

Brontë Naylor  
***COUNTERWEIGHT***

10 March - 15 April 2023



### ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

- **Exhibition Dates:** 10 March - 15 April 2023
  - **Artist Talk:** Saturday 11 March, 4-5pm
  - **Opening Event:** Saturday 11 March, 5-7pm
  - **Exhibition essay text by Emma McLean**
  - **Onespace Gallery Hours:** Tuesday to Friday 10am – 6pm | Saturday 11am – 5pm
  - **Gallery Contact:** (07) 3846 0642 or [info@onespace.com.au](mailto:info@onespace.com.au)
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Onespace warmly invites you to the opening of *COUNTERWEIGHT* by multidisciplinary artist, Brontë Naylor.

Naylor's first solo exhibition with Onespace examines our tolerance for grief and longing, while considering the passing of time, and the unfolding of healing. Through performance and composition, the works layer and distribute 'weight' in different ways, exploring the poignant relationships between humans, objects, and landscape. Comprising paintings and digital prints, and a large-scale work in progress live in the gallery, *COUNTERWEIGHT* balances the aesthetic tensions of sentiment, imagined flashbacks, fast forwards and replays, as a way to hold time within these works.

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Photo: Wednesday Sutherland. Image courtesy of the artist.

Brontë Naylor (b. 1993) is an Australian Visual Artist working across exhibitions, public art, installation, research and community engagement. In 2022, she completed a Bachelor of Creative Arts (Honours) Graduating First Class at University of Southern Queensland, Australia. Collaborations with St+ART India, Sea Walls: Artists for Oceans, First Coat International Art Festival and Big Picture Festival have firmly positioned her as a prominent practitioner within the international public art landscape.

Mixing photography and digital illustration, Naylor has established a signature collage aesthetic and methodology. She employs a considered and respectful approach to the creation of site specific public art, working across three stages: initial research including documentative photography, the conceptualisation of design and rationale and then realised through the act of painting in the public sphere.

### *Holding Time*

Brontë Naylor's artworks evoke jolts of memory that are at once individual and shared. Working at the forefront of public art in Australia, Naylor has created murals of monumental scale that reflect and distil the values of diverse communities across the country. Naylor is not one to shy from admissions of vulnerability or chances at genuine connection. She describes engagement with local communities as the most enjoyable part of the mural painting process, especially the ability to hold space for informal and frank conversations.<sup>1</sup> Informed by early experiences with graffiti artists, her friends, Brontë engages with the socio-political in her own way, and through her own visual language. She often creates her works under the gaze of an impromptu audience, using broad and confident brushstrokes, and always with adrenaline on her side.

In recent years, Naylor's practice has shifted to one which depends more heavily on her studio in Newcastle, on the land of the Awabakal and Worimi people. In a break from mixing large volumes of paint and working on scissor-lifts at staggering heights, she has adjusted to a smaller palette, to controlled gestures, and to moving her body in unfamiliar ways. The result of this considered return to studio practice is a suite of paintings, photographs and installations that speak to questions that have routinely underscored her public-facing works. Naylor's practice is one that unfolds in stages. First, she consults and engages with participants before taking photographs of them. Second, she creates iterative digital collages where she experiments with composition, scale, shape and colour. Finally, once she has completed a collage that feels right, she translates this image to canvas in a method that resembles her mural process: in one confident and direct attempt.

The paintings in this exhibition reference the co-existence of tenderness and hurt, push and pull. *Counterweight\_002* conjures this distinct experience of closeness and resistance. Prior to creating the work, Naylor spoke with two friends who had grown up and matured together for over two decades.

Walking along a Newcastle beach together in 2022, Naylor asked the pair a range of questions that they responded to through collaborative gestures, which she photographed. She was struck by their physical synchronicity and tempo. Mirroring a natural form found on the beach, the duo moved their bodies to create the precarious yet supportive shape that arcs through the centre of this painting. Within the work, we see a wordless answer to Naylor's key question: *Why do you love each other?*

Universal and personal concerns consistently generate friction in Naylor's artworks. In *Foreground and Background*, which are visual inversions of one another, environmental and physical elements converge. In the centre of each picture plane, an anonymous figure is positioned among the tree stumps of a cleared pine forest. Characteristic of many of her paintings, the artist omits the central figure's identity so we may relate to their bodily experience as a priority. The figure balances the weight of a box overhead which, as Naylor explains, contains water that has been brought from a different location. These paintings represent an act of collage in its most destructive sense: the endless removal and replacement of natural features for the purpose of future urban intervention. Drawing on the collage aesthetic, sections of the works are so clearly demarcated that they appear to have been incised or peeled away. These, and other works in the show, contrast a depth of perspective with broad planes of flat colour, inferring a collapsing and fragmentation of time.

