



After the Fall

The Guildhouse Collections Project
Flinders University Museum of Art
25 July — 16 September, 2022

Elyas Alavi

Artist statement

While I often use archival materials in my work, this was my first time researching and responding to a particular collection. The works I created for *After the Fall* are my response to the recent tragic events in Afghanistan, and I researched artists who also dealt with themes of war, violence, trauma, chaos and the aftermath. I found many similarities in prints by artists such as Käthe Kollwitz, Jean Duplessis-Bertaux, Jacques Callot and Francisco Goya to past and present events in my home country. In an etching by Callot for his c.1633 series *The miseries and misfortunes of war*, I was amazed, at first glance, at the way Callot appeared to show a group of men playing games on a farm. Look closely, however, and we find that the men are in battle and killing one another. This work is one of 18 sequential prints depicting the horrors of what became known as the Thirty Years' War. In this series Callot depicts, in graphic scenes, soldiers ransacking farmhouses,

raping inhabitants and burning them alive. Corpses hang from trees. I see so many similarities between these works and events in Afghanistan. Until a year ago, it would have been unimaginable the Taliban could take over a country of 40 million people, and overthrow a government backed by the United States and NATO. War is so horrific yet repeats again and again in different places and times.

It's been a great experience holding Kollwitz's prints and studying them in detail. Two works I draw on a lot are *Woman with dead child (Frau mit totem Kind)* (1903) and *From many wounds you bleed, O people (Aus vielen Wunden blutest Du, O Volk)* (1896). It's fascinating to see how Kollwitz magically absorbed what she felt at the time. When I look at these works I feel like I experience a bit of what she felt — a strong, really deep sense of pain and sorrow. She is an artist who lived in a time of war and was deeply affected by it. I have so much respect for her.



Elyas Alavi
Drowning I, 2022
oil on canvas
76.0 x 110.0 cm
photo Grant Hancock

Biography

Elyas Alavi is an interdisciplinary artist and poet who works across painting, sculpture, performance and moving image. An Afghan-born Hazara refugee, Alavi is interested in exploring trauma, memory, gender, sexuality, and social and political crises through his work. Alavi has exhibited nationally and internationally. He has published three poetry books in Afghanistan and Iran, and has received several literature prizes.

Alavi's work featured in a solo exhibition at ACE Open in 2019, the same year he received a prestigious Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship. Most recently Alavi exhibited at The Substation, Melbourne, as part of the Hyphenated Biennial 2021-22. He completed a Master of Visual Arts at the University of South Australia in 2016 and a Master of Fine Arts at Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London, in 2020.

Louise Haselton

Artist statement

The Guildhouse Collections Project at FUMA gave me the chance to look broadly at a range of European prints dating back to the 1400s. The dark atmosphere in works of human catastrophe and folly by artists such as Sebald Beham, Francisco Goya, Jacques Callot and Georges Rouault made an impression. I was particularly drawn to pages from *The Nuremberg Chronicle*, printed in 1493, containing more than 1800 woodcut illustrations and text. This ambitious, encyclopedic work is compelling. It was, at the time, the most lavishly illustrated book printed in Europe.

I'm curious about how written and visual information was combined in the *Chronicle*, and how this work impacted readers at the time. I'm also interested in its content — portraits of royalty, saints, martyrs, 'human monstrosities', depictions of biblical events and miracles, and views of cities. I'm drawn to its efficient, elegant typography and layout, and the strong graphic appeal of the woodcut and letterpress printing.

This project was an opportunity to develop skills in working two dimensionally. I trialled several printmaking processes, including etching, drypoint and monotype, and incorporating collage. I also attended an etching workshop at the Australian Print Workshop in Melbourne. I began by responding to an often reproduced series of 21 small images of 'human oddities' from the *Chronicle*. These human figures, reportedly seen in distant lands, include a representation of 'umbrella foot', a figure with one foot pictured lying on his back using his oversized foot to shade himself, and a figure whose mouth is so small that he has to eat and drink through a straw, and winks to communicate. Though strangely and, at times, comically distorted, the figures are depicted with compassion and empathy. I've re-presented and re-arranged elements of these images to explore different ways of using printmaking in my practice.



Louise Haselton
Plate 1 from the series *Chronicle*, 2022
drypoint, plate tone,
ink on paper
29.5 x 20.5 cm (plate)
48.5 x 38.0 cm (sheet)
photo Grant Hancock

Biography

Louise Haselton investigates relationships between disparate materials and objects, which generally culminate in her sculptures and installations. Haselton employs everyday and overlooked materials to explore ideas of connection and coexistence. She has participated in group and solo exhibitions at galleries and museums such as Sydney's ArtSpace, Melbourne's Ian Potter Museum of Art and Adelaide's Art Gallery of South Australia, and residencies at studios including Delhi's Sanskriti Kendra, Berlin's Phasmid Studios and Papulankutja, in Western Australia.

