

t h e i m p r e s s i o n o f o u r a r t e r i e s



Caitlin Franzmann, Sonya G. Peters, Robyn Daw, Ali Bezer, Jay Younger, Julie-Anne Milinski, Ellie Buttrose (writer), Debra Porch, Mona Ryder, Sophie Bottomley, Elizabeth Shaw, Kat Sawyer, Chantal Fraser, Leena Riethmuller, Carol McGregor & Victoria (Tor) Maclean

the impression of our **arteries**

artists: Caitlin Franzmann, Sonya G. Peters, Robyn Daw, Ali Bezer, Jay Younger,
Julie-Anne Milinski, Debra Porch, Mona Ryder, Sophie Bottomley, Elizabeth Shaw,
Kat Sawyer, Chantal Fraser, Leena Riethmuller, Carol McGregor, Victoria (Tor) Maclean

writer: Ellie Buttrose

exhibition dates

10 March – 1 April 2017

opening date

Saturday afternoon 3pm – 6pm, 11 March 2017

Woolloongabba Art Gallery

613 Stanley St, Woolloongabba, Qld 4104

the impression of our **arteries**

The impressions and interpretations of emotions, feelings, connections, all intertwined. I reflect on the specific system of the arteries and veins. The arteries being vessels that transport oxygen-rich blood from the heart to the rest of the body, and the veins transporting blood back to the heart after the body has used the oxygen. Here are the direct connections to the heart, to the central part of living and feeling, to the hollow muscular organ that pumps blood through the circulatory system. Strangely, the heart is also regarded as the centre of a person's deepest thoughts, emotions, sentiments, and soul. The heart has also become the overseer of compassion, kindness, sympathy, humanity, empathy, understanding and goodwill, or as Patti Smith said, "the transformation of the heart is a wondrous thing, no matter how you land there".

The impression of our arteries is an exhibition that questions how the heart and the mind convey significant and revealing impressions and intentions through objects, images and the senses. It reflects the circulatory patterns between those one loves, and the feelings, senses, intuition, perception, influence and the impressions that are formed from these bonds.

Here the visible and invisible connections that the artists have with each other, their families, their pets, and their ambitions, also stem from these vein-like systems of (heart-felt) attachments and relationships. The varying and diverse associations have presented new insights and quandaries for the artists included in this exhibition. All the female artists, through their work, have made a difference to the presence of detail and careful consideration reflected here. They have made a difference just by the action of thinking and constructing a new vehicle for contemplation – they leave their mark, their feeling, their perception.

I proposed these ideas to 14 female artists with whom I have worked since 2003. All have notable intuition, perception, opinions and wisdom. Links with these artists have given me new insights and intelligence, and hopefully these associations have also done the same for them. I gratefully acknowledge the artists Jay Younger, Elizabeth Shaw, Kat Sawyer, Mona Ryder, Leena Riethmuller, Sonya Peters, Julie-Anne Milinski, Tor Maclean, Carol McGregor, Chantal Fraser, Caitlin Franzmann, Robyn Daw, Sophie Bottomley and Ali Bezer. I sincerely thank Ellie Buttrose for her insightful words.

And I wish to extend much gratitude to Robert Mercer and Alex Shaw of Woolloongabba Art Gallery for the support of this project.

Debra Porch
collaborator and organiser

Note: Patti Smith, M Train; Alfred A. Knopf, N.Y.; 2015; p.142.

keep in touch

relations

I am currently away from home, trying to meet new people, while keeping up my ties with those who are dear but distant. I am sending and receiving messages at odd hours of the day and in a moment of weakness made my temporary internet password 'WriteHome'. I am feeling guilty that I have not sent this essay off for editing but I am also trying to get off my screen to experience everything on offer in this city; a place steeped in history and struggling with the present moment. In this unfamiliar context I am seeking to understand what it means to make and show art for those who call this place home. How are connections made, what are the most pertinent concerns that drive artistic practice, and what questions I don't even realise should I be asking? I am reflecting on these subjects with some old friends and new professional colleagues — some of whom I may one day have the pleasure to call old friends.

