

Traces of the female self:

Exploring the documentation of women's art
through traces, impressions, residues and self-portraiture
via contemporary art practice

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Abstract

Women have always been present as artists, but not necessarily included within the canon of Western art history. Studying the canon is an accepted way of understanding the context of what has gone before, and in turn positioning ourselves within contemporary art practices and theories. However there is a disconnect when most of the individuals within the canon are nothing like us. Self-portraiture can be an embodied methodology, a starting point for an investigation that goes beyond oneself. Addressing the personal through my art practice also addresses a wider community of female artists.

Through a studio-based investigation I have asked:

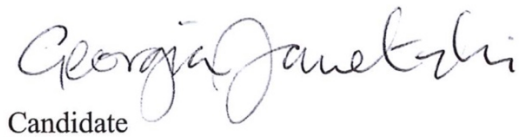
What can visual art's inherent capacity for generating and capturing traces, residues and impressions express in a material and conceptual way to explore self-identity and contribute to the current discourse about women artists' history?

How can these themes be visually expressed in new ways through contemporary self-portraiture, addressing absence and perspective in the documentation of women's art?

I explore these questions through experimental methods of making self-portraits. This research project considers the personal, examining representation of the self as an ontological enquiry into the roles of making and being. As a practice-led study, I pursue this line of enquiry as a means for exploring current structures of power, through a new body of work aimed at further informing Australian women's art practice and its history.

Statement of authorship

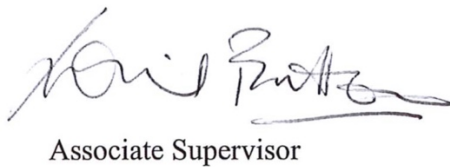
Except where explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere, or extracted whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for, or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgement in the main text and bibliography of the thesis.


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Preface

When studying art history in secondary school during the 1980s, reflecting back at me from my text books were examples of great art, overwhelmingly made and delivered by white men. Included were, *The Story of Art* by E.H. Gombrich, *Handbook of Art* by Graham Hopwood, the BBC television series' *Civilisation: A Personal View* by Kenneth Clark and *The Shock of the New: Art and the century of change* by Robert Hughes. As a fourteen-year-old I did not have the self-awareness to question this historical bias, but it does raise the question of whether I perceived that becoming an artist might be a viable profession for me, a female. The role models within the State school curriculum were hardly encouraging in that regard yet I was an artistic child, always drawing or making things. Life as a professional artist would have been a logical path for me to take.

Instead I chose to study design when I left school, where women working within this creative industry were often in the majority as studio employees, yet as I came to realise, it was most often men who were the identity of design studios and they were the individuals who gained the professional recognition. Jane Connory's research explores "the invisibility and visibility of women in graphic design . . . women have consistently comprised over 50 percent of graphic design graduates since the 1970s and the Australian Graphic Design Association's (AGDA) hall of fame has, until recently, included only one woman, Dahl Collings (1909-1988), with the inclusion of Alison Forbes (1933-) later in 2016."¹ Despite receiving an AGDA Pinnacle Award myself,² I would argue that I have not had a public profile within the design industry, beyond those colleagues I have directly worked with.

According to the Australia Council 2017 economic study of professional artists in Australia by David Throsby and Katya Petetskaya, the sixth in a series carried out independently over thirty years by Throsby at Macquarie University, with funding from the

¹ Jane Connory, "Plotting the Historical Pipeline of Women in Graphic Design." Design History Australia Research Network. Accessed January 23, 2019. <http://dharn.org.au/plotting-the-historical-pipeline-of-women-in-graphic-design/>

² Australian Graphic Design Association National Awards, 1996. Category: Illustration series. Client: Georgia Janetzki Illustration.

Australia Council,³ “there are more women with formal art qualifications than men.”⁴ I agree with Throsby and Petetskaya when they say “This observation reflects a somewhat more attenuated road to establishment for women compared to men”.⁵ I went back to university for a second time in 2006, in part this decision was motivated by a comment my mother-in-law had made to me two years before. Glenda knew that she was terminally ill when she told me that she had not done everything with her life that she had wanted to do. She died not long after that frank conversation; she was 65 years old and her death felt premature.

That intimate conversation had a profound effect on me. The quotidian experience of daily living can be, in turns, routine and revelatory, but most often routine. Death is an inescapable part of the human condition, but it was the personal nature of our conversation that made me pause for thought. I could do nothing to change the difficult truth revealed to me, however I could address how I wanted my own life to be, every day. Until then I had not realised just how much I lamented not following the path of the professional artist. My work as an illustrator and designer expressed the needs of clients in a commercial environment. I still want to express the needs of others through my visual voice but I also want to have more choice over what those issues are.

I waited another year for my daughter to start school before taking up full-time study in a Bachelor of Fine Arts program. Unlike my earlier tertiary study, this decision would affect my entire family, not just myself. At this stage in my life I was raising two young children and I continued to teach part time. Even with an involved and supportive partner I concur with Throsby and Petetskaya who found that

women still undertake most of society’s unpaid caring work, which reduces their ability to spend more hours on their practice and although the proportions of female and male artists who have had children under their care at some point in their career

³ David Throsby, and Katya Petetskaya, “Making Art Work: An Economic Study of Professional Artists in Australia.” Australia Council for the Arts, 2017. 125. Accessed January 18, 2018. <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/workspace/uploads/files/making-art-work-throsby-report-5a05106d0bb69.pdf>

⁴ *ibid*, 125. 83 percent of women compared to 70 percent of men.

⁵ *ibid*, 126. 31 percent of women artists were still at the stage of starting out or becoming established, compared to only 26 percent of men. 27 percent of women cite lack of time compared to 18 percent of men (in their overall career) as a factor holding back professional career development.

are more or less the same, substantially more women than men feel that this restricted their work as an artist significantly.⁶

With this in mind, is it necessary or helpful to isolate women's art by gender in curated exhibitions, or refer to 'women artists'? Whilst "women are finding a voice within the documentation of contemporary art practices as professional artists in greater numbers than ever before,"⁷ I would suggest that the answer is yes, because women artists are still contending with culturally ingrained social patterns of behaviour that influence our agency as professional artists. According to feminist historian Katie Holmes "We cannot afford to let women keep disappearing as historical subjects."⁸

⁶ *ibid*, 129. Table 12.7: Artists who had children under their care and restrictions on art practice due to caring for children by gender (percent). Had children under care at some point during career: female 52%, male 49%. Felt that children restrict work as an artist: significantly – female 38%, male 18%. To some extent – female 38%, male 38%. Did not feel that children restrict work as an artist: female 24%, male 44%.

⁷ *ibid*, 125.

⁸ Katie Holmes, "Past, Present, Future: The Future of Feminist History." *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal*, no. 15, 2006. 1-12. Accessed June 7, 2019. <https://search.informit-com-au.ezproxy.lib.rmit.edu.au/documentSummary;dn=492579672407372;res=IELAPA>

Chapter 1

Introduction: Tracing the physical

Presence and absence. Women have always been present as artists, but not necessarily included within the canon of Western art history.⁹ Studying the canon is an accepted way of understanding the context of what has gone before, and in turn positioning ourselves within contemporary art practices and theories. However there is a disconnect when most of the individuals within the canon are nothing like us.

No one works in isolation, although pioneering women artists and feminist historians are all the more extraordinary because they did not have a documented feminine perspective to identify with and so were unable to draw upon a tradition that they could relate to. The artwork that I create within this research project is intended to reference and document other women artists, recognise their contribution to artistic practice and their influence upon my own practice.

Through a studio-based investigation I have asked:

- a. What can visual art's inherent capacity for generating and capturing traces, residues and impressions express in a material and conceptual way to explore self-identity and contribute to the current discourse about women artists' history?
- b. How can these themes be visually expressed in new ways through contemporary self-portraiture, addressing absence and perspective in the documentation of women's art?

I explore these questions through various methods of making self-portraits, and the artwork manifests in weaving, drawing, printmaking and photography. This research project considers the personal, examining representation of the self as an ontological enquiry into the roles of making and being. Through a new body of work, undertaken as a practice-led study, my aim is to further inform Australian women's art practice and its history. Through the lens of post-structuralism and practice theory I am interested in this line of enquiry as a

⁹ Giorgio Vasari, and Gaston Du C. De Vere, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors & Architects*. (London: Macmillan & The Medici Society), 1912. This text, written by Giorgio Vasari, can be considered as the beginning of Western art history documentation during the Renaissance, and has provided an influential framework for recording artist biographies. The second edition, published in 1568, includes four female artists; sculptor Properzia de' Rossi and painters Sister Plautilla Nelli, Lucrezia Quistelli and Sofonisba Anguissola alongside 320 male artists.

means for exploring cultural structures of power, which have the capacity to encourage or limit women's art practices, and influence the representation of female artists. I consider how the evidence for justifying a focus specifically on women's art becomes clear during this research project. I establish this through my practice-led enquiry in the following chapters, supported by philosophical ideas and art history.

Through the materials that women artists have employed, I have focused on artists in four distinct areas of practice: Weaving - Anni Albers, photogenic drawing - Anna Atkins, photography - Vivian Maier and street art - Margaret Kilgallen. Their influence upon my methodology, and the resulting artworks produced for this research project, form an homage to these women. I discuss this in more depth, relative to my own practice and experiences, together with theories of praxis in chapter two.

Chapter three situates my work within the field of context, providing an historical and contemporary perspective via women's art practices and the support of organisations who are specifically invested in the promotion of women artists. In chapter four, the conclusion, I will return to my original research questions and explain how I have achieved my objectives.

Self-portraiture can be an embodied methodology, a starting point for an investigation that goes beyond oneself. The process of thinking through the act of making a self-portrait informs a broader context, beyond identity politics. Feminist scholar Sara Ahmed says "[This is] how we re-describe the world we are in. We begin to identify how what happens to me, happens to others."¹⁰ Addressing the personal through my art practice also addresses a wider community of female artists.

Examining materials is an integral entry point for exploring the embodied nature of practice-led research. Although my *Weaving women* tapestry series speaks to the legacy of the weaving workshop within the Bauhaus, which can now be perceived as a success story over adversity, this history sits in stark contrast to the current numbers of female artists' work being exhibited and collected, in comparison with their male counterparts. Threads can amass into something very tangible and tactile, it is the language of textiles that

¹⁰ Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017), 27.

provides a nuanced voice to the statistics showing that almost a century later female artists have still not achieved parity. The quantitative statistics are an essential underpinning to the work, which is a qualitative response to the statistics. However, I contend that the qualitative aspects of this work says a great deal more than numbers alone are able to convey.

