



Ham Darroch

Fairground

5 – 27 April 2024

Catalogue of Works

onespace

## Ham Darroch

## Fairground

5 – 27 April 2024



Image: Andrew Sikorski. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Born Sydney, Australia 1972. Lives and works in Canberra, Australia.

Ham Darroch is a contemporary visual artist based in Canberra, Australia. He works across a range of media including painting, sculpture, and performance. He holds a Master of Fine Art from the University of New South Wales (2006) and a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Hons) from the Canberra School of Art (1997).

Spanning more than two decades, Darroch's practice strongly reflects on 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism and 21<sup>st</sup> century life, driven by an unwavering intellectual curiosity, rich use of colour and masterful technical ability. His large-scale paintings resonate with the perception of space while his sculptures are created from altered and discarded existing objects, conceptually redirected using optical effects of geometric colour to reveal new meanings, influenced by the vernacular and art history.

Darroch is recognised for his large wall paintings. Since 2015, the artist has realised a number of site-specific wall pieces in Australia, such as Counter Attack (2020). At 12 metres long and 3.5 metres high, Counter Attack is his largest gallery wall painting, produced for the artist's solo exhibition at Canberra's Drill Hall Gallery in that year. In December 2023 Darroch completed a 96-metre public artwork for the green energy company Neoen Pty Ltd on the Capital Battery Project in Canberra.

Darroch's recent solo exhibitions include Uplift at Woollahra Gallery Sydney (2024), Kestrel at Benjamin Parsons Gallery United Kingdom (2022), and Propeller at the Drill Hall Gallery ANU (2020). Darroch is part of several notable collections including the Kerry Stokes Collection, Canberra Museum + Gallery, The Kirkland Collection UK, the Brazilian and Columbian Embassies, Bundanon Trust Collection, and the Bridget Riley Art Foundation. In April 2024 Darroch will present Fairground, his first solo exhibition in Brisbane at Onespace.

@hamdarroch

## ABOUT FAIRGROUND

**Fairground**

5 – 27 April 2024

- **Exhibition Dates:** 5 – 27 April 2024
- **Opening Event:** 6 April 2024, 5pm – 7pm. Artist Talk: 4pm - 5pm
- **Onespace Gallery Hours:** Tuesday to Friday 10am – 6pm | Saturday 11am – 5pm

---

I'm excited by the space between painting and sculpture, figuration and abstraction, in objects literally about time, journey, generations and cycles. Also, the ability of painting to hold focus and create a stillness when everything is moving fast, and how art can transform multiple elements somehow overlapping, towards a feeling of being human and uplifted.

—Ham Darroch, March 2024

Hamilton ('Ham') Darroch is a contemporary artist whose work is a reflection on 20th-century modernism and 21st-century life. His creative output is driven by an unwavering intellectual curiosity, rich use of colour and masterful technical ability informed by a practice that spans more than two decades. His large-scale, site-responsive wall paintings, works on canvas and paper, series of wall-mounted objects, and performative projects are at once conceptually rigorous, lively and uplifting. They feel familiar in that they recall moments of modernist art history, yet they are fresh and full of the potential of a new relationship.

Fairground marks not only Darroch's first exhibition at Onespace but also in Brisbane. This selection of paintings and sculptures derives from the artist's deep interest in the visual tradition of hard-edge abstraction of the 1960s and 70s, and of incorporating a phenomenological sense of dynamism within a pictorial space through geometry, tone, perspective and scale.

Since 2015, the artist has realised a number of site-specific wall paintings in Australia. Painting directly onto the wall is, by now, one of Darroch's great strengths: he's a natural. At 12 metres long and 3.5 metres high, *Counter Attack* (2020) was the largest, made for the artist's solo exhibition at Canberra's Drill Hall Gallery and based on the composition of Paolo Uccello's early Renaissance masterpiece *The Battle of San Romano* (c. 1435–60).

