

EVA ROTHSCHILD: KOSMOS

Education Kit

**Australian Centre for
Contemporary Art/
City Gallery Wellington**

**City
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Wellington**
Te Whare Toi

acca



Exhibition Introduction

Eva Rothschild: Kosmos is the first survey of Eva Rothschild's work in Australasia. It is a joint project by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, and City Gallery Wellington, curated by ACCA Director Max Delany and ACCA Senior Curator Annika Kristensen.

Artist Biography

Eva Rothschild was born in Dublin in 1971. She studied art in Dublin and Belfast, and completed a Master of Fine Arts at Goldsmiths, University of London, in 1999. She taught art at the Slade School of Fine Art, London. She currently lives in London. She is Ireland's representative at the 2019 Venice Biennale. Her work is influenced by minimalist art of the 1960s and 1970s, classical architecture, spiritualism, and pop culture. Her works explore the formal language of sculpture—form, shape, colour, structure, scale, material. Most of her works are made for gallery contexts, however she has made large public works outdoors. As a studio-based artist, she uses hands-on processes to create her works. To realise large pieces, she engages professional fabricators and specialist technicians.

How to use this kit

This kit is for use in conjunction with exhibition visits. It was written by ACCA's education team, and adapted by City Gallery. Teachers can adapt questions and activities provided within the Kit for learning experiences in the gallery or classroom.

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Key Ideas & Vocabulary



Images

Eva Rothschild in her London studio.

Photograph: Royal Academy London/Anne Purkiss

p 3 Eva Rothschild *Trouble Maker* 2018 and *Risers (Black)* 2018





***Hazard* 2018**

Concrete, steel, acrylic paint

Hazard is about order and disorder. This wall of concrete blocks bisects the gallery, interrupting the passage of viewers, forcing them to walk around it. It's like choreography—instructions telling dancers how to move. The wall is painted on both sides in an abstract geometric pattern. The form and title refer to the official law-and-order barricades that have become a familiar feature of our public spaces, which Rothschild calls 'hazard architecture'.

Hard-edged, non-representational, and non-figurative, *Hazard* has similarities to minimalist artworks of the 1960s and 1970s. Rothschild used the industrial processes required for building an actual concrete wall.

It looks like the blocks are supposed to be arranged regularly, so the painted pattern is coherent—the pattern being a guide to building the wall correctly. But Rothschild has arranged them a little 'haphazardly', leaving gaps in the structure and disrupting the pattern. She messes with the language of authority, playing with her blocks as though they were a giant, super-heavy tangram puzzle. Whose side is she on—order or disorder?

Inquiry Question

What kind of material could you make a sculpture from that would guide viewers through the gallery in a similar way to *Hazard*? To begin, think about how your sculpture could be adapted from an everyday structure, like a fence, wall, or set of stairs. Make a drawing to show how your work would be installed in the gallery and title it.



Image

p 4/5 Eva Rothschild *Hazard* 2018.



