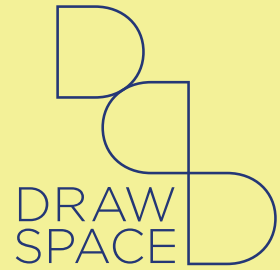


DRAW Space acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation upon whose ancestral lands our ARI now stands. We pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these places.



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## Ron Adams / MAKING A MOULD FOR A MOUNTAIN

Thursday 9 November – Sunday 2 December 2023

### WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Please see [drawspace.org](http://drawspace.org) for further detail.

1. <i>Ulysses</i> acrylic on board 2019	\$15,000
2. <i>Ambient 1</i> ink on paper 2001	\$6,000
3. <i>Expulsion</i> oil paint and ink on canvas 1998	\$5,000
4. <i>Transcendental Meditation</i> oil paint and ink on canvas 1998	\$5,000
5. <i>Untitled</i> ink on paper Framed 1995	\$500
6. <i>Untitled</i> ink on paper Framed 1995	\$500
7. <i>Untitled</i> ink on paper Framed 1995	\$500
8. <i>Untitled</i> ink on paper Framed 1995	\$500
9. <i>Precarious Encounter</i> ink on paper 1995	POA
10. <i>Speed of Light</i> acrylic paint and ink on canvas 2003	\$3,000
11. <i>Pure Contemplation</i> oil, ink and vinyl on canvas boards 1999	POA
12. <i>Untitled</i> ink on paper NF 1995	\$400
13. <i>Untitled</i> ink on paper NF 1995	\$400
14. <i>Untitled</i> ink on paper NF 1995	\$400
15. <i>Pavilion (light grey)</i> acrylic paint and ink on board 2003	\$2,500
16. <i>Pavilion (pink)</i> acrylic paint and ink on board 2003	\$2,500
17. <i>Pavilion (mauve)</i> acrylic paint and ink on board 2003	\$2,500
18. <i>Pavilion (grey)</i> acrylic paint and ink on board 2003	\$2,500
19. <i>Pavilion (yellow)</i> acrylic paint and ink on board 2003	\$2,500
20. <i>Pavilion (black)</i> acrylic paint and ink on board 2003	\$2,500
21. <i>Making a mould for a mountain</i> ink on paper 1098-2022	\$9,000
22. <i>a brief candle in the dark (Peter)</i> c type photo 2019	\$2,000
23. <i>Untitled</i> ink on paper Framed 1995	\$500
24. <i>Untitled</i> ink on paper Framed 1995	\$500
25. <i>Untitled</i> ink on paper Framed 1995	\$500
26. <i>Untitled</i> ink on paper Framed 1995	\$500
27. <i>Radiation</i> acrylic on board 2002	\$2,500
28. <i>Black Body</i> acrylic on board 2002	\$2,500
29. <i>Book of drawings</i> charcoal on paper 1995	POA

Many thanks to George Adams

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## An interview with Ron Adams

Melinda Reid

I sat down for a cup of tea and conversation with the Australian artist Ron Adams in October of 2023. We spoke about a collection of automatic drawings he produced between 1995-2019 that are being exhibited in *Making a Mould for a Mountain* at DRAW Space. This is the first time these drawings have been exhibited. The exhibition at DRAW Space coincides with a sister show – *Lettuce Gyoza* at Schmick Contemporary – of Adams' surrealist paintings from the same period.

**This exhibition brings together automatic drawings produced between 1995-2019. When did you first begin to experiment with automatic drawing?**

I first started experimental drawing when I was a young teenager, maybe 12 or 13, just with a packet of textas. I used to like the idea of making marks and turning them into patterns and then becoming almost like acrobatic figures. Then, as I got older, they had more shading, but they were always created without necessarily having any future vision for them – they just had to become a shape, or a 'something,' a blob, or what I would call a biomorphic shape these days. [...] I would have, I suppose, [initially] termed it doodling, but I wouldn't have felt that 'doodling' was a big enough word for it. The 'automatic drawing' would have come out of my early twenties, late teens.

**In 1924, André Breton famously aligned Surrealism with "psychic automatism in its pure state" – or in other words, expressions of one's inner impulses, dreams, and chance associations. For surrealists, this practice has been a way of accessing what Freud and many other psychoanalysts have called 'the unconscious.' What do you believe automatic drawing gives you access to?**

Well, I'm a big time dreamer, and I'm very good at remembering my dreams. I can even put them together like a mini-series. A lot of the early surrealist work I did turned towards almost erotic sexualisation. I suppose that was my youth, and being young and horny. That was in there. I was very interested in these beautiful, luscious,

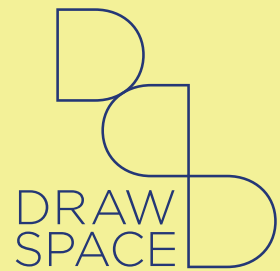
round shapes, and how they would fix together, and how sexuality could work in a different way. [...] I became very interested in Freud and I loved what Freud was saying about sexuality. It's probably a little bit wrong these days, but it was right for me at that period, and he became a big hero, and Jung too. So more than anything, it was about using drawing to turn those sexual urges and ideas into a kind of automatic primitive futurism.

