

Alex Seton

Selected work

There is no place for humble in public space, particularly in marble monuments. Public spaces represent our shared values. Those change constantly. Isn't it time we considered a humble monument? Something with a little more humility, something that acknowledges our imperfection, that we have gotten it wrong, and will get it wrong again, that we are constantly evolving, constantly learning.

This kneeling figure contained in the block is made from an old hand picked piece of Australian Molong marble, that sat in a quarry yard for years, used as the recalibration weight to check the accuracy of their scales.

Proposal For a Humble Monument, 2020. Molong marble, 120 x 86 x 77cm, Finalist, Wynne Prize, Art Gallery of NSW, 2020. Photo: Mark Pokorny





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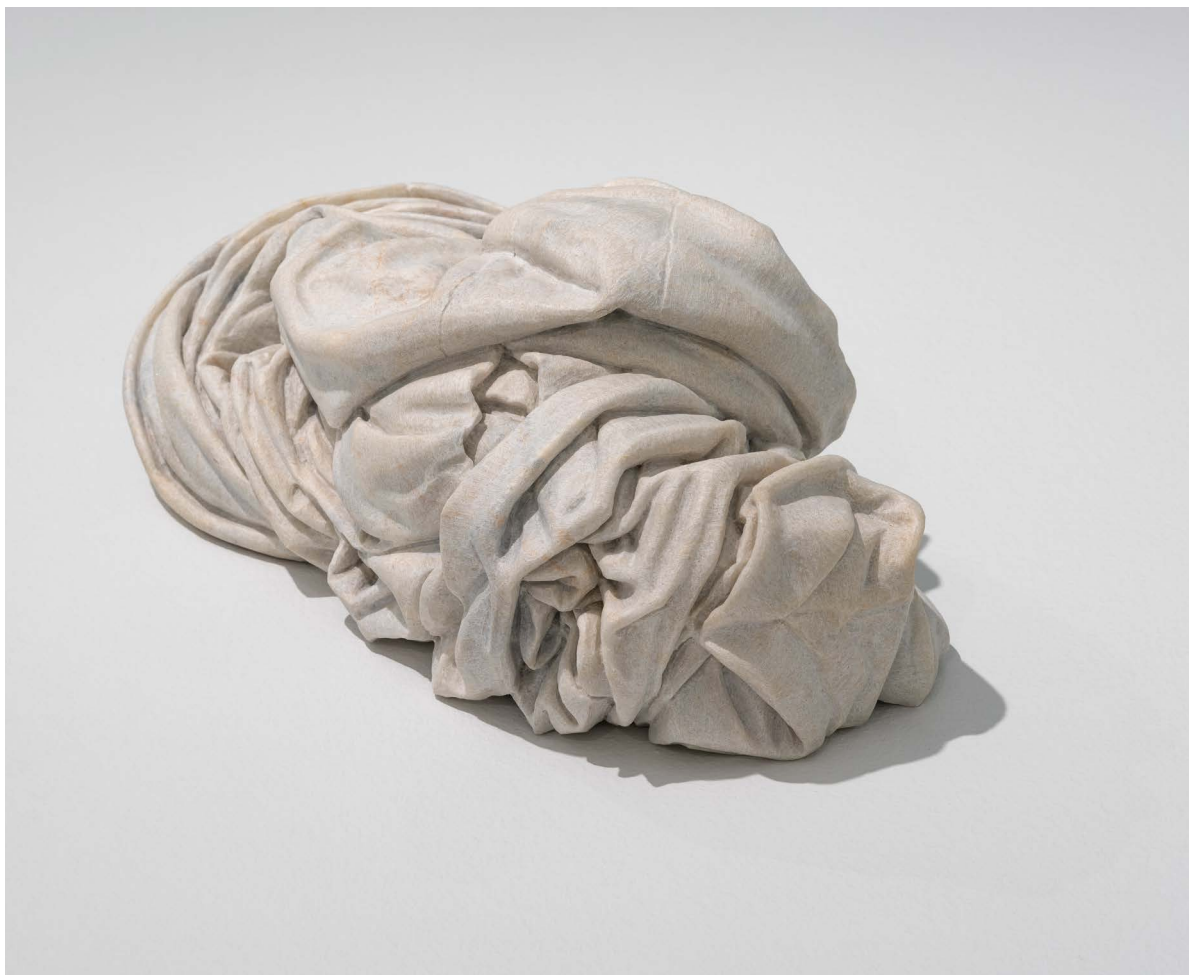
In 'Once There', Alex Seton plays with, inverts and exaggerates the techniques and language of classical statuary and monument to create works that reflect on the contemporary world.

