

ALEX  
SETON



## INTRODUCTION

Alex Seton's artistic practice incorporates photography, video, sculpture and installation to investigate the complex relationship between form and substance. He is best known for his beguiling marble carving, applying his refined craftsmanship to unexpected forms. Blankets, hoodies, inflatables and national flags are rendered in stone, invoking a somatic paradox. By infusing the rich heritage of Classical statuary with contemporary concerns, Seton gives weight to the issues we face here and now.

The Journey his most recent project explores the international issue of asylum seekers. This new body of works incorporates installations and Carrara marble sculptures alluding to the perilous sea journey of millions of people fleeing war and famine. A boat motor, a rubber dinghy, a life jacket, a paddle or an anchor become potent reminders of all those individual lives being risked everyday in the hope of a better tomorrow.

## ARTWORKS



*A paddle...*, 2014  
Wood, bianca carrara marble  
125 x 18 x 4 cm



*Durable solutions 01*, 2014  
Wombeyan marble, polyester ropes, spigots  
140 x 95 x 12 cm



*Life vest (Emergency)*, 2014  
Bianco Carrara marble  
50 x 32 x 25 cm



*As of Today*, 2011  
QLD marble, halyard,  
Dimensions variable



*Last resort*, 2014  
Wombeyan marble  
Dimension variable



*Someone died trying to have a life like mine*, 2013  
Wombeyan marble, nylon webbing  
Dimensions variable



*Oilstone 01: Transparent*, 2015  
Bianco carrara marble, stainless steel,  
engine oil, plastic tarpaulin  
42 x 48 x 100 cm



Detail *Oilstone 01: Transparent*, 2015  
Bianco Carrara marble, engine oil



*Refuge*, 2015  
Bianca Carrara marble, tarp, eyelets  
110 x 120 x 170 cm



*The Best of All Possible Worlds*, 2015  
Bianca Carrara marble, tarp, tin, bucket, sand, light  
Installed dimensions variable



*Folded Zodiac 01*, 2015  
Bianca Carrara marble, tarp, rope, spigot  
56 x 42 x 35 cm



*Folded Zodiac 02*, 2015  
Bianca Carrara marble, tarp, rope, spigot  
56 x 42 x 35 cm





*Someone Else's Problem*, 2015  
Marble dust, resin, Tasmanian oak, stainless  
steel, LED lights  
Installed dimensions variable



*Deluge in a Cup*, 2015  
Bianca Carrara marble, tarp, water, steel  
Installed dimensions variable



Detail *Deluge in a Cup*, 2015  
Bianca Carrara marble, water  
30 x 27 x 14 cm



*Oil Can 01*, 2015  
Bianca Carrara, tarp  
40 x 27 x 10 cm

## EXHIBITION VIEWS



THE JOURNEY  
Solo Show  
September 10th - October 24th 2015  
Galerie Paris-Beijing, Paris

# CV

## ALEX SETON | GALERIE PARIS-BEIJING

Born in 1977 in Sydney, Australia

Currently lives and works in Sydney, Australia

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2015

«The Journey», Galerie Paris-Beijing, Paris, France

2014

«Replicator», Tweed Regional Gallery, Murwillumbah

2013

«Roughing Out», Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre, Sydney

2012

«Six More», Australian War Memorial, Canberra

«Elegy on Resistance», ArtHK12, Sullivan+Strumpf, Hong Kong Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong

2011

«Flags», Lismore Regional Gallery, Lismore

«Flags», Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney

«Flags», Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane

2010

«Infinitely Near», Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney

2009

«Assembly», Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney

«Supplementary Restraint System», Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane

2008

«On Hold», Jan Murphy Gallery, Melbourne Art Fair, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne

«Memeoid», ChalkHorse Gallery, Sydney

2007

«Panoply», ChalkHorse Gallery, Sydney

«Security Blanket», Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane

2005

«Stay on Message», Maunsell Wickes@BSG, Sydney

«We Gotta Get Out Of This Place», Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane

2004

«New Works», Maunsell Wickes@BSG, Sydney

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2014

«Protest Songs», Lismore Regional Gallery, Lismore

«Subject to Ruin», Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Casula

«Conflict: Contemporary Responses to War», University of Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

