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# THE PATIENT

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The Medical Subject in  
Contemporary Art

Curator Bec Dean	Artists
	Ingrid Bachmann
3 June – 6 August 2016	Guy Ben-Ary
	John A Douglas
	Bob Flanagan & Sheree Rose
	Brenton Heath-Kerr
	Carol Jerrems
	Eugenie Lee
	David McDiarmid
	ORLAN
	Helen Pynor
	Jo Spence
	John Wynne & Tim Wainwright

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## The Patient: Encountering the Medical Subject

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The word patient has a dual meaning. It describes a state of being – of bearing a situation quietly, without complaint. It also describes a person in a hospital or clinical context, who is ill and undergoing diagnosis or treatment. The word originates from the Latin, *patiens*, which means “suffering, enduring”.<sup>1</sup> And for the medical patient, it is a common enough experience to wait, with pain.

This exhibition, *The Patient*, addresses the embodied experience of the artist as medical patient, and the medical patient as living subject in contemporary art. It explores the ways in which artists engage with powerful human experiences in the fields of health, biological science and medicine, contributing to discourse on the representation of illness, disease, care, individual agency and what it is to be human.

From over two decades of artistic enquiry through “Bio Art”<sup>2</sup> convergences of the humanities and sciences, artists now have extraordinary access to the spaces of biological science and medicine – from laboratories, surgeries, therapeutic and community contexts, to specialist museums. Their access is not restricted to spaces, but includes relationships with scientific and medical professionals and their fields of research and knowledge.

There are four new works in *The Patient*. Helen Pynor's *The end is a distant memory* considers the state between living and dying and the scientific, medical and digestive consumption of other animals. Video and performance artist John A Douglas exhibits a trilogy of works traversing his lived experience as a renal patient. This includes the premiere of a new work as a transplant recipient called *Circles of Fire*. Installation artist and painter Eugenie Lee has created a participatory, virtual reality installation called *Seeing is Believing* that enables visitors to comprehend the experience of chronic pain. Looking to the future of patienthood and the potential of the human body, Guy Ben-Ary and

his collaborators Nathan Thompson, Andrew Fitch, Darren Moore, Douglas Bakkum, Stuart Hodgetts and Mike Edel have created an autonomous, cybernetic synthesiser controlled by a living neural cluster made from Ben-Ary's own stemcells in *cellF*.

For *The Patient*, I have researched a wide range of contemporary art to engage with the various lineages and progenitors of biomedical art: the feminist artists that challenged the social obligation to hide the diseased or surgical body from public view; the HIV and AIDS activist artists whose works brought home to mainstream Australia the power and subversive potential of art in addressing discrimination, visibility and the social impacts of the epidemic; socially-engaged photographers who addressed directly and defiantly the loss of agency that patients experience within the hospital system; and body-based performance and conceptual artists and their collaborators whose use of their own bodies as object, subject and art material brought the medical body viscerally into the space of the gallery.<sup>3</sup>

ORLAN has given access to both her early and recent video works for this project including performative surgeries and animations of augmented bodies. The exhibition also includes recent artworks made by artists John Wynne & Tim Wainwright, and Ingrid Bachmann, who have worked through different processes in close consultation with transplant patient communities and hospitals. As this is an exhibition engaging with the experience of illness including those of terminal patients, many of the artists represented have passed away. Permission to show these works has been gained from the estates of Jo Spence, David McDiarmid and Carol Jerrems, the friends of Brenton Heath-Kerr and the partner and collaborator of Bob Flanagan, Sheree Rose.

The history of medicine as a subject matter of art is perhaps as old as art itself, leaving

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## Bec Dean, Curator

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behind its evidence in Stone Age amulets, idols, mosaics, hieroglyphics and illuminated manuscripts, through to the Western canon and the celebrated anatomical drawings of Da Vinci, the consumptive muses of the Pre-Raphaelites, the etchings of Hogarth, the suffering figures of Munch, and the self-portraits of Kahlo.

The material record of human history tells us that people across all times, places, cultures and religions have grappled with expressing the transient and fragile nature of our fleshly, embodied human experience.<sup>4</sup>

The collection of works, new experiments and ongoing projects that comprise *The Patient* are all variously difficult, fearless, funny, painfully beautiful and unlovely. They range across media and connect to us as viewers and occasionally as participants through both familiar and leading-edge technologies. The artists in this exhibition deepen our own enquiries into the actual stuff of illness and disease, death and life – how they manifest viscerally and psychologically as well as socially and politically. The driving concern for me in presenting *The Patient* is to create a space for poetic, reflective and social forms of engagement with issues that we are all at some point touched by.