The exhibition comprised a series of studio dust cloths rendered in marble, which upend the image of the shrouded figure that traditionally denotes grand metaphorical concepts such as purity, death, glory and the afterlife.

Bundled and thrown on the ground, not covering nor 'containing' any object underneath, here the veil itself becomes the subject. The everyday masses of fabric are infused with rich heritage but invite a simpler contemplation of human impact, production and our ever-expanding relationship with the material world.



Once There, Sullivan+Strumpf,
Singapore. 22 November –
22 December, 2019



Drop Cloth: Chiton, 2019.
Wombeyan marble,
15 x 52 x 37cm



Empire Style, 2019.
Bardiglio marble, concrete
blocks, 77x55x56cm

Featured in the 2016 Kochi-Muziris Biennale in Fort Kochi, India *Refuge* appears to take the shape of a figure, yet the figure within is absent, suggesting that the identity of those who seek refuge has been entirely erased during this international discourse on asylum seekers. This erasure speaks to an erasure not only of identity but of humanity. It also speaks to earlier works by Seton featuring hoodies, both worn and unworn. The hoodie is a loaded category of garment, bringing to mind questions of socio-economic status and visibility. Seton has previously depicted seated, hoodie-wearing meditative figures, and these are echoed in *Refuge*.

Refuge, 2015. Bianca Carrara, eyelets, pallet. 110 x 120 x 170cm. Photography: Frédéric Albert. 2016 Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Fort Kochi, India



The Golden Calf was a large-scale installation work presented at Sydney Contemporary as part of Installation Contemporary and at Canberra's outdoor sculpture biennial Contour 556. A series of plastic barriers of the sort used in road safety contexts were vinyl wrapped and printed with images of a number of different marbles. The Golden Calf was a modern-day monument to a world that seems ever-more intent on throwing up walls between us

The Golden Calf, 2018.
Polyethylene road barriers, printed vinyl. 350 x 191 x 191 cm Edition of 3 + 2 AP. Sydney Contemporary, Sydney. Photo: Mark Pokorny



In Roman mythology, Pygmalion was a sculptor who fell in love with a statue he had carved. The 'Pygmalion effect' is the phenomenon in which higher expectations lead to an increase in performance. Its inverse is the 'Golem effect', by which low expectations lead to a decrease in performance. Both effects are forms of a self-fulfilling prophecy; both observable effects at play in a world divided by the privilege of circumstance.

Using these themes, in *Pygmalion* Seton replaced components of antique and modern bentwood chairs with his familiar medium of marble and digitally printed plastic proxies. The result is a series of hybrids in which the mass-produced melds with the hand made.



