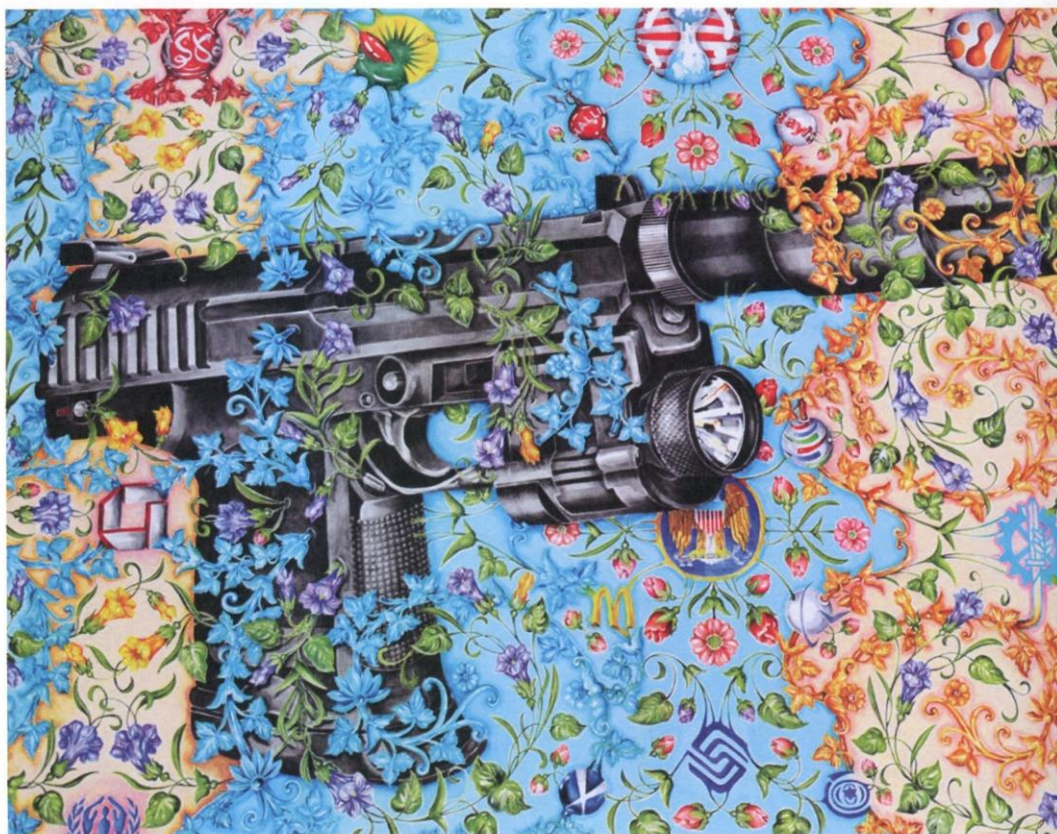


EX DE MEDICI

born 1959 Coolamon / Coolamon,
New South Wales



eX de Medici's watercolour painting *The Law: Heckler and Koch* 2013–14 seductively traps viewers' attention in a sickly-sweet decorative web. Once captured, they are forced to address the iconography of corporate branding and weaponry enmeshed in the design.

The Law: Heckler and Koch is a memento mori for the modern age, a reminder of the inevitability of death. Instead of the historically loaded depictions of skulls or rotting fruit, de Medici has meticulously painted a supersized Heckler & Koch pistol, the official sidearm used by the Australian Army. Guns are frequently the subject of de Medici's work. She describes her fascination with firearms as akin to a scientist, analysing fine detail and creating a system of categorisation within her oeuvre.¹ The artist notes, 'The gun operates ... as an emblem or signifier of a broader intention—the desire to control by force, not by negotiation. The gun should be re-named Destroy'.² *The Law: Heckler and Koch* originally formed part of a monumental work featuring guns and surveillance equipment which, during the Art Gallery of South Australia's 2014 Biennial, was severed into thirds in what the artist describes as a 'performed cutting'.

The work is the result of careful research, planning and design, a methodology de Medici developed throughout her lengthy career as a tattoo artist. While more delicate than tattooing, watercolour painting requires similar technical expertise, leaving no leeway for error or alteration. De Medici overlays her composition with a detailed tessellated design gleaned from the Golestan Palace, located in Tehran.³ This floral motif has infected the work like a weed, feeding off the corporate logos and permeating the pistol with its tendrils in a palette of 'prosthetic pink' and turquoise blue.⁴ It also contains one subtle area of black, appearing like a cavity which alludes to the spread of decay throughout de Medici's depicted system.

Representing a range of global entities that de Medici deems morally corrupt—including industries such as telecommunications, oil, gas, fast food, pharmaceuticals and arms manufacturers—the vivid logos are strategically placed to create a map of commercial influence, corruption and control. *The Law: Heckler and Koch* shows de Medici's frustration with the concealed agenda of private and public corporations, aiming to rectify this by revealing the often-invisible macrocosm of global power. She envisages that this work, which explicitly investigates wealth and greed, would be more at home exhibited at the Sydney Stock Exchange than in a gallery.⁵

De Medici's densely adorned works confront the viewer with unpalatable realities about our social, political and cultural landscape which en masse can induce fatigue, anxiety and an overwhelming sense of hopelessness. Her Frankenstein-like compositions are masterful amalgams of iconography, symbology and allegory sourced from disparate cultures and traditions.

YVETTE DAL POZZO

1. eX de Medici, internal file notes compiled by Yvette Dal Pozzo, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2019.
2. De Medici quoted in Kelly Gellatly, 'Excess, Beauty, Fragility...Death', in *Soft Steel. eX de Medici - recent work*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, 2003, p59.
3. De Medici used the Golestan Palace for this design as she has a strong geo-political interest in America's involvement in Iran. eX de Medici, internal file notes compiled by Yvette Dal Pozzo, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2019.
4. As above.
5. As above.