We will all be patient.

Bec Dean, Curator

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Bec Dean is a curator and writer with a background as a visual artist working in video, photography and performance. Her curatorial interests are focused on the reciprocity between distinct disciplines across science and the humanities and the representation of new media and experimental practice within the wider discourses and contexts of contemporary art.

She has been working for contemporary arts spaces and organisations since 1996. She joined Performance Space as Associate Director in 2007 and became Co-Director with Jeff Khan in January 2012 until February 2014. She continues a relationship with the organisation as Curator at Large. She is currently exploring possibilities for an independent practice as well as undertaking a PhD at UNSW Art & Design.

Dean was previously curator at the Australian Centre for Photography (2005-2007) and Exhibition Manager at Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (2002-2005). She was co-curator of the recent iterations of the interdisciplinary art laboratory *Time\_Place\_Space: Nomad* produced by Performance Space and ArtsHouse, Melbourne (2014-2015). Her curatorial projects have been presented around Australia and in international contexts.

<sup>1</sup> maquariedictionary.com

<sup>2</sup> The field of "Bio Art" is defined by one of its most prolific writers and artists, Eduardo Kac, as "a new direction in contemporary art that manipulates the processes of life." Kac, E. *Signs of Life: Bio Art and Beyond* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2007), 18.

<sup>3</sup> Art historian Amelia Jones has written extensively on the work of body-based performance artists. In *Body Art* she writes of ORLAN, Flanagan and Rose that they, "turn the body inside out, enacting the stubborn corporeality of the self while refusing any conception of this corporeality as fixed in its materiality." Jones, A. *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 226.

<sup>4</sup> The Wellcome Collection in London, UK, holds the most diverse collection of medical objects, artefacts, books and materials relating to the medical humanities and the social history of medicine. Its publication *The Art of Medicine* tells the story of medicine through art and artefacts. Anderson, J., Barnes, E., Shackleton, E. *The Art of Medicine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

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## Public Program

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### ***Exhibition Preview***

AUSLAN and live audio description is provided on this pre-opening tour with the curator and exhibition artists.

**5pm – 6pm, Thursday 2 June**

**UNSW Galleries**

**FREE**

### ***cellF***

The Sydney premiere of *cellF* by Guy Ben-Ary, Nathan Thompson, Andrew Fitch, Darren Moore, Douglas Bakkum, Stuart Hodgetts and Mike Edel.

*cellF* live performances with musicians, Chris Abrahams (Friday), Ensemble Offspring (Saturday), Jon Rose, Darren Moore and Clayton Thomas (Sunday).

**8pm, Friday 10 – Sunday 12 June**

**Cellblock Theatre, National Art School**

**Corner Forbes Street & Burton Street,  
Darlinghurst**

**FREE**

### ***The Patient Forum***

Join artists, doctors, historians, scientists and specialists for this cross-disciplinary forum engaging with key issues running through the exhibition *The Patient* at UNSW Galleries.

**10am – 4pm, Friday 24 June**

**EG02 Theatre, UNSW Art & Design**

**Corner of Greens Road and Oxford Street**

**AUSLAN interpretation provided**

**FREE, tea and coffee provided**

### ***In Conversation with Sheree Rose***

Performance artist and widow of Bob Flanagan, Sheree Rose, discusses her extraordinary body of work, her collaborative performances, and life after Bob with fellow performance artist and celebrated author, Fiona McGregor.

**5pm – 6pm, Tuesday 2 August**

**UNSW Galleries**

**AUSLAN interpretation provided**

**FREE, tea and coffee provided**

### ***Catalogue, Book Launch and an Ending***

Join us for the launch of *The Patient* catalogue and the launch of Dr Lindsay Kelly's new book *Bioart Kitchen: Art, Feminism and Technoscience* (I. B. Tauris, 2016) with drinks, 'food' and *an Ending* performed by Sheree Rose, Fiona McGregor and Victoria Spence.

**5pm – 7pm, Thursday 4 August**

**UNSW Galleries**

**FREE**

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### ***Participatory Program Developed by the Master of Curating and Cultural Leadership Program 2016***

For more information on all of these programs, please go to:  
[artdesign.unsw.edu.au/unsw-galleries](http://artdesign.unsw.edu.au/unsw-galleries)

### ***The Screening Room***

Emma Fowler, Amanda Saker & Issac Yeo

In conjunction with *The Patient* exhibition at UNSW Galleries, this curated film series explores the relationships between science, medicine and the patient. From German Expressionist cinema to the psychodramas of Ingmar Bergman, these screenings extend the conversation around health and humanity beyond the gallery.

