



YOU WIN SOME, YOU LOSE EVERYTHING.

Ben Mackie

21.06-02.07.2024

This show is dedicated to Nick Briggs
~Catch ya on the other~

Thank you to:

Green Floor Gallery; Victoria Maxwell; Ben Jones; Greta, Eva and the team at Graphic Art Mount; Julian Hocking; Mum; Dad; Jesus Christ



The lucky country is on a spectacular losing streak with Australians losing more per capita on gambling than any other country in the world.¹ This staggering statistic sets the stage for Ben Mackie's exhibition, "You Win Some, You Lose Everything," a series of intimate self-portraits that blend mementos and drawings into collages of life's little treats and big contradictions.

"Remember you must die" (the English translation of the Latin Memento Mori) was a cultural phenomenon present in Early Modern Europe where reminders of the inevitability of death were prevalent throughout art, architecture, literature, and music.² Linked to this idea are the vanitas paintings of the Dutch masters in the early 17th century. These paintings contained objects symbolising worldly pursuits that tempt humans—trinkets, goblets, pipes—alongside symbols of death and decay, such as wilting flowers, skulls, and rotting food. In these works, shame is inextricably tied to indulgence. The purpose was to remind us that the trivial pleasures of life are abruptly and permanently wiped out by death, or that while you may win some during life, in the end, you lose everything.

Mackie's works on paper (framed in gold as a nod to sporting memorabilia) are filled with modern-day ephemera—scratchies, receipts, coasters, and pornographic images. These items reflect the paper trail of Mackie's own experiences and interests - his fleeting joys and naughty indulgences. It is here that Mackie's work finds an unlikely counterpart in the Dutch masters. He too acknowledges that you lose everything in the end, but unlike the humorless Dutch who aimed to encourage a pious existence, his work suggests that life's little treats are often what make this reminder tolerable.

Gambling is a key theme in Mackie's work and the internal battle between the fleeting euphoria of a win and the enduring disappointment of a loss plays out in his compositions.

In VIP pokies rooms, time flows like molasses, diluted and distorted by sights, smells, sounds, tastes and textures of the space, the sensory overload turning even the most rational of gamblers into Pavlov's drooling dogs, unable to resist the promise of a jackpot, despite the knowledge that the house always wins. They are designed as vacuums to suck out the worries and responsibilities of the outside world and replace them with a mindless tranquility.

Whatever the vice, we are all driven by a primal aversion to discomfort, which can lead to a never-ending quest for short term pleasures. Doing so repeatedly, reinforces the cycle - making it difficult to come up for air. However once the dopamine hit wears off, we are forced to come to terms with our brain's betrayal - it's proclivity for seeking transient pleasure at the expense of reason. Mackie's compositions convey the sense of unease that comes with this realisation, using drawings amidst his collages to create contrast between inner dread and outward enjoyment. With clever use of familiar themes like the tragic/comic, he acknowledges the universal struggle of finding pleasure in activities that society deems shameful. Oscar Wilde famously said, "The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful."³ Mackie's art captures the internal struggle between instant gratification and long-term consequences, between societal norms and our most basic desires. His work reminds us that we crave peace and madness, Jesus and Tyson—our desires are as contradictory as they are intense.

Words: Victoria Maxwell

¹ The Australia Institute. (2020). Pokies Pub Test. Retrieved from The Australia Institute.

² The concept of Memento Mori is not unique to Early Modern Europe. Similar themes are present in various cultures worldwide. In Japanese culture, the term "mono no aware" captures a similar sentiment, reflecting on the transience of life and the beauty of impermanence. In Buddhism, the contemplation of death, known as "maranasati," serves to remind practitioners of the impermanent nature of life. The Mexican tradition of Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) honors deceased loved ones, blending indigenous beliefs with Catholicism to celebrate the cycle of life and death.

³ Wilde, Oscar (1854-1900) *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

LEFT TO RIGHT

Self portrait (1)

Pencil, paper, used scratchies, vyvanse label

H: 42.5 W:60.5

\$400

Self portrait (2)

Photograph, paper, marker, white out, trading cards

H: 42.5 W:60.5

\$400

Self portrait (3)

Xerox, paint marker, trading card

H: 42.5 W:60.5

\$400

Self portrait (4)

Magazine print, receipt, marker

H: 42.5 W:60.5

\$400

Self portrait (5)

Photographs, ink, xerox, playing card

H: 42.5 W:60.5

\$400

Self portrait (6)

Paper, marker, magazine print, used scratchie, oil pastels, tape

H: 42.5 W:60.5

\$400

Self portrait (7)

Charcoal, paper, receipt, found CD cover

Paper, marker, magazine print, used scratchie, oil pastels, tape

H: 42.5 W:60.5

\$400

MIDDLE

Family Values (Pour it)

Dimensions variable

Found objects, Black Sambuca

\$200

Ben Mackie, Aka Bedroom Ben, Aka Dean Hamm, Aka The Pig, Aka Blow Job, Aka King Quiche, Aka Mr. 9/11, Aka The Wolf of Bourke street, Aka The Chinese Dreamboat, Aka Lonely Tony, Aka Jeffrey The Hedgehog, Aka Pub Boy, Aka Uncle Pub, Aka Australia's hottest virgin, Aka Bookshoè, Aka Da Blue Eye Bastard, Aka Deep cheddar, Aka Bath boy, Aka Mr. Fandango, Aka Dr. Trust, Aka Dive King Aka Mole Eye, Aka The strongest man alive 3 years running, Aka **Mackie**.

Instagram: @self_taught_judo

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**Sovereignty was never ceded.
It was, and always will be Aboriginal land.**

*Exhibitions at **Green Floor Gallery** are thoughtfully curated to showcase a diversity of artistic styles, mediums, and perspectives.*

Green Floor Gallery is committed to promoting emerging talent and underrepresented voices. Through special exhibitions, collaborations, and initiatives, we aim to shine a spotlight on artists whose work challenges conventions and enriches our collective cultural landscape.

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