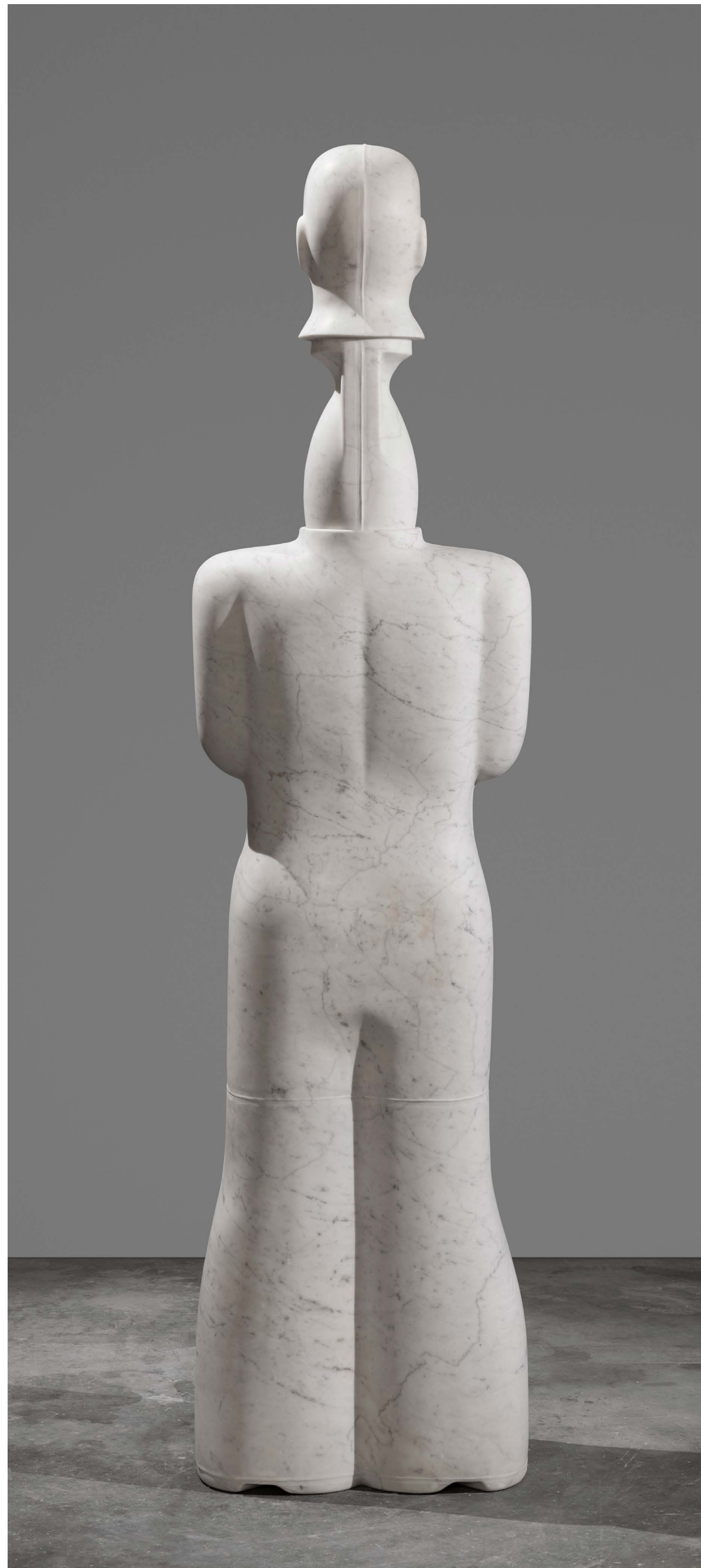
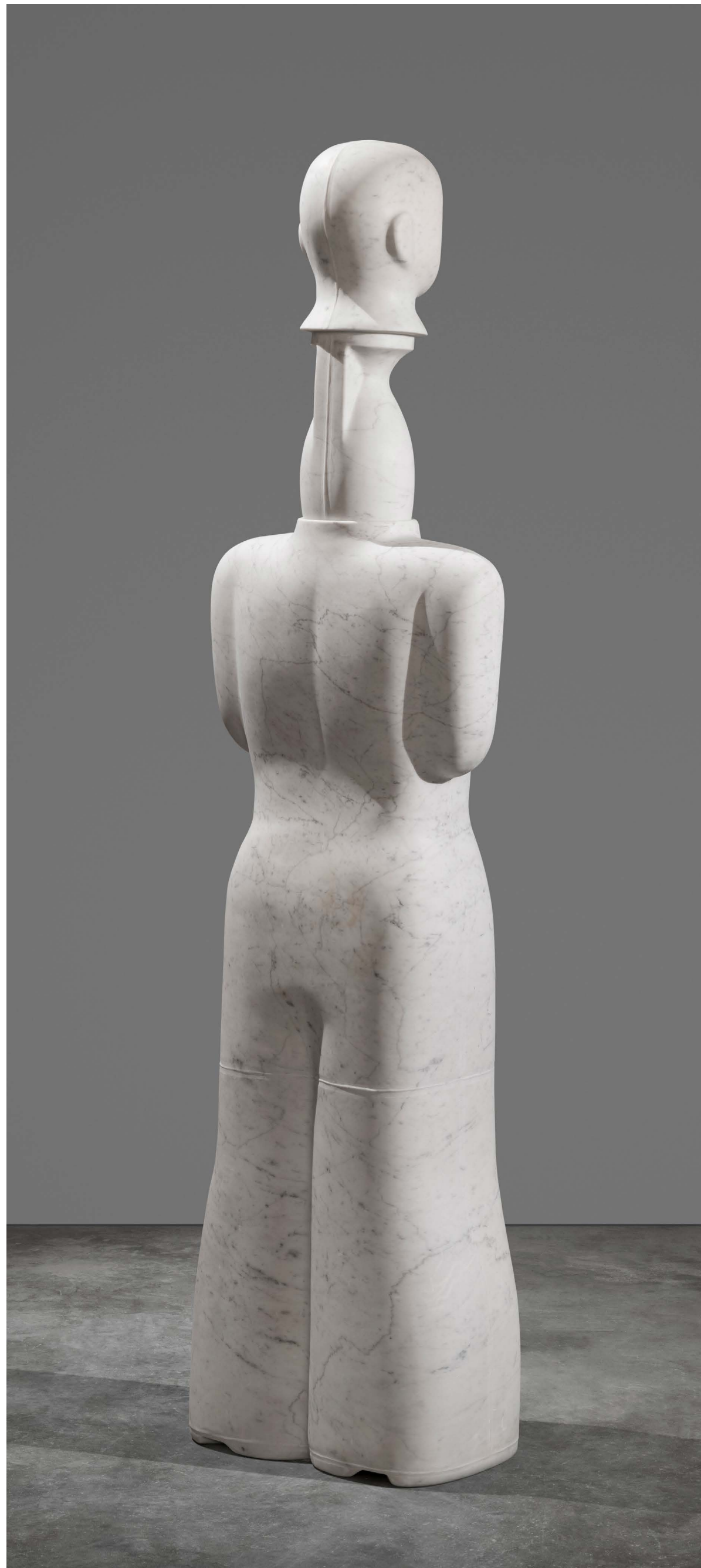
Pygmalion, Sullivan+Strumpf,
Singapore. 28 October –
30 November 2016

