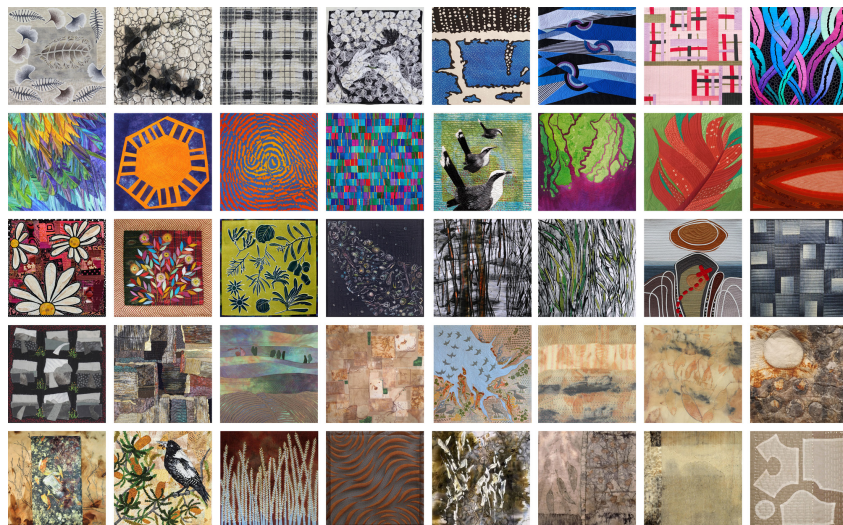




# AUSTRALIA WIDE SEVEN

an Ozquilt Network members' exhibition: on tour 2020-2022



## An Introduction to Australia Wide Seven

**Sam Bowker**

Reflecting on their experiences of Australia's vast and varied landscapes, the artists of the Ozquilt Network have showcased the diversity of practices across contemporary Australian quilting. In this exhibition, their work consists of observations across the living world. These are translated into textiles that share rich and subtle engagements with our native flora and fauna, the changing climate, the urban, the interstellar and the microscopic. As fixed forms and fugitive glimpses, these small squares are windows across a changing world.

Though 2020 has been an extraordinary year, it is not specifically Australia's landscape that is changing. Quilting is constantly renewing itself as new voices find expression through layers of fabric held together by thread. The three selectors, Alison Gummow (SA), Sharon Peoples (ACT) and Alys Midgell-Marsden (New Zealand) selected 37 works from 83 entries. Combined with their own contributions, we see 40 small quilts before us.

In this exhibition, you will find residues and traces, or memories of objects and moments that no longer exist. You will find striking juxtapositions of brilliant colour and form, the familiar and the strange. Look for those quilters who have created forms you have not seen before, for those who have honed in as far as the eye can focus, and who have borrowed old words to tell new stories. Quilts are complex surfaces, shaped by the interplay of intriguing materials. More than images, they are sculptural – and in this exhibition's format, they remind me of a disassembled book, each page contributed by a new author. How closely we look at each quilt determines the story we read from all.

For some, this is a story driven by drawing – as punctuated lines that hold layers together, or visual structures blending the abstract and figurative. For others, it is the image or the substance of the quilt itself, as one thing becomes another. Quilting is a slow and tactile process, it is an exploration of combinations. Ask yourself, what does it tell you about the artist? Does it generate the palpable tingle of wanting to make something yourself?

Quilting generates a thriving ecosystem of critical and inclusive practice that is simultaneously competitive and empowering. We see this clearly in *Australia Wide Seven* – a journey across the vibrant landscape of contemporary Australian quilting.

Curated by Ozquilt Network, *Australia Wide Seven* will travel for two years to galleries around Australia and the National Quilt Museum in Paducah, Kentucky (USA).

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## About the Author

Dr Sam Bowker is the Senior Lecturer in Art History & Visual Culture at Charles Sturt University, based in Wagga Wagga. He lectures across contemporary Australian and Islamic art and design, and his research builds upon the history of the Egyptian tentmakers and the art of khayamiya applique. Contemporary and colonial quilting informs his teaching and research, such as his recent publications for *The Journal of Modern Craft*, *The Australian Society for Asian Art (TASAA Review)* and *Craft + Design Inquiry*.