



matt dwyer

THE TEA PARTY

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MATT DWYER - CONTEMPORARY JEWELLERY & DESIGN

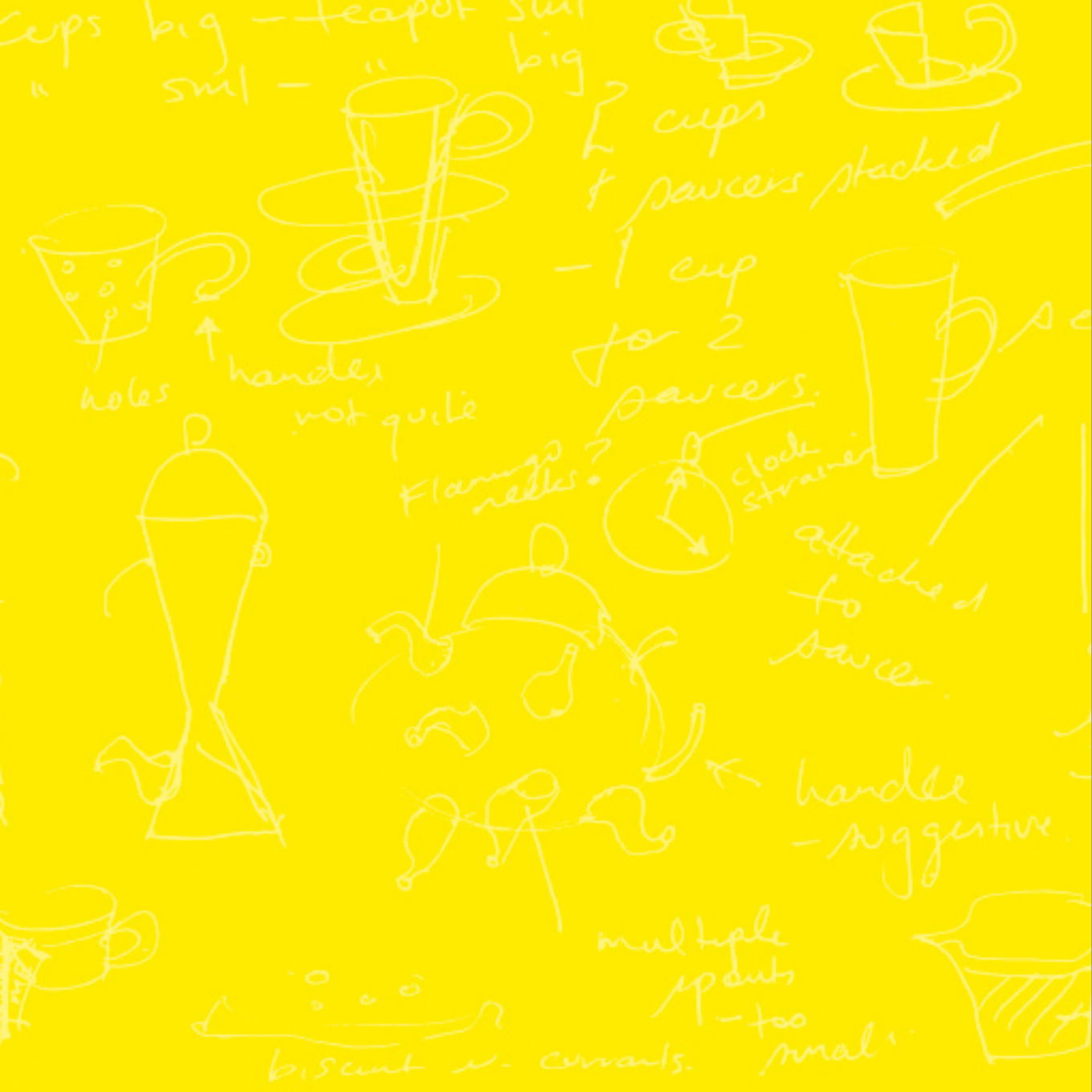
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AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY'S
COLLECT
The International Art Fair for Contemporary Objects
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
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IT TAKES ALL THE RUNNING YOU CAN DO TO KEEP IN THE SAME PLACE...

THE TEA PARTY

Jacqueline Armitstead

Matt Dwyer continually pushes the boundaries of his design practice. Initially trained in jewellery and silversmithing, he has since extended his repertoire to include lighting and object design, sound and installation. After graduating from Griffith University – Queensland College of Art in 1999, Dwyer has exhibited regularly both nationally and internationally. Dwyer's work aims to alter our perceptions of the world in which we live through both tangible and abstract interpretations of history. His exhibition work has explored notions of materiality, adornment, beauty, masculine identity and childhood memory.

