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Shaun Gladwell, Inverted Monuments, 2nd November 2024 – 25th January 2025

Inverted Monuments evolves a long-standing series of photographs and videos of inverted performances and gestures where the resulting images are, in turn, rotated 180 degrees, to re-orient the body upright within an upside-down world. The exhibition takes its title from a new video and related photographs that engage monuments to colonial or Eurocentric power.

Inverted Monuments continues the series loosely titled Sculpture Inverts (2011–), where the artist and others climb upon and hang upside down from statues in Australian and European cities. While formally related, the new works are distinct. The new performances necessarily engage methodologies in response to a post-2020 context, where monuments are subject to increased surveillance by a State power responding to the zeitgeist of protest.

For Gladwell, protest is an open gesture leaving no damage; a gesture towards symbolic inversion and anti-monumentalism through hybridising performance art, gymnastics, parkour and urban exploring. Offering his own body as a scale reference to an historical corpus, Inverted Monuments is not simply an irreverence to the historical forms of political and cultural power, but an opportunity to see the functionality (and even beauty) of these representations when pictorially and symbolically upended. Inverted Monuments uncouples the representation from its referent, the strategies of protest from a specific cause. The works in this exhibition rather negate the monumentality of bronze with the timeframe of flesh in temporal performance.

1. Hochgurtel Fountain Invert, 2024

Pigment print on cotton rag art paper, blue frame
122 x 122 cm

2. Inverted Monuments, 2024

4K digital video, 9:16, black & white, silent, 52 minutes

3. Metro Area, 2024

4K digital video, 9:16, colour, silent, 19 minutes 13 seconds

4. Theseus and the Minotaur Invert, 2024

Pigment print on cotton rag art paper, mint green frame
81.3 x 122 cm

5. Macquarie Invert, 2024

Pigment print on cotton rag art paper, mint green frame
122 x 81.3 cm

6. Burns Invert, 2024

Pigment print on cotton rag art paper, duotone frame (mint green, blue)
122 x 81.3 cm

7. Victoria Invert, 2024

Pigment print on cotton rag art paper, blue frame
122 x 81.3 cm

8. Shakespeare Invert (reverted), 2024

Pigment print on cotton rag art paper, blue frame
122 x 81.3 cm

9. Cook Frontside + Backside Invert, 2024

Two digital prints on eco solvent paper, blue double-sided frame mounted to wall at 90 degree angle
75 x 50 x 20 cm

10. Westgarth Fountain Invert, 2024

Pigment print on cotton rag art paper, amber frame
80 x 80 cm

11. R. Bourke Invert, 2024

Pigment print on cotton rag art paper, duotone frame, yellow, amber
122 x 81.3 cm

12. Inverted rotated milk crates 1, 2024

Plastic milk crates, 3D printed components, skate ballbearings
70 x 36 x 36 cm

13. Inverted rotated milk crates 2, 2024

Plastic milk crates, 3D printed components, skate ballbearings
70 x 36 x 36 cm

