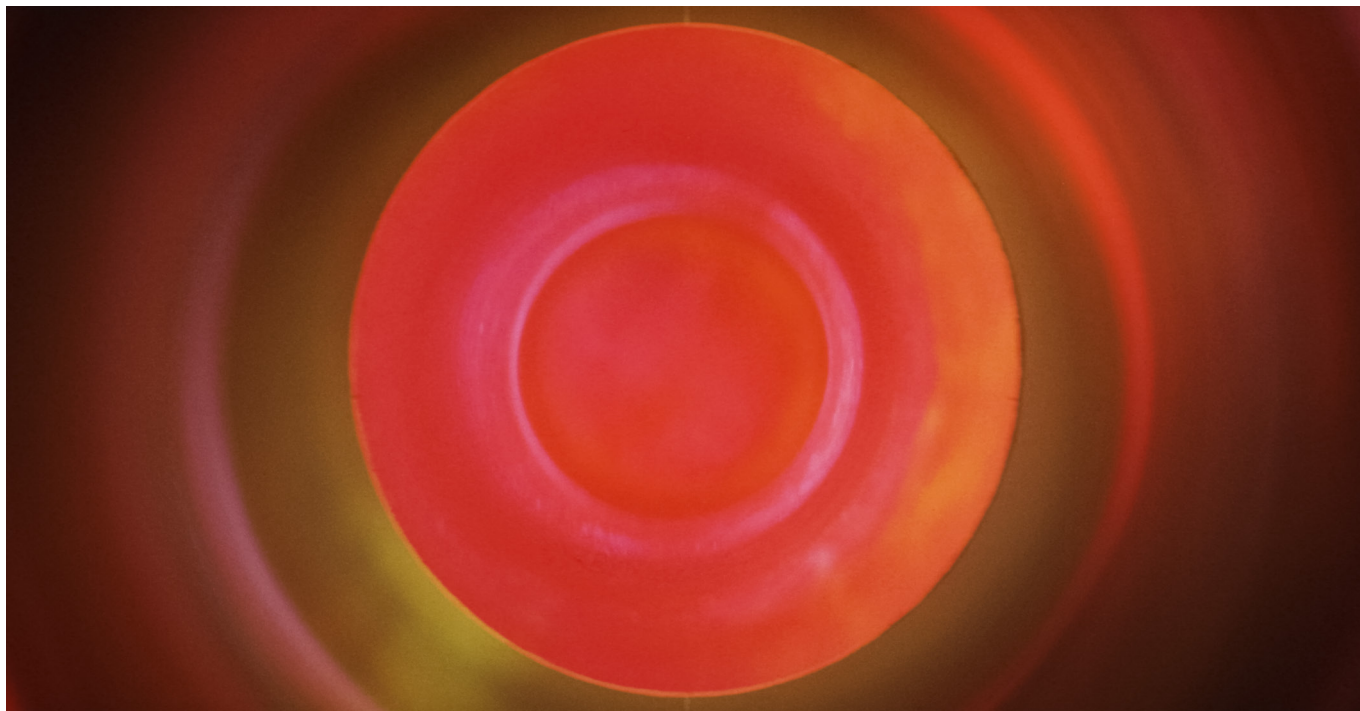


M C Media Release A



***Tacita Dean* opens at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, the largest presentation of the acclaimed international artist's work in the Southern Hemisphere**

Tacita Dean, *Paradise* (film still), 2021, with music *Paradiso* by Thomas Adès, 35mm colour anamorphic film, optical sound, image courtesy the artist, Frith Street Gallery, London and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris and Los Angeles, © the artist

[8 December 2023, Sydney] The Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA Australia) today opened *Tacita Dean*, its major summer exhibition, featuring the work of one of the most important living artists of our times. Presented as part of the Sydney International Art Series 2023/2024, this Sydney exclusive exhibition brings together significant works created by Dean over the past decade and is the most important survey of the artist's work to be presented in the Southern Hemisphere.