Haselton's practice was the subject of the 2019 SALA monograph, *Act Natural*, published by Wakefield Press. This was accompanied by a major solo exhibition, *like cures like*, at Adelaide's Samstag Museum of Art. Haselton is represented by GAGPROJECTS Berlin/Adelaide.

Acknowledgements

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Kate O'Boyle

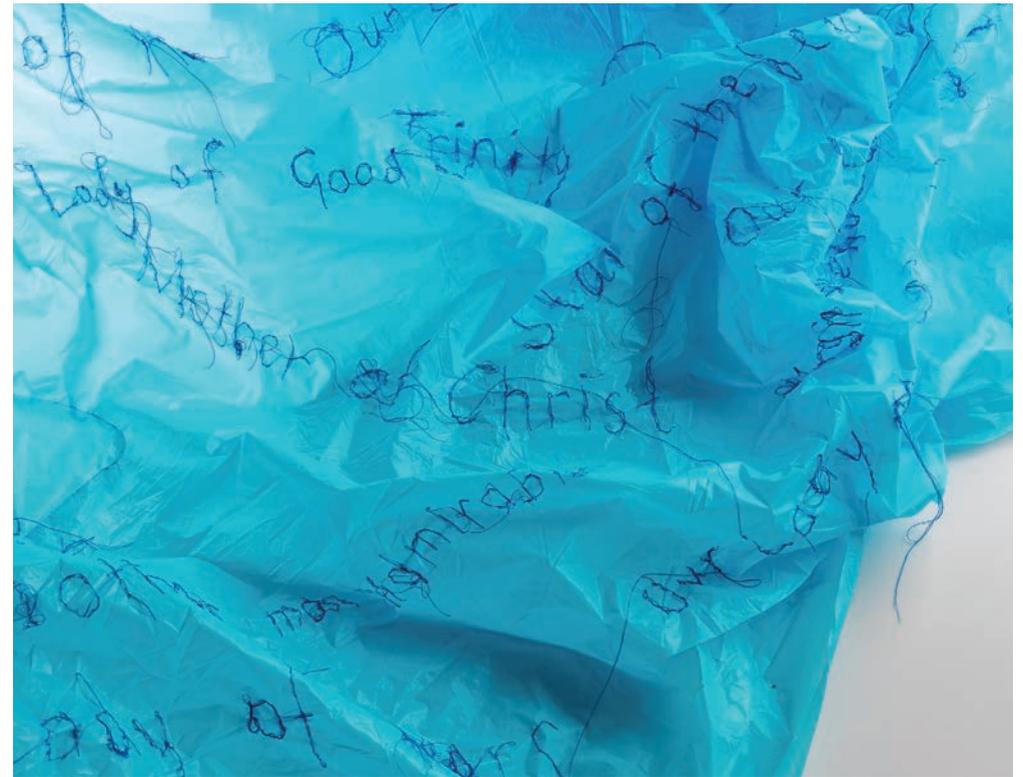
Artist statement

The FUMA European print collection allowed me to extend my PhD research into Christian materiality and consider how performative gestures of worship are represented in the collection. I became particularly interested in *The Virgin protecting two members of a confraternity*, by Agostino Carracci after Veronese (1582). Here, Our Lady of Mercy is giant-like — quite literally larger than life. She holds her large cape open to shelter two men who look up at her in rapture.

Reflecting upon this Mary, and her protection of the confraternity members, I discovered Marian Valley, a Catholic site of pilgrimage near the Gold Coast in Queensland. Marian Valley draws visitors to shrines commissioned by confraternity groups who identify along ethnic lines. The various Marys represented here provide a tangible example of Australia's diversity, the colonial nature of Catholicism and the continued reiteration of that process in contemporary Australia.

Staying on site at Marian Valley I was invited into the lives of the people who live there or visit. Many stories of hope and triumph were attributed to the Virgin. Many of the Marys find their genesis in times of crisis — war, genocide and tragedy. Trauma is deeply embedded in these shrines, and Mary becomes a figure through which tragedy — personal and collective — can be processed.

