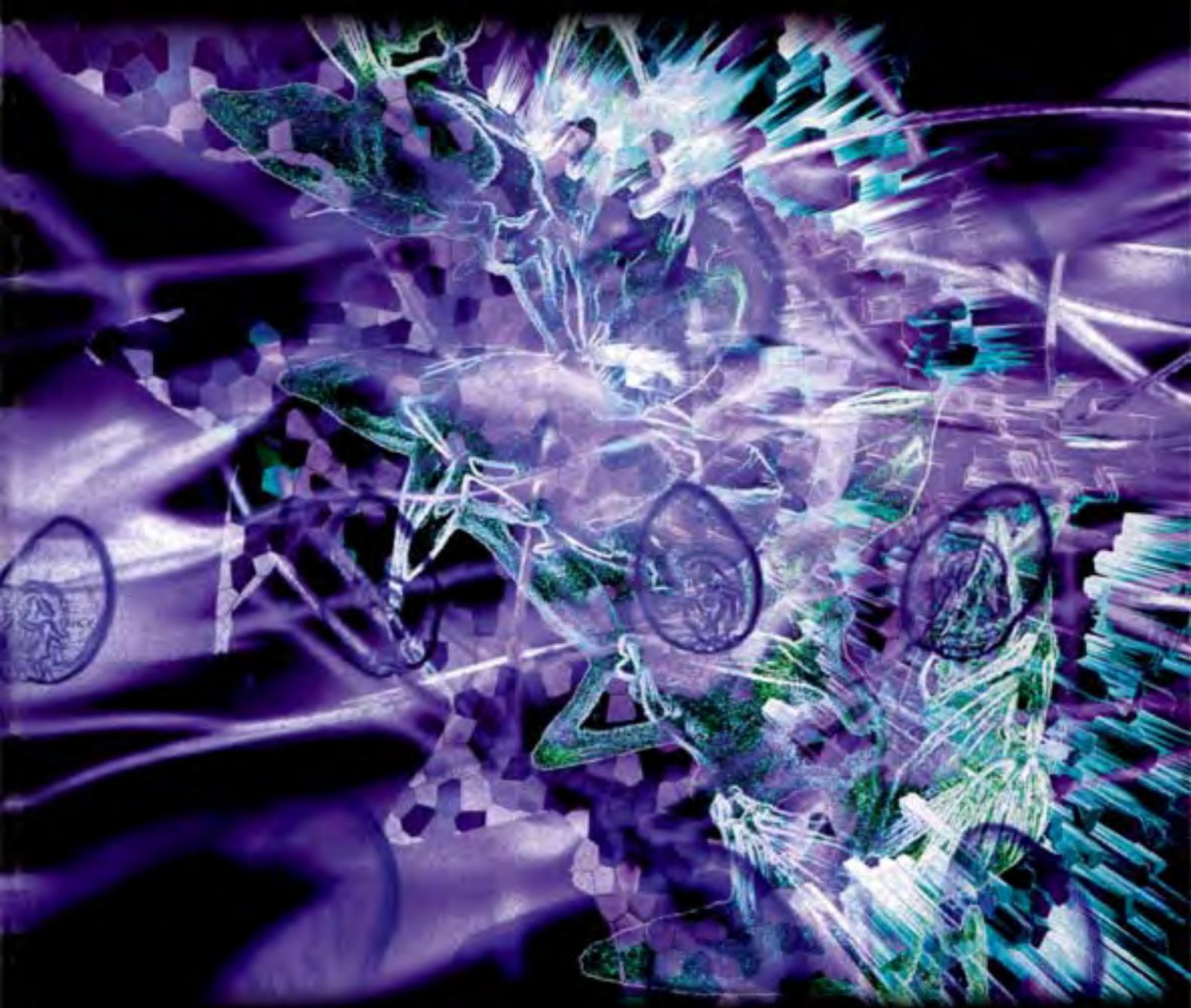


# IMPRINT

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THE ANNUAL JOURNAL OF THE PRINT + DIGITAL PRACTICE  
PRINTMAKING + WORKS ON PAPER + DIGITAL ART + WRITING + BOOKS



Eleanor Gates-Stuart, *Magical Fusion*, 2012, inkjet on paper, 60 x 90 cm.

