

Nathan Nhan



7 July–
1 August,
2026

Nathan Nhan in his studio, 2025
Photograph courtesy Cassie Abraham



Nathan Nhan

Proverbial

7 July–1 August, 2026

KS
G_w

King Street Gallery
on William



trophy #80 sick feeling,
2025, clay, glaze, 48.5x25x29.5cm



trophy #81 gruelling green grass,
2025, clay, glaze, 70x39x41.5cm



Nathan Nhan in his studio, 2025
Photograph courtesy Cassie Abraham

I ♥ NIN

Con Gerakaris

Time and tide

Upon consideration, proverbs are a fascinating subsection of popular vernacular. Phrases existing in transhistorical floating cultural memory, transferred across global space-time as offerings of wisdom. Their origins are varied and often unspecified, their perseverance entwined with their repetition in classrooms, pubs and schlocky .jpg files shared on boomer Facebook. Proverbial philosophy represents a flattening of codified hierarchical knowledge in which Publius Vergilius Marco's paradigm-shifting Augustinian poetry is equally as valid as the scriptwriting of a Star Trek episode

when effectively deployed as a bona fide truth nugget. Effectiveness is tied to ubiquity, and authorship is neutered under the guise of perfect timing.

Nathan Nhan's debut solo exhibition in Sydney and presentation with King Street Gallery on William embraces the kitsch with the profound. *Proverbial* is an exhibition where cliché, familiarity and tropes play into ideas of mundanity, realised through a series of vessels standing as reflections of self and a celebration of memory. Nhan repurposes the ceramic vessel as a repository for and record of time, making intangible experiences physical. Each sculptural ceramic work is a commune of the artist, materiality, time, place and

atmosphere manifesting across subtle pinches and dramatic folds. By engaging in an ancient and enduring art form, Nhan makes moments everlasting by creating memorialised keepsakes with a contemporary bent borne from everyday emotional and temporal ephemera. Long story short, Nathan Nhan's vessels runneth over with cherished and chastised emotional memories.

My friend had an exhibition and all I got was an essay

In preparation for *Proverbial*, Nhan found relevance in Susan Stewart's analytical text *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Stewart discusses the dichotomic influence of sociopolitical phenomena at a macroscopic scale: global hegemonic shifts linked through correlative interpretation of narrative. The four key motifs of *miniature, gigantic, souvenir and collection* are a useful thought experiment for (re)contextualisation.

In the miniature-gigantic duality, Nhan's ceramic sculptural vessels mythologise materiality as a methodology for memorialising a quotidian life. Ceramic as a material lineage possesses the ability to conjure images from history: of amphoras and meiping. Traditional vessels created with purpose and eventually decorated with techniques refined over centuries and shared across geographies. When viewing Nhan's works however, we are struck with the labour of an individual mediating memory and

experience into a physical record. Cleanliness of functional form is replaced by evocative gestural manipulations prescribed in raw clay as the works relish in their proportional elongations crafted by pressure and touch. Nhan convenes with the physics of his wheel in an alchemical process of material transmutation, guided by experimentations in sgraffito decoration and experimentation with glazes. Bathed within his kiln, the artist collaborates with chemistry to forge glossy vessels imbued with molecularly microscopic traces of his hand and a macroscopic conceptual outpouring of the physical and mental conditions which shaped the object.

Stewart's other dichotomy—souvenir and collection—inform's Nhan's consideration of mundanity as a source of celebration. Nhan has previously commemorated everyday achievements through his long-running series of Trophy artworks, reformatting the tried-and-true double-handled cup by simultaneously twisting its silhouette and experimenting with colour and textural aesthetic treatments. As the artist reworks his established ceramics practice into vessels of increased scale and new forms, he seeks deeper engagement with the concept of prescribed and ascribed value.

Between the souvenir and the collection, we are told to accept objects based on their cultural, social, political and economic importance, given value through history, research and collective relevance. In creating vessels which inherently access material lineage and deliberately value universal daily life, Nhan intentionally creates

dichotomic works in which reverence and kitsch coexist. A souvenir is unique in that they are both a representation and simulation of something else. Consider the "I ❤️" t-shirt format, mass-produced landmark fridge magnets or gallery shop collection artwork postcards. Souvenirs possess personal invaluable worth simply because someone you love thought specifically of you, in a specific time, in a specific place (that wasn't home), to buy you a specific facsimile of something they saw.

Some weird billionaire of another museum would purchase Léonard de Vinci's *Portrait de Lisa Gherardini, épouse de Francesco del Giocondo, dit La Joconde ou Monna Lisa* (1503 - 1519) if they had the opportunity. Sadly, they would not acquire that stretched and stained Niagara Falls t-shirt you wear to bed.

A bird in the hand

Here we may return to the humble proverb, where mimesis, meaning and memeability collide. The trophy, modelled after the 10th century Saxon loving cup, has endured as an emblem of achievement not only throughout time but across geographies due to its intrinsic recognition as the symbol of victory. What matters is not the origin story of the loving cup morphing into the trophy, but the immediacy of the form.