Set in rainforest, Marian Valley's architecture is recognisably Catholic with a Queensland flair. It is unique among Catholic sites. Rather than shutting out the external world, its shrines and chapels engage with the environment. The rainforest is a place of beauty but also ferociousness — the shrines battle moisture, harsh sunlight and large spiders. Maintaining the shrines takes considerable labour which is demonstrated by the ongoing dedication of those assigned to care for each of them.



Kate O'Boyle
Mother wound (detail), 2022
PPE COVID gowns, cotton thread
450.0 x 900.0 cm
photo Grant Hancock

Biography

Kate O'Boyle works across digital media, installation, sculpture and performance. O'Boyle is interested in the role materiality plays in acts of divinity and worship. Her recent research has focused on the physical act of gazing upwards as a performative gesture in Judeo-Christian faith.

O'Boyle's work has been exhibited in Melbourne at galleries and festivals including Buxton Contemporary, Channels Festival, RMIT Site Eight Gallery, Mejia, Blindside and Seventh Gallery. Outside

Melbourne her work has featured at venues including Murray Art Museum Albury (MAMA), Sydney's National Art School and Adelaide's FELTspace. She is currently a PhD candidate at RMIT University, Melbourne.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Pauline Fathers, and the Marian Valley volunteers, especially Julianne, for their guidance on this project. I am extremely grateful to Luke Walker for his work as DOP.

From left to right
Francisco Goya (1746–1828), *Furious folly (Disparate furioso)*, plate 6 from the series *Los Disparates (The Follies)*, c.1815–19, published 1875, etching with burnished aquatint, ink on paper, 21.8 x 32.4 cm (image), 31.5 x 48.9 cm (sheet), Collection of Flinders University Museum of Art 77.

Agostino Carracci (1557–1602), after Paolo Veronese (1528–1588), *The Virgin protecting two members of a confraternity*, 1582, see footnote 5.

Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945), *Woman with dead child (Frau mit totem Kind)*, 1903, see footnote 6.

John Martin (1789–1854), *Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise*, from *Illustrations to Paradise Lost*, 1827, see footnote 2.



*Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe.*

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, lines 1–3, published 1667

Art in a fallen world

When John Milton embarked on his epic poem *Paradise Lost* he was in mourning for his second wife and in political exile for his part in Oliver Cromwell's failed republican government. Milton was also blind, dictating his poem to his daughters and trusted aides while in hiding. The narrative follows a war in heaven where the 'traitor angel', Satan, and other fallen angels have been cast out by God. Satan seeks revenge on God by tempting his creation — man — and Adam and Eve become corrupted into a mortal life of sin, and expelled from the Garden of Eden. *Paradise Lost* describes the fall of Satan, the fall of mankind and, for the poet, the work was an attempt to make sense of a fallen world.

English artists who illustrated *Paradise Lost* interpreted the poem from the depths of their experience, faith and imagination. William Blake's watercolours of 1807 and 1808¹ show a curly-haired, agile and wicked Satan, alluding to the artist's sympathy for Milton's nonconformist antihero. By the time John Martin was commissioned to illustrate *Paradise Lost* in 1824, the United Kingdom was in the throes of the Industrial Revolution. Much of Martin's work focused on improvements in infrastructure for England's towns, including sewerage systems, railways and embankments. Working in mezzotint, the dark-to-light printmaking technique which begins with a roughed-up plate to hold the ink, Martin delicately smoothed the areas of the plate to print radiating lines of light. In *Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise* (1827)², the artist's sublime and colossal landscape is the drama; craggy rock faces tower over the cowering Adam and Eve, and a lightning bolt pierces the stormy sky. The tiny serpent is making itself scarce in rocks at the lower right, and in the landscape beyond are two dinosaurs — a nod to recent developments in science with the discovery of megafauna fossils in the English countryside during the 1820s.

Martin worked for three years on his 24-plate series *Illustrations to Paradise Lost*, which was advertised to subscribers, then published to great critical acclaim in 1827. At almost the same time, Blake was working on his plates for the series *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (1823–6, published 1874). Blake, facing his own personal and artistic crises, found expression in the Old Testament narrative of the Book of Job, which follows Job's suffering as Satan tests his piety. In the engraving *Satan before the Throne of God*³ a muscular Satan leaps at God's feet, surrounded by angels, Job and Job's family. Throughout the series Job endures the loss of his possessions, family and health. Blake died soon after the proof sets and first edition were published but an additional set was published by his patron, John Linnell, posthumously in 1874.

