

New ACCA

‘Exhibitions that don’t have an inventive display feature are doomed to oblivion’, says Hans Ulrich Obrist. ACCA rebuilds its exhibition formats all the time, every time. There’s never been a baseline for its architecture or ambition, no opportunity for being nil, no bare bones—although ‘tin shed’ might suggest otherwise. Martin Creed’s *The lights off* (2005), was perhaps the nearest this gallery came to bare bones, but even then the lights were only turned off down the back in the art spaces.

New13 suffers from this lack of emptiness. Do architects design for emptiness? Can exhibition designers empty a space? Surely artists are concerned with gaps and disparities—slow lanes, fast lanes, material dexterity. The always-on hum of production-jazz adds a fog to any space. The artists in *New13* seemed caught in the ACCA format, rather than any chance of the other way round.

ACCA was running a radio advertisement for *New13* that I heard on 3RRR and the voice-over went something like, ‘come and see the art stars of tomorrow’. You have to be kidding?

From an artist’s perspective it’s worth asking, what is the point with *New13*? What is being learned or invigilated? Alex Martinis Roe, for example, might be better served by being included in the more conceptually defined Gertrude Contemporary exhibition [Loosely speaking](#). Conversely, any of the Gertrude exhibiting artists might have been commissioned for *New13*. As an event, it could have paralleled something like [Action/response](#) in North Melbourne last month. Shock-horror, *New13* could have comprised women exclusively, whereupon this impertinence might finally have had a serious structural airing (celebrations aside).

Melbourne’s fifteen years of boom-time museum building must surely be over. There are now so many larger scale art institutions: RMIT, Ian Potter Museum of Art, ACMI, NGV Australia and International, ACCA, TarraWarra, Heide and MUMA (I think that was the chronology), all of them entirely capable of affecting and nurturing content. So now, or soon, there is a chance again at an old phase, where priorities go back to content.

[New13](#) (Benjamin Forster, Jess MacNeil, Alex Martinis Roe, Sanne Mestrom,

Scott Mitchell, Joshua Petherick and Linda Tegg), Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 16 March - 12 May 2013.



Linda Tegg, 'Tortoise', 2013



From left: Sanne Mestrom, 'Still life with nine objects, 1954', 2013; 'Still life with small white cup on the left, 1931', 2013; 'Weeping woman', 2013