By exploring the work of Albers, Atkins, Maier and Kilgallen, a conversation develops between these women artists of the past through my own responses now, with a view to what future women artists need. It is in part a textual dialogue, however, it's the artwork itself that creates a rich exchange, bringing history into the present, for consideration today and into the future. Materials and practices have power of expression. I had the opportunity to view Albers' work in the flesh for the first time in 2018. Her weaving was included in the exhibition *MoMA at NGV: 130 Years of Modern and Contemporary Art*.¹¹ The materiality of Albers' ideas speak volumes through her innovative research and experimentation with new materials, textures and structures. Her woven textiles embody practical qualities such as light-reflection and sound-absorption, but also engage the imagination and elicit an emotive response.

Atkins began making her artistic contribution through the sciences. One can easily draw a parallel between scientific laboratory and field work, with artistic practice inside and beyond the studio. Both are creative, exploratory research fields and it makes sense that Atkins' artistic enquiry can combine with scientific documentation. Atkins recognised the aesthetic qualities of her specimens, the significance of her scientific specimens draws upon the beauty in her work and the way she could frame the artistry in nature. It is Atkins' lead in exploring the cyanotype process through the lens of artist and scientist that encouraged me to explore alternative, non-toxic substances as an alternative for my own practice.

Maier's photography shows her keen interest in the medium itself. The tools that she used were of a professional quality and the careful consideration of her compositions demonstrate a sophistication within her work that comes with practice. Her photographs

¹¹ Melbourne Winter Masterpieces exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria, *MoMA at NGV: 130 Years of Modern and Contemporary Art*. <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/moma-at-ngv/>

often capture her own reflection in shop windows, creating a separation between artist and viewer that is made through the intervention of glass and mirrors. Conversely, these reflections of the self, allow her to metaphorically step from behind the camera whilst clearly maintaining her status as photographer. Maier's photography is now beginning to receive the kind of recognition that may serve to preserve her work.

The scale and ephemeral nature of the street is something that Kilgallen embraced, painting directly onto walls and tagging freight trains. She chose to work this way, in part, because of its accessibility to "young people who are interested in doing art or are doing art."¹² I'm not sure that Kilgallen intended to create the legacy she has, but there is a definite desire to reach others that drove her art practice and kept her going during moments of feeling uninspired. "[Kilgallen wanted to] inspire young women. I'd like to change the emphasis of what's important when looking at a woman."¹³

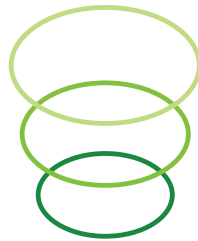
The actions of women expressing ideas, that we can see through the work of Albers, Atkins, Maier and Kilgallen, as well as our protesting predecessors, expresses their being even though they no longer walk amongst us. Their existence is an important public trace that can easily become invisible without the remembrance of a kind that documents their life and work for future generations.

¹² Sarah Sollins, Art21.org, Interview with Margaret Kilgallen, November 2011, *Influences, Train Marking, and Graffiti*. Accessed April 29, 2020. <https://art21.org/watch/extended-play/margaret-kilgallen-heroines-short/>

¹³ *ibid.*

Chapter 2

Methodology: Ontology for the psyche



The hermeneutic circle

Year 1 artefacts #1 > question > writing #1 >

Year 2 artefacts #2 > question > writing #2 >

Year 3 artefacts #3 > question > writing #3 >

In this chapter I will consider methodology in relation to my art practice. The hermeneutic circle is a cycle of making artefacts, followed by a period of reflection and writing.¹⁴ I am applying this methodology to structure my research questions, and I don't see this method as siloed in relation to making, listening, thinking, reading and writing. Slippage between these different languages is a synthesis that supports the understanding and expression of creative research. This recurring process is flexible, and although the processual forms are not always linear, there is a logic to the order in which each yearly cycle unfolds and then informs the following year.

For this research project, beginning with material exploration, my approach is experimental, to inform making and writing. Embracing the liminal space that brings action and thinking together is essential for reflective insights that generate questions to be addressed within a written enquiry. Interspersing the making of a body of work and writing as cyclical, each informs the other in a continuous dialogue between art and research. The hermeneutic circle, developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer, "operates as a framework within which the artist-researcher carries on the research process."¹⁵ Artist and researcher Maarit

¹⁴ Maarit Makela, *The Art of Research: Research Practices in Art and Design*, ed. Maarit Makela and Sara Routarinne (Helsinki: University of Art and Design Helsinki, 2006), 73.

¹⁵ *ibid*, 68.

Makela explains a hermeneutic circle as “a symbol of the spiral form of information. Accordingly, the information is taken to move ahead, returning to the starting point over again, but the information does not return as it was, it has reached a higher level.”¹⁶ Lesley Duxbury also describes a spiral of information in the situation of creative research as the “cyclical process of explicating ideas.”¹⁷ I would add that where an artefact implies an object made with the human hand, practice-led enquiry could also take form in praxis using the body, a performance, an installation, the use of space, the natural world or something that grows. Duxbury notes:

Research is about innovative thinking and practice, about making and testing assumptions, performing, proposing, speculating, asking questions and paving the way for new questions or propositions to be made next time . . . Creative arts-based and arts-led projects involve imagination, invention, innovation, risk-taking. New knowledge is made possible through the materiality of practice itself.¹⁸

The actions of printmaking, drawing, painting, weaving, folding, deconstructing, assembling, casting, photographing, sewing and embroidering, gathering and documenting materials, iterative process, and the studio environment that facilitates the experience of art directly shape my thinking through making.¹⁹ One such term for this approach to making art is referred to as material thinking.²⁰ The foundations of material thinking may be seen in philosopher Martin Heidegger’s tool analysis. Whilst I love the expansive quality of Heidegger’s thinking, evidenced in his earlier work ‘Being and Time’, published before the Second World War, I equally loathe the racist, anti-Semitic views he has expressed within the more recently published ‘Black Notebooks’, in 2014. I cannot reconcile his membership and association with the National Socialist Party. The methodology that I have chosen to work with was created by Gadamer, who was a student of Heidegger. There is a direct connection through my methodology, between myself and Heidegger through hermeneutic generational thinking. Consideration for the ontological nature of being is a vital thread to my examination of why we have social structures that do not give parity to

¹⁶ *ibid*, 70.

¹⁷ Lesley Duxbury, “Finding a way to be with the work.” *Creative Arts Research: Narratives of Methodologies and Practices*, Elizabeth Grierson and Laura Brearley, eds. (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2009), 58.

¹⁸ *ibid*, 5-6.

¹⁹ Shirley Ardener, ed., *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Limited, 1993).

²⁰ *Studies in Material Thinking*, Auckland University of Technology research archive, a peer-reviewed international journal reporting on the work of artists, designers and writers. Accessed July 3, 2018. <https://www.materialthinking.org/smt-research-communication-platform>

women. Alongside women I also include any person who has experienced discrimination because of their gender, race or sexuality. Heidegger has played a role in disseminating ideas that reinforce the fear of ‘other’, to which I am strongly opposed. Artist and academic Barbara Bolt’s study of Heidegger re-contextualises “the particular form of knowledge that arises from our handling of materials and processes”²¹ within art as research. Artist Paul Carter identifies material thinking as “the discourse of creative research,”²² and Duxbury also says that within the university environment “the idea that art is a physical and material activity through which the artist can generate new knowledge by engaging with materials and processes, is gaining ground in creative arts research.”²³

My practice

In response to a serious health issue I have had to re-think the mediums and techniques I usually employ.²⁴ Although I’ve always taken precautions when handling printmaking materials; wearing gloves, a mask for fumes and particles, goggles and having adequate ventilation, I could not bring myself to work with these materials any more. I would routinely use chemicals for making prints, be it the toxicity of nitric acid, gum Arabic (when used for printmaking it includes phosphoric, nitric or tannic acid), or known carcinogen asphaltum, all used in the lithographic printmaking process. Lithography is my preferred print medium, however the set up required for this printmaking process is beyond the scope of the studio spaces where I usually make my artwork. As is common practice for many printmakers, to engage in the lithographic process I access a print workshop that is configured to accommodate a large press, graining table and levigator, fume hood ventilation, slabs of limestone and a forklift to move the stones from their resting place to the press bed. The choice of chemicals used in this printing process are often determined by the print workshop themselves.

In my quest to work with alternative non-toxic materials I collected eucalyptus leaves, and onion and avocado skins to use for printing and dyeing onto fabric as well as paper. In the past I have experimented extensively with traditional intaglio, relief and planographic print processes on cloth, so fabric is a natural choice for me to work with, even though these

²¹ Barbara Bolt, *Heidegger Reframed: interpreting Key Thinkers for the Arts* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 90.

²² Paul Carter, *Material Thinking* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004), 7.

²³ Lesley Duxbury, “Finding a way to be with the work,” 57.

²⁴ In February, 2016 I was diagnosed with breast cancer.

processes are customarily used for printing on 100% cotton rag paper. One drawback I encountered with plant-based printing was my reluctance to use mordants other than salt, vinegar and avocado pits. A mordant fixes the colour to the material during the dyeing process and can also dramatically change the resulting colour and intensity. Adding avocado pits to a hot dye pot releases the tannins from the pit, which is a non-toxic fixative, as is sodium and acetic acid. Avoiding common mordants such as iron, copper, ammonia and alum, which release fumes of varying toxicity when heated, severely limited my scope for experimentation.

Instead I tried placing moist fabric in the compost bin, hoping for mould blooms. The mould spores can be killed by putting the fabric in the freezer before washing. I left other samples in sealed glass jars to steam in the sun, but unwrapping the samples after several weeks yielded lacklustre results. I then turned my attention to turmeric, an inexpensive alternative to saffron. Turmeric imparts an intense golden yellow and experimentation with different substrates confirmed that natural fibres such as wool, cotton, linen and silk take up the colour most successfully. I also experimented with silver oxidization by placing crushed hard-boiled eggs in a sealed plastic bag with silver castings. The sulphur released from the eggs blackens the silver and proved to be an effective way to oxidize silver rather than handling the more toxic and volatile plant fertilizers that I have used in the past. I discovered by accident that turmeric fades in sunlight, I had left a folded stack of turmeric-dyed fabric on a shelf, when I unfolded the fabric the edges nearest the window had faded significantly. Although not an effect that I initially desired for that particular fabric, this has led me to playing with the combination of turmeric and light as a source of printing.