**How would you describe automatic primitive futurism?**

An automatic sexualised eroticism, but all the surrealist paintings have that moment to them. They all have this sexual or cute or want-able or huggable [quality], like Japanese Pokémons in a way. On the other side of that, I really like animation and I love comics. The bold lines and the colour come from that as well. I read comics as a kid, and particularly science fiction comics. I love science fiction and fantasy. So, I was interested in things you might find in the Lord of the Rings hiding behind a bush, or Star Wars. I like the unusual and the unseen.

**Many surrealist poets approached automatism as a way of experimenting with writing as a method of thinking. In your practice, is drawing a method of thinking?**

I think so. It forms rarely negative thoughts in my head. I'm a bit of a 'glass half empty' type person and I don't like that. So, the drawing is all about being positive and making the shape wonderful, happy. And optimistic.



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## An interview with Ron Adams (continued)

### **Each of your drawings seem to have their own introspective lingo or idiolect.**

I think they have their own intellect, and dialect and language. And they also all look like they come from one family. Particularly in the early ones, they all look like they have come from the Forest of Id, or something. They have all been born in that way. They're all born harmonious and can live together. When you see all of the drawings, they splinter off into all sorts of bizarre shapes, but there's quite a link to the way they are, and they feel, and they look. [...] Negative space is very important. I think negative space is overlooked. It's a bit like people overlooking weeds in gardens. Weeds are just as nice as the plants. It's an unusual choice, I realise, because people don't look at negative spaces generally.

### **Words and short phrases are included in the compositions of some of your drawings. Could you describe the role of text in your work?**

In some instances, poetry. In others, it's probably shouting at you. [...] But also, on the other side of that, I really like the look of words, and I like putting words together in patterns and forming shapes with them. [...] The letter S, for example. It's a beautiful round thing that rolls around and then stands up again or sits the other way to become a different shape, and you still know it's an S, whether its teething and simple, or if you join lots of them together and they become whatever they become. And I love putting O's on top of Y's – they become a beautiful shape. It doesn't have to be an O or a Y then – it's just a shape, like a bird-like, or an architectural shape. I spent a lot of time for my large text works really thinking about the right amount of letters, like the right amount of L's for instance. Some take a year to put together.

### **How has your drawing practice changed over the last 30 years?**

A lot! For the very intricate fine drawings, I was using a 0.1 pen. These days, it's done with a very considered scalpel. I would draw on masking

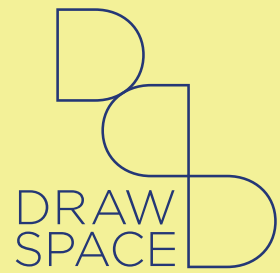
tape, then cut out with a scalpel, but as a gestural drawing. I like cutting out complete circles just freehand, and then peeling it back, painting the surface or drawing on it, then adding layers and layers and layers to it. For the recent electronic drawing on the computer, I use a program on iPhoto where I can use lines to make squares or circles. They're very simple and geometric.

### **Rounded, shapely forms seem to reappear especially frequently in your drawings. Is there something about circles that attracts you?**

Squares are okay. Rectangles are okay. Triangles drive me nuts. Circles are brilliant. It's just the continuous beauty of a circle. It could be a bit 'Groundhog Day,' but it could also be a very large circle. Walking the circumference of the planet would take you a little while! I'm also very interested in physics and astronomy. The idea of all those planets sitting up there floating around each other is very appealing. [...] It also goes back to James Gleeson and a lot of his beautiful, round, ball-y shapes which he used to use a lot of. [...] One thing though – when first saw Gleeson's work, I was opposed to the male nude in some of his surreal landscapes. They are very surreal landscapes, but with very figurative, realistic male figures. I thought that it didn't belong. But, I think subconsciously, it does actually belong. It belongs in many ways in that reality. It's a little like the idea of a subconscious – why can't it sit in that landscape?

### **Do you feel that there are similar tensions in some of your drawings between things that feel as if they belong and things that do not?**

Yes, I like that. I like the idea that there's a possibility that these things could exist somewhere, and that those shapes are hidden somewhere inside. If you break a rock open, you've suddenly got all these shapes.



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