
Sally McKay

Blind Radius Series



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Sally McKay’s latest body of work sends viewers on a captivating journey into the realms of the seen and the unseen – the central and the peripheral.

Following on from her previous project, “Blind Radius,” “Blind Radius II” is yet another masterful exploration of the impact of contemporary visual culture that proves McKay’s talent, situating her not only as one of Australia’s most technically skilled photographers, but also as one of the medium’s most conceptually and compositionally distinctive proponents.

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Nicholas Forrest

TheAList.Art

The Exploration

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Blind Radius II

By Elizabeth Fortescue

Arts Editor Daily Telegraph, Australian correspondent The Art Newspaper

Aren't they lovely, these beautiful, mandala-like photographs of Sally McKay's? Doesn't their intricacy and delicacy whisk you back to grandma's house and all the comfort and reassurance that you once found among her handmade doilies and tapestries?

Are you sure?

Come a little closer. **What do you really see?** Plastic figures with plastic guns. Plastic observation towers. Plastic fighter jets and plastic tanks. All arranged in the neatest of circles, all chasing one another endlessly round and round the mandala with their rifles raised, each figure in the sights of the one behind.

Sally McKay calls it "war plastic", and the supply of it never ends. The figurines, forever frozen in their puddles of plastic, were ubiquitous in the Australian childhood. They're still churned out in factories, and children the world over still use them to stage mock battles. But this is 2018, and now the toys come with a choke hazard warning. Pity the sea creatures who can't read those warnings, and die in their millions because of various types of floating plastic waste.

McKay is by training, practice and inclination a photographer, and the artworks on view here are photographs. But the last few years have seen McKay's process veer towards a whole new way of working. **McKay creates installations on platforms in her studio,** using tweezers to painstakingly arrange objects in a circular pattern. She finds these circles "holistic", and some of her admirers have likened them to mandalas. It's a comparison she doesn't dislike.

In a previous series, exhibited at .M Contemporary in October 2017, McKay assembled and photographed circular installations made of oddments both manmade and natural, creating colour harmonies that she intended to open our eyes to the beauty in everyday objects that we often take for granted.

In this new series, **Blind Radius II, McKay goes further. She wants us to see beauty in all these lace mandalas. But she also wants us to be confronted by their components.** But these components are not exclusively plastic. McKay also collected dead plant material from the floor of the mini forest in Cooper Park near her family home in Sydney's east. She enjoys referring to nature in her work.

"I wanted to show the link between plastic and what happens with our environment," she says.

In McKay's work, the plastic and the vegetation are all painted white and arranged on coloured woven cotton in nine pretty colours from watermelon to egg yolk to slate blue. They are then photographed, and printed.

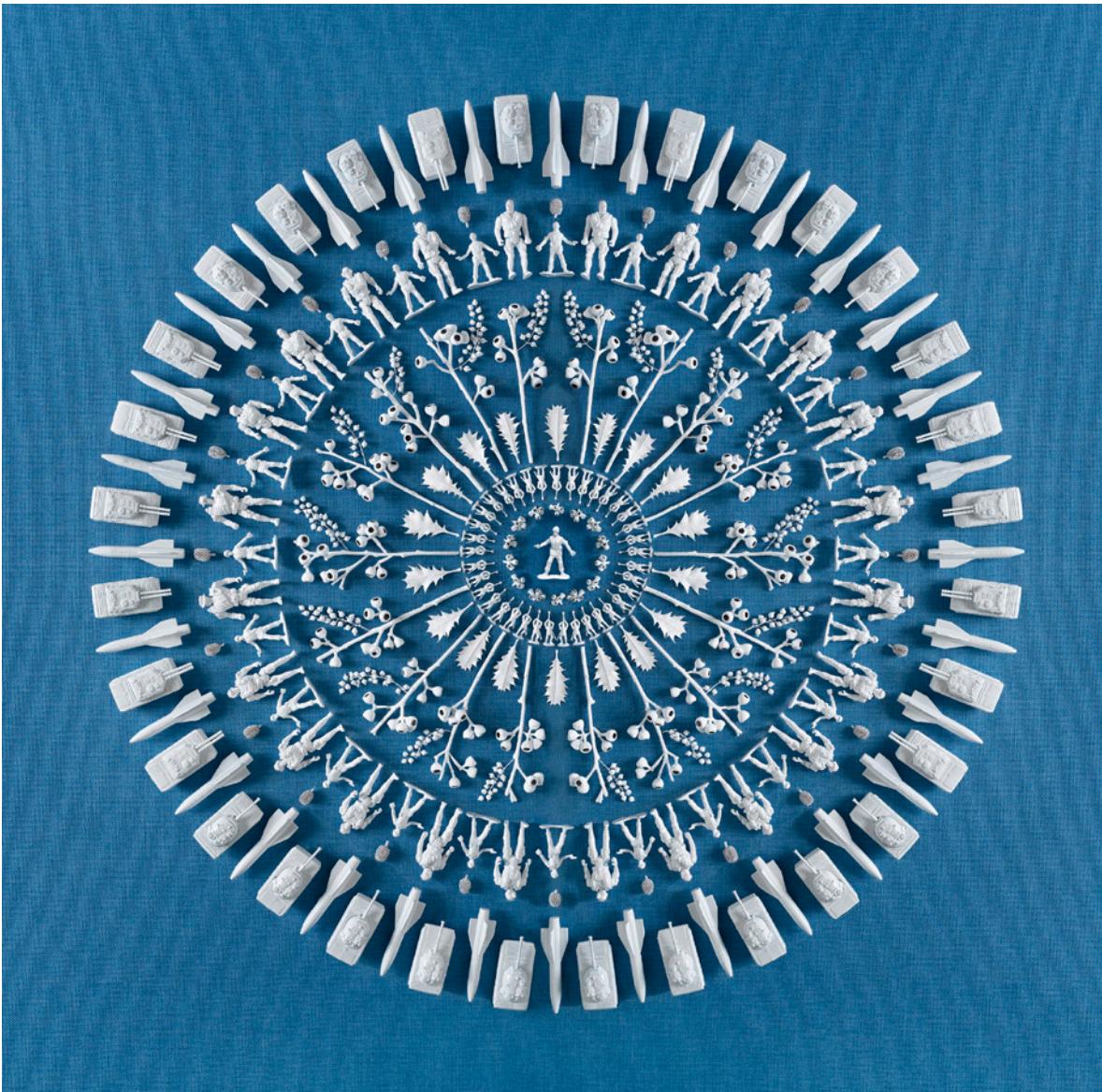
McKay's influences in these works are varied. Her childhood plays a big role. Her father Peter Linley owned and ran a Melbourne company called Interprint which printed catalogues and posters for the National Gallery of Victoria, and did printing for photographers. It was Peter who gave McKay her first camera when she was 12.

Antique French lace is an obvious influence. And **McKay has looked to several international artists – Indian-born Raqib Shaw, China's Yao Lu and Michael Wolf of Germany. The works of Shaw and Yao Lu look beautiful for a minute, before you realise what you're actually looking at.** Shaw's decadently coloured scenes of opulence and wealth feature flayed bodies and skeletons. Yao Lu's photography appears to be

of traditional Chinese mountain scenery before you realise those mountains are rubbish dumps. The photography of Michael Wolf takes us inside Chinese toy factories, where workers toil and sleep in squalid conditions to supply the global market with plastic objects of momentary, passing children's play. In Wolf's photography, piles of dolls' heads awaiting assemblage are gruesome and repellently visceral.

So here is McKay's second solo exhibition. Just like grandma's house.

But watch out, Little Red Riding Hood, because grandma has grown some very big teeth.