At this early research stage I still wasn't clear where these materials were leading me; this was the time when learning to live in the liminal space I have described is hardest, entering into a dialogue one must 'listen' to the materials. The corporeal has removed me from the comfort of practices that I am most familiar with, however one role of practice-led research is to develop the possibilities and characteristics of research through art practice and in doing so, extend an existing art practice. As a foundation for idea generation, new materials and processes are a means for further developing my art practice.

Philosophies of difference

To inform my practice-led research I am also exploring theories and philosophies of difference. The history of philosophy is, like art history, heavily laden with white, heteronormative males. 20th and 21st Century feminist history re-interprets events from a female standpoint, addressing the rejection of women within the traditions of philosophy and history. “Feminist research acknowledges that there are multiple ways of knowing: perception, intuition, conceptualization, inference, representation, reflection, imagination and remembrance”²⁵ that could be defined as qualitative, practice-led research methods. From the late 1980s “emotions, intuition, and relationships themselves (interaction with other human beings, the natural world, or one’s own subject matter) serve as legitimate sources of knowledge”²⁶ within qualitative research methodologies.

Post-structural theorist Luce Irigaray posits that “woman ought to be able to find herself, among other things, through the images of herself already deposited in history.”²⁷ Social Theorists Michel Foucault and Theodore Schatzki address politics and governance; Foucault’s philosophies examine “social structures and the relationship between culture and power.”²⁸ Schatzki has developed ideas about “objective spacial configuration, how we use common, shared and orchestrated spaces in social situations, and the nexus between the professional and personal.”²⁹ These three theorists inform my thoughts surrounding the use of gallery and studio space, exhibition curation and social investment in relation to women artists.

“We make ourselves in relation to others,” according to academic Morwenna Griffiths, who argues that “arts-based, practice-based research needs to address the issue of the self of the researcher. It shows the significance of self within the processes and in its outcomes, whether these are propositions, descriptions, explanations, theories, artefacts, changed

²⁵ Sharon Brisolaro and Denise Seigart, *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*, Sharlene Nagy Hess-Biber, ed. (Washington DC: SAGE Publications, 2012), 302.

²⁶ *ibid*, 302.

²⁷ Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (London: The Athlone Press, 1993), 10.

²⁸ Stuart Elden, *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography* (London: Routledge, 2007).

²⁹ Theodore Schatzki, “Materiality and social life.” *Nature + Culture* 5, no. 2, 2010, 123-149.

Accessed October 8, 2019.

<https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.rmit.edu.au/docview/754040271?accountid=13552>

practices or changed understandings.”³⁰ This research project uses self-portraiture to work at the intersect of feminism, art history, philosophy, material thinking, ethnography and anthropology. The project as a whole consists of four series of self-portraits that explore the different threads of my inquiry.

Series I | Weaving women

My research topic explores contemporary self-portraiture to address absence and perspective in the documentation and exhibition of women’s art. This series of tapestries is a suite of unconventional self-portraits that attempt to evoke what my experience of space looks like and what I see when I visit art galleries and museums. These pieces are a snapshot in time between 2017 and 2019 but the historical bias towards exhibiting artwork made chiefly by men is a reflection of what I have been offered to look at all my life. In particular I have visited the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) regularly for inspiration and self-education since childhood.

On one such visit to the NGV, early in my research, I decided to walk through the galleries paying particular attention to gender, by noting the number of male and female artists’ work being exhibited at both the NGV International and the NGV Australia. During my walks I could not help but draw parallels with the earlier experience I had through my art history text books. From the “perspective [of the] postmodern flâneuse . . . as a minority and outsider,”³¹ I observed an alarming quota of white, male artists still reflecting back at me from within the gallery walls. Women are concealed within the artworks’ subject matter, which is often women, but created from a male perspective. I expected this in many areas of the gallery, particularly the early works in the collection, but I had thought the figures may have looked somewhat different once we reached 20th century Art and Design. I was disappointed.

³⁰ Morwenna Griffiths in Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts* (Abingdon, New York and Canada: Routledge, 2011).

³¹ Yuha Jung, “Mindful Walking: Transforming Distant Web of Social Connections into Active Qualitative Empirical Materials from a Postmodern Flâneuse’s Perspective.” *The Flâneur and Education Research: A Metaphor for Knowing, Being Ethical and New Data Production*, ed. Alexandra Lasczik Cutcher and Rita L. Irwin, 2018, 115. Accessed October 8, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72838-4>

This disappointment concurs with the *CoUNTess Report: Women count in the art-world*,³² an initiative by Elvis Richardson, who has been counting gender representation in the Australian visual arts sector since 2008. I wanted to express the gender parity I saw during my walk through the gallery, through an artwork. To this end I found myself adopting another new material and technique, tapestry weaving, as an homage to Weaving form masters Gunta Stolzl and Anni Albers,³³ and the women who worked in the Bauhaus Weaving Workshop (Figs. 1 and 2). According to academic Anja Baumhoff “[Magdalena] Droste ... was the first scholar to take up the subject of Bauhaus women”³⁴ in 1987. This marks a shift in emphasis within the historical documentation of the Bauhaus, looking for the first time specifically at the lives of women involved with the institution, through the lens of gender.



Figure 1. Gunta Stolzl, *Rumba Upholstery Material*, jute, silk, boucle yarn and wool, 12 x 10 cm, 1932.

³² Elvis Richardson, *The CoUNTess Report: Women count in the art-world*, 2014. Accessed October 8, 2019. <http://thecountessreport.com.au/>

³³ Gunta Stolzl became the Weaving Master in the Bauhaus Weaving Workshop in 1928. Anni Albers took over from Stolzl as Weaving Master in 1931.

³⁴ Anja Baumhoff, *The gendered world of the Bauhaus: the politics of power at the Weimar Republic's premier art institute, 1919-1932* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 9.



Figure 2. Anni Albers, *Two*, linen, cotton and rayon, 46 x 102 cm, 1952.

Into the Bauhaus

2019 marks the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Bauhaus.³⁵ There are events worldwide celebrating the significance of a school that existed for only 14 years, such is its reach. Subsequent generations of tertiary students, myself included, have learned about the Bauhaus within art history and theory courses. Founder of the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius, was director of an institution within art history that had the initially promising hallmark of egalitarianism. The admission policy of the Bauhaus stated that “any person of good repute, without regard to age and sex, whose previous education is deemed adequate by the Council of Masters, will be admitted, as far as space permits.”³⁶

However, when Gropius’s egalitarian views were challenged by the number of female applicants, a not so fair view prevailed. The Bauhaus was established in 1919, and just a year later Gropius suggested a “tough separation, at the time of acceptance, most of all for the female sex, whose members are too strongly represented.”³⁷ Instead “women should be directed into the Weaving, Bookbinding and Pottery Workshops after completion of the preliminary course.”³⁸ Soon the Pottery Workshop would be off limits to women too.

³⁵ “100 Jahre Bauhaus,” 2019. Accessed October 8, 2019. <https://www.bauhaus100.de/en/>

³⁶ Sigrid Weltge-Wortmann, *Women’s Work: Textile Art from the Bauhaus* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993), 41.

³⁷ “Minutes of the Master Council.” Bauhaus Archive, Berlin (September 20, 1920): 10, quoted in Sigrid Weltge-Wortmann, *Women’s Work: Textile Art from the Bauhaus* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1993), 42.

³⁸ Sigrid Weltge-Wortmann, *Women’s Work*, 42.

“Gerhard Marcks, the Pottery form master, and Gropius were of the same mind: if possible not to admit women into the Pottery Workshop, both for their sake and for the sake of the workshop.”³⁹ By 1922 the Bookbinding Workshop had been dissolved. “This left only the Weaving Workshop open to women . . . because weaving was seen as primarily a woman’s field of work.”⁴⁰ It is testament to the tenacity of the women in the weaving workshop that this studio became such a successful enterprise, contributing significant innovations within the medium, particularly when it was not necessarily the artists’ medium of choice.

Gathering an argument

Using the floor plans in gallery guides, I have navigated my way through a number of art galleries to collect the data content for a tapestry series that depicts the gender balance of artists exhibited within our state and regional institutions in Victoria (Figs. 3, 4 and 6).

Because I made a trip to Japan whilst undertaking this research masters project, I have also created a tapestry based on the Pola Museum of Art that I visited at that time (Fig. 5). The gendered bias of the work exhibited in art galleries I visited in Hakone and Naoshima was very pronounced and so has become a part of my research. The floor plans to all the art galleries in this series also create the compositions of the tapestries and resemble the modernist grid.

Rosalind Krauss, in her seminal essay *Grids*, refers to centrifugal and centripetal grids and how it is possible for artists to work concurrently with both the inward turn and expansive supposition through the compositional arrangement of the grid.⁴¹ The composition of my tapestries demonstrate temporal segmentation which characterises my experience; the spatial elements of these grids are closed and ingoing. They refer to the bias women artists experience, in relation to their work, within public museums. However this brings into sharp relief the conversation in this work that concerns a centrifugal viewpoint. The nature of my woven compositions, dictated by the space itself and its use, run counter to my own inclination to bleed shapes off the edges of a substrate, as the expansive infinity of the edge would be my preference rather than being confined within the restrictive edge. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari explain striated space using the analogy of the loom, noting

³⁹ Maria Herkner, “Master’s thesis.” (1984): 43, quoted in Sigrid Weltge-Wortmann, *Women’s Work*, 42.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, 42 and 44.

⁴¹ Rosalind Krauss, “Grids.” *October*, Vol. 9, 1979, 63-64. Accessed October 8, 2019. http://www.jstor.org/stable/778321?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

“fabric can be infinite in length but not in width, which is determined by the frame of the warp; the necessity of a back and forth motion implies a closed space.”⁴² Through this rub the material making continually confronts the research questions about feminine presence and absence. Being limited by the architectural elements of a building to compose my own artwork has had its frustrations, but given that the majority of the buildings’ architects are male, it is an appropriate mechanism to reinforce this work conceptually.

