Space, Place and Recurring History

Jill Orr

(Jillian L. Orr)

Exegesis submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Fine Arts, Monash Arts Design and Architecture

2012
Copyright Notices

Notice 1

Under the Copyright Act 1968, this thesis must be used only under the normal conditions of scholarly fair dealing. In particular no results or conclusions should be extracted from it, nor should it be copied or closely paraphrased in whole or in part without the written consent of the author. Proper written acknowledgement should be made for any assistance obtained from this thesis.

Notice 2

I certify that I have made all reasonable efforts to secure copyright permissions for third-party content included in this thesis and have not knowingly added copyright content to my work without the owner’s permission.
Table of Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS .................................................................................................................. II

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ........................................................................................................ III

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................................... XII

INTRODUCTION: SPACE, PLACE AND RECURRING HISTORY ........................................... 1

1: REMEDIATION: DID YOU REALLY HAVE TO BE THERE? .................................................. 5

2. COLLABORATION OR NOT? –THERE IS NO ISLAND! ......................................................... 27

3. THE CROSSING ....................................................................................................................... 52

4. A PRAYER ............................................................................................................................... 73

5. PERFORMATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY – SPACE, PLACE AND RECURRING HISTORY ...... 93

CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................................... 111

BIBLIOGRAPHY ......................................................................................................................... 116

WEBSITES .................................................................................................................................. 124

APPENDIX .................................................................................................................................. 126
List of Illustrations

Chapter 1: Remediation figures.


Figure 1.2. Marco Anelli, Day 65, Marina Abramovic. 2010. From Marina Abramovic’s The Artist is Present, at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010. Permission granted by photographer, Marco Anelli ©

Figure 1.3. Marco Anelli, Day 68 Portrait 15. 2010. From Marina Abramovic’s The Artist is Present, at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010. Permission granted by photographer, Marco Anelli ©


Figure 1.5. Jill Orr, Love Songs – woman. 1991. Photographer: Virginia Fraser for Jill Orr. Jill Orr ©

Figure 1.6, 1.7 & 1.8. Jill Orr, Bleeding Trees. 1979. Photographer: Elizabeth Campbell for Jill Orr. Jill Orr ©

Figure 1.9. Jill Orr, Walking on Planet Earth. 1980. Photographer: Virginia Fraser for Jill Orr. Jill Orr ©

Figure 1.10 to Figure 1.14. Jill Orr, Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters – Goya, 2004. Photographers: Bruce Parker and Joanne Haslam for Jill Orr. Jill Orr ©

Chapter 2: Collaboration or Not – There is no island!

Figure 2.2. Vanessa Beecroft, *VB 016.NT*. 2008.
Digital C-print 229cm x 177cm
Vanessa Beecroft ©

Figure 2.3. Vanessa Beecroft, *VB61.339.NT*. 2007.
Digital C-print. 178cm x 268cm
Photographer: Nic Tenwinggenhorn.
Vanessa Beecroft ©

Figure 2.4. Jill Orr, *Marriage of the Bride to Art*. 1994.
Photographer: Antonia Chaffey for .
Jill Orr©

**Chapter 3: The Crossing.**

Figure 3.1. Jill Orr, *The Crossing – The Hospital*. 2007.
Pictured: Carolyn Connors as the Bush Nurse and the Benchmo sisters as the colonial children.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcolm Cross for r.
Jill Orr©

Figure 3.2. Jill Orr, *The Crossing – The Hospital*. 2007.
Pictured: Gretel Taylor as the Colonial woman.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcolm Cross for .
Jill Orr©

Pictured: Craig Peade as the Missionary.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcolm Cross for .
Jill Orr©

Figure 3.4. Jill Orr, *The Crossing – The Lost Malaysian*. 2007.
Pictured: Tony Yap as the Lost Malaysian.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcolm Cross for .
Jill Orr©

Figure 3.5. Jill Orr, *The Crossing – The Lost Malaysian*. 2007.
Pictured: Tony Yap as the Lost Malaysian.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcolm Cross for .
Jill Orr©
Pictured: Emma Strapps as the White Tree Spirit.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcolm Cross for.
Jill Orr©

Pictured: Emma Strapps as the White Tree Spirit.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcolm Cross for.
Jill Orr©

Pictured: Peter Peterson as the Latche Latche Danceman and Jill Orr as the Nun.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcolm Cross for.
Jill Orr©

Pictured: Jill Orr as the Nun, Gretel Taylor as the Colonial Woman, Carolyn Connors as the Bush Nurse, Bud and Mate as the Young Latche Latche Dancers.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcolm Cross for.
Jill Orr©

Pictured: Jill Orr as the Nun.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcolm Cross for.
Jill Orr©

Pictured: Peter Peterson as the Latche Latche Danceman.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcolm Cross for.
Koorie College for Indigenous Education and Jill Orr©

Pictured: students from the Koorie College of Indigenous Education, Mildura.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcolm Cross for.
Koorie College for Indigenous Education and Jill Orr©

Chapter 4: A Prayer.

Photographer: Fiona Morrison for 24hrArt.

Light jet print from Polaroid original, 100cm x 80cm. Edition of 15.
Photo courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.
Figure 4.7. Destiny Deacon, *Melancholy* - From the series *Sad and Bad*. 2000. 
Lamda print from Polaroid original, 80cm x 100 cm. Edition of 15 + 2 A/Ps. 
Photo courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

Figure 4.8. Destin Deacon, *Where is Mummy?* From the series *Forced Into Images*. 
Light jet print from polaroid originals, 95cm x 77cm. Edition of 20. 
Photo courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

**Chapter 5: Performative Photography: Space, Place and Recurring History.**

Figure 5.1. Jill Orr, *Faith in a Faithless Land*, 2007-09. 
Ink jet print on museo silver rag, 165cm x 125cm. Edition of 5. 
Photographer: Naomi Herzog for Jill Orr. 
Jill Orr©

Figure 5.2. Jill Orr, *Faith in a Faithless Land – footprints*, 2007-09. 
Ink jet print on museo silver rag, 94cm x 160cm. Edition of 5. 
Photographer: Naomi Herzog for Jill Orr. 
Jill Orr©

Figure 5.3. Jill Orr, *Faith in a Faithless Land – reflection*, 2007-09. 
Ink jet print on museo silver rag, 94cm x 160cm. Edition of 5. 
Photographer: Naomi Herzog for Jill Orr. 
Jill Orr©

Figure 5.4. Jill Orr, *Faith in a Faithless Land – antipodean*, 2007-09. 
Ink jet print on museo silver rag, 94cm x 160cm. Edition of 5. 
Photographer: Naomi Herzog for Jill Orr. 
Jill Orr©

Figure 5.5. Jill Orr, *Southern Cross – to bear and behold – reflection*, 2007-09. 
Inkjet on museo silver rag, 94cm x 160cm. Edition of 5. 
Photographer: Naomi Herzog for . 
Jill Orr©

Figure 5.6. Jill Orr, *Southern Cross – to bear and behold – footprints*, 2007-09. 
Inkjet on museo silver rag, 94cm x 160cm. Edition of 5. 
Photographer: Naomi Herzog for . 
Jill Orr©

Figure 5.7. Jill Orr, *Southern Cross – to bear and behold – burning*, 2007-09. 
Inkjet on museo silver rag, 94cm x 160cm. Edition of 5. 
Photographer: Naomi Herzog for . 
Jill Orr©
Figure 5.8. Jill Orr, *Southern Cross – to bear and behold – flame*, 2007-09.
Inkjet on museo silver rag, 94cm x 160cm. Edition of 5.
Photographer: Naomi Herzog for Jill Orr©

Figure 5.9. to 5.12. Jill Orr, *Cubbies*, 2009.
Collaboration with students from the Avoca Primary School, and Lyndal Jones for the *Eco-Living Festival*, 2009.
Photographer: Chrissie Smith for Jill Orr
Jill Orr©

Figure 5.13. Jill Orr, *Vision*, 2009-10.
(portrait of students from the Avoca Primary School)
Ink jet print on museo silver rag, 140cm x 160cm. Edition of 5.
Photographer: Christina Simons for Jill Orr
Jill Orr©

Figure 5.14 Jill Orr, *Vision – Leo eyes open*, 2009-10.
Ink jet print on museo silver rag, 140cm x 160cm. Edition of 5.
Photographer: Christina Simons for Jill Orr
Jill Orr©

Figure 5.15. Jill Orr, *Vision – Leo eyes closed*, 2009-10.
Ink jet print on museo silver rag, 140cm x 160cm. Edition of 5.
Photographer: Christina Simons for Jill Orr
Jill Orr©

Figure 5.16. Jill Orr, *Vision – Jacinta eyes open*, 2009-10.
Ink jet print on museo silver rag, 140cm x 160cm. Edition of 5.
Photographer: Christina Simons for Jill Orr
Jill Orr©

Figure 5.17. Jill Orr, *Vision – Jacinta eyes closed*, 2009-10.
Ink jet print on museo silver rag, 140cm x 160cm. Edition of 5.
Photographer: Christina Simons for Jill Orr
Jill Orr©

Figure 5.18. Jill Orr, *Between Somewhere and Nowhere – Beginning*, 2011.
Inkjet print on archival crane silver rag, 120cm x 90 cm. Edition of 5.
Photographer: Christina Simons for Jill Orr
Jill Orr©

Figure 5.19. Jill Orr, *Between Somewhere and Nowhere – Whisper*, 2011.
Inkjet print on archival crane silver rag, 120cm x 90 cm. Edition of 5.
Photographer: Christina Simons for Jill Orr
Jill Orr©
Jill Orr®

Jill Orr®

Jill Orr®
Abstract

The works created for this research are responses to some perceived impediments to social change which have been linked to issues faced by our environmentally challenged planet. This research is framed by the notion of culture as nature, termed by Janine Burke. However I have viewed this conceptual space as vast and inclusive residing between binary oppositional structures. Part of the process of undoing, opening up and expanding oppositions is to enable an active and open space where hearing/listening/imagining/and visualising become active communication methods. Some of the works exhibited and produced for this PhD research, are remediated from live performance events and some are performative photographs that are created as performances for the camera. Space, Place and Recurring History is an analysis through art practice, of relations to place that have left social, historical and environmental traces which are experienced as obstructions from the past relived in the present.

The artworks produced for this research have varied in performance methodology. The Crossing is a collaborative performance event that occurred on Lock Island, Mildura. The local Indigenous community was involved as well as six other performers and production crew. The video remediation is seen over six video chapters where the exhibition space governs the installation and viewing possibilities. Another performance methodology occurred for A Prayer that was commissioned as an interventionist style performance for the 2007 Darwin Festival. This was only two weeks after the Howard Government’s Emergency Response into Indigenous Communities had occurred. A Prayer is situated in a busy market place amongst random shoppers that are included within the performance field.

The other works are photographically based, performances for the camera or performative photography. These works differently visualize space, place and

---

recurring history through specific sites in relation to the body that in varying ways depict and are embedded by traces of history, climate, culture and locale. *The Southern Cross*—to bear and behold, *Faith in a Faithless Land*, *Vision* and *Between Somewhere and Nowhere*, ultimately exist as photographs that have already, or are yet to become, part of the cultural landscape.
Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution and affirms that to the best of the candidate's knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Date: 31/03/2012

Signature:____________________________
Acknowledgements

I have been privileged to under go this research and my gratitude goes to Monash University, The Faculty of Art Design and Architecture, who have enabled my supervisor, Anne Marsh to guide me through the unfolding terrain with astute and perceptive advice. I am also indebted to her own writing, which has contributed to the theoretical base. Claudia Terstappen was an early supervisor who on practical levels assisted by invitation to exhibit internationally. I have been refined, questioned, corrected and informed by Jan Bryant whose supervision of the final stages of the exegesis has enabled me to reach a point in writing that now hopefully expresses my research finding in a fluid and informed manner.

My work is not possible without others. The collaboration with the Mildura Indigenous community and Tony Yap, Gretel Taylor, Carolyn Connors, Craig Peade and Emma Strapps whose performance in The Crossing was inspired. Steve Bell, D.J. Hunt, Pete Brownstein, Naomi Herzog and Malcolm Cross enabled the stills, video and music production for this work. This exhilarating experience was also made possible by the generous support of Tasco-Inland, Arts Victoria, Regional Arts Victoria, Vic Health with the Mildura and Wentworth Arts Festival and the Mildura Arts Centre hosting the events. The invitation, with commission from Steve Eland of 24heArt in Darwin provided the opportunity to realize A Prayer.

The photographs are non-existent without collaboration with photographers. I wish to thank Naomi Herzog and Christina Simons. The generosity of reply from the photographer’s perspective from Paul Batt and Annie Wilson is also greatly appreciated.

Lyndal Jones and the Eco-Living Festival, and the Artist in schools program, have been instrumental in providing an opportunity to work with the Avoca Primary School to create both Twelve Cubbies and a Boat that was part of the festival, and to realize the Vision photographic series as part of this research.
The immense support shown by my gallery director, Jenny Port of the Jenny Port Gallery has helped place the works in the public imaginary along with the many other exhibitions that have occurred along the way. Helen Vivian has also worked to create a catalogue of works since 1977 the fruits of which will become evident in the future. This support has been intermingled through this research.

I began on an APG scholarship, until I was appointed to a position with the Arts Academy at the University of Ballarat who have enabled me time to finish this research. I thank their generosity when staffing levels are so small. Thank you to Elena Galimberi for the final assistance in formatting.

Ultimately the love, patience and generosity of my partner, Andrea Wilson without whom I would have a diminished life and to Hortie Wilsow and Dougal Orr who have achieved their doctorate by sitting on my lap and at my feet every inch of the way and guarding the door against any unwelcome intrusion.

I do feel a blessed person and thank you all.
**Introduction: Space, Place and Recurring History**

I come to this research as an artist and bring the methods of my art making to provide a possibility for audiences to witness, and participate in, dialogues from different perspectives that play out in live performance time and through the mediums of photography and video. I have come to realize that some of the blockages, or impediments to open imagination, by anyone of any field, and the consequent development of active environmental solutions, are possibly bound to identification with place, be that actual or imagined. There are many complex reasons for this and my research will attempt to address these matters through the question, “What space, place and recurring history can enable imaginative and creative insights into how we live together with respect for each other and the environment? Romantic – possibly? Realistic – possibly?” The space between romance and reality is one of openness and interaction. It is this space that is opened through this research.

This is a study through performance, photography and video, of the relationships that occur between separate identities and histories that coincide and overlay social, cultural and environmental relations to place and how do different points of view and life experience co-exist with authenticity and agency within the live performance medium and the attendant documented states? The question is therefore raised, how does space, place and recurring history impact on each aspect of performance theory, methodology, site specificity and cultural interface? This question is linked and adapted to each chapter focus.

Can a documentary or performative photograph and video impact as a work of art in relation to a live performance? Or did you really have to be there? These are questions that are central to the current discussion regarding the representation of performance documentation. Remediation is important in beginning to establish the complexities of the current argument where some historians argue that one had to experience a live work in order to write authentically about it. Through an analysis of the medium(s), I argue that both the live experience and the photographic and video documentary forms have a
power to engage emotionally however this engagement and experience is different. Liveness is not reproducible but to foreclose on the status of the documentary supplement is to deny a vital aspect of visual and conceptual art history whose influence continues to be felt.

The second chapter, Collaboration or Not - We are not an Island, addresses another pressing methodological question that has implications beyond my own practice. The question of how space, place and recurring history impacts on the production of my own performance, photography and video in relation to the contemporary art context? The focus of this chapter is very specific to the works’ production in that it goes to the heart of my relationship to photographers without whom there would be no images. The importance of this chapter is that it outlines the often-difficult relations between artists in collaboration and demonstrates how I, as one artist, overcome challenges of acknowledgement, authenticity and collaborative practice. The current explosion of collaboration as a method in its own right is acknowledged as an expanding, open, interactive and inclusive field where there are some casualties along the way. Collaboration or Not discusses these issues as part of a work's production. The specific collaboration utilized in the performance, The Crossing and the Vision photographs, will be discussed within the chapter that directly deals with these works however the central principals are outlined in this chapter. The second half of this chapter importantly establishes the theoretical basis of the Lacanian structure of the subject and the gaze and the speech act as it pertains to the research and from which the following chapters develop.

Chapter 3, The Crossing, is the first research outcome that was a collaborative performance event on Lock Island, Mildura where place relations are integrated into the site history. Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives are presented as both a historic and contemporary re-framing through dance that is both performance ritual and contemporary expression. Dance is both a cultural and political force that is presented with agency as it is performed separately and together in the work. Representation is a crucial issue that is referenced throughout this chapter. The event, The Crossing, is a contribution to new
knowledge through the performance structure that enabled the multiple overlapping of time, culture and place. This work is analysed in relation to post colonial and performance theory. Central to The Crossing is the question, Can performances and attendant documentation facilitate an open and inclusive arena for cultural exchange including Indigenous and non- Indigenous participation where representation is both historically and politically sensitive? Who can represent whom?

Chapter 4, A Prayer, is focused on an interventionist performance that occurred in Darwin in 2007, two weeks after the Howard Government’s own Intervention into Indigenous communities. Here post generational trauma is discussed in relation to both the charged events on the ground in Darwin and the performance as a field of random occurrences. An important insight into art and trauma is given through Jill Bennett’s, Empathetic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art, Cultural Memory in the Present. The work of Destiny Deacon and Gordon Bennett are discussed in terms of their strategies for representation.

Chapter 5, Performative Photography: Space, Place and Recurring History. If we are to work collectively towards climate change, which is witnessed most visibly in regional Australia where several works are performed, the complex relations between people, place and placeless-ness must be researched. By focusing on the space between binary oppositions, where shades of grey are infinite and relational nuance is in constant flux, this centre could be imagined as alive and multi-relational. This space could also incorporate relations between selves and others, and selves and place where binary structures can be re-framed through Janine Burke’s term, “culture as nature”. Part of the process of undoing or opening up binary structures is to enable an active and open space where hearing/listening/imagining/visualizing can become active communication methods. This chapter is an analysis of space, place and recurring history

---

through the four performative photographic works that resulted from this research.
Chapter 1: Remediation: Did you really have to be there?

What impact space, place and recurring histories have on performance art, photography and video is the question that underpins this exegesis and is asked in relation to each specific subject addressed in each different chapter. This chapter, also considers the question: Can a documentary or performative photograph and video communicate the relationship to the original performance? or, Did you really have to be there?

In recent years there have been a number of exhibitions that have been dedicated to performance art and its attendant photographic, video and textual documentation. The works for these exhibitions have been initially drawn from the 1960s and 1970s performance art, body art and happenings. During this time artists created works outside the institutional and gallery systems as a means of protest, which included attacks against the art object and moves towards its dematerialization. Alternative locations were sought for events bringing into focus the marginalized. Feminist, gay, racial, environmental and other identity politics emboldened performances that utilized the body as a site to dismantle stereotypical relations between, selves and society. Anne Marsh writes:

Happenings and performance art presented contradictions: on one hand many of the works sought to create a cathartic experience for the artist or the audience or both; on the other, the participatory structures aimed to break down the heroic position of the artist as unique individual, and to create a democratic art in which numerous people would be involved ... The dialectic between participatory happenings and body art in the early 1970s highlighted the differences in the artists' interpretations of self, body, and society.¹

The nature of ephemeral art to exist beyond the moment is dependent on documentation. It is this remediated material, as traces of live events that is the subject of many current exhibitions. Some theorists and art historians feel that they had to be present to experience the performances first hand in order to write about them. In other words, ‘Did you have to be there’? This question, whilst valid seems to foreclose on the rich history that can be told through

documentation. To question what value documentary, or performative photographs and videos have in relation to live performance, has far greater potential to assist the analyses of what actually remains through the documentation, seems more pertinent. Some of these exhibitions, listed in Chapter One’s Appendix, demonstrate that an analysis is being done regardless, or in parallel to, the question of ‘being there.’ Performative photographs are photographs that are staged without an audience for the purpose of the photographic image. Documentary photographs are photographic records of a live performance event. The term, remediation, coined by David Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, applies to documentation when one medium is incorporated and/or represented in another medium.\(^2\) The question whether liveness can be reproduced, or perhaps the impact of liveness, is raised against the practice of documentation, performative photography, video and remediation. I do not intend to define the differences between live performances and remediated formats this seems to be a fruitless exercise. The live performances will be discussed in relation to the works produced as part of this research in later chapters. Rather the performativity of remediated work is analysed here.

Implicated in the question of liveness and remediation are two differing terms, immediacy and immersion. For a succinct definition I have used the Chicago Education Glossary definition of Immediacy that states:

> While a medium is often depicted as a window onto a vision or an experience, immediacy is the absence of that window and is instead the presence of the viewer within the vision or experience itself.\(^3\)

The definition also states that “essentially, immediacy is the negation of media”\(^4\).

Immersion on the other hand has become more complex where for Jelna Guga:

> The use of new media art practice has strongly influenced and changed the perception and reception of artworks, not only as a physiological but also as a cultural process. Image is no longer a static object of observation and contemplation. 3D images are fluid, variable, dynamic, process-oriented, and exist only in interaction with the observer who is placed within the image and who is a constitutive part of the image. Thus positioned, the viewer loses what has been...

---


\(^4\) ibid. p. 1.
considered the key element of history, criticism and theory of art and that is the critical distance from the work of art as an object of observation.5

However liveness as an immersive installation and a virtual environment complicate the issue through what Adrian Heathfield describes as “immediacy that can be felt” in Damian Hirst’s The Pursuit of Oblivion, 2004, presented for Live Culture at the Tate Modern, London. Here an aquarium containing not only live fish but also sides of beef, knives and mirrors is a living ecology that performs. It is both immersive and alive.6 Adrian Heathfield draws on tactics from live performance artists in describing immediacy:

The shocks to perception that are frequently deployed by contemporary live artists, somewhat like those of other visual artists, take the spectator into the conditions of immediacy where attention is heightened, the sensory relation charged and the workings of thought agitated. The artwork is Alive. Such conditions bring the spectator moment by moment into the present.7

Time, memory and associative selection are integral elements found in both live and immersive art. Mark B. Hanson explains that in Henri Bergson’s theory of perception the body is a centre of interdetermination within an acentred universe where it functions as a selective cipher. Marl B. Hanson writes:

The body acts as a kind of filter, which selects from among the universe of images circulating around it and according to its own embodiment capacities precisely those that are relevant to it. Within Bergson’s central concept is affection and memory. On his account, the body is literally responsible for deciding which elements of material flux enter the domain of perceptual experience. And the body is able to perform this filtering function precisely because of its own material singularity: its own constitution is a concretely configured processor of images.8

Past works are viewed retrospectively from a present are not neutral because new knowledge and contexts come to bear on past events, just as their interpretation is also coloured by the viewer’s own subjective position. It is the

7 ibid. p. 7.
subjective position that I need to develop here because it is implicated through the various positions that are active in both viewing, experiencing and creating a work of art. Desire is a filter through which all subjects navigate their relation to the other and the world.

Attention has been given to the issue of performance documentation through the recent writing of Anne Marsh whose analysis of desire in relation to photography and performance is read through Jacques Lacan. Michael Fried’s theory of absorption and anti-theatricality is discussed for the impact on both the performing subject and the viewer. The philosophy of Roland Barthes is discussed in relation to photography and memory. Amelia Jones, Adrian Heathfield, Philip Auslander, and Peggy Phalen as writers on performance, demonstrate different perspectives. The implication of Lacanian image screen that is framed through psychoanalysis is discussed in relation to Lacan’s formulation of the subject and the gaze. The technological screen for image projection is essential to remediation where the body is central and perception demonstrates an evolving capacity for adaptation through technological advancement.

The experience of a work of art, whether it is live or remediated, ultimately resides in memory. However memory is not a pure, untouched page, it occurs as a reconstruction of interwoven personal, socio-political and geographic influences that ultimately become individual and subjective. Both Plato’s story, Allegory of the Cave,10 and Freud’s theory of Screen Memory11 refer to the instability and deception of memory and perception. Both works relate to confused perceptions that cover or sublimate original experiences by supplanting them with others. In this register, the experience of live performances is also unreliable. Although I believe that there is no substitute for a live experience because the terms of engagement are completely different and each individual response is different. Something happens when a symbolic

---

act, through a performance frame, is shared in real time with others. Marina Abramovic's most recent performance, The Artist is Present at MOMA New York, 2010, is essentially a work of ‘energy exchange.’ Marina Abramovic, sat at a table opposite an audience member, both engaged in the act of looking. I will return to Marina Abramovic shortly but her work, as mine, shares qualities of the following terms.