**The Black Box, UNSW Art & Design**

**FREE**

### ***Piecing it Together***

Joan Cameron-Smith, Cara Lopez & Chloe Gunn

This collaborative collage workshop will extend and borrow from imagery in *The Patient* surrounding themes of health, illness and medical sciences. The workshop will be convened by contemporary Australian artist Deborah Kelly, and will coincide with Kelly's own Postgraduate Masters Exhibition at UNSW Galleries.

**UNSW Galleries**

**FREE**

## ***Are YOU Sick?***

Leana Julian & Sarah Gallagher

The *Are YOU Sick?* app will provide a digital, interactive feedback form for exhibition audiences to express their own personal experiences with illness. These anonymous responses will be added to a database that will follow the exhibition throughout its tour of regional NSW and Victoria.

**UNSW Galleries**  
**FREE**

## ***Personal/Social Objects***

Maria Makismova & Renee Quiambao

As part of the *Personal/Social Objects* project visitors are invited to bring a small empty medication container to be displayed in a pill box cabinet.

**UNSW Galleries**  
**FREE**



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John A Douglas, *Circles of Fire: Version 1*, 2016.  
Synchronised dual channel 4k to HD.  
video and sound.

Courtesy of the artist and Chalkhorse  
Sydney.



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## **Acknowledgments**

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Bec Dean would like to thank presenting partner UNSW Galleries and its staff for supporting and presenting this project. *The Patient* is also supported by Museums & Galleries of NSW, the Australia Council for the Arts and the Russell Mills Foundation. Many thanks to the event partners, National Art School and Performance Space. This project has also been supported by 133 individual funders through Pozible and the generosity of artists Deborah Kelly, Raquel Ormella, Lily Hibberd, Nadège Desgenétez, Eugenie Lee and Lucas Ihlein & Ian Milliss.

Special thanks to Lizzie Muller, Richard Manner, Tilly Boleyn, Matthew Connell, Derek Williamson, Claire Monneraye and Vanessa Bartlett.

## **A UNSW Galleries exhibition**

**Curator** Bec Dean

**Exhibition Designer** Shahmen Suku

**Designer** Fiona Hudson

**Curatorial and Editorial Assistant** Emma Size

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Carol Jerrems, photograph from the *Royal Hobart Hospital Series*, 1979. Printed by Roger Scott, 2004.  
Gelatin silver photograph.

Courtesy of Ken Jerrems and the Estate of Lance Jerrems  
with thanks to the Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne.

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## Artists

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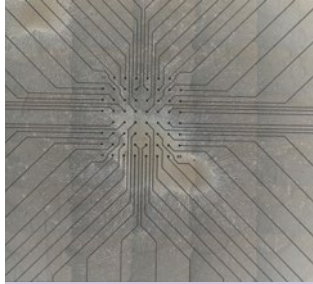
### Ingrid Bachmann

b. 1958, London, Canada.  
Lives and works in Montreal.

Ingrid Bachmann is an interdisciplinary artist and researcher who explores the complicated relationship between the material and virtual realms. Her works exist at the crossroads of the technological, the generative, the performative and the corporeal. In the piece *A-Part of Me*, the body is used both as the means and the site for listening to the narratives of heart transplant recipients. The listener hears these stories intimately in their body and through their body. Bone transducer sensors are used to conduct the sound through the bones using the skull as the resonating chamber. Only the person holding the transducer to his/her bones can hear the sound.

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*A-Part of Me*, 2014.  
Bone transducer sensors,  
electronics, sound recordings.  
Courtesy of the artist.



### Guy Ben-Ary, Nathan Thompson, Andrew Fitch, Darren Moore, Douglas Bakkum, Stuart Hodgetts and Mike Edel

G. B–A b. 1967, Los Angeles, USA.  
Lives and works in Perth, Australia.

*cellF* is the world's first neural synthesiser. It is made from the artist Guy Ben-Ary's neural stem cells that have been bioengineered from a biopsy taken from his arm and nurtured in a laboratory over several years. The neural networks control an array of analogue synthesisers and can play with human musicians. The artist's extended biology is the material, subject and co-author of this work. Its living 'brain' has a lively materiality that compels us to consider the selective possibilities of the future human body.

