



onespace

Ham Darroch

Pause for a Human

29 May – 4 July 2026

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Exhibition Dates: 29 May – 4 July 2026
Opening Event: Saturday 30 May, 5 – 7pm | Artist Talk, 4 – 5pm
Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Friday, 10am – 5pm, Saturday 12pm – 5pm

Artist Statement

This current series of paintings takes its beginning with human proportions. Like many of my works, it often starts with thinking about what it means to be human - imbuing the works with considerations of empathy, simplicity and sameness. These qualities provide pathways to share concepts and visual metaphors through proportion, perception, inclusion, knowledge and philosophical beliefs. It takes time for works to develop, to discuss things, and to find the right moment for works to be shared. Some of these paintings were tacked to the wall for a year or more. I left them and came back armed with observations and experiences of other places, paintings and people. They have now made their way to a space together where they feel open, allowing us to pause, take time to look at, and hopefully enjoy.



Ham Darroch, *Silvered Landscape*, 2025. Gouache on vintage bats, 30 x 30 x 4 cm. Photo: Rhianna Phillips Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Photo: 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 three decades, Darroch's practice strongly reflects on 20th century modernism and 21st 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 the ANU Drill Hall Gallery and *Tonic* (2026) a 53-meter mural for the National Gallery of Australia.

Darroch's recent solo exhibitions include *Harp Frequency* (2026) in Canberra at Civic Bureau, *Fairground*, (2024) in Brisbane at Onespace, *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 major collections in Australia; Artbank, QAGOMA, Canberra Museum + Gallery, the Kerry Stokes Collection, and the Bundanon Trust Collection, and internationally in the Bridget Riley Art Foundation (UK), The Kirkland Collection (UK), the Brazilian and Columbian Embassies.

There is something quietly defiant about the title of Hamilton (Ham) Darroch's new exhibition. We live in a moment when the pace of the world seems to outrun our ability to make sense of it, conflict is waged overnight, certainties are upended, and technology is rapidly reshaping our roles and relationships to the world. Against all this, *Pause for a Human* doesn't argue or resist but rather holds a door open, allowing time and space to breathe. This gesture – which is unhurried, generous, full of possibility – is central to everything Darroch makes.

Darroch comes from a family of makers. The artist recalls his grandfather's workshop, where time was spent creating, repairing, and learning the satisfaction of understanding how things hold together – and what happens when they don't. That sensibility of being hands-on, curious, and grounded has never left him.

It surfaces in one of the most enduring throughlines of his practice: the 'bat' works. These vintage ping-pong bats, which Darroch picked up and collected during his travels because of their transportability and their intimate scale, become a contained site where the artist's interest in everyday ephemera and his painting practice meet in open conversation. Some pay homage to his art historical heroes – Hilma af Klint, Matisse, the Russian Constructivists, Hokusai – while others are named after moments in everyday life, like Ken's Roses, the colour relational to his Canberra neighbour's well-loved roses. In his works, high and low, sacred and everyday come together and are treated with the same reverence and importance. The bat works can be encountered singularly, in clusters, or as full installations. Each has a presence and humanity, which is perhaps why they continue to appear throughout his practice.

Darroch's initial training as a sculptor shows: built into all of his works is a keen awareness of the body in relation to scale, to physical space, to what a human form can reach and inhabit. Performance is also a recurring thread, with durational works and actions involving physical exertion, carrying and pulling objects and loads through landscapes and cityscapes. In these works, the body is tested, extended, made aware of itself. That performative impulse of action, experience, and consequence are intrinsic to Darroch's paintings.

At the centre of Darroch's practice is the cubit, an ancient unit of measurement running from one's elbow to the tip of their middle finger, which was used by the Ancient Egyptians, the Babylonians, and even referenced in the Bible. The cubit is fundamental to how we understand the world; at one time, it was the measure of economy, trade, engineering, and roads, a measurement that could be multiplied or divided to suit any purpose. For Darroch, it is his grandfather's box ruler made universal: a grounding for his personal, philosophical, and artistic framework that is implicit in all he does. Darroch's use of the cubit generates radiating arcs and sawtooth shapes that recur and reinvent themselves across varying bodies of work. The cubit is an invisible sculptural intervention, a shared language by which all the works are connected. The body is not incidental here but embedded as the first tool, the original measure, and the thing all else is scaled to.