Flinders University Museum of Art's European prints which illustrate accounts of the Old Testament resonate with Kate O'Boyle. Her practice spans sculpture, installation, performance and video, and considers the role materiality plays in acts of divinity and worship. Her research into the relationship between relic worship and textiles led her to prints which depict Saint Veronica holding up the sudarium (the sweat cloth of Christ, which shows his portrait wearing the crown of thorns) or 'veil of Veronica'. O'Boyle was also drawn to prints which incorporate the performative gesture of figures looking up toward the divine, including the 19th century engraving of *St Catherine* after a Guido Reni painting (1854)⁴, and the 16th century engraved series *The martyrdom of Christ and the Apostles* by Dutch artist Hendrick Goltzius.

Observational research into the gesture of 'looking up' led O'Boyle to the Marian Valley in the lush Queensland rainforest, inland from the Gold Coast. This Catholic monastery is home to 39 shrines to the Virgin Mary. They have been commissioned by particular ethnic groups within the Catholic community (and include Vietnamese, Rwandan and Indian Marys), and employ architectural devices designed to make the worshipper look up to the object of devotion. O'Boyle's video work *There's something about Mary* (2022) documents the Marys, the priests who look after them, and their connection to those who seek shelter from persecution and crisis. She presents the benevolent Mary as a shape-shifter who can comfort as well as bring about apocalyptic threats.

Mother wound (2022) is a large, hand-embroidered cape; a reference to the elaborate cape worn by the Virgin in the engraving *The Virgin protecting two members of a confraternity* (1582) by Italian artist Agostino Carracci (after a lost painting by Veronese)⁵. Various names of Mary have been embroidered by O'Boyle into the fabric, reflecting Mary's multifaceted nature and the importance of drapery to both Christian materiality and in printed images of faith. These Marys are a conduit for contemporary fears. O'Boyle has reimagined the Virgin in PPE as a protector against pandemic, offering salvation to those affected by COVID-19.

Having worked in sculpture for two decades, Louise Haselton's turn to printmaking for *After the Fall* was inspired by the 1493 book *Liber Chronicarum* or *The Nuremberg Chronicle*. The *Chronicle* was published in both Latin and German in its namesake of Nuremberg, Germany, and was the most ambitious feat of image production and publishing of its time. Its text, by the humanist Hartmann Schedel, describes the history of the world from the Creation to the time of publication, and it includes more than 1800 woodcut illustrations of biblical narratives, historical figures, mythical humanoids and panoramic views of European cities. Haselton's interest initially focused on the sheet's compositions — where xylographic text, letterpress text and woodcut image are elegantly combined on the same page.



For *After the Fall* Haselton produced a series of drypoints inspired by the human monstrosities in the *Chronicle*, including 'blemmyes', or headless men, each with faces on their chest. In Folio XII recto a blemmye appears alongside creatures with missing or elongated body parts, a horned man and a man with a large foot to shade him from the sun. Blemmyes were documented in antiquity and by the time the printing press was invented in the 15th century, their inclusion in printed books and illustrated maps was common. The presence of humanoids was associated with documenting geography and travel, signalling fear of the unknown parts of the world, and the monsters and imagined creatures that might inhabit them.

Haselton's series *Chronicle* (2022) takes elements of the humanoids — the blemmye with face on chest, eyes, horns from a horned man and backward legs. The isolated forms are scratched into the plate with a drypoint needle, with extra ink added to other parts of the plate and delicately wiped back before printing. The result is cinematic and surreal. Some prints have added collaged elements — mirrored discs and false eyelashes — feminising the curious creatures.

For Elyas Alavi 'the Fall' directly references the fall of Kabul to the Taliban on the night of 15 August 2021 and the recent rapid collapse of the Afghan government. Alavi is a Hazara Afghan-born refugee and explores trauma, memory, identity, and social and political crises in his practice. He was drawn to the European prints in the FUMA collection which depict the trauma and grief of war. These include an etching by the 17th century French printmaker Jacques Callot of soldiers ransacking the countryside from his c. 1633 series *The miseries and misfortunes of war*, and prints from Francisco Goya's famous series *Los Desastres de la Guerra (The Disasters of War)* (1810–15, published 1864), which document Napoleon's brutal invasion of Spain and Portugal, and the ensuing war from 1804–1814.

Swiss artist Theophile-Alexandre Steinlen and German printmaker Käthe Kollwitz communicated their lifelong concerns for the working class and marginalised communities in their printmaking. Both documented the effects of war — the displaced persons, the soldiers — and Kollwitz, in particular, dealt with the personal grief of losing loved ones. Kollwitz's *Woman with dead child (Frau mit totem Kind)* (1903)⁶ elicits a strong sense of pain and sorrow, which for Alavi holds deep resonance. He considers the dark irony that Kollwitz used herself and her son Peter as models for this work. A decade later her son was killed in the First World War. For *After the Fall*, Alavi presents a video work, *TAMAM (The End)* (2022), mixed from phone footage captured on Kabul streets and at the airport in the days following Kabul's fall to the Taliban.