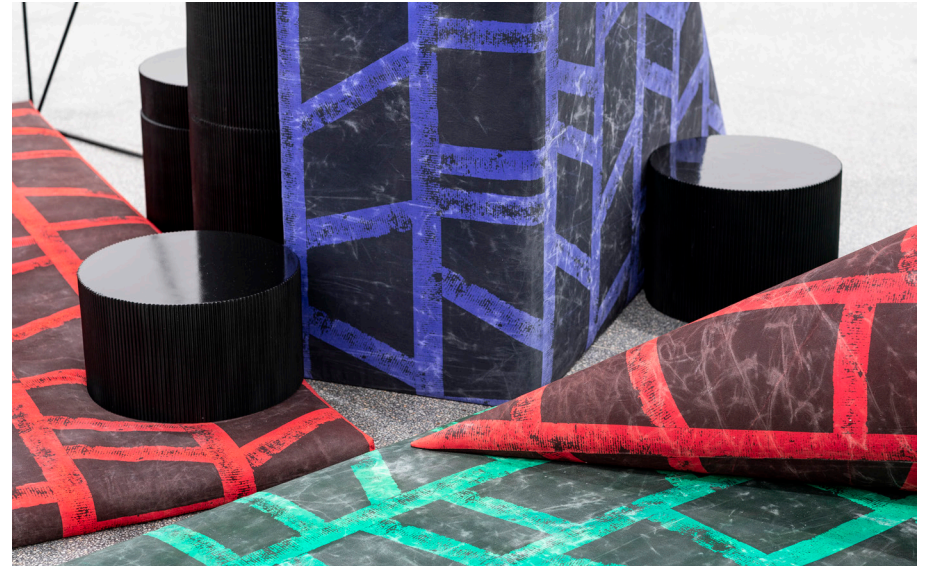
***An Organic Threat* 2018**

Jesmonite, resin, steel, hand-dyed cotton, wax, paint, fibreglass, foam, plywood

An Organic Threat is an assemblage of soft and hard, open and closed sculptural forms. It was commissioned especially for *Kosmos* and has never been exhibited before. As a new commission, it involved complex planning and coordination. The fabric was designed and printed by the artist in her London studio. It was sent to Melbourne with detailed plans for its transformation into three-dimensions. Fibreglass, foam, and polystyrene forms were fabricated, then covered with the printed material by an upholsterer, with specialist skills in padding and covering furniture items such as couches and chairs. The slender steel element was also fabricated in Melbourne according to plans sent by the artist. It was painted black in the gallery during the installation of the exhibition. Rothschild only decided how to arrange the pieces during the installation. Many sculptors use arrangement as a technique to create their works.

Inquiry Question

Rothschild carefully places and arranges her sculptures. Take a moment to see how their sequencing and spacing shapes a journey for the viewer. Consider how you could arrange the works differently to create an entirely new experience. For example, by bundling all the artworks close together in one spot and leaving some galleries entirely empty. How would this change your experience?



Images

p 6 Eva Rothschild *An Organic Threat* 2018

p 7 Eva Rothschild *An Organic Threat* (detail) 2018



Cosmos 2018

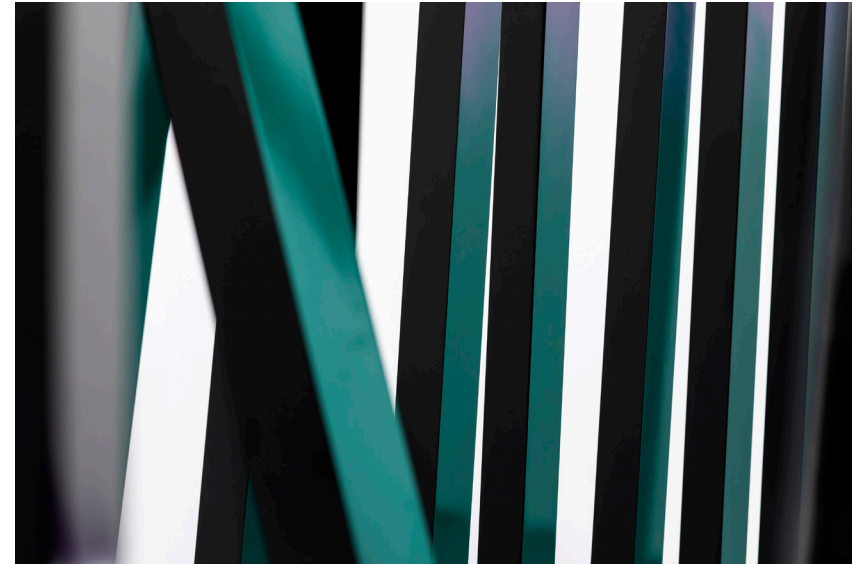
spray painted aluminium

Over three meters high, *Cosmos* sits somewhere between architecture and sculpture. Viewers can walk through it, temporarily inhabiting it. With its geometric forms, tilted planes, and smooth industrial surfaces, *Cosmos* engages the tradition of minimalist sculpture, as do other works in the exhibition, such as *Hazard* and *The Sacrificial Layer*. Minimalism is part of Rothschild's visual language.

Cosmos is a textbook example of sculpture in the round. It has no obvious front, and there is no 'ideal' or 'correct' viewing position. The title reinforces this idea. 'Cosmos' is another word for the universe, which, because it is all-encompassing and its limits unknown, with no front or back, up or down. *Cosmos* plays on spatial perception. Its arrangement of angles and planes moves with the viewer. Its blackness can make it appear as a flat silhouette. However, the graduated colours on its interior components generate spatial illusions.

Inquiry Question

Move slowly around the sculpture. What happens as you move? What appears different from different directions, and how does this change the experience of the work for you? Hint: consider the artist's use of colour.



Images

p 8 Eva Rothschild *Cosmos* 2018

p 9 Eva Rothschild *Cosmos* (details) 2018



Stools 2018

Steel, Jesmonite, fibreglass, paint

*"I want people to know what my work feels like. I make stools and benches for people to sit on in my exhibitions, using the same materials as my sculpture. You can touch the stool and get a sense of what the sculpture feels like, without having your hands all over the artwork. It's an opportunity to make contact with the materials, and an invitation to stay with the work a little longer."*¹

—Eva Rothschild

Distributed throughout the exhibition are ten *Stools*. The artist decided on set positions for her other sculptures, however viewers can move her stools around and sit on them. They are hybrid objects, furniture and art work simultaneously (they are signed on their underside). Rothschild is concerned that our attention span has become shorter. Her stools encourage us to sit and relax, to spend more time with her works.