In *Proverbial*, Nathan Nhan catalyses experiences defined as mundane—hanging out; going to work; cooking dinner—

into unparalleled participatory events contributing to one's being. He encourages us to not just appreciate but monumentalise the little victories day to day and consider routine with significance. Displayed honourably in the gallery, embracing the pomp and pride formality of the white cube, Nhan's sculptural ceramic vessels demonstrate resolution in their ambitious form and a commanding understanding of technique, material and application.

Con Gerakaris
2026



trophy #82 bone in the ground,
2025, clay, glaze, 57.5x49.5x44.5cm



trophy #83 I can hear it now, like I heard it then...,
2026, clay, glaze, 46.5x25.5x26cm



trophy #84 gum,
2026, clay, glaze, 47.7x26.5x39.5cm





trophy #85 obsession,
2026, clay, glaze, 50.5x25.7x26cm



trophy #86 Lucre,
2026, clay, glaze, 43x21.5x30cm



trophy #87 I wear blue when I don't know what to do,
2026, clay, glaze, 51.5x25x30cm



Nathan Nhan in his studio, 2026
Photographs courtesy James Hiscutt



trophy #88 vampire soap-opera,
2026, clay, glaze, 21.5x26.5x29cm



trophy #89 all-purpose paint job,
2026, clay, glaze, 42x31.5x34.5cm



trophy #90 proverbial,
2026, clay, glaze, 47x29.5x27.5cm



Nathan Nhan in his studio, 2025
Photograph courtesy Cassie Abraham



Nathan Nhan's studio, 2025
Photograph courtesy Cassie Abraham



trophy #91 untitled,
2026, clay, glaze, 48x29x25cm



trophy #92 NAG,
2026, clay, glaze, 42.5x25.5x24.5cm



trophy #93 untitled (2),
2026, clay, glaze, 50.5x25.7x26cm



trophy #70 first year,
2024, clay, glaze, 15x16x17.5cm



trophy #71 second year,
2024, clay, glaze, 17x14.5 x16cm



trophy #79 untitled,
2025, clay, glaze, 46x33x26cm

Nathan Nhan

Selected Biography

he/him

Nathan Nhan (b. 1997, Canberra, ACT) is a ceramicist whose practice uses experimental making and the ceramic process as a tool to create, investigate and manifest identities within his work. Responding to the inherent materiality and cultural significance of ceramics, Nhan reflects upon concepts of place, community and identity from his perspective (as an Asian-Australian). He often employs traditional vessels as a foundation, transforming historical forms into contemporary vehicles that play with the medium's enduring epic narrative of both Eastern and Western perspectives imbued with personal stories and social commentary.

Born 1997, Canberra
Lives and works Canberra

Studies

2022 ANU School of Art & Design Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours), Ceramics

Solo Exhibitions

- 2026 *Proverbial*, King Street Gallery on William, Sydney
- 2024 *That All Just Happened*, Canberra Museum and Gallery, Canberra
It's never quite as it seems, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra
- 2023 *Nathan Nhan*, Strathnairn Arts Association, Canberra
- 2019 *Life after Love*, Tributary Projects, Canberra

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2025 *Rigg Design Prize* National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Memo Horseshoe Gallery, Canberra
- 2024 *ATA PRESENTS VOL. 03*, At The Above, Melbourne
- 2023 *Threads of being: Emerging Artist Support Scheme (EASS) 2023*, Canberra Potters Society, Canberra
Emerging Contemporaries, CraftACT, Canberra
- 2023 *HATCHED National Graduates Show*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth
- 2022 *ANU School of Art Graduates Show (Honours)*, ANU School of Art
CONTOUR656 Canberra Art Biennale,

National Arboretum, Canberra
New Energy, 4A Centre of Contemporary Asian Art, SYDNEY

- 2020 Fire Fight Fundraiser, Nishi Gallery, Canberra
Fire Relief Fundraiser, Tributary Projects
- 2019 *Tainted love*, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Gorman Art House, Canberra
ANU School of Art Graduates Show, ANU School of Art

Commissions, Grants & Awards

- 2022 ACT Legislative Assembly Prize
Drill Hall Gallery ANU Art Collection Acquisition Award
EASS Strathnairn Arts Association Anita McIntyre Residency Award
EASS Canberra Potters' Society Exhibition Award
EASS Craft ACT Emerging Contemporaries Exhibition Award
EASS Canberra Museum and Gallery Ramp Showcase Award
- 2019 Harris & Hobbs Acquisition Award
ANU School of Art & Design EASS graduate The Australian Ceramics Association recipient
Mansfield Ceramics High Commendation Ceramics Graduate

Collections

- ACT Legislative Assembly Collection
Australian National University Art Collection, Drill Hall Gallery
Strathnairn Arts, Ginninderry
Paranormal Wines, ACT



A comprehensive CV for Nathan Nhan is available on the King Street Gallery on William website kingstreetgallery.com.au/artists/nathan-nhan

Nathan Nhan in his studio, 2025
Photograph courtesy Cassie Abraham



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Cassie Abraham



King Street Gallery
on William

10am–6pm, Tuesday–Saturday
177-185 William St Darlinghurst NSW 2010 Australia
+61 2 9360 9727 art@kingstreetgallery.com
www.kingstreetgallery.com.au