This human calibration gives the work a quality that is easy to feel before it is easy to explain. Darroch has described abstraction as "a door left open to perception – a way to think about things in a non-linear way". He offers the example of a staircase: "you can ascend, descend, pause and make it a journey, or even perhaps turn it into a motif". That openness is not evasion but a way of viewing multiple possibilities and contending with various interpretations.

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In our discussions on his work, he noted that he pours any number of things into a work – himself, other artists, colour, history, associations, ideas. In the act of combining these elements and creating the works, they become something entirely independent and new, free from any fixed meaning. His paintings are informed by a deep understanding and appreciation of artists and art history, including the history of colour and technology and the way these have shaped what painters can and have done over time. Recently, Darroch spent an extended period of time at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, where he found himself captivated by Honoré Daumier's *The Laundress* (1863), not for the commentary on social and political life Daumier is known for, but for the painting itself, and in particular for his use of Payne's grey. This colour started being manufactured in the late 1700s and was used widely by the Impressionists, including Paul Cézanne. It is, as Darroch says, the kind of colour that makes atmosphere and space. It appears in Darroch's new exhibition *Pause for a Human*, carrying that art historical weight quietly, as one element among many that is then transformed into something new.

An exploration of colour is core to *Pause for a Human*. In *Basket of Flowers* (2023), joyful and bright punctuations of purple land across the surface with confidence, used to balance the use of orange, with brown umber grounding the work and the moments of red allowed to sing. The palette of this work carries echoes of af Klint, though Darroch notes that the work is not spiritual in any traditional sense. Nevertheless, he is keenly aware that all colours carry a lived code of personal, cultural, and social associations that exist whether or not they are intended, and this work hums with them. Darroch's pointy sawtooth motif, which has appeared in previous bodies of work, softens here into something rounder, more generous, signifying a new development in his visual language.

and peach are layered beneath the surface, the whole framed in burnt umber. Gradients of circular colour in bright blue and pink press toward the satisfaction of a complete harmonious circle but withhold it. One small full circle of indigo anchors the work at the bottom centre, a single point of rest in a composition that refuses to settle.

The exhibition's namesake work, *Pause for a Human* (2025), is one of the most impactful paintings in the show. Darroch in his work is endlessly intrigued by colour. It is, for him, a sacred language and here that specificity is at its most considered. The dark colour in this work is indigo, not black. The green is the closest he has come to an Australian bush green, conceptually linked to landscape and arriving from nature rather than art history. Payne's grey anchors the tonal structure, while layers of different grey tones force the eye to move around; it cannot rest, as it is thrown between advancing and receding forms simultaneously. Between the complementary and high-contrast blue and the orange, there is also a filmic quality. Bands of solid colour charge across the surface, jostling inward at angles rather than framing the edges. More than any other work here, it feels like architecture: forms cantilevered, windows opening, doors closing. Smaller spheres act as accents and anchoring points, marking the shift between planes. Darroch is acutely aware of how we look and cleverly deploys both obstacles and points of interest to move us through the composition. There is a puzzle in all of the works, he says. This one offers no easy solution.

Finally, there is *Repetition Is the Editor* (2026). Here, the curved version of the sawtooth returns in a new way, dividing forms into quadrants of colour with a wavy or scalloped edge, whereas in other forms they are cleaved open with angles of light, like shards beaming through half-open blinds. Turquoise and orange charge against each other energetically, with burgundy and green balancing the work. One motif is mathematically exacting: one-sixth of a cubit within the shape of a circle. Even though moments in the work are precise, it is still ultimately open to interpretation. Darroch asks of the work: “Is it a mirror looking back on itself?”

Darroch observes that there is always a work in a show that feels as if it is the bridge to the next idea. *Repetition Is the Editor* feels like that bridge, an unanswered question that opens outward. The artist likes to work his way into a puzzle and then work his way out. Ultimately, this is what this exhibition offers its viewers – not resolution, but rather the pleasure of looking, the questions worth asking, and the rare, necessary, space in which to ask them.