Dentelle Bleuet | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4



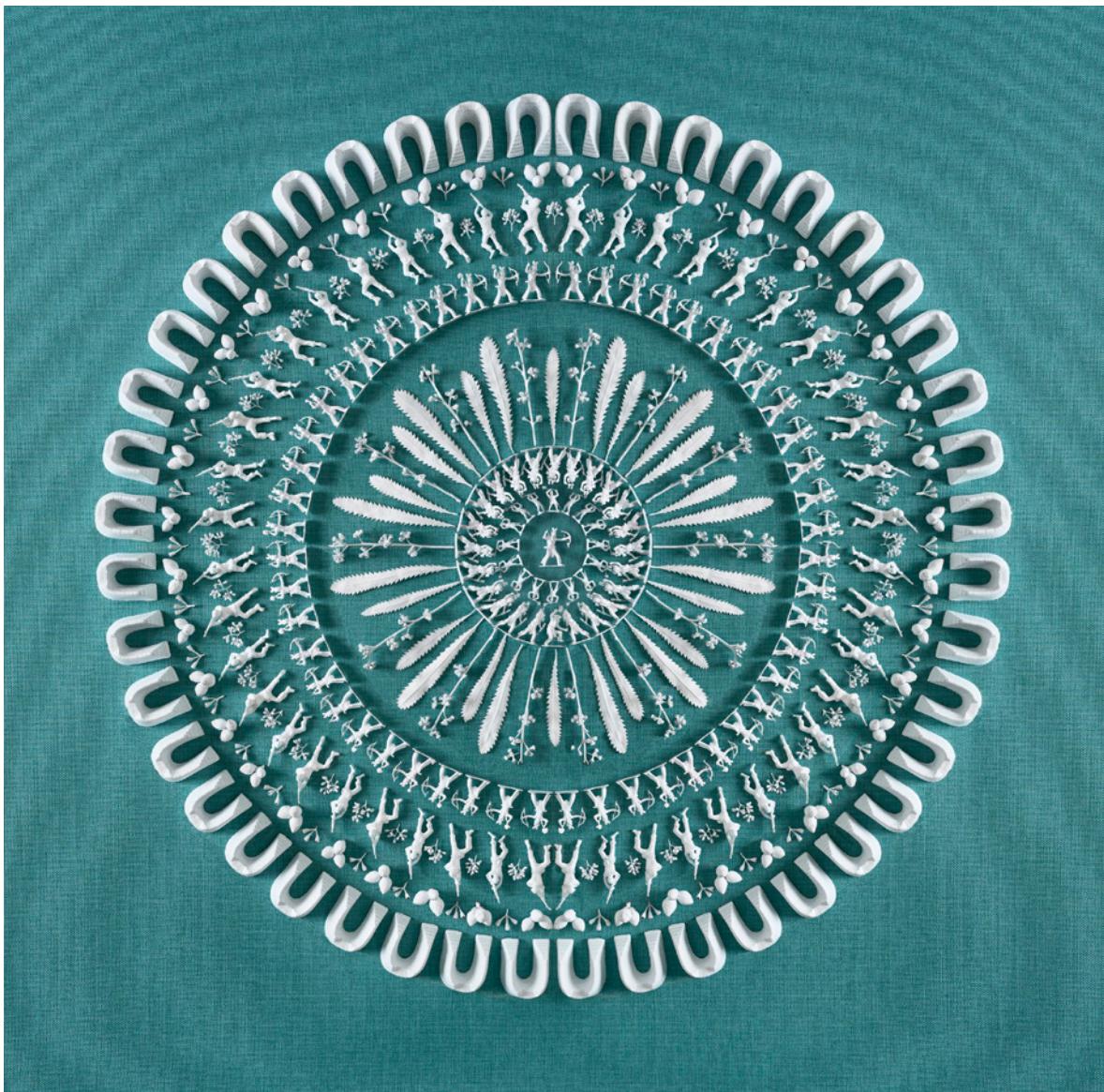
Dentelle Grenadine | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4



Dentelle Paon | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4



Dentelle Jaune D'or | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4



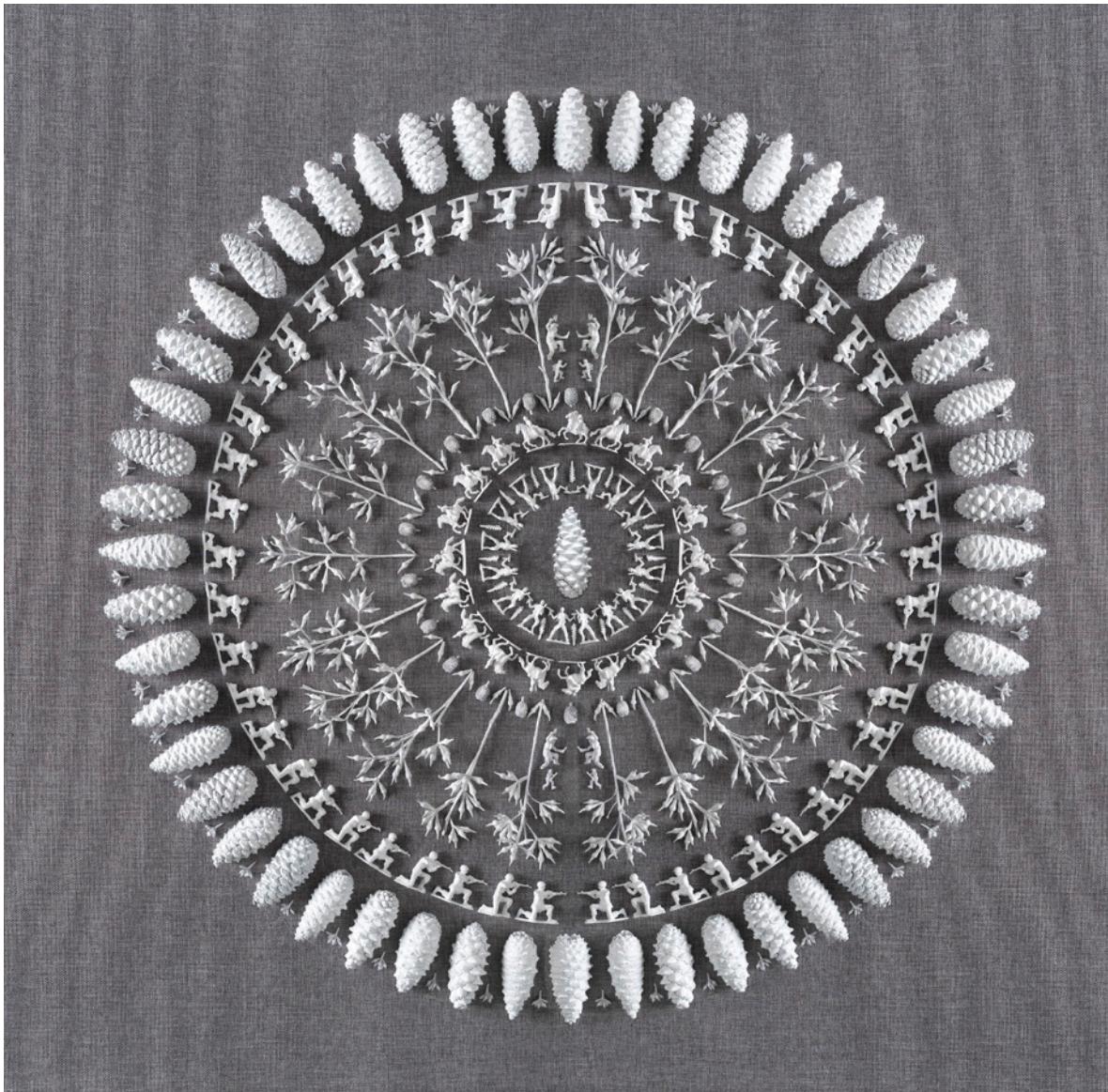
Dentelle Peridot | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4



Dentelle Gris | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4



Dentelle Violet | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4



Dentelle Cobalt | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4

Blind Radius II Noir Blanc

By Nicholas Forrest

TheAList.Art

Using a very specific, methodical process of collection, classification, and organisation, McKay creates mesmerising, mandala-like compositions that challenge the audience to contemplate the way that they process the visual data attached to objects. **Her unique modus operandi engenders works that occupy an indefinable position at the intersection of the real and the imagined** where she aims to reveal and unveil just how much of the visual data we absorb every day is in some way manipulated, skewed, or falsified.