These current concerns are also at the centre of the exhibition *The impression of our arteries* organized by Debra Porch. It features her own work alongside works by Jay Younger, Elizabeth Shaw, Kat Sawyer, Mona Ryder, Leena Riethmuller, Julie-Anne Milinski, Victoria (Tor) McLean, Carol McGregor, Sonya Peters, Chantal Fraser, Caitlin Franzmann, Robyn Daw, Sophie Bottomley and Ali Bezer. The show reflects on Debra's thirteen years living and working in Brisbane. These women are her conversation partners. Some started as professional colleagues and others as students, and she now considers each of them a friend. Responding to one another's practices and discussing artistic and philosophical influences are part of their relationship. These activities foster the localised energy that is the backdrop to this exhibition.

I cannot pin down when I first met Debra. One of my friends is also her dear friend; I had the pleasure of working alongside her partner for many years; I also know various people who have worked with Debra; and others who were taught by her. And, yes, some of these people are in this exhibition. What people remark upon is Debra's boundless warmth and

enthusiasm. Once she chooses her horse, Debra really backs it. If Debra likes your work she makes it known and it is through these strong bonds that this exhibition has arisen.

Expanding on from Debra's personal links, the artists were invited to present work — existing or new — that responds to the idea of 'visible and invisible connections... [to] vein-like systems of (heart-felt) attachments and relationships'. The range of artistic approaches presented in this exhibition is broad, from jewellery and installation to video. Some artists represent the complexity of maintaining personal relationships while others take a more formal approach to connectivity.

One point of reference for this exhibition was how objects and images become vessels for expressing abstract concepts from the minds and hearts of artists. A parallel focus is how local networks can be fostered to create feedback loops that energise and sustain the artists working within them. The title *The impression of our arteries* makes an analogy between these ideas and how arteries and veins become the vessels in a looping system that transports the oxygen rich-blood from our heart to nurture the rest of the body. The artists have responded by representing familial ties or by physically knotting materials, creating endless loops or using vinyl records of love songs past.

bloodlines

In an ongoing series of works Chantal Fraser traces the veins on her and her mother hands, highlighting the blood connection between the two women. The artist notes that her mother's hands show the signs of years of hard work and physical labour while also displaying elegant movement when dancing the Samoan *siva*. The work was informed by research on mourning veils from Oro province of Papua New Guinea in the University of Queensland Anthropology Museum collection. In performances Chantal wears these lines as a veil in front of her face.

Carol McGregor has been researching the historical use of possum skin cloaks in South East Queensland and reviving the practice through facilitating community workshops. Traditionally the cloaks grew with rows of added skins as the wearer

matured and their stories were incised onto the underside of the garment. Carol's works often reference possum skin cloaks in their form or their material. In this particular work she combines possum fur with her own hair to construct a series of vessels that envelope and wrap space with a warm embrace. Seeking to nurture silenced histories, these works link back to Carol's Wathaurung and Scottish decent and particularly her great grandmother.

Debra Porch also reflects on her family history, one shaped by the Armenian genocide (1915–17). Her works grapple with the possibility of the physical and visual representation of absence. For *The impression of our arteries* she has made a new work inspired by her grandmother. In this work Debra transforms everyday objects of gold chain, a gold needle, a taxidermy bird and basalt into a vehicle for revealing personal accounts and histories.

embodiments

Using a mix of found objects and metal work Elizabeth (Liz) Shaw's jewellery and small object practice gives new life to discarded articles. Often using a metal bracing to bring two different elements together, Liz presents the found material in surprising new juxtapositions. In this new work she brings together a small plaster/ceramic dog's head with some building site detritus that resemble intestines, and broken ceramic ducks take on new and extended features.

The weight of history and religion is present in the work of Mona Ryder. Inspired by a recent residency in Rome, in *Ballroom Essence* an offering box holds small bottles filled with red liquid, adorned with red ribbons and various milagros or ex-votos. The milagros remind us to reflect on what offerings we make to the future, while the Victorian bottles invoke Alice in Wonderland's mind-altering sip of potion or, in their theatrical decoration, suggest they could also be poison intended for an ex-lover.

Ali Bezer has created objects that suggest, but not represent, the human form. The works are made from melted records, cassette tape and musical stands. The use of these materials conjures up the broken hearts that often fuel the romantic pop

song. As a group the sculptures appear to be a collective act of mourning for failed relationships. Sophie Bottomley's abstract sculpture seeks to represent a moment of physical tension between two people. She has chosen sensual materials to evoke but not characterise bodies. Sophie's work is typified by her repetitive use of commercially available materials, as well as layering to create interior and exterior spaces. The two forms of this sculpture are presented distinctly close to one another, evoking the moment of brushing past someone you desire to be touched by.