Standing Manikin Target is a marble carving of an anthropomorphic mannequin. The mannequin is a replica of a ballistics gel target, ordinance of the Australian Special Forces Snipers, who were present in great numbers on the day.

Designed for practicing gunmen, the non-gendered specific human form is created from many sets of scientific data depicting the average size and shape of the human form. Rendered in traditional marble the figure is an enigmatic effigy to an enemy who is both the everyman and faceless.”

Standing Manikin Target,
2007/2020. Bianco Peak Marble,
240 x 32 x 48cm.
Photo: Mark Pokorny





Displayed at the Art Gallery of South Australia, *Someone Died Trying To Have a Life Like Mine* was made in response to a particular incident in the sorry history of the many boat people who have died at sea. In May 2013, 28 empty lifejackets were found washed ashore on Cocos Island.



Someone died trying to have a life like mine, 2014.
Wombeyan marble, nylon webbing, dimensions variable.
Commissioned for the 2014 Adelaide Biennial: Dark Heart, Art Gallery of South Australia.
Photo: Mark Pokorny

'Nothing's Going to Change My World' is Alex Seton's newest body of work that uses a corrupted form of traditional memorial statuary and sculptural installation to create monuments to an uncertain future. From carved marble effigies these mixed media pieces, the works take a gentle sardonic sci-fi look at expressions of a nervous world in prognostication, proselytizing, punditry and doomsayers.



The Effigy Series, 2016. Nothing's Going to Change My World, Spring 1883, The Hotel Windsor, Melbourne, 17–23 August, 2016. Photo: Mark Pokorny



The Prophet, (2016).
Pisanino marble, Belgian black
marble, plastic, 50 x 48 x 38 cm

Plinth of the Effigy, 2016.
Imperial White marble,
30.0 x 37.0 x 63.0 cm

The Island contemplated and questioned Australia's role in the asylum debate. 'The Island' as a concept can be a safe place of refuge, isolated geographically and ideologically from the humanitarian challenges the world is currently grappling with. Alternatively it can take on a more sinister tone as a place deserted for those who have survived a perilous sea journey only to be marooned, stateless, detained, looking to the horizon for help.

Last Resort, 2014. Wombeyan marble, dimensions variable.
The Island, Newcastle Art Gallery.
18 February – 7 May 2017.
Photo: Mark Pokorny



Roughing Out was a break with carefully controlled carving to delve into the creative process and the medium. The series of works explored the raw material of marble itself, the act of carving as performance and its refuse. Elements of the process normally confined to the studio were brought into the gallery space. Likewise the waste and marks of process, usually hidden in the finished forms, took centre stage.



Roughing Out, Hazelhurst
Regional Gallery & Arts Centre.
31 August – 13 October 2013.
Photo: Mark Pokorny



Recycle Bags, 2013.
Wombeyan marble, nylon
industrial bag, wooden pallets,
125x112x140cm each



Half (detail), 2013.
Statuario marble block,
315 Durablex glasses,
marble dust, 56 x 39 x 55 cm
and 73 x 39 x 40cm

While stone monuments have traditionally signified an inviolable and solemn truth rendered in an eternal medium, Alex Seton seeks to turn these conceptions on their head with a new suite of works which monumentalise the everyday and twist reality. Taking as its starting point Warhol's declaration that all monuments glorify their maker, the exhibition *Monument* deconstructed notions of monumentality, vanitas and memento mori via personal explorations of transience and the finite.

Featuring *Left Turn at Albuquerque*, *Monument* brought temporal and existential truths into question without taking itself too seriously – combining references to popular culture and personal experience with a deep knowledge of his craft and its history.

Left Turn at Albuquerque, 2017.
Stop-motion video, 4.00 minutes,
Edition of 3 + 2 AP. Monument,
Sullivan+Strumpf, 11–27 May 2017



Cargo presents a series of clothing bales, of the kind found in the second-hand industry, carved in marble and rendered alongside abstracted volumes of steel. These constrained and condensed bricks of fabric, with their interwoven and baroque folds, are arranged on six recycled nylon pallets. Each pallet is constrained to a cubic volume composed of three layers of an alternating chiral pattern, reminiscent of masonry stacking.

Each bale speaks to the interconnectedness of our world, the complex webs of needs and concerns, war and trade that drive us. In spending many hours meticulously carving these flocked effigies, Seton slows the pace of these entwined systems, pausing to consider their momentous impact on our environment, culture, economy, and the developing nations that bear the brunt of our insatiable appetite.



Cargo (Installation view),
Sullivan+Strumpf,
18 September – 20 October 2018.
Photo: Mark Pokorny

Winner the 2020 Sovereign Asian Art Prize, Hong Kong, *Oilstone 05_Corrosion* is a carefully carved marble sculpture that has been deliberately smashed, reassembled and aged. The reconstructed Yamaha motor-boat engine in classic white statuary Carrara marble is then subjected to a process of chemical transformation. The marble, with a geological age of 200 million years, is rendered in the shape of a resolutely man-made object and then placed in a prospective future by accelerating the natural process of corrosion with hydrochloric acid. Under contemporary environmental conditions, even the age-old earthen material of stone loses its status as resolute and, in turn, the human timeline itself is eroded.