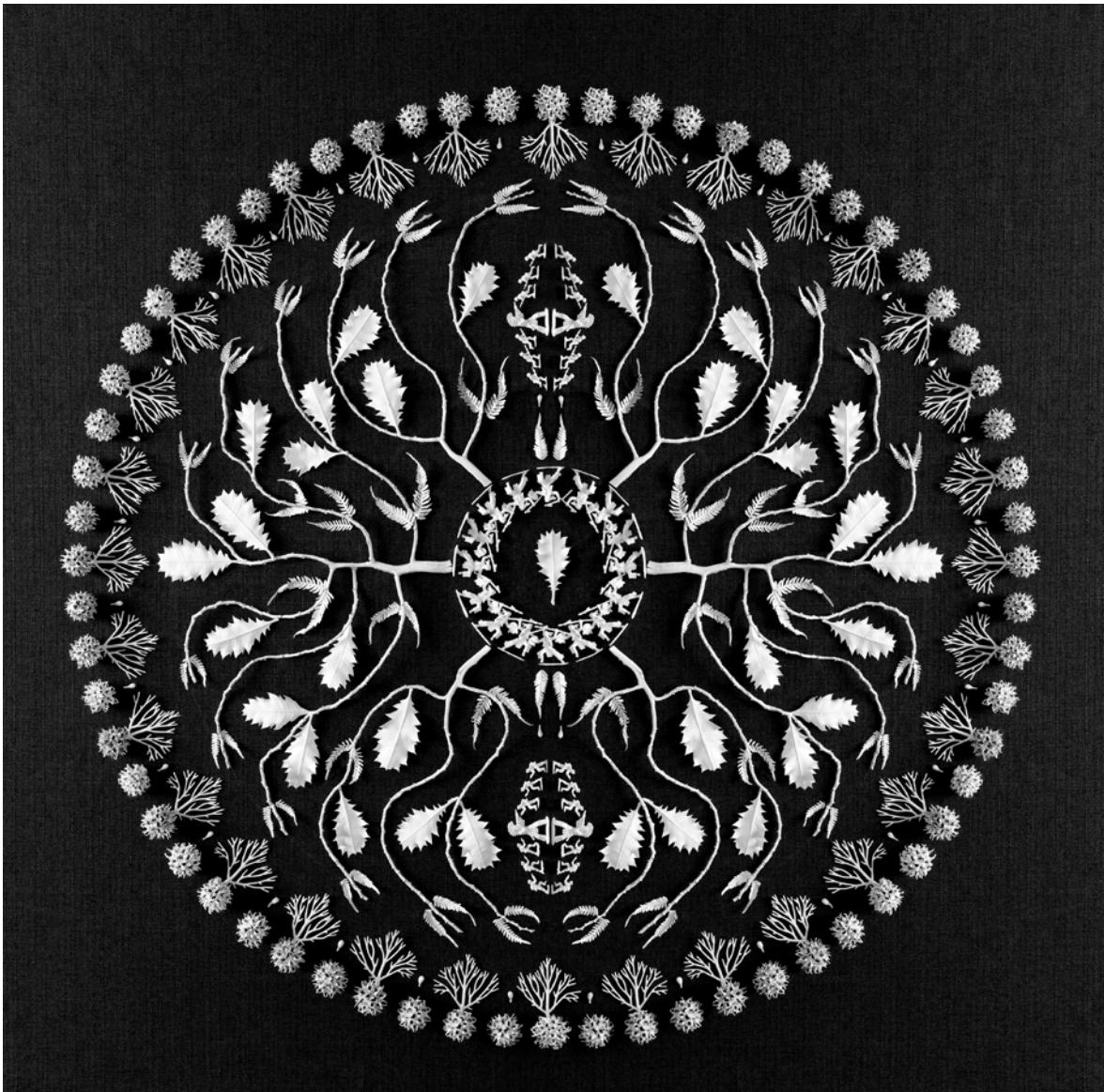
Things are often not as they seem, and the same can be said for the works in “Blind Radius II Noir Black.” From a distance, a beautiful lacework panel, but up close, a complex composition of evocative and emotive elements.

From the day they are born, human beings begin to develop a visual databank consisting of images, colours, motifs, and graphics. It is this constantly evolving and growing visual databank that often determine the feelings, sensations, and thoughts that we experience when we come into contact with an object, whether directly (in reality) or in the artificial realm via a medium or of transmission and translation (television, magazine, social media etc.). For the black and white works, for instance, **McKay drew inspiration from the emotional and cerebral connection that she developed with the visual and conceptual motif of the “War Laces” sold by women during WW1 to support their families.**

Every single day, most human beings face the daunting task of processing and interpreting the excess of visual stimuli that they are bombarded with on a daily basis. In fact, **there is so much information and data being fed to us that we often don't get the opportunity to filter and interpret that information and data. Instead, we rely on what we are told by other people** (and entities) **to develop thoughts, emotions, and sensations in connection with that information and data** – whether or not those thoughts, emotions, and sensations are factual, true, or even rational.

The very fact that we are conditioned to see a particular type of attractiveness in plastic war toys, yet fail to see the beauty in the stunning, sculptural form of a dead branch covered with wonderfully patterned, skeletal leaves that has fallen off a tree into our path, which was once a living entity and is now a wonderful relic of the natural world, suggests that our visual perceptions, physical sensations, and emotional signals have been compromised by the lives we live.

“Blind Radius II Noir Blanc” is a visual and moral antidote to the hyper commercialised, mass producing, super saturated contemporary world. McKay turns the chaos and disorder of contemporary life into structured, mesmerising, and evocative moments of meditation and mindfulness. She not only crafts encapsulating images, but also experiences – experiences that last well beyond the walls of the gallery.