Absorption, facingness, to-be-seenness, the gaze, the beholder and the viewer are terms discussed by Michael Fried in reference to paintings and photographs, but I am extending this application to live performance. Michael Fried argues:

That new art photography seeks to come to grips with the issue of beholding in ways that do not succumb to theatricality but which at the same time register the epochality of minimalism/literalism’s intervention by an acknowledgement of to-be-seenness, just as ambitious French painting after Manet acknowledged painting’s facingness (not flatness, as is usually said) while nevertheless reserving an imaginative space for itself that was not wholly given over to soliciting the applause of the Salon-going public.

These terms or modes of being are part of the performative language that describe differences in performance states. This can be seen in all performative or mediums in which there is a human subject. For example: live performance, documentation and performative photography, film, video and also more traditionally, painting, drawing etc. Fried traces these states (modes) of representation through the philosopher, Diderot, in an analysis of paintings prior to Manet in the 1860s and 1870s. Michael Fried argues:

The Diderotian project describes a fundamental change (of orientation, rather than purpose) of effectively denying the presence before the painting of the beholder was no longer feasible in any of its classical forms but on the other hand suggests that the problem of the beholder – of acknowledging his presence while not addressing him… was now fundamental to advanced sculpture and painting.

---

14 ibid. p. 100.
From this shift the anti-theatrical tradition arose, that is pertinent for performance art, particularly from the 1960s onwards because it is the actions of the artist and the artist’s body that is prioritised, unrepeatable and unpredictable. This is the anthesis of traditional theatre. For performance art, the conceptual base is the grounding of the work regardless of the actual technique, aesthetic and/or theatricality used by the artist. The terms analysed by Fried, of absorption, facingness, to-be-seenness and the relationship to and with the viewer that can also be interactive, I see as highly relevant and move beyond dialogue of theatricality and anti-theatricality.

Michael Fried applies modes like absorption, as part of anti-theatricality, to a fundamental distinction between seeing and being shown.\textsuperscript{15} Fried writes:

\begin{quote}
Within the framework of seeing and being shown are the means by which the subject in the image and the beholding viewer come to regard the painting or photograph. Part of this involves the term absorption. In terms of a photograph, the photographer takes a photograph when the subject is unaware of being photographed.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Anti-theatricality is further pertinent to performance art where absorption is a state of interiority – a state of concentration on a task that absorbs full attention. For example one can be completely absorbed in a meditative act, or a physical or mental task and yet be aware of the surrounding environment but not engaged in it. Perhaps one could say, mindfully absorbed. Similarly when one is in a performance mode, the concentration is complete and yet one does have an awareness of, for example, an audience or a practical function, but simultaneously maintains the state of absorption. The state of absorption is visible because it is reflected in the subject's body language and more subtly, the body's concentrated presence, which is read by the viewer. Fried uses many examples but Manet’s painting \textit{Olympia} is a good example of the above terms. Absorption, to-be-seenness and facingness and the gaze are tactical methods of subject communication to the viewing beholder used by painters, photographers and performance artists.

\textsuperscript{15} ibid. p. 101.
\textsuperscript{16} ibid. p. 101.
By comparison, Susan Sontag in *On Photography* writes about a situation where the subjects in Evan Walker’s subway photographs are unaware of being photographed. Fried writes that for Sontag, their expressions are private ones, not those that they offered to the camera.\(^{17}\) There are legal and moral ramifications in this type of photographic approach, where without permission, the photographer is liable for mis-representation of their subject. As some photographers take images of their subjects unaware of being photographed, enabling an unconscious and absorbed subject to be photographed, the opposite happens to subjects who are aware that they are being photographed.

Roland Barthes writes about preparing his pose for the photograph:

> I instantly make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image. This transformation is an active one: I feel that the photograph creates my body or mortifies it, according to its caprice.\(^{18}\)

This pose is all too familiar to us as we are taught to smile for the camera from childhood. The pose is the antithesis of absorption, which is why I use the performance mode of absorption that circumvents the self-conscious preparation of the pose and the ‘smile and click’ phenomenon. Absorption enables a presence or perhaps an authenticity to be felt by the audience in both live performances and those for the camera. It is this quality that can be seen across mediums that both Roland Barthes and Michael Fried are talking about. That is, a pose for the camera, a theatricality that is countered as anti-theatrical when the state of absorption is employed. Michael Fried writes:

> In the rarest instances, then, it is possible to neutralize the theatricalising effects of the pose by a kind of gift of nature on the part of the sitter, which is also to say without any intention on her part. This is a grace or presentness is grace.\(^{19}\)

---


I think grace and presentness are excellent descriptors of how the state of absorption can appear. In terms of my question, Did you really have to be there? or can a documentary, or performative photograph and video communicate the relationship to the original performance, the use of the terms, absorption, facingness, to-be-seenness and the gaze, operate across mediums in relation to the subject and the viewer and are in common to all. The gaze is another term that is applied to paintings, photographs, and performance. The gaze in Michael Fried’s terms is where the subject is in the act of looking out from the picture or (performance) frame, towards the viewer. The subject is available to be seen and to be looked at, in the knowledge that we see and are seen by others. In the performance sense one can be absorbed and seen at the same time. In Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic terms, the gaze is seen in conjunction with the subject and the image screen that is an operation of the gaze, identification and the Other. The position of the subject and the viewer are implicated.

**The Subject, The Image Screen and The Gaze**

In Anne Marsh’s interpretation, the Lacanian theory of the gaze through the image-screen demonstrates that “the subject may locate its own image in another but it also locates the other in its own image.”

Lacan uses a diagram to describe the image screen. (See Chapter 1: Figure 1.1.) It is composed of two intersecting triangles, based on Renaissance perspectival drawing systems. The triangles are placed so that they overlap and the opposing apexes touch each opposite base line. There is an intersecting line that both divides and joins both triangles. This line, which Lacan names the image-screen, interfaces the subject and the other. Lacan says: “I too turn myself into a picture under the gaze”.

This means in terms of creating a photograph and for viewing a photograph, and by implication other visual media, that both the subject and the viewer are both

---


part of the picture. There is an inescapable inter-relationship at work which, is also propelled by mis-recognition and desire as Anne Marsh describes below:

The Lacanian subject is thus configured by mis-recognitions propelled by the process of desire itself: “man’s desire finds its meaning in the desire of the other, not so much because the other holds the key to the object desired, as because the first object of desire is to be recognized by the other.”

The Lacanian image screen, therefore operates for both the subject and viewer that is, for Marsh, following Lacan, inseparable from desire. Therefore in any scopic relationship, Peggy Phalen also connects the compulsion of desire by suggesting that audiences and performers mutually desire the possibility of transformation. The role given to performance art is that it often acts as a kind of image screen that reflects social, sexual and relational aspects between the self and the other amongst which mis-recognitions and desire are propelled. The roles of the both performance photographs, videos and other remediations also operate through the mirroring that is incorporated within the function of the image screen. Anne Marsh argues that:

The idea that the camera is a mirror has often been conventionally framed in terms of the camera as a witness. However if one argues that the subject is often, if not always, posed, then the mirroring qualities of the camera suggest another interpretation, which can draw on psychoanalysis and the theory of the mirror as a metaphor for false identities. The narcissism of the pose suggests that the power relationship within the photographic process need not be one of the hunter and the prey; the person being ‘shot’ by the photographer may not always be in the role of victim.

In Lacan’s theory of the gaze and the image screen a complex dialectic is apparent. The subject may locate the other in its own image. The implications for live performance and its mediations are that from either position, be it subject or viewer, both are incorporated in the act of seeing and both are defined

---


25 ibid. p. 44.
by the gaze which is the culture from which identification is made. The gaze, in relation to desire and the Lacanian image screen will be developed in following chapters. At this point I will focus on Marina Abramovic’s *The Artist is Present*, which is discussed in terms of liveness and the documentary photographs.

**Marina Abramovic and the photographer Marco Anelli**

Marina Abramovic’s live performance, *The Artist is Present*, at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2010, occurred over seventeen days. One at a time, audience members sit at a table opposite Abramovic for as long or as little as they wish. Marina and the audience member engage in the act of seeing and being present with each other. There is no task other than looking into each other’s eyes. For many this is a moving experience that in Peggy Phalen’s words quoted already, become transformative. The photographic portraits taken of Abramovic and her participants do not necessarily convey the experience of those sitting with Marina, or the experience of the larger audience witnessing the engagement. This experience for Marina Abramovic, the participants and the larger audience is their personal response privileged by the live moment. The documentary photographs can be experienced in their own terms – they are photographed by Marco Anelli.26 (See Chapter 1: Figure 1.2 and 1.3.) What both the artist and the audience take away is a shared experience that resides in memory. The photographic images, once seen and experienced are also taken away in memory but they can be viewed again as prints and other mediations online, which is where I have viewed them. In terms of Michael Fried’s to-be-seenness, facingness and absorption, the subjects, in Marco Anelli’s photographs are absorbed in the act of looking, facing each other, and aware that they are in the position of to-be-seen. They are not directing their gaze out towards the viewing audience or to the photographer, but rather their gaze is directed towards each other. They are seen in the act of absorption. The photographs are framed so that only one of the couple is depicted; the other is invisible to the viewer of the photograph. In that sense the documentation of this work enables a subjective and imaginary interpretation as a work in its own right. For a

Lacanian reading perhaps the image screen that is the surface of the photograph incorporates what is both seen and not seen as part of a deeper identification between the self and the other. The act of seeing is held within the performance moment and remediated into a photographic image. In both instances the viewer takes away a captured image but that cannot possibly be everything the live moment offers because the frame of either our human selection or the photographer’s framing, both prioritise what to include and exclude individually. The gaze is the over riding backdrop against which meaning and identity are made symbolic.

The document as a work of art: regardless of the medium

Peggy Phalen’s written responses directed to “Dear Marina” could be called a remediation through writing. Phalen expresses the experience of her silent interaction with Abramovic, in an earlier work, *The House with the Ocean View*, at the Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, 2002. Phalen writes that the performance responds to war and terrorism via a demonstration of love and trust. This work operated, over a twelve-day period, through silent visual contact between Marina Abramovic and her audience members, one of whom was Peggy Phalen. Peggy Phalen’s written response is as if she is still absorbed in the heightened sensitivity of the performance time. It reads like a passionate piece of automatic writing — writing being the writer’s form of improvisation — where one follows the intuitive impulse. Peggy Phalen’s writing however is grounded in the performance experience that was obviously for Phalen a transformative one. Through Peggy Phalen’s words the performance is extended in the parallel medium of writing, that for me is a documentary supplement. Her writing I likened to Roland Barthes’ term *punctum*. I experienced a puncture, a wound, and a heightened empathy that came from the Peggy’s words. I become opened, agape, transported so much that I also could have been present in the live performance. I was in one-way or another, transformed. In this way the power of the document as a work of art has undone me. I did not have to be at the

---

28 Ibid. pp. 16-27.
performance to be touched by the writing. The issue of liveness and the question, did you really have to be there, still needs addressing but before I attempt this, the implication of memory as the residue that remains after experiencing a work of art whether live or mediated is important.

Memory

Roland Barthes writes about both the experience of seeing and remembering a photograph as residing within a flickering glance which, by my own extension, applies in part to experiencing a live performance. Barthes writes:

> Ultimately — or at the limit — in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes. “The necessary condition for an image is sight”, Janouch told Kafka; and Kafka smiled and replied: “we photograph things in order to drive them out of our minds. My stories are a way of shutting my eyes.”

I have experienced many times over the past thirty years moments when an audience member from one of my live performances accurately recalls the performance. They usually add that they were in one way or another transformed by the experience. I have often put that down to their receptivity on the moment where they have been particularly open or perhaps vulnerable, where the social mask as it were, was loose enough to be dismantled by their experience thereby an unconscious association is made that has deep meaning to that person. This is linked by Michael Fried to Roland Barthes’ punctum, where Fried writes:

> Time in Barthes’ sense of the term, functions as a punctum, for him precisely because the sense of something being past, being historical, cannot be perceived by the photographer or indeed by anyone else in the present. It is a guarantor of anti-theatricality that comes to a photograph [and by my extension to glimpses of a performance] that becomes visible in it, only after the fact. In order to deliver the hurt, the prick, the wound, to future viewers that Barthes fears and cherishes.

---


In this sense memory exists as a moment of seeing where the moment is retrieved, but as Barthes says, “in order to see a photograph well, it is best to look away or close your eyes.”\(^{31}\) This describes both the experience of a photograph and the recall of a performed moment. Roland Barthes writes:

The image, says phenomenology, is an object-as-nothing. Now in the photograph, what I posit is not only the absence of the object; it is also, by one and the same movement, on equal terms, the fact that this object has indeed existed and that it has been there where I see it... On one hand it is not there, but on the other is has indeed been.\(^{32}\)

Amelia Jones writes in, *Presence in Absentia: experiencing performance as documentation*, Art Journal, VOL 56, No. 4, 1997, from the perspective of a younger generation who could not have been present during the 1960s and 1970s. She says that “while the experience of viewing a photograph and reading text is clearly different from that of sitting in a room watching an artist perform neither has a privileged relationship to the “historical truth” of the performance.\(^{33}\) Jones writes that there is no possibility of an unmediated relationship to any kind of cultural product, including a live performance situation”.\(^{34}\) In the sense that Jones does not necessarily access the artists’ intentions, I agree that often the live works (mine at least) are designed to deliberately trigger multiple interpretations and responses in audiences. Therefore the impact over time and historical context often enriches the political, social and personal contexts. For Amelia Jones her respect for the equally inter-subjective exchange through documentary traces is an affirming stance. Amelia Jones writes:

Making use of a feminist post structuralism informed by phenomenology, I argue this by reading the transfigured subjectivity through the works themselves (specifically: the works as documentary traces, and this goes even for those events I also experienced “in the flesh”; I view these, through screen memory, and they become documentary in their own right... I insist that it is precisely the relationship of these bodies/ subjects to documentation (or more specifically, to

---


\(^{32}\) ibid. p. 115.


\(^{34}\) ibid. p. 12.
the re-presentation) that most profoundly points to the dislocation of the fantasy of the mixed, normative, centred modernist subject and thus most dramatically provides a radical challenge to the masculinism, racism, colonialism, classicism and heterosexism built into this fantasy.\(^{35}\)

Amelia Jones is referring to the Freudian screen memory that is a displaced memory, which, although usually occurring in childhood, demonstrates nonetheless that some memory is selective and associative. Sigmund Freud writes:

> When we conceive the idea that two psychical forces are involved in producing these memories. One of them takes the importance of the experience as a motive for wanting it remembered, but for the other — the force of resistance — opposes this preferential choice. The two contending forces do not cancel each other out, nor does the one motive overpower the other, with or without loss to itself. Instead, a compromise is reached...it is not the experience itself that supplies the memory image... but another psychical element, which is closely associated with the one that proved objectionable. ... Instead of the memory image that was justified by the original experience we are presented with another, which is to some extent displaced from it.\(^{36}\)

Memory in Freud’s screen memory terms is selective, displaced and governed by an early traumatic memory that is subverted. We each carry our own selective memory whether that is altered by trauma or not. Kathy O’Dell writes, that the representational aspects of performance art, as already mediated, are at play within the arena of the symbolic. \(^{37}\) The site of memory is a participant here because it also carries the symbolic both prior to the performance, triggered by the performance or empathized by images as symbolic remediations. The site of memory is active but not complete because as Amelia Jones explains below, the body is never fully knowable. Amelia Jones writes:

> Body art, finally shows that the body can never be “known purely” as a totalizable, fleshy whole that rests outside of the arena of the symbolic...Body Art through its very performativity and its unveiling of the body of the artist, surfaces the insufficiency and incoherence of the body-as-subject and its inability to deliver itself fully (whether to the subject –in-performance her/himself or to the one who engages with this body)... even more to the point is

\(^{35}\) ibid. p. 12.


Peggy Phalen’s insistence on the way in which the body-in-performance puts forward its own lack.\textsuperscript{38}

Peggy Phalen feels that liveness cannot be reproduced and the reproduction becomes something else. In her discussion on Marina Abramovic's \textit{Rhythm O} performance, Phalen writes that:

What makes live performance a significant art form is that it opens the possibility for mutual transformation on the part of the audience and the performers. What distinguishes performance art from other arts, both mediated and live, is precisely the promise of this possibility of mutual transformation during the enactment of the event.\textsuperscript{39}

In terms of live performances, I agree with Peggy Phalen. Liveness cannot be reproduced, it becomes remediated or performed for the camera and the work then becomes something else. In other words, the work becomes a photograph, video or an online entity and so on. The question of having to be at a live performance in relation to Lacan’s theory of the gaze and the image-screen suggests that the dual location of self and other operates in both live and mediated works. In this sense, one did not necessarily have to be present at the live event. One’s experience of the performance trace is operative for the subject and the other and can be located regardless of the medium. Works of art, in this context, are held within the dichotomy of the image-screen filtered through desire. Documentation of an event itself becomes symbolic where the role of memory, the impact of the Lacanian image-screen, the historical and cultural contexts reflecting the complexities of the gaze and identification are each tactical methods of communication. That is, documented images employ facingness and to-be-seenness, as factors in the dialogue between the subject and the viewer of a work of art. This is found in both live and remediated artworks and as such do not foreclose on the symbolic representation for those not present. Documentation does enable an alternative experience. Anne Marsh also adds another layer where she links memory, the photograph and desire.


Photography can be used as a metaphor for desire. Its capacity to capture life, to preserve memory is undermined by its freeze-framed moment, which produces a death-like image. This process is much like a psychoanalytic interpretation of desire where desire is always in a state of becoming, where the object of desire is never quite captured. Photography manifests a similar failure in that the object captured in time and space never becomes present, it is always in the past but it preserves time as snapshots of memory.

Memory is fallible, subjective, selective and associative. This was seen in Roland Barthes’ interpretation of his mother’s childhood photograph that has resonance for him alone because of his specific longing to find an essence of his deceased mother. It arose in Sigmund Freud’s memory screen, where memory is subverted and replaced by others in the patient’s retrieval. Finally, Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave* tells of subjects who are positioned facing a wall of the Cave, on which they mis-recognise shadows projected by the light of a fire mistaking them for actual objects. The subject in Plato’s cave, for Rachel Furnari, is therefore doubly removed in this illustration – from the real that factually exists outside of the Cave and humanity held in thrall, enslaved to a screen that is always – already mediating the real. (Please see the Appendix Chapter Two for definitions of real as actual, factual and not imagined and the Lacanian Real).

**The truth: what truth?**

The notion that a photograph could act as a truth bearing witness, which was often the motive for the early performance documentary photographs and videos, has been dismantled by many writers amongst whom are Susan Sontag, in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 2003, and Rosalind Krauss, in *The Originality of*
the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths, 1986.\textsuperscript{46} The truth? What truth? Whose truth? Underlies the question of being there as well as the impact of performative mediums on viewers. I think it is better to suggest that amongst the instability of memory, history, point of view, cultural and technological developments, there are many truths that are always relative.

Roland Barthes is writing about analogue photographs where, in particular the early performance documentary photographs could be called “straight” or unadulterated records of the live event. These photographs were created in part as the evidence or act as the witness of the event that has occurred. In analogue terms the performance trace is an index on the photographic film. In current new media terms the idea that something has actually been there is not necessarily true evidence of an action in real-time because through computer imaging programs, an event or a photographic image can be created from within the program. For Anne Marsh these types of photographs are usually digitised photographs that “are freed from the referent.”\textsuperscript{47} Anne Marsh also suggests that most photographs of performance art have the same intent: to capture the event as directed by the artist.”\textsuperscript{48} The veracity and effect of the documentation has to speak on its own terms. I am arguing for the value of documentation and performative photographs as artworks that can be analysed in the same manner that art historian RoseLee Goldberg refers to as an analysis through art historical methodology.\textsuperscript{49} In common to their histories, art historians must dig the archaeologies of the past, ever sensitive to the signs embedded in the traces. In a sense, the past is reflected in the present and it is a matter of discerning, in hindsight, the impact and truth of the work. Peggy Phalen, Adrian Heathfield and Anne Marsh, like myself consider that the live performance and remediated states are different and not reproducible. However to undervalue the documentary traces denies those who were not present, the validity and fresh

\textsuperscript{48} ibid. p. 1.
insight that the passage of time, seen through “presence in absentia” brings to the freshness perceived in the performative traces. Value is gained through renewed attention as indeed the international exhibitions have demonstrated.

I now turn my attention to technology and its impact on liveness, immediacy, immersion and perception.

**Performances using mediatisation within the live work**

In analysing performance documentation and performative photography there is a category where separation between the live and the mediatised is impossible. These works include reproductive technologies within the live work as the work itself. Vitto Acconci is one of the earliest proponents of this because his performances are often performances in the camera. For example, there is no separation from the camera, videotape and the action in Vitto Acconci’s *Open Book* (1971). This work is framed by the camera lens, which is focused directly into Acconci’s open mouth. It is as if the tunnel between the camera body connected through the lens is an unbroken hollow tube that seamlessly enters into his open mouth, recording his utterances emitted through his viscous interior. Vitto Acconci’s *Open Book* is not remediated because it is wholly performed for video. One of the earliest performative photographs is Yves Klein’s *The Leap into the Void*, 1960. This image was created for the camera. Several photographs were taken to become a composite, with the net catching Klein’s fall/flight from the second story removed. Klein’s image is a performance that is inseparable from the photograph. It is the photograph that performs.

PhilipAuslander argues:

> If we are concerned with the historical constitution of these events as performances, it makes no difference at all. It follows from my assertion that the identity of documented performances as performances is not dependent on presence of an initial audience that we cannot dismiss studio fabrications of one

---

sort or another from the category of performance art because they were not performed for a physically present audience. My suggestion that performance art is constituted as such through performativity of its documentation is equally true for Burden’s piece (Shoot 1971) and Klein’s. The fact that one could and did occur before a live audience while the other could not and did not is not a significant difference in this context. ... This difference has had no consequence in terms of their iconicity and standing in the history of art and performance.52

In this sense the “liveness” of Vitto Acconci’s video and Yves Klein’s photograph herald twenty-first century hypermediacy where the desire for immediacy through mediatized technologies is determined, as Bolter and Grusin note, through the ever-increasing disappearance of the interface of technology. Here great effort is made to create immersive environments without the impediment of physical hardware.53 The evolution of technology has always been a tool for artists, from the early video formats to today’s large-scale projections that are integrally woven into to the fabric of live performances. Here the endless repetition within the medium and manipulation across media are part of the volume and visual spectacle of live performances.54

Remediation, the documentary, the performative photograph and video in my own work

In terms of my own works the earliest deliberate live integration with large-scale projections are Love Songs in 1991, Marriage of the Bride to Art and Raising the Spirits, both in 1994. The introduction of large-scale projections enabled integration between live performance characters in relation to their projected gendered opposites that was first realized in Love Songs, 1991. (See Chapter 1: Figure 1.5 and 1.6) This work characterized both the male and female aspects of the self in relation to each other through the projection screen. From the 1990s live events like rock concerts and football matches, to more intimately, dance, performance art and theatrical works are rarely without a screen presence. The performance spectacle in large-scale events is projected to thousands of viewers and simulcast to viewers at home. In both large and small-scale events, the lure

52 ibid. p. 2.
54 ibid. p. 43.
of the screen often dominates an actual body and the eye naturally gravitates to the light-emitting screen.\textsuperscript{55}

By contrast “performance for the camera” is a term that I have used since the late 1970s to describe performances that are staged without an audience for the purposes of making a photographic and/or video artwork. The current term used to describe this method for photographs is performative photography. I have created performances for the camera from 1978 onwards with works like \textit{Bleeding Trees} in 1978. (Chapter 1: Figures 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8.) Strictly speaking these images in particular, although performed for the camera, were also used in a live performance as a means to bring the land, through slide projections, into the gallery where I performed actions that either replicated or contrasted the projected images. The original slide images represent this work and are not reliant on the live performance or an audience for their meaning or reading. As with Amelia Jones’ argument about early performance works being available to younger generations, these images have now become an iconic part of Australian art history. I realized partly through this work that the photographic image is the artwork. \textit{Walking on Planet Earth}, 1989, (Chapter 1: Figure 1.9.) is one of many works performed strictly for the camera that has bearing on this research detailed in chapter 5. Works for this research that are performances for the camera include \textit{Faith in a Faithless Land}, \textit{The Southern Cross — to bear and behold} (2009), \textit{Vision} (2010) and \textit{Between Somewhere and Nowhere} (2011)(See Chapter 5: Figures 5.1 to 5.8 and 5.13 to 5.22). In these instances it is the photograph that performs.

