

**NATIONAL
NEW
MEDIA
ART
AWARD
2012**



Ross Manning

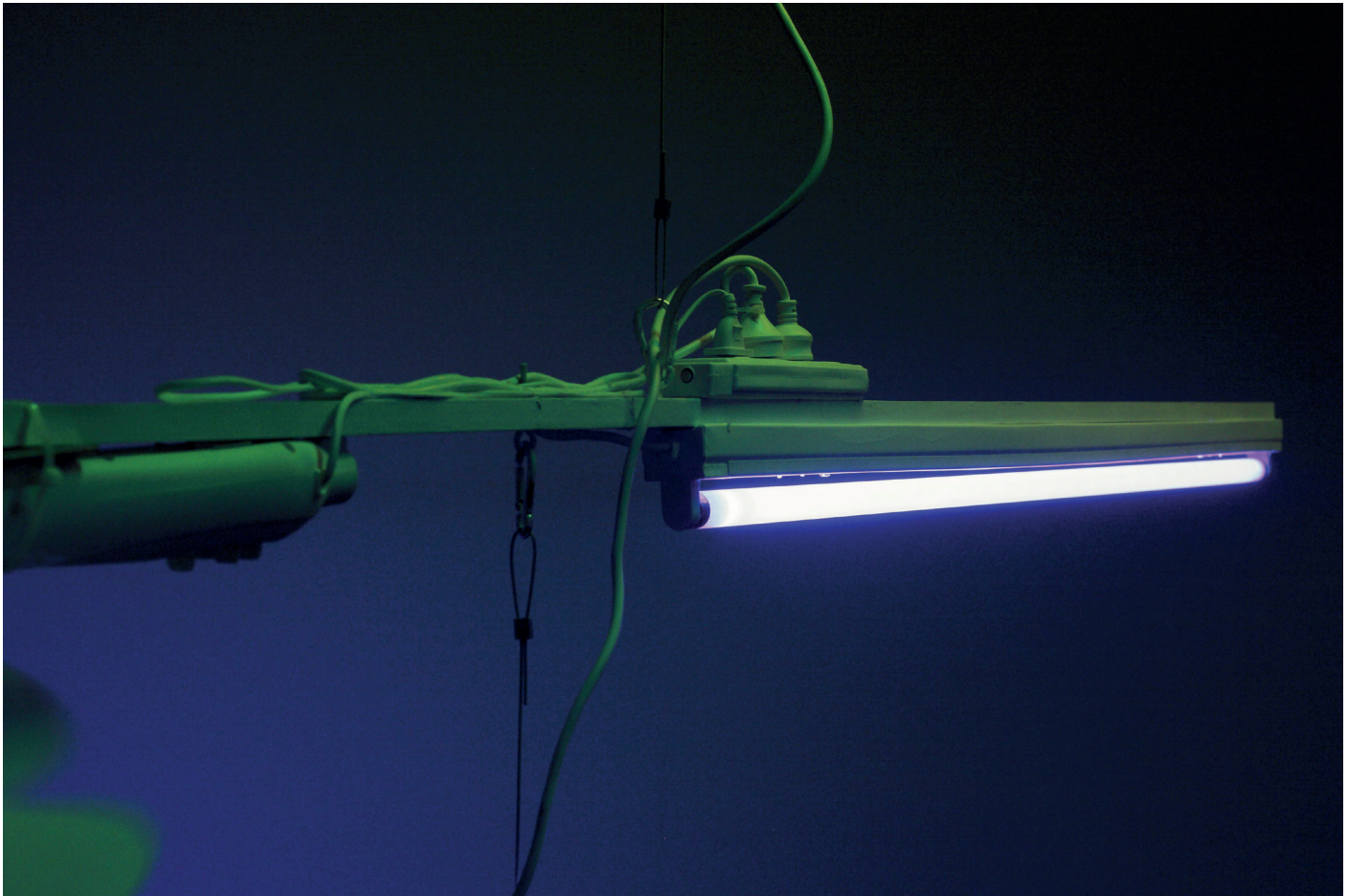
The waltz of old and new

Ross Manning started creating kinetic sculptures specifically for their sound components, into which environmental influences were often incorporated. It was from his research into soundwaves that he first became interested in light waves, an exploration helped by the practical experiences of his job as a television repairer. Working behind television screens, Manning acquired an understanding of additive colour mixing, a concept central to contemporary screen- and projection-based technologies. In additive colour mixing, different coloured light beams or spectra overlap to produce new colours. For example, white is produced onscreen by equal parts of red, green and blue.