Art Basel Hong Kong, Sullivan+Strumpf, Hong Kong

«Dark Heart» Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

The Redlands Konica Minolta Art Prize, National Art School, Sydney

«SSFA14», Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney

2013

«Australia: Contemporary Voices», The Fine Art Society Contemporary, London, UK

«Gravity of Sculpture: Part II», Dorsky Gallery Curatorial Programs, New York, USA

«Wynne Prize», Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

«Drawing a Line», Caboolture Regional Gallery, Caboolture, Queensland

«Speak to Me», Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney

2012

«Look Closely Now», Lake Macquarie Regional Gallery, Lake Macquarie

«Variable Truth», 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney

«SSFA12», Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney

2011

- «Arboreal», Macquarie University Gallery, Sydney
- «Double Vision», McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park, Langwarrin
- «Pat Corrigan/Collector», Maitland Art Gallery, Maitland
- «Wattle», Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong
- «SSFA11», Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney
- «Art Stage Singapore», Sullivan+Strumpf, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore

2010

- «SO Contemporary», Jackson See Collection: A Snapshot, Praxis Space, Singapore
- «ARTHK10», Sullivan+Strumpf, Hong Kong Exhibition and Convention Centre, Hong Kong
- «SSFA10», Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney
- «Two Degrees of Separation», Satori Gallery, New York, USA
- «Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize», Tenth Anniversary; Manly Regional Art Gallery, Sydney

2009

- «Artlive», Chair and the Maiden Gallery, New York, USA
- «Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize», Woollahra Council Chambers, Woollahra
- «SSFA09», Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney

2008

- «Step Right Up!», Albury Regional Art Gallery, Albury
- «Sculpture 08», Maunsell Wickes Gallery, Sydney
- «Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize», Woollahra Council Chambers, Sydney

2007

- «Arc Biennale: Art, Design and Craft», Queensland University of Technology Art Museum, Brisbane
- «Replicotta Warriors», Chalk Horse, Sydney
- «Sculpture 07», Maunsell Wickes@BSG, Sydney

2006

- «New Social Commentaries 2006», Warrnambool Art Gallery, Warrnambool
- «Sculpture By The Sea», Sydney
- «The Green Zone, 1/2 dozen», The Palm House, Sydney
- «Flamin' Youth», Orange Regional Gallery, Orange
- «Helen Lempriere National Sculpture Award», Werribee, finalist
- «Sculpture By The Sea», Perth
- «Artists Against Sedition Laws», Casula Powerhouse, Sydney

2005

- «McClelland Sculpture Survey and Award», McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park, Langwarrin
- «March of the Miniatures», Defiance Gallery, Sydney
- «Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize», Woollahra Council Chambers, Sydney
- «10th Anniversary Exhibition», Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane
- «Sculpture 2005», Maunsell Wickes@BSG, Sydney

2004

- «Sculpture By The Sea», Sydney
- «The Year in Art», S.H. Ervin Gallery, Sydney
- «Sculpture 2004», Maunsell Wickes@BSG, Sydney

2003

- «Sculpture By The Sea», Sydney
- «Darling Park Sculpture Exhibition», Sydney
- «Ripdff», Flinders Hotel, Sydney
- «Flavour», Lidi Gallery, Sydney

2002

- «Sculpture By The Sea», Sydney
- «Sculpture Inside», Sculpture By The Sea, Sydney
- «Darling Park Sculpture Exhibition», Sydney

2000

- «RFA Gallery», Sydney
- «Inaugural Exhibition», Studio W, Sydney

1999

- «LoA II», Sheraton on the Park, Sydney

1998

- «Luxury of Art I», Exhibition for Emerging Australian Artists, Sydney

## COLLECTIONS

Albury Regional Gallery, Albury  
Artbank  
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
Art Gallery Society of New South Wales, Sydney  
ARTS ACT, Canberra  
Australian War Memorial, Canberra  
Canberra Civic Collection, Canberra  
Danish Royal Art Collection, Copenhagen, Denmark  
Fidelity Worldwide Investment, Hong Kong and Sydney  
HBO Collection, New York, USA  
Lane Cove Municipal Council, Sydney  
Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra  
Patrick Corrigan Collection, Sydney  
Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane  
St Ignatius College Collection, Sydney  
University of Queensland Art Museum, Brisbane  
Private collections throughout Australia and overseas

## SELECTED AWARDS AND PRIZES

2014

Il Henraux International Sculpture Award, Querceta, Italy, finalist  
University of Queensland National Artists' Self Portrait Prize, University of Queensland  
Inaugural Nancy Fairfax Artist in Residence, Margaret Olley Art Centre, Tweed River Art Gallery, Murwillumbah