In live works both the audience and the cameras are compromised by each other’s presence. Sometimes this is unavoidable: for example \textit{The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters — Goya} (2003-4)(See Chapter 1 Figures 1.10 to 1.15.). This was performed both in Sydney and Melbourne, however the performances were one–off live events in each site. The work, involving a ton of meaty bones occurred over nine hours. It was not possible to do a separate shoot because I did not want the bones to go off. It was the very flesh of our existence that

\textsuperscript{55} ibid. pp- 20-50.
provided an anti-dote for what I sensed was becoming a dulled public swayed by the media campaign to dehumanise refugees and overlook the horrors of the Iraq war where the images became yet another image easy to ignore. Suffice to say that for the Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters – Goya, the cameras, both still and video, were situated on structures designed to have minimal impact for the audience and to enable several framing and focusing possibilities and therefore editing possibilities. The resulting video is a sanitized version because there is no stench of dead flesh, there is no blood. Mediation cannot reproduce liveness. This video however, has its own power, particularly because the filming was directed with consideration given to the framing, lighting, and compositional states that establish its own internal logic specific to the video medium. Many works slide across mediums from live works that have an audience on site, that exist through remediation or are live performances are that are simultaneous mediations streamed online. Recently Karen Casey, who is one of many artists who fluidly traverse media platforms, invited me to create a live collaborative work for her Global Mind Project, 2010. (I will discuss this in the following chapter with figures). Mark B. Hanson calls “The fluid use across technologies bi-directional and inter-changeable”.

The international focus through exhibitions that have put performance art documentation, performative photographs and videos squarely on the international art agenda may now, in light of international attention, be able to adjust their position regarding being there, remediation, liveness, and documentation. Anne Marsh invited my response to a video I found hidden away in my archives. We had it restored and from an unplayable format my 1980, She Had Long Golden Hair performance at the Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide was now viewable. Time had reinvigorated this work by sticking together parts of the tape and deleting others. What was viewable was a mesmerizing performance edited randomly, over time. Word length prohibits the inclusion here however excerpts can be read in the Chapter One Appendix.

Certainly I do not think that a live performance can be reproduced but the value and impact of documentary and performances for the camera is undeniable. The influences are felt across media platforms where liveness is an embodied navigation impelled by memory and attraction. The shift from the performer’s body to the embodiment of the audience reflects twentieth century immersive cultural practice. The following chapter will discuss the role of collaboration in terms of what space, place and recurring histories impact on performance art, photography and video in both methodological and theoretical terms.
Figure 1.2. Marco Anelli, *Day 65, Marina Abramovic*, 2010, from Marina Abramovic, *The Artist is Present* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010. Permission granted by photographer, Marco Anelli ©
Figure 1. 3. Marco Anelli, *Day 68, Portrait 15*, 2010, from Marina Abramovic, *The Artist is Present* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010. Permission granted by photographer, Marco Anelli ©
Photographer: Virginia Fraser for Jill Orr. 
Jill Orr ©
Figure 1.5. Jill Orr, *Love Songs – woman*, 1991. 
Photographer: Virginia Fraser for Jill Orr. 
Jill Orr ©
Figure 1.6. Jill Orr, *Bleeding Trees*, 1979. 
Photographer Elizabeth Campbell for Jill Orr. 
Jill Orr ©
Figure 1.7. Jill Orr, *Bleeding Trees*, 1979. Photographer Elizabeth Campbell for Jill Orr. Jill Orr ©
Figure 1.8. Jill Orr, *Bleeding Trees*, 1979.
Photographer Elizabeth Campbell for Jill Orr.
Jill Orr ©
Chapter 2: Collaboration or Not? – There is no island!

Are the images documented from live performances or performances for the camera called collaborations between the photographer and myself? If not, why not?

The question above is vital in terms of my own work’s methodology, and in terms of the thirty-two photographers and videographers with whom I have worked through amicable, productive and clear engagement. Collaboration involves not only questions of authorship but also originality. Regarding this chapter specifically, the question of what impact space, place and recurring history has on the methodological and theoretical aspects of performance, photography and video in relation to collaboration? There are two aspects of collaboration that are addressed.

Firstly, collaborations that occur for the production of live events, and secondly, my work with photographers and videographers on performances for the camera. Primarily the initial imaginary work, of both live performances and performative photography, is a process that creates the image, the structural and sometimes sculptural elements that are already developed prior to any relationship with others. I must have a very clear conceptual, spatial and elemental organization before any briefing with others can be realized. This is very different to collaborations that begin from group visualization that together conceive and produce the work.

This chapter also addresses the theoretical positions that impact on performance, photography and representation, following the semiologic theory of Roland Barthes as it pertains to photography and which I link to collaboration. Roland Barthes writes “It is language that speaks, not me.”¹ The subjective positions in terms of both the act of creating a performative and documentary photograph, as well as the public reception of the artwork itself, is discussed in

---

reference to Lacan’s psychoanalytic framework on the subject and the gaze. Also referenced is the performance of gender as it pertains to the philosopher, Judith Butler who is following J.L. Austin’s theory that “to say something is to do something.”\textsuperscript{2} Butler however, argues that evolving identity is instituted through a stylised repetition of acts.\textsuperscript{3} I will begin with a historical background where authenticity, the original and the photographers’ agreement, will foreground the semiotic, psychological and philosophical perspectives.

**Collaboration Background and Methods**

By way of background, from the 1960s to the 1980s collaboration was often used as a method through which the conceptualisation, democratisation and dematerialization of the art object was achieved. As early as the Futurists around 1909, the Dadaists in the 1920s and the Situationists in the 1950s - 70s, collaborative approaches were often adopted. The question of the original is implicated in collaborative practice that can be reflected in some production practices both historically and in the current time. For example, the reproduction of Auguste Rodin’s, *Gates of Hell*, illustrates the industrial manufacture of multiple editions that were left to the French Nation after his death in 1918. This work was cast in 1978, more than sixty years after his death; and raises the question for Rosalind Krauss: “Can this be original”? Krauss’ answer is “that it is neither yes or no.”\textsuperscript{4} Are we not involved here in clinging to a culture of originals, which has no place among the reproductive mediums?\textsuperscript{5} Ultimately, Krauss alerts us to the reproduction of style that is both a signature of the artist and is reflective of the historical time of making. Style is relevant to photography as a reproductive medium as well as Rodin’s fabrication methods. It is my own particular style that I believe is evident over many years of directing photographers who record and capture my performances. It is also my own style.

\textsuperscript{5} ibid. p. 157.
that distinguishes my work from the work of my contemporaries and the work of the photographers whom I employ. I will develop this shortly. Rosalind Krauss says, “What is at stake are the historic rights of style based on a culture of originals.” Krauss emphasizes the terms authenticity, uniqueness, originality, original and singularity that depend on the originary moment of which this surface is both the empirical and semiological instance. The originary moment is a crucial counterpoint to the collaborative process, in my terms and to the issues stated by Krauss. The word, originary is a loaded term that is applied to theological, metaphysical, philosophical, psychoanalytic and scientific discourse. This is the dictionary definition of originary upon which I shall begin:

Proceeding from a person, as the inventor, maker, composer, or author and from which a copy a translation is made; the person or thing represented by a picture or a description, one who is original in his ways of thinking or acting, an idea, method or performance, in the first place, primarily, to initiate, invent, to give rise to. To originate characterized by the power of originating; creative.

Connected to the imaginary act, along with the site, conceptual research, drawing and other steps essential to making a performance occur, is the function of improvisation. Improvisation can be described as a series of movements that unfold unpredictably, driven by the moment, which I try to include within a highly planned structure so that there can be an element of surprise or something unknown to me. The images and improvisations are contained within a performance structure, which is unique to each work. The structure or organizational principles, are in place to communicate clearly to others. In this way I can be specific about the briefs required for each skill base needed. Naturally there is discussion and room to evolve creatively within each role and skill base. I am always involved directly in all aspects of the production and postproduction.

The concept of originality demonstrated by the authentic artistic signature and to a large extent, style of the artist is still necessary and sought after when art

---

7 ibid. p. 161.
becomes a marketable commodity. The origin, signature and authentication are required for the investment practices of museums, collectors and historians. The creative arts industry incorporates artistic production, that can be seen as collaboration between skilled printers, framers, founders, photographers, web site creators, writers, publishers; and the supporting services of grants and commissions and so on. Commercial art galleries, public art galleries and art teaching institutions are levers, wheels or gears of the machine. At each point when the artwork is placed in the market, a signature authenticating the source of the work is required. In this sense, co-operation and collaboration become part of the arts industry network. However this view alone does not give sufficient weight to experimental works that often use collaboration where artists come together for short-term projects. I am cognizant of both retaining authorship and fostering experimentation by assuming the role of artistic director, not unlike a film production. For example, The Crossing, created for this research and discussed in full in the following chapter, exemplifies an experimental type of collaboration

Okwui Enwezor in his essay, The Artist as Producer in Times of Crisis, 2004, reminds us of the continued relevance of Walter Benjamin’s essay, The Author as Producer in 1937.9 Benjamin poses the question, to what degree does political awareness in a work of art become a tool for the deracination of the autonomy of the work and that of the author?10 Enwezor writes that for Walter Benjamin the conditions of production in 1937 were the struggle between capitalism and socialism that was the driving force behind modern subjectivity. Enwezor sees that the spirit of activism drives some contemporary artwork.11 Enwezor argues that the anxieties that circumscribe questions concerning the authenticity of either the work of art, or the supremacy of the artist as author, are symptomatic of a cyclical crisis in modernity about the status of art to its social context and

the artist as more than an actor within the economic sphere.\textsuperscript{12} Enwezor emphasizes that this crisis has been exceptionally visible since the last decade of the twentieth century. The political climate of the current global emporium adumbrates it further.\textsuperscript{13} Okwui Enwezor categorizes two types of collaboration. The first is based on a permanent fixed group of practitioners working over a sustained period of time. Authorship represents the expression of the group rather than that of the individual artist.\textsuperscript{14} Enwezor’s second group is closer to my collaborative work where a flexible, non-permanent course of affiliation, supports collaboration on a project-by-project basis. Enwezor says that this formation can be designated as networked collectives that are far more prevalent today due to radical advances in communication technologies and globalization.\textsuperscript{15} Enwezor writes:

Though collaborative or collective work [...] in the context of visual art under which the individual artistic talent reigns such loss of singularity of the artist is much less the norm, particularly under the operative conditions of capitalism.\textsuperscript{16}

I recently collaborated with Karen Casey on the Global Mind Project - a performance at Federation Square in Melbourne in 2010.\textsuperscript{17} (See Chapter 2: Figure 2.1) along with two other collaborators, Stelarc and Domenico De Clario. We each created a work that utilized Casey’s work with software developer Harry Sekol and the neuroscience headset technology that transmits the performer’s brain waves which in turn impact on pre-programmed video images. Karen Casey and I created the video images that related to my performance. Craig Peade and Ben Cittadini were my co-performers. I did not arrange the photographic or video documentation, as that was arranged by Karen Casey, and therefore will not claim them as my own. They are not marketable works as photographic images, but remain as collaborative documents of the event for historical and promotional purposes. For visual artists who do require their work to be photographically documented, a legal

\textsuperscript{12} ibid. p.1.
\textsuperscript{13} ibid. p.1 and 2.
\textsuperscript{14} ibid. p.2.
\textsuperscript{15} ibid. p.2.
\textsuperscript{16} ibid. p. 3.
framework has been established. This is a necessary and fundamental legality that enables an artist to function through a production process and participate in market economies at the same time. It does not necessarily address the underlying anxieties of unacknowledged collaborations. I will discuss this shortly. In the mean while The Photographers Agreement is discussed below.

The Photographer’s Agreement

In a symposium on Photography, Performance and Contemporary Art, You didn’t have to be there, 2007 Rosalie Goldberg, interviews Marina Abramovic, Vanessa Beecroft and Babette Mangolte. The relevance to collaboration versus the production photographer is pertinent for Vanessa Beecroft who is from a younger generation and not part of the original 1960’s and 1970’s protestation of the live. Whilst I do find Beecroft’s ethical use of people in some of her shoots problematic, I do share her appreciation that the photographic image is an essential still form, symbolic of the performance that represents the work and its role in the art market. Beecroft works with her long-term photographer; with whom she trusts to find the essential still moment. The image that becomes the artwork itself is symbolic of the performance. Her performances involve her directing up to thirty women. Beecroft does not direct the photographer nor does she direct or edit the videos. Her documentation is completely in the hands of her production team. She talks in terms of the photographer’s agreement and not in terms of collaboration. (See Chapter 2: 2.2 and 2.3) By contrast, I am directly involved in all aspects of the production. I prefer to edit my own videos but, depending on the complexity, I may work with an editor. I also prefer to direct the stills camera, however I will elaborate on this shortly. Beecroft does do collaborations, however these tend to be with designers, make-up artists, and fashion houses such as Vogue Italia. The photographic collaboration and

19 Ibid. Fora TV.
20 Ibid. Fora TV.
21 Nick Johnston, Dare to Bare, VB interview with Nick Johnston, Culture, <www.guardian.co.uk/profile/nickjohnstone>
technical production are part of Beecroft’s production process that she formalizes with her photographer’s agreement.22

Babette Mangolte is a photographer and filmmaker, who as Rosalie Goldberg says, “is the visual historian of the 1960’s and 1970’s.”23 Mangolte filmed Marina Abramovic’s Seven Easy Pieces in 2005 at the Guggenheim Museum New York, where she restaged seminal performance works by Joseph Beuys, Vito Acconci, and her own earlier works.29 Abramovic says that she gave Mangolte “full and unrestricted reign to work instinctively because I respected Mangolte’s history of working with dancers like Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Reiner, and Simone Forti.”24 In Abramovic’s case her still images and video works are created and acknowledged as the photographers and video production teams for Marina Abramovic. The works are copyrighted in Abramovic’s name and are sold by her gallery, the Sean Kelly Gallery New York, and Lia Rumma Gallery, Milan.25 Babette Mangolte works as a photographer and filmmaker in her own name and is copyrighted accordingly; and she acknowledges her subject and their work. For Seven Easy Pieces, Ambramovic is credited as actor and Mangolte as Director.26

For my work, there are significant constraints in working with photographers using agreements similar to the model used by Babette Mangolte. This is primarily because I would have limited access to and distribution control over the images. I am constantly required to provide images for publication, sale and to utilize my own works in different ways. As early as 1978, I realized that if I did not own the copyright, I would have to request, from the owner, and pay for the images. This imbalance of power is a nightmarish scenario for an artist and completely unworkable in a commercial sense. In contrast to Babette Mangolte, I acknowledge the photographer, as Babette Mangolte acknowledges her subject.

23 ibid. Fora.TV.
24 ibid. Fora.TV.
In terms of my own work, and as mentioned above for both Vanessa Beecroft and Marina Abramovic, the photographic images and video are exhibited and sold through the commercial gallery system. The photographic and video representation becomes the artwork that operates in cultural, institutional and commercial realms, as the work enunciates itself each time it is viewed, in Barthes’ terms, without the author. However in practical terms, the demand for authorship and an authentic signature by cultural institutions and the economy, signature and authorship remain the desired attribute. For example, the photograph becomes the art object, which is distributed and sold, satisfying the desire, and demand of the market but the trace of the author is paramount because the signature authenticates the work and makes it desirable. That is why the photographer’s agreement is so important to ensure that the work can authentically, without dispute, participate economically and freely assign the originary signature trace to the artwork.

The works most frequently published are the performances that I do for the camera. There is no surprise in this because the image is established and performed for the camera, which enables an aesthetic control and concept unique to each performative photograph. I do want to leave something behind which is very different to undocumented live performance works lost in time and fluid collaborations that are the artworks themselves like the Global Mind Project.

**Performances for the Camera – The Practicalities of Collaborative Relationships with Photographers**

The reason I do not often take the images myself is because frequently the situation makes it impossible. For example, *The Southern Cross – to bear and behold*, (See Chapter 5: Figures 5.5 to 5.8.) produced as part of this research, is an image of a burning umbrella taken in a salt lake where just below the surface is dense sulphuric mud. I also need to perform with my whole body, which is restricted by release cables. Most importantly however I enter into the performance mode that is a deep focus which enables a transformation from the
pedestrian mode of daily expression into an open and intuitive flow that is responding to the emergence of another performance self in relation to the site and the performance task I have set myself. The photographs capture the body in this state of absorption or meditation that is read by viewers through body language, gesture and an energetic emission that subtly changes the physical appearance of the body. A clear example of this physical change is evident in the Vision photographic series (See Chapter 5: Figures 5.13 to 5.17). These portraits, also produced for this research, show that the physical holding of the body is markedly different between the eyes open and the eyes closed portraits. In this sense the body becomes the canvas through which it can express emotion as a psychophysical language.

The photographs that come from the performative state are very different to domestic photographs where the subject “smiles” for the camera. I don’t have any photographs of myself that have been taken posing in a family gathering or at a party that carries the same performative depth and communication as those taken whilst in performance mode. It is for this reason that I prefer to employ photographers to capture these moments and click the work into existence. Each photographer is briefed with drawings, sometimes models, storyboards and much discussion prior to the shoot. Each photographer also enters a concentrated mode where ultimately the communication takes the form, to use J.L. Austin’s term, from a slightly different perspective, “saying something is doing something.” However it may be better understood in reverse where “to do something is to say something”, or perhaps it is “actions that speak.” This is the communication between the photographer and myself that in turn carries the performance image across into the symbolic as a photograph. I will shortly refer to Roland Barthes, Judith Butler, Jacques Lacan and Anne Marsh to develop this further.

In practical terms, I prefer the transparency, which is supported in Australian Copyright Law, 2006, which states:

Where the author of the work in the case of a photographer, is the photographer, except when the photographer has been commissioned to take the photograph. In producing a photograph where two people creatively contribute to the image, the Copyright law calls this authorship as impossible to prove.\textsuperscript{28}

The photographer and I understand, through discussion and signed agreement that their employment by me, to photograph my performance work, will be credited as “the photographer for Jill Orr” and the copyright is assigned to “Jill Orr©”. Here the definition of creative is acknowledged as both my own originating and performed material, as well as photographer’s instinctive, technical and professional expertise in the moment of taking the photograph. I do not work with photographers who have no instinct or who have little understanding of the technical requirements of photography. My originating material and immaterial processes however have already invested the image itself in readiness for the photographic and video mediums. The photographer is, in a sense, remediating the image from life into reproducible formats. It is then again remediated through the printing process onto photographic paper or into other digital formats. In terms of collaboration, the actual moment of taking and performing for a photographic and video work, the synergy that occurs between the photographer and myself, is collaborative.

The photographers I have worked with are not people with whom I have worked over a long period of time. I have a game with myself that if my concept, direction and performance for the camera are clear, there should be a signature style, as alerted to earlier. Although the works over many years have embraced many varied themes and been situated in many different sites, I look for a site that along with its natural, historic and cultural implications has a space that can frame the performance action. This is often very simple, for example, my rule of three, being sky, land and body. Actually it is a classical triangle, or variations on that, which can be clearly framed in camera. There is always an aesthetic consideration that incorporates costume, colour, shape and form, light, drama and perspective in all meanings of the term. This is not unlike the compositional awareness of a painter. In this way I can direct the photographer in all aspects of

the image and I know, through my body in performance mode, what the camera will capture. There are often surprises in the detail that the photographer captures but I think that can also be attributed to the photographic medium itself. In these photo-shoots, the photographer and I are both focused together, one in the act of performance and the other in the act of photographing. We are joined in a particular moment in time that will never be repeated. It is the aesthetic principals that may emerge over time regardless of who brings the image to life as a photograph that could be named a Jill Orr work.

I cannot speak from the photographer's perspective so Annie Wilson and Paul Batt are two photographers with whom I have not worked who have answered my questions regarding their experience of collaboration. Their full answers can be read in the Appendix.29 Both responses have mirrored many of my own thoughts regarding the photographic collaboration. Acknowledgement is not necessarily a practice done by many artists but I always do. I wish to thank Annie Wilson and Paul Batt for their insightful responses and acknowledge that the act of photographing my performances, live or for the camera is a collaborative one.

The distinction between what is my work and what is the photographer’s is identified by a clear demarcation of the performance space and time. Anyone who is photographed within the performance space, including the physical traces left behind, is part of the work being photographed. There is a natural beginning and end to such photo-shoots because, unlike a live performance, the artist and photographer can speak, confirming positions and ensuring that the framing and lighting etc. is correct. The artist and photographer can respond to the site and each other. This is a creative and collaborative moment where the shared energetic engagement is a communication between the performer and the photographer. This is the moment when we are acting instinctively together. The images are performed and then it is over. If the photographer is inspired to film me, in a work where they have directed me to perform their own idea, that is their work and their creative inclination. In summary, the collaboration between the photographer and myself occurs when my preparation has come

29 Questions for photographers – See full transcript in the Chapter 2: appendix.
together and the image is actually performed and simultaneously clicked into photographic existence. This short, essential and very concentrated moment of creative collaboration is better acknowledged by the contractual agreement. There is always clarity and choice in this method.

**Theoretically Speaking**

Roland Barthes’ semiotic theory focuses on a structured system of signs, specifically photographs as social phenomena. Roland Barthes writes:

> Semiology therefore aims to take in any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all these, which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: these constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification.

Barthes also argues that it is true that objects, images and patterns of behaviour can signify, and do so on a large scale, but never autonomously; every semiological system has its linguistic admixture. In applying Barthes’ terms, it is clear that we are not on an island, isolated from life and influence. From the act of creating an image, to its placement and engagement in public spheres, the impacts from and on the image operate multi-directionally, across cultural representations, media platforms, individual subjectivities and time. The act of engagement with the work could be called a socio-cultural collaboration through signs, symbols and codes pertinent to and dependent on languages of signification for their understanding, reception and association. An artwork participates in the economy of signs by building into its material ideology, a language that can transcend the artist. For Barthes:

> Semiology is perhaps destined to be absorbed into a trans-linguistics, where the materials of which may be myth, narrative or journalism or on the other hand objects of our civilization in so far as they are spoken (through press, prospectus, interview, conversation and perhaps even inner language, which is ruled by the laws of imagination).

---

32 ibid. p. 2.
The processes of engagement are fluid and evolve over space, time and cultural circulation. From Roland Barthes’ perspective, in his influential essay, *The Death of the Author*, 1968, it is the language, which speaks, not the author. Barthes writes: Language acts and performs, not "me." In these terms, it is the language of the performance body that “speaks” in both the live event and becomes symbolized through remediated forms. If by some synchronicity, the work becomes part of the public imaginary, it continues to do the task of a work of art, that is, it continues to speak. For Roland Barthes the relationship between object, image and time is “that-has-been.” But as Anne Marsh writes:

Photography is a conceptual apparatus that allows multiple reproductions of identities: it is a kind of theatre of simulacra, a life always deferred and deferring. What is actually happening in the photograph is a simulacrum, a copy of something that can never be repeated – it is useless to speak of the original photograph, in the same way, as it is uninformative to speak of the original performance. Photography may act as a pure cutting device to capture a slice of time but that moment is always past...even staged photographs which are directed by the photographer cannot be repeated accurately.

The original moments are unrepeatable and unique and so is the moment of taking a photograph which as Marsh has stated above, is a slice of time that is always past and for Barthes that-has-been. Anne Marsh however, through reference to Barthes, indicates:

The idea that one makes oneself into an image via the look and at the same time becomes an image-object for the other forecloses on an authentic index. This authenticity is always already in question as soon as the image is made– in the instantaneous click of the shutter.

