

David Griggs

Exchanging Culture For Lavender

PIERMARQ*



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

David Griggs (b. 1975, Sydney) is a prominent Australian contemporary artist known for his provocative and politically charged works that span painting, photography, video, and installation. His art delves into themes of social injustice, marginalisation, and the human condition, often drawing from his experiences in both Australia and the Philippines.

Griggs earned a Bachelor of Visual Art (Painting) from Sydney College of the Arts in 1999 and a Master of Fine Arts (Sculpture) from UNSW Art & Design in 2007. His early exposure to global socio-political issues began at 18 when he documented poverty in India and Nepal for an underground newspaper. This commitment to highlighting societal undercurrents continued with his time spent with refugees on the Thai-Burmese border. A pivotal moment in his career was a 2005 residency in Manila, which deeply influenced his artistic direction. In Manila, Griggs immersed himself in the city's vibrant yet chaotic culture, collaborating with local banner painters to create large-scale works that juxtapose commercial aesthetics with subversive imagery.

Griggs's work is characterised by its anarchic energy and bold use of colour, often incorporating elements like tattooed skeletons, religious iconography, and references to popular culture. His style challenges viewers to confront uncomfortable truths about society and themselves.



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY (cont.)

Throughout his career, Griggs has exhibited extensively across Australia and internationally, including notable exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Heide Museum of Modern Art, The Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. His 2017–2019 touring survey exhibition, “Between Nature and Sin,” showcased his exploration of the darker aspects of human nature and society.

Griggs has been a finalist in the Archibald Prize ten times, most recently in 2024 with his portrait of artist Shaun Gladwell. His works are held in major public collections, including the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Brisbane, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA), Sydney, University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Sydney, Tamworth Regional Gallery, New South Wales, Newcastle Art Gallery, New South Wales, University of Melbourne Art Collection, Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA), Melbourne & the Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney following his winning of the Mosman Art Prize in 2023.



David Griggs "Between Nature and Sin"
Campbelltown City Art Gallery 2017

Exchanging Culture for Lavender

David Griggs' latest exhibition, *Exchanging Culture For Lavender*, marks a significant return to (and transformation of) key motifs that have shaped his career. Griggs, long recognised as one of Australia's most uncompromising figurative painters, revisits the visual language of his "Restaurant" series from the early 2000s, while simultaneously engaging with the allegorical depth of the Italian folk tale 'The Land Where No One Ever Dies'. In this confluence, he creates a body of work that is both ferociously contemporary and profoundly mythic.

The "Restaurant" paintings established Griggs' reputation as a provocateur capable of distilling Sydney's nocturnal underbelly into images at once grotesque, comic, and disturbingly familiar. Characters with bulbous features, garish colour schemes, and theatrical excess transformed the restaurant as a site of consumption into a stage for cultural critique. The most notable of these works, housed in the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, positioned Griggs among a generation of Australian artists unafraid of kitsch, vulgarity, and the satirical grotesque as tools of social analysis.

In 'Exchanging Culture For Lavender', Griggs returns to this kitsch sensibility, but through a matured lens. The garish palettes have been refined into a chromatic theatre where acidic greens and toxic purples collide with the softness of lavender tones. What once appeared chaotic now feels like the orchestration of memory itself: fragments of his earlier language revisited, sampled, and reconfigured to confront the changing social landscape of twenty-first century Australia. These works are not nostalgic reprises; they are recursive meditations, returning to the past in order to estrange it anew.