2013

University of Queensland National Artists' Self Portrait Prize, University of Queensland, finalist  
Wynne Prize, Art Gallery of New South Wales, finalist

2012

Art OMI Australia, Art OMI International Artists Residency, New York, USA

2009

Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize, Sydney, winner  
Sculpture by the Sea, Art Gallery of New South Wales Director's Choice Award, Sydney  
Us Visual Arts Award, The Prometheus Foundation, Gold Coast, winner

2008

Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize, Sydney, special commendation

2007

Hanyu International Sculpture Cup, Shenzhen, China  
The Flying Fruit Fly Circus Residency, Albury Regional Gallery, Albury

2006

Helen Lempriere Sculpture Award, People's Choice Award, Sydney, winner



**EXPO**

# **SAISSANTE ODYSSÉE DE MARBRE À LA GALERIE PARIS- BEIJING**

Par Dominique Poiret (<http://www.liberation.fr/auteur/#096-dominique-poiret>)

— 30 septembre 2015 à 10:33

**Avec «The Journey», l'artiste australien Alex Seton rend hommage aux migrants refoulés aux portes de son pays en reproduisant dans le marbre les objets de leur quotidien.**

reproduisant dans le marbre les objets de leur quotidien.



Vue de l'exposition. Photo Frederic Albert. Courtesy Galerie Paris-Beijing [➔](#) [f](#) [\(h\)](#) [tff](#)

Voilà une exposition qui est (sans le vouloir) au cœur de l'actualité. En effet, *The Journey*, le tout dernier projet de l'artiste australien Alex Seton (né en 1977 à Sydney), porte sur la question des migrants demandeurs d'asile en Australie, qu'on peut bien évidemment rapprocher de ceux qui frappent aux portes de l'Europe. «*Un sujet que j'ai décidé d'explorer en réaction à la politique ultraradicale de mon pays pour décourager tous les candidats à l'immigration*», explique l'artiste.

Réfugié politique ou non, absolument aucun ne sera admis sur le territoire sans un visa. On peut lire sur de grands panneaux imprimés en caractères rouges, «No Way, you will not make Australia home.» (Pas question, vous ne serez pas chez vous en Australie). C'est le Premier ministre Tony Abbott – chassé du pouvoir mi-septembre à la suite



Depuis, plus aucun boat people, la plupart originaire du Sri Lanka, d'Iran, d'Irak, d'Afghanistan ou du Vietnam, n'est désormais accepté dans les eaux territoriales. Les migrants arrêtés en mer ont le choix entre retourner dans leur pays d'origine ou être transférés en centre de détention offshore, c'est-à-dire hors du territoire dans des pays partenaires.



Alex Seton, *Oilstone 01: Transparent*, 2015. (Photo Frederic Albert. Courtesy Galerie Paris-Beijing)

C'est cela que raconte le sculpteur à travers son installation à la Galerie Paris-Beijing. Il s'agit d'un ensemble d'objets de leur quotidien sculptés en majestueux marbre blanc de Carrare ou de Sydney : bâches, canots gonflables, moteur de bateau (dont un cassé lors de son transport, que l'artiste a décidé tout de même d'exposer, y voyant une symbolique des aléas du périple), boîte de conserve. Ils évoquent tous les voyages périlleux par la mer que des millions de personnes sont amenées à entreprendre pour fuir la guerre ou la famine. Ils sont posés sur des bâches de chantier bleues, des palettes ou encore dans des bacs métalliques au fond desquels repose une épaisse couche d'huile d

Les bateaux ne sont pas encore gonflés, ils sont présentés encore pliés, d'un hyperréalisme époustouflant, les plis et la matière propres au textile paraissent souples et contrastent étonnamment avec la solidité de la pierre, dans laquelle l'artiste a même incrusté les cordages de nylon ou une valve de gonflage.



Alex Seton, *Refuge*, 2015. (Photo Frederic Albert. Courtesy Galerie Paris-Beijing)

Au milieu du parcours, une forme humaine emmitouflée dans une bâche interpelle le visiteur. De par sa posture et l'incroyable taille de la pierre, elle n'est pas sans évoquer une pieta de la Renaissance. Au fond de la galerie, le voyage s'achève dans un décor de théâtre. Des troncs d'arbres sculptés sont plantés dans un seau posé sur une île de sable. Un paradis que ces migrants n'atteindront probablement jamais.