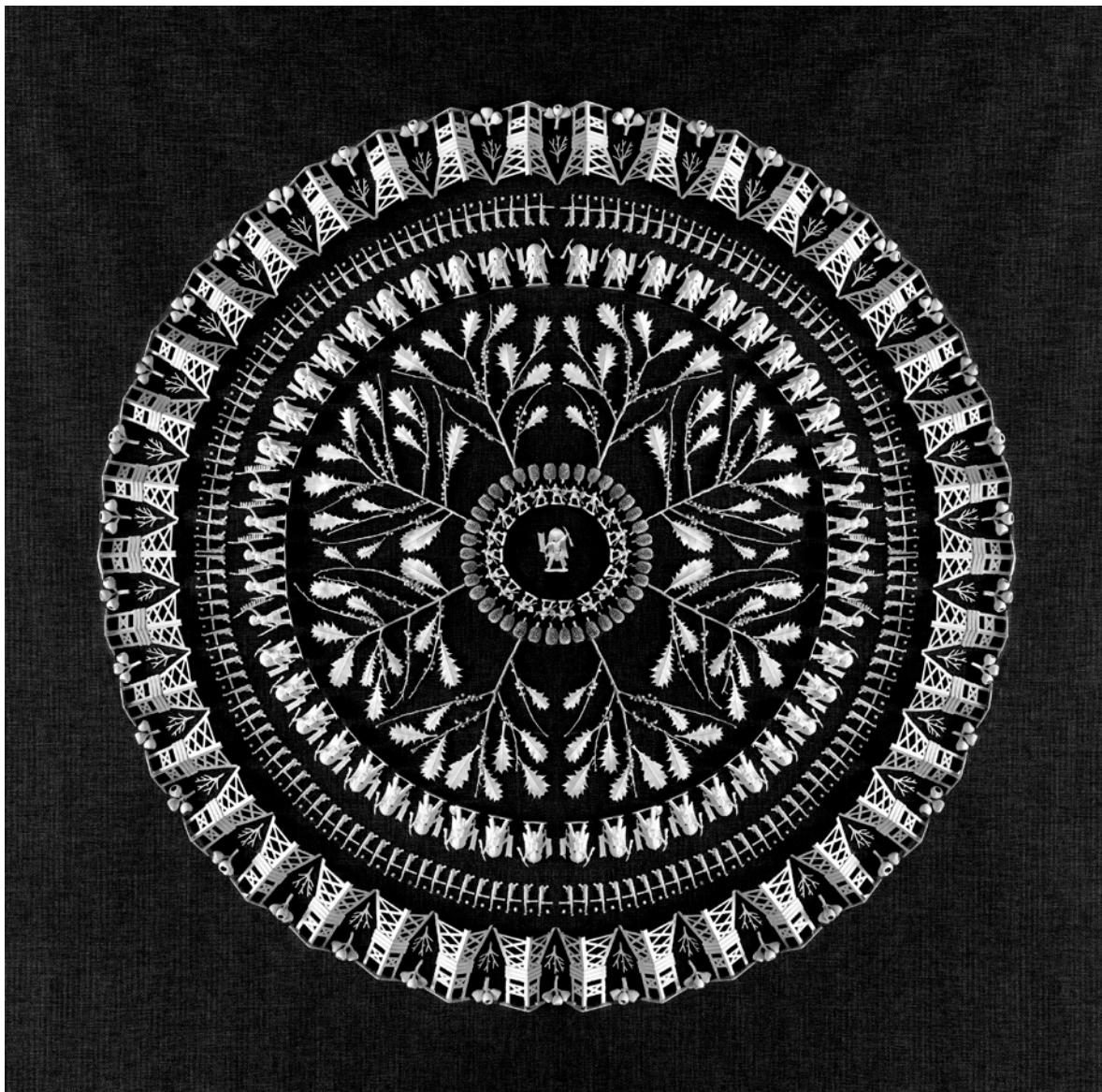
Dentelle Ardoise Noir Blanc | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4



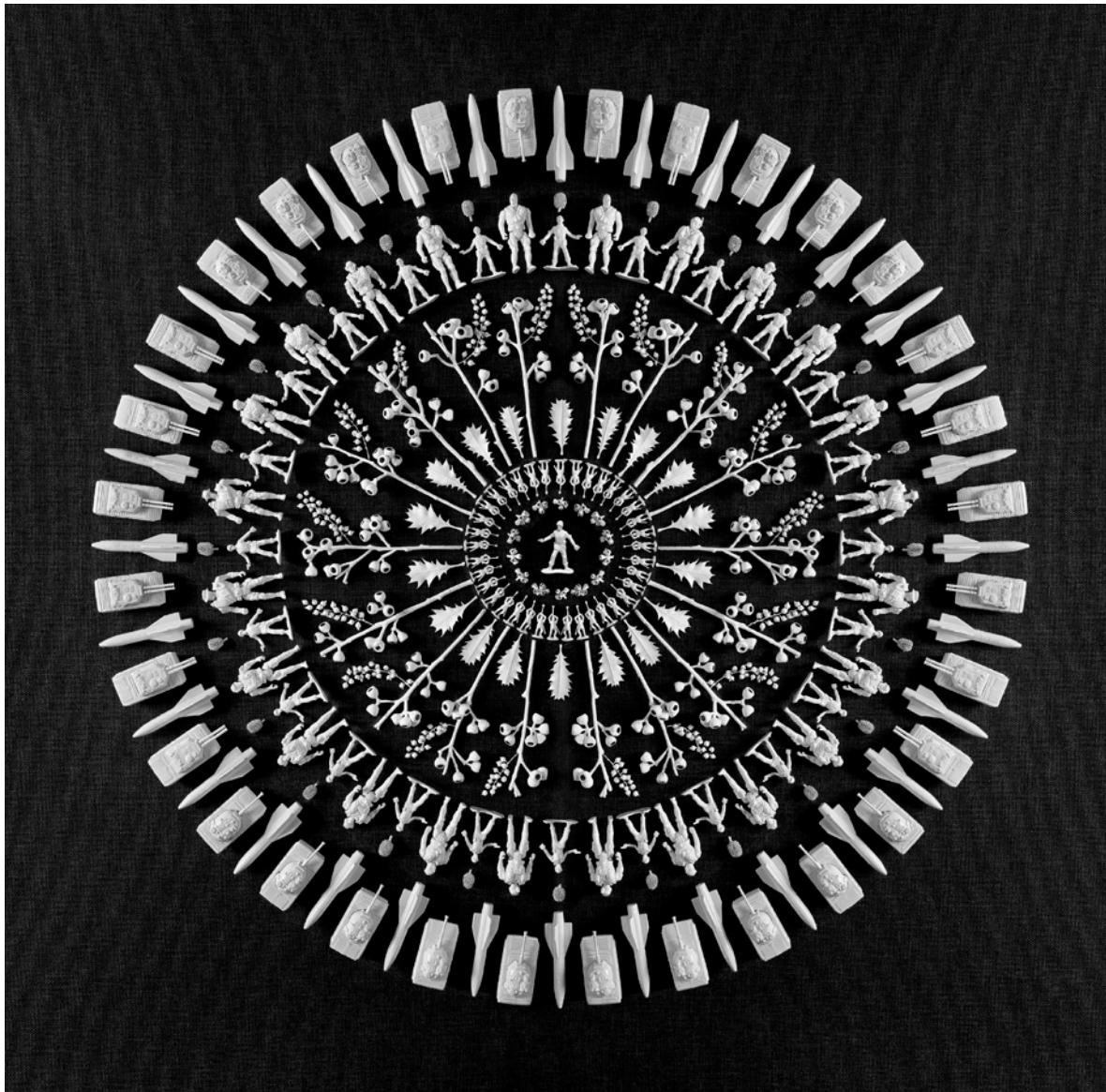
Dentelle Cobalt Noir Blanc | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4



