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Alexander Seton

Sculptor Alexander Seton graduated from the University of NSW with a Bachelor of Art Theory and History in 1998. His solo exhibitions include 'Stay on Message' (2005) at Maunsell Wickes@BSG, Sydney; 'We've Got To Get Out Of This Place' (2005) at Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane, and 'New Work' (2004) at Maunsell Wickes@BSG.

His sculptures are featured in various Australian and overseas collections including the Danish Royal Collection, Copenhagen; HBO Collection, New York and the Omereck Collection, France.

Awarded the People's Choice Award in the 2005 Woolhara Small Sculpture Prize, Seton was also awarded the Art Gallery of New South Wales Director's Choice Award in 2004 and 2003.

1. **Security and Relationship**
(from *Bags of... (Wish Fulfillment)*), 2007
Wombeyan marble
Courtesy of the artist and
Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane

2. **End Safety Zone**, 2005
Cararra and Portoro marbles
Private Collection
Courtesy of the artist and
Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane

Master of illusion Alexander Seton uses deft skill to fashion sculptures that trick the eye. His works can be described as three dimensional *tromp l'oeil*, for they create false impressions about the nature of their existence. Unlike traditional *tromp l'oeil*, where the optical illusion of an inhabitable environment is created on a two dimensional plane, Seton's works occupy real space. However, they retain the contradiction between material and form that leaves viewers struggling to reconcile visual perception with physical experience.

An example is Seton's *RTW II* which appears to be an everyday t-shirt hanging on a clothes rail. At first glance the work reads as an updated version of Marcel Duchamp's influential readymades¹ that explores links between consumerism, fashion phases and contemporary art. On closer inspection the layered complexity of his work is laid bare with the realisation that the shirt is a precisely carved marble sculpture, finished to create the illusion of suspended fabric.

But what, you might ask, is the aim of spending countless hours faithfully rendering a pop culture item in the permanence of marble? In this question lie both the seeming pointlessness and one particular purpose of Seton's work: to create a place for marble as a medium of contemporary sculpture. Marble's associations with classical Greek and Roman monuments mean that it is viewed as a traditional and conservative medium, weighed down by centuries of expectations. However, Seton's works demonstrate that subject matter and form are not inextricably linked to medium. As a result, the artist catapults marble into the 21st century as a flexible medium that can embody whimsy and humour, as well as serious contemplation of the ephemeral and everyday.

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1. Duchamp's readymades challenged the very meaning of art in the early twentieth century by declaring mass-produced, store-bought objects, works of art





RTW 1, 2006
Caesar stone and stainless steel
Private Collection
Courtesy of the artist
and Jan Murphy Gallery