

## Recollecting Home

### Research Background

The [Frank and Eunice Corley collection](#) consists of approximately 61,000 photographs of houses taken in Queensland suburbs in the 1960s and 70s and sold to households as calendars and Christmas cards. Consisting of images that didn't sell, and which were retained by Frank Corley for taxation purposes, it is estimated that the complete collection approached 300,000 images. Frank, in a pink Cadillac, drove the suburban streets of Brisbane (and a number of Queensland towns) documenting every house that could be seen from the street. Eunice, based in a mobile dark room parked strategically in each suburb, developed and printed the film, and a team of salespeople worked the suburbs selling the images. While Frank and Eunice's project was primarily an entrepreneurial one, the collection is valued for the stories it tells of Queensland's suburbs, its heterogenous and complex nature, and the lifestyles it fostered.

While the photographer/s had recorded spools and street locations, the collection was uncatalogued. Limited research on social histories emerging from the collection been undertaken by the Annerley Stephens History Group and SLQ volunteers.

*Home: A Suburban Obsession* explores the collection and how it is used and interpreted by various agents including researchers, artists, designers, educators and community groups. The *Home* exhibition consists of three 'acts'. The first two acts, curated by Chenoa Pettrup and Adam Jefford from the State Library, comprise an introduction to the Frank and Eunice Corley and their enterprise, and a selection of specially commissioned artworks inspired by their work. The third called *Recollecting Home*, was curated by Deborah van der Plaats, Nicole Sully and Andrew Wilson from the ATCH Research Centre and School of Architecture at the University of Queensland.

### Research Contribution

*Recollecting Home* is made up off 11 curated sets of photographic images that showcase 490 photos from the Corley collection and new photography. These were supported by a series of cabinets housing related imagery, ephemera and publications sourced from SLQ, other public institutions, and private collections. The panels explore a number of research themes. These include: 'Artists in the Suburbs,' which delves into a selection of parallel explorations of man-made environments by artists from across the globe including the German photographers Bernd and Hilda Becher, the American artists Ed Ruscha and Todd Hido, and Australian photographers John Gollings and Tracey Moffat (whose 2008 image *First Jobs: Selling Aluminium Siding* is based on an image from the Corley collection and which captures residential housing in the Brisbane suburb of Norman Park; attributes associated with the 'Queensland house', including 'screening,' 'under the house,' and 'open windows' and which speak of lifestyles and modes of living peculiar to the Queensland state; 'Not the Queensland House,' a set of images which highlight the diversity of forms and materials that contribute to the complexity of the Queensland suburb; and 'Suburbs in Transition,' a series of photographs which capture moments of change in Queensland's suburbs of the 60s and 70s and which begin to highlight some of the distinctions (real and imagined) between "old" and "new" suburbia. New photography by [Paul Dielemans](#) extends these observations into the present day. Digital stories and supporting displays that tell the real-life stories of occupants of homes found in the Corley collection complete the sequence.

### Research Significance

Generating new histories of Queensland's suburban architecture, research significance is demonstrated by the:

- Promotion by State Library of Queensland as a major exhibition and shown for 8 months from December 2018 to July 2019.
- Supported by a vibrant selection of public programs and engagement opportunities.
- Reviewed by national journals and local and national broadsheets.
- Generated new communities of interest in the architecture, social histories and lifestyles of the Queensland suburbs and increased heritage awareness of this work.
- Activated the public's interest in the collections of the State Library of Queensland and brought to their attention the diverse uses of their collections by different agents.
- Inclusion of the exhibition in the program supporting the 2019 Asia Pacific Architecture Forum.

- Imagery externally sourced for the exhibition to permanently acquired by the State Library of Queensland.

#### Sources:

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