

NOVEMBER 2015

COUNTRY LUXE

glam rural abodes from *Bendigo* to *Burrumbidgee*

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AUSTRALIA

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Trolley dollies
best bar carts

ROAMING
IN ROME

CREATIVES
AT HOME

David Bromley
and Yuge Yu

plus

Jonathan Adler's
POPTASTIC LIFE

COOL

collected

Chic serendipity in
NEW YORK, PALM SPRINGS AND MONTFERRAT

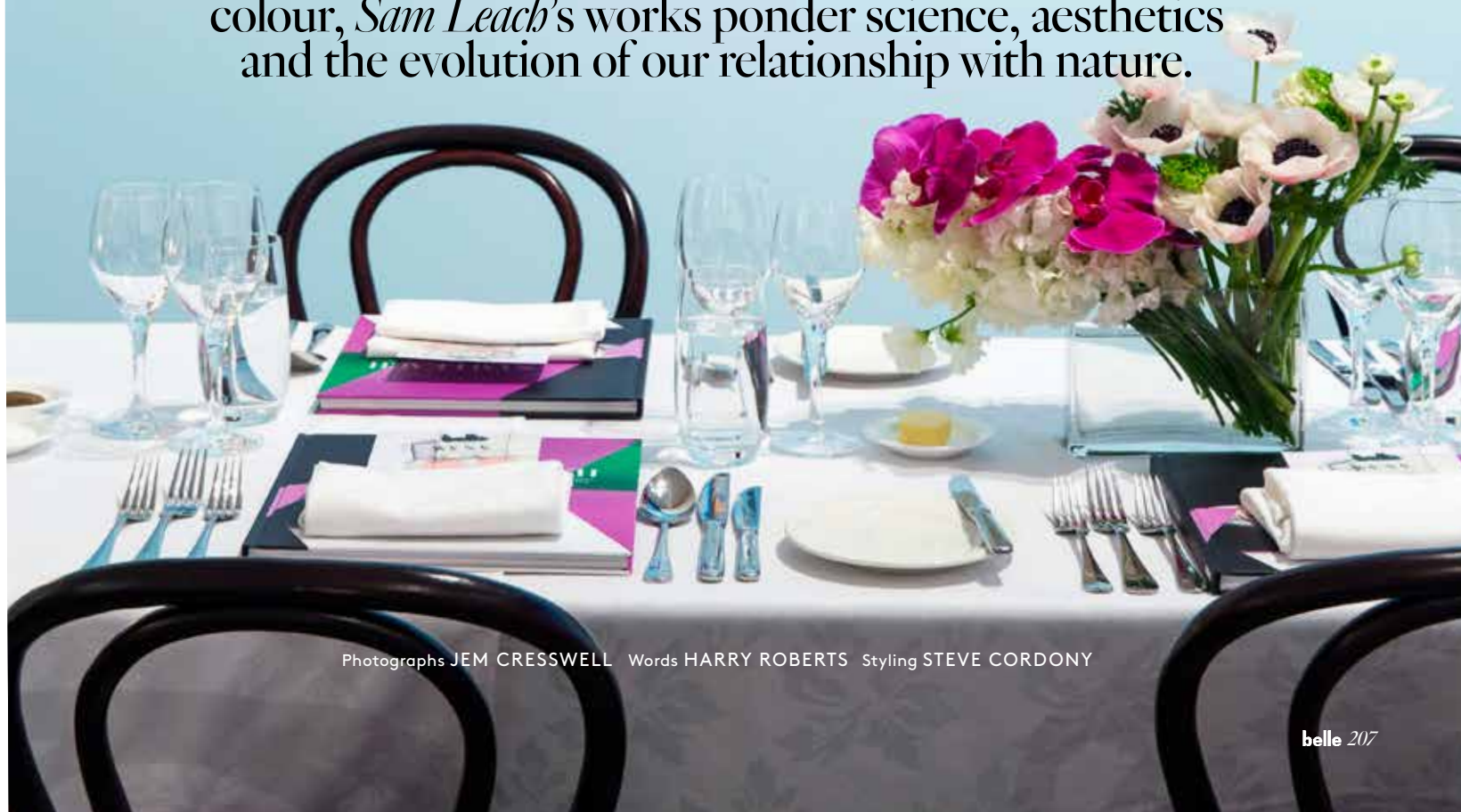
COOL & COLLECTED

This page *House for Bats with Magenta* and *House for Bats with Blue* by Sam Leach at Sydney's Sullivan+Strumpf.