Based between Berlin and LA, Tacita Dean (b. 1965, Canterbury, UK) is renowned for her compelling works in wide-ranging mediums including film, photography, sound, installation, drawing, printmaking and collage. Engaging with themes of landscape, history, mortality, entropy and the passage of time, Dean's extraordinary art reflects her sensitivity to and wonder at natural phenomena, her sustained exploration of the processes of making, and deeply felt empathy for a world in flux.

In an era in which digital technology has become the mainstay of so much of our lives, Dean's use of photochemical film as one of her principal mediums is especially relevant. Dean has said: 'My relationship to film begins at that moment of shooting and ends in the moment of projection. Along the way, there are several stages of magical transformation that imbue the work with varying layers of intensity. This is why the film image is different from the digital image: it is not only emulsion versus pixels, or light versus electronics, but something deeper – something to do with poetry.'

Curated by MCA Director Suzanne Cotter, Senior Curator Exhibitions Jane Devery, and Curator Megan Robson, the exhibition *Tacita Dean* is composed of inter-related bodies of work made

around the world, from Berlin to Los Angeles, Japan and Australia. It includes new and recent films, monumental chalkboard drawings, sensuous photographic and print series, and early ephemera works exhibited for the first time.

MCA Director Suzanne Cotter, highlights the significance of Dean's work, noting 'Tacita Dean is undoubtedly one of our greatest living artists and an artist that truly speaks to our contemporary moment. Aesthetically seductive and scintillating in its intelligence, her work is a profound and poetic response to the world as visual sensation and as a metaphor for time and the interconnectedness of people, places and things. We are excited and honoured to be presenting this exhibition to a broad public in Australia. To be able to present the work of one of the most inspiring living artists of the 21st century at the same time as the work of Louise Bourgeois, one of the great artists of the 20th Century, is being presented at the Art Gallery of New South Wales is a momentous occasion for residents and visitors to New South Wales this summer.'

Tacita Dean, *Geography Biography*, 2023, installation view, Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection, 2023, 35mm portrait format anamorphic film diptych, colour with black and white, silent, image courtesy Pinault Collection, © Tadao Ando Architect & Associates, Niney et Marca Architectes, agence Pierre-Antoine Gatier, photograph: Aurélien Mole

Exhibition highlights:



Premiering in Australia is the major new film installation, *Geography Biography* (2023), direct from its debut at the Bourse de Commerce – Pinault Collection in Paris. Dean's most biographical work to date, the 35mm diptych reflects the artist's relationship to the world through her 'cutting room floor', incorporating outtakes from her 16mm films and her early Super and standard 8mm films, to form what she calls an 'accidental self-portrait'.

MCA Australia also premieres Dean's new film, *Claes Oldenburg draws Blueberry Pie* (2023), depicting the American Pop artist Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929 – d. 2022) drawing in his Manhattan studio. Oldenburg, in Dean's words, was a 'virtuoso draughtsman' drawing 'fluid, wry, brilliant, funny' images that often referenced his giant public sculptures.

Exhibited together for the first time are Dean's monumental chalk on blackboard drawings, *The Wreck of Hope* (2022) and *Chalk Fall* (2018). Dean's use of chalk – an unfixed medium – mirrors the fragility of the landscapes she portrays, which are increasingly threatened by our climate emergency. Depicting a melting glacier, *The Wreck of Hope*, takes its title from a famous painting of the same name by the German Romantic landscape painter Casper David Friedrich (b. 1774 – d. 1840). The majestic cliff in *Chalk Fall* recalls England's iconic White Cliffs of Dover, a landscape steeped in wartime notions of nationhood and the home front. Dean's cliffs, created during the turbulence of Brexit, evoke geopolitical and environmental collapse.

Sakura (Jindai II) (2023), another standout work, is a large-scale photograph that Dean has overdrawn in pencil, of the Jindai-Zakura, a rare cherry blossom tree in Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan. With an estimated age of 2000 years, this tree is thought to be the oldest of its kind. Its branches are supported by wooden crutches, a practice intended to extend its life. Dean's meticulous embellishment of the tree's branches give it an otherworldly quality and accentuates the inherent duality of nature as a powerful yet vulnerable entity.