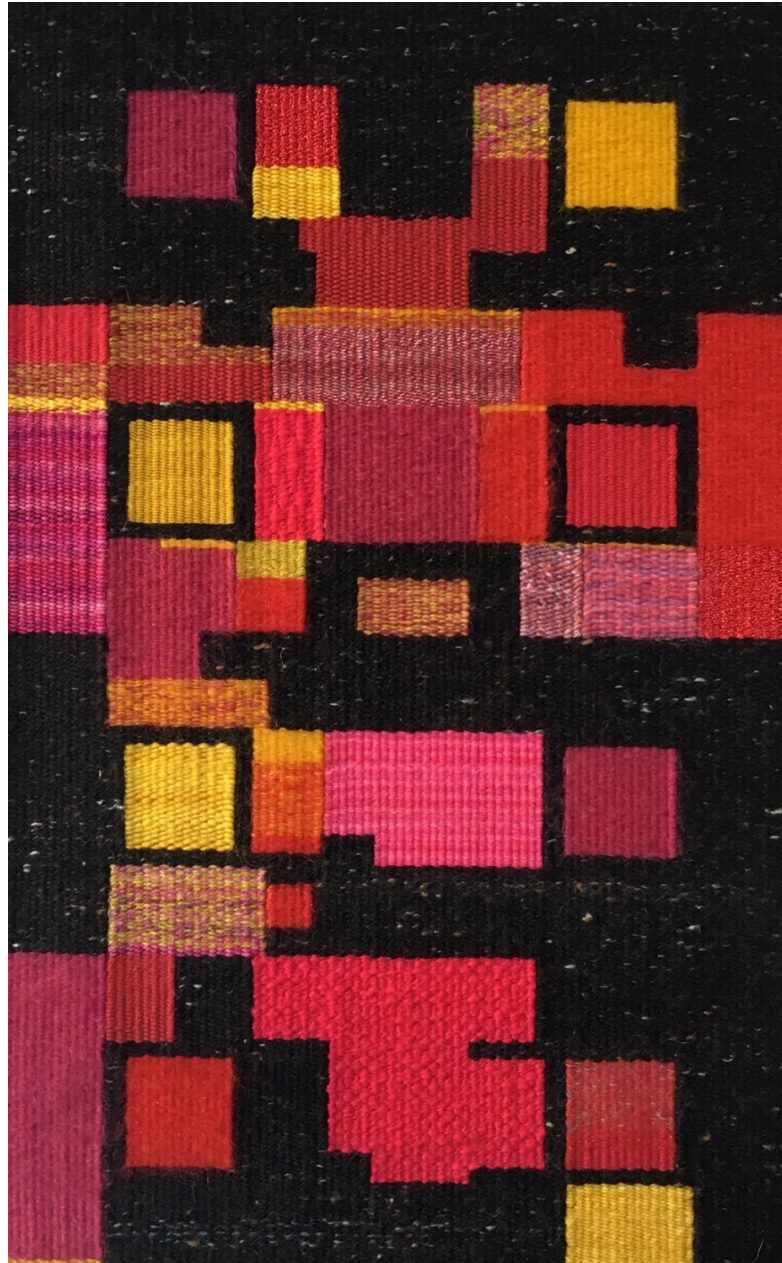


Figure 3. Georgia Janetzki, *#8* (*NGV International*), wool, cotton and silk, 61 x 40 cm, 2018.

⁴² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 475.



Figure 4. Georgia Janetzki, #33 (*NGV Australia*), wool, cotton and silk, 43 x 40 cm, 2018.



Figure 5. Georgia Janetzki, #0.4 (*Pola Museum of Art*), work in progress, wool, cotton and silk, 64 x 40 cm, 2019.



Figure 6. Georgia Janetzki, #23 (*Romancing the Skull*), wool, cotton and silk, 42 x 33 cm, 2018.

Whilst discussing the figures I had collected from the NGV, my research supervisors suggested I might be interested in counting the exhibiting artists by gender in the *Romancing the Skull* exhibition (2017) at the Art Gallery of Ballarat (AGB) (Fig. 6). Both supervisors thought that the exhibition was well represented by female artists. When I walked through the exhibition I also had this perception.⁴³ Perhaps our cognisance was influenced by the fact that a number of the major works were by women. However the

⁴³ Numbers in themselves do not always tell the full story. The Art Gallery of Ballarat (AGB) commissioned and acquired a major work each by Fiona Hall and Sally Smart, for the *Romancing the Skull* exhibition. Both works are prominent and large scale pieces.

final numbers are revealing in that overall, women made up only 23% of the entire show [number of works by women].⁴⁴ It begs the question, are we so accustomed to seeing greater male representation within art galleries that our perception of good and fair female representation is equal to a percentage such as this?

The tapestry series is foremost a qualitative research project because it is describing my subjective experiences. The data documentation at both the NGV Australia and NGV International sites alone took six months to collect because within a large institution such as this, there is always a part of the museum that is closed for the installation of an upcoming exhibition, or for changing or improving the permanent collection. However, without quantitative data to inform the tapestries, the artwork would not have had the impact I needed to support this research project. At times my anger was palpable as I counted artwork after artwork made by males, and although I could have felt some satisfaction in finding the gender imbalance so pronounced regarding my own research, this self-gratification was far outweighed by the reality of what the figures revealed and the implications for myself and other female artists. Being an artist is not a romantic notion; to the contrary, it is a difficult avenue, made all the more so by limited opportunities if you happen to be female.

The slow, reflective and rhythmic process of tapestry weaving is a wonderful enabler for thinking through the material. I use a simple frame loom and I weave by hand with a tapestry needle. The women in the weaving workshop at the Bauhaus experimented with both traditional hand looms and manufacturing techniques. I found the tactile qualities of wool, cotton and silk comforting to the touch and they provided welcome relief to the unsettling action of regularly moving through art galleries to collect data, particularly because I found the figures so depressing.

A cartoon is developed on graph paper for each tapestry weaving. In weaving parlance the cartoon is a drawing that sits behind the loom as a guide for the weaver then outlines of the

⁴⁴ Louise Tegart is now the Director of the AGB, taking up the position in July 2018. Since her appointment, the AGB is addressing gender representation within their exhibitions. Walking through the temporary exhibitions at the AGB on June 17, 2019. I saw *Becoming Modern: Australian women artists 1920-1950*. *Nana Ohnesorge: No Picnic at Ngannelong* and *Tai Snaith: A World of one's own*. In *Backspace Liz Souter Retrospective: Four decades of basketmaking*. All these exhibitions present female artists and *Becoming Modern* was sourced almost entirely from the AGB's permanent collection.

drawing are transferred onto the warp threads with ink. I also found the cartoon useful as a preliminary plan for the use of colour in the tapestries. My choice of colour shifts from one weaving to the next in this series, however the one constant colour is yellow, which is used to represent percentages of artworks by female artists. In some instances I have dyed the wool yellow with turmeric, in the knowledge that the colour will fade if exposed to UV light, to create another visual cue that demonstrates our lack of female visibility within galleries and in historical art reference. Yet the wool itself will not disappear, it is the materiality of our existence.

My first tapestry has red warp threads. I then moved on to using yellow warp threads. The decision was a purely practical one, I hoped that the warp threads would disappear because the weft threads were of a similar colour. However the switch to a yellow warp made me see the construction of the tapestry as another means to communicate the hidden traces of the existence of women artists, beneath the surface of documentation.

The weaving method I use is based on the Gobelin technique that originated in France in the 15th Century. Employing a European weaving technique seems an appropriate choice for an homage to the Bauhaus Weaving Workshop, which from its inception in 1919 was located in Weimar. The school moved to Dessau in 1925 and finally, for a short time, to Berlin in Germany. The Australian Tapestry Workshop (ATW) also uses the Gobelin technique. ATW master weaver Chris Cochis, speaking as part of a panel discussion during the 2019 MPavilion series⁴⁵ made an important point about categorisation upon being asked “when does a tapestry cease to be a tapestry and become a sculpture?” Cochis replied “there is no need to label the work at all,” articulating a way to bridge the artificial divide between art and craft that we have been grappling with ever since Vasari, in his quest as a painter to be included within the liberal arts movement, made the distinction between art and craft.

When the tapestry work is exhibited I invite viewers to touch the work and feel the fibres for themselves. Touching artwork is not orthodox practice within many art galleries. In this instance I believe using our hands to touch the tapestries is of vital import for enriching the

⁴⁵ Chris Cochis, “MTalks Tapestry x Architecture.” *MPavilion Program*, January 14, 2019. Accessed October 8, 2019. <http://mpavilion.org/program/tapestry-x-architecture/>

audience experience. Actively engaging with the texture and softness of the tapestry material sits in stark contrast to the figures that the fibres reveal. University of Georgia marine scientist, Joan Sheldon, created a Tunisian crochet wool scarf to map climate change, which she presented at the 2015 Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation Conference in Portland, Oregon.⁴⁶ Sheldon found that “even scientists who were familiar with the data wanted to touch the scarf . . . they never would [do this] with a science graph.”⁴⁷

The benefits of material tactility extend beyond the makers’ process to include anyone who comes into direct contact with the artwork, highlighting the importance of physical exhibition spaces. Victoria Mitchell suggests: “Textiles . . . mediate between the fibrous body and the fabric of architecture. They articulate subtle physical sensations between substance and surface, and are most closely known to us through their relationship to the skin and to the sense of touch.”⁴⁸

Social anthropologist Tim Ingold invites us to look at weaving and making from a particular perspective; rather than thinking “about making a weaving, [he suggests that] weaving is making.”⁴⁹ A weaving literally grows, however with a subtle shift of emphasis we might begin to look at the materiality and modality of the natural world and art practices in ways that bring the similarities between making and growing together, rather than as distinct and different processes. Growth has the potential to change the artist’s and the audience’s understanding through the materials and practices used to express ideas. Anni Albers referred to weaving as the “pliable plane,”⁵⁰ but the full softness and movement of the material is only revealed once the taught warp threads are released from the loom’s frame, allowing the grid-like warp and weft threads to take in the 3rd dimensional form.

⁴⁶ Joan Sheldon. Accessed January 28, 2019. <http://sheldonfiberdesigns.net/the-globally-warm-scarf/>

⁴⁷ Joan Sheldon. Accessed January 28, 2019. <https://www.fastcompany.com/90290800/crafting-take-a-dark-turn-in-the-age-of-climate-crisis> accessed January 28

⁴⁸ Victoria Mitchell, “Textiles and Techné.” *The Textile Reader*, ed. Jessica Hemmings (New York: Berg Publishers, 2012), 11.