# STELLRSCOPE

## the Centenary of Canberra's Science Art Commission

by Clive Barstow and Eleanor Gates-Stuart

**Clive Barstow** is a practising artist and writer, Professor of Creative Arts at Edith Cowan University Perth and Honorary Professor of Art at the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, China.

**Eleanor Gates-Stuart** is a practising artist, Honorary Research Professor at UCSC, and Science Art Fellow at CSIRO. Eleanor is undertaking a PhD at the Australian National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science, Australian National University.

To contextualise this important Centenary of Canberra<sup>1</sup> commission as a significant creative shift for artist Eleanor Gates-Stuart, we must backtrack to a body of prints called *Finger Codes*<sup>2</sup>, produced as part of her artist residency at the University of California Santa Cruz in 2010. In *Finger Codes*, perhaps inadvertently, Eleanor started to develop a personal language based on computer codes and structures that celebrated the operation of mediated systems. Fusing traditional tactile print processes with digital print production, she questioned personal and collective identities through her physical and cerebral responses to the work.

Eleanor's success in gaining the 2013 Centenary of Canberra's Science Art Commission was timely; it has allowed her to collaborate at the highest technical level with scientists and technicians at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) in Canberra to expand this language within the domain of public art. Based on a story of wheat innovation involving genetics, bioinformatics and historical artifacts, *StellrScope*<sup>3</sup> is an emerging body of work connecting the Canberra region to Australia's major crop science, from the times of William Farrer's pioneering wheat breeding through to the scientific achievements of the modern era.

Although aware of the pitfalls of didactic representation, Eleanor has skillfully established her artistic independence throughout a journey of learning that fluctuates between art and science. Perhaps more importantly, she is testing how her ideas can be communicated in a visual form that stimulates even the most unimaginative mind, and how this might transcend both art and scientific language. Through her adoption of new digital and projection technologies that are still in their developmental stage, Eleanor is attempting to position her work in-between knowledge and enquiry. Enlightenment can take many forms; the commission therefore seeks to invest in a collaboration that acknowledges both common and unrelated creative and scientific solutions.

Since her time as a printmaking postgraduate student at the University of the Arts London, the aesthetics of dynamic relationships between objects and artefacts has been a recurring theme in her work. Eleanor's practice as an artist and her command of fundamental skills such as drawing, colour, composition and structure, have been developed through an understanding of the sequential nature of printmaking and the discipline that this requires. These skills are now being translated into a new guise; one that demands an extended spatial awareness for both artist and audience.

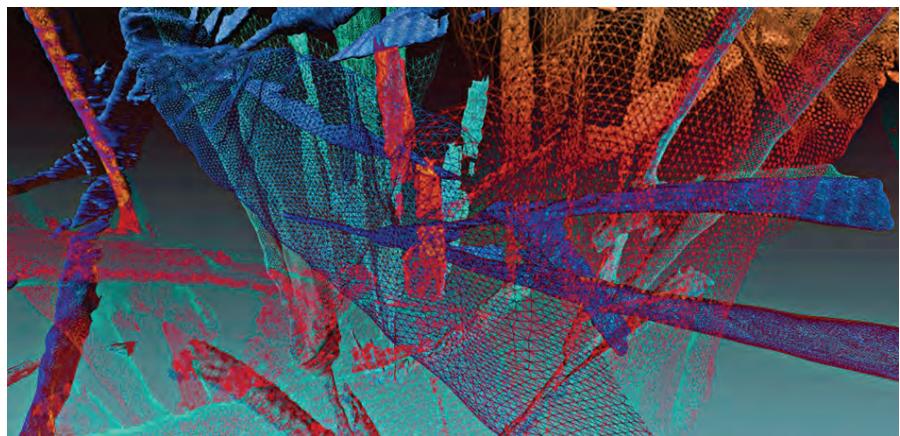
Through the opportunities brought about by CSIRO, this practice has expanded to include digital printmaking aligned to 3D image building and architectural projection. Although the connections between traditional and digital printmaking are easy to map, embracing the digital challenge of 3D and 4D visual space demands a more scientific approach. As such, the artist's position in terms of controlling and owning the work, and the aesthetics that underpin it, are being examined and generously laid bare for us all to see.