**Media Release: Alex Seton's *Somebody died trying to have a life like mine* stands out at Adelaide Biennial.**



The 2014 Adelaide Biennial 'Dark Heart' opened last weekend to overwhelming success. Already, Alex Seton's major work *Somebody died trying to have a life like mine* has emerged as a highlight.

*Technically this work is a tour de force, as 21st-century ideas meet ancient technologies. But such is the strength of Seton's idea that it is the art that overwhelms, not his superb craftsmanship.* Joanna Mendelsohn, *The Conversation*.

The 28 marbled life jackets that compose *Somebody died trying to have a life like mine* stand in memorial of those that washed ashore the Cocos Islands in May of 2013, empty of the asylum seeker bodies that once inhabited them.

Seton's work does not shy away from the tragedy of this event, nor does it force any particular experience on the viewer. Rather it reminds us of the individual stories of those who undertook the fatal journey.

"These jackets represent the lives of 28 unknown people who were simply looking for the chance to lead the lives that we enjoy everyday", Seton says. "The work asks, what is this darkness in our national character that means we do not readily extend good faith and protection to those who claim asylum?"



## Kate Britton 'Someone died trying to have a life like mine' 2014 Adelaide Biennial 'Dark Heart', 1 March – 11 May



The political content of Alex Seton's dramatic Adelaide Biennial work is obvious. 28 marble life jackets are strewn across the gallery floor, replicating those found washed up on the Cocos Islands in May last year and assumed (seemingly by all except the Australian government) to belong to asylum seekers lost at sea. These sculptures stand as reminder and memorial; a confrontation to our reluctance or inability to appropriately respond to the situation unfolding just off our shores.

Informing the political character of this work, however, is a subtle and haunting aesthetics; a materiality that draws us down a more speculative path. To encounter these objects in the evocatively lit gallery is not an immediately political encounter. Rather, it is a deeply personal encounter that evokes in us a moment of pause, of disruption, within which the political character of the works takes shape.

As the implication of the empty jackets dawns on us we grapple with it, trying to understand what it is we have stumbled upon and what it means. In many ways, the work's refusal to prescribe these meanings is its strength. It is not what is in the room that leaves the most lasting impression, but what is absent – the bodies that should have occupied the jackets, their journeys

and aspirations, and the ultimate risk they took in hoping for a better life – indeed life at all.

These few moments of aesthetic disequilibrium signify our collective inability or unwillingness to engage with the larger issue – the nature of asylum, the dangerous weighing of risk and reward those seeking it undertake. The nature of the work challenges us to seek a more cogent engagement.

It is immediately obvious Seton has invested significant attention-to-detail in the works, and in doing so has imbued them with an abject specificity. The jackets are undeniably beautiful objects, carved to the most minute details – the ripple of distressed lining and deceptive buoyancy, the sharpness of seams and crisp white nylon belts hanging limp through silver D-loops. In one exposed pocket, a few notes of Iranian currency are wedged, encountered only as one comes almost full circle around the installation; until this point we have been denied any such explicit reference to the events on the Cocos Islands. Through these details we are anchored in a specific time and place, while still retaining the eerie uncertainty with which we first experienced them.

NEWS

## Someone died trying to have a life like mine...

Best known for his refined technical skill in carving Wombeyan marble, Australian artist Alex Seton's recent work engages in a topic at the forefront of Australian consciousness: asylum seekers. Kate Britton reports.

There seems to be, locally speaking, a dearth of overtly political work being made in Australia about the experience of asylum seekers. For an issue that bears uncomfortably at the forefront of our nation's psyche, there are remarkably few attempts to come at it directly in artistic practice.

Alex Seton is an exception to this rule. Since his major installation in the 2014 Adelaide Biennial Dark Base, he has been making work about this idea. That initial work, *Someone died trying to have a life like mine*, is an expression of the strange cognitive dissonance that seems endemic to the asylum seeker debate. 25 marble life jackets lay strewn across the gallery floor; roads for 23 life jackets that resulted ominously when the Costa Concordia in 2012, presumed to have come from a boat lost at sea.

A new body of work for shown by Sydney gallery Sullivan + Strumpf at Art Basel Hong Kong 2015 continues this line of investigation, with an installable diorama, a series of paddles and another, all carved in marble. These objects may promise a better life, but will ultimately sink, heavy as stone, Seton warns. The paddles, inscribed with symbols, comprise a cry for help in simplified code from international maritime flag signalling.

