

Undercurrent



Undercurrent aims to contribute to the ongoing development of critical and aesthetic debate concerning contemporary photo-media practice by engaging photo-media artists, curators, writers and other interested parties, across all borders (national and international).

Co-produced by Edward James and Gregory Ackland, the motivating factor for Undercurrent is to develop a broader audience for photography, and to generate a greater public understanding of various photo-media practices through the process of exhibitions, artists talks and critical writing.

Undercurrent is a collective of 9 photo-media artists originally from South Australia, promoting their individual art practices within a group environment and highlighting the diversity of South Australian photo-media art. As a group, Undercurrent actively engages a philosophy of promoting photo-media arts to a wider audience. This element is the key to understanding the makeup of the collective.

Undercurrent artists are: Gregory Ackland (SA), Jen Brazier (QLD), Edward James (SA), Mimi Kelly (NSW), Rachel McElwee (SA), Will Nolan (SA), Amy Patterson (SA), Beverley Southcott (NSW), and Danielle Walpole (SA).

Gregory Ackland

Bottom
Gregory Ackland
A View to a Death, 2008
Giclée print on Hahnemühle German Etching Paper
81.3 x 94.8cm | Edition of 5



Right
Gregory Ackland
The Sound of the Shell, 2008
Giclée print on Hahnemühle German Etching Paper
81.3 x 94.8cm | Edition of 5



Gregory Ackland's work is masculine, earthy and wild. His photographs are dominated by nature: cracks of light seep across the boughs and debris of darkened undergrowth, while shadows dance across layers of ochre rock face. A figure clammers, small against a slope slippery with stones — a long scar smashed into the jungle. The images recount a place of leaf litter, detritus and decay; nature in a state of silent struggle. His work conveys a landscape (both physical and mental) that is spoiled and destroyed, but from which a new sense of beauty and innocence can be found.

In *A View to a Death* a man stands against an imposing incline of soil and undergrowth. Despite the recognisable symbols of strength — tattoos and an inherently masculine demeanor — there is an undeniable sense of trepidation and discomfort. At the same time, the landscape exposes its own fragility, with visible signs of destruction and defilement at the hands of humanity.

This sense of fear and alienation is strengthened in the shadows of *Gift for the Darkness*, which spread across the image, inhibiting the ability to understand the environment and consuming the small and silent figure standing amongst the briars and debris of the darkened space.

Mute and melancholy tones reference the landscape traditions of Corot and his contemporaries, yet the images are denied a horizon or a clear *repoussoir* — or framing device — through which to make sense of the site. Without these clear navigational references, the viewer is unable to dominate or take ownership of the view and remains, like the figure lost amongst the landscape, subservient to its untamed and impenetrable nature.

While it is possible to associate Gregory Ackland's practice with the dramatic landscape tradition of Constable and Turner, it is also deeply connected to William Golding's allegorical masterpiece, *The Lord of the Flies*, and its investigation of society and savagery, environment and intervention. These literary themes of unbridled nature and the pursuit of power are similar to those in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialect of Enlightenment*, binding together the rationalisation of nature that became the Enlightenment with the modern revolution of fascism and domination. The images, like Golding's frightening fable, follow the ideals of the Counter-Enlightenment: both a reaction against the scientific rationalisation of nature and an ascription to the emotions of trepidation, terror and awe. There is a realisation that in nature's reclamation of these abandoned spaces there is a return of innocence, beauty and of the majesty of untamed nature.

Ackland's work is also driven by an inquiry into the act of viewing. Photography, more than any other medium, rarely demands active consideration. We are so proliferated by photographic imagery — on billboards, television and magazines — that photographs rarely garner more than a cursory glance. By changing the viewing framework — whether through exhibition spaces lit only with torches or photographs driven by traditional painting techniques — Ackland demands a slowed gaze and detailed consideration from his audiences.

Gregory Ackland's photography is part of an ongoing inquisition of human presence in, and emotional connection to, the urban and natural environments. His work questions the dual states of nature and urbanity, and the overlying spaces of refuge, fear and alienation. There is a vulnerability that extends throughout his work — a frailty of both nature and humanity. These themes of isolation, fragility and belonging reappear throughout the images. The figures in Gregory Ackland's large scale photographic landscapes remain anonymous and unknown, often disappearing into the mass of the photograph, yet endure as saturnine symbols for the exquisite melancholy of beauty and destruction.