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*cellF*, 2015.  
Documentation of the making of *cellF*.  
Courtesy of the artists.



### John A Douglas

b. 1960, Sydney, Australia.  
Lives and works in Sydney.

In this trilogy of works, made between 2010 to date, John A Douglas engages with his lived experience as a renal patient. In the large-scale photographs of *Body Fluid*, the sheathed figure of a humanoid interacts impossibly with different environmental extremes. In *The Visceral Garden*, Douglas' encounters with specimens of pathology are rendered as luminous imaginary landscapes. The artist connects the internal and external states of being, as a chronically ill patient, as entering an underworld from where there is no return. The latest work *Circles of Fire* navigates through the complex and challenging terrain of organ transplantation, as a metaphysical journey.

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*Circles of Fire: Version 1*, 2016.  
Synchronised dual channel 4k to HD  
video and sound.  
Courtesy of the artist and Chalkhorse  
Sydney.



## Bob Flanagan

b. 1952, Los Angeles, USA.  
d. 1996, Los Angeles, USA.

## Sheree Rose

b. 1941, Los Angeles, USA.  
Lives and works in Los Angeles.

From 1981 until his death in 1996, Sheree Rose collaborated with her partner, Bob Flanagan, in a series of photographs, videos and performances that documented their sado-masochistic relationship as well as the impact of his cystic fibrosis on both their artistic and personal lives.

*Visiting Hours* is arguably the pair's most famous work. This major collaboration premiered in 1993 at the Santa Monica Museum, California, before touring in the United States.

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*Wall of Pain*, 1993/2016.  
Documentary photographs.  
from *Visiting Hours*, 1993-1995.

Photograph by Sheree Rose.

Courtesy of Sheree Rose and the One Archives, Los Angeles.



## Brenton Heath-Kerr

b. 1962, Sydney, Australia.  
d. 1995, Sydney.

Brenton Heath-Kerr was a performance artist and AIDS activist, until his death at the age of 33 from an AIDS-related illness. Heath-Kerr made costumes and performances for the gay and lesbian club scene in Sydney and was later presented in contemporary art contexts including the National Gallery of Australia. Heath-Kerr's work explored identity and experience – including his experience as a patient – through costume and characters that obfuscated his own features. Many of his iconic costumes have been collected by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney.

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*Homosapien*, 1994.  
Type C photograph.  
Photograph by John Webber.



## Carol Jerrems

b. 1949, Melbourne, Australia.  
d. 1980, Melbourne.

Carol Jerrems' black and white, autobiographical portraits and photographs of young people and subcultures of the 1970s in Australia resonated with the rapid social change and spirit of resistance of the times. In the *Royal Hobart Hospital Series*, Jerrems continued to take photographs of herself, her changing body, her clinical surroundings, other patients and the doctors and nurses treating her during a lengthy, twelve-week stay for treatment of Bud-Chiari Syndrome in Hobart Hospital. Jerrems died the following year from her illness.

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Photograph from the *Royal Hobart Hospital Series*, 1979.  
Printed by Roger Scott, 2004.  
Gelatin silver photographs.  
Exhibited with excerpts from Carol Jerrems' hospital diary, *The Patient*.  
Courtesy of Ken Jerrems and the Estate of Lance Jerrems with thanks to the Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne.



## Eugenie Lee

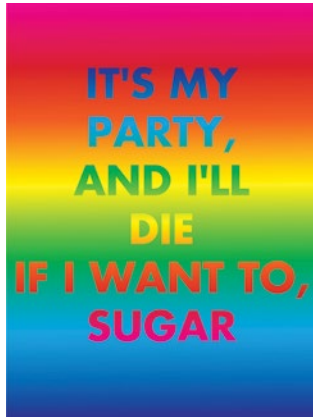
b. 1974, South Korea.  
Lives and works in Sydney.

*Seeing is Believing* conveys the bio-psycho-social aspects of a type of chronic pain – Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS). The interactive installation, supported by a Synapse Residency, is based on the latest research in neuroscience showing that pain is integrated with each person's environment, and that their subjective associations contribute to their perception of pain.

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*Seeing is Believing*, 2016.  
Multimedia, participatory installation, 'Mirage Machine', Oculus Rift and anechoic chamber.

Neuroscience collaborators:  
Dr Tarsha Stanton, Dr Valeria Bellan, Professor Lorimer Moseley, Professor Philip Porronik, Professor William Martens, Stuart Elisdale and Professor Roger Newport.  
VR media design and production:  
Andrew Burrell, Tom Hazell and Rosie Menzies.  
Acoustic design: Meisha Stevens.  
Design: Matthew Bolton and Cassandra Prasad and Rob Yuan.  
Courtesy of the artist.