The Tea Party has been conceived as part of a larger body of teawares entitled *Curiouser, Curiouser*. The words 'it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place' appear, as if by magic, on the surface of Dwyer's exquisitely crafted tea pot. This acts as a metaphor for the contemplative and reflective act of the tea drinking ritual in the midst of a time-poor and frenetic twenty-first century society.

Functional, yet whimsical, the sterling silver and ebony objects are installed for a real or imagined tea party. The viewer is engaged by elements of humour and play. By re-contextualising objects Dwyer challenges our perception of value. This may include the monetary value placed on objects or, less directly the value of objects based on our individual or collective memory and identity.

The work is inspired by the beloved children's story *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. The ephemeral

nature of childhood and the subjective nature of memory with the passing of time are explored through materials. The objects are familiar and modern and yet are 'crafted' from materials evocative of a bygone era. The Tea Party is both beautiful and playful and extends on the ongoing concerns of the designer's practice. Dwyer's work demonstrates the rigour of process, tactility and texture. The hammered surface conjures up a physical experience of the Australian landscape. The sterling silver forms reflect our imagination and changing identity making them both poetic and powerful.

Moreover, The Tea Party reflects upon an historical and uniquely Australian "neurotic" preoccupation towards sustaining ties with Britain¹ – the mother country – born out of a sense of geographic isolation and loneliness "like Alice running in Wonderland". Despite the strange new settings, the ritual of the tea party remains inviolate and child-like. In Carroll's tale, Alice follows a mysterious white rabbit into a hole to enter an absurd and improbable world. In this case, the rabbit hole symbolises the Anglo-British entry into the new world.

With the advent of the global economy Australian artists and designers are less concerned about isolation and so it is clear The Tea Party is grounded firmly in contemporary craft and design practice and the reality of place.

¹ As quoted in *The Australian Ugliness* (1960) by architect, author and critic Robin Boyd. Boyd advocated for the development of a uniquely Australian identity through innovative, responsive and intelligent design practice.

Jacqueline Armitstead is an independent curator, manager and writer working in-house at Cox Rayner Architects in Brisbane. Jacqueline has twenty years experience working in the arts industry in Queensland having held curatorial and senior management positions at Artworkers and Department of Public Works. She has also held positions with Arts Queensland and Craft Queensland (now Artisan).

Jacqueline holds a Bachelor of Fine Art from Griffith University and is a recipient of an Arts Queensland Professional Development Grant and the President's Award from the RAIA (Qld Chapter).

She is currently curating four art and architecture projects and an exhibition of contemporary art and design to be held at Gallery Artisan in 2008.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Matt Dwyer

The Tea Party forms part of a range of teawares entitled Curiouser Curiouser and addresses the value associated with the ideals of a child's tea party, but in a contemporary and adult context. I initially explored the idea that the tea party is often played out by children to mimic adult behaviour. This idea led me to Lewis Carroll's novel Alice in Wonderland and more specifically the Madhatters Tea Party.

At first glance, the Madhatters Tea Party appears childlike yet when I explored Carroll's novel further, I realised that it is thickly layered with complexities that are uncannily similar to the absurd and surreal politics played out in the modern day tea and coffee ritual - it no longer appears as innocent as a child's play.

Is our tea party no more than an attempt to mimic a child's behaviour?

It occurred to me that our daily tea ritual is actually a form of play where we escape from daily pressures that exist in our life; to find some solace, almost to mimic the child's tea party. The irony lies in its perceived escapism which is contrary to the reality of our contemporary everyday life.

The Tea Party also continues my interest in notions of beauty, identity and value and how they are perceived. Focusing on memory and childhood play scenarios, I examine how such memories are perceived and altered as an adult. This work also aims to challenge the perception of the world we live in, through physical objects or ideals.



'JAM YESTERDAY AND JAM TOMORROW BUT
NEVER JAM TODAY'

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
Lewis Carroll, 1865.





Curiouser, Curiouser! Teapot & Teacups
Stg silver, Ebony.
2005



Curiouser, Curiouser! Tea Accessories
Sugar Bowl, Milk Jug, Teaspoons & Tea Bag Infuser
Stg silver, Ebony
2007



Curiouser, Curiouser! Tea Accessories
Teaspoons & Tea Strainer
Stg silver, Ebony
2007

ABOUT THE DESIGNER

Matt Dwyer is one of Australia's foremost contemporary designers working predominantly in jewellery, lighting and object based design. Recently he has extended his work to include sound and installation based practice. In 1999 Dwyer graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Art – Gold and Silversmithing from the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University. In his final year, he was honoured by Object, Australia's premier contemporary craft and design magazine. These honours are awarded to the most outstanding graduating students in Australian University art and design schools in a craft, design or 3D design discipline.

