

SUSAN BURET

AXIS

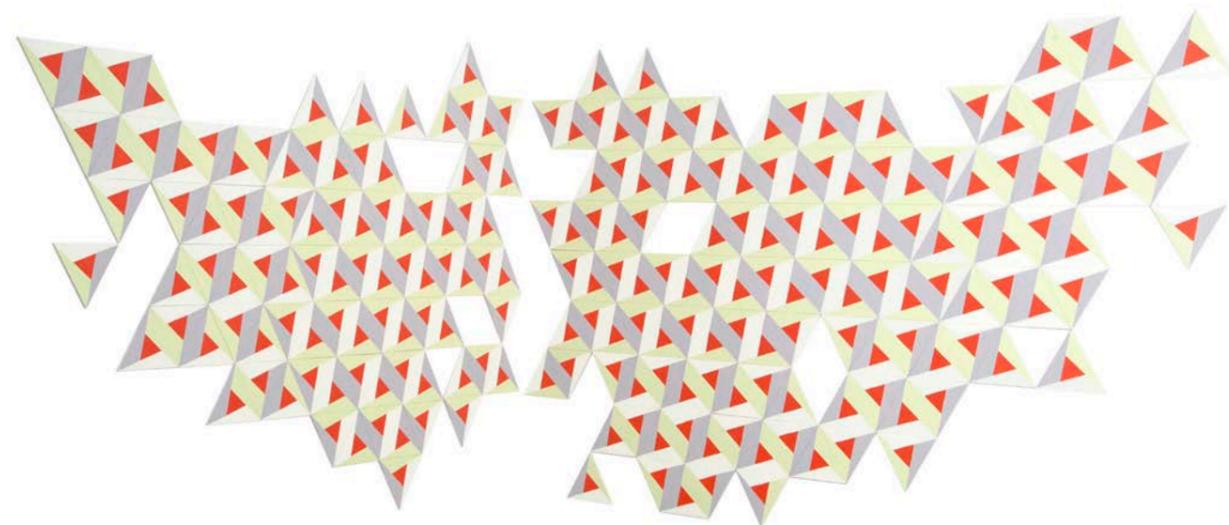
FOREWORD

The Mercury gallery is an exhibition space at Wollongong Art Gallery that punches well above its weight. Situated on the ground floor this intimate white cube corner gallery has presented some of our most innovative and interesting contemporary exhibitions. Susan Buret's exhibition *Axis* is a case in point.

Axis is a deeply layered and visually captivating exhibition. While at first glance the works seem constructed from a complex repetition of lines and geometrical patterning and forms, delving more closely reveals a fascinating and elusive intricacy of breaks, ends and diversions within the works that lead the eye on unexpected and remarkable visual journeys with endless possibilities. Drawing inspiration from architecture, oriental rugs, textiles and quilts *Axis* provides the viewer with a subtle yet immersive experience.

We would like to thank the artist for her commitment to this project and we hope like us, you will be both surprised and engaged by this exhibition.

John Monteleone
Program Director



Images: (details) *Axis*, 2014, acrylic on ply. Photography Bernie Fischer

SUSAN BURET: AXIS

Pattern has the ability to dazzle, delight, welcome, make cultural claim, give human scale and act as a navigating tool in space.¹

Axis may appear at first sight to be a work of pure geometry – of straight lines, regular angles and exact forms. The title references mathematical coordinates, mapping, and navigation; it implies precise measurements and systems of logic. However, on closer inspection, this interconnecting network of colour and line fractures and splits. Asymmetries and discontinuities take the eye on haphazard and unpredictable journeys through a shimmering field of colour, while lines that seemed ruler-straight waver and fray, revealing the mark of the hand.

These wavering edges – these 'little wobbles,' as Buret describes them – record a time and labour intensive engagement with materials. The surface of *Axis* is soft, chalky, matte. Muted shades of pale yellow and mauve drawn from nature, from art history, and from memories of her childhood home are woven together, setting up a play of illusory shadows that contrasts with arrowheads of pure bright red. The repeating triangular unit from which *Axis* is built is based on the span of Buret's hand, a simple and direct form of measurement that allows architectural space to be translated into a human scale. In short, *Axis* reveals the potential of geometric art to personalise space, mark territory, embody memory, and reference the colours and forms of the natural world.

Allow your eye to wander through the work, and you'll find mirrored forms and visual 'flips' that subtly activate the surface. As Buret explains, 'by breaking and redirecting the pattern, I try to suggest orienting strategies to the viewer as they move throughout the room, sensing a fluid trajectory through space rather than following the rectilinear structures of wall and floor.' These slippages, fractures and unexpected reversals allow Buret to explore how pattern can claim and draw our attention to space. Such disruptions to the predictability of patterning are a key element in traditional art forms such as weaving, where 'the eyes of an observer are often attracted to a pattern or a part of the design... enjoying the repetition and the disruption of the recognized motifs.'²

Buret draws deliberate parallels between her occupation of the gallery wall and floor and the use of textiles by the nomadic Berber people who, as she says, 'unrolled

their patterns' when setting up camp, creating a familiar domestic space for life in the desert and mountain landscapes of Northern Africa. Berber weavings were made exclusively by women, with motifs handed down from mother to daughter that symbolise the 'movements and sensations of the body' associated with life, love, sex, birth and death.³ Here, a network of triangles signifies the tent as a place of refuge, and also the natural cycles of birth, transformation and renewal.⁴ As Buret unpacks her patterns to take temporary occupation of the gallery, the irregular form of *Axis* takes shape on the walls and floor in a process suggestive of cellular growth.

With its repetitions, asymmetries and fractured crystalline appearance, *Axis* mirrors the geometric structure of living systems. As Buret observes, 'the things I like to look at are sun on water and leaves – nothing fixed.' This fluctuating, dynamic form reflects her fascination with the restless patterns of nature, and the eye can navigate the zigzagging web of lines as it might the inconstancies of the world around us. Just as the dazzle of light on water or branches shifting in the wind can create a mesmeric, meditative effect, so *Axis* engenders a sense of reverie, inviting us to reflect on the structures and rhythms of nature.

In Susan Buret's sensitive material exploration, straight lines transform into a fluid, amorphous field that occupies and draws our attention to the gallery space. Mathematical precision gives way to a shimmering geometry in which time, place and memory are at play, leading us inwards on journeys of private contemplation, and outwards to the natural world.

Julie Brooke

Dr Julie Brooke is a Canberra-based painter who investigates parallels between research in science and in the visual arts. She is a Research Fellow at the ANU School of Art and an Artist Fellow in the ANU Department of Applied Mathematics, and completed a practice-led visual arts PhD in 2013 for which she was awarded a J. G. Crawford Award. (www.juliebrooke.net)

¹ Susan Buret, personal communication

² Inna Naroditskaya, "Azerbaijani Mugham and Carpet: Cross-Domain Mapping," *Ethnomusicology Forum* 14, (2005): 33

³ Bruno Barbatti, *Berber Carpets of Morocco: The Symbols Origin and Meaning* (trans. Alan J. Bridgman). ACR Edition: Paris (2008): 24

⁴ *Ibid.*, 22