This is a part of the issue that Roland Barthes explains:


As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into its own death, writing begins. The sense of this phenomenon, however, has varied; in ethnographic societies where the responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator whose performance – the mastery of the narrative code – may possibly be admired but never his genius.\(^{37}\)

But when authenticity is foreclosed in Marsh’s terms, via the look of making oneself into an image there are other disciplines at work that I will address shortly. At this point Anne Marsh complicates the notion of authenticity further when she says:

The concept of the index, after structuralism, was recognized as a mythology. Every level was already written. There was no authenticity. On one level this could be interpreted as the downfall of rational order and the eclipse of meaning; on another level the idea that there was no authenticity meant that there was no final authority; no real truth. The greatest insight of post-structuralism was fundamentally, its relativity. Where the structuralists looked for meaning behind the text, the post-structuralists plotted maps, diagrams, possibilities of other meanings and unspoken voices. Thus identities and histories could be performed and the camera was employed to represent the fragmentation of identities, the doubling and fracturing made possible by the camera’s apparatus.\(^{38}\)

Therefore at this point collaboration is an already fractured relation between an already doubled self-performing other(s) who is being photographed by another doubled self. I will take this notion further shortly. The photographer is also fractured not only by the Lacanian image screen, discussed in the previous chapter, but whose vision is physically screened and framed through the camera body. Barthes asks the question who is speaking? In his discussion about Balzac’s story describing the castrati, Sarrasine, Barthes writes:

Is it the Sarrasine? Is it Balzac? The individual furnished by his personal experience with a philosophy of Woman? Is it Balzac professing “literary” ideas on


femininity? Is it universal wisdom? Romantic psychology? We shall never know for the good reason that writing is the destruction of voice, of every point of origin. Writing is never neutral where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.39

Barthes’ example of the identity of Sarrasine is a very clear illustration of the role of context, history and changing modes of perception. In each question that Barthes asks, the points of solid definition become slippery and less defined as one perspective is seen in relation to another. In other words, between the book's cover lies nuance. In relation to collaboration, this world of relativity whose relationship is fluid and full of possibility, brings the past to the present and the present to the past; it is impossible to detach one time, context or history from another. This phenomenology is carried into the collaborative exchange.

As a communicative method, to see and to be seen, to feel and be felt, hear and be heard, are some of the qualities that contribute to a two-way interaction without which there is no dialogue nor is there a collaboration. The performance state reflects this. The performance can also be described as a state of being that is neither “I” nor “me” but it is other – the performative other. I will elaborate on this shortly but for this moment, in terms of the artwork as live, photographed or videoed and I add, collaboratively received, Barthes states:

The enunciation where every text is eternally written in the here and now – the act of performing. Enunciation has no other content than the act by which it is uttered.40

The work in each performance state from the imagined moment, and through the consequent mediations is an enunciation of the symbolic as spoken through the act of performance, in collaboration and communication with those beholding – the viewer.


Who is Speaking? Who is speaking to whom?

The ground is not yet clear between the act of performing as both the object/subject/ self/ I/ other and the implications of the performance mode in relation to the photographer. It could be seen that the photographer and I are bound in relation to each other as Other. Jacques Lacan writes in psychoanalytic terms regarding the eye and the gaze “In the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture.”

Lacan writes, the picture is in my eye, But I am in the picture. Lacan suggests that through the mediation of masks, the human subject of desire that is the essence of man is not unlike the animal, entirely caught up in this imaginary capture. Lacan writes that “man maps himself in so far as he isolates the function of the screen and plays with it”. The screen then is the locus of mediation and the site of collaboration. The camera itself also becomes a physical screen fragmenting the relationship, which Anne Marsh reads as the structural paradigms framing the camera as a weapon. Marsh also argues that “this framing forecloses on the relationship between desire, memory and history”. The relationship between the viewer and the photographic image and, I suggest, a live performance, is confounded or doubled because for Lacan it is important to understand that the eye and the gaze, although split, are also part of the same person. That applies to both the audience, the photographer in the act of

---

42 ibid. p. 106.
43 ibid. p. 106.
44 ibid. p. 106.
photographing, as well as the subject who is seen performing the image. In a phenomenological sense, as the performer, part of the mind is aware of what is being presented as if one is standing above oneself observing the other self below, absorbed in the task of performance. Jacques Lacan writes:

   For my part, I set out from the fact that there is something that establishes a fracture, a bi-partition, a splitting of the being to which the being accommodates itself, even in the natural world.\footnote{Jacques Lacan, The Four Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI, Jacques-Alain Miller (Ed.) Translated by Alan Sheridan, Norton, USA, 1981, reissued 11998. p.107.}

Marsh writes “that for Lacan, the subject is in the position of doubling, as both seer and seen (looker and watched) and pictured and picturing. The subject is both the subject and the object of the gaze”.\footnote{Anne Marsh, The Darkroom: Photography and the Theatre of Desire, Macmillan, Melbourne Australia, 2003. p. 182.} This in a sense verifies what I experience whilst in the performance mode. On my own work Marsh writes:

   That much of Orr’s work is collaboration between the artist and her photographers… where the camera acts like a mirror in which the artist performs for an imaginary Other and the narcissistic quality of the image is exemplified.\footnote{Ibid. p. 87}

I do think that Marsh’s comment is partly correct but which split or double do I fall in love with, all of them? None of them? They are passing fragments of conjured selves that have little lasting attachment beyond creating the work. They reside in the space of the artwork. In this complex schema, the performer and photographer are both reflected and visualized through the image screen of each other’s subjectivity during the photographic process. Therefore when Marsh argues that Lacan’s insistence that the ego is not a fixed identity and that in fact, there exist many identities within the one subject, opens the door toward a much richer analysis of notions of self and subjecthood.\footnote{Ibid. p. 87}

Marsh writes:

   In other words, subjectivity is produced through the signifier, languages and modes of culture that pre-exist the subject. The subject enters into symbolic codes
that already exist to provide the means by which the subject will come into being, existence, and identity. Photography’s promise to capture the Other in front of the camera lens is what makes the medium of photography compelling for all of those concerned in the picture making process.\textsuperscript{49}

These interrelations are further played out when desire is taken into account. Lacan writes that human desire finds meaning in the desire of the other, not so much because the other holds the key to the object desired as because the first object of desire is to be recognized by the other.\textsuperscript{50} The material desire in the case of a photo-shoot is driven by the need to create performative images, and in this sense, both performer and photographer create a collaborative dance between the eye, the gaze and the camera apparatus to fulfil the desire to create images. The act of photographing for the photographers, Annie Wilson and Paul Batt demonstrate a different type of double focus. On a practical level, the double or split state occurs simultaneously as they focus both on taking the image and fulfilling their collaborative/employment requirements. Who is speaking/facing/beholding/being seen, when we are all operating under the same Lacanian psychoanalytic structure but with different “symptoms”? This is the complex territory that the law, as previously noted, describes “as impossible to know.”

Lacan argues that the efficacy of the unconscious does not cease in the waking state...the unconscious leaves none of our actions outside its field. For Lacan:

\begin{quote}
In our relation to things in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage and is always to some degree eluded in it—that is what we call the gaze.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

The gaze can be seen as culture through which identification is realized. In terms of a photographic collaboration it is perhaps better articulated through Lacan who writes:

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
It is not a question of knowing whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms
to what I am, but rather of knowing whether I am the same as that of which I
speak. (not thought). If I dedicate myself to becoming what I am, to coming into
being, I cannot doubt that even if I lose myself in the process, I am in that
process.52

Lacan’s notion of the process of coming into being could be descriptive of the
performative mode where the difference between knowing whether “I” am the
same as that which “I” speak or act, is separated from but located in the place
where “I” am situated. The process of separation from knowing and being opens
the possibility of acting (not in the theatrical sense but in the act of doing) the
image to be seen that is captured photographically. In Lacan’s words:

What one ought to say is: I am not wherever I am the plaything of my thought; I
think of what I am where I do not think to think. This two sided mystery is linked
to the fact that the truth can be evoked only in that dimension of alibi in which all
“realism” in creative works takes its virtue from metonymy; it is likewise linked to
this other fact that we accede to meaning only through the double twist of
metaphor...the Saussurian algorithm are not on the same level and man only
deludes himself when he believes his true place is at their axis, which is no-
where.53

The symptom is a metaphor and desire is metonymy.54

Metaphor and metonymy are both the artist and viewer’s tools for negotiating a
photograph, painting or performance because it is in the evocation of symbol
and resistance to a fixed identity that opens a dialogue with the Other. Whether
that be driven by unattainable desire through the impossible lack, that is both
longed for, traumatic and unspeakable. This is the separation that occurs
through our entrance into language, which is the trauma of Lacan’s Real (a
definition is found in the Chapter 2 appendix). In this sense, the Real can be felt
everywhere and nowhere. Freud says:

Is what thinks in my place then, another I?
Woe es war, soll ich werden.
(I must come to the place where that was).55

---

52 ibid. p. 182.
53 ibid. p. 183.
54 ibid. p. 193.
55 ibid. p. 189.
Of course I must come to the place where that was, because it is the site of the imaginative, the symbolic and the unspeakable. This is the place for me called art that through its transformative power can negotiate in collaboration and communication with others something that is larger than any individual self and yet seated within selves. Lacan assists here:

Who, then, is this other to whom I am more attached than to myself? Since, at the heart of my assent to my own identity it is still he who agitates me? His presence can be understood only at the second degree of otherness, which already places him in the position of mediating between me and the double of myself, as it were my counter point. If I have said that the unconscious is the discourse of the Other (with a capital O), it is in order to indicate the beyond in which the recognition of desire is bound up with the desire for recognition. In other words, this other is the Other that even in my lie invokes as a guarantor of the truth in which it subsists. By which we can also see that it is with the appearance of language the dimension of truth emerges.\(^{56}\)

I have performed double, triple and multiple selves in works like *Raising the Spirits*, 1994, *The Marriage of the Bride to Art* 1994 (See chapter 2, Figures 2.4 and 2.5) and *Love Songs*, 1991 (See Chapter 1: Figures 1.4 to 1.5). More specifically, these works on gender identity describe an ever widening space where the performative others can be as many or few as is imagined. They sit within the space of the binary opposition that could be aspects of self/other, male/female, body/spirit, nature/culture. Between each definitive binary is a place that can be vast and as populated as the imagination can visualize. These works clearly showed me that identity is not fixed and is as varied as any fleeting visualization or performed act. More recently, particularly in relation to *The Crossing*, 2007 (See Chapter 3 Figures), the imagined identities or characters I have performed myself have given way to an actual engagement with others as co-performers. That creates an even more complex picture in terms of collaboration that I will address in the following chapter. I now turn my attention to other fields to assist in the question of who is speaking and in turn the relation to the space and place created through performance and collaboration.

---

\(^{56}\) ibid. p. 190.
Philosophically Speaking

I have drawn on Judith Butler to establish some crucial themes that are integral to understanding performativity and gender in relation to collaboration, performance and performative photography. Judith Butler establishes in the 1999 preface for her book, *Gender Trouble* a definition of performativity that was inspired by her reading of Jacques Derrida’s reading of Kafka, *Before the Law*. Butler writes:

> There the one who waits for the law, sits before the law, [and] attributes a certain force to the law for which one waits. The anticipation of an authoritative disclosure of meaning is the means by which that authority is attributed and installed: the anticipation conjures its subject.\(^{57}\)

Butler asks whether we do not labour under a similar expectation concerning gender; that it operates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates.\(^{58}\) Butler says that “performativity is not a singular act, but a representation and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood in part as a culturally sustained temporal duration.”\(^{59}\) In other words Butler writes:

> The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of facts, posited through the gendered stylisation of the body.\(^{60}\)

In the sense that we are not an island, but rather we operate and identify within and against culture and society that is the background or environment within which gender is performed. For Butler, “what we take for granted to be an internal feature of ourselves, is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts; at an extreme – an hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures”.\(^{61}\) Judith Butler’s own activism inspired her writing, where the notion

---


\(^{58}\) ibid. p. xv.

\(^{59}\) ibid. p. xv.

\(^{60}\) ibid. p. xv.

\(^{61}\) ibid. p. xv.
of universality becomes a category of political agency, not just in exclusive negative and exclusionary terms but also as Butler states:

Through activism I came to understand how the assertion of universality can be problematic and performative, conjuring a reality that does not yet exist and holding out the possibility for a convergence of cultural horizons that have not yet met. Thus I arrived at a second view of universality in which it is defined as a future – oriented labour of cultural translation.62

This labour of cultural translation carries further implications for the expression of gendered identity. Judith Butler relates this to style. Butler writes:

Style is not one that we unilaterally chose or control with the purposes we consciously intend and that neither grammar nor style are politically neutral.63

Further to this Judith Butler says that “learning the rules that govern intelligible speech is an inculcation into normalized language where the price of not conforming is loss of intelligibility itself.”64 Importantly for the purposes of performativity and the complex relationship we each have towards our individual and collective socialization, Butler describes the distinction between subversive and un-subversive where prescriptive judgements are made based on description. For Butler such judgements cannot be made out of context but the context also changes over time and therefore the judgement is not enduring. Judith Butler writes:

Just as metaphors lose their metaphoricity as they congeal through time into concepts, so subversive performances always run the risk of becoming deadening clichés through their repetition and most importantly, through their repetition within commodity culture where subversion carries value. The effort to name criterion for subversiveness will always fail and ought to.65

One can see the failing of judgement as fixed and singular from the enlightened perspective of history where value judgements regarding appropriate, normative gendered behaviours have changed over time. In the developed

---

62 ibid. p. xviii.
63 ibid. p. xviii.
64 ibid. p. xviii.
65 ibid. p. xvi.
Western world not only has the role of women changed but also what is deemed, in principal, as acceptable towards race, sexual preference and religion. Amidst the background of subversive and un-subversive gendered performance is the role of the psyche. Significantly Judith Butler thinks that it is a theoretical mistake to take the “internality” of the psychic world for granted. Butler argues:

That certain features of the world, including people we know and lose, do become “internal” features of the self, but they are transformed through that internalisation, and that inner world, as the Kleinians call it, is constituted precisely as a consequence of the interiorisations that a psyche performs. This suggests that there may be a theory of performativity at work that calls for greater exploration.66

In these terms that the subject enacts an embodied and gendered performance that is not only in an evolving relationship with society, where style and language are crucial for effective agency. The psychic world also carries within it internalised “features of the world including people we know and lose” rendering gendered performativity as a dual act between the internal and external aspects of self. Butler makes another move that has significance to collaboration and more broadly the following chapters. Judith Butler’s view of whether the theory of performativity is transposable into race. Butler writes:

That no single account of construction will do and that these categories always work as a background for one another and they often find their most powerful articulation through one another. Thus the sexualization of racial gender norms calls to be read through multiple lenses at once, and the analysis surely illuminates the limits of gender as an exclusive category of analysis.67

As the construction of gender, identity and race are read in relation to one another where multiple lenses have simultaneous importance and are read together, the binary structures of categorization have given way to a much more inclusive and reflexive articulation where convenient and simplistic descriptions and judgements become redundant or at least questionable. Butler writes that “one is not simply a body, but in some very key sense, one does one’s body and, indeed, one does one’s body differently from one’s contemporaries and from

---

66 Ibid. p. xv.
67 Ibid. p. xvi.
one’s embodied predecessors and successors as well”. 68 The question, “Who is speaking?” for Butler is better articulated as, the “I” that is its body is, of necessity, a mode of embodying, and the “what” that it embodies is possibilities. For Butler, in other words, the body is a historical situation, as Simone de Beauvoir has claimed, and is a manner of doing, dramatizing and reproducing a historical situation. 69 For Butler, “there is neither an essence that gender expresses or externalises nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact.” 70 The various acts of gender create the idea of gender and without those acts there would be no gender at all. Gender is thus a construction that regularly conceals its genesis. 71 The attributes that communication needs for a performative act to succeed is both a performing body and a listening/viewing body. Butler sees that acts are a shared experience and collective action. 72 In this sense, the occupation of and interrelation with multiple subject positions is collaboration.

In conclusion

Regarding my performance methodology the performance, live or for the camera, is an interaction between the body and the site that are completed together as the artwork. The photographic image is created from a collaborative act with the photographer for the production of the artwork. By working in this way I am able to govern the aesthetic style of the images through all aspects of their creation and production including printing, publication, installation and exhibition of the work. There are also acts of collaboration with other aspects of the industry. The acknowledgement of the photographer in the production of the work, by the Photographer’s Agreement, enables a clear unfettered place in cultural production and history.

---

69 Ibid. p. 156.
70 Ibid. p. 157.
71 Ibid. p. 157.
72 Ibid. p. 160.
Theoretically speaking the artwork live or remediated is symbolic within the complex relations that are engaged through cultural, historical and subjective reflexivity held within the eye and the gaze that operates in our psychologic and scopic fields of representation. In this way the space to act, in art through collaboration embraces the recurring histories of individual psychic and performative cultural interdependence. The exciting aspect of new collaborative practices is that they open dialogue through different participatory methods of engagement. Collaboration for a work’s production and as experimental artworks are vital ways to address many urgent issues of the twenty-first century by enabling multiple perspectives to be present, with agency, through the prism of art.

The following chapter addresses *The Crossing*, which is collaborative in its nature and structurally enables space for different voices to participate within the one field. The site is central to the multiple relations that come from and into it where recurring histories that impact on the performative present are visualised.
Figure 2.2. Vanessa Beecroft, VB 016.NT, 2008. Digital C-print, 229 x 177cm. Edition of 6. Vanessa Beecroft ©
Figure 2.4. Jill Orr, *Marriage of the Bride to Art*, 1994. Photographer: Antonia Chaffey for Jill Orr ©
Chapter 3: The Crossing

The collaborative performance event, *The Crossing*, 2007, is the first output for this research. It is a further complication through performative communication that was addressed in the previous chapter. In this work the agency of the Other occurs through the involvement of people from different ethnicities, ages, histories, and spiritual expression. The uniting factor is their relation and/or non-relation to the Murray River in Mildura on the site of Lock Island. Dance, music and performative gesture are the expressive media. *The Crossing* involved the local Indigenous community, six other performers with music and documentation crew. The full titles and credits are included in the Appendix.

What space, place and recurring history can be expressed through performance that enables individual agency to exist simultaneously within the same field? This question directly concerns this work. Integral to *The Crossing* is an acknowledgement of Indigenous Australians, whose relation to country is central to any notion of land, place and Australian history. Consequently the question of representation is very sensitive requiring extreme care to ensure each collaborative partner, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, is portrayed with agency and credit. This chapter outlines how this was achieved amongst the practical and theoretical complexities of representation, Indigenous politics, ethics, post-colonial theorists and perceptions of the Other. *The Crossing* resides within binary oppositional structures that are opened to reveal the vast field in-between. Here non-productive binaries become a fluid evolving space where the oppositions dissolve or lessen, through interaction. Black and white, past and present, place and no-place, culture and nature, self and other have been thrown into a performative mix where together they created another space. To do this, in artistic terms, I created a performance structure that can hold multi-perspectives and identities together as both separate and interrelated through the fact of being there in the ritual of performance time. Janine Burke has coined the term, culture as nature, where the binary can be viewed as one field that contains, rather that separates, oppositions.
Janine Burke writes:

Traditionally nature and culture have been seen in opposition to one another. Nature has been conceived either as “a passive inert, ahistorical burden...or else as a romanticised refuge or haven from the cultural.” But on our rapidly changing environmentally challenged planet, it’s vital to rethink nature’s status and as Elizabeth Grosz writes, “to allow it to account for the very inception of culture itself.”

This is an in-between space where identity through place, culture, heritage and spirituality bring together an amalgam of others, not competing to be seen but rather taking their space fully with each other. Peggy Phalen suggests that:

Identity cannot reside in the name you can say or the body you see, your own or you mothers. Identity emerges in the failure of the body to express being fully and the failure of the signifier to convey meaning exactly. Identity is perceivable only through a relation to another, which is to say, it is a form of both resisting and claiming the other, declaring the boundary where the self diverges from and merges with the other. In that declaration of identity and identification there is always loss. The loss of not being the other and yet dependent on that other for self-seeing and self-being.

In this sense we are inter-dependent but separate and yet we require self-reflection through the gaze of the Other to form individual identification. Where the Other is either invisible, under-represented, or in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s terms, a subaltern, identity and representation can become troubled. The question posed by Gayatri Spivak in 1988 “Can the subaltern speak?” is an analysis of colonial power structures that is partly based on her criticism of French intellectuals whose construction of power and desire is based on the imagination of the unnamed subject of the Other of Europe.

Spivak alerts her readers, not only the French intellectuals, to identify their own position as writers. In this vein, my own drive to create *The Crossing*, is a need to untangle the psychology of colonialism, racism and my own role as an artist.

engaged with relations to land and environment. I have opened myself to the voices of others who contribute to this complex tapestry of past, present and future possibilities that must, in the first instance, be imagined. Gayatri Spivak has reminded me of my own experience whilst living in Amsterdam in the early 1980s, where international feminist conferences were attended by women from Third World Countries. They could not consider dialogue about gender theories that were a product of privileged Western democracies because their own sisters were struggling to survive and feed their children. This experience alerted me to the fact that one cannot speak for another. However one can speak with another thereby creating a conversation where one speaks and the other listens and vice versa. Gayatri Spivak writes:

The silent, silenced centre, of the circuit that is marked out by epistemic violence where men and women are among the illiterate peasantry, the tribal and the lowest strata of urban sub-proletriate.4

Spivak argues that the problem is that the subject’s itinerary has not been traced so as to offer an object of seduction to the representing intellectual. With what voice-consciousness of the people can the subaltern speak?5 For Spivak:

The question of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of sexual division of labour, for both of which there is “evidence”, is rather that, both as object of colonialis historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the shadow.6

In the contemporary Australian context, Indigenous Australians since the 1970s have fought tirelessly for self-representation. Through their own voices, which are many and varied, they have succeeded in increasing number to regain their land rights that were taken in the colonizing process. To gain legal recognition each separate Indigenous community has produced proof of a continuous cultural and spiritual relationship to their tribal land. These land claims continue. Legal protection of Indigenous cultural heritage and practice enables governance of their own

4 ibid. p. 25.
5 ibid. p. 27.
6 ibid. p. 28.
representation that in relation to the collaboration for *The Crossing*, I required ethics clearance and agreements that ensured Indigenous cultural protection. Equality and respect is the basis for any engagement. In 1967 W.E. Stanner wrote that “The lack of acknowledgement of Indigenous Australians was The Great Australian Silence”.7 This is thankfully over. However, there are still grave inequalities and the impacts of inter-generational trauma caused by epistemic violence still makes its presence felt. Gayatri Spivak defines epistemic violence as “when the subaltern is silenced by both the colonial and indigenous patriarchal power.”8 Already within this formulation there are two distinct binaries at work. One being racial the other being gender. *The Crossing* in these terms is an alternative feminised version of settlement, expressed largely through a female perspective. This aspect of the work is not the driving force, however, when researching suitable characters to represent historical connections between the settlers and the Indigenous population, the bush nurse and colonial woman and her children as historically under-represented, were ideal. I will develop the history and actual performance discussion later in the chapter. By way of another perspective, Leigh Astbury proposes:

> In the representation of race, it is easier to recognise blackness as essentially a politically and culturally constructed category than it is to conceive of whiteness in similar terms. Within the now familiar discourses of post-colonialism, black people are customarily positioned as Other in relation to which colonising white people define their sense of self and identity. Through the process by which whites seek to establish the stereotypical difference of the Other, black people are invariably marked as black, that is, as being coloured as distinct from their skin colour being considered neutral or of no importance. This site of difference is equally a site of power... Could it be as Richard Dyer has recently suggested, that the power of whiteness in contemporary society has habitually passed itself off as being embodied in the normal, as opposed to the superior? Because of its seeming invisibility, whiteness is not easily recognisable as a historically and culturally constructed category. Dyer offers the hypothesis that this “property of whiteness, to be everything and nothing, is the source of its representational power.”

---

Leigh Astbury is writing from an Australian perspective where whiteness represents the majority of the population. Issues of equality for women, Indigenous people and awareness of the environment were historically invisible in Australian consciousness until relatively recent times. By joining these together as invisible it may be suggested that the essentialist paradigm of nature verses culture is evoked. But this grouping is problematic because awareness is an evolving process where many gains and many blind spots often occur in the function of representation itself.\(^\text{10}\) Peggy Phalen writes:

> Representation follows two laws: it always conveys more that it intends; and it is never totalising. The “excess” meaning conveyed by representation produces ruptures and gaps; it fails to reproduce reality exactly. Precisely because of representation’s supplemental excess, representation can produce psychic resistance and, possibly political change (although rarely in the cause and effect way that cultural critics on the Left and Right often assume).\(^\text{11}\)

For Peggy Phalen, the political efficacy of visible representation is based on the belief that representations can be treated as “real truths” and that greater visibility of the under-represented leads to enhanced political power.\(^\text{12}\). Peggy Phalen writes that:

> Insufficient understanding of the relationship between visibility, power, identity and liberation has led both the conservatives, who want power for themselves and the progressives, to share this power with others, to mistake the relation between the real and representational.\(^\text{13}\)

Judith Butler points out that the confusion between the real and representation occurs because:

> The real is positioned both before and after its representation; and representation becomes a moment of the reproduction and consolidation of the real. The real is read through representation and representation is read through the real.\(^\text{14}\)


\(^{11}\) ibid. p. 2.