Gregory Ackland and Edward James are the co-producers of the *Undercurrent* photo-media collective. Gregory graduated from Adelaide Centre for the Arts with a Bachelor of Visual Art & Applied Design in 2004. He has exhibited in South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland, prior to his first show in New South Wales at MOP Projects in 2010. In 2005 his work was included in *Hatched*, the National Graduate exhibition held at PICA, WA. He was also a semi-finalist in the 2008 *Hasselblad Masters* photography competition. Gregory Ackland is currently a lecturer and coordinator of Photography and Digital Media at Adelaide College of the Arts.

Lauren Tomczak

Jen Brazier



Top
Jen Brazier
Menace # 4, 2010
Giclée print on Cotton Rag paper
100 x 150cm | Edition of 8

Right
Jen Brazier
Fools Gold # 3, 2010
Giclée print on Cotton Rag paper
100 x 150cm | Edition of 8



The artist would like to greatly thank Linda Carroli, Svenja Kratz and Michelle Oxenham.
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Threshold... emerging from the shadow

Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. At all counts, it forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions. Dr Carl G. Jung

Menace is a series of large format photographic works that pivot on the tension between and juxtaposition of two — seemingly opposing — female figures in a littoral setting. Through this work Jen Brazier evokes and explores liminality: set on the cusp of water and earth, day and night, shadow and light. The interplay of light and dark is central to the work's symbolic construction and aesthetic nuance, suggesting more than an opposition; rather, a point of change or a threshold that must be crossed. One figure is impossibly golden and radiant in the dusk while the other more shadowy figure emerges from murky waters. One figure is composed and ordered, while the other is chthonic, rising from the mud, the shadows and the swamp. The golden figure is strangely oblivious and self-absorbed. Her own radiance seems to blind her and does not illuminate the likely threat that is looming.

It seems appropriate, perhaps even obvious, to address the *Menace* series through Jung's psychoanalytic writing about the shadow. The shadow is that part of ourselves that is undeveloped, unconscious, repressed and denied. However, the artist upholds that she is endeavouring to coax an exploration of self beyond the surface, beyond how things first appear. The tension is not between separate characters symbolising opposing qualities external to us, but unfolding in ourselves and of ourselves. The shadow is, as Jung proposes, that part of ourselves that we elect not to see, the part we disavow and cast aside. The shadow can be vested with positive, even harmless, attributes. Yet, as the situations and dramas presented in Brazier's *Menace* series demonstrate, refusal does not equate with erasure. A complex negotiation between these figures must ensue. The shadow is present; it is with us, wanting us, waiting for us.

Fundamentally and historically, photography involves the manipulation of light and dark and the apprehension of light and dark. It is a mode of representation and image making that is regarded as reflecting reality and telling it as it is. Brazier explores the shadows of this medium for dramatic effect. Even though the *Menace* series does not dwell on truths, it nevertheless rises from the fact of its creation, including the performative engagement of the two models and the fact of its own manipulation, in the narrative of our own multiplicity and obscured realism. That is one of photography's ironies: so susceptible to manipulation, yet vested with truth-telling.

Brazier's work evokes mythic and dreamlike scenes that resonate with other cultural representations of psychodrama ranging from mysterious folklore about liminoid outsiders and monsters to shadowy scenes in horror and thriller films. As Jung proposes, the unconscious is truly unconscious - humans experience the unconscious through symbols encountered in myth, folklore, dreams, art, religion and symbolic dramas. Brazier's work calls on us to touch our unconscious, to live that drama and to consider what may be retrieved from our own shadows. The works are intended as mirrors and Brazier seems to ask that we seek and see something of ourselves within their field of vision.

It is not as simple as the illusion of light and dark. The works endeavour to raise an awareness of our complexity — our psyche — by evoking tropes of mythopoetic power. They are triggers for conscious and unconscious, rational and non-rational exploration through experience and awareness. In acknowledging that the shadow exists, a subject can be shown her light and be in touch with her self.