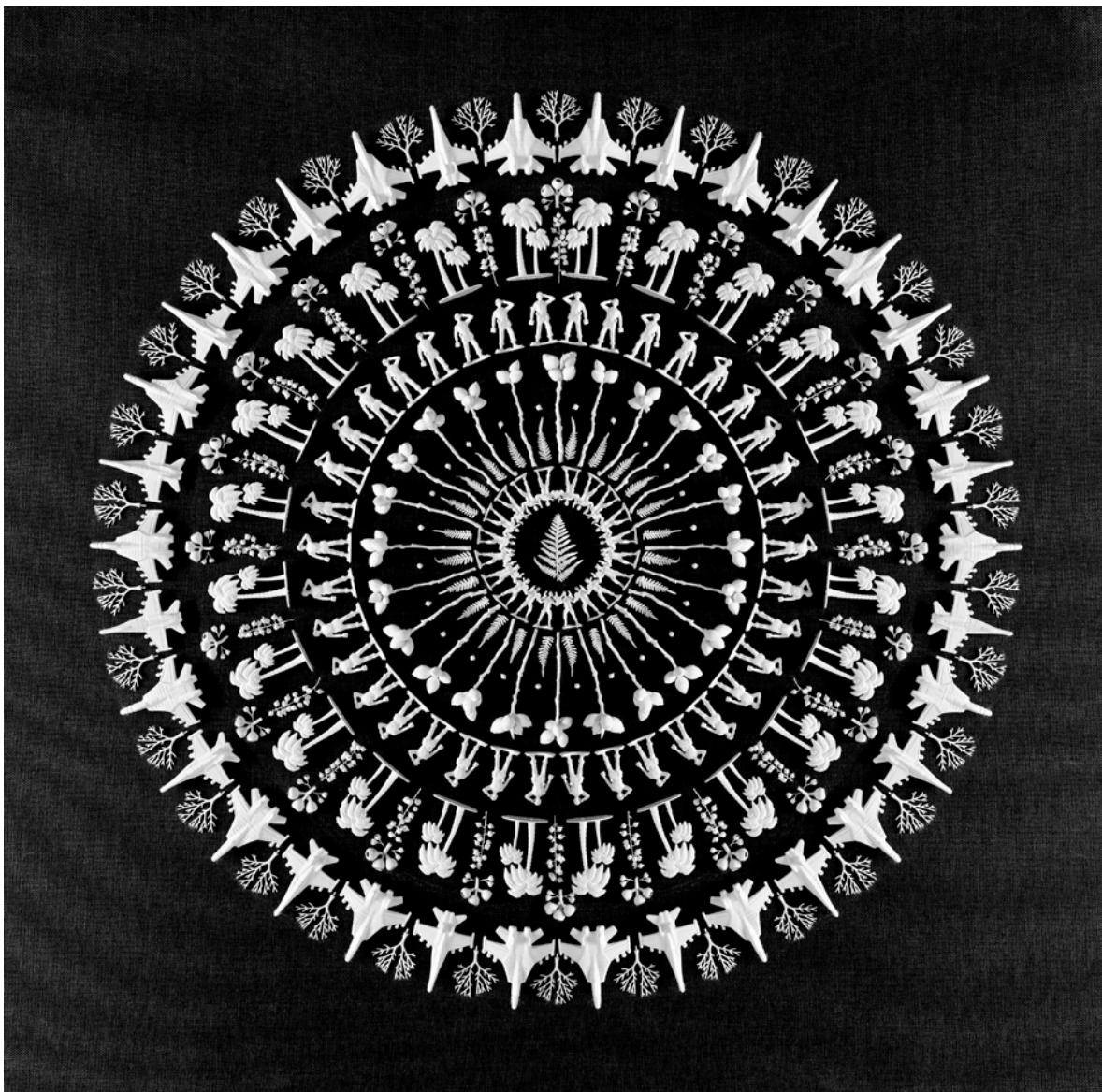
Dentelle Bleuet Noir Blanc | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4



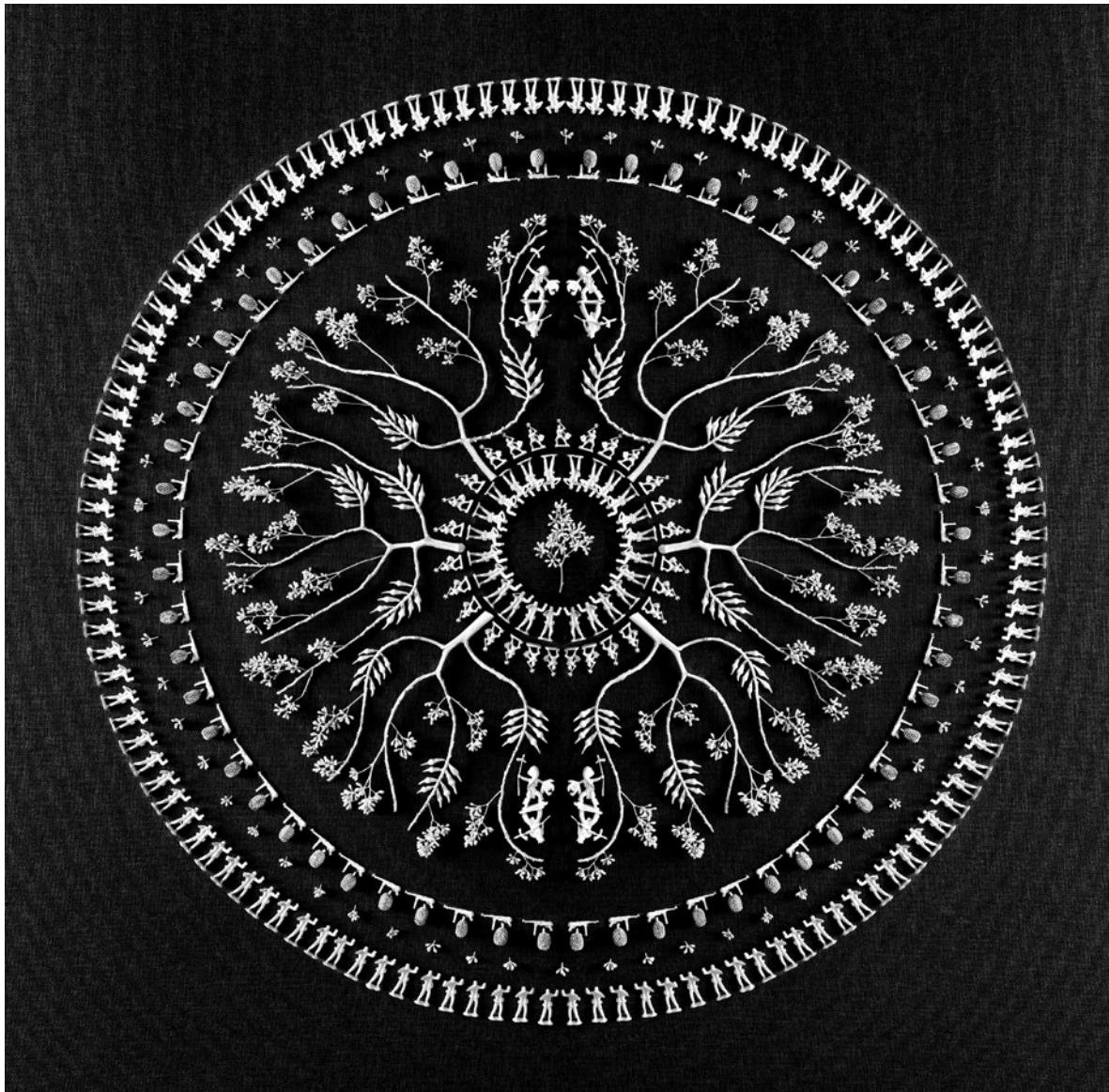
Dentelle Grenadine Noir Blanc | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4