## David McDiarmid

b. 1952, Hobart, Australia.  
d. 1995, Sydney.

David McDiarmid was a celebrated Australian artist, painter, activist, designer across print media and textiles and artistic director of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. His vibrant work engaged with homosexual male identity politics, gay liberation and activism and later with the HIV/AIDS crisis. In *Rainbow Aphorism Series*, McDiarmid's biting, witty and incendiary statements, which counteract the conciliatory language employed around sickness, are rendered in large, rainbow typeface over a rainbow background.

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David McDiarmid  
*Rainbow Aphorism Series*, 1994.  
Exhibition prints 2015 on loan from the David McDiarmid Estate.  
Inkjet print on Platine fibre cotton rag.  
Courtesy of the David McDiarmid Estate.



## ORLAN

b. 1947, Saint-Étienne, France.  
Lives and works in Los Angeles, New York and Paris.

ORLAN is a French conceptual and performance artist. Since 1963 she has created series of photographs, installations, sculptures, texts, objects, films and performances. She is well known as the first artist to use plastic surgery, and to collaborate with medical surgeons in the making of her work. This exhibition includes video of her 7th 'surgery-performance' which explores the material and cultural transformation of the body as image and flesh, and recent works that engage with augmentation of the body through the possibilities of the digital. ORLAN makes her own body the medium, the raw material, and the visual support of her work.

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4th Surgery-Performance Titled *Successful Operation*, 8th December, 1991.  
Courtesy of the artist.





## Helen Pynor

b. 1964, Sydney, Australia.  
Lives and works in London  
and Sydney.

Helen Pynor's work reflects her ongoing fascination with the porosity between mind and body, culture and biology, body and memory. Drawing on her own dual backgrounds in the biological sciences and the visual arts, Pynor's work explores the interiority of the human body. *The end is a distant memory* is an interdisciplinary work exploring two related philosophically and medically ambiguous zones – the end of life into death, and the inter-subjective nature of eating. Her work brings into focus the use of animals as proxies for human test subjects in biological science and medical contexts and the transfer of bodily tissue and energy between organisms.

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*The end is a distant memory*, 2016.  
Video, sound, photography and  
object installation. Sound by James Brown.  
Collaborating scientist Dr Jochen Rink,  
Max Planck Institute of Molecular Cell  
Biology and Genetics, Dresden.  
Courtesy of the artist.



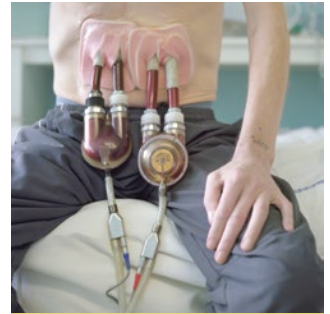
## Jo Spence

b. 1934, London, UK.  
d. 1992, Hampstead.

Jo Spence was an integral figure within photographic discourse in the UK and internationally from the 1970s onwards. Through her diverse projects she was well known for her political and socially engaged approach to photography, and later the representation of her own struggles with breast cancer. In the staged portraits of *Narratives of Dis-ease* Spence explores the gendered experience, subjectivity and agency of the female patient. In this case, taking control of her own representation.

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*Narratives of Dis-ease*, 1990.  
Colour photograph, 63.5 x 41cm.  
Collaboration with Dr Tim Sheard  
Copyright the Estate of Jo Spence.  
Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery,  
London.



## John Wynne

b. 1957, RCAF Zweibrücken,  
Germany. Lives and works  
in London.

## Tim Wainwright

b. 1954, Brisbane, Australia.  
Lives and works in London.

John Wynne and Tim Wainwright were artists-in-residence for a year at Harefield Hospital near London, one of the world's leading centres for heart and lung transplants. They recorded and photographed patients, the devices attached to or implanted in them, and the hospital environment itself.

*"Through all the differences and similarities of sound and vision, seeing and hearing, looking and listening, a rapprochement emerges in the collaboration. The insistent stillness of a photograph hovers in and out of the temporal movement of spoken language, but both add a powerful sense of human presence and individuality to each other."* (David Toop)

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*Transplant*, 2008.  
Video with sound.  
Courtesy of the artists.

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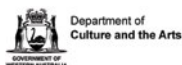
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