Install: David Griggs
'Exchanging Culture for Lavender'

David Griggs
'Exchanging Culture for Lavender (Summer)', 2025
oil on canvas
74 3/4 x 66 7/8 in | 190 x 170 cm



David Griggs
'Exchanging Culture for Lavender (Autumn)', 2025
oil on canvas
74 3/8 x 59 in | 189 x 150 cm



David Griggs
'Exchanging Culture for Lavender (Winter)', 2025
oil on canvas
72 x 60 in | 182.9 x 152.4 cm



David Griggs
'Exchanging Culture for Lavender (Spring)', 2025
oil on canvas
71 1/4 x 59 7/8 in | 181 x 152 cm



David Griggs
'The Sage, The Meeting', 2025
oil on canvas
66 1/8 x 72 1/2 in | 168 x 184 cm



David Griggs
'Mythology of Trails', 2025
oil on canvas
70 7/8 x 51 1/8 in | 180 x 130 cm



David Griggs
'The Lovers' 2025
oil on canvas
59 x 55 1/8 in | 150 x 140 cm



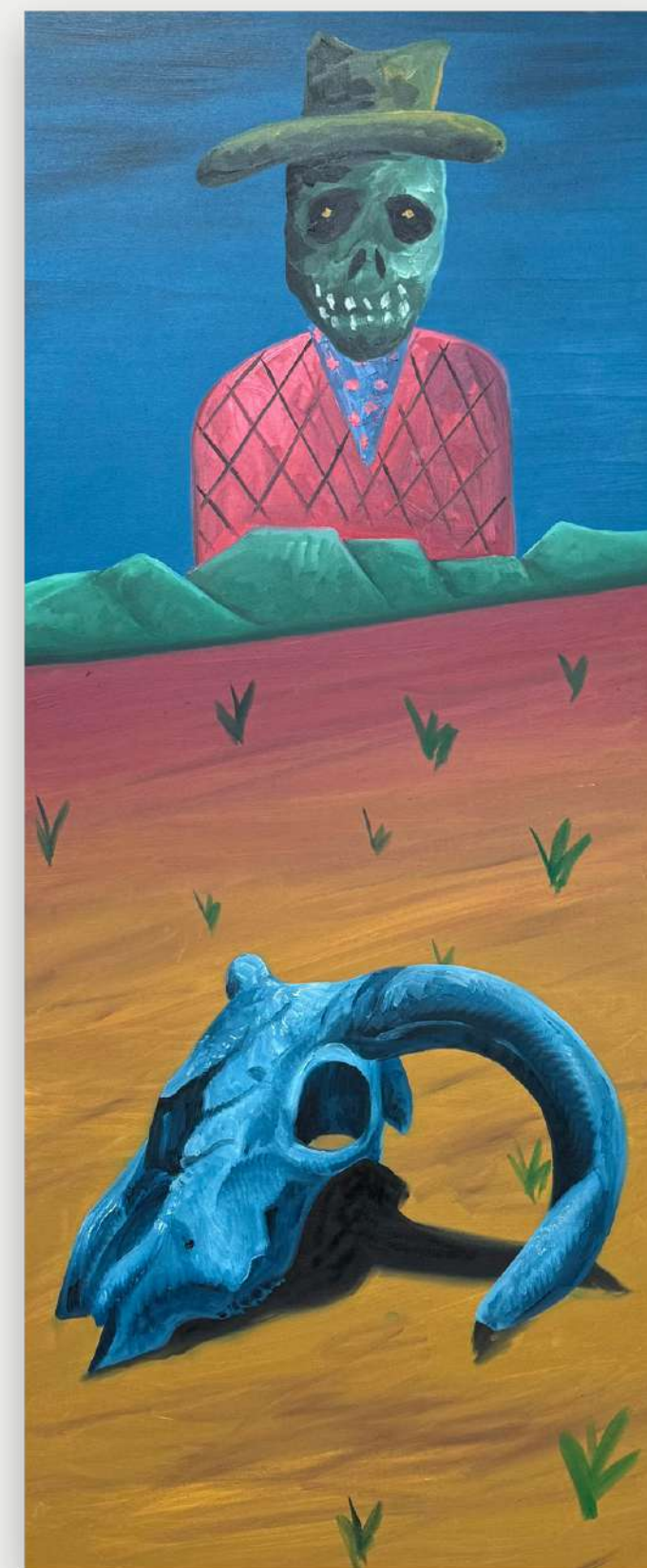
David Griggs
'Mysterious Past', 2025
oil on canvas
59 x 55 1/8 in | 150 x 140 cm