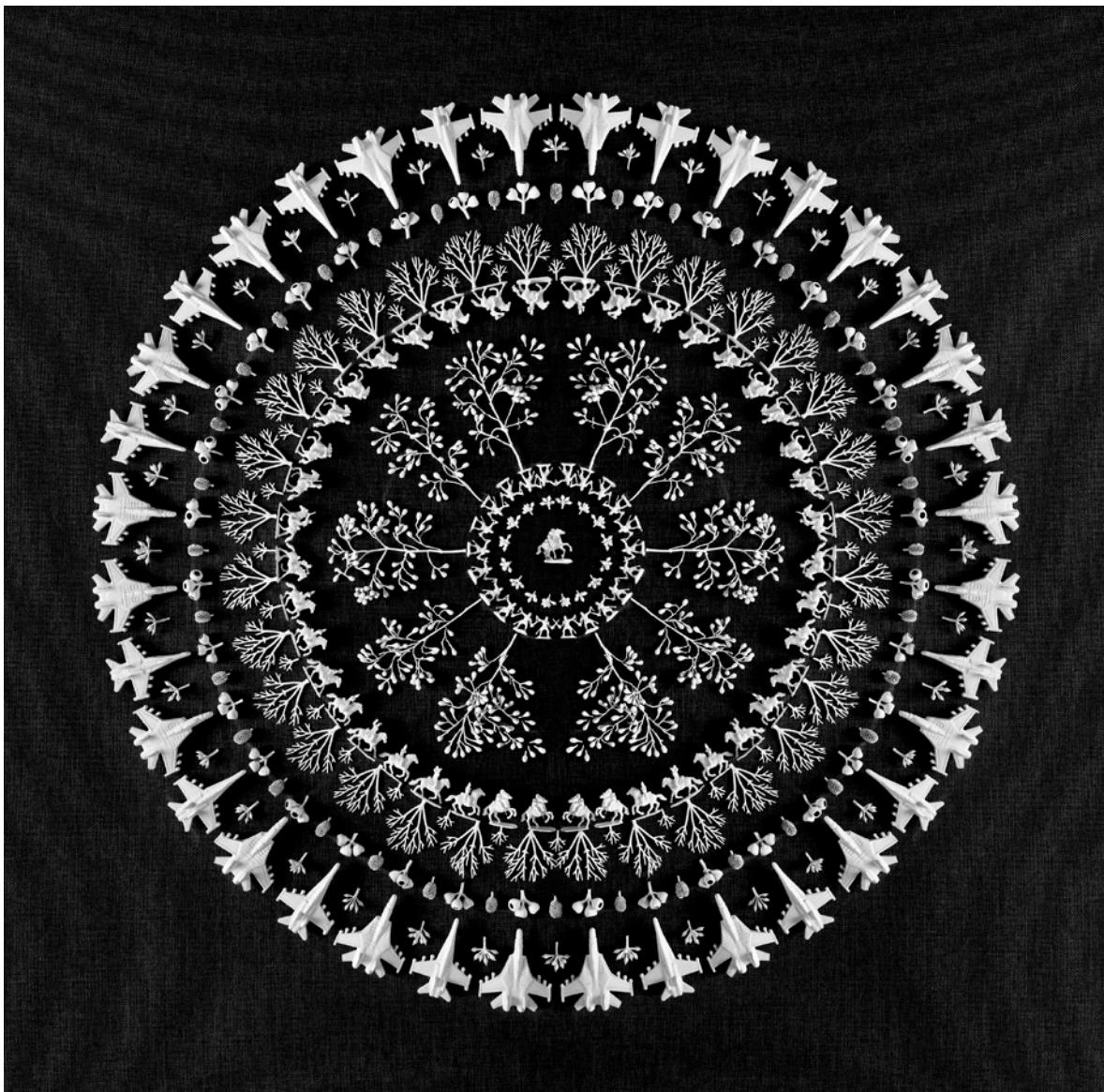
Dentelle Jaune D'or Noir Blanc | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4



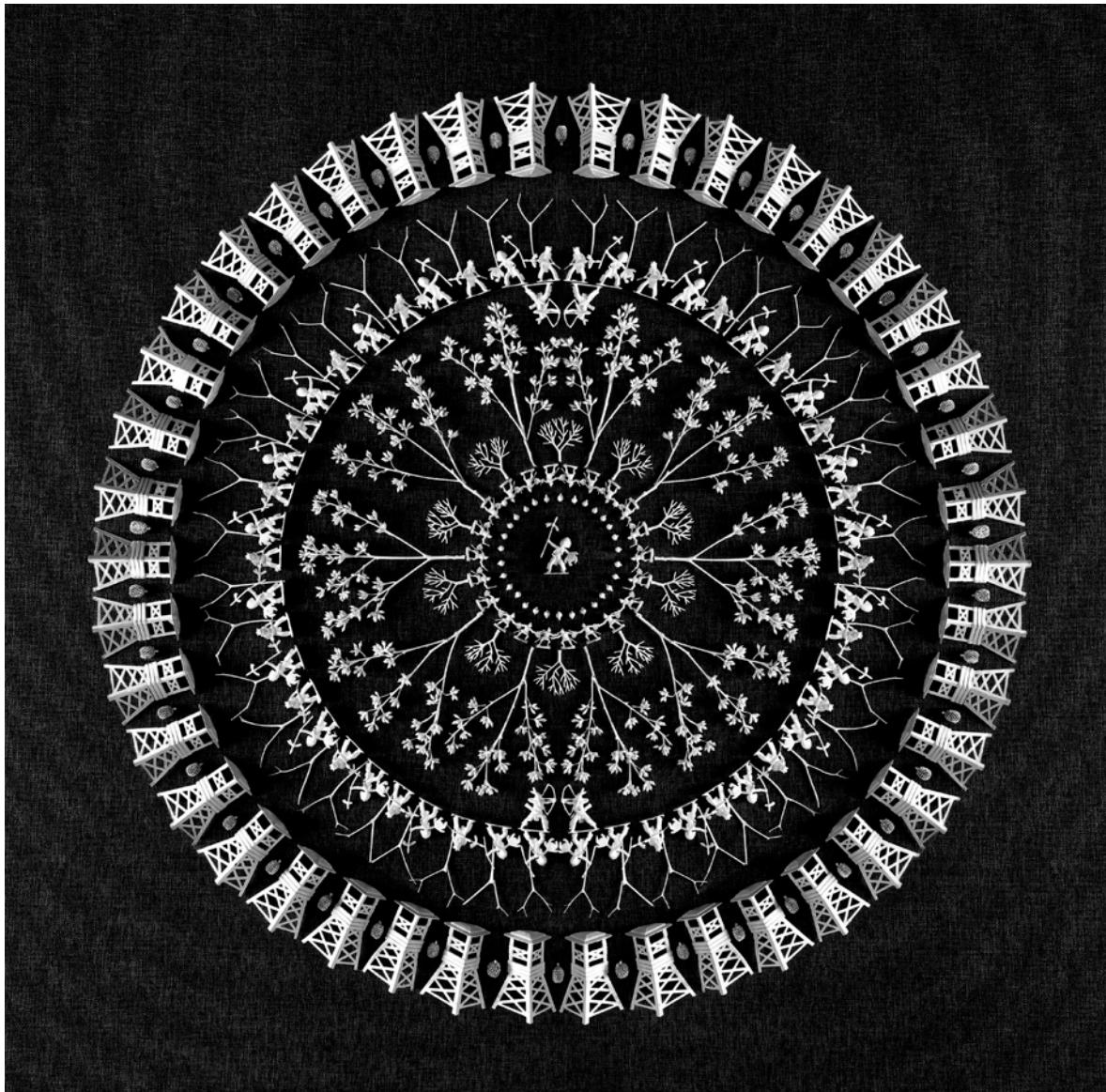
Dentelle Peridot Noir Blanc | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4



Dentelle Violet Noir Blanc | 2018

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

64 x 64 cm | Editions 1 – 8

124 x 124 cm | Editions 1 – 8

157 x 157 cm | Editions 1 – 4

Blind Radius I & II – The Intersection

By Clare Caldwell

The Authorial

Despite the discernable contrast between McKay's bodies of work, it is clear that they share a unified message. Their joys and sobering realities ask the audience to ruminate on the impact of humanity on the natural environment. More importantly however, the works demand that the viewer observe what is both within and beyond their own radius so that they may, in the words of Thoreau, understand less but begin to see more.

Blind Radius I, 2017

In her first venture beyond portraiture, **McKay undertook an assiduous process of collecting still life objects within her local radius, arranging and then photographing them in a series of meticulous curations of colour.**

"There is beauty around us that we don't always experience. These works forced me to slow down, pause and forage," she explains. Each piece is a homage to the Pantone scale, assembled in hypnotic concentric rings that intersperse items of urban bushland flora with fragments from her domestic setting. The images invite the viewer to come closer, look more critically