Acts of holding, supporting and collectivising are central to Naylor's process and outcomes. Her recent photographic exploration, broadly titled *HORIZON ERASURE*, reveals this impulse. In the Newcastle suburb of Stockton, where this series is based, the relics and rubble of industry are highly visible. She introduces visual markers that are in contrast to the built landscape—a series of sculptural circles that reference the obliteration techniques of the late John Baldessari (1931–2020). Within these photographs, Naylor's friends

and regular collaborators position these 3D components in locations around Stockton. The shapes, which mimic the brilliance of the sun, generate what she describes as temporary “blind spots” upon an already altered landscape. In one work, the group obscures an industrial coal train yard. In another, the circle erases the monolithic lighthouse which was constructed on a sacred traditional site at Nobbys Beach. Naylor’s interventions create a temporary pause in time and reference the longstanding narratives impacting upon this place.

Slippages between what is tangible and what is absent feature strongly in the artworks on display. Through them, Naylor invites us to question perception itself: our ability to understand our relationships with one another, with the environment, and with the truth of living on this land. She suggests that these concerns are entwined and that we engage honestly with our blind spots. Like the flickering of memories, many things that are palpable today are in a state of precarity tomorrow. While it is easy to become overwhelmed by this transience, Naylor leads by example by asking the right questions. She does so with her heart on her sleeve.

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### Emma McLean

Emma McLean is an curator and writer. Her curatorial credits include Assistant Curator, *The National 4* at Carriageworks; Associate Curator at Museum of Brisbane; and Kinnane Endowment Curatorial Intern at the University of Queensland Art Museum.

1. All quotes by the artist are taken from a conversation with the author on 20 February 23.



Image: Brontë Naylor, *Documentation of Horizon Erasure: NORTH HAMILTON TRAIN YARD\_\_\_001*, 2022, 77 x 61cm, Giclée in timber frame, Edition of 3. Image courtesy of the artist.



**Brontë Naylor**  
*Counterweight\_001, 2022*  
Acrylic on canvas, 155 x 145cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Brontë Naylor**  
*Counterweight\_002, 2022*  
Acrylic on canvas, 155 x 145cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Brontë Naylor**  
*Counterweight003, 2022*  
Acrylic on canvas, 110 × 110cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace Gallery.





**Brontë Naylor**  
*Ruins\_001*, 2022  
Acrylic on canvas, 55 × 44cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace Gallery.



**Brontë Naylor**  
*Ruins\_002*, 2022  
Acrylic on canvas, 55 × 44cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace Gallery.



**Brontë Naylor**

*Documentation of Horizon Erasure:*  
*NORTH HAMILTON TRAIN YARD\_\_\_001, 2022*  
Giclée in grey timber frame, 77 × 61cm, edition of 3

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Brontë Naylor**

*Documentation of Horizon Erasure:*  
*TANK TRAPS\_\_\_002, 2022*  
Giclée in grey timber frame, 77 × 61cm, edition of 3

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Brontë Naylor**

*Documentation of Horizon Erasure:  
STOCKTON TENNIS COURT\_\_\_004, 2022*

Giclée in grey timber frame, 77 × 61cm, edition of 3

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Brontë Naylor**

*Documentation of Horizon Erasure:  
STOCKTON BUNKER\_\_\_003, 2022*

Giclée in grey timber frame, 77 × 61cm, edition of 3

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Brontë Naylor**  
*Documentation of Horizon Erasure:*  
*STOCKTON WATCH TOWER\_\_\_005, 2022*  
Giclée in grey timber frame, 77 × 61cm, edition of 3

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Brontë Naylor**  
*Documentation of Horizon Erasure:*  
*SAND DUNE\_\_\_006, 2022*  
Giclée in grey timber frame, 77 × 61cm, edition of 3

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Brontë Naylor**  
*Foreground*, 2019  
Oil on board, 71 x 51cm

Photo: Louis Lim. Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Brontë Naylor**  
*Background*, 2019  
Oil on board, 71 x 51cm

Photo: Louis Lim. Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Brontë Naylor**  
*Rise & Fall*, 2017  
Acrylic on Belgian linen, 41 x 51cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Brontë Naylor**  
*The Conversation*, 2017  
Acrylic on Belgian linen, 30 x 30cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Brontë Naylor**

*[work in progress], 2023*

Acrylic on aluminium panels, 200 x 450cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

The artist is currently working on the painting, live in the gallery, over the course of the week from March 13 - 18. A gallery based version of the practices and processes she usually employs for large scale mural projects. The work will then sit completed as part of the exhibition.

# onespace

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