David Griggs
'200 Years of Eternity', 2025
oil on canvas
63 x 51 1/8 in | 160 x 130 cm



David Griggs
'Colossus Has a New Coat', 2025
oil on canvas
74 3/4 x 31 1/2 in | 190 x 80 cm



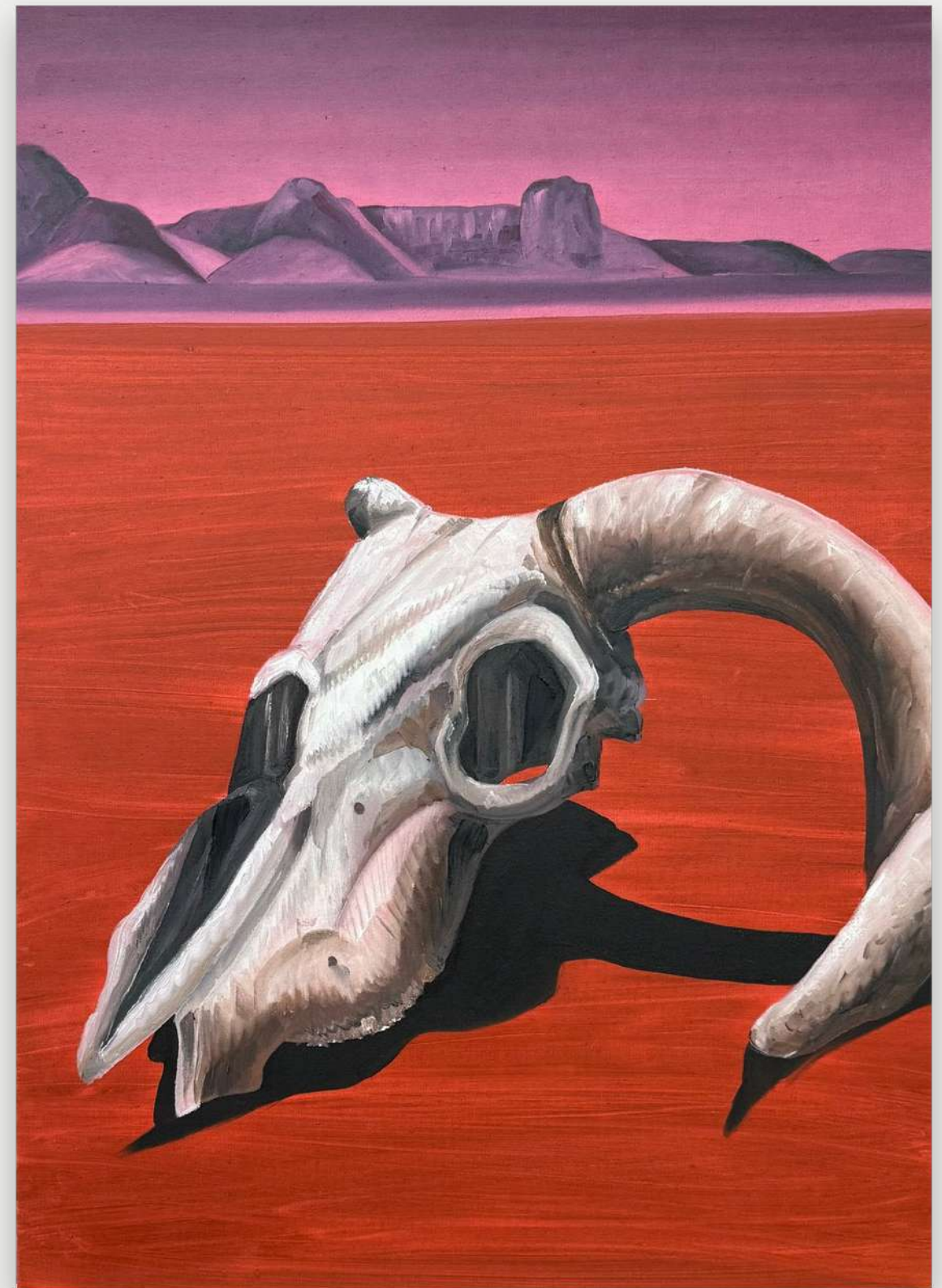
David Griggs
'The Romantic Cowboy', 2025
oil on canvas
63 x 51 1/8 in | 160 x 130 cm