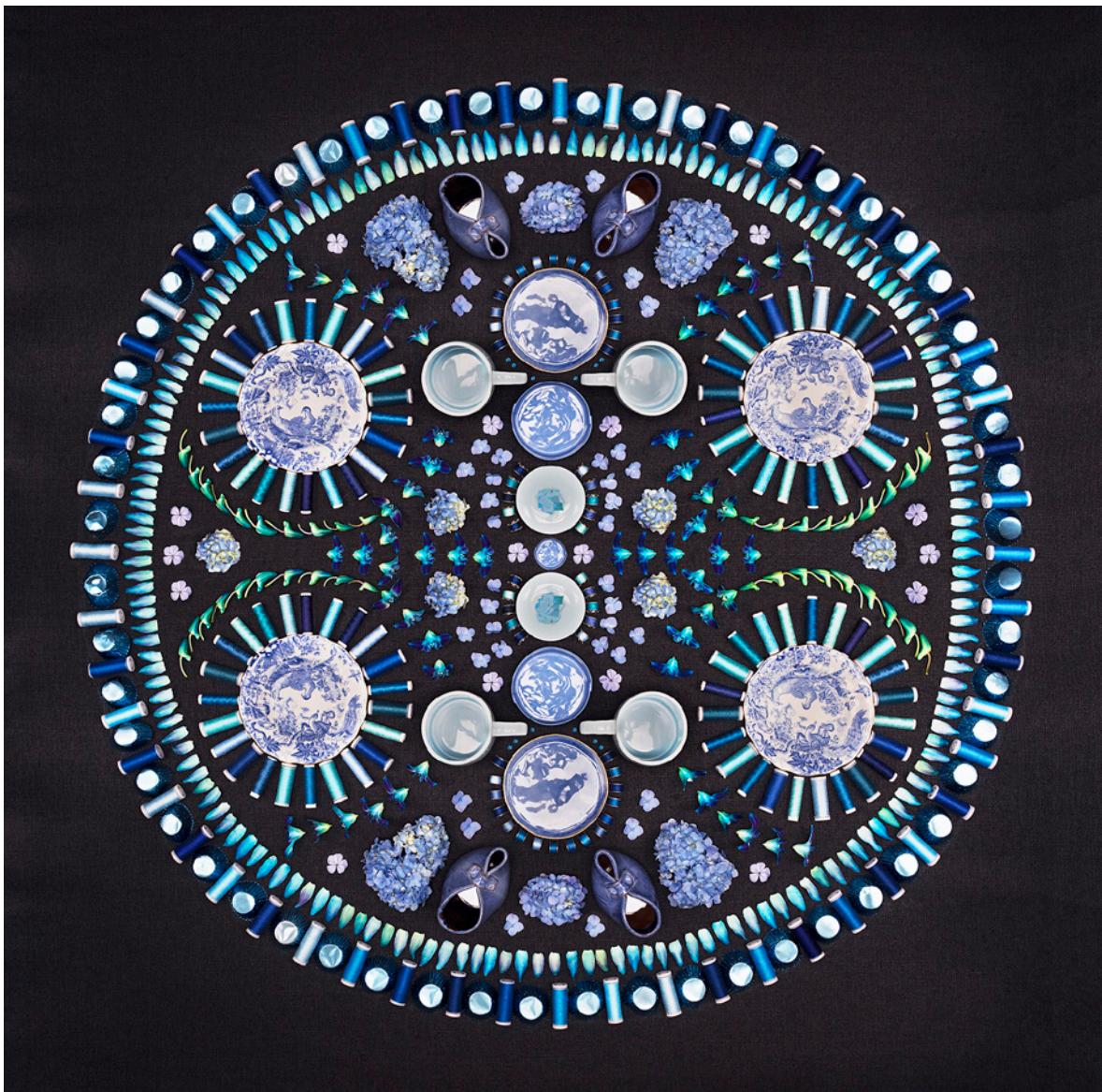
and understand the works less as art and more as statements on our surroundings. "The juxtaposition of the elements is not random, they're not accidents. They're reflections, like a mirror," says McKay. At first, the viewer may think they recognise the design of a Buddhist mandala in the amphitheatre of found objects that McKay has carefully devised. The familiar acquaintance **evokes an intimacy with the work where humble, natural elements sit amongst the miscellany that feed the conversations and fabric of daily life.** Teacups, plates and cotton reels mingle with the ephemera of the local landscape – petals, lush produce, fallen autumn leaves. **The rhythm of these repeated elements, in cordons of perfectly elliptical lemons, lush hydrangeas and ripening acorns, focuses the audience on the particular, rather than the general.** "The most rewarding part of showing my art," explains McKay, "is seeing people come in close, right up to the glass, and suddenly noticing all the tiny elements that make up the whole." When this occurs, she says, her art has done its work.

Blind Radius II, 2018

In McKay's subsequent series, the dialogue is markedly different and asks the observer significantly more challenging questions. Her exceptional capacity to harness colour and light makes for a familiar scene, yet this time the works depict an intersection rather than a symbiosis – one where the natural world and the 'fast' economy collide. In these later images, McKay's message carries weight and provocation, its power emanating from absence rather than abundance. Colour is forced to the background and stark white heroes take centre-stage. Where Blind Radius I had celebrated the rich palette of Australian flora, this later series presents a contrasting story. Part chiaroscuro, part silhouette, each incremental halo generates its own thought-provoking chapter on the often-dichotomous relationship between nature and humanity. "These works are about the non-beauty that surrounds us," McKay explains. "They're about environmental damage, about consumerism and the way we package up plastic to appear beautiful."

From afar, her whimsical patterns take on the appearance of antique lace, but a careful inspection reveals that their dainty ornamentations are indeed dozens of model toy soldiers, figurines from archaic war games and their incumbent plastic artilleries, all frozen mid-*pose*. In these scenes, the antithetical elements of nature and warfare are disguised in a mutual cloak of alabaster depicting the precarious relationship between our environment and a profligate disposable economy.

In this space, McKay weaves her palette judiciously, right down to the ambiguous nomenclature she uses to speak of beauty. The works' titles each derive from the French term for lace – dentelle – along with a seemingly synaesthetic reaction to their colour and context: Ardoise suggests the English word arduous, Bleuet conjures bullet, and Grenadine invokes grenade. These instances appear neither accidental nor deliberate, but simply an acknowledgement of the interdependence of colour and emotion in art and life.



