

ART COLLECTOR



THE UNDISCOVERED ISSUE

+ Col Jordan + Gregor Kregar + Brian Blanchflower + Lottie Consalvo
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FLOW STATE

Award-winning Western Australian duo **Stephen Brameld** and **Jay Staples** blend spontaneity and shared consciousness in their distinctive collaborative practice.

WORDS | EMMA-KATE WILSON

Working in collaboration, **Stephen Brameld** and **Jay Staples** invite cultural memory into abstract mark-making. Paint brushes touching; the canvases are heavy with activity. A teasing, playing, manipulating the surface.

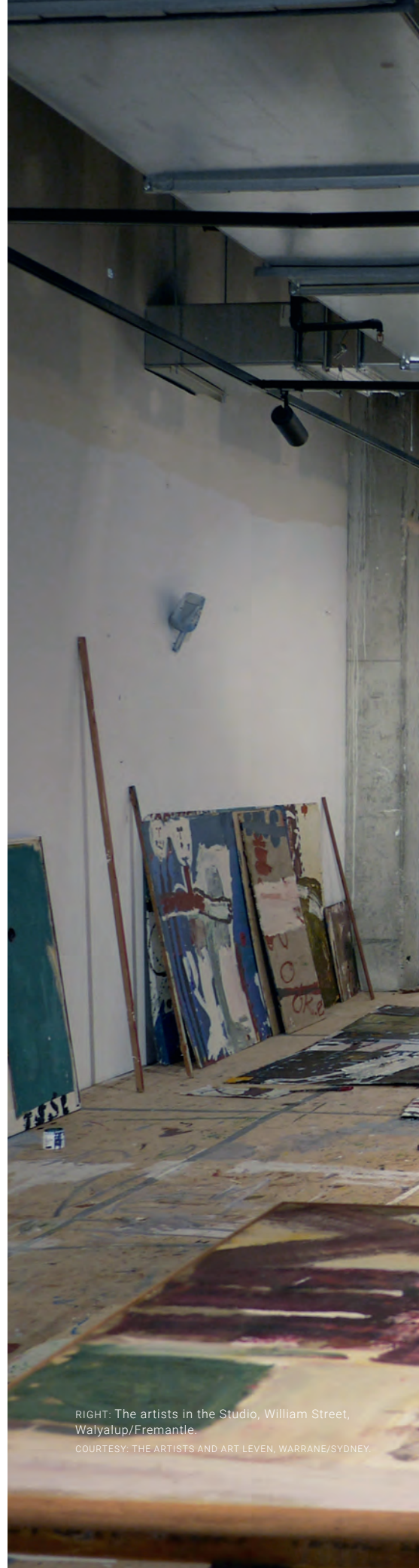
The two Western Australia-based artists share a language and formality of tone that extends to the application, gesture, and colour. Working together since 2018 in an array of materials, their work explores improvisation, shared consciousness, regeneration and mysticism. They adopt a ‘workshop-like’ approach to painting and sculpting. “Our collaborative input works to destabilise falling into tendency or idiosyncrasy,” says the artists in a joint statement. “[It] stops us from making the same work over and over again.”

“A constantly changing surface, which is out of the individuals’ control, ensures that the course of the work is forever taking unexpected turns, allowing the painting to evolve beyond what the individual might conceive,” they continue.

With a unique synergy, the two recently won the Art Leven Gallery Award at the 2024 Paddington Art Prize, after catching the eye of Art Leven’s gallery director, Mirri Leven. “Even as a small thumbnail in the portal, the composition immediately caught my attention,” says Leven. “Their ability to create such a perfect balance together is remarkable. Each work sits as a conversation that Stephen and Jay invite the viewer into, making their art both dynamic and deeply engaging.”

The winning artwork, called *Freshwater Bay*, 2024, evokes the banks of Perth’s Swan River—bringing the landscape into the composition through the application of sand alongside acrylic and oil. With the duo frequently painting outside in the hot, dry and salty climate of Western Australia, this sense of place is depicted in the material palette and punctuated mark making.

For their upcoming exhibition, the collection has ‘revealed itself’ over four years.



RIGHT: The artists in the Studio, William Street, Walyalup/Fremantle.
COURTESY: THE ARTISTS AND ART LEVEN, WARRANE/SYDNEY



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The artworks are heavily processed with many previous incarnations, which the artists aim to speak to the clarity of perseverance. “It tells us not to be afraid of destroying what is ‘valuable’, especially if it stands in the way of something more virtuous or robust,” they add.

With previous exhibitions in Perth and Newcastle, the self-taught artists work in a flow state to engage a level of spontaneity that can only be achieved through collaboration, working towards common ground for a collective vision. As Leven observes, “Brameld and Staples navigate a space of shared imagination, engaging in a creative process akin to an instinctual and unscripted performance.”

Stephen Brameld & Jay Staples, *New Works By* shows from 3 - 26 April at Art Leven, Warrane/Sydney.



ABOVE: Stephen Brameld & Jay Staples, *Waltz Down to Slip Street*, 2024. Oil, acrylic, charcoal on board, 120cm x 190cm.

BELOW: Stephen Brameld & Jay Staples, *The Moon, the Boy and their Shadow*, 2024. Oil, acrylic, enamel, wood stain, pigment, timber on board 123cm x 184cm.

OPPOSITE: Stephen Brameld & Jay Staples, *Plum Bird*, 2023. Oil, acrylic, timber, fabric on board, 180cm x 120cm. COURTESY: THE ARTISTS AND ART LEVEN, WARRANE/SYDNEY.