\(^{12}\) ibid. p. 2.

\(^{13}\) ibid. p. 2.

The real in Phalen’s terms is actual, not imagined, factual, where representation is symbolic. The same use of the real is used by Judith Butler; however, she positions her observation of the real, as actual, factual before any symbolic representation but she also includes the real after representation has occurred. In Butler’s terms, the impact on the real before and after representation is an evolution of influence. The real, as actual and not imagined is different to “the Real” which is a psychoanalytic term initiated by Jacques Lacan, that I will develop later. A definition of both “the real” and “the Real” is in the Appendix. (p.143.)

*The Crossing* is an amalgam of actions that are inevitably implicated in the impossibility of full presence and incomplete representation. The event enabled both sound and silence, presence and absence, real and theatrical, association and dissociation, performance and ritual as a fleeting moment of coming together. Ultimately as a live performance *The Crossing* cannot assure a reproduction of the Other or the Same because whose other is Other in the multi-faceted meeting across ethnicities, time and cultures? This is the space where multiplicities reign. Peggy Phalen writes that performance, insofar as it can be defined as representation without reproduction, can be seen as a model for another representational economy, one in which the reproduction of the Other as the Same is not assured.\(^{15}\) Phalen writes:

The relationship between the real and the representational, between the looker and the given to be seen, is a version of the relation between the self and the other. Cultural theory has thus far left unexamined the connection between the psychic theory of the relationship between the self and the other and the political and epistemological contours of that encounter. The relationship between self and other is a marked one, which is to say, it is unequal. It is alluring and violent because it touches the paradoxical nature of psychic desire; the always already encounter nonetheless summons the hope of reciprocity and equality; the failure of this hope produces violence, aggressivity, dissent. The combination of psychic hope and political-historical inequality makes the contemporary encounter between self and other a meeting of profound romance and deep violence.\(^{16}\)


\(^{16}\) Ibid. p. 4.
Peggy Phalen’s comments above are particularly pertinent for *The Crossing* where the scene of convergence, the *Big Dance*, is a meeting of improvisation and ritual where epistemic violence is both real and imagined, romantic and violent. I will elaborate later in this chapter. In Phalen’s terms “the process of self-identity is a leap into a narrative that employs seeing as a way of knowing”. This work is an encounter with the non-material, the unseen, the felt and the unspoken – that which lies outside the representational frame but requires a witness, not only to see but to feel. Julia Kristeva phrases this as memory, sight and love that all require a witness, real or imagined. *The Crossing* is not concerned with visibility politics where visibility of the same minority group, be it of race, gender, sexuality, class or religion is represented as a group to be seen by others. Nor is the work primarily concerned with inclusive representation – although the latter became important in recognising that an investigation of site must incorporate as many as was practical who had relationships to that site. The work’s focus was more experimental. What could happen when people with conflicting histories and belief systems came together and expressed relationships about the site, and by implication each other, in performance? Was it possible to create an experience for both performers and audiences, of an active and positive engagement through and with recognition of cultural difference? In this sense, as Phalen writes;

> In conflating identity politics with visibility, cultural activists and some theorists have assumed that “selves” can be adequately represented within the visual or linguistic field. The role in the signifier, the “Real – impossible”, which is unsayable, unseeable and therefore resistant to representation, is ignored in the full fling forward into representation. The danger in staking all on representation is that one gains only re-presentation.\(^{19}\)

In Phalen’s terms, the Real is a reference to the Lacanian Real however her reference above to the re-presentation of the work, lies in the documentation. The actual performance cannot be reproduced, it can be documented, from which another version of the work can be viewed. Due to the collaborative

\(^{17}\) ibid. p. 5.


nature of the work, the photographic images are for publicity purposes and not as saleable artworks. Video is the medium chosen to more fully express the work because sound, vision, movement, framing and editing, specific to the video medium, have created a different, yet related atmosphere that has been developed from the live as a version in its own right. The Crossing DVD is available in the Monash University Library.

Before addressing further perspectives by post-colonial theorists whose views on the location of culture are pertinent, I will address Judith Butler’s work, following J.L. Austin, on speech acts that was touched upon in the previous chapter. In relation to The Crossing and more broadly to the performative role of speech acts in society, Judith Butler writes:

Performative acts are forms of authoritative speech - most performatives, for instance, are statements that, in the uttering, also perform a certain action and exercise a binding power. Implicated in a network of authorization and punishment, performatives tend to include legal sentences, baptisms, inaugurations and declarations of ownership, statements that not only perform an action, but confer a binding power on the action performed.

These acts are, in context, the basis of ritual where the historical repetition of an act is divested with authority through that person of authority who can marry, incarcerate, liberate and so on. The ritual is performed by judges, celebrants, priests and police – in other words, people who act on behalf of social order. Those in authority do not act as individuals but with the authority bestowed upon them. The Crossing is a performance art ritual that resides in the symbolic with no authority to act on behalf of social order or anything else. Indigenous Ceremony is a ritual on a completely different register in that it enacts Indigenous law. However these enactments sit alongside the predominant social code and have limited authority other than some exemptions recognized by Australian Law.

---

21 The first court was established in Port Adelaide on 1 June 1999. Indigenous sentencing courts do not practise or adopt Indigenous customary laws. Rather, they use Australian criminal laws and procedures to sentence Indigenous offenders who have either pleaded guilty or been found guilty, but they allow Indigenous Elders and Respected Persons to participate in the process, thereby creating a more culturally appropriate forum for sentencing Indigenous offenders (Auty
such acts are performed for Indigenous cultural law. *The Crossing* itself was a mixture of performance art and Indigenous ceremony, performed for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences but, in this instance, the performance/ceremony was reinforced, and authenticated by the presence of highly regarded elders of several local tribes. Their presence was seen as an affirmation that the collaboration was beneficial for all through the performance of their Indigenous traditional dance within a collaborative context. The Indigenous and non-Indigenous overlap occurred during the *Big Dance* scene where Peter Peterson the Latche Latche Danceman assumed the role of Indigenous master of ceremony with the weight of his task as elder. His actions during the performance carried the weight of a parallel society with thousands of years of repeated and inherited acts of authority. Judith Butler writes that “this is an invocation by which a social bond among communities is formed through time. The interpellation echoes past interpellations, and binds the speakers, as if they spoke in unison across time”.22

Anthropologist, Fiona Magowan recognises a spectacle that occurred outside the High Court of Australia in 1997 following the Wik decision where a woman began to dance. Magowan sees this dance as a transformation of public space outside a legal building into a living, moving, ancestral arena inscribing it with the politics of cross-cultural encounter. The dancer’s expression lay precisely in the non-transparency of her dance movements.23 Magowan writes:

> That the variants of ritual performance for government or state occasions, for political rallies and interstate exhibitions, for tourists at cultural centres are performances that play a key role in the construction of indigeneity in Australia today.24

For Magowan, Indigenous dance brings an articulation of Indigenous sacred
power into secular space and opens up new possibilities for absorption, reflection, exchange and cultural access. In doing so, Fiona Magowan says, “they demand that the audience cognitively and emotionally, at least, move into the Indigenous milieu to make sense of the performative gestures”. For Magowan, as dance emerges from and embodies corporeal dispositions and, by extension, local sentiment, ritualisation is the politicising force of Indigenous dance in non-ritual contexts. Fiona Magowan argues:

However, it seems that it is largely due to a Western mis-recognition of local corporeal dispositions that Indigenous dance, whether in a street, a theatre, or a cultural centre, comes to have a life of its own standing as a microcosm for the politics of all Indigenous peoples. Within this microcosm, the dialogic relations between dancers and spectators are embedded in their particular readings of each other.

This is precisely the reason why I included different dance forms and performance styles that bring the cultural expressions of each form together within the one work, thus enabling multiple perspectives including both that of the participants and the audience. This space encompasses divisive binary polarities that become part of a larger encompassing pattern or structure and in that complex mix, loose their power to divide. I will develop more thoughts on dance shortly.

The Implications of Mimicry

Homi Bhaba’s concept of Mimicry is relevant to this research however before I elaborate on this a context of the site and some historical detail is necessary. Whilst it was important to find some historical facts upon which to ground The Crossing, I am not creating a documentary. I am evoking a poetic response to the site, history and the cultural relations to it. The actual site of Lock Island was one of intervention. The Chaffey brothers between 1887 and 1927 completed Lock 11, that is one of the locks in a system created to control water levels that is necessary for irrigation and river trade. The consequences of this regulation

---

25 ibid. p. 312.
26 ibid. p. 313.
27 ibid. p. 318.
combined with the impacts of drought and climate change has been disastrous for the river. A delicate balance is currently being brokered between interest groups. Lock Island is presently an artificially buffered bush reserve with sandy riverbanks.

I was looking for historic colonial characters with actual connections to local Indigenous tribes that lived north, south, east and west of Mildura. The characters I chose were the bush nurse, the colonial woman and her children and the missionary and nun. Each is recognisable through costume. Indigenous populations were decimated by their first contact with European settlers during the 1830s through the impact of diseases such as Influenza and Smallpox. By the time the bush nurses arrived in the 1860s and 1870s, the Indigenous population was greatly diminished. The nurses were the first pioneers for the Australian District Nurses. Their interaction with local Aboriginals was as midwives and nurses who often treated their patients in tents on earthen floors. I found it initially perplexing why the bush nurses regularly worked as midwives when traditional birthing customs had been used for thousands of years. In the light of more information, most of the Aborigines around Mildura (symbolic of many other situations) sought refuge at the Yelta mission that was established from the 1850s. Both the presence of bush nurses and missions are testament to the degree of Indigenous estrangement from their customary practices.

Raelene Berriman, the elder from the Barkindji tribe, who was my first point of contact, told of both her own birth and her mother’s as being delivered on an earthen floor assisted by the bush nurses. This practice was still occurring in the 1950s, within my own generation. Carolyn Connors performed the role of bush nurse and we felt that to tell the historical facts of disease and births, it would be best done as a song that she wrote and performed from the bush nurses perspective. Gretel Taylor and the Benchmo children, as the colonial woman and children, assisted in the tent hospital. They also guided the audience across the island from site to site as the work unfolded in a phenomenological journey.

Accessed 03/03/2007.
31 Yelta Mission Celebrates 100 Years, Sunraysia Daily, August 8th, 2005.
missionary and nun, through their renunciation of sexuality in their marriage to Christ and the church were institutionalised through choice and circumstance. Sigmund Freud writes from a psychoanalytic perspective, in 1930 that:

The disintegration of civilization occurs when the sexual drives are sublimated and this powerful energy is directed towards cultural ends but because the aggressive drive is always present, civilization only works when targets are left out for aggression.\textsuperscript{32}

The missionary, performed by Craig Peade, is directing sublimated energy towards cultural ends and targeting aggression in his fervour to convert. This missionary is also victim to a madness or perversion that comes from the sheer heat, dust and disorientation of those lost in the bush. It also comes from the spiritual desert where his prayer is without answer and his God has forsaken him. He turns this dissociation into a fever to preach and enacts the conflict where he says "You Heathens repent...this story has no end."\textsuperscript{33} Part of \textit{The Crossing} is an exploration of dissociation and the missionary’s performance can be seen in this light. Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory of sublimated sexual energy is visible as symptoms of perversion that is communicated through performative body language. My own role as the nun was very minimal for practical reasons, however the distilled presence did apparently trigger associative memories in some audience members of traumatic experiences from their encounter with nuns during their Catholic education.

Homi Bhaba’s \textit{Of Mimi Cry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse} 1994, is a perspective on the psychological operations of colonialism. For Homi Bhaba, colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite. Bhaba says that “the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence – that in order to be effective,


\textsuperscript{33} Spoken text from Missionary performance, DVD, \textit{The Crossing}, 2007.
mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, and its difference”.34 Homi Bhaba explains:

Mimicry is thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline which appropriates the Other, as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance that coheres in the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both normalized knowledges and disciplinary powers.35

Homi Bhaba’s reference to the colonisation of India through a text of Charles Grant’s observations of Indian society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain in 1792 has specific relevance to the missionary as a political tool for colonialism. Homi Bhaba writes:

Grant’s dream of an evangelical system of mission education conducted uncompromisingly in the English language, was partly a belief in political reform along Christian lines and partly an awareness that the expansion of company rule in India required a system of subject formation - a reform of manners, as Grant put it - that would provide the colonial with “a sense of personal identity as we know it.”36

This is visible in the Australian context particularly in relation to the impacts of missionary life on the Indigenous population, forced to navigate between cultures. It is also evident in the behaviour other early settlers whose mimicry of “the mother land” is reflected as perhaps a hopeful mirror of the English upper classes, or at least this was a likely aspirational ideal. Homi Bhaba continues:

Inadvertently, Grant produces a knowledge of Christianity as a form of social control which conflicts with the enunciatory assumptions that authorize his discourse.37

In The Crossing, perhaps mimicry could be reflected in the inspiration behind the White Tree Spirit, which was an amalgam of my own childhood fantasies of

35 ibid. p. 86.
36 ibid. p. 87.
37 ibid. p. 87.
inherited Celtic nature spirits mixed with an Australian re-imaging where fairies, gnomes and elves are inherited remnants from an English, Scottish and Irish past that is remade as the same but not the same. Emma Strapps, who performed the White Tree Spirit, again re-interpreted or re-imagined the spirit that she performed as her own translation.

The Australian Indigenous population experienced the most violent impacts of colonial mimicry. Mimicry is most evident in the Government’s assimilation policy that endorsed the removal of children from their families. The National Inquiry into The Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Children from Their Families Report, 1995-7, is a Government report that studied the policies that were implemented by the Federal Government between 1910 to 1970. The report from 1995 to 1997 is a testament to the horrors of this practice. The government removed up to 100,000 Aboriginal children who were forcibly or under duress taken from their families by police or welfare officers. Missionaries and foster carers bought up the children. The impact, for these children, was not only separation from their family and culture but an education in “being white.” For some an education was appreciated but nevertheless the consequences of mimicry is recognizable as “a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.”

Homi Bhabha writes that the menace of mimicry is its double vision where disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. Double vision, for Homi Bhaba “is a result of partial representation and recognition of the colonial object.” In the Australian context, thousands of people have discovered their Indigenous heritage making their emergence a politicised force where double vision is a tactic experienced from partial representation as “almost the same but not quite.” The sheer numbers had become a force too large to ignore and finally, through broad public demand for

---

40 Ibid. p. 87.
recognition, resulted in an eventual apology in 2008, by the Australian federal government.\(^{41}\) This was a pertinent occasion that coincided with the showing of the video and documentary photographs at the Mildura Arts Centre, one year after the live event.

**Dance: It comes from the Earth**

In order to place multiple perspectives along side each other I choose dance and performative movement as the vehicle. I share similar training and philosophies to the non-Indigenous collaborators although we each express this differently. Significant inspiration came through some of my teachers, Simone Forti and Deborah Hay from America and the Indonesian, Surprapto Suryadarmo. In each case their work included forms of improvised movement that in different ways, focused on an inner awareness between the body, the location and movement that enabled a psychic transformative communication. Japanese Butoh training and the Australian evolution of this through Tess De Quincy’s *Body Weather Practice*\(^{42}\) as well as various forms of Yoga, also have these aims in common.

Moreover, in the 1980s, during my search for the non-theatrical that can also potentially express spirit, I was drawn to the work of the late Pina Bausch, who directed the Wuppertall Dance Company.\(^{43}\) Here I recognized myself or more specifically my work. The difference being that Pina Bausch was the director of a contemporary dance company in Germany that reflects the German condition, and more broadly, the human psyche, located in environments, both urban, architectural and in nature. I had already created many works within the Australian natural and urban environment, albeit much less theatrically and not in the realms of dance. Although my work is within the visual art based practice of performance art, there are elements in common. One thing that I have never forgotten about Pina Bausch was the working method with her dancers. I perceived that Pina recognized that in order to perform from an authentic self, it


\(^{42}\) <dequinceyco.net/bodyweather/about-body-weather/>. Accessed 12/12/11.

was essential to give her dancers a full, deep and personal role in the creation of the work. In this way her dancers create their own work within a thematic collaborative structure. The results were as risky as performance art because they plumbed the depths of the fragile impossibility of desire and consequently Pina Bausch often did not fully know what would happen. In a sense I used this method in working with my collaborators in *The Crossing*.

The other profound influence around the 1980s was the Japanese Butoh master Kazuo Ohno, whom I saw in performance on Dutch television. He was already at least 60 years old and I was mesmerized by his stillness, power strength and fragility. To me this was pure spirit. The Motimaru Butoh Dance Company writes about Butoh:

> Butoh represents one of the most meaningful realities of the 20th century performing art history. The influential cultural character of this dance style has given impact to Europe, and all other countries in the world. Influenced by European expressionist dance, it was able to melt the structures of Japanese tradition into innovative boosts of the Japanese artistic avant-garde of the post-war period. It is a synthesis of Artaud’s visions, surrealist painting and metaphysics, Rudolf Laban’s theories, Marta Graham’s rituality, Kantor’s ingenious madness and Mary Wigman’s freedom. Butoh was born in Japan between the 1960s and 1970s. There were two outstanding revolutionaries of dance, Hijikata Tatsumi and Kazuo Ohno, and their revolutions were called “butoh” afterwards. They both brought dance over the edge breaking conventions and rules to reveal the truth of the human in his life and death. They had different ways to process but same final destination. Hijikata Tatsumi said: “Form goes first, soul follows.” Kazuo Ohno said: “Soul goes first, form follows.”

In acknowledgement of Kazuo Ohno and Tatsumi Hijiakata’s own East meets West influence, it’s not surprising that the impact of this work originated from an International Avant-Garde. I have trained in Butoh in Australia however I have always felt that the Western body trying to be Eastern is an uneasy mix. The techniques however can be made one’s own as Ohno’s words express, “Soul goes first, form follows.” This technique comes from the earth, through the feet, legs and hips as the centre of gravity and central point of power and energy. My own concern, regardless of the encultured body is that an inner state finds it’s way irrespective of form. The DVD, *Butoh: Piercing the Mask*, is a film dedicated to Butoh where Hosoe Eikoh describes Butoh as dance, which crawls from the

---

bowels of the earth. He describes the difference between Eastern and Western
dancers, in particular ballet as follows:

Western dancers want to express their energies or powers to the sky. Butoh
dancers look down for the energy, toward the earth as if you have the God in
heaven and also the God in the earth. Through the energy downward, it means
they’re looking for their identity in their own inner world. The energy or power
of the Butoh dancer is just as the roots of a pine tree filled with much energy.
But the Western dancers like a tall straight tree going upward and upward
trying to reach heaven. I think that is the main difference between Butoh and
Western dance.45

The late Takao Nakazawa the founder of Okido Yoga in Melbourne where I
practiced used to say that the Eastern body is a farmer who squats low to the
ground and sits cross legged on the floor. The Western body is a hunter who
points his bow and arrow, opening his chest, and looks over great distances. He
sits on a chair. These essential observations point to both the psychological,
philosophical and evolved physical manifestations in the body as an inherited
historical trace. However identity, as a fluid evolving process cannot be
represented in these terms. Identity is found, more profoundly in what cannot be
said and what is left out of representational frames as Peggy Phalen has
emphasized.

The performance structure of The Crossing that enabled history, time, and
agency to overlap was framed through six separate performance cameos
situated on different sites on the island. The seventh was the arrival and
departure of the colonial woman and children on an aluminium boat. It enabled
Indigenous participation to be represented on their own terms in relation to the
whole work. The six scenarios were The Bush Nurse, The Missionary, The Lost
Malaysian, The White Tree Spirit, The Big Dance and The River Dance (See
Chapter 3: Figures 3.1 to 3.12.). Tony Yap’s dance as the Lost Malaysian is based
on Asian shamanic trans-dance, Butoh, and psycho-physical research.46 Tony
was invited to adapt his E1 Evocation of a Lost Boy to Lock Island as a relatively
contemporary character whose longing for place is expressed as loss. His dance

45 Chris Bollard and Richard Moore, Butoh: Piercing the Mask, DVD, an A.K.A. production
reflects the lives of globalised travellers, immigrants and refugees. Where is home? What is the place of identification? What are the impacts of no-place and dissociation?

Indigenous dance is also from the earth. It is the most ancient dance form that as I have mentioned, is an integral element in Australian Indigenous ceremony and a political tool for Indigenous representation. The anthropologist, Deborah Bird Rose regarding Indigenous dance writes:

I have danced Pantimi many nights as part of my responsibilities toward those who have taken responsibility for me. I worked the ground with my feet, and learned to make the dance-call that is so much a part of the pattern. Thus I learned, that the body connects earth and air when you dance. The call comes from deep within and is propelled by the impact of your feet on the ground. It comes to feel as if the ground itself propels your voice into the night sky. That call starts somewhere below your feet and ends somewhere out in the world. The call is a motion, a sound, a wave of connection. You are dancing the earth, and the earth is dancing you, and so perhaps you are motion, a sound, a wave of connection. One of the outstanding patterns in Pantimi and other ceremonies is the pattern of dance and non-dance. Each small song is punctuated by a pause, a break in the music. The rhythms of the song and dance are thus set within a larger oscillation of music and non-music. The non-music interval is dominated by joking. It is not a break in the ceremony but rather a contrapuntal engagement with the musical portion of the ceremony.47

Deborah Bird Rose’s description of Pantimi dance I have left in full because not only does she describe dance through the feet into the ground, but she elucidates the structural, ritual and ceremonial performance that I feel is informative beyond this work.

It is not my intention to describe The Crossing as I hope the video will act in its own terms. However I will elaborate on the Big Dance where the convergence of all performers occurred and a deep symbolic moment was realized. The video cannot represent nor re-present this live moment.

---

The Big Dance

The Barkindji Elder Christine Kelly, assisted by others, symbolically lit fires to create smoke, which is central to ceremonies. It acts to protect and encourage good spirits by covering all present within the circle of its influence. Inhaling the smoke works within the body’s interiority as it cloaks the bodies exterior. The nature of smoke as vapour has the ability to infiltrate, blend and cover. Arising from its originating matter, eucalyptus leaves, and fuelled by the “alchemy” of fire it ascends with heat and wind into the atmosphere. Smoke is an intermediary state that is a veil between seen and unseen worlds. The didgeridoo began, emitting the base sound that seemed to come up from the ground and Steve Bell’s stringed instrument, created for The Crossing, held the atmospheric ambience together. Peter Peterson as master of ceremonies sang and created the rhythm with clap sticks. The children each performed their individual totem dances, kangaroo and brolga amongst others. The cycle is repeated in waves of movement that came towards the audience and receded again. This dance was pivotal. It was the moment where histories, cultures and beliefs collided. One young dancer continued her totem dance and was joined by The White Tree Spirit. Both move within the space differently and yet together. The Lost Malaysian emerged from the river. At this point there were three culturally different expressions of spirit and dance present together. Crashing on to the scene came the Missionary shouting blasphemes and thumping his bible, which built to a point of hysteria. The nun slowly entered with a bucket of water that she emptied over the Missionary. He fell to the ground. Peter Peterson symbolically struck dead, first the missionary then the other non-Indigenous interlopers. Dispatched with deliberate and calm movement he decapitated each character and wiped his bludgeon clean after each purposeful cleave. Revenge and re-dress filled the space declaring atonement for two hundred years of violent injustices. There was a palpable wave of deep appreciation and laughter from the totally engaged, largely Koorie audience. It felt like this was not only revenge but the possibility that history was being re-written. What would life be like if a different history were possible? This action in all its symbolic aggression
was a rare moment where the power balance upturned. The possibilities of that moment remain with those who were there. At that time I did not know what would happen but this is the reason for *The Crossing*, to ritualistically enable symbolic healing as a contribution towards the necessary condition of reconciliation.

