

Tom Melick (23 May, Sydney, 2:41pm)

maps
calligraphy
cuneiform inscription
graffiti
lacework and netting
botanical shapes
musical composition
weather systems
cartoons
signatures
children's drawings
anatomical illustrations
architectural plans
electrograms

I made the list on the train, after talking with my friend Nina about Mary's art. It comes from wanting to read her pictures, piece them together from clues and associations.

The images ask for guesswork because what is absent is just as present as what appears. Her visual language is never one thing, refuses a single technique even. Some hair-like marks suggest script (ideograms?) but then breakdown, become excitable. Nothing remains still.

I was trained to locate artworks in time, secure them to a particular style. Art history is a discipline of explanation and emplacement. Mary's pictures bother chronology and style. They come with a restless historicity. Full of citations to visual languages that lead you across the surface, but also into the primary act of mark-marking.

You once wrote that when there is too much to say you synthesise it into something cryptic. You were referring to your own writing, but I wonder, can this also be a way of making images?

Abstract not in terms of its art historical meanings, but something closer to the word's etymological root? "To draw, drag, move" away.

Inoperative words #1

Elisa Taber (25 May, Montréal, 9:21am)

Mary's marks graze their surfaces like absolute decoration, emancipated from every purpose. They feel "al ras de suelo" (grazing earth). The Uruguayan storyteller Horacio Quiroga describes his characters that way, hovering between life and death.

Intent is a raft moored to the island that is comprehension, always trying to float away. She cuts the cord and speaks to herself. Brave isolation.

I stare and stare at the clusters of shapes until they emit smoke. This is fiction, I think and imagine a mask beside a featureless face. Reality's doppelganger, unlike dreams, is not dispelled by but points to its artificiality. I fall deeper into sleep.

A snake slithers up a stairwell to a room in the sky, swallows a star, and falls so hard it becomes a rooted tree.

Air dense with swarms of no-see-ums blown clean by a wind that feels like diving into a tepid pool. An arrow points to the sea, "No one lives there, they drowned."

Those are the myths, stories of origin, I see in "Ceramic Papers." Dwelling on her encrypted script, I peer into her home. We can only hear each other. You mention a "restless historicity," maybe this is the time of myth: the primordial is immanent, now gods descend in human form.

Tom Melick makes books and pamphlets at Stolton Press, and edits Slug with Elisa.

Mary MacDougall (b. 1983, Australia) lives and works on Gadigal land in Sydney. The foundation of her practice is experimental mark-making which she employs across a variety of materials including glass, board, paper and ceramics. She is interested in colour theory, collage, asemic writing, image archives and forms in transition.

Recent exhibitions include *DRAWING*, Sydenham International, Sydney (2022); Joan Jonas and Mary MacDougall, *Dialogues: Wind, 1968* and *R.B Archipelago, 2017*, ReadingRoom, Melbourne (2021); *Roman Glass Episode*, Knulp, Sydney (2019) and *R.B. Waves*, ReadingRoom, Melbourne (2018).

Mary has released two records, one as part of Warm Currency via the London label Horn of Plenty (2022) and another as The Bowles on Graham Lambkin's Kye label in New York (2012). She has produced three artists' books with Nicolas Weltyk of Cooperative Editions and has contributed to numerous publications. She has exhibited widely in artist-run spaces in Sydney, Melbourne and San Francisco.

Mary would like to thank Rory, Wendy, Elisa, T.Melick, Hana, Ivan, Tom, Matthew, Petra, Victor, Olivia, Ed and Sofia

ReadingRoom
186 High Street, Northcote,
Naarm / Melbourne, 3070, Australia.

www.areadingroom.com

Mary MacDougall *Ceramic Papers*

28 May–25 June, 2022

clockwise from entrance

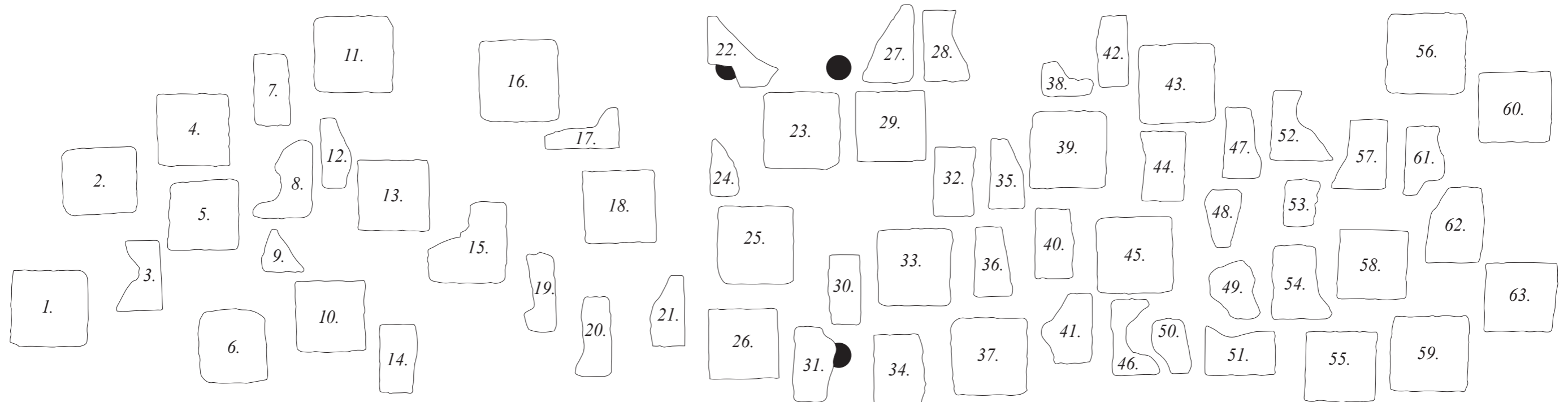
Compendium Scene, 2022
glazed ceramic mounted
to dibond
37 × 56 cm

Sheet Scene 2, 2022
glazed ceramic mounted
to dibond
37 × 56 cm

Sheet Scene 3, 2022
glazed ceramic mounted
to dibond
37 × 56 cm

Sheet Scene 4, 2022
glazed ceramic mounted
to dibond
37 × 56 cm

Long Life Bricks, 2022
glazed terracotta, mounted
to dibond, framed
71 × 98 cm



Frag 1–63, 2022
glazed ceramic
dimensions variable
available individually

1. Frag 49
2. Frag 35
3. Frag 23
4. Frag 10
5. Frag 42
6. Frag 40
7. Frag 21
8. Frag 54
9. Frag 32
10. Frag 3
11. Frag 46
12. Frag 26

13. Frag 6
14. Frag 24
15. Frag 50
16. Frag 37
17. Frag 34
18. Frag 1
19. Frag 58
20. Frag 55
21. Frag 28
22. Frag 17
23. Frag 39
24. Frag 63

25. Frag 45
26. Frag 8
27. Frag 53
28. Frag 13
29. Frag 4
30. Frag 31
31. Frag 57
32. Frag 19
33. Frag 48
34. Frag 11
35. Frag 29
36. Frag 22

37. Frag 36
38. Frag 61
39. Frag 44
40. Frag 20
41. Frag 15
42. Frag 27
43. Frag 38
44. Frag 16
45. Frag 47
46. Frag 56
47. Frag 30
48. Frag 60

49. Frag 59
50. Frag 33
51. Frag 14
52. Frag 18
53. Frag 62
54. Frag 52
55. Frag 9
56. Frag 41
57. Frag 12
58. Frag 2
59. Frag 43
60. Frag 5

61. Frag 25
62. Frag 51
63. Frag 7