For Cageworks, a group exhibition in Spring 2022 at Canberra Contemporary Art Space themed around John Cage's soundworks, Darroch painted a series of Chambers—rich coloured 'portals' across two walls. The work defied perspective; the apertures seemed to recede into labyrinthine depths. The artist describes them as acoustic, "containing colours which visually sound, advance or recede inside a rhomboid window. They are all intentional members of a group; some are more silent, yet they are all present like musicians patiently awaiting their part to play in the score."<sup>1</sup>

Darroch's most recent wall painting is *Boulevard* (2023), commissioned by Kerry and Christine Stokes for their Sydney residence. Its dynamic trajectory is populated with gently rolling, bumping semi-circles and quadrants. Three white geometric shapes ground the composition as portals of empty space and light. *Boulevard* continues Darroch's interest in pictorial depth, combined with a sense of activation, flow, and the suggestion of crossing. The work resonates with an early work by renowned British artist Bridget Riley, *Remember* (1964), hanging nearby. Darroch has worked as a studio assistant with Riley for almost 20 years; their on-going professional relationship has undoubtedly contributed to his approaches to making art.

## Ham Darroch

## Fairground

5 – 27 April 2024

For Darroch, the act of creation is both conceptual and physical. Making work involves as much thinking with mind/eye/hand aligned, while remaining acutely aware of the space his work occupies. Placement of key motifs is determined through a process based on the dimensions of the artist's body. For example, the fan-shaped motif derives from an ancient unit of measurement known as a 'cubit'; an in-built ruler that extends from the tip of the artist's elbow to the end of his middle finger. He swings a forearm in an arc to create his radiating, signature elements.

The 'portals' in *Boulevard* and *Chambers* were spaced according to the artist's outstretched arms, conforming to his personal measure, as timeless as Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* (c. 1490). This personal scale makes Darroch's paintings both relatable and harmonious, along the lines of the great Renaissance paintings and cities, scaled for human measure.

His paintings on canvas such as *Fairground* (2021), *Mask (Noh)*, *Kestrel* and *Letter* (all 2022) literally sway into being across the surface through line, form and colour, determined by the artist's acute sense of the body's relationship to the pictorial space—"dancing like I know you forever".<sup>2</sup> Their dynamism is further emphasised through tone. Colours push forward or recede, strong or muted, signalling vibrancy or depth. They quicken our senses as we look—and we must look again—to grasp this agile shift and shimmy before us.

Darroch also enjoys repurposing disused objects for artwork. Vintage ping-pong bats, concreter's wooden floats, an overhead light from a pool room and even a mallet head are given new purpose and meaning through the optical effects of colour, geometric configuration and the artist's interest in the vernacular and art history. Ham Darroch's painting *Kestrel* (2022) is subtitled (*dancing like I know you forever*).

A dozen wooden floats—essential tools in the concreter's kit but also simple, beautiful forms—have been transformed by Darroch's geometric ultramarine overpainting on concrete and wood. Installed as a serial assemblage, the visual dynamic of the painted surfaces is intensified by the angle of installation, augmenting the objects' reconceptualisation with renewed context and meaning.

Darroch currently lives and works in Canberra, but for four years he was based in London, and he still travels there often. On a recent visit, he found a familiar street was being repaved. One of the stoneworkers had snapped the handle of his mallet, which, Darroch says, brought much laughter to his co-workers. As the mallet was heading for the skip, the artist intercepted it from one of the paving crew. *Dover Street* (2023) features the rescued mallet head, a new handle and a wooden stool. The artist states:

I love that in failure, the mallet brought fun, the street was coloured by the sound of mallet on stone and laughter, and it became a kind of polysemy object. This work, a ready-made with, of course, a nod to Marcel Duchamp, fits with my series of sculptures titled *Resurface* (2007–9) [produced in London], which were broken shovels and gaff hooks retrieved from the Thames at low tide, given new harmony-coloured handles.<sup>3</sup>

This exhibition of Ham Darroch's new and recent works attests not only to the artist's exceptional practical skills, his mastery with geometry, harmony and colour, but also to the inspiration to be explored in everyday encounters, and the liveliness, lyricism and joy to be experienced in art.

Dr Judith Blackall

1. Ham Darroch, Cageworks exhibition catalogue (Canberra: Canberra Contemporary Art Space), 7, <https://www.ccas.com.au/ccas-lakeside-past/cageworks>.

2. Ham Darroch's painting *Kestrel* (2022) is subtitled (*dancing like I know you forever*).

3. Ham Darroch, statement by the artist posted on Instagram, 24 January 2023, accessed 12 March 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2eMzB0rqQp/>.