All performers left the beach in a procession to the final scene, leaving Peter to reclaim and cleanse the land. He used a long stick to trace the perimeters of the scene and then used leaves to wipe the performance traces away. Lastly he placed the stick upright in the sand. It was as if the hole in time created by the ceremonial focus in evoking good spirits was closed so that there was no means of energetic escape from any direction. The circle was closed. This was my reading. *The Big Dance* was a series of actions that we built on each night slightly changing the action through improvisation that was enabled through trust, daring and co-operation. Here actions spoke. In this way we together created another possibility that was felt by all. The last scenario, *The River Dance*, is where the children dance from the river’s edge. All the totems came together that express the river as a whole. This dance for me was a profound expression of Indigenous culture grounded in the reality of the twenty-first century of which we are all part.

**In Conclusion**

*The Crossing* is an example of research where reconciliation with Australian Indigenous people can in part be realized through active and positive work together on a shared cultural basis. Here the meeting of difference through respect and equality is witnessed as an example of being seen by each other and by the audience, constructing an alternative reality together. This was a very different experience to bureaucratic and law enforcement encounters that are a frequent negative part of the cultural interface for many Australian Indigenous people. In *The Crossing* representation was incorporated as part of a larger social whole, whose parts are distinct and separate and yet inter-related. Jonathon Rutherford writes:
Identification, if it is to be productive can never be with the same static and unchanging object. It is interchange between the self and structure; a transforming process. If the object remains static ossified by tradition or isolated by a radically changing world, if its theoretical foundations cannot address that change, then its culture and politics loose their ability to innovate. Its symbolic language can only conjure up the past, freezing as another moment.48

In Rutherford’s sense the dynamic interchange between self and structure can also be seen through music collaborations of the Black Arm Band concerts and the Bangarra Dance Theatre’s performances. Both are instrumental in promoting and evolving this cultural interface and in Rutherford’s sense, are a transforming process. The Crossing can be seen in these terms as a fluid and evolving sharing that Jonathon Rutherford describes is necessary for cultural change and evolution.

The following chapter, A Prayer, was an interventionist performance, which occurred in Darwin two weeks after the Howard Government’s 2007 Intervention into Indigenous communities. The nun, as an under developed character is performed through the act of writing a prayer on the street of a busy market place.

---

Figure 3.1. Jill Orr, *The Crossing – The Hospital*, 2007.
Pictured: Carolyn Connors as the Bush Nurse and the Benchmo sisters as the colonial children.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcom Cross.
Jill Orr ©
Figure 3.4. Jill Orr, *The Crossing – The Lost Malaysian*, 2007.
Pictured: Tony Yap as the Lost Malaysian.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcom Cross.
Jill Orr ©
Figure 3.5. Jill Orr, *The Crossing – The Lost Malaysian*, 2007.
Pictured: Tony Yap as the Lost Malaysian.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcom Cross.
Jill Orr ©
Pictured: Peter Peterson, the Latche Latche Danceman and Jill Orr as the nun.
Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcom Cross.
Jill Orr ©
Pictured: Jill Orr as the nun, Gretel Taylor as the colonial woman, Carolyn Connors as the Bush Nurse, Two young Latche Latche dancers, Bud and Mate. Photographers: Naomi Herzog and Malcom Cross.
Jill Orr ©
The Koorie College for Indigenous Education and Jill Orr ©
Chapter 4: A Prayer

What spaces, places and recurring histories collude through the intervention of art and politics with specific reference to the impact of trauma? This is the guiding question for this chapter. The performance, A Prayer is central to this chapter and is an intervention style performance that was performed in a busy market place in Darwin. The work was a response to an invitation by 24HrArt Contemporary Art Space, Darwin. Director and Curator, Steve Eland had invited national and international artists to present works to unsuspecting audiences, intervention style in the gallery’s Interpositions Program, for the 2007 Darwin Festival. In context, the highly impacting intervention carried out by the Federal Government for The Northern Territory Emergency Response Intervention into Indigenous Communities had occurred only two weeks prior to the performance. Indigenous communities were intervened by the army under the instruction of the Government, on the grounds of stemming child abuse. The Darwin community was shaken and outraged and it is against this background that A Prayer occurred. The second section of this chapter is discussed in relation to Jill Bennett’s Empathetic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art, 2005 and the work of Destiny Deacon and Gordon Bennett.

Facts, Fears and Anxieties

Child sexual and other abuse does occur in the wider community however the focus on Aboriginal communities has for many years been dominating the media. The Howard Government based the intervention on revelations of the abject conditions in numerous Australian Indigenous communities where alcohol and other drug-use fuelled violence and abuse affecting entire communities. The impacts on children are highlighted through The Little Children are Sacred Report June 2007.¹ The government sent the army into the communities in the Northern Territory to establish law and order. Alcohol was banned. Family payments were monitored to ensure that expenditure on food and clothing was for the children.

Children were systematically health checked for sexually transmitted disease, physical abuse and dietary inadequacy. This was always going to be delicate as the ethical issues of personal and private bodily examination of children also required parental permission. The Aboriginal communities were not consulted on the intervention and were understandably suspicious. Aboriginal cooperation varied from community to community.

The intervention proposed that the Commonwealth Government would lease land from the Aboriginal communities who chose to participate, in the form of both five-year and ninety-nine year leases. Two weeks later this resulted in Galarrwuy Yunupingu signing a ninety-nine lease for parts of his tribal land, Ski Beach and the Gove Peninsula, under the condition that housing, infrastructure and investment was spent in North East Arnhem Land and that his people had control over each development.2 The Government’s premise was that outside investment would stimulate long-term community economies, which would benefit from an influx of non-Aboriginal businesses, housing and infrastructure. For many people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, the Intervention was perceived to be a government land grab claiming the numerous uranium deposits that are within Aboriginal lands. It was also feared that Aboriginal lands would become the dumping ground for the world’s uranium waste. These fears were founded correctly with reference to the Muckaty Station site. In 2007, the Ngapa Clan signed an agreement with the Howard Government to receive nuclear waste from the Lucas Heights uranium processing site in Sydney.3 At the time of this writing, other local communities, whose lands adjoin and overlap the proposed site, are contesting the agreement.

Regarding the Government intervention, the highly respected Aboriginal intellectual, Noel Pearson has long argued for an end to passive welfare. When asked by Leigh Sales on ABC news, if he was surprised at the political storm created by the Intervention. Pearson’s reply was:

---

I’m amazed that anybody would put the protection of children secondary to anything, particularly when those children are subject to imminent abuse, abuse that takes place on a regular basis that’s the subject of binge drinking, week in, week out. I think that those who have objections to immediate intervention have to ask themselves whether they’re willing this whole exercise to fail, and geez, if you’re willing the whole exercise to fail, what kind of priorities do you have in relation to the wellbeing of Indigenous children? You know, the big danger for the Government, I think, is that they can’t go marching in like cowboys. They’ve got to go marching in with humility, with support, not with arrogance, and they’ve got to enjoin the Aboriginal people of that community.4

Other respected Aboriginal intellectuals such as Marcia Langton are allied with Pearson. She urges that development must occur with direct and respectful consultation with community elders in order to achieve empowered and sustaining viability.5 Patrick Dodson, known as the Father of Reconciliation, is critical of the Intervention, feeling that the government is using the intervention to destroy Australian Indigenous culture by linking child safety to land leases and further government control. He proposes that the likely outcome is the ultimate integration of Aborigines into the mainstream. He says the Government’s goal is “the extinguishing of Indigenous culture by attrition”, and describes this as “a searing moral challenge for the nation.” 6

I was not able to completely disagree with the intervention strategy. This might have been the first time in many years where effective change might be implemented. Other governments have tried with a long history of failed attempts and incremental improvements. However the distain and complete lack of trust that I held towards the Howard government fuelled my deep suspicions of the Government’s motives. The reality and depth of disadvantage will still take generations to educate and redress. The issues are complex and not easily fixed by government alone. However, the concern, as Pearson and Langton express it is for the children and the actions of the Government have recognized a state of emergency.

---


The Performance

The figure of the Nun from *The Crossing* was an undeveloped character that I had wanted to cultivate for some time. Because mission life had impacted so considerably on Australian Indigenous lives, I felt that the symbolic layering in the form of a prayer was an appropriate, gentle and respectful vehicle to reflect the fears and anxieties surrounding the Government’s Intervention (See Chapter 4: Figures 4.1 to 4.5). *A Prayer* was also inspired by an experience I had walking from at peak hour on a railway station in Toronto. An overwhelming feeling of peace at the busy exit drew me to a nun sitting in prayer. People rushed by her. I slowly walked by absorbing her peaceful radiance. The experience has never left me. I do not pretend to be a nun, nor do I imagine that I can generate such pure radiance however *A Prayer* is inspired by this act.

The nun of my performance, entered the market situated along a narrow street filled with stores largely selling trinkets and other memorabilia. The nun knelt in prayer at the entrance. She wrote in white chalk a prayer that extended along the full the length of the market-street. A full transcript of *A Prayer* is in the Appendix.\(^7\) Amongst the chaos of shoppers, audience and general market din were several Long-Grass men, a name adopted by Aboriginals themselves to explain drinking habits, (they drink till they drop in the long grass, only to rise again to continue their drinking). The Long-Grass men address the Nun and although she remains silent, she writes what she thought she heard in the prayer. But the Nun was mistaken. Instead of writing “Long-Grass men”, she writes, “Long-Lost men”, an uncanny mistake in the context of the work.

During one such engagement the Nun, still silent, rises to her feet. The peaceful demeanour becomes unstuck. This is a moment of pure improvisation in which I am influenced by several unforeseen effects. Firstly, the impetus of my own accumulated absorption of community anxiety. Secondly, the repression and sublimation that I embodied by imagining what was required to achieve the Nun’s dedication and faith. Thirdly, the fact of my own complicity in the face of

---

\(^7\) See Notes for a full transcript of *A Prayer*. 

76
Australian Indigenous trauma. The collapse of the nun’s demeanour seemed to provoke, confuse and undermine the prayer and in terms of the aim of the performance, I think it failed. However it did reveal other insights, as conflicting as they may be. The nun collapsed into what felt, at the time, like an exorcism. These factors seem like a tear in the body’s image screen oozing a fragmented psyche that is perhaps seen as an abject display of psychic melt down. This performance is, in a sense, a ritual where the enactment or expression of troubled psychic symptoms are channelled, expressed and therefore unlocked. The power or energy that is needed in the act of repression is released becoming available for constructive, or other, use. In the performance sense, being witnessed and felt by others begins the transformative use of the energy. The notion that energy can neither be created nor destroyed, but it can be transformed, is central. Peggy Phalen writes insightfully about the cultural (or collective) unconscious that Performance Art frequently taps and A Prayer, in this instance, is a good example. Peggy Phalen writes:

In the creation of such a consciousness, the cultural unconsciousness works double time. The invention of cultural history is generally not the product of a progressive, liberatory enterprise, in part because those powerful enough to impose that “invention” tend to be entrenched within the conserving and conservative apparatus of the state. Furthermore, what Tilley refers to as the “largely unconscious but nevertheless rule-governed production of statements about the past” is like all productions of the unconscious, subject to repressive disavowing.8

In these terms, the Nun is both representative of the conserving and conservative apparatus, of both religion and colonial power. She is also a contemporary artist, responding to these complex extremes. From a post-colonial perspective, Homi Bhaba says that “The establishment of colonial power was assisted by Christianity’s complicity with the state.” 9 This assistance to the State, in terms of the past negative effects the Colonial power had on Indigeneity, means that the Nun was subject to the production of the

unconscious, symptomatic through her repressive disavowal. She embodies abjection.

As Peggy Phalen says “These remains represent the excess that will not stay repressed no matter how carefully mainstream culture works to solidify the normative.”\textsuperscript{10} Hal Foster also writes “that artists evoke the real in different ways. Illusionism is employed to uncover the uncanny and estrange everyday objects related to the body.”\textsuperscript{11} \textit{A Prayer} can be seen in both these terms where the Nun becomes both abject and expresses the excess as symptoms of repression and at the same time mirrors the many real, actual concerns regarding the government's intervention.

To clarify the terms abject, repression and the Lacanian Real, I will begin with Julia Kristeva, for whom abjection is the process of rejecting what seems to be part of oneself.\textsuperscript{12} In other words the abject is expelled and rejected but it is never banished completely because it is both inside and outside of the body. For example vomit, excrement, saliva and so on, are expelled from a wound or an orifice or for Kristeva, also the womb. Jessica Navarria distinguishes the difference between the abject and the repressed where the repressed is relegated to the unconscious, whereas the abject is not simply repressed, as it does not entirely disappear from consciousness and remains a looming presence on the limits of the conscious and the unconscious.\textsuperscript{13}

However, the Lacanian term “the Real” is a distinctly different term altogether. The Real, as written by Jacques Lacan, "sits below or behind both abjection and

\textsuperscript{13} Jessica Navarria, <home.etu.unige.ch/~madsen/Presentation_Jessica.htm>. Accessed 6/1/12.
repression where the original trauma that remains from the painful separation from the pleasure of infantile need is severed by our entrance into language”.14

*A Prayer* became an expression of repressed disavowal, where an excess of emotion is dislodged, expressed and released. In psychological terms the release of repression exposed the traumatic, both reflected in the community and the Nun’s own visible conflict with the real. In a physical and symbolic sense the Nun’s abjection, was like the expulsion of bile, in reality it was certainly saliva, both being abject and repulsive. Working with Kristeva’s canonical definition, of the abject, Hal Foster writes:

That the abject is what I must get rid of in order to be an I. But what is this primordial I that expels in the first place? It is a phantasmic substance not only alien to the subject but intimate with it – too much so in fact this over proximity produces panic in the subject. In this way the abject touches on the fragility of our boundaries, in the fragility of the spatial distinction between our insides and outsides as was as (again the privileged realm of the maternal body (again the privileged realm of the abject) and the paternal law. Both spatially and temporally, then, abjection is a condition in which the subject-‐hood is troubled, “where meaning collapses”; hence its attraction for avant-garde artists who want to disturb these orderings of subject and society alike.15

Foster alerts to a second approach used by artists who reject illusionism, indeed any sublimation of the object gaze in an attempt to evoke the real as such. For Foster this is the primary realm of abject art, which is drawn to the broken down body.16 A *Prayer* is not in the first instance abject, it is grounded in the multi-‐facetted expression of empathy and sincerity, cynicism and outrage, confession and politicisation. It is a reflection of the confusion and anger in the community. The abject forces its way through the surface where the body in performance speaks without words. Hal Foster says, of the second approach used by artists where:

---


16 Ibid. p. 153.
The ambition is to tease out the trauma of the subject with the apparent calculation that if its lost object a cannot be reclaimed, at least the wound that is left behind can be probed. This can lead to a coded expressionism. It does not raise the possibility of an obscure representation, i.e. a representation without a scene that stages the object for the viewer.\textsuperscript{17}

The wound that is left behind is pertinent here. A Prayer speaks to the inter-generational wound experienced by the Australian Indigenous population. Another aspect of A Prayer is relevant to Leigh Astbury’s analysis of the construction of colour in the previous chapter however for the context of this work, a part is reiterated below because perceptions of race are associated with skin colour regardless of the inaccuracy of the formulation. Astbury writes:

Because of its seeming invisibility whiteness is not easily recognisable as a historically and culturally constructed category. Dyer offers the hypothesis that this property of whiteness to be everything and nothing, is the source of its representational power.\textsuperscript{18}

In this sense the Nun, as a white figure representing past and perhaps present religious colonization, is a constructed character. This nun also enacted a flaw in the perception of white infallibility and tear in the promotion of religious ideals associated with Nuns and the Church. The character of the nun performing A Prayer became schizophrenic in the vernacular sense but she could be a display of what Hal Foster calls bipolar postmodernism.\textsuperscript{19} Hal Foster sees bipolar postmodernism where:

Many artists seem driven by an ambition to inhabit a place of total effect and to be drained of effect altogether, to possess the vitality of the wound and to occupy the radical nihility of the corpse. This oscillation suggests the dynamic of psychic shock parried by protective shield that Freud developed in his discussion of the death-drive and Walter Benjamin elaborated in his discussion of Baudelairean modernism – but now pushed well beyond the pleasure principal. Pure effect, no affect: It hurts, I can’t feel anything.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} ibid. p. 153.


In these terms not only the artwork, A Prayer, but the entire situation of the Howard Government’s Intervention and the very communities intervened, in a way can be seen to display “Pure effect, no affect: It hurts, I can’t feel anything.” This is the impact of trauma.

Implications and intersections

Anger, confusion and outrage were the sentiments expressed within the Darwin community that included both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Meetings and random groups had heated discussion about the Government’s Intervention. A Prayer was indeed situated at the cross roads between culture, history, politics and life.

Mid way through writing the prayer, came a Long-Grass man and his mates. He is playing his guitar and sings “We are the Long-Grass men.” A Long-Grass man speaks to the nun. “Hey Sister, Heaven must be Hell”, or “Black Sabbath, High Way to Heaven” and “Heaven is a Place where Nothing Ever Happens” and so on. These song titles and band names are embedded into popular culture and are in common to us all, particularly, in this instance, the particular generation that the Long-Grass man and I shared. The reference to popular culture brought to the performance by the random appearance of the Long-Grass men, demonstrated the strength and communication of culture as in Lacan’s terms, the cultural gaze through which we identify. It showed that the background of Christianity and popular song is pervasive. As it happened, the emerging performance artist, Danielle Freakly was also in the audience. Danielle’s performance is called the Quote Generator. Whenever Danielle was in public she engaged people by speaking only through culturally recognizable quotes. She performed this work daily for over a year. Danielle had engaged the Long-Grass man in a conversation of cultural quotations and I am sure that this inspired him to speak to the Nun. The Long-Grass man quoted song titles that were relevant to sin, religion, Sunday, Jesus etc. Remarkably when I viewed the video, Danielle was sitting far away from him so I can only assume that he was inspired to take the idea further. “Hey sister are you for real? Jesus loves you, Devil Woman.” The Long-
Grass man provided the Nun with the backdrop of popular culture that propelled her rise into the *Exorcism* (referencing the 1973 film, *The Exorcism*.) The cultural connections through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980’s song titles resounded with the enduring overlay that Christianity pervades, tarring the Long-Grass man and I, in this instance, with the same brush.

**Recurring History**

The violent wounding committed towards Indigenous communities is continued through recurring waves of injury and injustices. From the first massacres, forced removal of children, incarceration, prejudice, and abuse perpetrated from both outside and within communities. This violence and consequent trauma is recurrent and trans-generational. In terms of art works that address trauma, Jill Bennett has written *Empathetic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*, where she feels that “we require an approach that pursues the exploration of traumatic memory not as scientia sexualis in which moral or medical classification precedes representation, but as an open artistic inquiry”\(^{21}\) Jill Bennett suggests that “trauma is never unproblematically subjective; neither inside nor outside, it is always lived and negotiated at an intersection.”\(^{17}\) Bennett chooses to write about artworks that communicate through the effect of the artwork itself that has a psychological impact on the viewer. In this way the artwork is relational and speaks in its own terms. I will shortly discuss two other artists whose strategies for the communication of trauma will be elaborated.

*A Prayer* is perhaps an insight into a performance work that highlights the intersections between what can be said, what is known and not spoken, what is inexpressible, conflicting perceptions and histories and what is perceived to be actually occurring in the present. Nothing about perception is stable or the same from individual to individual. This is a space where multiple realities are present in the performative arena defined by a specific time where all that was within that time and place became part of the work. This performance brought together

the Nun, the chalk written prayer, the people in the market place going about their business that included the Long-Grass men and the art audience. This is not a work about trauma in any direct sense of the word but trauma sits quietly in the underbelly as the political background upon which the work is situated. Jill Bennett writes about Dominik LaCapra’s concept of empathetic un-settlement, where “the aesthetic experience of simultaneously feeling for another and becoming aware of a distinction between one’s own perceptions and the experience of another.”  

Jill Bennett references Ghassan Hage’s notion that post- colonial subversion of guilt has elevated the figure of the victim to a position of moral superiority. Bennett also references the term Trauma Envy coined by John Mowit as another symptom of post - colonial subversion of guilt. Whilst A Prayer navigates the notion of guilt through an aspect of the Nun’s apology, by placing the victim as morally superior is a bankrupt expression of a subverted colonialism. Guilt and envy are both unproductive emotions that blind the subject from both empathy and possibility. As the Nun is my own cultural heritage with all her strengths and weaknesses, guilt and compassion she became the vehicle as a recognizable symbol to express and locate her complicity in Australian Indigenous trauma. For Jill Bennett this is transactive where spoken and unspoken dynamics are in play and held within the performance frame. It is not my place to say whether the work is transformative or not, given it is the audience who makes this call.

Jill Bennet writes:

In an almost concrete sense much visual and performance art evokes the possibility for the artist and viewer of being a spectator of one’s own feelings. This kind of imagery that operates under this vein, mediating affects, sensations and traumatic memory, cannot be reduced to a form of representation, in so far as such imagery serves to register subjective processes that exceed our capacity to represent them, certain of its features might be understood as reflecting those of traumatic memory. Art works can produce a form of empathy that is more complex and considered than a purely emotional or sentimental reaction.

---

22 ibid. p. 10.
23 ibid. p. 5.
24 ibid. p. 2.
I believe *A Prayer* can be seen in the above terms as evoking the possibility for the artist and viewer of being a spectator of one’s own feelings which occurred within frame of the performance as a delineated moment in time, highlighting all occurrences that crossed into its path. The little girl who touches the nun to see if she is real and another Long-Grass man who placed his foot by the nun who then drew a chalk outline around his foot as part of her prayer. The nun’s own actions are neither descriptive nor representative of the underlying weight of Australian Indigenous trauma they do however represent her own disorder. The audience and passers by exist within the moment of the performance time where the relations remain fluid, unfixed, open and dynamic.

**Destiny Deacon**

Destiny Deacon is an artist whose strategy for representing trauma is through the humorous re-appropriation of stereotypes. As Blair French writes where:

> Humour often functions as a survival mechanism, a means of keeping fear or trauma at a distance. Or equally it acts as an agent for change employing hyperbole for example, to highlight absurdity or injustices underpinning social convention.

An Australian Indigenous artist, Destiny Deacon, often in collaboration with Virginia Fraser, creates photographs, videos and installations that challenge common perceptions held about Indigenous stereotypes. Deacon depicts scenarios taken in her back yard and living room in suburban Melbourne. She incorporates her Indigenous friends and family and her collections of dolls and tourist memorabilia from the 1950’s, 1960’s and 1970’s. These objects are kitsch and were manufactured to reflect an Australian identity by appropriating Indigenous art and culture. These collectables perpetuate what Blair French describes as naively stereotypical and clearly racist. Deacon re-appropriates these objects by setting them in scenarios that she then photographs: the images become aids to help change the social perspectives of the viewer towards contemporary Indigenous people.