For *L'Amour Fou: un tableau domestique*, Jay Younger collaborated with the performer and choreographer Lisa O'Neill. The short video captures a woman's love affair with a table that starts with her being enamoured with the object, only to be frightfully dominated by the end. The work demonstrates how quickly our relationships can change and how over time our roles within these relationships can alter.

linkages

Leena Riethmuller's practice often takes the guise of asking the viewer to undertake simple actions. Through performing these small gestures participants gain a heightened awareness of their body and the way they move through space. Objects are employed as a vehicle to link bodies and force connections between participants. The most recent of these types of works is a set of mugs that are intertwined with a type of ball and socket joint allowing two people to simultaneously drink — with some delicate negotiation needed.

In a sign of good luck Caitlin Franzmann found a snakeskin on her studio desk. This work is an extension of her '*Magical Thinking*' project that brings together symbolism and chance. The snakeskin has been mounted so that it forms a complete circle, which suggests repetition and cycles. The image of the snake eating its tail has been used in several societies to symbolise the cycle of birth and death, of eternity, and of infinite self-regeneration.

Julie-Anne Milinski takes a more formal approach to the idea of connection. In the 'perambulatory harness propositions'

series she uses flagging tape to create a set of harnesses strapped to the gallery walls. Flagging tape is a material normally used to mark boundaries but, in these works, Julie-Anne transforms the tape into an entity that straps bodies to objects. In this sense they also remind us about the strength and safety of our connections.

The 'Architectural distortion' series by Robyn Daw are precariously held together arrangements of objects that the artist describes as painting. Their composition relies on what Buckminster Fuller entitled 'tensegrity' — a combination of tension and integrity. The everyday objects and discarded materials appear to be held together by the most precarious of means and yet manage to find a delicate point of interdependence.

impressions

Seeking to evoke an impression of memories Sonia Peters has drawn onto the gallery wall blindfolded. The line drawing connects and merges different figures and figments, partly representing the artist's visual memories as well as giving form to the movements made by her body. The work is also an intersection between Sonia's real and imagined memories. For her the performative act of making the drawing brings the past and the present into the same temporal moment.

Kat Sawyer has based her works on drawings of the ocean made during a residency on a peninsula in Scandinavia. At the time the ocean was physically surrounding Kat as well as becoming a major psychological force. The images attempt to capture how water is displaced as the artist moves further into, and then is completely engulfed by, the sea. The images represent a fleeting impression that a body makes on a constantly changing environment.

Tor Maclean pays close attention to the signs of other people's presence, which can be small marks and often overlooked traces. For the exhibition Tor has inserted bougainvillea flowers or gardenia petals into the holes in gallery walls made by previous exhibitors. The result is a mapping of the past, making visible marks that are normally patched and painted over. The project also witnesses the passing of time as the flowers dry out over the course of the exhibition.

continuing

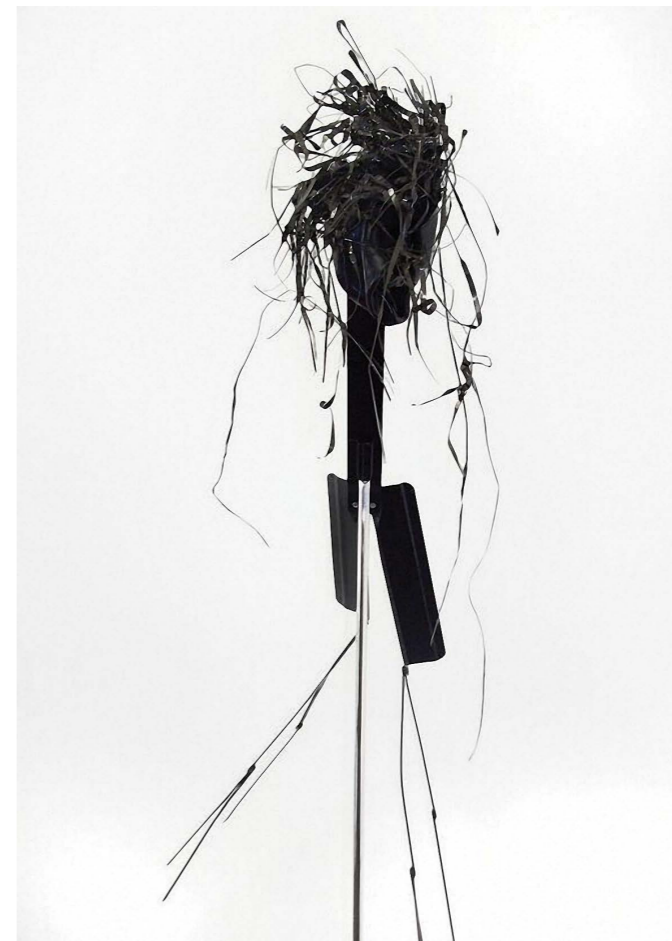
The impression of our arteries showcases the bonds we have, the networks we make, the changes in our relationships, the feedback loops that keep us sustained, the precarity of our connections, the imprints we make and the impressions we take on. But what is key to this exhibition is relationships. Debra is quick to state that she is instigating rather than curating the exhibition. *The impression of our arteries* has been a catalyst for the artists to meet, to reflect on what works might mirror its premise, and to talk about new works they want to make that might expand the show's parameters. Discussions may drift into other exhibitions they have seen and about what is going on in their personal lives; this too is part of the process, a gentle reminder that art and life are not separate things. When I return from this trip away and have a chance to catch up with my dearest, I look forward to seeing the results of *The impression of our arteries*.