⁴⁹ Tim Ingold, *Making and Growing: Anthropological Studies of Organisms and Artefacts*, Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold, eds. (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 339.

⁵⁰ Anni Albers, “The Pliable Plane; Textiles in Architecture.” *Perspecta* 4, 1957, 36-41. Accessed October 8, 2019. <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.rmit.edu.au/stable/1566855>

Director of the NGV, Tony Ellwood, actively promotes the exhibition and acquisition of work by women artists within the NGV. An article by Ellwood in the NGV Magazine⁵¹ is written with an obvious agenda to promote to the public a more unbiased approach to current collecting and exhibiting. It is all about women artists. During the Summer of 2017/18 at The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, the work of contemporary artists Helen Maudsley, Del Kathryn Barton, Mel O’Callaghan and Louise Paramor was showcased. What this approach addresses is the provision for public access to an extensive body of women artists’ work and the development of that work, thus providing a fuller picture of their practice, something our historical collections have been lacking.

Addressing the legacy of our historical collections is more troublesome. Earlier in 2017 the NGV announced several new acquisitions by women painters. The works were acquired in an attempt to address the imbalance within the NGV’s collection. *Portrait of a lady* (1675)⁵² by painter Mary Beale, *Portrait of Anne Charlotte of Lorraine, Mademoiselle de Brionne as Diana* (c. 1775)⁵³ by painter Elizabeth Vigee Le Brun, and *The Shrimp Seller* (1776)⁵⁴ by Maria Margaretha La Fargue are the only paintings on display by female artists within their respective exhibition spaces. Whilst their acquisition is certainly admirable, sadly their singularity provides us with a limited understanding of these artists’ practice during their lifetime.

I was too young to remember the inaugural exhibition, at the new NGV building on St Kilda Road, entitled *The Field* (1968). When the exhibition opened it included 40 artists, and of that number only three were women. Beckett Rozental, curator of *The Field Revisited* (2018), which is a recreation of the original exhibition to celebrate the gallery’s 50th anniversary, does not attempt to redress that imbalance, yet nor does she shy away from it. A reading space within the exhibition displays the 1960s photographic portraits of each artist that exhibited in *The Field*, alongside their biographies. If anything, seeing the

⁵¹ Tony Ellwood, *National Gallery of Victoria Magazine*, #7, November/December 2017, 7.

⁵² Mary Beale, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1675, National Gallery of Victoria. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/artist/30335/>

⁵³ Elisabeth Vigee Le Brun, *Portrait of Anne Charlotte of Lorraine, Mademoiselle de Brionne as Diana*, 1775, National Gallery of Victoria. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/work/131079/>

⁵⁴ Maria Margaretha La Fargue, *The Shrimp Seller*, 1776, National Gallery of Victoria. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/artist/30337/>

artists' portraits draws attention to the gender bias. The exhibition is faithful to the original as an important marker of time and I do not see Rozentals' curatorial decisions as an endorsement for the imbalance within that show. Rozentals says "the NGV will use this show as an opportunity to discuss the shortcomings of the male-focused curation. So a show exhibiting the work of women from the same era will open shortly."⁵⁵ I could not resist making a tapestry based upon *The Field Revisited*, as it really was like walking into a slice of Australian art history (Fig. 7).



Figure 7. Georgia Janetzki, #7 (*The Field Revisited*), wool, cotton and silk, 50 x 27 cm, 2018.

⁵⁵ Will Cox, "Back to The Field." *Broadsheet*, April 27, 2018. Accessed October 8, 2019. <https://www.broadsheet.com.au/melbourne/art-and-design/article/back-field-ngv-2018>

The NGV opened the promised all-women exhibition soon after, entitled *Modern Australian Women: Works from a private collection* (2018). I find it difficult to draw comparisons between this exhibition and *The Field Revisited* because *Modern Australian Women* includes professional artists from 1880 to 1965, a period of time before *The Field*, and generally the work is figurative in nature, as opposed to the abstract colour field work that marked *The Field* as ground-breaking and highly controversial. Entry is free to the *Modern Australian Women* exhibition, and I believe it's important to provide free entry to see significant artists' work within public museums, so that everyone has access and it is possible to revisit the work numerous times. However, in the mind of the public the paying exhibitions may garner more significance and prestige than their free counterparts. This says something about the status of the two exhibitions and I find it difficult not to perceive the *Modern Australian Women* exhibition as secondary to *The Field Revisited* because of the way the two exhibitions have been presented.⁵⁶ It's also hard to imagine an exhibition titled *Modern Australian Men: Works from a private collection*. The idea of a private collection, perhaps in a home, reinforces the internal, intimate spaces that women have occupied for so long versus the external, public spaces where men have always felt at home.

Also in the same year the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) held the landmark exhibition *Unfinished Business: Perspectives on art and feminism*. This show directly addressed the role of art and social activism through the feminist movement from the 1970s until today, celebrating the experiences and expression of Australian women artists. Through exhibitions like *Unfinished Business* we are seeing a change in attitude towards collecting and exhibiting women's art, particularly in the larger public institutions. Australian independent curator and writer Julie Ewington is an exemplary role model; her activism on behalf of women artists acknowledges that there is still much to be done, but also much to celebrate. From April in 2019 Tate Britain "is to temporarily rehang the last 60 years of its gallery displays with only female artists . . . for a year at least, the free galleries will tell the story of British art from 1960 until the present day from a female perspective."⁵⁷ Yet again we have a free entry exhibition of women artists' work. I applaud

⁵⁶ The public had to pay an entry fee to see *The Field Revisited*.

⁵⁷ Mark Brown, "Tate Britain to celebrate 60 years of work by female artists." *The Guardian*, December 19, 2018. Accessed March 12, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/dec/18/tate-britain-celebrate-60-years-work-female-art>

the Tate Britain for their decision, although the status of women artists still needs more consideration from a feminist perspective.

We can observe a number of initiatives within Australian galleries and museums that directly address women artists, in an attempt to change the status quo. In May, 2019 the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) launched the campaign #knowmyname. National Gallery Assistant Director Alison Wright created the idea and “the campaign builds on the work of the National Museum for Women in the Arts in Washington D.C. which, in 2016, asked people if they could name five women artists.”⁵⁸ About 25% of The NGA’s entire collection of artworks is by women artists, so the NGA will hold a major exhibition of Australian women artists in 2020 to acknowledge this imbalance.⁵⁹ From a commercial gallery perspective, Melbourne’s Finkelstein Gallery will open in August, 2019 as “Australia’s only commercial gallery dedicated to contemporary female artists.”⁶⁰ Founder of Finkelstein Gallery and art consultant Lisa Fehily is motivated by the NGA’s #knowmyname campaign. The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA), who announced in their *2020 Vision* “a year of exhibitions centred on female artists and a reinstatement of some galleries to underline the role of women in art history . . . beginning in October, 2019.”⁶¹ The Art Gallery of New South Wales also implemented a new policy in 2015, to collect more local women artists.⁶²

If there is an alternative to the canon of Western art history for understanding myself as a female artist, I believe one of the answers may lie in the acquisition and curation of women’s art within public art museums. This is possibly a generational shift, as each new generation of men and women acknowledge that there are cultural practices and histories that are partisan, and recognise that the political and social emancipation of women is still a work in progress.

⁵⁸ National Gallery of Australia campaign: *Know my name*. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://nga.gov.au/knowmyname/>

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Fortescue, “Australia’s only gallery dedicated to female artists to open in Melbourne.” *The Art Newspaper*, August 21, 2019. Accessed October 8, 2019. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/australia-female-gallery>

⁶¹ Nancy Kenny, “Baltimore Museum of Art dedicates a year of exhibitions to women.” *The Art Newspaper*, August 1, 2019. Accessed October 8, 2019. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/baltimore-museum-of-art-dedicates-a-year-of-exhibitions-to-women>

⁶² Linda Morris, “Art Gallery of NSW dips into collection for all women show.” *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 25, 2019. Accessed October 6, 2019. <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/art-gallery-of-nsw-dips-into-collection-for-all-women-show-20190824-p52kxb.html>

Series II | Photogenic drawings with turmeric

I associate the colours purple, green and white with feminism. I became aware of the suffrage movement as a young girl reading the novel *Mary Poppins* by Pamela Lyndon Travers. These were the signature colours of the militant suffrage group called the Women's Social and Political Union⁶³ between 1903 and 1917 in the United Kingdom. The Victorian Women's Suffrage Society, the first of its kind in Australia was established in 1884.⁶⁴ Their earlier counterpart in the United States, the American Equal Rights Association, founded in 1866,⁶⁵ adopted yellow. Women wore yellow and carried yellow banners that they had made themselves, during their rallies and protests. This was a serendipitous discovery that reinforces my decision to use the colour yellow as a visual representation for women within the artworks made during this research project. For me, yellow symbolises a positive, joyous colour and as a medium, turmeric yields satisfying, deep yellow tonal values as a dye. It's not only safe to work with, skin contact with this spice could also be beneficial for one's health. These attributes are a fitting embodiment in the artwork.