Jen Brazier's work often utilises long exposure and alternative lighting techniques in an attempt to gain a sense of the 'unreal', lending itself more readily to her conceptual aims to delve into states of mind, rather than just the documentation of a concept. Brazier graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts and Applied Design from Adelaide College of the Arts in 2003. Since completing her studies, she has presented work across the country, significantly in South Australia and Queensland. Her work and collaborations have received nominations and shortlistings in several awards including the Yellowglen Young Photographers' Awards and the Adelaide Fringe Awards

Linda Carroli

Edward James



Edward James
Black Sky Blue #1, 2010
Giclée print
140 x 140cm | Edition of 8

Edward James is a visual alchemist on a quest for the perfect anti-portrait. Taking as his departure point, the biological premise that significant sections of our brains are employed specifically to 'read' human faces, James explores the limits to which this innate cerebral skill can be extended.

In an obsessive, reductive process, James wilfully engages in breaking down visual information, seeking to unearth that which can only be created via the process of destruction. Ostensibly this process of 'creating' is wanton, reckless, cavalier, hurtling toward certain disintegration. Yet James lovingly salvages his image moments before total annihilation, revealing unseen emotions, unseen characters, and leaving the viewer with a distilled essence from which to rebuild, review and re-engage. By reducing the image to its basest level, James implicates you, the viewer, in the final unique interpretation of the work.

A large scale portrait from James' current pinhole series, *Black Sky Blue #1* is an intriguingly dichotomous work. Infused with Warholian modernity, the work embodies a universally ancient aesthetic. The visage is at once ethereal and firmly anchored as if sculpted in marble, divulging a parallel tension between 21stC digital photography and the traditional photographic object.

The woman in *Black Sky Blue #1* is familiar. But rather than directing our viewing experience, James challenges us to intuit his subject. The close crop encourages us to examine a timeless and classic visage — liberated from the affectations of hair 'style' or textile 'fashion'. Her obscured eyes grant her the upper hand in the transaction of objectification that takes place between subject and viewer. In fact, James goes so far as to confuse the boundaries between subject and viewer. Traditional frameworks of 'the gaze' threaten to invert as the woman in the photograph asserts her own.

Transcending form and aesthetic however, is James' broad recurrent themes specific to female portraiture, particularly his interrogation of the notions of strength, control and objectivity. Extrapolating further his concept of the 'anti portrait', James intentionally strips away visual information, paradoxically presenting the viewer with more to 'read' by providing less visual pollutant.

Photography as a representational form is notoriously guilty of manipulating truth, diluting purity, and planting bad seeds with seemingly innocuous visual cues. Heroines are cast as Madonna or Whore with a not-so-casual application of colour, composition or facial expression. Boldly, James seeks to resolve this primary experience of the portrayed woman by embodying the very process of Ancient Goddess Kali: I destroy to create.

Edward James is a practicing photo-media artist living and working in Adelaide, South Australia. A founding member of the *Shoot Artists Collective*, Edward has exhibited regularly in group and solo exhibitions in Adelaide, Brisbane and Melbourne since 2000. With a strong belief in bringing art to the public and breaking down barriers to arts participation

James has jointly produced exhibitions, new-media civic projections and artistic events, usually in non-traditional art spaces. In 2007 with the aim of promoting photo-media art, James established *Undercurrent* with fellow artist Gregory Ackland, as an ongoing platform to further promote photo-media art to the wider community.

James' collective *Shoot Sounds from Level Four* exhibition was nominated for an Adelaide Fringe Award for Best Visual Art Exhibition. Outside of *Shoot* his other exhibitions include, Max Dawn Gallery Adelaide, *SALA Festival 2009*; Festival Centre Adelaide, *SALA Festival 2008*; and Union Square Adelaide, *artEast*, 2003.

James has a Bachelor of Visual Art and Applied Design majoring in photography and currently works as Project Producer at the Helpmann Academy.

Charity Bramwell

Mimi Kelly



Top
Mimi Kelly
Untitled #7(?), 2009
Digital photographic print
Dimensions variable.
Photographed by
Dan Freenea

Left
Mimi Kelly
Untitled #7(?), 2009
Digital photographic print
Dimensions variable.
Photographed by
Dan Freenea

Dead Girl

Now, picture this. Another woman lying listlessly naked, also suspended in what seems to be the languorous, bleached out aftermath of some unrepresentable sexual trauma, for which the blood oozing out of her — coagulating and crystallizing into gemstones that resemble fish roe — is a symptom as beguiling as the faraway look on her face. But this blood is no tribute to menstruation, nor even a customary phobic response to it; this stuff flows unexpectedly from the bowels rather than the uterus. A kind of diarrhoea as well as hemorrhage, this is shit and blood combined: the alimentary and reproductive tracts confused and congealed within a body that in skin tone appears anaemic (with patches of blue veins showing through the flat, chalky musk-stick pink body make-up), as if what drains out of her is not excrement but essence; and yet a body that in contour appears voluptuous (tender but impermeable flesh, dense and yet docile, amenable and perfumed: with plaint discipline of a fashion model's body), and as if this blood is fake rather than diseased, as if it were a type of jewellery or a cosmetic feature, a Gothic accessory shown off for a fashion shoot that even Guy Bourdin might balk at.