Spectra III 2012, part of an ongoing series, is a mobile sculpture positioned in the centre of a white room, reaching almost from floor to ceiling. Each arm comprises a coloured fluorescent light and a power board, plus an oscillating fan. Each arm is attached off-centre to the one above it — without a central thread, the arms rotate from slightly different axes, spinning with and against the arms above and below. The sculpture recalls television resolution scan lines that have jumped off a screen and are twirling in space.¹ The colours of the fluorescent tubes relate to the colours on the additive colour mixing chart — the lights fall onto the walls in solid colours and mix as the arms rotate. If, by chance, the lights meet and mix in equal measure, they create white light.

On one wall of the space housing the mobile sculpture, the viewer is presented with three circular apertures. The series of apertures brings to mind the three lenses of a cathode-ray tube (CRT) projector. CRT projectors use additive colour mixing, with red, green and blue lenses each projecting a part of the image, which then combine on screen to produce a full-colour image. Outside the space, the coloured light of the mobile is projected through the apertures and mixes on the white wall opposite. The coloured lights, having passed through the apertures, appear inversely to how they are hung, and their fade rate correlates to their position on the mobile. In this sense, *Spectra III* is a projector reduced to its most basic components.²

What is projected onto the wall resembles a natural phenomenon, as if the artist is trying to recreate the aurora australis (the southern lights) within the gallery space. However, the reference point is Sir Isaac Newton's seventeenth-century research into colour refraction,



which revealed the way that white light can be refracted into the colours of the rainbow. With *Spectra III*, we see the most basic of optical devices at work (the aperture) alongside the more sophisticated (the CRT projector). To an extent, Manning's works are driven by the input rather than the output of his chosen technology.³ He approaches all technologies with a similar ease, not seeking a specific piece of equipment because of its ability to produce a particular sound or light composition; instead, he uses the mechanics of a given technology as a point of departure for his explorations.

Manning exposes all the structural components of the work, from the functional power boards to the hooks and wires holding the mobile sculpture together. The fans oscillate in accordance with their speed, but the mobile as a whole doesn't seem to keep a regular rhythm. Without a central axis, the arms softly swing and sway — the mobile appears to move of its own volition.

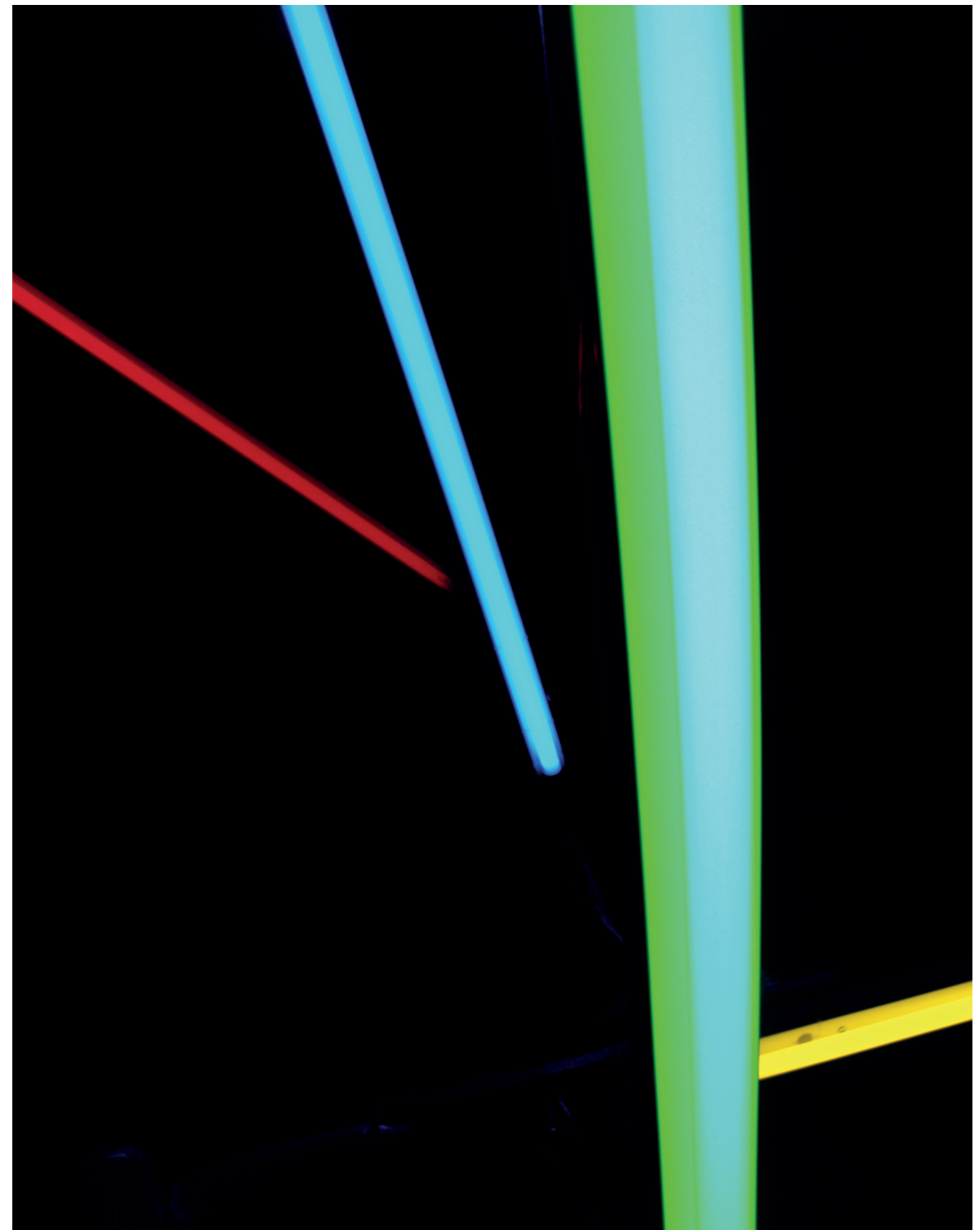
The rudimentary mechanics of the work do not detract from its power; if anything, they enhance it. Manning plays with the ubiquity of both the fluorescent tube and the household fan, and *Spectra III* sends these common objects whirling and spinning into the realm of magical animism: the work becomes an object with agency that shares our physical space. While Ross Manning's work explores how old and new technologies coexist on a single spectrum, what makes his work so captivating is the life they appear to embody.