Yvette Dal Pozzo

Ham Darroch

Pause for a Human

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Ham Darroch

Pause for a Human, 2025

Acrylic on canvas, 204 x 185cm

\$30,000

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



Ham Darroch

Repetition is the editor, 2026

Acrylic on canvas, 168 x 198cm

\$25,000

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



Ham Darroch

Basket of Flowers, 2023

Acrylic on canvas, 198 x 198cm

\$25,000

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

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Ham Darroch

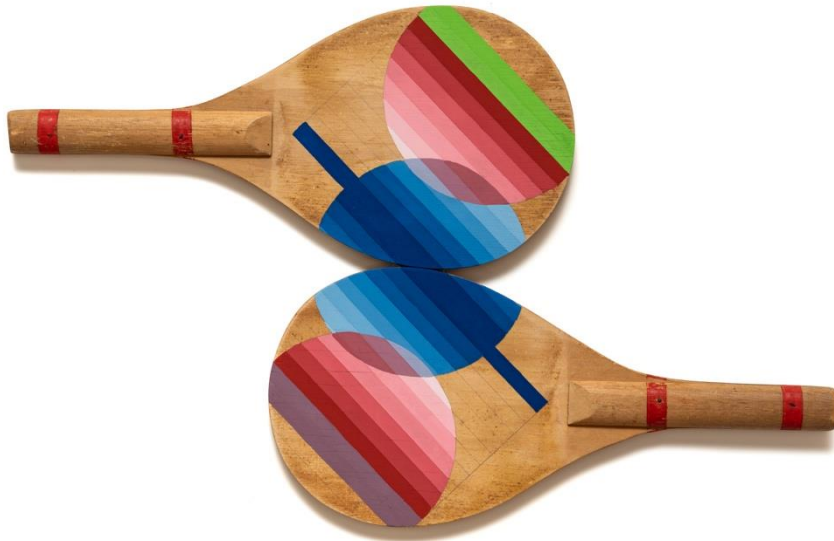
Green Sage, 2025

Acrylic on canvas, 153 x 122cm

\$15,000

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

Ham Darroch



Ham Darroch

Bathed in the Moonlight, 2026

Gouache on vintage bats, 34 x 53cm

\$1,800

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

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Silvered Landscape, 2025

Gouache on vintage bats, 30 x 30 x 4cm

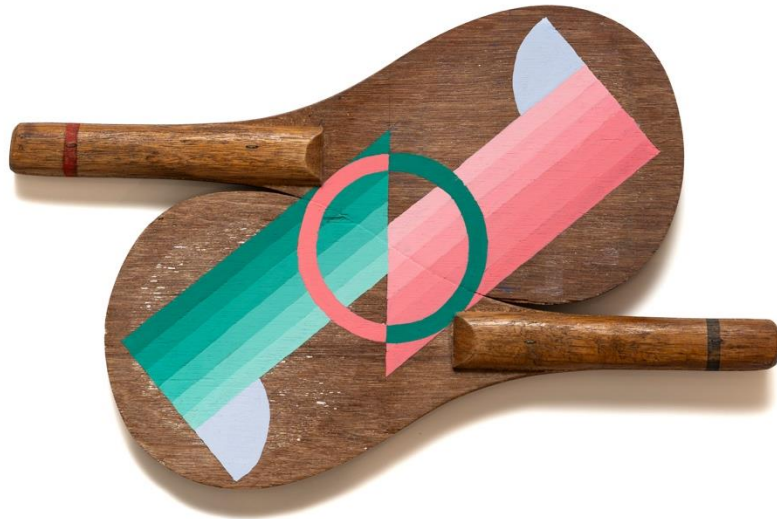
\$1,800

Photo: Rhianna Phillips. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

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Ham Darroch
Swings, 2025

Gouache on vintage bats, 44 x 30cm

\$1,600

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Ham Darroch
Anecdote, 2025

Gouache on vintage bats, 30 x 45 x 4cm

\$1,600

Photo: Rhianna Phillips. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Ham Darroch
Alphabet, 2025

Gouache on vintage bats, 35 x 50 x 4cm

\$1,600

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Ham Darroch
Star wheel, 2025

Gouache on vintage bats, 37 x 22cm

\$850

Photo: Rhianna Phillips. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Ham Darroch
Altes, 2023