David Griggs
'What Once Was (The fable of the potato's #1)', 2025
oil on canvas
46 7/8 x 34 7/8 in | 119 x 88.5 cm



David Griggs
'What Once Was (The fable of the potato's #2)', 2025
oil on canvas
43 1/4 x 31 1/4 in | 109.9 x 79.5 cm





Install: David Griggs 'Exchanging Culture for Lavender'



‘The Land Where No One Ever Dies’ (Il paese dove non si muore mai)

One day a young man said to himself:

“This story that everyone must die — I don’t like it. I am going to find the country where no one ever dies.”

He said farewell to his mother and father and all his family, and he set off on his journey. He walked for days and months until he came to an old man pushing a wheelbarrow full of rocks, trying to level a mountain stone by stone.

“Old man, do you know where the country is where no one ever dies?” asked the youth.

The old man replied: “Stay with me, and you will not die until I have carted away this entire mountain with my wheelbarrow.”

“How long will that take?”

“At least a hundred years.”

“And after that I must die?”

“Certainly.”

“No, then this is not the place for me,” said the youth, “I want a country where no one ever dies.” And he went on his way.

After a long time he met another old man with a beard down to his waist, cutting branches from an endless forest.

“Old man, do you know where the country is where no one ever dies?”

“Stay with me,” said the old man, “and you will not die until I have cut all the branches of this forest.”

“How long will that take?”

“Two hundred years.”

“And then I will die?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Then this is not the place for me.” And again the youth continued his journey.

‘The Land Where No One Ever Dies’ (Il paese dove non si muore mai) - Continued.

Further on he came to the seashore. There sat a third old man, beard down to his knees, watching a duck drinking the sea.

“Old man, do you know where the country is where no one ever dies?”

“Stay with me,” he answered, “and you will not die until this duck has drunk the whole sea.”

“And how long will that take?”

“Three hundred years. And after that, who would want to live any longer?”

But the youth said: “No, no — I want a place where no one ever dies.” And he went on.

At last he came to a castle. At the door stood an old man with a beard down to his toes.

“Old man, do you know where the country is where no one ever dies?”

“You have found it,” replied the man.

“May I come in?”

“Yes — I would be very glad of company.”

And so the young man stayed there.

Time passed. One day the youth said:

“I would like to return home, only for a moment, only to greet my parents and see the street where I was born.”

The old man replied: “Centuries have gone by. They are all dead.”

“All the same, I would like to see my native place.”

The old man said: “Very well. Go to the stable. There you will find my white horse, swifter than the wind. Mount him and ride — but beware: if you dismount, you will die.”

The Land Where No One Ever Dies (Il paese dove non si muore mai) - Continued.

The young man rode off. First he came to the sea: the duck had drunk it all dry, and on the seabed lay a little heap of bones — all that was left of the old man with the beard to his knees.

Then he came to the forest: all the trees were gone, only pasture remained.

Then he came to the mountain: it was now a plain.

Each time he said to himself: “How wise I was not to stop here!”

At last he reached his hometown. But he recognized nothing: houses, streets, everything had changed. He felt so lost that he turned back toward the castle.