Gravity's RAINBOW

Beneath their cool, shellacked surface and vibrant colour, *Sam Leach's* works ponder science, aesthetics and the evolution of our relationship with nature.



Photographs JEM CRESSWELL Words HARRY ROBERTS Styling STEVE CORDONY

MENU



This page, clockwise from top Behind a meteor-inspired sculpture hangs *The Garden of Cantarel*. Twin tables set for dinner at Sullivan+Strumpf. Guests soaking up the lively conversation between Michael Reid and the artist. Sam Leach in front of *Imminent Bolide Strike*.



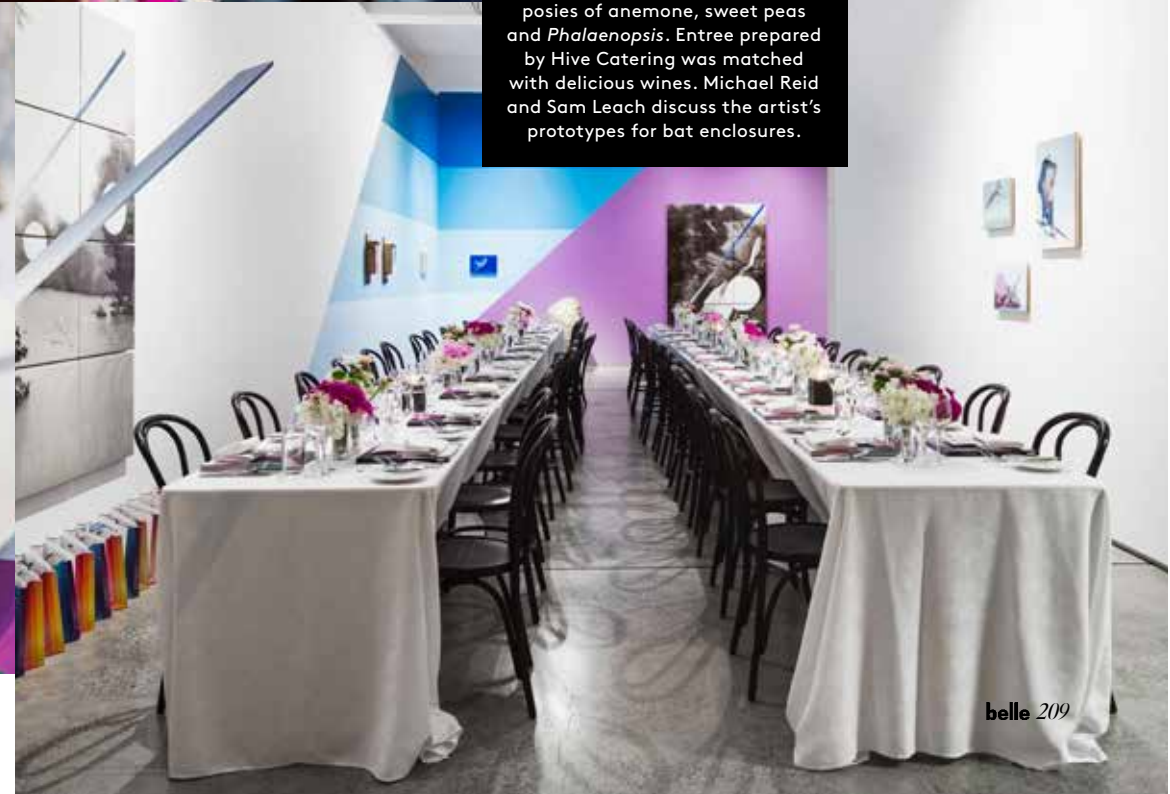
Art and science make beguiling bedfellows on the canvas of leading contemporary artist Sam Leach. Although his figurative work is rendered with an exacting precision and sumptuous detail that recalls the traditions of 17th-century Dutch renaissance painting, this ethereal mood is ruptured by bursts of neon-hued abstraction, which mimic the visual language of data, graphics and technology.