Inquiry Question

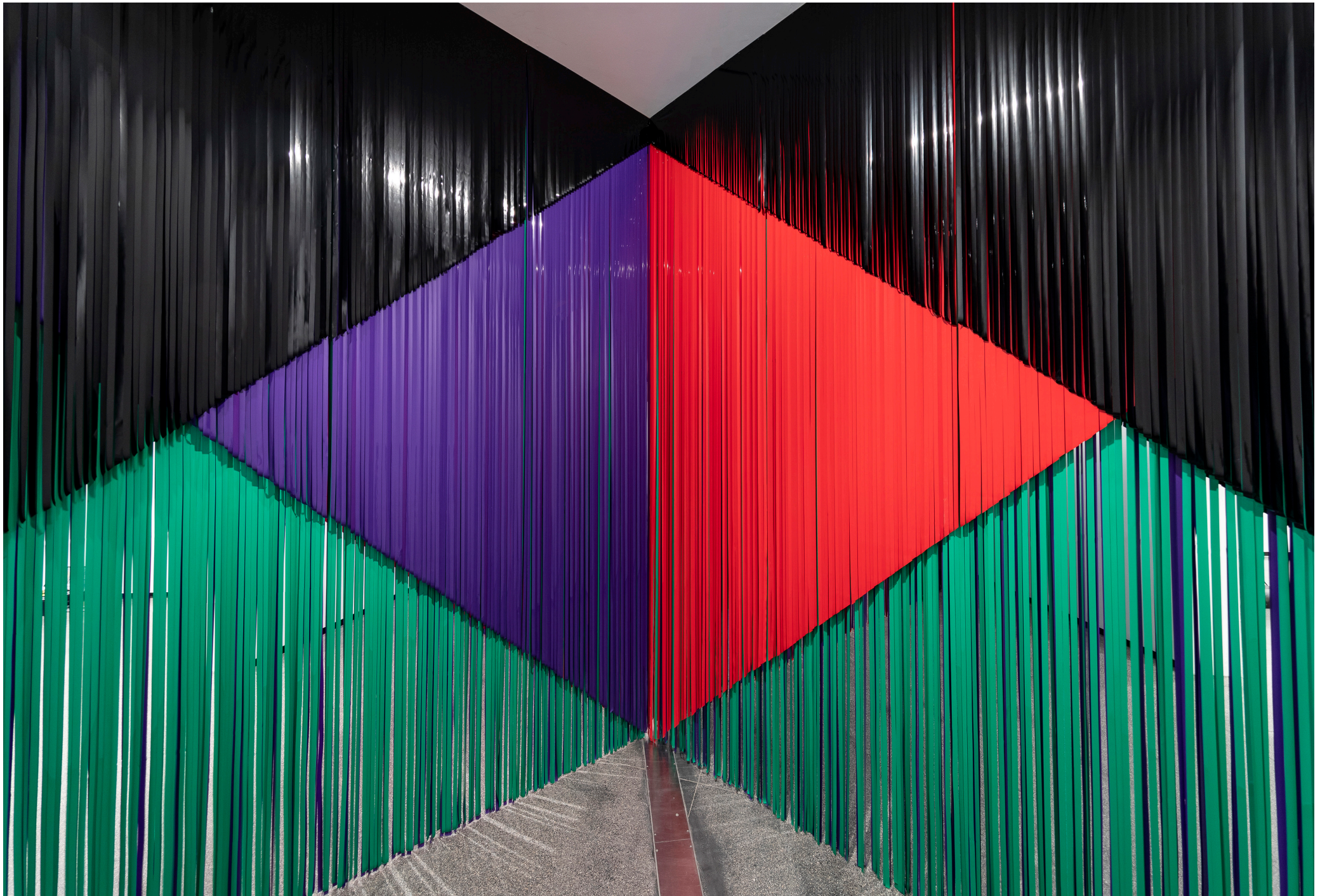
What is another work that is also a functional object? If you haven't seen anything that fits this description, think one up and draw a picture of your new creation.



