



1. 'Artempo: Where Time Becomes Art' (2007) was curated by Jean-Hubert Martin, Giandomenico Romanelli, Mattijs Visser and Daniela Ferretti, and brought together works from the Palazzo Fortuny's permanent collection with loans from the collection of Axel and May Vervoordt. Mattijs Visser and Jean-Hubert Martin would later bring this 'encyclopaedic' model of curating to 'Theatre of the World' (2012-13) at MONA. Earlier in 1989, Martin's exhibition 'Magiciens de la Terre' at the Centre Pompidou pronounced this approach as a cornerstone of contemporary curatorial practice.

2. Sequeira, 30 April 2022
<https://artsreview.com.au/david-sequeira-all-the-things-i-should-have-said-that-i-never-said/>

History and Infinity by José Da Silva

The transhistorical museum is not a new phenomenon. But perhaps 'Artempo: Where Time Becomes Art' (2007) is the exhibition that popularised the idea for contemporary audiences. Its presentation of visual and material culture sought to transfigure and connect diverse cultures, narratives, and times.¹ The approach became a defining characteristic of museum displays throughout the 2010s, with collection hangs leaping across historical and geographic contexts, creating new aesthetic and thematic associations. They sought to rupture display hierarchies and introduce marginalised and excluded visual histories and objects otherwise consigned to customary value. Importantly, they ask audiences to think about art history as groups of affinities rather than direct causalities.

This urge to intervene, disrupt or rethink the narratives of art has been a foundational strategy for David Sequeira over the past three decades. As an artist and curator, Sequeira has sought to generate a sense of personal time through exhibition-making, using curatorship as an expanded studio technique to allow him to rethink how we identify, value, and understand cultural production. We see the questions posed by this approach in the new work, *History and Infinity*, 2022, a shelf-based display of over 1000 glass and ceramic vessels punctuated by a selection of paintings by other artists, some of which are from Sequeira's personal collection.

Sourced from thrift stores around Australia – and considered 'discarded' rather than 'found' objects – Sequeira's vases are readymade expositions of the colours and shapes used to fashion decorative containers. They are everyday items that are made extraordinary in their massing. We see this in portraits of the artist at his Fiona and Sidney Myer Gallery office, flanked by floor to ceiling shelves that house the ever-expanding collection. While the vessels hint at functionality (some retain watermarks from prior use), others are lined with dust, implying a purely ornamental purpose. They are unified by their symmetry and opaque colouring, with Sequeira recognising: 'Individually, the vases are neither valuable nor even interesting. Collectively, I can arrange them into infinite orchestrations of colour and form.'²

Sequeira began using vases in his practice in the late 1990s, inspired by seeing vase motifs in decorative relief carvings at Mughal palaces throughout India. The image of this humble object was fascinating to Sequeira as a witness to events occurring within architectural spaces. In 2001, he presented the first collection of vases alongside a set of geometric paintings for *David Sequeira Projects* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, using both as forms of abstraction to represent the seven colours of the rainbow and the seven Chakras or energy points of the body in meditation. The installation was formative for testing colour relations via the vase form, informing many permutations and experiments throughout his practice. In 2006, Sequeira presented a parade of 100 vases, *Collections 1 & 2* at the John Curtin Gallery, Perth as part of his ten-year survey exhibition. *Fugue*, 2008-2021, another of Sequeira's installations of coloured vessels was presented at Gertrude Glasshouse, Melbourne in 2019, and unlike previous vase-based works, jewel-coloured transparent vessels were

made especially for the project as part of Sequeira's residency at the Jam Factory Glass Studio, Adelaide. In each of these projects Sequeira creates 'chords' of colour and light in the gallery space through the careful arrangement of objects.

Allusions to music appear throughout Sequeira's practice, with the understanding that several objects can operate like notes to form a musical chord. Sequeira describes the arrangement of vases in *History and Infinity* as 'chromatic harmonies', formed by shifting gradients of colour spanning the length of each gallery wall. While working with the constraint of symmetrical and opaque vases, Sequeira finds endless variations in their assembling – all sorts of rich and subtle differences in curves and colour. In the meditative process of installing the work, the placement of the paintings within infinite variations of tone and shape becomes an opportunity to locate works of art as moments within a bigger scheme associated with ideas of endlessness. The vases act as parentheses to the eight paintings that disrupt the sequence, echoing tones from their compositions on either side. Sequeira is explicit in his intentions for this staged relationship: 'I want to create physical and visual links between works of art that differ in style, philosophy, culture, and history. More specifically, I want to use everyday objects to interrupt a linear narrative about the history of art. I want to place the ordinary (vases) on the same level as the extraordinary (art). I use the shelf as a strategy for this levelling.'³

In *History and Infinity*, Sequeira envisions curatorship as the ability to make time malleable and suspend fixed readings of art: 'You generate your own time by placing objects together. Time can slip forward or backward depending on the selection and placement.'⁴ The installation presents itself as a horizontal line, although the subjects depicted move freely throughout history. The paintings refer to colonial history, modernism, postmodernism, paintings of paintings, creation stories, and references to 15th-century Flemish drapery and 18th-century French portraiture — a mash-up of ideas, places and approaches that form an unlikely connective tissue via Sequeira's colour chart of vessels. Bought through online auctions, purchased from galleries, or borrowed from friends, the paintings point to Sequeira's deeply personal understanding of art.

The selection includes Gordon Bennett and Tim Johnson's *Creation Story I*, 1990, a work demonstrating art's ability to address the cosmos from different aesthetic and cultural positions. Megan Evans' *The colour of blood*, 1993, studies an incidental or overlooked fold of fabric from Rogier van der Weyden's *Durán Madonna*, 1435-38; while Greg Creek's reproduction of the mother figure in Hans Holbein the Younger's *Portrait of the Artist's Family*, c.1528, suggests learning through duplication, art as a copy of the past, or even a forgery. Another intriguing still life is an example of Australian tonalism by Rex Bramleigh from the 1930s. Here Sequeira acknowledges a moment of Australian modernism, once rejected, and now celebrated. This selection also features a mid-18th century portrait of a girl in attire typical of the French Court; a seascape by Charles Wheeler, c.1914, depicts London's Thames and Vauxhall Bridge; two colonial Australian landscapes c 1880-1910 and a contemporary miniature painting by Nusra Latif Qureshi.

5. Ibid

Sequeira's selection represents an equal interest in what the paintings represent as historical entities and what they illustrate: 'Each speaks to a possibility. The possibility of imagination, representation — that nothing is just what you see.'⁵ We might also understand them as a rewiring of Australian art histories, or how art can refute being known, understood, or fixed in time more broadly. For Sequeira, these conceptual exercises are never about replacing histories outright. They acknowledge what might be parallel, adjacent, or forthcoming. In *History and Infinity*, Sequeira allows us to recognise multiplicities, creating a setting where cultural production is open to dialogue, collaboration, influence, and exchange.

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3. Sequeira in email to author, 9 March 2022

4. Sequeira in conversation with the author, 10 April 2022























