

Mitch Cairns: Restless Legs  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
08.03.25 — 09.06.25  
wall label

Sydney artist Mitch Cairns (b1984) presents oil paintings, text-based bronze plates and a power pole sculpture in his exhibition *Restless Legs*, its title referencing the sensation he feels sometimes while reading in bed. This disparate body of work is informed by Cairns' literary interests and influences, his inner-city locale and the humour and pathos of daily life.

Language – the exchange of information through visual, written and verbal modes of communication – underpins several works in *Restless Legs*. Pictures of letters and numbers, quotations from books and text messages, and a recontextualised power pole (which formerly transmitted telephone calls) all allude to language playfully. Indeed, Cairns uses language as a 'visual cue' in his practice.

Nature also emerges as a significant theme, with land, sky, water, vegetation and the remnant of a tree all featuring in the show. Inspired by Italo Calvino's 1963 book *Marcovaldo* and its title character's affinity with the natural world, Cairns has portrayed himself imaginatively as a floral still life. This painting belongs to Cairns' series of self-portraits as trees, bookmarks, bookends and restless legs, which represent traits and characteristics that cannot be described by an image of his likeness.

*Restless Legs* has been commissioned by the Art Gallery for the Contemporary Projects series, which showcases new works by contemporary artists from NSW.