The *Photogenic drawing with turmeric* series is an homage to botanist and photographer Anna Atkins. In 1842 scientist and astronomer John Herschel created the cyanotype process for copying notes, but it was Atkins who employed cyanotype to make photogenic drawings that visually record specimens of algae, making her the first person to produce a book using photographic illustrations⁶⁶ (Fig. 8). Published in 1843, *British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* is now held in the collection of the British Museum.⁶⁷ Atkins moved in scientific circles, since her father, John George Children, was a chemist and zoologist, and this is how she came to understand the cyanotype method. Photogrammetry is used in mapping to record measurements between objects, whereas photogenic drawing

⁶³ Barbara Caine, *Australian Feminism and the British Militant Suffragettes: Papers on Parliament 41, 2004*, Parliament of Australia, 2004. Accessed October 8, 2019. https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Senate/Powers_practice_n_procedures/~/~link.aspx?id=3C44655A04494661A14BF77C89E93438&z=z

⁶⁴ Victorian Women's Trust, "Gender Equality Milestones." Accessed January 27, 2019. <https://www.vwt.org.au/gender-equality-timeline-australia/>

⁶⁵ American Equal Rights Association, National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, and Susan B. Anthony Collection, "Proceedings of the first anniversary of the American Equal Rights Association, held at the Church of the Puritans, New York, May 9 and 10, 1867." Accessed January 27, 2019. <https://www.loc.gov/item/ca10003542/>

⁶⁶ Anna Atkins, "Photographs of British Algae. Cyanotype Impressions," British Library Catalogue of Photographically Illustrated Books. Accessed February 8, 2019. <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/photographyinbooks/record.asp?RecordID=3048>

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

speaks of absence, as the white negative image on a blue background that we see is the result of its reliance on a physical object blocking UV light during the making of a cyanotype. I am interested in the indexical trace, and as a medium cyanotype's symbolism connotes the absence of documenting female artistic participation in the professional sphere. "A photogenic drawing allows us to look at the material mode of the photograph rather than through it, as a way of making that materiality matter."⁶⁸

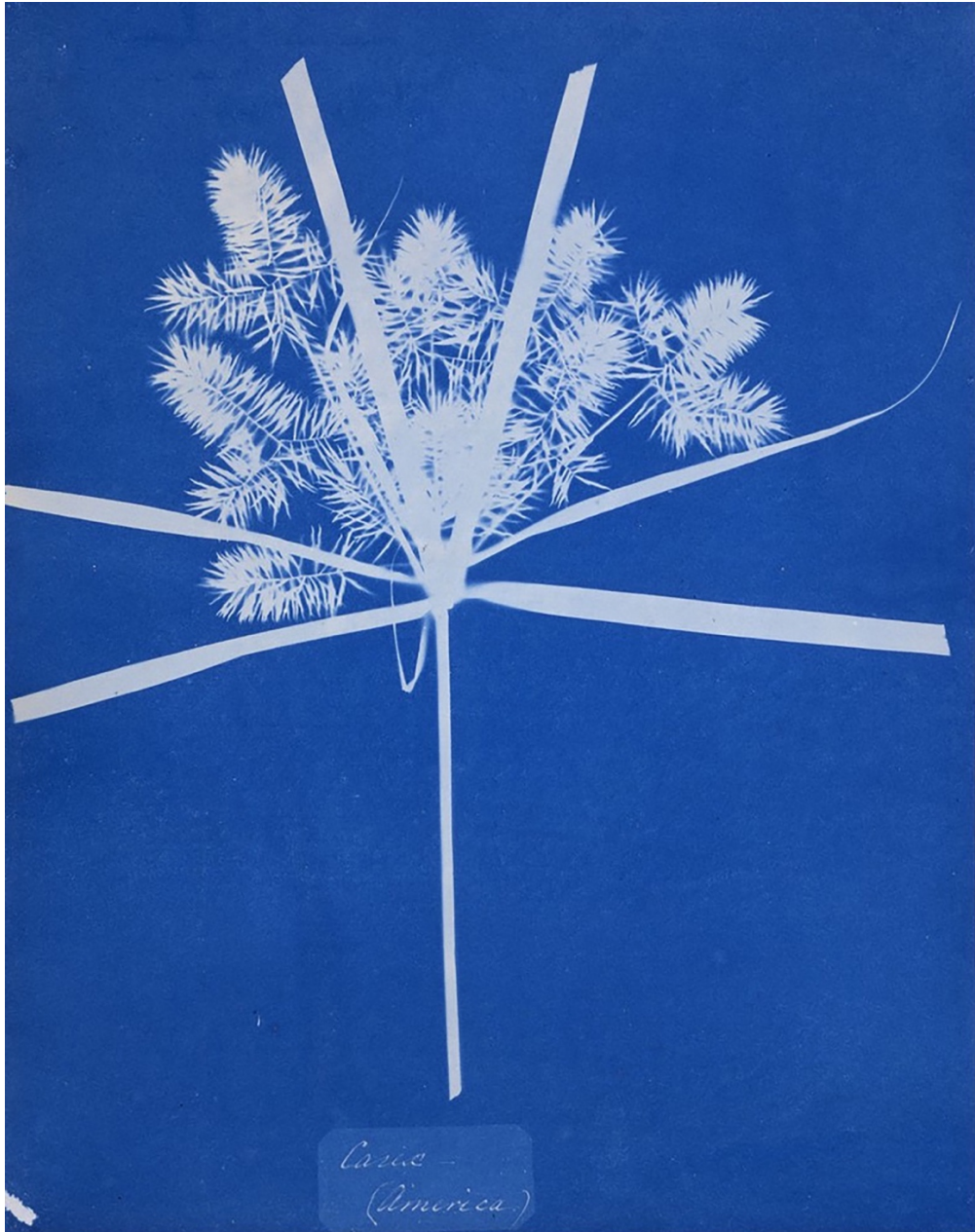


Figure 8. Anna Atkins, *Carix*, cyanotype, 25.6 x 20 cm, c. 1850.

⁶⁸ Carol Armstrong, *Ocean Flowers: Impressions from Nature*, Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher, eds. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 163.

I think of the cyanotype process as a way to make self-portraits that have an oblique reference to my body, through associations drawn upon from a medical procedure I underwent called a sentinel node biopsy. A blue dye is administered that eventually leaves the body as blue urine. In this process, I *am* the cyanotype.⁶⁹ As an alternative to the toxicity of the cyanotype print process⁷⁰ I am using turmeric as a medium, which has a long history of being used to dye textiles, following traditional Hindu Ayurvedic principles. The beautiful bright yellow is not colour-fast, however artisans in India consider their raw materials not just for their colour but also for their healing benefits, because fabric can be in contact with and worn next to the skin. Turmeric has been used for centuries in Asian cooking as a spice and medicinal herb, its health giving properties are found in the compound curcumin, acting as an anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory. Washing the fabric will slowly leach the colour but light has a far more dramatic effect.

To dye the fabric I simmered silk in a dilution of four parts water to one part vinegar, for an hour. Despite the mordant improving the retention of the dye colour during subsequent washing, the same cannot be said for the exposure of the dyed fabric to sunlight. The mordant is still necessary to keep the colour from washing out during rinsing, and achieve the greatest contrast during the photogenic process to follow. After the mordant, the fabric is simmered in a pot of water with powdered turmeric for about an hour, stirring regularly to ensure even coverage. The pot is taken off the heat and I prefer to leave the fabric submerged overnight. The cloth is then rinsed in cold water until the water runs clear. For a really intense colour I repeat the process. I have experimented with the dye process using pieces of fresh turmeric but the powdered turmeric provides a more vibrant result.

Using a similar principle to photogenic drawing, I place stencils of opaque black paper over fabric dyed with turmeric, blocking the UV light, whilst allowing the exposed shapes of the fabric to fade (Fig. 9). Unlike the tapestries, the composition of this series is not dictated by the encumbering architectural dimensions of floor plans, so I have used the

⁶⁹ During surgery for the removal of a breast cancer tumour, a blue dye is injected into the breast. The dye will travel to the lymph nodes via the lymphatic vessels and the sentinel lymph node(s) will turn blue. The Surgeon can then remove the blue sentinel nodes, in my case five, for biopsy.

⁷⁰ Potassium Ferricyanide and Ferric Ammonium Citrate (green) together are stable. Using a fume hood, gloves, safety glasses and mask to prepare the chemicals when in powder form is adequate to prevent irritation ie. a controlled environment. This technique was developed by John Herschel, another more recent cyanotype process developed by Mike Ware mixes Potassium Ferricyanide, Ammonium Iron Oxalate and Ammonium Dichromate and is a more toxic process.

edges of the work to create more expansive, centrifugal compositions. A series of banners, their form alluding to protest, utilizes the process of the fade to represent women's presence in the face of absence in documentation. Through experimentation with photogenic drawing my focus on the surface and materiality of fabric has helped me to consider the nature of textiles as art and the association with clothing, and therefore the body, as more than an alternative substrate to paper for printmaking techniques.



Figure 9. Georgia Janetzki, *You are her*, work in progress (one piece of a triptych), turmeric and silk, 110 x 110 cm, 2019.

With yellow becoming a thematic emblem for this research project I am reminded of a yellow cotton shirt that I bought from an Opportunity Shop many years ago (Fig. 10). I wore it for several years, it had an unusual repeat pattern of gryphons, the strong mythical creature that is part lion, part eagle. However what makes the shirt important to me is not the pattern on the surface of the fabric but having shared this shirt with my mother-in-law, Glenda. She admired the shirt so I gave it to her, and knowing that she often wore it made me feel close to her. When she died I took the shirt back. Wearing a garment next to the skin imparts something of the body in the weave of the cloth that's more than a memory; it's a physical residue in confluence with the properties of that cloth.



Figure 10. Vintage shared shirt, c. 1960s, cotton.

Series III | Looking-glass houses

My interest in the properties of textiles and the woven substrate has led to a series of printed scarves, intended to be worn on the body. During a visit to the Heide Museum of Modern Art I took a photograph of the garden outside the Heide III gallery window and found myself superimposed in the trees by the reflective glass window of the gallery space (Fig. 11). It is my habit, and typical of the time I occupy now, to take photographs with my mobile phone camera during the course of my day. Sometimes I share these images on social media platform Instagram. The photographs are not highly orchestrated (although I do post-edit with careful consideration for composition), I do not own an SLR camera nor am I overly interested in the technical aspects of professional photography, but rather in a dialogue about the documentation and place of female artists inside and outside of the institutional art gallery.

As a printmaker I love the traditions and tactility of manual lithographic and etching methods, however just as the weavers at the Bauhaus experimented with automated processes alongside handmade processes, I am also interested in how digital textile printing can shape the nature of photography through a digitally automated print process. The textile printer I choose to work with uses natural fibre fabrics and prints with non-toxic, solvent free, water-soluble pigment inks. “[They are] committed to running a low impact, sustainable practice and only print what is needed - there's no overproduction, what little waste fabric they do have is repurposed or recycled through recycling programs.”⁷¹ Exploring new ways of working has provided me with the opportunity to address environmental concerns via my art practice in a direct way.