One evening, as night fell, he met a cart drawn by an ox. The cart was piled high with worn-out shoes and boots.

The carter called: “Young man, stop! Get down and help me — one wheel of my cart is stuck in the mud. Night is coming, it will freeze, I am old and you are young.”

“I cannot dismount,” said the youth, “I am in a hurry.”

But the old man pleaded so earnestly that the youth, out of pity, climbed down.

Before his second foot touched the ground, the carter seized him by the arm and cried:

“Do you know who I am? I am Death. Look at this cart, filled with the shoes I have worn out chasing you all these years! Now at last I have caught you. Nobody escapes me.”

And so the young man died.

The Land Where No One Ever Dies (Il paese dove non si muore mai) is an Italian folktale, believed to originate in oral traditions of northern Italy, the tale blends Christian and pre-Christian motifs, using the imagery of impossible labours (levelling a mountain, emptying a forest, drinking the sea) to dramatise time’s inexorable passage. Its purpose is both moral and existential: to remind listeners that the human desire to outwit death is universal but futile, and that the meaning of life lies not in its endless extension but in its finitude.



David Griggs speaks at
Maitland Regional Art Gallery, May 2019

CV

Born 1975, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Lives and works in Sydney, Australia

EDUCATION

1999 BA (Painting), Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, Sydney

2007 BFA, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2025 Exchanging Culture for Lavender, PIERMARQ*, Sydney

2024 Marcel Proust Mini DV, Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane

2021 The Cubensis Head Butt, Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane

2021 The Ashtray Reader, STATION, Melbourne

2020 The Propaganda Paintings, STATION / Melbourne Art Fair Online Viewing Rooms

2020 Mankini Island, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

2019 David Griggs (3:33 Art Projects & Clayton Utz) Sydney

2018 Heroes, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

2017 Palmtree Bass Budda, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

2017 David Griggs: Between Nature and Sin, Campbelltown Arts Centre, NSW
(toured nationally 2017–19)

2016 Horror Business GAGPROJECTS / Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide

2015 Yum Yum Hippy Paintings GAGPROJECTS, Adelaide

2014 Magic is Mentally Ill STATION, Melbourne

2014 Frustrated Poverty Porn Bubble Gang, Future Perfect Gallery, Manila,
Philippines

2013 Tie Die Till I Dye, Kaliman Rawlins, Melbourne

2013 Ban all Pink and Yellow Pills, Gallery Esosse, Sydney

2012 Privation under the Palms, Galerie Zimmermann Kratochwill, Graz, Austria

2011 Frat of the Obese, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

2011 Zodiacs and God, Kaliman Rawlins, Melbourne

2011 Devils in Exile, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

2010 The sort of black claymore paintings, Pablo Gallery, Manila, PH

2009 Zombie Kiss, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

2009 New York Paris London Rome Manila City Jail, MOP Projects, Sydney / in
cooperation with Asialink & Green Papaya Art Projects (Manila)