---

26 ibid. p. 45.
In an interview with Virginia Fraser for the catalogue, *Destiny Deacon: Walk & don’t look blak* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney year 2004, Destiny Deacon says:

> Expert white travellers still take and make the usual stereotypes. It irks me. Half the reason I got into photography was because I was sick of the sameness of their images—kids with snot pouring out of noses, and flies eating the crap out of eyes, empty beer bottles, or our children, naked and wet in watering holes. I’m sure in other situations the photographers would be arrested for paedophilia.27

Destiny Deacon’s strategy of employing dolls, friends and family in her photographic images function like a mirror that she holds to her audience. The reflection stands in stark contrast to white Australia’s perception of the Indigenous population. Deacon’s images are also for her people as they speak in subtle ways of the traumatic experiences they have endured and engage them in empowering modes of representation. Her armoury of humour and irony act as both a catalyst for change and as acknowledgement of injustice. Dr Anita Heiss, in the catalogue for Destiny Deacon’s exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney 2004, writes:

> These are imposed stereotypes, not self-defining ones. Destiny knows that and challenges the viewer to come to terms with the fact that the only real portrayal of who we are, is the self-portrayal, showcased by those representations done by such art masters (or mistresses) as Destiny Deacon. Destiny uses the little black doll as a symbol of Indigenous Australia. It is a political statement, because even though we know Aboriginality is not about skin colour, and regardless of whether it’s an urban Melbourne experience or a remote one, when a Blackfella looks in the mirror, they see a Blackfella, even if we don’t fit the current media definition of who we should be.28

In terms of Deacon’s representation of trauma it is the strategy of humour that Dr. Anita Heiss continues to describe:

> The survival of us as Blackfellas is due, in large part, to our ability to laugh—not only at ourselves, but more so at the foibles of the white man to kill us off, their denial in recognizing this failure, and their ongoing yet relentless

---

misrepresentations of who we are. Our reaction to such behaviour is often demonstrated behind closed doors and not for public consumption.29

Destiny Deacon’s work draws on her personal experience as an Indigenous woman whose community of friends and family as well as her collaboration with Virginia Fraser, form the dynamic basis that, as Blair French writes, “shows a fundamental sense of empathy that always tinges her confronting iconography”.30 Destiny Deacon’s dolls in her photographs are props that become personalities who both act out and subvert the stereotype. Blair French describes the use of dolls as “acting as surrogates for the artist and for absent Indigenous subjects as well as manifesting colonial prejudices and brutality”.27 The dolls assert their presence and remain fixed in the human world of discord, affection, politics, social conflict and hope. Marcia Langton writes that:

Destiny Deacon’s work acts as a barometer of post colonial anxiety as a window of understanding for new generations of Australians turning away from the psychosis of the colonial relationship, but seeking to establish a considered and meaningful grammar of images in an environment full of cultural memories.28

Destiny Deacon says, “I see myself as rescuing the dolls from people who would buy them. You can sort of put your spirit into it, but you can’t make a doll smile... That’s the trick to photography – to create that mood for the doll and say something for us.”29 Deacon’s camera is her tool. She uses low-tech Polaroid cameras and then enlarges and reproduces the images as ink jet or laser prints.30 Rosalind Krauss writes:

The camera is treated by families to passively document the fact of family interaction. It is an agent in the collective fantasy of family cohesion and in that sense the camera is a projective tool, part of the theatre that the family constructs to convince itself that it is together and whole.31

29 ibid.
27 ibid. p. 45
In this sense Destiny Deacon’s camera is a foil because she photographs friends, family and her collection as a home theatre. This becomes subversive in the act of affirming contemporary Indigenous identity and simultaneously dismantling public perceptions of outmoded and racist stereotypes. Destiny Deacon’s image, *Axed*, 1994/2003 (See Chapter 4: Figure 4.6) shows the little black doll decapitated. The axe is perhaps the weapon. Destiny says she “feels sorry for the dolls and that they represent us in some way.”

The image of trauma that Hal Foster writes is “pure affect, no affect: *It hurts, I cannot feel it.*” Trauma in this image is perhaps sublimated by the doll.

Destiny Deacon’s *Melancholy*, from the *Sad and Bad* series, 2000 (See Chapter 4: Figure 4.7) again depicts a doll decapitated. The doll’s body is lying in the emptied out half of a watermelon. Next to it is the head lying on the other half of the watermelon that is full of fruit. There is a contradiction here. One seems strangely full of hope and life, regardless of the doll’s head being separated from the body, an act of symbolic proportions lying beside the fullness of fruit. Somewhere within this disturbing mix is the capacity of mind and fruitful abundance but this is disrupted potential. The other half rests in the empty silence of a past act that cannot be spoken. Both halves are held together on the check gingham tablecloth symbolic of family picnics and a sense of togetherness. This to me is art that, in Jill Bennett’s terms, carries the force of trauma. In another image, *Where is Mummy?* from the *Forced Into Images* series 2001. (See Chapter 4: Figure 4.8) it is difficult to see the bare leg lying on the wooden floor. The rest of the body is out of the frame. Standing beside is a man dressed in what looks like a yellow rain coat. I find this image chilling with the man looking directly at the camera. His gaze is direct and yet I also read, vulnerable. The raincoat is clean but raincoats keep fluid out. Is the absent fluid blood or sexual or neither? In either case it may be implied and yet it is absent. The elements in the image combine to suggest –“ Where is Mummy?” This is an image of

---


empathetic trauma where the answer can be felt in the image.

Gordon Bennett

Gordon Bennett is an Australian Indigenous artist who describes himself as a history painter who appropriates images of history to both deconstruct and reconstruct identity. Ian McLean’s book on Gordon Bennett states that Bennett, who is of mixed parentage, found his identity when he was eleven. Gordon Bennett rejects the search for roots for an authentic Aboriginal identity. Ian McLean writes that for Bennett “identity is a concept always in motion, but he does not embrace the free-floating signifier blindly.” Bennett creates a language system of conventional and arbitrary sounds and symbols that reflect the culturally relative subjective human perception of it. Anne Marsh writes “that Bennett’s critical position is firmly based on the psychoanalytical Lacanian concept that “I is an Other”; that the subject is constituted through language and the gaze of the Other”. Homi Bhaba, from a post colonial position describes the strategies of colonial power in *Mimicry of Man*. The psychological and post-colonial strategies are both utilized by Gordon Bennett. Although Homi Bhaba is referred to in a previous chapter, a further development on mimicry appropriate to Gordon Bennett is included here. Homi Bhaba writes:

Mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge. Within that conflictual economy of colonial discourse... colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.

Homi Bhaba explains the sign of a double articulation that can be seen operating

---

in the work of both Destiny Deacon and Gordon Bennett. Homi Bhaba continues:

Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which “appropriates” the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both “normalized” knowledges and disciplinary powers.\(^{38}\)

To my mind, Gordon Bennett’s strategies of both Lacanian and post-colonial observations come together as a powerful navigation between identity, self and Other, as a relational visualization of power. Bennett is celebrated as a painter and an installation artist. His performance for the camera is a rare extension of his practice. I saw Gordon Bennett's video of *Performance with Object for the Expiation of Guilt (Apple Premiere Mix)* 1995\(^{39}\) at the time of its release. I have viewed it many times since. The sound of Bennett’s grunts as he whips the object which is a black coffin-shaped box made to Bennett’s dimensions are amplified by the slashing sound the stock whip makes as it sears the box’s surface. My body reacts in response. The whipping reveals scars on the box, a technique that is fore-grounded in Bennett’s welt paintings. The welt paintings have thick red paint that is hidden by an overlaying black painted surface. Each whipping action reveals the red scar underneath. Gordon Bennett, whose face is wrapped in bandages, plays the overseer striding up and down in a black tuxedo and as Anne Marsh says, “the white tie of civilization.”\(^{40}\)

In the words of Homi Bhaba:

> What emerges between mimesis and mimicry is a writing, a mode of representation, that marginalizes the monumentality of history, quite simply mocks its power to be a model, that power which supposedly makes it imitable. Mimicry *repeats* rather than *re-presents* and in that diminishing perspective emerges.\(^{41}\)

\(^{38}\) ibid.


This, to my mind, is precisely what Gordon Bennett does in a performative sense. As Homi Bhaba says, “The question of the representation of difference is always also a problem of authority.”\(^{42}\) Gordon Bennett gives the oppressor a beating, a payback for past deeds in the hands of power and authority. Bennett challenges authority with his own displacing gaze. Homi Bhaba explains that:

> The process by which the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed and partial representation rearticulates the whole notion of identity and alienates it from essence…almost the same but not white: the visibility of mimicry is always produced at the site of interdiction.\(^ {43}\)

Anne Marsh suggests that this performance of Gordon Bennett as “the bandaged persecutor submits a hidden other to a severe beating whilst he is continuously threatened by his own dark shadow which haunts the stage.”\(^ {44}\) The backdrop for this performance is the projection of digitally manipulated images of his own history paintings where he references his own recognizable alphabet. Anne Marsh explains:

> A is for Aboriginal, B is for Bong, C is for Coon, D is for Darkie. This reinforces the projections of both the overt and covert violence of the work... Gordon Bennett deliberately shifts and complicates the signatures of power. The appropriate strategies of post modernism which questions originality and authorship are re–played throughout Bennett’s deconstruction of identity. All identity whether it be that of place, nation, individual or tribe is, according to Bennett, an identity constructed through the eyes of the Other, a position that is never stable but always becoming.\(^ {45}\)

My reaction to Gordon Bennett’s *Performance with Object for the Expiation of Guilt (Apple Premier Mix)* 1995 is visceral and physical. The images, sounds and actions have been etched into my sense memory as the affects of the force of trauma as art. Jill Bennett writes that “pain is placed at the nexus of social relationships so that like sense memory, pain is seen to be negotiated as a gnawing encounter.”\(^ {46}\) This is the crux of Gordon Bennett’s performance where

\(^{42}\) ibid. p.87.  
\(^{43}\) ibid. p. 87.  
\(^{45}\) ibid. p. 237.  
\(^{46}\) ibid. p. 237.
he dismantles stereotype through the force of mirroring its language and actions of abuse. Jill Bennett refers to Charlotte Delbo’s notion “that the aesthetic rendering of traumatic memory was the fact that it resisted historicization and preserved within memory the affective experience itself.” In this sense, I bear the force of Gordon Bennett’s performance as a physical blow where the experience of trauma is present. The same applies to the impact on me of Destiny Deacon’s work. Both artists have entered indelibly into my body as sense memory and this is the effect of powerful art.

In Conclusion

In returning to the context for A Prayer, The FaHCSIA: Report on Northern Territory Emergency Response Redesign Consultations 2009, the Australian Government, reported extensive consultation with communities who continue to struggle. There are small gains and continued frustrations. The legalities of the Intervention have been questioned, as have issues of Human Rights. This complex situation is ongoing. Indigenous voices like Marcia Langton, Noel Pearson and Patrick Dodson and artists like Gordon Bennett and Destiny Deacon, to name a very few, give grounds for hope. Their work demonstrates an evolving identity that both resists and challenges cultural stereotypes. A Prayer and The Crossing make a contribution to evolving identities from a non-Indigenous perspective. These performances were driven by an interactive process that, via two different methods, revealed the relations between people, identities and places. The Crossing being a collaborative work enabled a different translation of history to be perceived by the processes of performance and dance, guided through a definitive performance structure. A Prayer was an intervention-style performance that relied on surprise. The structural field of A Prayer was held within a specified moment and place and this defined its parameters. Unpredictability was overlayed with viewer interaction and the process of writing and reading the final chalk traces of the prayer. In this sense

---


the random relations did the speaking. The priority is given in these works to the live. The following chapter will focus on performances for the camera that prioritise the photographic image. *Faith in a Faithless Land, Southern Cross – to bear and behold, Vision* and *Between Somewhere and Nowhere* are discussed in relation to both historical and current imperatives that underlie relations between people, place and the impacts of climate change.
Figure 4.1 Jill Orr, *A Prayer*, 2007.
Figure 4.2 Jill Orr, *A Prayer*, 2007.
Figure 4.3 Jill Orr, *A Prayer*, 2007.
Figure 4.4 Jill Orr, *A Prayer*, 2007.
Photographer: Fiona Morrison for 24hrArt.
Photographer: Fiona Morrison for 24hrArt.
Figure 4.7. Destiny Deacon, *Melancholy* – From the Series *Sad and Bad*, 2000. Lamda print from Polaroid original, 80 x 100 cm. Edition of 15 + 2 A/Ps. Photo courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.
Light jet print from Polaroid original, 95 x 77cm. Edition of 20.
Photo courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.
Chapter 5: Performative Photography – Space, Place and Recurring History

How does space, place and recurring history impact on performance and performative photography in relation to selves and others and environment and culture? The works discussed are the photographic series, Faith in a Faithless Land, Southern Cross- to bear and behold, Vision and finally Between Somewhere and Nowhere. These are performances for the camera. Embedded within this chapter is a further development of “nature as culture”, coined by Janine Burke.¹ Recurring history, as trans-generational trauma, is further analysed from a psychoanalytic perspective in relation to Faith in a Faithless Land and Southern Cross- to bear and behold. I will develop and define this term in relation to these works as a departure from the preceding chapter. The question whether land also expresses trauma will be elaborated. In relation to each specific site, one can perceive a layered palimpsest where Walter Benjamin remarks that “each epoch dreams the next but in doing so, revises the one before it.”² However for Hal Foster the framing of historic transitions are complex and layered. Hal Foster writes:

There is no simple now: every present is non-synchronous, a mix of different times; thus there is no timely transition between the modern and the post modern. “In a sense each comes like sex(uality), too early or too late, and our consciousness of each is premature or after the fact.” In this regard modernism and post modernism must be seen in parallax, by which I mean that our framings of the two depend on our position in the present and that this position is defined in such framings.³

Faith in a Faithless Land

The framing of Faith in a Faithless Land comes from a twenty-first century Australian perspective where the physical traces of colonialism through land ownership and land use are reflections of cultural ideologies. Progress, economic growth and development shape attitudes towards both land and people. The missionary as a colonial instrument is one of the symbolic players in the historic construction of the British (white) colonization of Australia. To be shortly developed is Homi Bhaba’s, role of missionaries as complicit within the establishment of colonial power in Location of Culture. Coupled with economic production and progress associated with nation building, land productivity is central to the nation’s development.

I will begin with Ron Shaffer, Steven Deller and David Marcouiller in Community Economics: Linking theory and Practice, 2004, who explain land use from an economic and environmental perspective:

Land as a primary factor of production has provided a key basis for expansion across the globe. It has served as a critical production input and has been regularly used as a resource for both household subsistence and income generation while acting as an important tradable asset. Only through conscious public and private planning does land use take on attributes of being something other than a private commodity for use as a production input. This is important in understanding land use change and the implications for managing growth and maintaining land-based environmental quality in these regions... The unintended consequences of market –driven economic forces have left their mark on land and land-based resources... On a widespread scale, open spaces have been converted to residential neighbourhoods and commercial uses. Highways and transport systems... reflect economic prosperity. The nature of change with respect to land use has been rapid and complete.

The balance required for human and environmental sustainability, economic development and matters of the spirit, that may or may not be religious, are interlinked and interdependent particularly in relation to current environmental urgency. We seem to be witnessing the process of transformation where the past merges with the present and the present requires a different relationship to both

---

the land and each other. Both *Faith in a Faithless Land* and *Southern Cross – to bear and behold* differently visualize aspects of this transformation and perhaps allude to the current land use as the surface of a deeper relationship.

The missionary in *Faith in a Faithless Land* (See Chapter 5: Figures 5.1 to 5.4) is photographed on the vast expanse of Mitre Lake, a natural salt lake symbolic of hundreds of salt lakes that have appeared through drought and climate change. Located below Mitre Rock and Mount Arapiles in Western Victoria, the lake’s surface temporarily records the tracks of struggle between the hunter and prey as they fight for life. Their struggle pierces the salt surface, as do the missionary’s footsteps, to reveal the black sulphuric mud below. Seen from the mountain high above, the lake is surrounded by the regular patterns of farming with neat ploughed lines that mechanically curve around trees and other obstacles. This is the mere surface of a residual past whose echoes can be felt as both ancient, Australian Indigenous and alive. The land pulsates— it is an all-encompassing living entity. This site is a theatre of presence and absence. Concepts like belief or faith are in the human domain.

The photographic series that is *Faith in a Faithless Land* is an historical trace where emptiness can be seen as absence and silence understood as trauma. Here recurring history is repeated through footsteps that expose the sulphuric, oozing formlessness beneath the deceptive surface. The ooze could be imagined as a glimmer of the Lacanian Real where primordial illusion is unsettled in the trespass. The fact of walking over the fragile surface of Mitre Lake is a repetitive act. One step in front of the other. The Missionary is toting an ungainly cross that hinders ease of movement. It is both burden and crucifixion in one that Damian Smith refers to as “a point of earnest seriousness and blackest irreligious humour.” He is correct. However repetition for Hal Foster, following Freud, in *Return of the Real*, says that “the function of repetition is to repeat a traumatic event in actions, in dreams, in images, in order to integrate it into a

---

psychic economy; a symbolic order”. These works could register as a healing ritual where past actions are seen and accounted for. The action, one step after the other, the cross and the missionary are signifiers whose indexical traces of repetition are temporally imprinted on Mitre Lake’s surface, not unlike the photographic ontology. In an imaginative and symbolic sense, the lake itself could be seen as the Lacanian image screen, that is a surface stained by action. In this sense, disrupting or penetrating the surface is an act that traumatizes. The body of the lake itself could be seen as the all-encompassing gaze that is, in this instance, nature rather than as will be explained, culture.

Could the lake that has a crystalline surface that covers black ooze representative of the larger natural whole, become the gaze? Can identification with nature, as formulated in Lacan’s thesis on the subject and the gaze, become an alternative cultural form of collective psychic development? This notion is assisted by Kaja Silverman’s thoughts in *The Threshold of the Visible World*. Silverman writes:

> The screen derives from Seminar XI and is always conceptualised in relation to the gaze. Lacan suggests that the subject relies for his or her visual identity on external representation. However he refers to this representation as a screen rather than a mirror reflection. Moreover rather than simply mis-recognising him or herself within the screen, the subject is now assumed to rely for his or her structuring access to it on an “apprehensible” and un-localizable gaze, which ... has found its metaphor in the camera. In order to emerge within the field of vision, the subject must not only align him/herself identificatorily with the screen, but must be apprehended in that guise by the gaze.8

Rather than summarize Silverman’s thoughts, for clarity I have continued her thoughts in full. Silverman continues:

> The visual paradigm elaborated in *Four Fundamental Concepts*, is also calculated to underscore the often-involuntary nature of the imaginary subject and external image. Lacan sharply differentiates the gaze from the subject’s look, conferring visual authority, not in the look but on the gaze. He thereby suggests that what is determinable for each of us is not how we see ourselves but how we are perceived by the cultural gaze.9

---

Therefore if we visualize, through the gaze of “nature as culture”, our identification could be within a differently framed culture – one in which nature is incorporated. In this way, the culturally specific gaze, that is the backdrop of our identification, or non-identification, could be one in which the gaze is in synch with an environmentally sustainable future. Rather than the present gaze where cultural identification persists through an encompassing focus on economic and material progress at all costs. This huge shift in perception and identification seems to be tentatively re-balancing, as Foster says, in relation to modernism and post modernism, in parallax. Kaja Silverman suggests alternative approaches to visualising through the image screen of the cultural gaze.

Given that we cannot simply choose in any simple way in which we are seen, nor can we in any simple way conjure a new screen into place. We can struggle on a collective level to transform the existing one. Alternatively we can try at an individual level to substitute another image for the one through which we are conventionally seen or to deform or re-semanticize the normative image. All these options imply a preliminary acknowledgement of both the exteriority and the cultural constructedness of the images through which the subject assumes a visual identity.10

Silverman offers hope in the possibilities for cultural change. The image screen and gaze operate differently in other cultures where normalcy and identification operate within other gazes. For example, generally speaking, most indigenous cultures view the Earth and every living entity as sacred and the Earth as Mother. Within this cultural gaze, individuals identify with land as living and that humanity is but one species dependent on it. This view imbues respect towards all life. The gradual shift in Western cultural identification may be slowly becoming incorporated through, as Kaja Silverman says, “the cultural constructedness of the images through which the subject assumes a visual identity.”11

Visual identity from Anne Marsh’s analysis of Jacques Lacan’s subject and the gaze in the formation of visual identity, is what Marsh sees as Lacan’s panoptic gaze which is the gaze of an all seeing authority like that of surveillance. Marsh

10 ibid. pp 19-20
enables a different perspective, where the subject is incorporated within the picture. Anne Marsh explains:

It is necessary to re-examine Lacan’s thesis on the gaze in order to undermine the panoptic determinism and to recuperate a subject who is always part of the picture, especially as it is being made. In Lacan’s thesis the subject becomes a kind of virus infecting the picture.\textsuperscript{12}

Here the subject is always part of the picture, (also inferring the photograph) in the construction of identification. In this sense, it is a reiteration of Silverman who suggests, “All these options imply a preliminary acknowledgement of both the exteriority and the cultural constructedness of the images through which the subject assumes a visual identity.”\textsuperscript{13} This psychoanalytic framework of identification for Marsh and Silverman, is inclusive, in that the subject is included within the construction of images. But as Marsh states:

Lacan’s thesis on the gaze is enmeshed in his thesis on desire. This is made clear in his schematic diagram, which explains his concept of the gaze. The image screen in the diagram stops the subject from clearly positioning him or herself in the representation, as it has been conceived by optical perspective. The point at which the subject would be positioned in the Renaissance-type schema is the point at which the subject disappears in Lacan’s scheme.\textsuperscript{14}

Anne Marsh continues, “The field of vision explored by Lacan is full of traps, it is a labyrinth rather than a panopticon.”\textsuperscript{15} Therefore, in light of the ruse of a labyrinth, inclusion is the operative term. Inclusion within the labyrinth of representation and visual identification can also occur in the imaginative space opened up between binary structures. Within this field, that is alive with contradiction, desire and mis-recognition abound. Here forces and drives clash and caress and perhaps even morph into something else. This is an imaginary space where many binary opposites are placed next to each other so that

individual qualities become less distinct, like black and white, light and dark, male and female. They are distinguished as an infinity of shades in-between. Since the body is never fully available to itself because of the original trauma of separation and alienation, and where the Lacanian Real is an ever-present longing and fear, the shift towards “nature as culture” as an identificatory gaze is indeed full of traps and complexities. I will endeavour to realize this further in reference to Hal Foster’s *Return of the Real*.

**Return of the Real: A moment with Hal Foster**

The recurring impacts of trans-generational trauma and trauma itself is experienced by humanity across the ages in one guise or another. Does the Land express Trauma? This question is asked in philosophical terms and is implicated, although not necessarily obvious, in the *Faith in a Faithless Land* and *Southern Cross – to bear and behold* photographs. These questions are embedded in the works and can be revealed and imaginatively interpreted, should one desire. There is no fixed answer. Rather the space, place and recurring history are relational and hover somewhere between the photograph and the viewer. Again the interpretive framework reflects one’s position. Hal Foster writes that “for Lacan, repetition serves to screen the real, understood as traumatic.”

But this very need [for repetition] also points to the real, and at this point the real ruptures the screen of repetition. It is a rupture less in the world than in the subject – between the perception and the consciousness of a subject touched by an image...Lacan calls this traumatic point tuche; in Camera Lucida, Barthes calls it punctum.17

The tuche, punctum and rupture are perceived by the viewer. I perceive that the surface of the lake, like any other of Earth’s surfaces, reacts to a tear as traumatic. This tear can come from the hand of man or as a natural adjustment from the Earth itself. The consequences of trauma are different for the Earth

17 ibid. p. 132.
that reacts to re-balance. For human dependence, the consequences of Earth’s re-balance are precarious and potentially unsustainable. Whose trauma does *Faith in a Faithless Land* allude to? Indeed although the missionary, is a misplaced evangelist who wears the brute action and consequent guilt of trespass as a sign in this photographic image, the trauma lies with the original tribe, of the Mitre Lake region. The Djurite Balug people from the 1840s died from European diseases and massacres. Their dislocated survivors were sent to mission stations and now very few descendents remain.18

In a phenomenological sense, when I stood at the top of Mt. Arapiles and walked across Mitre Lake, I could feel the layers of past Aboriginal generations just below the surface, in part as age-old communities and in part as the howl of trans-generational haunting. Judy Atkinson who has written extensively on Australian Indigenous trauma writes, “intergenerational transmission of trauma occurs through directly experiencing trauma or through visually or aurally sharing the traumatic experiences of others.”19 I cannot say how the viewer will react to these photographic images nor can I even suggest that the images themselves are traumatic but located beneath the surface, the invisible historical impact on both people and place, is the site of trauma.