Gouache on vintage bats, 25 x 15 x 2cm

\$750

Photo: Rhianna Phillips. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

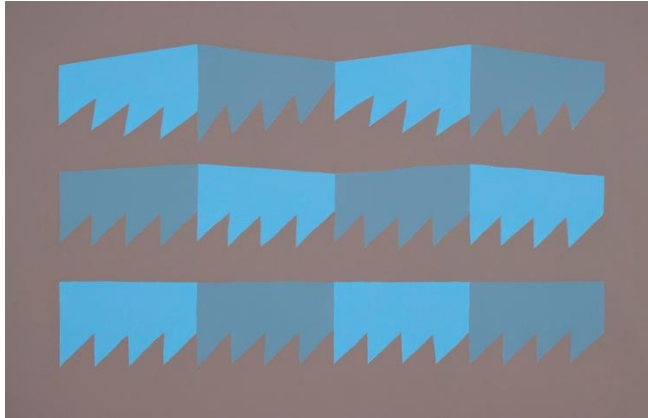


Ham Darroch
Untitled, 2021

Gouache on vintage bats, 35 x 15 x 3cm

\$750

Photo: Rhianna Phillips. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

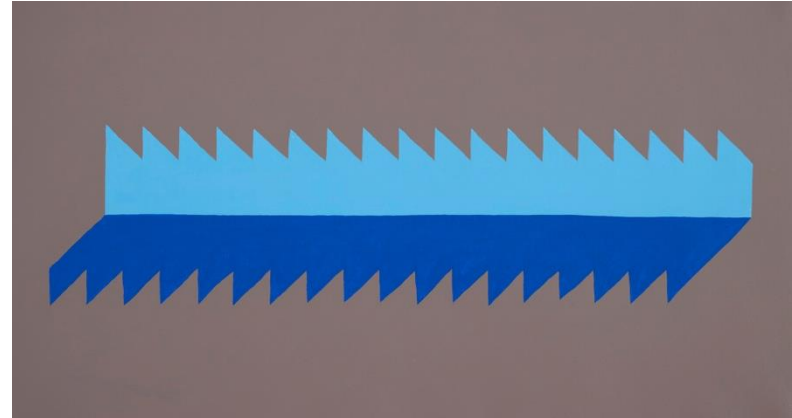


Ham Darroch
Mudkark, 2024

Acrylic on canvas, 39 x 63cm

\$3,000

Photo: Andrew Sikorski. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace

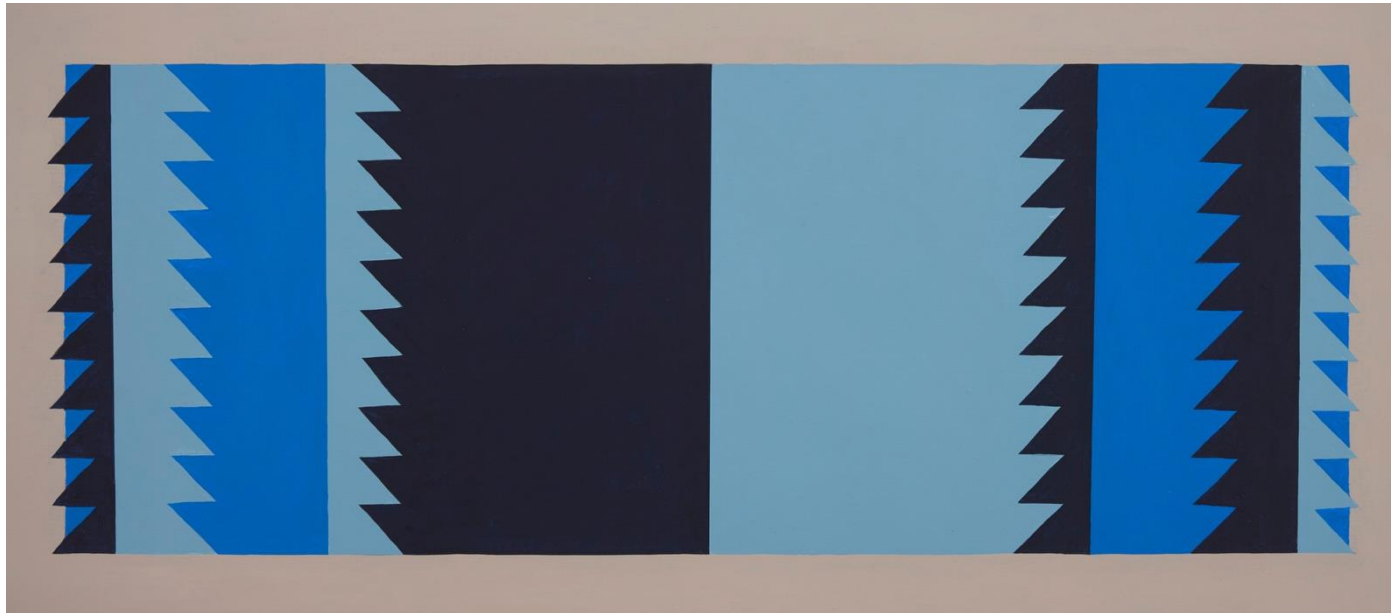


Ham Darroch
Pavillion (after Ed), 2024

Acrylic on canvas, 39 x 72cm

\$3,000

Photo: Andrew Sikorski. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace



Ham Darroch

Moon Lander, 2024

Acrylic on canvas, 43 x 102cm

\$3,000

Photo: Andrew Sikorski. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace

Onespace is a Brisbane-based 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, showcasing emerging, mid-career and established artists whose works inform, stimulate and challenge. Onespace welcomes you to engage with the artists and artworks we exhibit.

Onespace is uniquely located adjacent to Maiwar (Brisbane river) beneath the Spice Apartments near the Go Between Bridge in South Brisbane. We are proudly surrounded by the dynamic buzz of the Queensland cultural precinct that is significant to this area of Brisbane.

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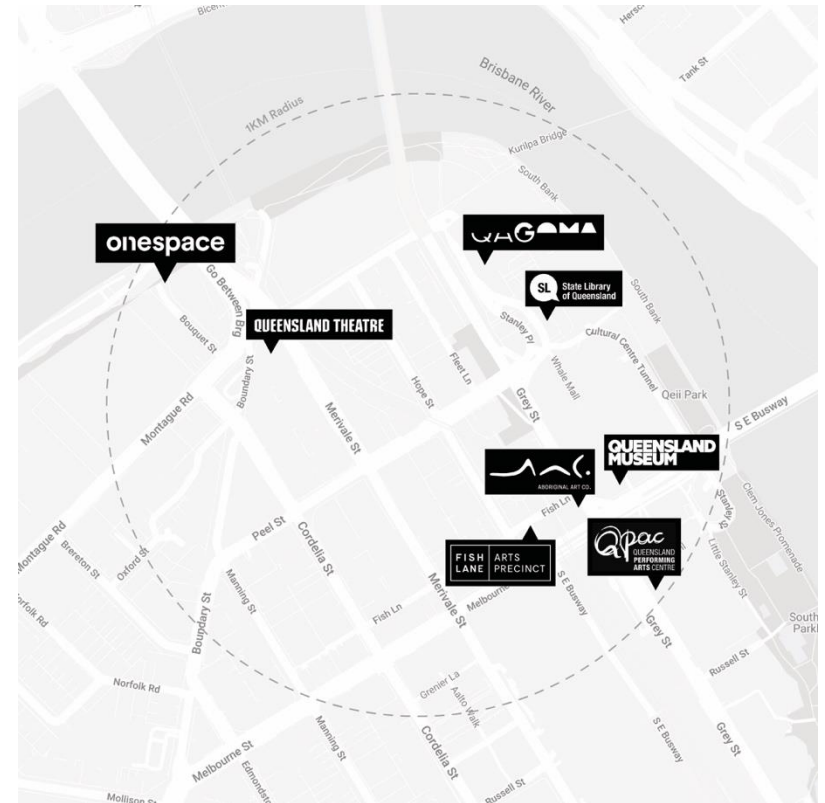
onespace.com.au

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Onespace Gallery Hours:

Tuesday to Friday 10am – 5pm, Saturday 12pm – 5pm

25A Bouquet Street, South Brisbane Q 4101 Australia



Onespace acknowledges the traditional custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters, culture and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.