

13 May 2025

Crosscurrents: New Flinders University Museum of Art exhibition explores coastal narratives and ecologies



Image: Installation view: Crosscurrents, 2025, featuring cnidølysis noeëidolon by Michael Kutschbach, 2025, Barroco Slump by Mary-Jean Richardson, 2024—2025, Swollen by Honor Freeman, 2025, and Wrack by Chris De Rosa, 2025; Flinders University Museum of Art, Adelaide © the artists, photo: Grant Hancock

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As South Australia's beaches continue to be impacted by tiny but powerful algal forces, Flinders University Museum of Art (FUMA) presents *Crosscurrents*, an evocative new exhibition tracing the coastal edges of Ngarrindjeri, Kurna, and Narunga waters of South Australia.

Bringing together newly commissioned works by six South Australian artists—Brad Darkson, Chris De Rosa, Honor Freeman, Michael Kutschbach, Sonya Rankine, and Mary-Jean Richardson—*Crosscurrents* offers a richly layered exploration of place, where speculative sculpture, reimagined cultural practice, and collaborations with marine ecologies converge.

While our coastlines grapple with loss of sea life and toxic foam, seemingly caused by algae drawn to warming waters, the exhibition reflects on the stark realities of bioprospecting, extracting biological resources from nature for commercial purposes.

At the same time, the artists celebrate the intimate rituals of coastal life including swimming, walking, and observing the ever-shifting thresholds of land, sea, and sky.

"The intersecting narratives of *Crosscurrents* reveals the myths, histories, images, and objects unique to this stretch of South Australian shoreline, while evoking universal experiences of the coast," says exhibition curator Dr Belinda Howden.

Pieces include:

Brad Darkson interrogates bioprospecting practices at Henley Beach and Lonsdale, ‘returning the gaze’ on these sites through handheld, night-vision video surveillance. **Chris De Rosa’s** archival paper stacks materialise the daily rituals and observations of Port Elliot’s coastline, alongside a striking papier-mâché sea sponge—playful yet ominous in scale. **Honor Freeman** presents a cast porcelain sandbag—an item she describes as an ‘emergency object’, and that has been used for seaweed revegetation in Encounter Bay. She has also made a stoneware besser block, which bears the collaborative encrustations and markings of the sea, having been submerged for many months in Encounter Bay’s tidal zone.

Michael Kutschbach draws from science fiction to craft a large-scale speculative sculpture—a hybrid organism washed up from the depths or as an imagined creature of our near future. **Sonya Rankine** pays tribute to the Narungga fish trap at Wallaroo’s Powder Magazine, recreating its outline with woven hagstones and traditional coastal fibres. **Mary-Jean Richardson**, inspired by Italian Rococo, explores historical personifications of the ocean through fresco and painted tonal ‘registers’ capturing the colour of Port Elliot’s waters and sky.

Engaging deeply with the textures, histories, and ecologies of South Australia’s coastal landscapes, these artists foster dialogue between artistic practice, cultural heritage, and environmental stewardship.

They invite audiences to look beyond the surface of their works, to consider the unseen currents shaping our understanding of these regions and to acknowledge their deep histories and precarious futures.

“*Crosscurrents* is a compelling and timely exploration of our connection to the coast, in the face of rapid ecological and cultural change,” says FUMA Director Fiona Salmon.

“Highlighting the role of artists as storytellers and agents of change, we hope this exhibition prompts audiences to consider their own relationships with the natural world.”

Crosscurrents opens at Flinders University Museum of Art on Monday 12 May and runs until Friday 5 September with the official launch taking place on Thursday 15 May.

Crosscurrents has been assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body, and by the Government of South Australia through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

For further information, visit <https://www.flinders.edu.au/museum-of-art>

Exhibition details:

Title: *Crosscurrents*

Dates: On now—Friday 5 September

Opening reception: 5:30—7:30pm, Thursday 15 May 2025

Location: Flinders University Museum of Art, Ground Floor, Social Sciences North Building, Flinders University, Bedford Park

Gallery hours: Monday—Friday 10am—5pm & Thursdays until 7pm

Free entry

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