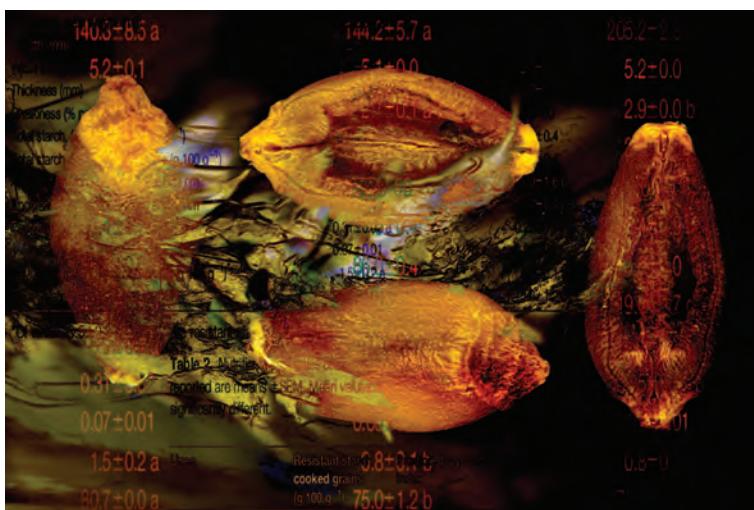
The work *MAGICal B*<sup>4</sup> (2012 – on this issue of *IMPRINT*'s cover) was probably a turning

point in forming new graphical solutions to represent scientific and historical narratives, particularly when faced with data-based information and a multitude of images as a result of her documentary approach. Visually dense in content and layers, *MAGICal B* examines the genetics of wheat and the laboratory conditions of retaining dormancy in seed growth. It led to a series of works in the *MAGICal*<sup>5</sup> series in which the artist explored spatial dimensions and the number sequence 1 – 9 as the simple numerical rule for mapping shape. With access to high-end technology and the supporting expertise of scientists at the cutting edge of visualisation research, Eleanor has been able to translate and code numerical and data-driven information into a visual form. Working in collaboration with Dr Chuong Nguyen<sup>6</sup> within the field of 3D reconstruction of plants, insects and microscopic specimens at CSIRO, the artist has been able to design personalised creative tools for visualisation via 3D scanning and manipulation. *The Measure of Volume* and the *Wheatear* series for instance, are images created via volumetric data and 3D scanning.

Eleanor manipulates data in the creation and deconstruction of 3D objects towards the making of a print or moving image, starting from rendered files, point clouds,

Eleanor Gates-Stuart, *The Measure of Volume*, 2012, 3D Maya image.



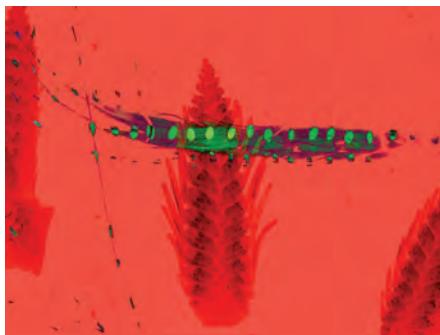


Eleanor Gates-Stuart, *Grains*, 2012, inkjet on paper, 60 x 91 cm.



above Eleanor Gates-Stuart, *Wheatear 3*, 2012, 3D Maya image.