Ellie Buttrose, January 2017, Paris

The author would like to thank all the artists for speaking about their works via email over the past few months and notes that all material on the artworks in the essay has been gathered from these exchanges.

Ali Bezer

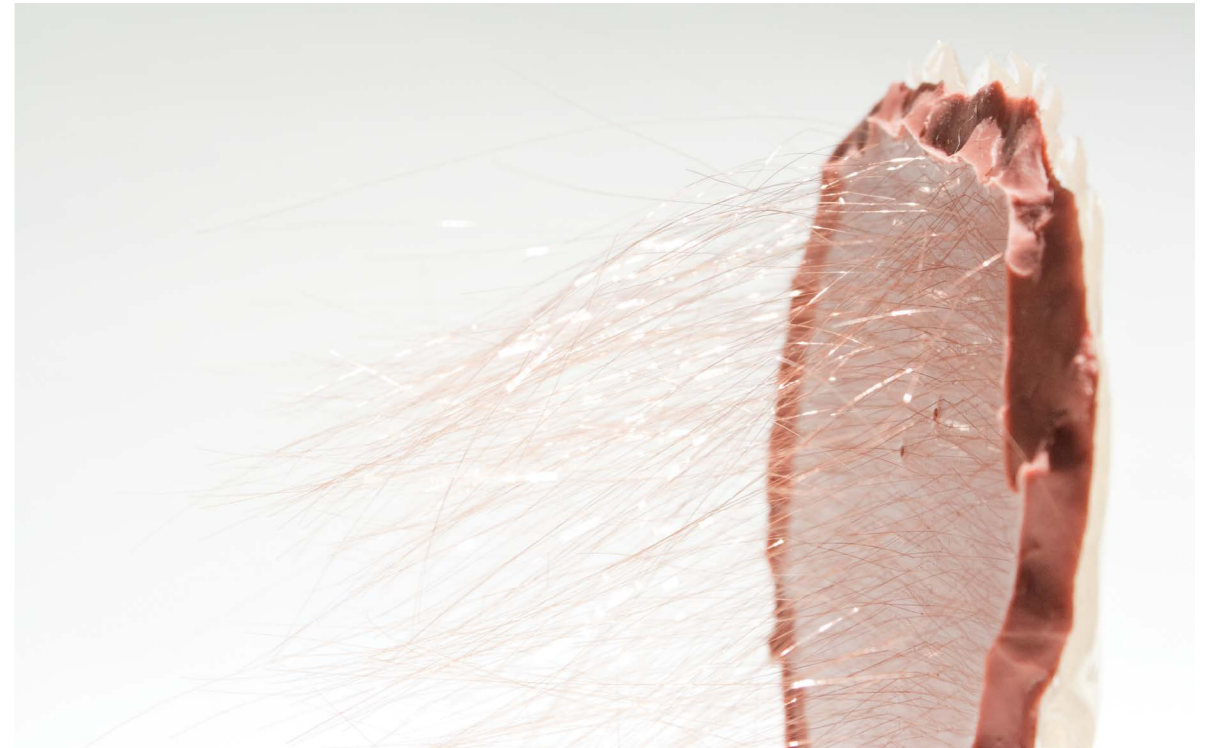
creature of sound (from the audiotribe series), 2017
Music stand, melted record, cassette tape
dimensions variable