Golfinger's dead girl serves as an introduction to this distinctive and lushly brutal photograph by Mimi Kelly, from 2009, because her photograph incarnates something *Golfinger* offered only as specular: the wish to be cruelly emblazoned, to suffer the execution of one's desire as an object, and as — specifically — a female object. Is the objectification of the woman in Kelly's photographs a sign, after *Goldfinger*, of criminal passion? Of assault? If so, we must assign it to the ambivalent expressions of this female body: the extrovert artifice of the cheesecake pose that appears nonchalant; the nail polish and red hair stylishly coordinated with the gore; the gaze that suggests a state of shock, disbelief, vacancy, even imminent death, but that also unnervingly insinuates a musing on intensely pleasurable experience. We trespass on this nudity not only because of its explicitness, but because we can't help but encounter it as the disclosure of narcissistic, sadomasochistic pleasure and privileged agony. Has the body been arranged like this after a violation, or is its display an invitation to violate? What is challenging here is that the photograph discounts any ethical elucidation of its depravity, dismissing the answers as unnecessary to the death wish. Do I expect you to talk? No, I expect you to die.

Yet at this point, there is something in Kelly's image that must be talked about. A secret offered to delay the death it invites. We say that this is an untitled photograph but hidden in that lack of title is Mimi Kelly herself. She is her own model and has been consistently, through her work at art school in Adelaide in 2003-5 (aligned with celebratory soft-core raunch culture), to her studio in Sydney now (out of which has come a series of elegantly damaged vamps, leaking blood from orifices and passing out from sexual concussion). We see her, explicitly and exclusively, but we see her *untitled*, an artist unidentified in the performance of her self-portrait. Unlike *Goldfinger's* crime scene, this scene, this scene conceals the artist's name symptomatically; although it does so within the disclosure of her appearance as a body that is willingly available for violation. This dispossession of the name is the secret passion of the photograph that detaches the body from its identity with its agony and ecstasy, like a type of general anaesthesia: to be un-named is the fantastic joy of becoming an object. To be dead to the world, but immaculately visible: to be a woman who does not exist; but who performs, with mythically fatal artifice (like Bond's cabaret dancer, like the actor in gold paint), the role of a dead girl. To be expected to die, and to find one's artistry in that expectation.

Edward Coleless

Rachel McElwee



Rachel McElwee
Missinformation, 2010
photographs on plastic
80 x 80cm

Missinformation

Missinformation, by Rachel McElwee, initially appears kaleidoscopic. Photographs of a woman dressed in bold snatches of eighties-inspired colour are installed in concentric circles around and around, again and again. The woman is divorced from her background and stands alone, accompanied only by her sense of fashion and domestic fare; an iron, frying pan, laptop, mobile, bottle, skateboard, kettle, cleaning products and rubber gloves. At first glance this could be a trick of mirrors, a circular scene extrapolated from one fine slither of this woman's day.

But like the woman herself, this is a parody of a kaleidoscope. The reflected fun falters when we realise this is not one moment, but an ongoing succession of different domestic actions. She is clearly burdened by household clutter, chores and her own lifestyle and dishearteningly stumbles, trips, loses her balance and falls into herself in similarly flawed situations again and again. In this performative installation her wholeness is fractured into frustrating moments until she finally lashes out with a heavy pot. She cannot break her cycle and being physically cut from her setting to live in an inescapable and impenetrable world, we must see her this way.

This setting, her stage, lets us see her mainly lycra-clad body and limbs, curvaceous and flowing, as Baroque styled lines or flourishes- the type adopted by certain hairdressing salons and beauty parlours to signify their luxurious flair. Her dress tells us that she has an acute awareness of her own appearance, maybe too aware; bleached, overly made-up and dressed the way someone dresses when they want others to see how they are dressing. This amusing fashion coupled with her repetitiveness allows her to be nameless and thus symbolic of a type of glamour, or at least striving for that glamour. Prey to the vast array of feminine conventions and pressures she mingles suburban domesticity with current fashion trends to a questionable degree of success.