Oilstone 05_Corrosion, 2019.
Bianca Carrara marble, epoxy
and tarp, 54 x 110 x 53cm.
Winner, Sovereign Asian Art
Prize, Hong Kong



ALEX SETON		SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS	2005	<i>Stay on Message</i> , Maunsell Wickes@BSG, Sydney	Schore, Belgium	2011	<i>Arboreal</i> , Macquarie University Gallery, Sydney
Born 1977, Sydney. Lives and works Sydney	2022	(forthcoming) <i>The Lock-Up</i> , Newcastle		<i>We Gotta Get Out Of This Place</i> , Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane	<i>Fleurieu Art Prize for Landscape</i> , Samstag Museum, University of South Australia, Adelaide		<i>Double Vision</i> , McClelland Gallery and Sculpture Park, Langwarrin
EDUCATION	2020	(forthcoming), <i>Meet Me Under the Dome</i> , Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney	2004	<i>New Works</i> , Maunsell Wickes@BSG, Sydney	Group exhibition, Sullivan + Strumpf, Sydney		<i>Pat Corrigan/Collector</i> , Maitland Art Gallery, Maitland
1998 Bachelor of Art Theory and History, College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney		<i>The Great Escape</i> , Goulburn Regional Gallery		SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS (2011–2020)	2015		RECENT AWARDS & RESIDENCIES
	2019	<i>Once There</i> , Sullivan+Strumpf, Singapore			Art Basel Hong Kong, Sullivan+Strumpf, Hong Kong		
	2018	<i>Cargo</i> , Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney	2022	(forthcoming) <i>Dummies & Doppelgänger</i> , Christchurch	Convention & Exhibition Centre	2020	Wynne Prize, Art Gallery of NSW, finalist
		<i>The Golden Calf</i> , Installation Contemporary, Sydney		Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, Christchurch	Art Paris 2015, Galerie Paris-Bejing, Paris		Sovereign Art Prize, Hong Kong, winner
	2017	Contemporary Art Fair, Sydney		(forthcoming) <i>Safe Space</i> , Murray Bridge Regional Gallery; Latrobe Regional Gallery; New England Regional Art Museum; University of Sunshine Coast Gallery	10th Anniversary Group Show, Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney		Montalto Sculpture Prize, finalist
		<i>Monument</i> , Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney	2021		<i>Sealed Section</i> , ARTBANK, Sydney	2019	Recipient of the Mordant Family/ Australia Council Affiliated Fellowship at the American Academy in Rome
	2016	<i>The Island</i> , Newcastle Art Gallery			<i>Art International Istanbul</i> , Galerie Paris-Bejing, Istanbul		Tactical Space Lab residency with Dr Josh Harle, Sydney
		<i>Pygmalion</i> , Sullivan+Strumpf, Singapore			<i>What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me</i> , The Fine Art Society, London, UK	2018	Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop residency, UK
	2015	<i>Paper Armada</i> , Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane	2020	<i>Safe Space</i> , Grafton Regional Gallery; Maitland Regional Gallery; Devonport Regional Gallery	Gifted Artists; Donations by Patrick Corrigan AM, National Gallery of Australia	2017	Contemporary Talents International Competition, Fondation François Schneider, Wattwiller, France, joint winner
		<i>The Journey</i> , Galerie Paris – Beijing, Paris	2019	<i>Hope Dies Last</i> , Art at the End of Optimism; Gertrude Contemporary	<i>Protest Songs</i> : Artful Actions, Lismore Regional Gallery	2016	
		<i>Someone Else’s Problem</i> , Installation Contemporary, Sydney		<i>Love</i> , Tweed Regional Gallery & Margaret Olley Art Centre	<i>Subject to Ruin</i> , Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Casula		