In 2004 Dwyer founded Studio Sixteen – a highly successful design studio based in Brisbane – which provides a diverse range of professional services including private and public commissions. Dwyer has exhibited extensively both nationally and internationally and has taught widely within the arts and design sector. He has given guest lectures in Australia and Bangkok and undertaken professional development travel to Argentina, Spain, the Czech Republic, China and Thailand.

Dwyer has received numerous grants, mentorships and awards and was profiled as one of 2005's Hot Australian Designers by Monument Magazine's Design Atlas. The most recent achievement being his inclusion in Australian Contemporary's – Collect 2008, held at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Collect 2008 is an International Craft Initiative of the Australia Council and the Adelaide JamFactory.

And yes – he only stops time at teatime...



Born	Brisbane 1975	2002	Something Precious Craft Queensland Retail Gallery, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane
Education			Insert 20c (solo exhibition) Craft Qld Gallery, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane
1995–99	Bachelor of Visual Art in Fine Art, [Gold & Silversmithing] Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Brisbane		Metal Element V Quadrivium Gallery, Sydney
			PRIME Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane, Brisbane
Selected Exhibitions		2001	Family Jewels Family Art Space, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane
2008	Australian Contemporary's (group exhibition) Victoria & Albert Museum, London	2000	Boxed in Contemporary Noosa Regional Art Gallery, Sunshine Coast Doggett Street Studios, Newstead, Brisbane
2007	Charmed (group exhibition) Experimenta, Melbourne, Victoria		Graduate Metal Qld Conservatorium of Music, Griffith University, Brisbane
	Trickle (solo exhibition) Bundaberg Arts Centre, Queensland		Sites for Adornment Doggett Street Studios, Newstead, Brisbane
	Contemporary Jewellery/Silversmithing showcase (solo exhibition) Frankston Arts Centre, Victoria	1999	Takeaway Craft Queensland Gallery, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane
2006	SPARK-Luminaire Exhibition West End, Brisbane		The Gift Contemporary Art & Design Gallery, Woolloongabba, Brisbane
2005	Plastic Fantastic Craft Qld Gallery, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane		Hair Craft Queensland Gallery, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane
	The Tea Party Craft Qld Gallery, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane	1998	Impact Institute of Modern Art, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane
	Celebrating Australia Raffles Mall, Singapore		Kaleidoscope Brisbane City Municipal Library Indooroopilly Municipal Library
	David Jones Brisbane Artist Showcase David Jones - Queens St Window, Brisbane		Awards & Achievements
	New Media – Non Precious Elements in Contemp. Wearables Object Store, Sydney	2004	Founder of Studio Sixteen Contemporary Jewellery & Design Studio
2004	Bund 18 Opening Shanghai, China	2002	Recipient Craft Queensland Mentorship Grant for Emerging Craftspersons.
	Celebrate Australia Saggese, Singapore	2000	Finalist, Memento Merchandise Awards Recipient of New Enterprise Incentive Scheme [NEIS] - a one-year new business support scheme
	Objects of Desire Nokia Launch, Shanghai, China and Bangkok, Thailand	1998	Object Magazine Student Award Golden Key National Honor Award
	Missing Jack Studio Ingot, Fitzroy, Melbourne		Guest Lectures/artist talks
	Afterglow [series 2] Queen St Mall Vitrine, Brisbane City	2004	Bangkok, Thailand University level fashion design students
2003	Afterglow [series 1] Craft Queensland Gallery, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane	2003	Craft Queensland Out of the Chrysalis: From Practice to Entrepreneurship
	Contemporary Wearables 03 Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery, Toowoomba.	2002	Quadrivium Gallery, Sydney Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, Rozelle
	Silent Jewels Craft Qld Store, Fortitude Valley Brilliant Facets Gallery, Brisbane.		
	Brooch Gallery 156, Surry Hills, Sydney		
	The Ubiquitous Ring Gallery 156, Surry Hills, Sydney		

Thankyous

Lyn & Allin Dwyer

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Queensland College of Art, Brisbane

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Jorgen de Voss
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Lyle Tweeddale
Senior Lecturer
Queensland College of Art, Brisbane

David Clayton – Silversmith

Roy Schack – Schack Furniture

Ilya Grawert – Violin Maker

Kylie Gartside – Jeweller



Queensland
Government
Arts Queensland

The Queensland Government, through Arts Queensland, has provided \$5000 to Matt Dwyer to attend and promote his artwork at 'Australian Contemporary's'; COLLECT – The International Art Fair for Contemporary Objects; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; January 2008.