That this public kaleidoscopic view is for multiple eyes and not the regular one, takes a little more lightness out of the somewhat amusing scenario. It is not fleeting and miniscule, but a sight enlarged, paused and posited for us to examine in detail. She, stuck in her unfortunate rut of expectations yet dressed to impress, has all of her faltering on public display and we are invited to watch, around and around, again and again her tripping over the upkeep of appearances.

Rachel McElwee is an Adelaide based artist. She has been a coordinator for *Shop@rt*, Adelaide, and a studio and board member of the Australian Experimental Arts Foundation. She holds a Masters in Visual Arts from the University of South Australia (2005) where she researched masculinity and identity. These concerns, alongside those of gender roles, consumerism and current cultural trends continue to inform her installation and photographic practice. She exhibits regularly in Adelaide and beyond.

Sera Waters

Will Nolan



Will Nolan
Yellow and Red with a Little Bit of Pine, 2010
Giclée print on German etching paper
110 x 110cm | Edition of 5 + 1 A/P

Everything is Melting is a deceptively complex body of work. Visually, Nolan's photography is simple, minimal; a Pop-like celebration of colour and design. Objects blur, melt and combine, lose meaning and lose function. The contamination of colour is a sight of new possibilities. No more segregation; a new diversity. It is a state of being no longer one but many; part of a liquefied, unified whole.

Nolan's work exist in dual states: on the one hand it represents an object; on the other, a memory. It is the space in between the two — the unknown territory of assumption and belief — that is vital in reading the photograph. As such, the unavoidable presence of time is ever inherent in Will Nolan's work.

Everything is Melting, and its depiction of melting iceblocks, evokes the nostalgic memory of childhood but remains as a quiet reminder of the inescapable future of decay and death. The work explores the essence of transformation, harking back to the various incarnations of the ever-told allegory of death and rebirth. However, there is a block of time missing somewhere between the ideal object and it's morose demise. It is this missing space — the time in between — that becomes an overwhelming force in Nolan's work. As viewers we have learnt to see the object for what it once was, rather than for how it is depicted in the present.

By exploring the nature of the found object — the scars, bumps and bruises, the dirt on a flattened bottle top and the melting of an iceblock — Nolan explores not just the present state of an object but the transient nature of its history. His photographs rely on our preconceived ideas of the object; not only accepting what exists before us, but also what we know or assume to have existed before.

His work is indelibly connected to the past: there are trace elements of time and decay that flow through Nolan's work — a series of surface scars, both physical and implied — that become unavoidable signifiers in reading the work. The majority of Nolan's narrative exists not in what is present in the images, but what has existed or occurred outside of them. As such, it is what is not present that counts. The effects on the objects he documents — the histories, the movements and functions — become ever important ghosts within the images. They haunt his photographs, inextricably attached to a personal sense of silence and loss.

What we see are the bones of something that once lived. But the images, though pensive, are not objects of mourning. Indeed, the new form, in its entirely different state, is still undeniably alive. It is full of colour that seeps and moves like blood through veins. There is life after death. It is ghost-like and translucent, but vibrant; alive with a new energy and an unpredictable movement. In embracing the passing of time Will Nolan's photography becomes a celebration of the silent moments in between and the beauty of memory and unknowing.

Will Nolan is an Australian photo artist residing in Adelaide, South Australia. In 2008 Will graduated from the South Australian School of Art, University of South Australia, with a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honors) degree, specialising in photography.

Nolan has since exhibited at a number of galleries within Australia, including two solo exhibitions in his home city of Adelaide at Gallery 139, with a third planned for July 2010. He has also exhibited with Helen Gory Galerie, Melbourne, Cross Cultural Art Exchange, Darwin and Queensland Centre of Photography, Brisbane.

In late 2009 Will's work was selected as one of only two South Australian artists to be featured in the *Off The Wall* Affordable Melbourne Art fair. His work was displayed as part of the exhibition presented by Australian Commercial Galleries Association (ACGA), *Inside the Stockroom*, Federation Square, Melbourne, courtesy of Helen Gory Galerie. In recent months the Government owned Artbank has acquired three of Nolan's *To Be of Use* series.