**Ham Darroch**

**Fairground**  
5 – 27 April 2024



**Ham Darroch**  
*Fairground*, 2022  
Acrylic on canvas, 198 x 198cm  
\$17,500

Image: Brenton McGeachie. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

**Ham Darroch**

**Fairground**  
5 – 27 April 2024



**Ham Darroch**  
*Kestrel (dancing like I know you forever)*, 2022  
Acrylic on canvas, 137 x 153cm  
\$12,500

Image: Andrew Sikorski. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Ham Darroch**  
*Letter*, 2022  
Acrylic on canvas, 100 x 100cm  
\$8,000

Image: Andrew Sikorski. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

**Ham Darroch**

**Fairground**  
5 – 27 April 2024



**Ham Darroch**

*Mask (Noh), 2022*

Acrylic on canvas, 153 x 137cm

\$12,500

Image: Brenton McGeachie. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

## Ham Darroch

**Fairground**  
5 – 27 April 2024



**Ham Darroch**

*Dover Street, 2024*

Pavement Mallett (London), paint on wooden handle and stool, Dimensions variable

\$5,500

Image: Andrew Sikorski. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Ham Darroch**

**Fairground**  
5 – 27 April 2024



(Detail)

**Ham Darroch**

*Floats (12 floats), 2024*

Acrylic and concrete on wood, dimensions variable  
\$2,100 (sold as triptych), \$8,400 (total of 12)

Image: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

**Ham Darroch**

**Fairground**  
5 – 27 April 2024



**Ham Darroch**

*Glass (diptych), 2024*

Gouache on vintage bats, 27 x 34cm

\$1,300

Image: Rob Little. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

## Ham Darroch

**Fairground**  
5 – 27 April 2024



**Ham Darroch**  
*Prismatic, 2020*  
Gouache on vintage bats, 27 x 34 x 2cm  
\$1,300

Image: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



**Ham Darroch**  
*Unanswered mail, 2020*  
Gouache on vintage bat, 42 x 18 x 3cm  
\$850 **SOLD**

Image: Andrew Sikorski. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace

**Ham Darroch**

**Fairground**  
5 – 27 April 2024



**Ham Darroch**

*Paris (triptych)*, 2020

Gouache on vintage bats, 27 x 48 x 2cm

\$1,300

Image: Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

**Ham Darroch**

**Fairground**  
5 – 27 April 2024



**Ham Darroch**

*Happy Hour, 2020*

Paint on billiard lamp shape, 180 x 50 x 30cm

\$8,500

Image: Rob Little. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

## *Ham Darroch – Past Wall Paintings*

***Fairground***  
5 – 27 April 2024



Ham Darroch, *Counter Attack*, 2020, Acrylic wall painting, dimensions variable.

Image: David Paterson. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Ham Darroch's iconic wall paintings are available for commission. Contact Onespace for further information.

## Ham Darroch – Past Wall Paintings

**Fairground**  
5 – 27 April 2024



Ham Darroch, *Chambers*, 2022, wall painting, dimensions variable.

Image: Brenton McGeachie. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

*Director, John Stafford: john@onespace.com.au*  
*Director, Jodie Cox: jodie@onespace.com.au*  
*Gallery Assistant, Demi Conrad: demi@onespace.com.au*

*Onespace Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am – 5pm | Saturday 12pm – 4pm*

*onespace.com.au*  
*@onespace\_au*

### ***Dr. Judith Blackall***

*Judith Blackall is an independent writer and curator based on the NSW south coast. She was previously Curator at the National Art School Gallery and Head of Artistic Programs at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art Australia.*

---

*Onespace Gallery is a Brisbane gallery that presents and sells contemporary art, including work by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.*

*We curate an exhibition program exploring diverse themes and media. We show emerging, mid-career and established artists whose works inform, stimulate and challenge. Onespace welcomes you to engage with the artists and artworks we exhibit.*

*Located in Brisbane's West End, we are surrounded by the dynamic buzz of the river end of the West End peninsula. This area is a thriving artistic axis stretching from QAGOMA along Montague Road.*

Kindly supported by