Sophie Bottomley

12

closer, 2017
Resin, silicone, pigment, synthetic hair and aluminium rod
20 x 17 x 17 cm



13

Robyn Daw

Architectural distortion (transparent), 2017
Acrylic and hair
65 x 55 x 50 cm



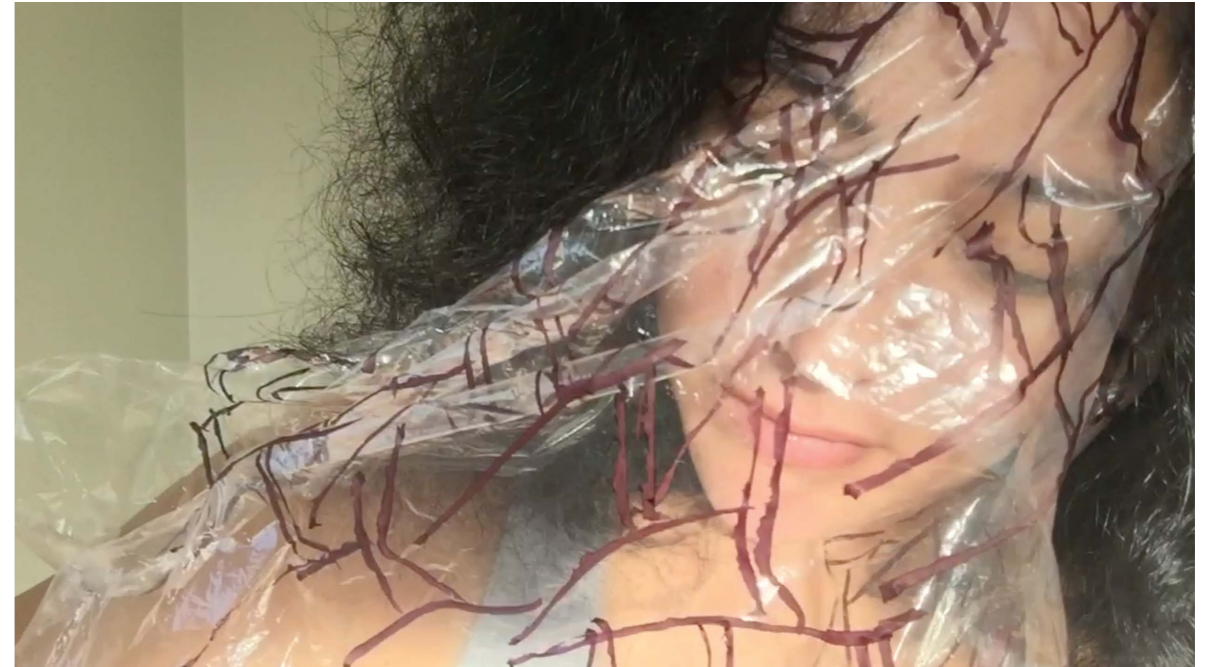
Caitlin Franzmann

Magical Thinking (Serpent), 2014
Collage
20 x 13 cm



Chantal Fraser

Veil, 2016
Single channel video – 5.13 minutes
(video still)



Victoria (Tor) Maclean

petal wall, 2016
Fallen geranium petals and pins
dimensions variable



Carol McGregor

nourish, 2017
Artist's hair and possum fur
dimensions variable



Julie-Anne Milinski

Love beads and meditation (Candy and Edgar), 2016-17
Felted Ragdoll, cat fur beads, metallic embroidery thread
350 cm long, width variable



Sonya G. Peters

From the Blind Contour Drawing Series, Lost, 2017
Graphite on blackboard
44 x 145 cm



Debra Porch

My grandfather named all his parakeets Billy, 2016
Artificial birds, tapestry, wood, paint
approx: 200 x 500 cm