Tacita Dean, *Small Sakura Study (Jindai II)*, 2023, coloured pencil on handprinted Foma matte silver gelatin photograph mounted on paper, image courtesy the artist, Frith Street Gallery, London and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris and Los Angeles © the artist, photograph: Simon Hanzer

A special feature of the MCA Australia exhibition is a series of works related to Dean's commissioned set designs and costumes for the acclaimed ballet, *The Dante Project* (2021) inspired by Dante Alighieri's narrative poem *The Divine Comedy* (1321), which premiered at the Royal Opera House, London. A collaboration between Dean, the choreographer Wayne McGregor and composer Thomas Adès, the ballet follows Dante's journey through the three realms of the afterlife – Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso. Central to this presentation is *Paradise* (2021), the film shown in the ballet's final act. Presented in an architecturally designed pavilion, *Paradise* is a 35mm Cinemascope abstract film that references the circular planetary motifs that feature throughout Dante's poem. The vibrant colour palette is inspired by the work of artist William Blake (1757–1827) and the film's soundtrack is a MIDI digital simulation of Adès's composition *Paradiso*.

One Hundred and Fifty Years of Painting (2021) is a filmed conversation between the painters Luchita Hurtado (b. 1920 – d. 2020) and Julie Mehretu (b. 1970), and one of the most recent works in Dean's ongoing acclaimed series of film portraits. Realising that Hurtado and Mehretu shared a birthday precisely five decades apart, a serendipitous connection that lends the work its title, Dean filmed the two artists in dialogue over the course of a day in Hurtado's Santa Monica apartment in 2020, only months before Hurtado would have celebrated her one hundredth birthday. In this intimate and illuminating film, the two women discuss their respective artistic practices and the medium of painting, as well as their lives and personal trajectories.

Another film highlight is Dean's *Event for a Stage* (2015), described as a live theatrical happening that inscribes time in the space of a performance, the film is a portrait of an 'actor' on stage. Originally commissioned by the 19th Biennale of Sydney, Dean developed the work to be realised across three mediums: theatre, radio and film. Over four nights in May 2014, Dean filmed Stephen Dillane's as 'the actor' in front of a live audience, using two 16mm cameras as part of the event. Each performance was unique and the script included passages from Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* (c.1610–11) and Heinrich von Kleist's essay *On the Marionette Theatre* (1810).

The MCA Australia exhibition also delves into Dean's career-long observation of natural phenomena. Clouds which are a recurring motif in the artist's work, appearing in her films, drawings, photographs and prints. The atmospheric hand-drawn lithographs, *LA Exuberance* (2016) and *LA Magic Hour* (2021), were inspired by the artist's response to the luminous skies in Los Angeles and made in collaboration with master printers Gemini G.E.L. in Los Angeles.



Tacita Dean, *LA Magic Hour*, 2021, installation view, Gemini G-E-L, Los Angeles, 2022, 15 hand-drawn, multi-colour blend lithographs, Published by Gemini G-E-L, Los Angeles, image courtesy the artist, Frith Street Gallery, London and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, Paris and Los Angeles © the artist

Sydney International Art Series 2023 – 2024

Tacita Dean is one of three exhibitions making up the Sydney International Art Series 2023 – 2024. Now in its fifteenth year, this initiative supported by the NSW Government through its tourism and major events agency Destination NSW, brings the works of internationally renowned artists exclusively to Sydney to show at MCA Australia and the Art Gallery of NSW. In Summer 2023 – 2024, *Tacita Dean* will be presented at MCA Australia alongside *Louise Bourgeois: Has the Day Invaded the Night or Has the Night Invaded the Day?* and *Kandinsky* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

NSW Minister for Arts and Minister for Jobs and Tourism, John Graham said, 'Tacita Dean, Louise Bourgeois and Wassily Kandinsky are three highly influential international artists. It will be an exciting opportunity for local and visiting audiences to engage with the work of these trailblazing figures in Sydney this summer. Sydney International Arts Series is part of why NSW can boast being home to Australia's creative capital and increasingly, a global hub for cultural experiences.'