In Alavi's oil series *Drowning* (2022), a deer appears to struggle under the weight of an explosion or an engulfing flood. Visions of his family and his childhood neighbourhood in Iran, which frequently permeate his dreams and nightmares, appear in oil on the left panel of the diptych *Drowning II* (2022). In the right panel the Old Presidential palace in Kabul (known as Darul Aman or 'Peace house') hovers over the struggling deer, referencing the quiet surrender of the Afghan government to the Taliban. Alavi's paintings are meditations on a fallen world, expressions of personal crisis and loss, amid the ongoing trauma of war and displacement.

In 2022 Milton's quote 'all our woe' holds extraordinary resonance. Emerging from the isolation and challenges of two years of a pandemic The Guildhouse Collections Project gives a sense of salvation. It has relied upon shared experiences and pulling FUMA's print collection out of storage for the artists to pore over. Alavi, O'Boyle and Haselton have engaged with FUMA's European prints as a collective, looking closely at works, sharing research and testing ideas. Martyrs, apocalypses, disasters of war, monstrous beasts and the biblical Fall have long been sources of provocation for European master printmakers. These iconographies offer platforms for artists to reflect upon societal trauma and idiosyncrasies, or suggest visions of a world anew. *After the Fall* considers how artists react when faced with a crisis — of health, war, religion, the environment. These works help to make sense of a fallen world, keeping faith that the act of creating brings about its own resolutions.

Author
Alice Clanachan, Collections Curator,
Flinders University Museum of Art.

Alice Clanachan has held curatorial and collection management roles at the National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of South Australia and South Australian Museum, and was the 2019–20 Harold Wright Scholar in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, London.

1 Commissioned by Blake's patrons Thomas Butts and Reverend Joseph Thomas, and now known as 'The Butts set' and 'the Thomas set', these watercolours are divided between a number of museum collections including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, The Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California and The Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

2 John Martin (1789–1854), *Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise*, from *Illustrations to Paradise Lost*, published by Septimus Prowett, 1827, mezzotint, etching and drypoint, ink on paper, 13.8 x 20.7 cm (plate), 18.4 x 27.8 cm (sheet), Collection of Flinders University Museum of Art 182.

3 William Blake (1757–1827), *Satan before the throne of God*, plate 2 from *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, 1823–6, published 1874, engraving, ink on paper, 21.5 x 16.9 cm (plate), 37.1 x 25.9 cm (sheet), Collection of Flinders University Museum of Art 108.

4 Jean Marie Saint-Eve (1810–1856), after Guido Reni (1575–1642), *St Catherine*, 1854, engraving, ink on paper, 39.4 x 28.6 cm (plate), 43.8 x 32.4 cm (sheet), Gift of Miss M. E. Wharmby, Collection of Flinders University Museum of Art 363.

5 Agostino Carracci (1557–1602), after Paolo Veronese (1528–1588), *The Virgin protecting two members of a confraternity*, 1582, engraving, ink on paper, 30.2 x 21.8 cm (image and sheet), Collection of Flinders University Museum of Art 7.

6 Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945), *Woman with dead child (Frau mit totem Kind)*, 1903, etching, drypoint, sandpaper, soft-ground, ink on paper, 40.6 x 47.2 cm (image), 51.9 x 64.3 cm (sheet), Collection of Flinders University Museum of Art 149.

The Guildhouse Collections Project delivered in partnership with Flinders University Museum of Art provides extraordinary opportunities for artists to delve into one of the largest public collections in South Australia. By inviting artists to research, study and collaborate with the Museum to create new work, the project demonstrates the value of creating new and ambitious environments for artists, collections and audiences to coalesce.

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Guildhouse and Flinders University Museum of Art acknowledge that they operate on the lands of the Kurna people and recognise the continued relationship to their lands by traditional owners past and present.

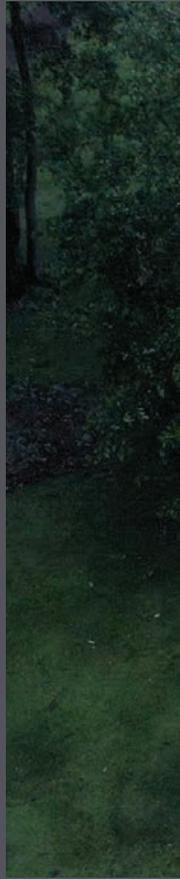
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