2008 All I want is peace in the Middle East, a blow-job, and a free T-shirt, Kaliman
Gallery, Sydney

2008 David Griggs at IMA@TCB, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane

2007 Blood on the Streets, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

2007 Blood on the Streets, Artspace, Sydney

2006 Exchanging Culture for Flesh, Level 2 Contemporary Project Space, Art Gallery
of New South Wales, Sydney

2006 Bleeding Hearts Club, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney

2005 The Buko Police, Green Papaya Art Projects, Manila, PH

2004 Destination Disaster, Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne

2003 Outside History, The Studio, Sydney Opera House, Sydney

2001 Radio Death Camp, Boutwell Draper Gallery, Sydney

2000 Me Against My Brother, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Sydney

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2023 Archibald Prize Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
2023 Lies, Magicians and Blind Faith QAGOMA, Brisbane
2022 Origins and Imagination (curated by 3:33 Art Projects)
Artist Profile Space, Sydney Contemporary Art Fair, Sydney
2022 Nationalism in the Wake of Covid Macquarie University Art Gallery, Sydney
2019 City Prince/sses Palais de Tokyo, Paris
2019 Nothing human is alien to me Artspace, Ideas Platform, Sydney
2019 “Grotesquerie” / Sydney Grotesquerie STATION, Melbourne
2018 Becoming Animal, Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark
2018 The Art of Living Arts Project Australia, Melbourne
2018 Kilgour Prize 2018, Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle
2017 Kim Hamilton Sulit’s “Domestic Dusk, new works for The Mona Lisa Project”
West Gallery, Quezon City, Philippines
2016 Primavera at 25 (MCA Collection), Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
2016 DOUBLE VISION, Lee Kong Chian Gallery, NUS Museum, Singapore
2014 Archibald Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
2013 Future Primitive, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne
2013 National Artists’ Self-Portrait Prize 2013, The University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane
2013 Manila Vice, MIAM Museum, Sete, France
2013 Slug Gun Drug Machine, ZINC, Manila, Philippines
2013 Unbound: An Australian Philippine Exchange, Youchengco Museum, Manila, PH
2013 Marley Dawson, David Griggs and TV Moore, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

2012 Bastards of Misrepresentation: NY Edition, Topaz Arts; Queens Museum of Art; Tyler Rollins Fine Art; Crossing Art Gallery, New York
2012 Hail to the Nightly Beasts of the Dark Sessions, DACG Gallery, Manila, Philippines
2012 Bastards of Misrepresentation: Contemporary Art from Manila H Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand
2012 Great Ghastly Art Informal, Manila PH
2010 Inversions of the Ideal, Galerie Zimmermann Kratochwill, Graz, Austria
2010 Painting with a Hammer to Nail the Crotch of Civilization, Manila Contemporary, Manila PH
2010 Bastards of Misrepresentation (doing time on Filipino time), Freies Museum, Berlin, Germany
2010 Free Range Aesthetics: Pussyfooting Through the Detritus Mind Field of Reality Skyline Gallery, San Francisco, USA
2010 Disorder Disorder Ulterior Motives in Contemporary Art, Penrith Regional Gallery & the Lewers Bequest, Sydney
2010 Post Criminal (Griggs + Adam Cullen), Kaliman Gallery, Sydney
2010 The Death of Death (is alive and kicking), Art Center, Manila, PH
2010 Twenty/20, UTS Gallery, Sydney
2010 CODED, Blacktown Arts Centre, Sydney
2010 True Story, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
2009 Fluid Zones: Jakarta Biennale, Jakarta, Indonesia
2009 D Group Show, MO Space, Manila, Philippines
2008 Under My Skin (Asialink touring exhibition) (various)
2008 Neo Goth – back in black, University of Queensland, Brisbane

SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS (continued)

2008 Hijacked, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney

2008 Hijacked, Casula Powerhouse, Sydney

2008 Revolving Doors: an exhibition in memory of Blair Trethowan, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

2007 God Captured Like Fossilized Dung: New Art From the Third World, Firstdraft, Sydney & Inflight, Hobart

2007 NADA Art Fair (Uplands Gallery, Miami), Miami, USA

2007 End of Year Show, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

2006 Primavera, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

2006 Parallel Lives: Australian Painting Today (Tarrawarra Biennial)
Tarrawarra Museum of Art, Melbourne

2006 Fantastic Voyage, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney

2006 Winners are Grinners, The Meat Market, Melbourne

2005 Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship Exhibition, Artspace, Sydney