Public programs

A series of public talks and programs will accompany the exhibition *Tacita Dean*, including:

In Conversation: Tacita Dean and Suzanne Cotter

Tacita Dean discusses her acclaimed body of work with MCA Director Suzanne Cotter.
\$32, including exhibition entry, Saturday 9 December, 2–3pm

Curator Talks: Tacita Dean

Join an MCA curator for an in-depth look at Tacita Dean's work and processes.
Free with exhibition ticket, Sunday 17 December 2023, Sunday 28 February 2024, Sunday 4 February 2024 & Sunday 11 February 2024, 2 – 2.30pm

Cross-disciplinary talks

Speakers from different fields provide interesting lenses through which to view Tacita Dean's body of work.

Adam Mada: Phenomena

Adam Mada is a magician and entertainer. Join him for a discussion about the world of magic and unexplained phenomena, key themes in Tacita Dean's work.
Free with exhibition ticket, Sunday 14 January, 12pm

Ann McGrath: Deep time

Ann McGrath is the W.K. Hancock Professor of History at the Australian National University and the Director of its Research Centre for History. She will discuss the concept of deep time in relation to works by Tacita Dean.
Free with exhibition ticket. Sunday 18 February, 12pm

Danielle Celermajer: More than Human

Danielle Celermajer is a Professor of Sociology and Criminology at the University of Sydney, Deputy Director of the Sydney Environment Institute and lead of the Multispecies Justice project. She discusses the impact humans have had on the climate and multispecies. Free with exhibition ticket. Sunday 25 February, 12pm

Family Space: Play with Chance

Inviting families with children of all ages to explore the themes of Tacita Dean's work through the medium of clay.

Free, drop in. Weekends, 10am–4pm & 20 December 2023– 29 January 2024, 10am–4pm

Artist Sessions: Lithography with Sarah Plummer

Join collaborative printer Sarah Plummer for a session on lithography. Plummer will discuss the production of Tacita Dean's *LA Magic Hour* (2021), for which she was editing printer, followed by a demonstration of the lithographic process itself.

\$45, Saturday 16 December, 1–4pm

Artist Sessions: Analogue Photography with Amanda Williams

Join photo media artist Amanda Williams for a session on analogue photography, key to Tacita Dean's own practice.

\$45, Saturday 17 February 2024, 1–4pm

Sunday Studio

A relaxed monthly workshop series about art-making materials, techniques and processes. Led by our MCA Artist Educator team, participants are encouraged to bring a friend and get their hands dirty.

\$45, Sunday 21 January 2024 & Sunday 18 February 2024, 2–4pm

Artist book available

Tacita Dean: Geography Biography is an artist book published on the occasion of Tacita Dean at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia. Dean has described *Geography Biography* (2023), the 35mm film diptych included in the exhibition, as 'an accidental self-portrait'. This accompanying publication, made by the artist and designer Martyn Ridgewell, is a compelling record of her life and art practice. Told in the artist's voice and 'through the traces that fill my life' it presents Dean's journey from art school to becoming one of the most important living artists of our time. \$49.95. Softcover, 184pp.

Tacita Dean is presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia until 3 March 2024.

The exhibition is ticketed. For details visit: mca.com.au

About the Artist

Tacita Dean is a British European artist born in 1965 in Canterbury, UK. She lives and works in Berlin and Los Angeles. Since the early 1990s, Dean has exhibited widely in exhibitions and biennales internationally. Her work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at major institutions and in 2018, the exhibitions *LANDSCAPE*, *PORTRAIT* and *STILL LIFE* took place simultaneously as part of a trilogy across three London museums: Royal Academy of Arts, National Portrait Gallery and the National Gallery. Dean was nominated for the Turner Prize in 1998 and she has been the recipient of numerous prizes including the Sixth Benesse Prize at the 51st Venice Biennale in 2005, the Hugo Boss Prize at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2006, and the Kurt Schwitters Prize in 2009. In 2011, Dean was commissioned to produce the monumental work *FILM* for the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern, London, which was also the start of her high-profile campaign to protect and preserve photochemical film. In 2014–15 she was the Artist in Residence at the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

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