

Bio and CV

Michelle Tonkin, born Sydney. Lived Australia, France, India, UK.
Currently lives and works on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country in Naarm/Melbourne, Australia | www.michelletonkin.com

Over three decades, my art-making processes have explored boundaries and sought ways to subvert concepts. Whilst being informed by feminist thought, it is my spiritual contemplations - grounded in formal Buddhist studies - that have guided my exploration of the transgression and transcendence of boundaries.

Between 2001-2011, I dedicated myself to spiritual practice, living in a monastery as a celibate Buddhist nun where I sought release from restrictive concepts of mind and body whilst exploring the possibility of an art practice based on sculpting intent rather than form. Through this period of renunciation, a profound erasure took place: of the body and its expressions, and of the tangible creation of art.

My subsequent art practice and research have sought means of re-entering form through modes of understanding and finding reparation at the site where spiritual trauma took place: the body.

In a practice that is fostered through a co-creating relationship with materiality, my art explores the junctures where self and matter, inner and outer are considered. These are liminal territories that disrupt borders and differences. Rather than crystallising limitations, my practice aims to evoke something that is unbound, limit-less, and which allows for the resonance of open-ended possibilities of being.

SOLO PROJECTS AND EXHIBITIONS

2022 *Formless Intimacies*, VCA Master of Contemporary Art yearlong project, Melbourne
Puckering Sky, VCA Stables, Southbank, Melbourne.

2020 *Bandaiddubuddha*, Melbourne, Australia *People We Leak*: Desiderium Gallery. (online)

2017-18 *Bodhi Unbound*, Foks Space, Wandsworth, London, UK, and San Remo, Australia

2011 *One Moon*, Australian Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, Australia

2001-11 *Sculpting Intent*, Institute for Wisdom and Compassion, Roqueredonde, France.

2001 *Waive*, Mass Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

2000 *Inhume*, Wilson's Promontory, Victoria, Australia

1999 Solo Exhibition at conclusion of 12-month studio residency, George Gallery St Kilda, Melbourne, Australia

1998 *Nativity*, Collingwood Children's Farm, Melbourne, Australia

Sky-dialogue, performance, George Hotel Tower, St Kilda, Melbourne, Australia

1996 *The Landing*, Southbank, Melbourne, Australia

SELECTED GROUP SHOWS

2023 *DEBUT XIX*, Blindside, Melbourne (curated by Priya Namana and Nina Sadaze)

2023 *Artists Books*, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne

2022 *Formless Intimacies*, with Jon Harris, VCA Artspace, Southbank, Melbourne

2022 *Make Love Your Practise in Radical Self Care and Sustainable Art Making*, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne (co-ordinated by Kate Just)

2022 *Subscental Birth*, in MCA Second year exhibition, VCA Artspace, Southbank, Melbourne

2022 *What I Wish I'd Told You*, (Footscray Community Arts Centre and touring nationally).
Claire Bridge and Chelle Destefano, a collaboration with the Deaf Community of Deaf

- Auslan stories. (supported through Creative Vic, City of Melbourne and Australian Council for the Arts)
- 2022 *Untitled (kinesis)* in *Portals and Parallels*, Dirty Dozen, Campbell Arcade, City of Melbourne (supported through Creative Vic)
- 2021 *The New Abnormal*, VCA 1st year MCA group exhibition, online.
- 1999 *Unexpect*, Probe, (three-week endurance/interactive performance), Melbourne International Arts Festival, Herring Island, Melbourne.
- 1998 *Talking Pictures*, (for *Emptiness*) Glen Eira Arts Complex, Melbourne, Australia
- 1997 *Slumber*, Melbourne University (performance), Australia
- 1996 Graduate Show, VCA, Melbourne, Australia
- 1995 *Neonate*, (interactive installation), VCA Gallery, Melbourne, Australia *The Rose Enigma*, PIT SPACE, Bundoora, Melbourne, Australia
- 1994 *Indwelling*, Temple Studios, Melbourne

AWARDS

- 2021 Graduate Access Grant, University of Melbourne
- 2017 Academic Development Grant, London Alternative Market, UK
Further studies research grant, Nima Buddhist preservation services, Schenzhen, China
- 1998 Lavazza George Gallery Scholarship, 12-month studio residency and solo exhibition
- 1997 Pratt Foundation Grant for publication of 'Emptiness'
- 1989 School Dux, Scotch College, Adelaide
South Australian Premiers Award, Year-12 academic achievement

EDUCATION, TRAINING, PROFESSIONAL

- 2021- ongoing Master Contemporary Art, VCA, University of Melbourne, Australia
- 2018-23 Public Programmer, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
- 2017-18 MPhil/PhD Fine Art plus Material Cultures (incomplete), Kingston University, London, UK
- 2001-10 Training in Vinaya (Buddhist monastic discipline), France, Taiwan and Nepal
- 2006-09 Three Year Training Programme, (Buddhist Philosophy & Practise), Institute for Wisdom and Compassion, France
- 1998 Bachelor of Fine Art (Painting), *first class honours*. Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, Australia
- 1993-94 Bachelor of Fine Arts (Painting), RMIT/ PIT, Bundoora (1st and 2nd year studies), Melbourne, Australia
- 1992 Advanced Certificate of Art, Box Hill TAFE, Melbourne, Australia
- 1991 Certificate of Art, North Adelaide School of Art, Adelaide, Australia

TEACHING AND SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- 2020 Invited Speaker, INFORM Seminar, *Sexual Abuse Framed by Faith or Belief*. London, UK.
- 2019 Speaker at AASR Conference, *Religion and Violence*, Newcastle, Australia Speaker at Sakyadhita International Buddhist Women's Conference, NSW, Australia
Interviewed for BBC World Service 'Sunday' programme, episode 8 Sept 2019
- 2017 Guest Lecturer for degree course on *Buddhism and Sexuality*, Duke University, USA Invited Speaker *Eroticism and the Radicalisation of Art* Symposium, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Paris Nord, France

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

- 2023 Chapter: 'Pure Perception and Pure Suffering: A nun's experience of abuse in a major Tibetan Buddhist organisation' for Routledge Inform Series on Minority Religions and Spiritual Movements. London, UK.

- 2022 Interview/Chapter: *Silhouettes of the Soul*, Otto von Busch & Jeanine Viau (eds) London: Bloomsbury.
- 2017 Interview for Tricycle Magazine. Varvaloucos E. New York. link [here](#).
- Interview for Huffington Post / Medium - The Art of Being Unbound. Haas M. link [here](#)
- 2011 Catalogue notes for *One Moon*, AEA, Damcho Drolma,
- 1997 *Emptiness*, artists book, self-published, edition of 750