2005 Hardwired, Firstdraft, Sydney

2005 The Centenary of Wild Beasts, MOP Projects, Sydney

2004 Out of the Blue, MOP Projects, Sydney

2004 Rude Shock, Penrith Regional Gallery & the Lewers Bequest, Sydney

2004 Sydney Group Show, Kaliman Gallery, Sydney

2004 GG Allen Breaks the Window, Inflight, Hobart

2003 Festivus, Sherman Galleries, Sydney

2003 The Beetles, Gallery Barry Keldoulis, Sydney

2003 Balance of Power, Raid Projects, Los Angeles, USA

2003 Not all Heroes and Legends, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

2003 The Fucken Weird Show, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne

2003 Anita and Beyond, Penrith Regional Gallery, Sydney

2002 Octopus 3, Gertrude Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne

2002 OBJECTion, The Physics Room, Christchurch, NZ

2001 OBJECTion, The Physics Room, Christchurch, NZ

2001 Black to Basics, Rubyayre, Sydney

2001 Bootcamp, Block, Sydney

2000 Australian Painters at the Millennium, Imperial Slacks, Sydney

2000 Skulls and Solicitors Gallery 4A, Sydney

1999 Qintex, Smith and Stonely, Brisbane

1999 Dazzle, 1st Floor, Melbourne

1999 Hack, Grey Matter, Contemporary Art, Sydney

1998 Vietnam Voices, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Sydney

1998 Fibro (Australian Perspecta), Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Sydney

RESIDENCIES/AWARDS/COMMISSIONS

10 time finalist Archibald Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

2024, 2023, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2014, 2013, 2009, 2007

Multti-time Finalist, Mosman Art Prize, Mosman Art Gallery, Sydney

2023 Winner.

2019 Finalist, Sulman Art Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

2018 Finalist, Kilgour Art Prize, Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle

2017 Finalist, Doug Moran National Portrait Prize, Sydney

2013 Finalist, UQ National Self-Portrait Prize, Brisbane

2007 Primavera Artist Prize, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

2005, Asialink Residency Program, Ateneo University, Manila, Philippines

2000 / 2001 Winner, Willoughby City Art Prize (Painting) NSW

2004 International Program, Overseas Travel Grant, NSW Ministry for the Arts

2003 Freedman Foundation Travelling Art Scholarship (for emerging artists)

2008 Commission: Melbourne Art Fair 2008, “Frog boy’s dissertation into a new karaoke cult” Artist commission for Fair

PUBLICATIONS

2021 David Griggs – The Ashtray Reader Artlnk Publishing

2017 Gina Fairley, Between Nature and Sin: David Griggs, ArtsHub, 21 August

2017 Peter Munro, David Griggs finds fun among the paint fumes at Campbelltown Arts Centre, Sydney Morning Herald, 23 March

2013 John McDonald, In our own image, Sydney Morning Herald, 23 March

2013 Carrie Miller, Curriculum Culture, Art Collector Australia, Oct / Dec issue

2010 Arvin Flores & Kevin Power, Catalogue Essay for Bastards of

Misrepresentation: Doing time on Filipino Time, Freies Museum (Berlin)

2009 Gerry Lirio, Art, Jail Style, Philippine Daily Enquirer, 24 May

2009 Eugene Tan, New Visions, Alternative Platforms, C Arts / Asian Contemporary Art & Culture, March/April

2008 Not a Dead Astronaut, Art World, August / September

2008 Fayen d’Evie, Let’s all go to Iraq, UN Magazine, March

2008 Current: Contemporary Art from Australia and New Zealand, Art & Australia

2007 Gina Fairley, Blessed Grunge, ArtAsiaPacific, March / April

2006 Fergus Armstrong, Catalogue Essay for Exchanging Culture for Flesh
AGNSW (Art Gallery of New South Wales)

COLLECTIONS

Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Brisbane

Museum of Contemporary Art Australia (MCA), Sydney

University of Queensland Art Museum

Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Sydney

Tamworth Regional Gallery (via gallery biography)

Newcastle Art Gallery

University of Melbourne Art Collection

Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA)

Mosman Art Gallery

+61 2 9188 8933

www.piermarq.com.au

23 Foster Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010, Australia

PIERMARQ*