¹'As I See It – Artists in Their Own Words: Eva Rothschild', Royal Academy.
<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/as-i-see-it-eva-rothschild>

Images

p 10/11 Eva Rothschild *Stools* 2018



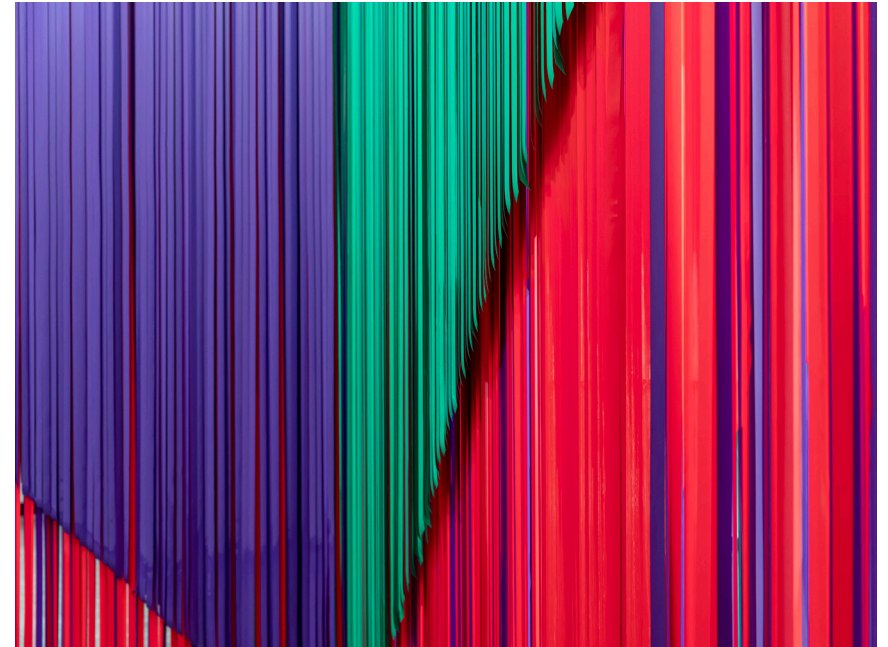
***The Sacrificial Layer* 2018**

polyvinyl chloride

The Sacrificial Layer is like a theatre curtain or backdrop. Its geometric composition refers to abstract painting. However, in contrast to geometric abstraction, it has a soft quality. The plastic strips move slightly with ambient air currents, and, when viewers walk through the piece, it dissolves around them, its plastic strips caressing them. The work combines opposites: it's hard and soft, architectural and ornamental, dominant (filling the entire space) yet modest (gives way to the viewer effortlessly).

Inquiry Question

Most of the works in *Kosmos* are for viewing at a distance, privileging visual experience. However, *The Sacrificial Layer* engages touch and hearing. Ignore its visual aspects and concentrate on how it feels and sounds. Describe this experience.



Images

p 12 Eva Rothschild *The Sacrificial Layer* 2018

p 13 Eva Rothschild *The Sacrificial Layer* (detail) 2018



Technical support 2018

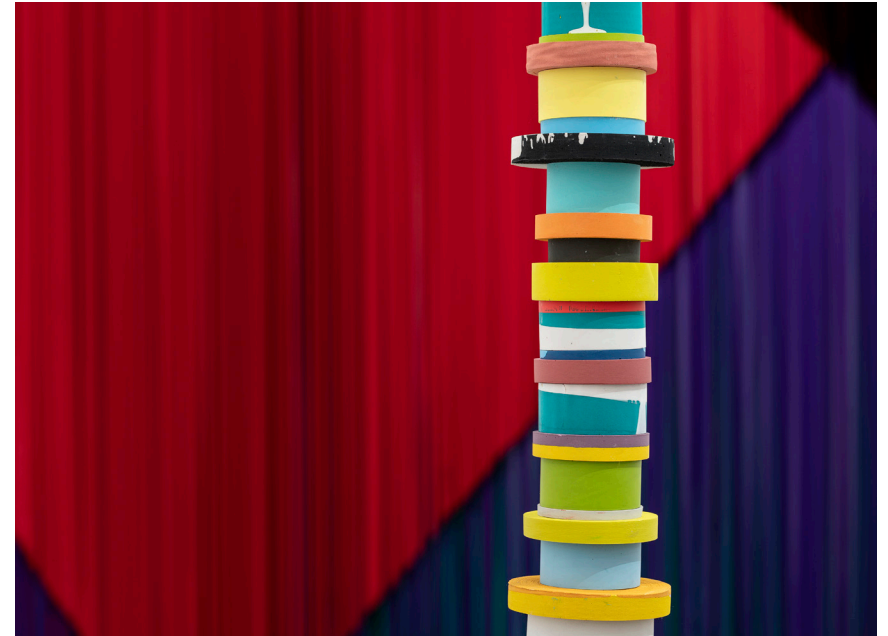
Jesmonite, steel

Technical support reflects Rothschild's studio process of production, experimentation, and reconceptualisation. In her studio, she used rolls of tape to support sculptural elements to stop them rolling away. However, this arrangement was thwarted when she needed to use the tape. Her solution was to make casts of rolls of tape as supports. Gradually, she incorporated these into other sculptures. Often, all it takes for an object to become an art work is for an artist to start seeing or thinking of it as one.