Lauren Tomczak

Amy Patterson



Top
Amy Patterson
untitled 16, 2009
giclée print on German etching paper
15 x 17.5cm | Edition of 5

Right
Amy Patterson
untitled 17, 2010
giclée print on German etching paper
15 x 17.5cm | Edition of 5



Dimly perceived, as though the vision is failing, a series of enigmatic vignettes present themselves across a measureless gulf of time and distance, seemingly worn and fading like a much handled deck of cards, laid on the table. The rooms are empty. The landscape is bleak. The people inhabiting these stories are suffused with portent, observed in the prelude or aftermath of a storm of crises that will thunder through their lives and whisk them off into a new direction.

What is the ruby colored stain on the floor? Is it blood? Wine? The loose limbed man, lounging against the banister like a marionette, is down on his luck. He has been sitting on the cold brick floor for a long time, now he has been disturbed. The insouciant stance is habitual, his streetwise demeanor an armor. There is a knife in his pocket.

There is a somber mist hanging over the ash colored earth as an elderly couple walk slowly beside the river. Who is leading who? The woman is guiding the man. The boat will take them between the islands, but what is out there? The boat goes to Avalon, but it is a fantasy. They are cutout people, superimposed. They are standing in front of a giant screen and dreaming themselves away.

The fire is a beacon, the businessman stranded by urgency in his stiff shirt and shiny new shoes. The salt breeze rinses away his thoughts. His mind is quiet now; there is nothing further to be done. His pulse is in time with the rhythm of the sea. Dropping towards him through the leaden sky is another consciousness on its solitary way to an uncertain fate. This is not his problem. He keeps an eye on the fire.

This artist never makes it easy for us. She makes us peer and squint, puzzle and confer. Her works are frequently in some way difficult to see. They are very small or very large, ingenuously hidden. The viewer must look inside, look around, look up. What is this object in the picture? What is lurking beneath the haze? What is the story?

The artist's practice could be seen as two entwined celestial bodies, or a day and night side of the same world. There are some works that seem harmonious, luminous with gossamer and sunlight. There are no people in these, they are quite abstract. The darker, lunar partner has a more ominous feel, comprising images that are figurative, although the figure may have just now walked out of the frame.

The story is in the shadows.

As for the works here, they are of the more tenebrous sort.

So gather your children, close the windows tightly. The wolf is at the door.

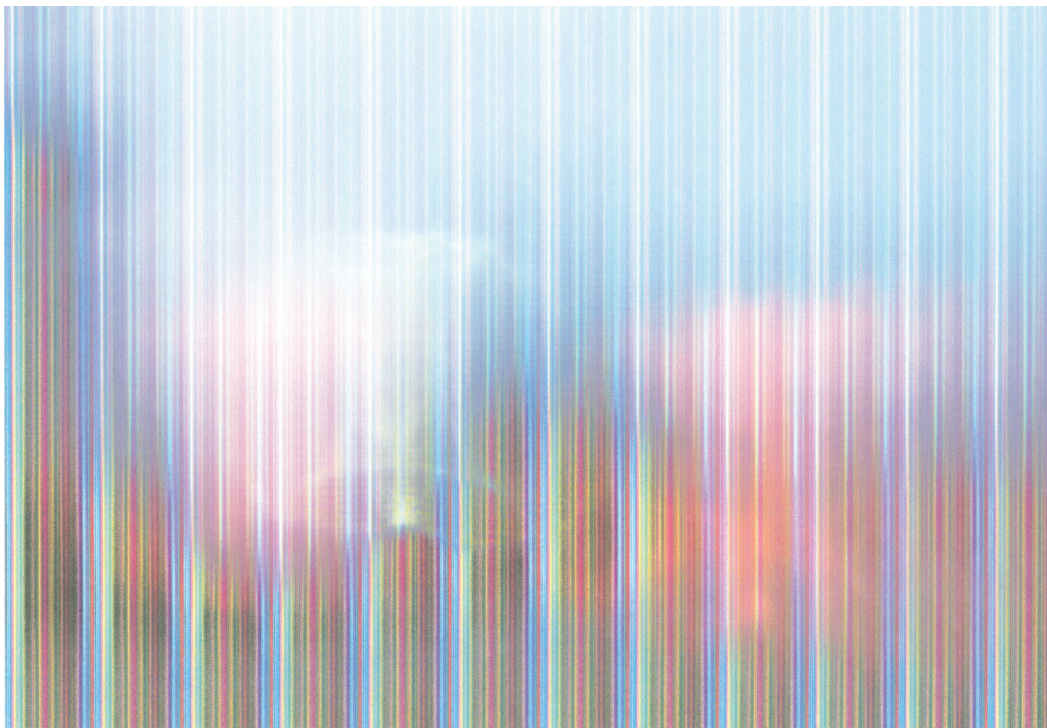
Amy Patterson is a Masters of Visual Arts Candidate with the School of Art, Architecture and Design at the University of South Australia.