It's satisfying to see this progression of work over time. Seton has come at it from a number of angles. In *Someone died trying to have a life like mine* we experience the quantifying encounter, the clock, the not-quite-hidden tragedy happening just off our shores. In recent solo shows in Australia at Sullivan + Strumpf in Sydney and McClelland Sculpture Park + Gallery and Lincoln Contemporary Art Center in Melbourne, he turned his attention to our own privilege and by proxy complicity in the suffering of others. Here we see the journey itself: fearful, uncertain, a perilous last resort.

Alex Seton exhibits with Sullivan + Strumpf, stand 2012 at Art Basel Hong Kong 2015.



1. Alex Seton, *ELI LILY*, 2015. Wood, Yax Marble, marble and bronze marble, each 118 x 118 x 4cm. [www.alexseton.com.au](http://www.alexseton.com.au), courtesy



© Anne-Frédérique For, visite de l'exposition, le 10 septembre 2015.

texte de Sylvain Silleran, rédacteur pour FranceFineArt.

C'est un voyage particulier que le sculpteur Alex Seton met en scène à la galerie Paris Beijing. *Journey* raconte la dangereuse traversée de l'océan par des migrants tentant de rejoindre une Australie à la politique migratoire fermée. Des objets d'une banalité familière: bâches, canots gonflables, moteur de bateau, boîte de conserve, sont sculptés dans un marbre d'un blanc fastueux.

Le matériau luxueux, empreint de noblesse, transforme cette traversée en une épopée classique, héroïque. Les différents instruments de la traversée deviennent des statues, comme autant de chapitres d'une nouvelle *Odyssée*.

Les objets de marbre sont posés sur des bâches de chantier bleues, palettes ou bac métalliques dont le fond brille d'une épaisseur d'huile de moteur, écrins tranchant par leur essence utilitaire et jetable. L'opposition est on ne peut plus tranchée entre la roche, d'une massivité absolue, et la légèreté, la souplesse textile des embarcations gonflables qui y sont sculptées. Les bateaux ne sont pas encore gonflés, ils sont présentés encore pliés, leurs fronces et ourlets détaillés dans un hyperréalisme troublant. Des petits éléments originaux de ces bateaux sont ajoutés ici et là: cordage de nylon et valve de gonflage. Un moteur de hors-bord tombé de son socle gît brisé au sol. Cet accident nous rappelle par les lignes de fractures irrégulières et les éclats éparpillés sa nature physique de roche, comme si ce n'était qu'une fois l'irréparable atteint que nous finissons par comprendre la véritable nature des choses.

Des petits riens soulignent la fragilité des migrants et des moyens dérisoires de leur traversée. Une boîte de conserve est posée tel un bijou sur le coussin d'une bâche pliée. De l'eau tombe goutte à goutte dans un gobelet depuis une tente de fortune suspendue au-dessus, égrenant lentement le temps des petites ondulations qui viennent régulièrement en troubler la surface. Ce qui n'a plus de valeur chez nous se révèle être une ressource précieuse pour d'autres.

Une forme humaine est emmitouffée dans une bâche. Cette œuvre totalement contemporaine est en même temps un drapé classique dans ce qu'il y a de plus virtuose. La finesse de la toile rehaussée d'oeillets métalliques semble nier le matériau même de la sculpture tant il semble improbable d'atteindre un résultat si fin sans casser la pierre. La toile fraîchement dépliée porte encore les marques des carrés de son pliage initial. Le personnage n'est pas représenté, les formes qu'épousent sa couverture en délimitent les contours, modèlent une posture. L'image emprunte au vocabulaire religieux, évoquant l'icône familière d'une vierge en prière.

Au fond de la galerie, le but du voyage se révèle être un décor de théâtre. Des troncs d'arbres sculptés sont plantés dans un seau posé sur une île de sable. Le feuillage est une silhouette découpée suspendue à des fils, que le vent d'un ventilateur fait doucement osciller. Un spot projette l'ombre de cet *eldorado* sur une bâche étendue comme un fond de studio photographique. L'aboutissement de ce long voyage résonne douloureusement, l'Australie (et l'Occident) se révèle n'être que de cruels mirages. Nos promesses, gravées dans le marbre de nos chartes et de nos lois, ne sont pas tenues.

Sylvain Silleran