Ellie Buttrose

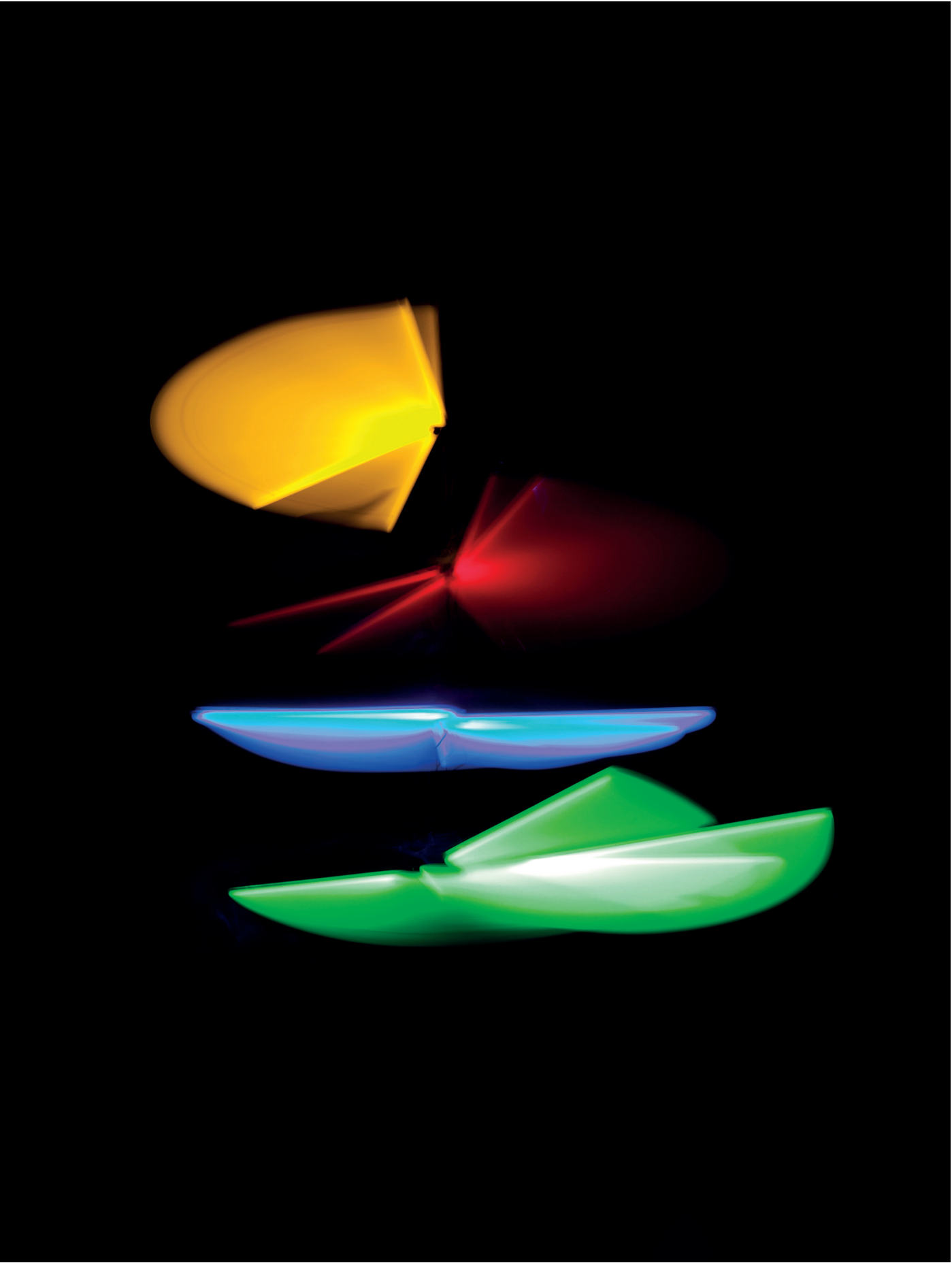
Endnotes

- 1 Ross Manning, in conversation with the author, 13 April 2012.
- 2 Manning.
- 3 Manning.

Left: *Spectra II* (detail) 2012
Installation view; commissioned by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art for 'NEW12'
Photograph: Andrew Curtis
Right: *Spectra I* (detail) 2012



Above: *Spectra I* (detail) 2012
 Opposite: *Spectra I* 2012
 Installation view, Milani Gallery, Brisbane



Ross Manning

b.1978 Brisbane
Lives and works in Brisbane

Spectra I (installation view) 2012
Coloured fluorescent lamps, motorised fans, power boards,
extension cables, wood, rope
Installed dimensions variable
Collection: Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2012	'Spectra', Milani Gallery, Brisbane
2011	'Gleaning the Cube', Milani Gallery, Brisbane
2010	'3 songs', Long Gallery, Salamanca Arts Centre, Museum of Old and New Art Festival of Music and Art, Hobart
	'Double Refraction', Lismore Regional Gallery, NSW
2009	'Input Ruins', Milani Gallery, Brisbane 'Sunshine and Zincaloom', Ptarmigan Electronic Art Space, Helsinki

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2012	'NEW12', Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne 'Tetsuya Umeda and Ross Manning', KickArts Contemporary Arts, Cairns
2011	'The Festival of New Primitive', SPEC, Brisbane 'The Plastic Arts', Wandering Room, Brisbane 'Ruckus', Wandering Room, Brisbane 'Out Hear', Footscray Art Centre, Melbourne 'New Psychedelia', University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane
2009	'Come Hither Noise', Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle, WA 'Primavera '09', Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney 'The New Truth to Materials', Boxcopy Gallery, Brisbane 'The Light', Milani Gallery, Brisbane 'Batteries Not Included', Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney
2008	'The New Fresh Cut', Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
2006	'Lost Garden Found', Nextwave Festival, Melbourne
2003	'Take Me to Your Ruler', The Farm, Brisbane

PERFORMANCES

2007	Electrofringe Festival, Newcastle, NSW <i>Audio Pollen Social Club</i> [performance], Brisbane 'Sound Crucible', Ballina, NSW
