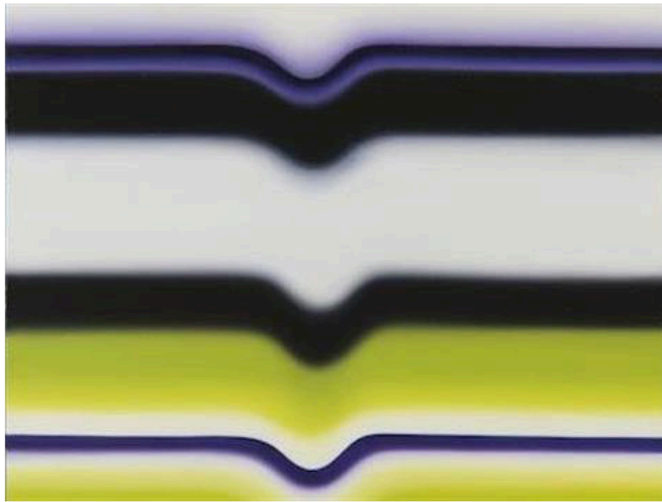


# Marion Borgelt: Memory and Symbol

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## CATHERINE CROLL

A spark for an idea can come from anywhere. It can sneak in the back door... and it has for 20-years. Borgelt's survey at Newcastle Art Gallery is witness to that journey.



*Detail of Strobe Series No. 3 (2007); courtesy the artist*

*Marion Borgelt's Weaving the Labryinth (1997-1999) is a highlight of Borgelt's survey exhibition; courtesy the artist.*

'In Paris, I wanted to take with me and feel some of the roots of Australia, that's why I chose red and black,' she explained, 'to create something more organic which attends to the movement of energy in nature.'

In *Quadrant Lore* (1996) and *Icons and Emblems* (1995) this metaphorical use of red evokes blood, energy and life while the fabrication of *Bloodlight Series Star No II, III, IV, V* (2000), from organic materials serves to heighten the sensual nature of the artwork.

Celtic mark making and archetypal symbols pertaining to the little signs and symbols within language itself are captured in the *Labyrinth Series*, and speak beautifully across the gallery with the *Hourglass Series (I to XXI)* 2003 and *Cryptologist' Memoir Series* (2004-2007).



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'These little symbol works are created to be read from any point of view,' said Borgelt. 'You don't have to speak a particular language; it's a visual language, a language that goes back to a more fundamental psychology of us,' she explained.

The rich visual optics of the *Strobe Series* (2007, pictured top) are created through an interplay of light and colour, repetition and pattern.

This series pursues Borgelt's interest in light, and tries to capture, 'the interference of little particles to the speed of light, the little humps and bumps indicating refraction and reflection of light,' as Borgelt described.

'I wanted the strobe works to bounce against your peripheral vision. I achieved that on a technical level by working with contrasts and working with fuzzy edges ... it's all done by hand,' she added.

'Marion's work is extraordinarily precise but still organic,' said Dominik Mersch, her Sydney representative.

'She is curious, she takes risks, she constantly explores new ideas and new materials; paint, wood, glass, duck eggs and stone.'

While *Memory & Symbol* predominantly focuses on large paintings, Borgelt is very interested in materials and their characteristics.

She grew up on a family farm in the Wimmera region of Victoria - here she loved to play around with her father's tools. It was rough and dusty work, which gave her an innate knowledge of what tools can do and how they can fashion materials.

Since 2010, collaboration has become a big part of Borgelt's art practice. She works with artisans and crafts people who have rare and dying skills - skills which she would like to preserve and pass on.

She embraces a range of different techniques and incorporates them into her practice, or as Mersch described: 'She lets them in and orchestrates them, like a conductor.'

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Borgelt's latest series of work *Lunar Swell* (2015) reflects the phases of the moon and the tides, it is inspired by ebb and flow. The work is statically beautiful, crafted in a way that incorporates gently bent hoop pine and Dutch gold leaf.

'I don't know when it really happened but I saw that all our lives were in a time capsule ... from birth through life to death. This fascinates me, and has found its way into my work based on the lunar cycle,' explained Borgelt.

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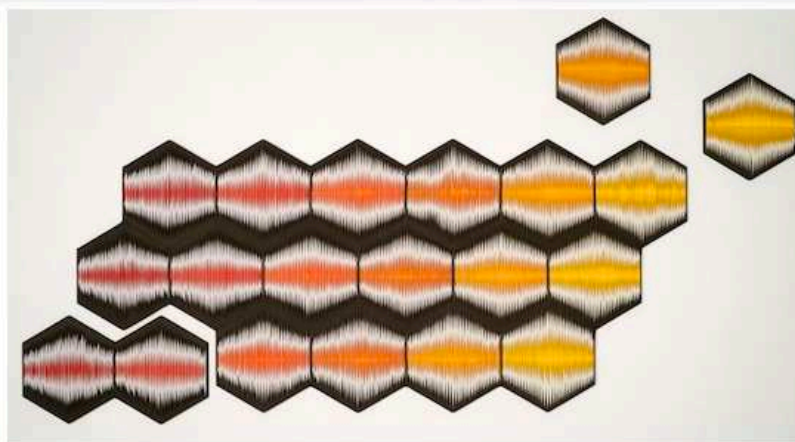


Lunar swell 3, captures the light in its discs that seemingly scoop off the wall of the Newcastle Art Gallery; supplied

She has become fascinated with capturing our core lives and how change occurs every nanosecond and this is what she has attempted to capture in her "cut" works. As you walk past them they change, by degrees.

Among them, *Liquid Light Honeycomb I* (2011) comprises a group of hexagons that split apart from a single unit like genetic activity demonstrating the way in which change and evolution form a significant part of Borgelt's thinking.

Inspired by the pattern of tiles she observed in Notre Dame Cathedral, Borgelt reflected: 'A spark (idea) can come from anywhere. It's a very organic process; it sneaks in the back door and takes you by surprise.'



Forty-six years ago, Professor John Boulton opened his house to Borgelt for her first exhibition, marking the end of her penultimate year as a student at the Stanley Street Art College in North Adelaide.

'When Marion talks about inspiration, she gets it from everywhere. For example some of her earliest abstract work, delicate colour fields in guache, were inspired by the imagery of the colours and shapes of the vast wheat fields seen from sitting on top of her father's storage silo,' said Boulton.

What we see here (in Newcastle) is just the last 20 years of a very long career built on an Everest of work,' he stated.

'Marion's enormous body of work reflects not only the outcome of her extraordinary focus and endurance but her true genius.' And I can only agree.

**Rating: 4.5 out of 5**

***Marion Borgelt: Memory & Symbol***

**Newcastle Art Gallery**

**20 August – 23 October**

**<http://www.nag.org.au/>**