This series is an homage to street photographer Vivian Maier, who often included her own reflection in store windows (Fig. 12). During a visit to the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki I photographed my silhouette reflected within an internal gallery window (Fig. 13). What began as a serendipitous discovery became a purposeful series. Experimenting with printing on fabric, the sheen and fluidity of the material combined with a larger scale, emphasises the surface and reflects light, just as the glass window does, allowing us to look at the materiality of the photograph, much like a photogenic drawing. The series also includes self-portraits at the Heide II (Fig. 14), the Ian Potter Museum of Art at the

⁷¹ Frankie and Swiss. Accessed April 17, 2018. <http://www.frankieandswiss.com.au/>

University of Melbourne (Fig. 15), Tarrawarra Museum of Art (Fig. 16), the NGV International (Fig. 17) and NGV Australia (Fig. 18), the Art Gallery of Ballarat (Fig. 19) and the Yayoi Kusama Museum in Tokyo (Figs. 20 and 21).



Figure 11. Georgia Janetzki, *Self-portrait (Heide III)*, digital print on silk, 100 x 132 cm, 2017.



Figure 12. Vivian Maier, *Self-portrait, Chicagoland*, photograph, dimensions unknown, 1975.

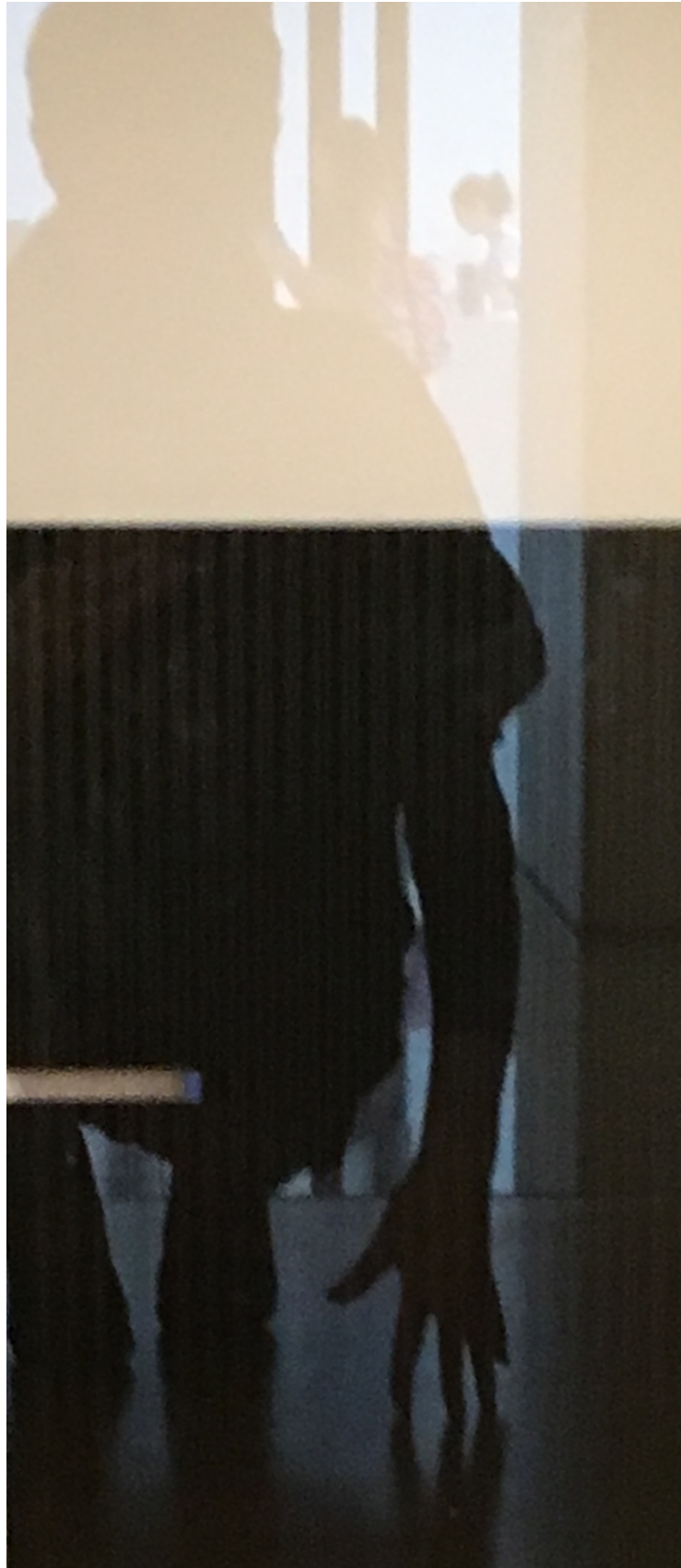


Figure 13. Georgia Janetzki, *Self-portrait* (Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki), digital print on silk, 86 x 200 cm, 2017.

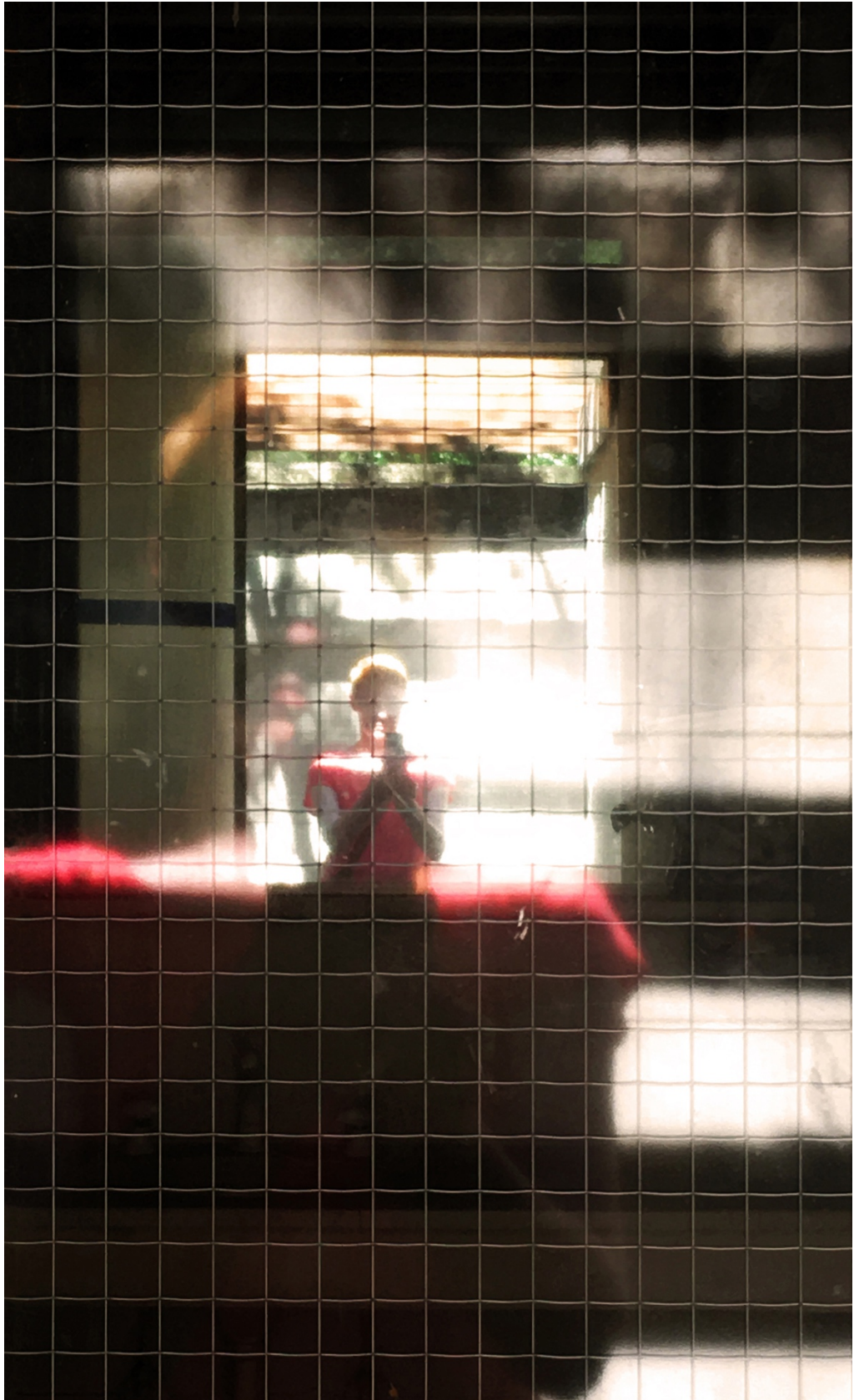


Figure 14. Georgia Janetzki, *Self-portrait (Heide II)*, digital print on silk, 100 x 165 cm, 2018.



Figure 15. Georgia Janetzki, *Self-portrait (Ian Potter Museum, University of Melbourne)*, digital print on silk, 83 x 200 cm, 2018.



Figure 16. Georgia Janetzki, *Self-portrait (Tarrawarra)*, digital print on silk, 100 x 139 cm, 2018.