2006	Liquid Architecture Festival of Sound Arts, Brisbane and Melbourne <i>Articulating space</i> [performance], ABC Radio
2005	What Is Music? Festival, Melbourne Straight Out of Brisbane Festival, Brisbane The NOW now Festival, Sydney
2004	Electrofringe Festival, Newcastle, NSW
2003	<i>Small black box</i> [performance], Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane <i>Make it now</i> [performance], Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane

QUALIFICATIONS, RESIDENCIES, GRANTS AND AWARDS

2011	'The Churchie National Emerging Art Exhibition', Griffith University Art Gallery, Brisbane (winner) Artist Residency, Footscray Community Art Centre, Melbourne
2009	Aphids 'Choose Your Own Adventure' Residency and Mentoring, Helsinki Artist Residency, Koelse Experimental Music Association, Helsinki Artist Residency, Ptarmigan Electronic Art Space, Helsinki

COLLECTIONS

Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart
University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane
Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne

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Bridgeman, Sean. 'Musicians and boffins, tinkers and dreamers'. In Priest, Gail (ed.). *Experimental Music: Audio Explorations in Australia*. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2008, pp.175–95.
Gomes, Mark. 'New everyday automata'. In Kahn, Jeff (ed.). *Primavera '09* [exhibition catalogue]. Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2009, p.52.
Moody, Sebastian. *New Psychedelia* [exhibition catalogue]. University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane, 2011.
Werkmeister, Sarah. *Double Refraction* [exhibition catalogue]. Lismore Regional Gallery, Lismore, New South Wales, 2010.
Zuvela, Dani. 'Ross Manning's *Spectra*'. In Kahn, Jeff and Engberg, Juliana (eds). *NEW12* [exhibition catalogue]. Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2012, pp.16–23.
Zuvela, Dani. 'Spectra'. In *Spectra* [exhibition catalogue]. Milani Gallery, Brisbane, 2012, unpaginated.

WEBSITES

www.rossmanning.com
www.milanigallery.com.au
www.skyneedle.org