**StellrScope** will be held at Questacon in Canberra during the month of August 2013 and also at the CSIRO Discovery Centre in Canberra.



Eleanor Gates-Stuart, *Hot Seeds*, 2012, inkjet on paper, 47 x 60 cm.

scans and screenshots using software such as MeshLab, Maya, and Photoshop. The technology assists in the formation of visual content and production, but it is the synergy between artist and scientist that really drives the formation of new languages communicating both science and art, and at best the fusion of the two. Works, such as *Hot Seeds* and *Grains* utilise an electron microscope to generate the information detail for prints, however, the purpose is often twofold in that it supplies base information for the process, but at the same time presents a technical challenge when working between a three-dimensional and four-dimensional digital space. The opportunity to test out 3D scanning of insects at the Australian National Insect Collection, and volumetric data from the Australian Plant Phenomics Facility was the catalyst for Eleanor's *Bugs* and *Grassland* series, both to be remodelled and transformed as architectural projections for Canberra's *Enlighten 2013*<sup>7</sup> public art event.

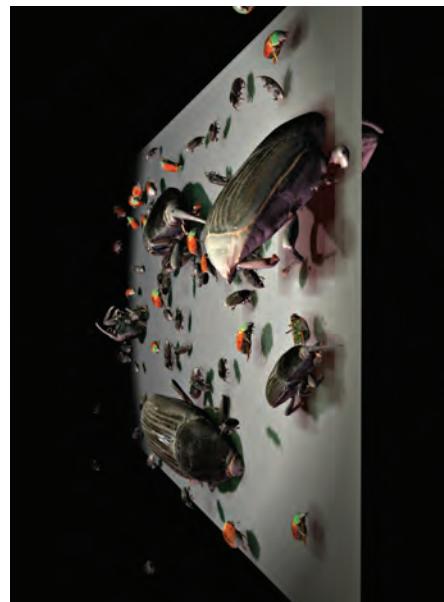
From a thematic position and through their sourcing of scientific data surrounding insects and plants, these works propagate and support our assumptions about the Darwinian theory of evolution. Interestingly though, the ambient and ephemeral quality of their resulting 3D and projection technologies propose a more temporary line of enquiry, one that might place doubt on

our fundamental belief systems that rely so heavily on acceptance of scientific evidence and the permanency of knowledge. The work also pays homage indirectly to the botanical copperplate engravings of Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander, more commonly known as Banks' *Florilegium*. These prints play an important part in our colonial history, standing as a marker of both artistic and scientific process. As with Banks, Eleanor is of course using the microscopic technology of the day and perhaps tomorrow, and through this is proposing as much about our future as our past.

The commission is ambitious for both the Centenary of Canberra and for the artist herself. Her approach is experimental and unrestricted, the technology is cutting edge, and the response will be unpredictable. In this sense it is a true artistic and scientific process, an open-ended investigation of both discovery and enlightenment in which unpredictability can be shared and celebrated. If the resulting works are to be successful, they will have to cross many divides between art and science, between artist and public and between ideas and technology. The true marker of the work is that it can communicate complex issues with simplicity, and first and foremost, that it speaks for the artist herself. •

#### References

1. Centenary of Canberra: <http://www.canberra100.com.au>
2. *Finger Codes*. Print series online: <http://eleanorgatestuart.com/finger-codes/>
3. Article: E. Gates-Stuart and R. Wohlfeiler, 'Finger Codes', *IMPRINT*, Winter 2011, Vol. 46, No. 2, p. 32. See Eleanor Gates-Stuart's discussion about her work with Richard Wohlfeiler.
4. *StellrScope*: <http://stellrscope.com/>
5. *MAGICal B* is part of the *MAGICal* series, referencing CSIRO's Multi-parent Advanced Generation Inter-Cross research, *MAGIC*. [http://www.csiro.au/en/Organisation-Structure/Divisions/Plant-Industry/MAGIC\\_FFF\\_ResearchOverview.aspx](http://www.csiro.au/en/Organisation-Structure/Divisions/Plant-Industry/MAGIC_FFF_ResearchOverview.aspx)
6. *MAGICal*: print series online: [http://stellrscope.com/2012/06/04/9x9x9x9x9x9x9x9x9/](http://stellrscope.com/2012/06/04/9x9x9x9x9x9x9x9/)
7. Dr Chuong Nguyen is an OCE Post Doctoral Fellow, CSIRO Mathematics, Statistics and Informatics.
7. *Enlighten 2013*: <http://enlightencanberra.com.au/event-info/architectural-projections/>



