

Between States

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Sydney, 2026

Written for

WU (物 / 悟): A Material Dialogue

Articulate Project Space

1–23 August 2026

*Between States was written alongside the development of **WU***

*(物 / 悟): **A Material Dialogue**. Instead of explaining the exhibition, it reflects on ideas that emerged through making, material, and perception.*

After a collaboration during our MFA at the National Art School in 2022, Ma and I had been looking for an opportunity to continue a conversation that never quite reached an ending.

At the time, I thought we were talking about materials.

This seemed like common ground. Although our practices are quite different, both are rooted in an engagement with physical things. Ma's work is shaped through processes of burning, weathering, crushing, and exposure. My own practice often begins with simple materials and constructed forms, using them to explore perception, spatial relationships, and the experience of viewing. Materiality appeared to be the obvious point of connection.

As we developed the exhibition, however, I began to notice something else.

The project gradually expanded beyond a single material or category of materials. Branches sat alongside plywood and veneer. Burnt wood appeared embedded within plaster. Paper, charcoal, timber, and architectural fragments entered into unexpected relationships. The installation became increasingly populated by materials that were not simply

themselves, but versions, transformations, or derivatives of something else.

Wood, in particular, seemed to resist any stable identity. It appeared as branches, timber, plywood, veneer, charcoal, structure, surface, and trace. Each form carried a connection to the others while remaining materially distinct. Similarly, plaster moved between powder, liquid, cast object, repair material, and architectural skin. What initially appeared to be discrete materials began to reveal themselves as participants in larger processes of transformation.

The more I worked with these materials, the less interested I became in their fixed identities. Instead, I found myself paying attention to the conditions between them. A branch is neither entirely natural nor entirely cultural once it enters the gallery. Veneer occupies an ambiguous position between tree and manufactured surface. Burnt wood is both destruction and preservation. Plaster exists in a continual movement between fluidity and solidity.

These transitions seemed to echo a broader concern within both of our practices. In Ma's work, transformation is

embedded directly within the material process. The works bear the visible traces of burning, weathering, and chance, recording moments of change rather than stable outcomes. In my own work, transformation occurs through perception. Meaning emerges through relationships between objects, space, light, and the viewer's position. Forms shift as the viewer moves. What appears flat becomes spatial. What seems stable becomes uncertain.

As I became less interested in the fixed identities of materials, I also found myself questioning some of the assumptions within my own practice.

I often work towards a high degree of resolution. Edges are refined, surfaces carefully considered, and relationships adjusted until they arrive at a particular balance. Yet while making work for this exhibition, I began to question whether that certainty was necessary. Should a surface remain clean and sharply defined, or should it remain more open, allowing it to enter into dialogue with Ma's materials and processes? Should a work maintain its autonomy, or should it yield to the broader relationships emerging within the exhibition?

These questions were rarely resolved through theory. Instead, they were answered through the exhibition itself. As individual works entered into dialogue with one another, certain decisions suddenly felt inevitable while others quietly disappeared. The works began to operate less as autonomous objects and more as participants within a larger set of relationships. The exhibition seemed to possess its own internal logic—one that neither of us fully controlled, yet gradually discovered through the process of making.

As the exhibition has taken shape, I have also begun to understand why *WU* feels like the right title.

The two Chinese characters, 物 (*thing*) and 悟 (*realisation*), no longer feel like separate ideas to me. They seem less like two independent concepts than two moments within the same process. Understanding does not stand apart from things; it emerges through sustained encounters with them. Likewise, objects are never simply given. They acquire meaning through the relationships they enter, the contexts they inhabit, and the attention they receive.

Perhaps this is also where the idea of 'Between States' began to emerge for me.

What remains most interesting is not the materials themselves but the way certainty emerged through relationships. Individual works often seemed to contain multiple possibilities, yet as relationships emerged between them, some possibilities gradually became more convincing than others. It often felt less as though we were constructing the exhibition than discovering the logic that already existed within it.

Between States no longer describes materials alone. It describes different ways in which change takes place: materials through transformation, perception through movement, and understanding through encounter. None of these exists in isolation. Each takes shape through its relationship with something else.

The works remain between states.

So, perhaps, do we.

Notes Towards Between States

An evolving framework for thinking through material, perception, and transformation.

Mode	Question	Example
Genealogical	What does it become?	Tree → Timber → Plywood → Veneer → Paper
Physical	How does it change?	Burning, cutting, weathering, crushing, casting
Perceptual	How is it experienced?	Object ↔ Image, Flat ↔ Spatial
Conceptual	How is it understood?	Thing ↔ Realisation (物 ↔ 悟)



Exhibition essays & documentation:

lunaguiart.com/wu