

the nature of being: **an interview with Maxwell Callaghan**

CCH talks to Maxwell Callaghan about common themes underpinning his arts practice, his curiosity for hidden environments, and the therapeutic nature of art in public spaces.

CCH: Could you start by telling us about your practice?

MC: *I use painting to examine personal and social memory.*

CCH: What themes or ideas are you most driven to explore in your work?

MC: *There is no concise idea or theme throughout my work. Some different ideas or themes that have arisen over the last five years are inner speech; oral history; interpersonal relationships; family; childhood; formative and everyday experiences; domestic and institutional environments; mental illness and treatment, amongst other things.*

CCH: Could you speak briefly about your works that recently featured in the exhibition *the nature of being*, displayed at Dentons Fisher Jeffries?

MC: *These works were taken from a body of work titled "Tomb with No Windows" that were exhibited as a solo exhibition in Sydney at Firstdraft at the start of the year. The works examine the experience of confinement and physical and chemical restraint in a psychiatric care environment. I was driven to explore these ideas because they are hidden environments and experiences. They are rarely talked about or acknowledged by society in general or from a patient's perspective.*

CCH: How do you think your works relate to other artworks in the exhibition? Are there any contrasts or interesting conversations?

MC: *I think there are interesting formal relationships between my works and others in terms of the use of brown, gold and earthy colours. Another interesting relationship I can see is the use of processes that have a therapeutic quality to them in the making of the works. I also think there is a bodily-ness to one of my larger paintings that relates nicely to Sam Gold's vessel forms. There are lots of relationships and conversations going on in this show.*

CCH: Is it unique to have your artwork displayed in a space like Dentons Fisher Jeffries? What impact do you think this might have on people's experience of the work?

MC: *I like the idea that people can walk in off of busy Gouger street, get in an elevator and within seconds be in a quiet space where they can look at a variety of different kinds of work that will make them think and feel in different ways.*

Maxwell Callaghan is a visual artist who lives and works on Kurna land (Adelaide). In 2017 he graduated with a BVA Honours (First Class) Degree from Adelaide Central School of Art and was included in the National Graduate Show at PICA. In 2018, Callaghan held his first solo exhibition at FELTspace in Adelaide. In 2019, he was awarded an annual studio residency at ACE Open in Adelaide and held a solo exhibition at Rubicon ARI, Melbourne. His work is held in a number of private collections.

***the nature of being* was presented by the Centre for Creative Health and Dentons Fisher Jeffries between 27 April – 31 May 2021. Featuring work by local artists Maxwell Callaghan, Sam Gold, Rebecca McEwan, Cassie Thring and Lee Walter the exhibition was co-curated by Fiona Borthwick and Steph Cibich.**

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