Made of hundreds of casts of rolls of tape, *Technical Support* towers above the viewer, from floor-to-ceiling. The casts are made of Jesmonite, which Rothschild uses in many of her works. This work refers to Constantin Brancusi's *Endless Column*. The Romanian sculptor made several versions, with the earliest surviving one—owned by the Museum of Modern Art, New York—dating back to 1918. *Endless Column* is a stack of simple uniform elements placed directly atop of one another. It is not endless, but it is easy to imagine that it could be, had the artist chosen to continue stacking his forms. *Technical Support* is potentially endless, if only the ceiling hadn't got in the way.

Inquiry Question

Rothschild chose to stack the individual elements that constitute *Technical Support* as a precarious-looking column. How does this contribute to your experience of the work? Does it affect your sense of proportion in the space? Does it feel safe? What other arrangements could the artist have chosen, and how would they change your experience of the work? Consider what your new arrangements may look like: tall or short, random or ordered, colour-coded or not.



Images

p 14 Eva Rothschild *Technical support* (ACCA) 2018

p 15 Eva Rothschild *Technical support* (ACCA) 2018 (detail)

Eva Rothschild, *Technical support*, Sonneveld House, Rotterdam, 2016



Key Ideas

Shape vs Form

A shape is two-dimensional; a form is three-dimensional. A triangle is a shape, while a pyramid is a triangular form. As a sculptor, Rothschild considers forms: how to sculpt and arrange them.

Artwork Titles

Rothschild often gives her works poetic and imaginative titles. She declines to explain her works, leaving interpretation to the viewer. As art critic and writer Michael Archer reflected:

By declining to invest her sculptures with any specific narrative, Rothschild ensures there is a broad scope for constructing it oneself. This is not to say that, in the face of her work, anything goes; it is more that she recognises the degree to which our apprehension of form is shaped by experience. 'Geometric forms', she says, 'are totally corrupted by sentiment and desire'.²

Key Vocabulary

Geometric Abstraction

Styles of abstract art that emphasise geometric shapes and forms.

Minimalism

An art movement that originated in the USA in the 1960s. Minimalist artworks are characterised by being abstract, with simple often repeated shapes and forms; being literal, not metaphorical; being free of decoration and ornamentation; and often being impersonal—industrially fabricated.

Vicarious Experience

An experience had in the imagination through the feelings, description, or actions of another person.



Images

p 16 Eva Rothschild: *Kosmos*, Exhibition view, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2018.

p 17 Eva Rothschild *Crystal Healing* 2018

² Archer, Michael. 2010. "In Difference". In *Eva Rothschild*, pp. 129-133. London: Koenig Books.

List of Works

A Sacrificial Layer 2018

polyvinyl chloride

An Organic Threat 2018

hand-dyed cotton, wax, Jesmonite, resin, steel, paint, fibreglass, foam, polystyrene and plywood

Cosmos 2018

spray-painted aluminium

Crystal Healing 2018

fibreglass, polyurethane, Jesmonite, paint, concrete plinth

Hazard 2018

concrete, steel, synthetic polymer paint

Iceberg Hits 2018

fabric, wax, wood, card, foam, wadding, steel

Risers (Black) 2018

painted steel, rubber, oak plinth

Stools 2018

steel, Jesmonite, fibreglass, paint

Technical Support 2018

Jesmonite, steel

The Way In 2018

leather, aluminium, fabric, tape, paint, steel, dyed oak plinth

Tooth and Claw 2018

aluminium, polyurethane, fabric, glass beads, Jesmonite, fibreglass, paint, composition board, acrylic plinth

Troublemaker 2018

Jesmonite, polyurethane, acrylic paint, steel

Black Atom 2013

steel, resin

Do-Nut 2011

ceramic tiles, Jesmonite, polystyrene, adhesive, grout



Image

Eva Rothschild *Black Atom* 2018

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Eva Rothschild is represented by Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London; The Modern Institute, Glasgow; Gallery 303, New York; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich; and Kaufmann Repetto, Milan.

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