Penny White



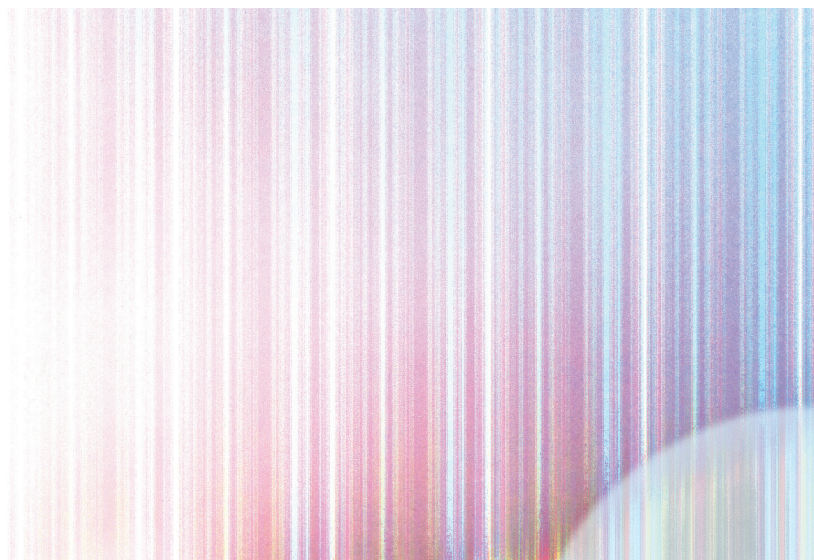
Left
Amy Patterson
untitled 11, 2010
giclée print on German etching paper
15 x 17.5cm | Edition of 5

Beverley Southcott



Top
Beverley Southcott
Havens, Sensibility and Durability One, 2010
C type digital photograph
80 x 120cm | Edition of 6

Right
Beverley Southcott
Havens, Sensibility and Durability Two, 2010
C type digital photograph
80 x 120cm | Edition of 6



What lies beneath

For some time Beverley Southcott has been on a quixotic mission: to catch sight of the ineffable. In her latest works — *Havens, Sensibility and Durability One* and *Havens, Sensibility and Durability Two* — she may just have run it to bay, and all as a result of a happy accident.

When moving house in Sydney recently, her desktop printer “got upset,” the artist explains cheerfully, and began printing stripes over her original photographic images.

The results entranced the artist. So too did their accidental nature. For Southcott is interested in the realm that exists in the “in-between spaces” of our everyday lives, a realm that runs parallel to our lives of busyness and concern, a realm to which we’re granted access in short abrupt glimpses like temporary openings in a blank wall. These glimpses come unbidden, as in the printer malfunction. What they reveal is something of formlessness and infiniteness, something the artist never attempts to name or conceptualise, but which, for argument’s sake, we might think of as Being or Source.

The two works in this exhibition capture the suggestion of something just disappearing, something not normally seen. “What’s that?” we think, our brains straining to see, to label, as the printer malfunction inadvertently reveals the uniform, regular, technically-manipulated surface to be just that: surface.

Stripes have featured previously in Beverley Southcott’s body of work. In some places, they denote stricture or codification; in other places, “white noise” or signal interference. Here, they are part of the artist’s response to the relentlessly urbanised Sydney landscape she is encountering afresh after ten years living and working by the Adelaide seaside.

Both settings — urban cityscape and pastoral seaside — are important to Southcott, and have featured widely in her work. They function as kind of “primal scenes” in which to stage her concerns. In both, the artist is asking a question derived from her appreciation of the tradition of the Sublime, including the works of Caspar David Friedrich: what constitutes a human response to the infinite in *this* place, in *this* time?

At first it may seem the pastoral scene confers a huge advantage. Who hasn’t had an intimation of the infinite in the midst of a blue seaside day such as Southcott featured in her photographic series of 2005, *Sea-In?* Yet things are not that straightforward, she seems to suggest, as off-kilter slogans and denatured maxims insert themselves into the idyllic scene.