One step in front of another, there are mis-recognitions and blind spots alluding to that, which cannot be seen. Hal Foster proposes another term:

> Where subjectivity is not set once and for all; it is structured as a relay of anticipations and reconstructions of traumatic events... One event is only registered through another that recodes it; we come to be who we are only in deferred action. (Nachtraglichkeit).20

Further to this Hal Foster continues:

---

Historical and neo-avant gardes are constituted in a similar way, as a continual process of protension and retention, a complex relay of anticipated futures and reconstituted pasts – in short, in a deferred action that throws over any simple scheme of before and after, cause and effect, origins and repetition.\textsuperscript{21}

The term “deferred action” can apply to an awareness of past events and visions of the future as an overlapping transition in constant evolution. However the impacts of trans-generational trauma, being un-nameable, unspeakable and in that register, frozen outside the symbolic, demonstrate the symptoms and effects of an unfinished past and an unrealised future. Here complicity between people and place is enmeshed through deferred action. As faith and belief are in the human domain, \textit{Faith in a Faithless Land} is situated in a collision between human ideology and ecological processes. Against the paradigm of nature as commerce, human ideology and ecological processes seem both non-relational and operate in parallax. That is the earth and natural ecologies each operate on their own terms independent of human psychological structure including desire and need. In \textit{Faith in a Faithless Land}, the missionary is a decoy character, carrying the cross as a belief system across nature’s surface. The lake itself as a signifier of the greater environment holds all within it. Should the lake stand in for culture, and the missionary and belief system be seen within nature’s cultural gaze, then “nature as culture” could be framed as a new gaze of identification. This new framing may result in an empathetic, sustaining and co-operative relation towards the natural environment including all life within it. Discussed shortly is the stand-in as a decoy, which operates differently, in Peggy Phalen’s terms.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{Southern Cross – to bear and behold}

My own recurring history can be seen through the re-staging of the 1989, \textit{Walking on Planet Earth} (See Chapter 1: figure 1.14). This image, photographed by Virginia Fraser, is taken in Clifton Hill, Melbourne. In 1989, I wrote “\textit{Imagine it is so hot that your very protection bursts into flames.”}\textsuperscript{23} The same words inspired

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{21} ibid. p. 29. \\
\textsuperscript{23} Jill Orr Archives
\end{flushleft}
me to recreate the action for the series, *Southern Cross – to bear and behold* (See Chapter 5: Figure 5.7). The passage of twenty-three years is pertinent where the acceleration of climate change has become an international imperative of great urgency. Hand in hand with scientific and technological change, art plays an active role particularly in the development of a culture that imbes respect to the Earth and all that lives within her. The ideologies, identifications and implementations vary across cultures and reflect relations to place that in some way or another are spiritually and materially incorporated. Collaborative practices, global networks and local empowerment are some methods utilized by artists towards a sustainable future. It is not my intention to trace this history or elaborate on the science or politics of climate change. The task here is to conceptualise the images that ultimately speak on their own terms as performative and poetic photographs in relation to place and environment.

The series, *Southern Cross – to bear and behold* (See Chapter 5: Figures 5.5 to 5.8) includes images of a burning umbrella and a flame, amongst others, that were conceived as images of transition towards hope. Amidst the complex, often fearful, cynical and fundamental activisms of many sides, the responses towards the challenges of climate change are as huge in the socio-cultural realm as they are on scientific and economic domains. These photographic images depict fire as symbolic of both destruction and restoration. Fire needs matter to fuel its flame. Spirit is the heat of flame that ascends ethereally. This could be a metaphysics or indeed poetic transcendence through image into a register that is not so specifically or pedantically bound into the yes and no’s of politics. There is more room to move. The other images in the series are reflections of the body on the lakes’ slightly wet surface. Perhaps it is here, rather than penetrating the image screen with the footsteps of past actions that *Faith in a Faithless Land* conjures, *The Southern Cross – to bear and behold* performs a double mirror or a stain in the image screen. Fundamental to this reading is Jacques Lacan’s mirror stage written in *The Mirror Stage’s Formative of the Function of the “I” as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience*. Jacques Lacan writes:

The child, at an age when he is for a time, however short, outdone by the chimpanzee in instrumental intelligence, can nevertheless already recognize as
such his own image in a mirror. This recognition is indicated in the illuminative mimicry of the Aha-Erlebnis which Kohler sees as the expression of situational apperception, an essential stage of the act of intelligence. ... in the case of the child ... (he) experiences the reflected environment and between this virtual complex and the reality it repudiates – the child’s own body, and the persons and things around him.  

The mirror stage helps to highlight an individual’s identification with and separation from others as the earliest formation of a self that is embodied individually. Perhaps this construction of separation, may be part of the conundrum in which the complex relations expressed towards climate change, may be found. Hal Foster writes about identification and alienation through the Mirror stage in a manner that I feel articulates the mechanisms of identification that foregrounds my own proposition, that the cultural gaze can incorporate nature and thereby change cultural priority. Hal Foster writes:

Lacan argues that the ego is first formed in a primordial apprehension of our body in a mirror... an anticipatory image of corporeal unity that as infants we do not yet possess. This image founds our ego in this infantile moment as imaginary, that is, as locked in an identification that is also alienation. For at the very moment we see ourselves in the mirror we see this self as image as other; moreover that we see ourselves it is usually confirmed by another – the adult in whose presence the recognition is made.

Most importantly for Lacan, as Foster suggests:

This imaginary unity of the mirror stage produces a retroactive fantasy of a prior stage when our body was still in pieces, a fantasy of a chaotic body, fragmentary and fluid, given over to drives that always threaten to overwhelm us, a fantasy that haunts us for the rest of our life – all those pressured moments when one feels about to shatter. In a sense the ego is pledged against the chaotic world within and without – but especially without, against all others who seem to represent this chaos.

Foster is describing Lacan’s Real, but here is the link into the forces of human nature that are at work when contemplating a new identificatory paradigm. Foster continues:

---


However this armoured and aggressive subject is not just any being across history and culture: it is the modern subject as paranoid, even fascistic. Ghosted in Lacan’s theory is a contemporary history of which fascism is the extreme symptom: a history of world war and military mutilation of industrial discipline and mechanistic fragmentation of mercenary murder and political terror. In relation to such events the modern subject becomes armoured – against otherness within (sexuality, the unconsciousness) and without (for the fascist this can mean Jews, Communists, gays, women) all figures of this fear of the body in pieces come again.27

In terms of the indigenous as Other, white as an “invisible Other,” the land as Other, coupled with the fearful impacts of climate change, another Other – and the cultural changes that are required if environmental redress is to become effective, fear of the body, within and without, in uncontrollable pieces, is the Lacanian Real at play. I think that fearful paralysis can begin dissolving through awareness, empowerment and hope as active ingredients in the cultural shift towards “nature as culture.” This may be a flawed and romantic dream at worst or an image of a possible future at best but the thought is set free amongst the flotsam and jetsam of the collective conscious, into the battle of collective will. This tide, as history documents, gradually changes.

The following section discusses hope and empowerment through art.

**Vision, Place and Eco-Cubbies**

*Vision* is a collaborative work involving students from the Avoca Primary School. I worked as an artist in residence to assist the grade five and six students to create life size cubbies constructed from recycled materials. The cubbies were shown on the banks of the Avoca River in the *Avoca Eco-Living Festival*, in 2007. The festival was and still is created and directed by the artist, Lyndal Jones. The *Vision* photographs were taken during a getting-to-know-you session at the school at the beginning of the project. I will return to this shortly.

*The Eco-Living Festival* is part of Lyndal Jones’ longer term *Avoca Project* that is

---

centred on environmental sustainability. It seeks to empower through constructive and positive engagement with the Avoca community, as a regional model for the sustainability of townships impacted by unemployment and climate change. National and international artistic collaborations and dialogue between scholars and environmental scientists are integrated into the broad spectrum of the Avoca Project. This multi-dimensional body of interactive work acts as an interface between art, community and science. It is facilitated around Watford House, owned by Lyndal Jones in Avoca, regional Victoria.

Claire Doherty writes:

Watford House has become both the subject and medium, the object model and platform, for a process of imagining by this resident and transient community. It is an ongoing process of transformation and recuperation.28

Lyndal Jones’ web site describes Watford House as the locally termed, Swiss House. Lyndal Jones writes:

The Swiss House is a prefabricated gold-rush residence that was imported from Germany in 1850. This house is an immigrant, its walls revealing stories of wealth and a European glamour now faded by the harshness of the climate and the decreasing services that are the result of globalisation and drought in rural Australia. 29

Claire Doherty in reference to The Avoca Project draws on models whereby “the artist’s primary authorship is used as a visionary means to engage participants and visitors and to secure financial support”.30 Doherty also says that, “ownership of the project invariably becomes exchanged and shared through authorship of specific facets of the project that might be clearly identified such as particular architectural interventions, residencies or texts.”31 My work building cubbies with the Avoca Primary School is seen in this context however the Vision photographs are a separate adjunct produced as images for this research. The collaborative models between The Crossing and the Avoca Project are different in

each case. The Crossing is a short-term collaboration in a temporary site compared to the Avoca Project whose site is consistent although participants vary.

In terms of space, place and recurring history to this point I have referred to site as place – the words, space, place and recurring history do flow more fluidly as a thesis title and question. However a distinction here is necessary between the place of Avoca, the township and the site of both the school and the Avoca River where the cubbies were installed for the Eco-Living Festival. The children, teachers, parents, community and transient artists viewed the colourful cubbies with enthusiasm. The Avoca Project manifests in the interactive site on the banks of the Avoca River. It was imaginatively inspired and created, at the Avoca Primary School where both the photo-shoot for Vision and the creation of recycled cubbies occurred.

Central to the Vision photographs is imagination where the states of seeing and imaging are explored by the students and photographed as portraits in each state. The state of seeing employs a direct gaze whilst in the state of imagining, the eyes are closed. To enable a relaxed atmosphere full of possibility, I set up a photo-shoot where local clay was used as a mask. The children thought this brought out their inner warrior. The technique of absorption, discussed in earlier chapters, in this case was facilitated by the performance of active imagination. The students visualised themselves five years into the future, the time chosen because that would place them as young adults. The closed eye image is an expression of interiority. By contrast the direct gaze, or facingness, is employed where individual agency is acting directly in the world. The students’ preparedness to embrace being seen both absorbed and facing the world, through the camera, is greatly assisted by their perception of being masked. I did direct them not to put a smile on for the camera and just to look straight at the lens which most of them achieved. That focus enabled their “inner – being” to shine through the white clay mask. Eyes are perceived to be both the window to and from the soul and in this way the children stand on their own terms, looking directly outwards.
The site is the child’s face where the land is reflected and so is climate change. As I stripped the colour from the images in photo-shop, it was both surprising and shocking to see the moles, freckles and other disturbances on the sun-kissed skin. This has become synonymous with melanoma. Their faces have become a mirror reflecting their place. When the eyes are open, the faces are alert and engaged. Compared to the softened relaxed face with closed eyes, being absorbed in the act of imagining. The difference between these states is palpable. The face in interior state is soft and a subtle connection through visualisation that is an identification with self and dreams seems visible. The eyes open images show engagement with the other where the face is alive, alert and seeing. Both states are necessary in life. The opportunity has not yet risen that would enable the production of the entire suite of fifty eyes open and fifty eyes closed portraits. Nevertheless by framing the children’s faces, closely cropped, there is no “body” to complicate the reading. (I was conscious of the hysterical debates surrounding Bill Henson’s images of nude adolescents in what some have called “pornographic”). Vision faces the world through seeing what is there and dreams of future worlds as becoming. The act of seeing and imaging space, place and recurring history is revealed as a surface between interior and exterior identification that wears the trace of place on the surface, an image screen between the subject and the gaze where identification could be seen as the gaze of “nature as culture”.

The cubbies are the student’s work and the framework for imaging the possibilities for the cubbies included consideration of power and water supply. They were briefed to invent a structure that was big enough for the groups of four and five students per cubby to fit in. Many did not think this was possible but the proof came in the end as well as the experience of working collaboratively together. (See Chapter5: Figures 5.9 to 5.12).
Between Somewhere and Nowhere

The final work, *Between Somewhere and Nowhere*, is in a sense a non-site because the work was created in an artificially contrived installation of pure theatre where the performance body becomes a no-body or a phantasm echoing cultural signifiers. By stripping place and site from the image but inserting recognisable elements like a canoe, or a bird, a white wig, smoke and lights, I have created a screen of desire that operates at the surface of the photograph. The operation became very clear when the work was shown at the Jenny Port Gallery in October 2011. Viewers responded, describing the spooky feeling of watching horror films or the primordial space of unease. In this sense the Lacanian Real is not far away. These works are pure illusion where desire is in full operation. I don’t think these works operate in sexual terms, but they are pitched as icons of desire, specifically the desire to experience nature that, in these times of material culture is impossible without the correct canoe, the riding gear and the correct labelled look. That is a small impetus and the work does not rest on label alone. “Culture as nature” is the modus operandi where phantasms and fantasy are forces within the images that are carried forward through the viewer.

There is no-body. It has largely been evacuated. Some images included a part of the body but the wig conceals. This cheap wig is also a mask whose reading was seen as Japanese, horror movie and an old woman. The surface has triggered many associations, all of them cultural. This work took a long time to articulate and name. *Between Somewhere and Nowhere* is the space between a no-place binary. A no-time, A no-culture, A no-nature, A no-body. It is everywhere and nowhere. It is caught between a cultural imaginary and a desire to experience life in extremis as the thrill of canoeing rapids. It’s flavoured with Johnny Depp’s performance in Jim Jarmusch’s 1995 film, *Dead Man* and the ancient story of the Ferry-man on the River Styx guiding souls to the other side. It is a secret that is shrouded and mysterious. It is Plato’s Cave where reality is mediated by the shadows formed by the firelight. In the vein of storytelling, I have been drawn to Jacques Lacan’s story of the lamella as one that has the feel and ultimately the
content that somehow eludes my grasp as surely as it is there.

Lacan reveals:

“Whenver the membranes of the egg in which the foetus emerges on its way to becoming a new-born are broken, imagine for a moment that something flies off, and that one can do it with an egg as easily as with a man, namely the "hommelette", or the lamella.

The lamella is something extra-flat, which moves like the amoeba. It is just a little more complicated. But it goes everywhere.

And as it is something that is related to what the sexed being loses in sexuality, it is, like the amoeba in relation to sexed beings, immortal - because it survives any division, and scissiparous intervention.

And it can turn around.

But suppose it comes and envelops your face while you are quietly asleep... This lamella, this organ, whose characteristic is not to exist, but which is nevertheless an organ - I can give you more details as to its zoological place - is the libido.

It is the libido, qua pure life instinct, that is to say, immortal life, irrepressible life, life that has need of no organ, simplified, indestructible life.

It is precisely what is subtracted from the living being by virtue of the fact that it is subject to the cycle of sexed reproduction. And it is this that all thee forms of the 'object a' that can be enumerated are the representatives, the equivalents.”

The lamella is present everywhere and irrepressibly plays havoc with selves, others, vision, image screens, gazes, subjectivities and desire. Libido is a force of nature that Slavoj Zizek imagines as “something that is first heard as a shrilling sound and then pops up as a monstrously distorted body”. For Slavoj Zizek “the lamella is an entity of pure surface, without the density of a substance, an infinitely plastic object that can not only incessantly change its form, but can even transpose itself from one to another medium.” Zizek says “A lamella is

---


34 ibid. p. 2.

35 ibid. p. 2.
indivisible, indestructible, and immortal - more precisely, undead.” What I have gleaned from viewers’ reactions to *Between Somewhere and Nowhere* is not an actual account of the image or a comparison to other images. Viewers have described their reactions in terms of an overwhelming feeling. The precise feeling varied as did the image triggering the feeling. In this way the viewers were expressing what I had trouble putting my finger on and yet the feeling was, for me, everywhere I looked. Lacan’s lamella, the libido that is saturated with desire seem to locate the feeling that bounces off the surface of the photographs coupled by the content that resides in pure fantasy. Slavoj Zizek writes:

As Lacan says, the lamella does not exist, it insists: it is unreal, an entity of pure semblance, a multiplicity of appearances, which seem to envelop a central void - its status is purely fantasmatic.

It is specifically Zizek’s reading of Lacan in relation to mediations of contemporary culture that have enabled me to frame the work further. Slavoj Zizek writes:

This blind indestructible insistence of the libido is what Freud called death drive – an uncanny excess of life, for an undead urge which persists beyond the (biological) cycle of life and death, of generation and corruption.

It will not go away. We have probably each experienced a version of the libido’s insistence through the death drive. Perhaps no more so than when we have done something propelled by pure impulse that in retrospect it is a miracle that one survived, only to do it again. Zizek says that:

This is why Freud equates death drive with the so-called ‘compulsion-to-repeat’, an uncanny urge to repeat painful past experiences which seems to outgrow the natural limitations of the organism affected by it and to insist even beyond the organism’s death. This excess inscribes itself into the human body in the guise of a wound, which makes the subject ‘undead’, depriving him of the capacity to die.

A deferred action in Foster’s terms, or the repetitive compulsion driven by inter-generational trauma and the death-drive, in each instance, will not go away.

---

36 Ibid. p. 2.
37 Ibid. p. 2.
38 Ibid. p. 3.
In terms of “nature as culture”, the Between Somewhere and Nowhere series has taken a different approach where pure surface is the site that actively, rather than theoretically, functions as the image screen between the subject and the gaze. The photographic mediation loses something in translation just as the subject and viewer perceive through their loss. This is explained further by Zizek and applies to this work. Zizek writes:

It is neither the cobweb of the Imaginary (illusions, misperceptions), which distorts what we perceive, nor the "wall of language", the symbolic network through which we relate to reality, but another Real. This Real is for Lacan the Real inscribed into the very core of human sexuality: there is no sexual relationship, human sexuality is marked by an irreducible failure, sexual difference is the antagonism of the two sexual positions between which there is no common denominator, enjoyment can be gained only against the background of a fundamental loss.\(^\text{39}\)

Imaginary illusions and the symbolic network through which we relate are at the centre and on the surface of Between Somewhere and Nowhere where the background of fundamental loss has been experienced by some viewers as images of a horror movie. The real, meaning actual, factual and not imagined, has been removed and replaced by pure imaginative theatricality. Nevertheless despite the unreality the Lacanian Real is not far away.

Each of the works discussed in this chapter are performances for the camera that I direct and perform in collaboration with the photographer. They are photographs from an event where there is no audience and priority is given to the photograph, as the first and final artwork. The following conclusion will bring together a summary of this chapter and then conclude the findings of this research.

**In Conclusion**

By attempting to link our visual identification through the Lacanian image screen and the gaze, the gaze was found to be cultural, that is the background

\(^{39}\) ibid. p. 4.
upon which visual recognition and identification is made. The self in relation to
the other is part of the same dynamic visual construction that reflects the
cultural construction of individual and collective identification. The notion that
“nature as culture” is an open field that could become the gaze, rather than the
restricted and competitive binary between nature verses culture, has
significance to our perceptions of, and identification with, an environmentally
sustainable earth. By seeing Earth as alive, and thereby granting it status as a
subject that participates in the Lacanian subject and the gaze formulation, Mitre
Lake became a symbolic representation of nature’s gaze of which we are all part.
Trouble begins when desire, mis-representation and the Lacanian Real interrupt,
pierce and distort identification.

The Lacanian Real is present in various guises that impact on people and their
relation to place. The symptoms of trans-generational trauma and deferred
action operate through the repetitive impulses of the death-drive and can
possibly account for the continual wounding of selves, others and places. The
force of the libido, as the drive that Lacan describes in his story of the lamella, is
felt everywhere, and is for Zizek, “undead.” The lamella in relation to any
position on climate change or anything else becomes a complex process. By
opening the binary into “nature as culture”, or a similar framing where nature is
incorporated within the subject identification of the cultural gaze, there may be
healing and repair as a possible outcome that includes and acknowledges rather
than represses the real and its unconscious force, the Real. Alienation, longing,
the body shattered into bits are all part of an entirety whose largess is beyond
imagination and its formless presence is life. “Nature as culture” goes some way
towards this incorporation. From another perspective, the notion of “nature as
culture”, like all notions, will float along side or be incorporated into the vast
stream of collective ideas where an eventual cumulative shift may be as
profound as the historical moments when people understood that the world is
round. But on the ground, in practical senses this shift in thinking is too slow for
the rapidly accelerating rise in the Earth’s temperature that is impacting on the
ecological organism. The stakes in terms of climate change rise exponentially,
potentially describing another Lacanian Real. As Slavoj Zizek says, “If there is a
notion of the real, it is extremely complex and, because of this, incomprehensible, it cannot be comprehended in a way that would make an All out of it.”

The performative photographs discussed in Chapter 5, contribute to cultural dialogue through their visualization of spaces, places and recurring histories that relate to land, self and the other. Some images like Southern Cross – to bear and behold have been in the public imaginary since their inception in 2008. These photographs have been included in Heat, Art and Climate Change at RMIT, and have been used for the publicity image for that show. This work has been on the Monash University Art and Design home page and several other publications. It is represented in the National Gallery of Victoria along with Faith in a Faithless Land. These works are now represented in public and private other collections. The Vision installation initially shown at the Jenny Port Gallery was later installed by invitation as a guest artist in the 2011 Castlemaine Festival. The final work for this research, Between Somewhere and Nowhere 2011, is on its way to joining the others in the public imaginary as a vehicle for cultural dialogue. These works are doing what they need to do, that is perform as photographs with a life of their own.

Collaboration and remediation, discussed in Chapter 2, are central to the production of work both designed for the art market and as experimental performance artworks. Both occupy a crucial place in the function of art and the ability to pro-actively address aesthetic, political and cultural issues. The function of the Photographer’s agreement is a clear and concise agreement that designates copyright to, in my performances for the camera, Jill Orr. As the employer of the photographer whose skills and collaboration during the photo-shoot are utilized, it is the legally recognized structure through which to assign the agreed copyright that is respected by all parties. In return is the photographer’s acknowledgement and fee. This ensures there is clarity of ownership for both authenticity and commercial uses.

40 ibid. p. 5.
The question, “did you have to be present at the live performance in order to appreciate and analyse the work?”, central to Chapter 2, has been discussed in terms of remediation. Also addressed is the power of performative photographs and video, directed by the artist, as art works that can impact in their own terms. In light of recent international exhibitions where documentation is the only trace left of performances, the value of straight documentation itself, as material that is validated for its vital historical impact on current performative mediums, provides material for research by generations that could not have been present. Ultimately one cannot reproduce the live moment because it becomes something else. That is, it becomes a photograph, video or online entity which is received in the terms and parameters of the medium through which it is remediated. I have referred to an article written by Anne Marsh in consultation with me, regarding a restored video of the live 1980 performance, She Had Long Golden Hair. Due to word length I have placed excerpts in the Appendix (p.141.) This writing is a compelling case for the liveliness of remediation and the foibles of memory.

What space, place and recurring history impacts on performance art is also read through a language that can be used in any medium where the body is subject. This has been discussed in reference to Michael Fried’s terms of facingness, to-be-seenness and absorption. These are not only terms, but can also be methods or modes of performative states of being, in which presence of the subject and the gaze are implicated for both the performer and the viewer.

In Chapter 3, the body as a direct means of communication has been central to the collaborative live event, The Crossing, where agency between the Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous performers, was paramount. The Crossing is a work where multiple realities, belief systems, histories and different relations to place come together through a ritualised performance frame. Through trust and daring as the basis of improvisation, a new possible reality was conjured. Led by

the Latche Latche elder, Peter Peterson, Australian Indigenous disempowerment was redressed as an alternate power balance. This work was experienced and deeply appreciated by those present and goes some way to provide positive experiences for the young Koorie dancers whose experience of white authority is one of punishment. Through the making of this work, each performer, and audience member, could see the Other as a participant in a larger collaborative whole. This was differently developed in Chapter 4, where the live interventionist performance, *A Prayer*, that incorporated all random interaction on the site of a busy Darwin market place, as part of the performance frame. *A Prayer*, set against the background of the Howard Government’s Intervention into Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, acknowledged my own complicity, through the character of a nun, and was a prayer for actual consultative reconciliation with and respect for Australian Indigenous people.

Performances for the camera, central to the Chapter 5, and the discussion, on the space, place and recurring histories that have impacted on land and her people, is told through the photographic series, *Faith in a Faithless Land, Southern Cross*—*to bear and behold, Vision and Between Somewhere and Nowhere*. These images are poetic responses to this research. “Nature as culture” is framed as an alternate gaze through which sustainability may occur. The unpredictability and force of energies that in Lacan’s terms is expressed through his story of the lamella,42 and which Slavoj Zizek calls the “undead,”43 is the power of the life force that incorporates everything in its wake. Like a plant that pushes its way through tiny cracks in concrete, the power of art to penetrate the impenetrable, has the potential to assist in the psycho-social transformation of spaces, places and recurring histories.

Figure 5.1. Jill Orr, *Faith in a Faithless Land*, 2007-09. 
Ink jet print on museo silver rag, 165 x 125cm. Edition of 5. 
Photographer: Naomi Herzog for Jill Orr. 
Jill Orr ©
Figure 5.2. Jill Orr, *Faith in a Faithless Land – footprints*, 2007-09. 
Ink jet print on museo silver rag, 94 x 160cm. Edition of 5. 
Photographer: Naomi Herzog for Jill Orr. 
Jill Orr ©