For the Archibald winner, these disparate styles coalesce into a probing meditation on the relationship between humans and the natural world, exploring the emotional and environmental pitfalls that might be wrought by our insatiable appetite for progress. Captured in ambiguous spaces that appear fraught with disquiet and drained of life and colour, Sam's vibrant animal subjects strike curious poses that hint at unknowable private worlds. "Leach appears to be resisting one of the most troubling underpinnings of modernity – the notion that the non-human world is mere grist," writes novelist Tim Winton in the foreword of the artist's new monograph. "To the contrary, he affords every thing – whether it be a hybrid marsupial, a primate, landform, plant or tool – an inner life; each is a sacred object on its own dreamy journey."

Guests were surrounded by this marvellous menagerie at a recent *Belle* Reader Art Dinner, which launched the artist's latest exhibition at Sydney gallery Sullivan+Strumpf. Titled 'The desire of things to move against gravity', the series comprised a dazzling cohort of bats, bears, gibbons and gazelles, whose appearance of upward flux was conveyed not only in their gestures but seemingly mapped out by the graph-like lines emblazoned diagonally across each canvas. For the duration of the show, these bold geometric motifs were writ large on the gallery walls, saturating the Zetland space in shades of magenta, cobalt and violet. At the dinner, this palette was echoed by striking arrangements of anemone, sweet peas and *Phalaenopsis* orchids – courtesy of Myra Perez of My Violet and *Belle's*



This page, clockwise from top *Imminent Bolide Strike*. A cluster of works including *Bat Exposing His Genitals* (top right) and *Bat Colony*, Cornelia Schulze and Ursula Sullivan. Tables dotted with posies of anemone, sweet peas and *Phalaenopsis*. Entree prepared by Hive Catering was matched with delicious wines. Michael Reid and Sam Leach discuss the artist's prototypes for bat enclosures.





This page, clockwise from top
The dining space. Alesandro
Ljubicic, Sam Leach, Monika
Radulovic. Gallery directors
Joanna Strumpf and Ursula
Sullivan in front of *Gazelle*
Resisting Gravity. Sam's works
*Construction of an Experimental
Platform* and *Three Researchers*.
Guests engaged in discussion.



style director Steve Cordony – and matched with a menu of piquant fare conceived by Hive Catering. It was a brilliant setting for an evening of colourful conversation led by art expert Michael Reid.

“Charts, diagrams, precision geometry: it’s a way of understanding the world through analysis and data that sits alongside a realistic representation of the world,” Sam explained. “There’s almost a paradox that by reducing the amount of information you can clarify things but at the same time you lose something else. You gain a sense of insight but it always comes at a cost.” These graphic forms, which Michael found reminiscent of Russian constructivist art from the 1920s, have a ring of familiarity for the artist, who worked for 12 years at the Australian Tax Office after completing his degree in economics. Honing his painting skills with rigorous training by night, Sam was eventually able to pursue art full-time following a string of accolades that peaked in 2010 when he became only the third artist – after William Dobell and Brett Whiteley – to be awarded the Archibald and Wynne prizes in the same year.

His work retains a fascination with the economic, scientific and aesthetic structures that humans impose on nature, perhaps informed by his years spent working amid a labyrinth of bureaucracy. By referencing the painting style and techniques of the Dutch Golden Age – in many ways the first truly modern society – Sam traces the origins of this human-centric worldview. “What planks can we pull out from that early stage of modernity?” he asks, subverting the traditional primacy of man over nature by pondering the agency of his non-human subjects, as with his installations *House for Bats with Magenta* and *House for Bats with Blue*.

Sam’s work is, however, more than the sum of its theoretical musings, and the dinner was an opportunity for guests to be dazzled by his works in all their virtuosic splendour. “Despite the glossy armour of its surfaces and its air of forensic dispassion, there’s a dreaminess to Leach’s painting that belies every expectation and early impression,” writes Winton, “and lingering behind the empirical tone and shellacked carapace there’s a yearning that leans toward the metaphysical.”

For more go to sullivanstrumpf.com.