Similarly, Southcott suggests, the urban landscape, for all its foreboding and alienation, is not necessarily bereft of access to this other realm. What it takes is an attentiveness to its possibility, and a celebration of its arising, no matter how that looks. Even if it looks like a printer accident.

Southcott is in busy mid-career, having exhibited in the US and various states of Australia in numerous group and solo shows. She has a Masters in Visual Arts from the University of South Australia’s South Australian School of Art. She works in a variety of media including photography, painting, installation and video. Her video work featured in the Littoral exhibition at Carnegie Gallery in Hobart in April / May 2010.

Beverley Southcott’s work has been selected for major Australian art awards and competitions including The Alice Prize, 2008, the Conrad Jupiters Art Prize, 2006 and the Josephine Ulrick & Win Schubert Photography Award, 2006.

N. E. Hanratty

Danielle Walpole



Top
Danielle Walpole
Allegory 6, 2008
Giclée print
70 x 115cm | Edition of 5 + 1 A/P

Right
Danielle Walpole
Allegory 7, 2008
Giclée print
70 x 70cm | Edition of 5 + 1 A/P



An ironic gift.
A stolen prop.
An offering to an enchanting tree spirit.
A small wrapped parcel sitting on a riverbank.

Danielle Walpole's *Allegory 6* (2008), appears a conundrum — a mystery. So too *Allegory 7* (2008), as the unusual placement of deep royal purple curling ribbon set amongst foliage ultimately leads to speculation about its symbolism. It is possible the ribbon was snagged there and a lone balloon now floats skyward, was dropped by a thieving magpie on its way back to the nest, or is a remnant of a pre-schooler's imaginative game. With no other obvious clues, all are equally feasible interpretations of a scene to which only a restricted view is accessible. It would seem the artistic intent behind the two artworks is veiled by the guesswork involved in discerning their true meaning. Though perhaps Walpole accentuates their ambiguity so as to draw-out multiple readings of the images, and this in fact is where the significance of their composition is found.

Such glimpses, seemingly snatched from unseen wholes, allow parallels to form between the two photographic images. One cannot be sure whether these scenes are singular, or derive from a more complex narrative where an entire story exists, but that for now remains concealed. In this way, they bear a similarity to film-stills. Walpole takes advantage of our uncertainty regarding her exclusive views, by employing various other visual devices that surreptitiously elicit an emotional response and provoke deliberation over the meaning of each artwork. For instance, the comparatively shadowy tree trunk and fine tendrilous branches offset the alluringly bright beautiful blossoms in *Allegory 6*, while in *Allegory 7*, the intensification of colour and rich depth of field confuses the senses as we try to make spatial assessments and search for a time of day as reference. In both instances, Walpole's essential measured cropping of information beyond the frame, obscures markers of site and situation.

Ambiguous narratives are a prevalent and recurring theme throughout Walpole's work. Every one of her compositions engenders quiet questions that quickly become directed inwards as an automatic mental process begins, which sifts through personal data applicable to each scene. It follows that the *where, how, and why* questions subconsciously first asked, are transformed into answers based on prior knowledge, experience, personal and collective memory, as well as recollections of fable and folklore.

It is only by these personal associations to the imagery that one can begin to establish intended connotations and contexts. *Allegory* takes shape in the in-between spaces, as metaphors and comparisons formulate and evolve into interpretations and representations from one viewer to the next. Whether alone or in combination, her use of objects, figurative elements, ambience and setting, along with evocative techniques, allow Walpole to easily fascinate her audience. She correctly presumes that we bring more than just a physical presence to viewing her profound scenes; she is banking the probability that we will deduce meaning from somewhere deeper within ourselves.

Since graduating from the Adelaide College of the Arts with a Bachelor of Visual Arts and Applied Design in 2003, Danielle Walpole has exhibited widely in many group showings and several solo exhibitions. Based in Adelaide, she has steadily grown a national profile as a result of artistic exposure around the country including Queensland, Western Australia, Victoria and her home state of South Australia. Walpole is co-founder and member of the *Shoot Artists Collective*, a new media group that has gained much recognition through public art commissions, festivals and events, such as the Melbourne and Adelaide Fringe Festivals and the Adelaide International Film Festival. Walpole's exhibition history is complemented by a number of national awards and achievements, as well as a solid body of literature that documents her rise as a young artist.

Nerina Dunt

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