Eleanor Gates-Stuart, *Bugs*, 2012, 3D Maya image.

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The Centenary Science Art Commission is jointly funded by the ACT Government and the Australian Government and is one of many projects marking the Centenary of Canberra in 2013. *StellrScope* will be completed in 2013 and displayed at Questacon and the CSIRO Discovery Centre in Canberra.

The Science Art Commission residency is kindly supported by the Transformational Biology Capability Platform (TBCP) at the CSIRO Mathematics, Informatics and Statistics (CMIS) Research Division and the CSIRO Food Futures Flagship. [www.csiro.au](http://www.csiro.au)

# Imprint

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Office 621, Fitzroy Town Hall,

201 Napier Street, Fitzroy Vic 3065

Postal address: PO Box 2949, Fitzroy Vic 3065

Telephone: 03 9416 0150 Facsimile: 03 9416 0151

Memberships email: [membership@printcouncil.org.au](mailto:membership@printcouncil.org.au)

Website: [www.printcouncil.org.au](http://www.printcouncil.org.au)

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## contributions

Any information or short news items on printmaking and related arts are welcome. Letters to the editor and articles submitted will be printed at the editor's discretion. All text should be on disc or sent via email. Contributions are submitted at the contributor's risk. *IMPRINT* cannot be held responsible for loss of manuscripts, discs or photos. For details telephone PCA 03 9416 0150, email [imprinteditor@printcouncil.org.au](mailto:imprinteditor@printcouncil.org.au)

## be on time

The next deadline for advertising bookings and short news items will be Friday 19 April 2013. The Winter 2013 calendar will cover the period from mid June to mid September 2013. Ideas for articles should be discussed with the editor in advance (alternative deadlines apply).

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## cover

Eleanor Gates-Stuart

MAGICal B, 2012

inkjet on paper, 90 x 60 cm

Eleanor Gates-Stuart is a CSIRO Science Art Fellow. MAGICal B was created for StellarScope, the Centenary of Canberra's Science Art Commission – [www.stellarscope.com](http://www.stellarscope.com). The image is a reference to CSIRO Multi-parent Advanced Generation Inter-Cross (MAGIC) research into the identification of genes in the parenting of plants.

## donations

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The Print Council of Australia Inc.  
proudly invites you to join us for

## Objects and Journeys an illustrated talk by

**Paul Coldwell**

Professor in Fine Art, University of the Arts, London

6pm on Friday 19 April 2013

in the Reading Room, Fitzroy Town Hall

201 Napier Street, Fitzroy, Victoria

Professor Paul Coldwell is internationally recognised for his prints, book works, sculptures and installations. He was a keynote speaker in Australia at the 2011 Impact? International Multidisciplinary Printmaking Conference and has represented the UK in numerous European print biennials. His work is held in prestigious public collections at the Tate, Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), the British Museum and the Arts Council of England.

His illustrated talk, 'Objects and Journeys', will look at the relationship between printmaking and sculpture in his own art practice, and at his use of objects to construct images of vulnerability and uncertainty. In particular, it will discuss his current survey exhibition: *A Layered Practice – Paul Coldwell Graphic Works 1993-2012*, its themes of journeying, absence and loss and his engagement with old and new print technologies.

[www.paulcoldwell.org](http://www.paulcoldwell.org)

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