Pantone Bleu | 2017

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

95 x 95 cm | Editions 1 – 8

131 x 131 cm | Editions 1 – 8



Pantone Jaune | 2017

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

95 x 95 cm | Editions 1 – 8

131 x 131 cm | Editions 1 – 8



Pantone Maron | 2017

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

95 x 95 cm | Editions 1 – 8

131 x 131 cm | Editions 1 – 8



Pantone Orange | 2017

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

95 x 95 cm | Editions 1 – 8

131 x 131 cm | Editions 1 – 8

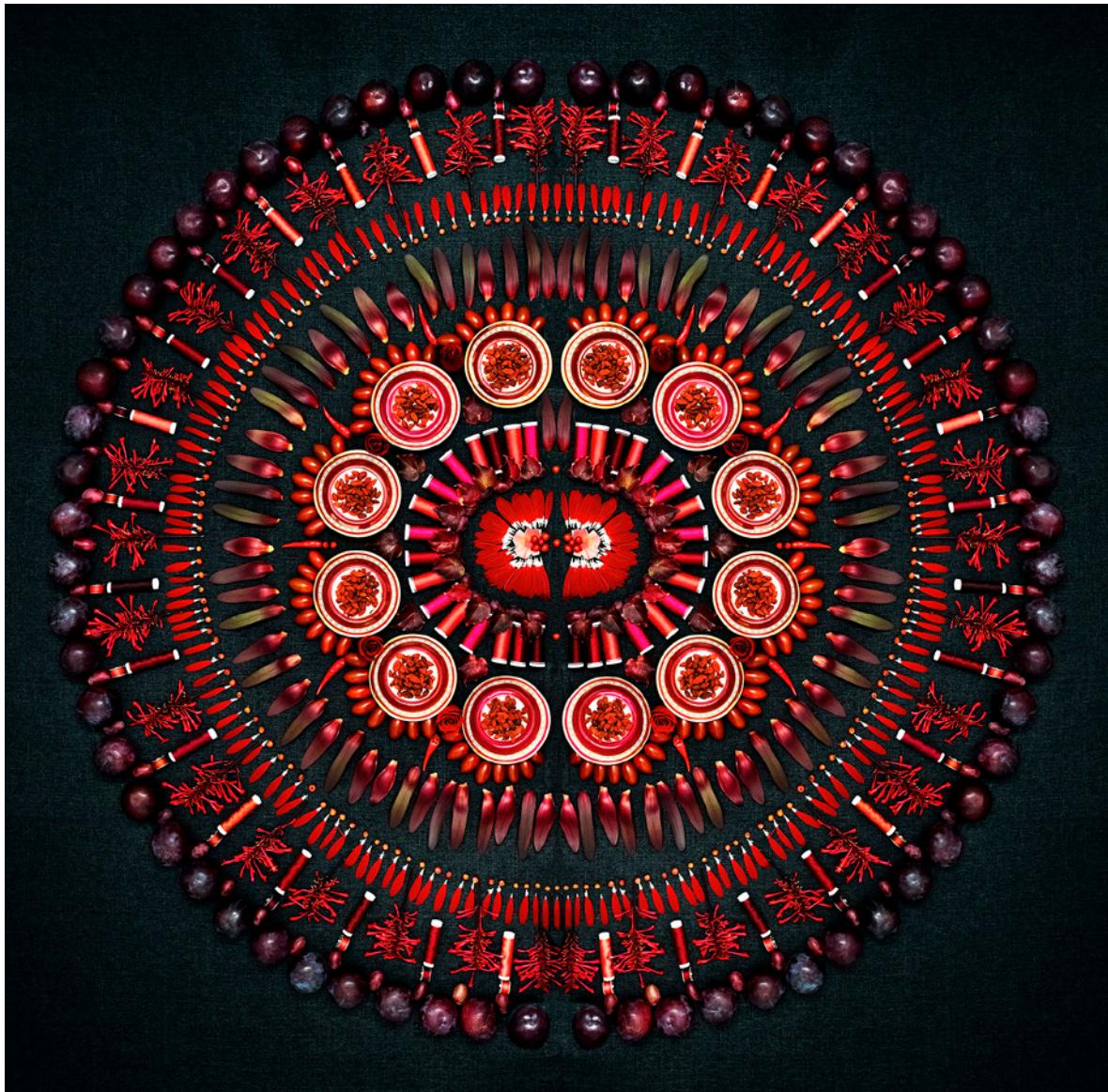


Pantone Rose | 2017

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

95 x 95 cm | Editions 1 – 8

131 x 131 cm | Editions 1 – 8

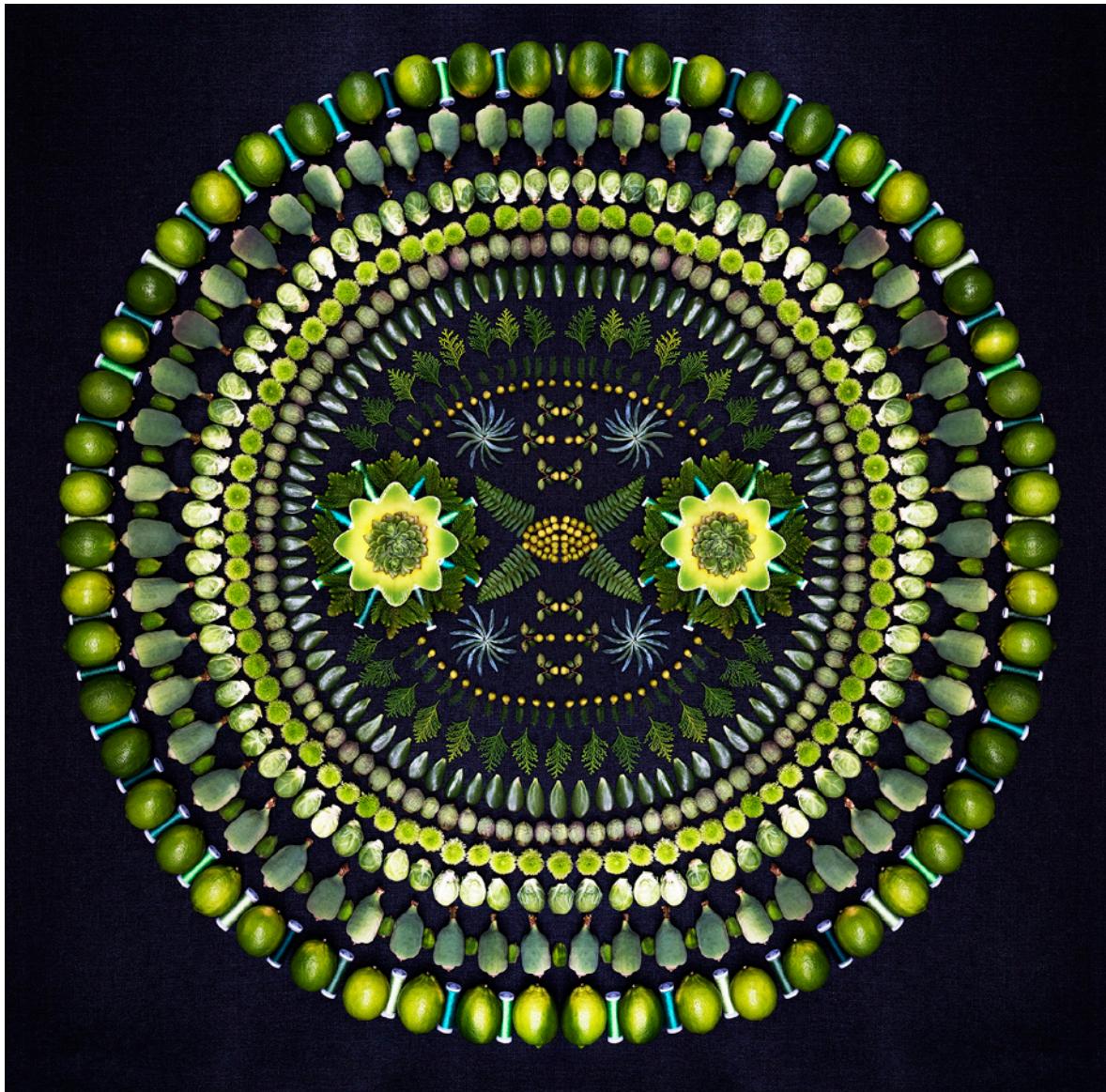


Pantone Rouge | 2017

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

95 x 95 cm | Editions 1 – 8

131 x 131 cm | Editions 1 – 8



Pantone Vert | 2017

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

95 x 95 cm | Editions 1 – 8

131 x 131 cm | Editions 1 – 8



Pantone Violet | 2017

Pigment Print on Cotton Rag

95 x 95 cm | Editions 1 – 8

131 x 131 cm | Editions 1 – 8



Sally McKay

Curriculum Vitae

1978 Born in Melbourne; lives and works in Sydney

Education

1996 -1999 Bachelor of Business Management &
Bachelor of Marketing

1996 -1998 Monash University - Melbourne
Diploma of Photography
Photography Imaging College - Melbourne

Professional Training

2017 Frank Farrugia - Sydney - Advanced Lightroom
2016 Daniel Linnet - Sydney - Still Life
2014 JinkyArt - Melbourne - Creative Collaborations
2012 Dan O'Day Samm Blake - Art & The Heart Program
2011 Audrey Woulard - Sydney - Composing Portraits
2008 Barb Uil - Canberra - Portrait Styling Techniques
2007 Daniel Linnet - Sydney - Speedlight Essentials
2006 Nichole Van Valkenburgh - Sydney - Advanced Lighting
2003 Australian Centre for Photography - Sydney - Film

Solo Exhibitions

2018 The Blind Radius II .M Contemporary – Sydney - NSW
2017 Ballarat International Foto Biennale – Ballarat - VIC
2017 The Blind Radius I .M Contemporary – Sydney - NSW

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When the human eye chances upon a glimpse of harmonious symmetry,
the effect is instant and visceral.

On a deep level, the brain is calibrating what it finds comforting.
It is here, amongst the intricate world of shade, pattern and tone,
that the mesmeric appeal of Sally McKay’s work lies.

”

Clare Caldwell – The Authorial