	2014–15	Contemporary Art Fair, Sydney		<i>Refoulement</i> (touring) McClelland Gallery; Linden Centre for Contemporary Art; Rockhampton Art Gallery	<i>Conflict: Contemporary Responses to War</i> , University of Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane		
		<i>As of Today</i> , Australian War Memorial, Canberra		Art Basel Hong Kong, Sullivan+Strumpf, Hong Kong	Art Basel Hong Kong, Sullivan+Strumpf, Hong Kong		
	2014	<i>Last Resort</i> , Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney		<i>Annual Group Show</i> , Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney	<i>Private Assembly: A Contemporary Collection</i> , Tweed Regional Gallery, Murwillumbah		
		<i>Replicator</i> , Tweed Regional Gallery, Murwillumbah		<i>Safe Space</i> , Bundaberg Art Gallery; Rockhampton Art Gallery; Dogwood Crossing @ Miles; Toowoomba Art Gallery	<i>Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Dark Heart</i> , Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide		
	2013	<i>Roughing Out</i> , Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre, Sydney	2018	<i>Safe Space</i> , Logan Art Gallery	<i>The Redlands Konica Minolta Art Prize</i> , National Art School, Sydney		
	2012	<i>Six More</i> , Australian War Memorial, Canberra		<i>All We Can’t See</i> , Yellow House, Sydney	SSFA14, Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney		
		<i>Elegy on Resistance</i> , ArtHK12, Sullivan+Strumpf, Hong Kong	2017	<i>I Was Here</i> , Fremantle Arts Centre, Western Australia	<i>Form and Substance</i> , Curated by Alex Seton, Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane		
		Exhibition and Convention Centre, Hong Kong		<i>Less than – art and reductionism</i> , QUT Art Museum, Brisbane	<i>Australia: Contemporary Voices</i> , The Fine Art Society Contemporary, London, UK		
	2011	<i>Flags</i> , Lismore Regional Gallery, Lismore		<i>Contemporary Talents prize winners exhibition</i> , Fondation François Schneider, Wattwiller, France	<i>Gravity of Sculpture: Part II</i> , Dorsky Gallery Curatorial Programs, New York, USA		
		<i>Flags</i> , Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney		<i>Counter currents</i> , Samstag Museum, Adelaide	<i>Wynne Prize</i> , Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney		
		<i>Flag</i> , Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane		<i>Young & Free</i> , Bega Valley Regional Gallery, New South Wales	<i>Drawing a Line</i> , Caboolture Regional Gallery, Caboolture, Queensland		
	2010	<i>Infinitely Near</i> , Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney		<i>Forming in the Pupil of an Eye: Kochi-Muziris Biennale</i> , 2016, Kochi, India	<i>Speak to Me</i> , Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney		
	2009	<i>Assembly</i> , Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney	2016	<i>Contour 556</i> Public Art Festival, Canberra	<i>Look Closely Now</i> , Lake Macquarie Regional Gallery, Lake Macquarie		
		<i>Supplementary Restraint System</i> , Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane		<i>Speed: The Fast and the Curious</i> , Murray Art Museum Albury	<i>Variable Truth</i> , 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney		
	2008	<i>On Hold</i> , Jan Murphy Gallery, Melbourne Art Fair, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne		<i>Arrival</i> , Inaugural exhibition, Sullivan+Strumpf, Singapore	SSFA12, Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney		
		<i>Memeoid</i> , Chalk Horse Gallery, Sydney		<i>Spring 1883 art fair</i> , Jan Murphy Gallery, Hotel Windsor, Melbourne			
	2007	<i>Panoply</i> , Chalk Horse Gallery, Sydney		<i>Art Festival Watou</i> , vzw Kunst,			
		<i>Security Blanket</i> , Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane					