Leena Riethmuller

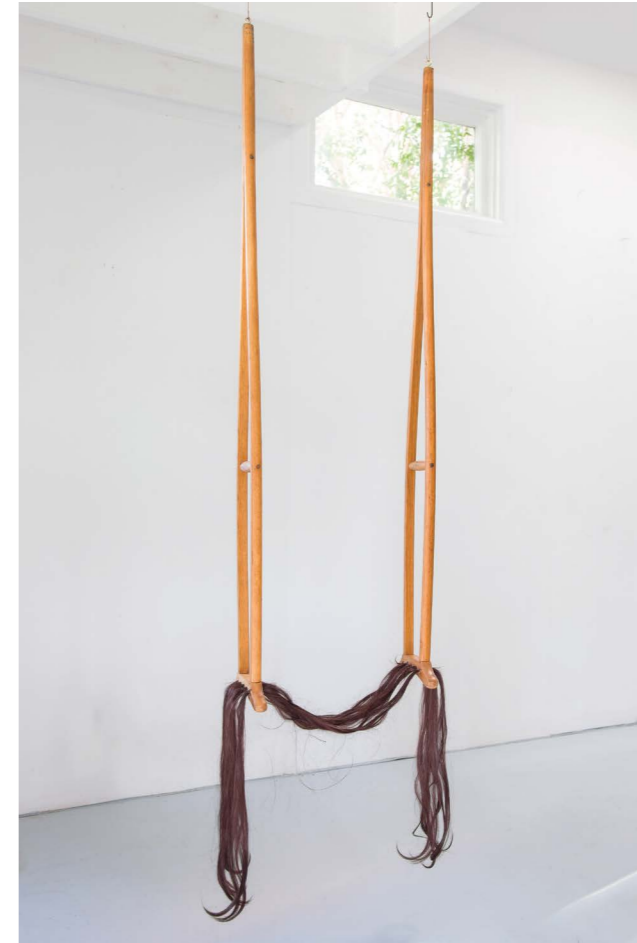
You and me, 2016
Epoxy putty
11 x 25 x 5 cm



Mona Ryder

32

Still, 2017
Wooden crutches, synthetic hair
approx: 178 x 40 x 20 cm



33

Kat Sawyer

146, 2013
Mixed media on paper
20.2 x 14.1 cm



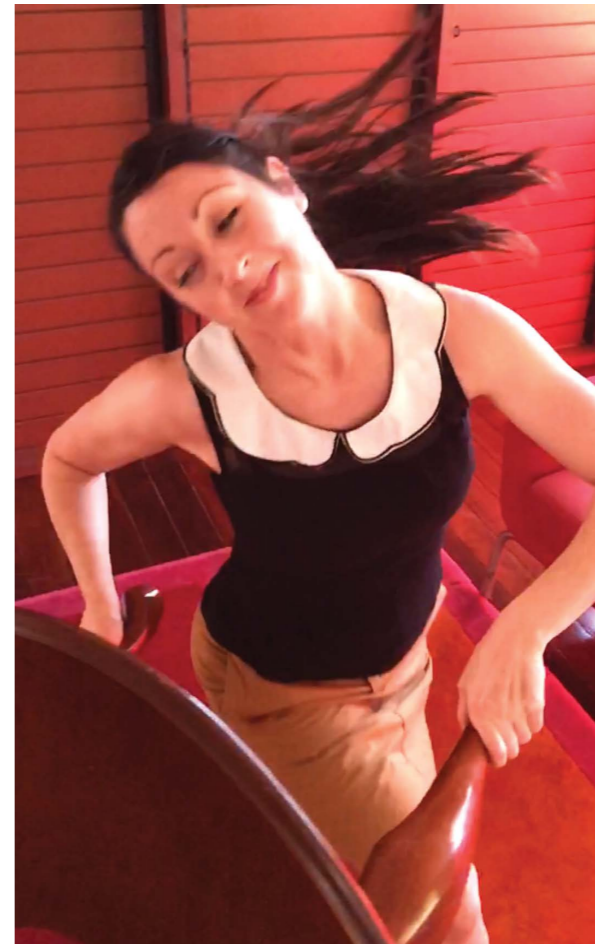
Elizabeth Shaw

Rescued Dog, 2017
Found low fired ceramic and extrusion waste from a building site, credit/cash cards,
reused sterling silver, titanium
3 x 11 x 7 cm



Jay Younger

L'Amour Fou un tableau domestique, 2016
Single channel video – 3.34 minutes
(video still)



thank you

Ellie Buttrose, writer

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Ian Were, editing

The artists



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