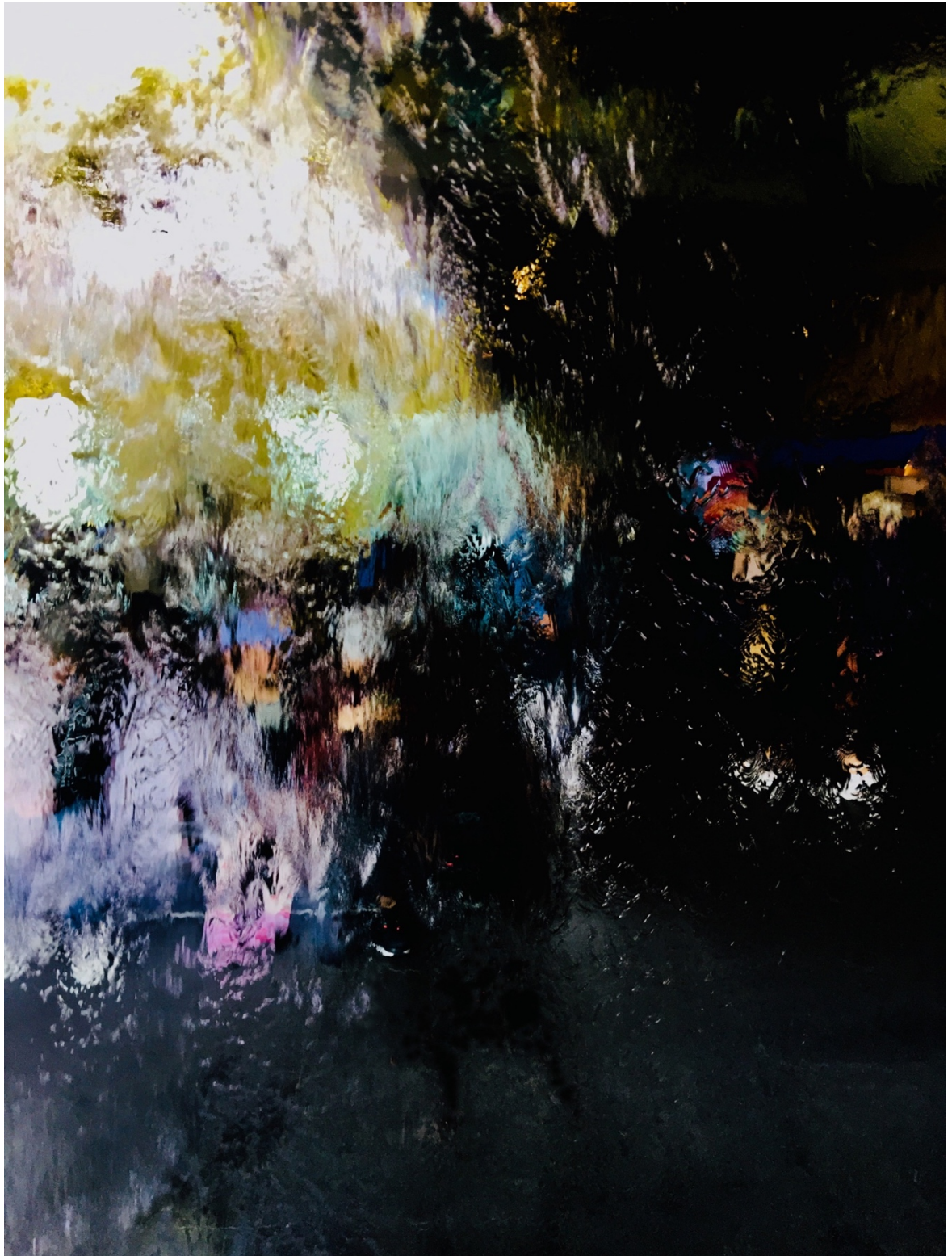


Figure 17. Georgia Janetzki, *Self-portrait (NGV International)*, digital print on silk, 100 x 133 cm, 2019.



Figure 18. Georgia Janetzki, *Self-portrait (Ian Potter Centre, NGV Australia)*, digital print on silk, 100 x 182 cm, 2018.

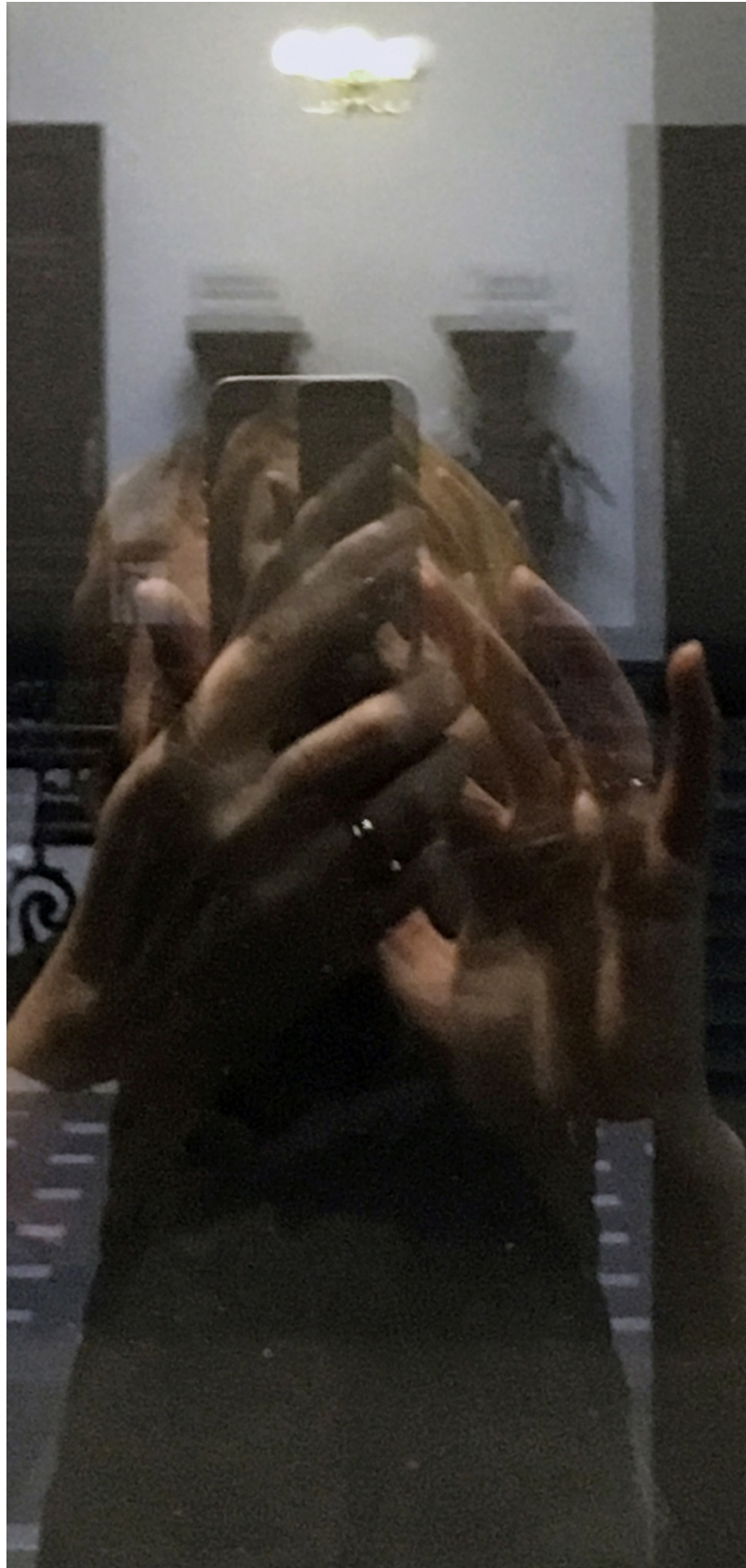


Figure 19. Georgia Janetzki, *Self-portrait (Art Gallery of Ballarat)*, digital print on silk, 95 x 200 cm, 2019.



Figure 20. Georgia Janetzki, *Self-portrait* (Yayoi Kusama Museum), digital print on silk, 84 x 200 cm, 2018.



Figure 21. Georgia Janetzki, *Self-portrait (Yayoi Kusama Museum elevator)*, digital print on silk, 100 x 100 cm, 2018.



Figure 22. Georgia Janetzki, *Self-portrait*, coloured pencil, 15 x 21 cm, 2018.

I simultaneously started making self-portrait pencil sketches because this way of working is much slower than taking photographs with a mobile phone. I felt the need for a method that required more contemplation. The drawings are more traditionally figurative than my photographs, and as I became more immersed, each drawing took a little longer than the last (Fig. 22). They are not intended for public exhibition; rather their function is to provide me with a means to facilitate sustained observation, which I find useful for gaining a deeper understanding of the self. In turn, this informs my photographic self-portraiture, helping me to discern the minutiae.

The digital camera within my mobile telephone captures something material, however combined with Photoshop software and the intervention of the digital textile print process, the photographic end result is not particularly representational nor faithful to the initial image. The texture and abstraction, a product of playing with the limited technology within the iPhone that I usually have at hand, is what interests me because the medium is an egalitarian marker of this time, a way that most of us make and, importantly, share images.

The title of this series, *Looking-glass houses*, refers to author Lewis Carroll's character Alice, who becomes invisible to the chess pieces in the looking-glass house.⁷² I am using Carroll's classic story as an analogy for women artists and the gallery system. According to Elvis Richardson's blog, *The CoUNTess Report: Women count in the art-world*, where Richardson publishes statistics about the gender parity of artists exhibited within Australian art institutions, "museums represent the state sanctioned height of artistic merit and as such their data reveals how tradition and discrimination hide within the notion of artistic excellence and merit."⁷³ Counter to this are Artist Run Initiatives (ARI). "They are independent spaces that encourage experimentation, with more women involved in exhibiting and organizational roles."⁷⁴

As a female practice-led researcher, employed at a university, this presents another layer of complexity. University research guidelines often stipulate which exhibiting institutions are sanctioned for research as recognised by the Federal Government in Excellence Research

⁷² Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (London: Tate Publishing, 2011).

⁷³ Elvis Richardson, *The CoUNTess Report: Women count in the art-world*, 2014. Accessed October 8, 2019. <http://thecountessreport.com.au/>

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

Australia exercise. They are predominantly invitation only national and state galleries in Australia and international equivalents, as well as highly regarded museums and galleries such as the Museum of Contemporary Art, Australian Centre for the Moving Image, WestSpace, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art and international equivalents, including regional galleries. RMIT School of Art recommendations does not generally include commercial galleries, ARIs, Schools of Art galleries such as RMIT University's Project Space and Spare Room, Federation University's Post Office Gallery and the Victorian College of the Arts' Margaret Lawrence Gallery.⁷⁵ This limits the exhibition of my work that can count towards university research outputs as a visual artist. For example, ARIs historically emerged to provide artists with a place to publicly exhibit artwork of an experimental nature, and also allow ultimate sovereignty for the artist over their own work. These attributes, unique to ARIs, can also fall within the definition of creative research and innovation, but both the university and the government do not recognise research through this mechanism for the exhibition of work.

The Advancing Women Artists Foundation (AWA) identifies and restores artworks by women artists from the 15th to the 19th centuries that have been languishing in storage within Florence's museum collections. Another initiative of the AWA is the online database 'A Space of Their Own', which is due to launch in 2019 to address overlooked women artists.⁷⁶ Locally, the Cruthers Collection of Women's Art (CCWA) is "Australia's largest specialist collection of women's art, with a recent focus on self-portraits."⁷⁷ The collection has a permanent home within the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, due to the 2007 bequest of Sir James and Lady Sheila Cruthers to the University of Western Australia.⁷⁸ In 2017 the Sheila Foundation became a public foundation to support women artists.⁷⁹ As evidenced by the 2018 exhibition at the NGV, *Modern Australian Women: Works from a private collection* and the 2019 exhibition at the AGB, *Becoming Modern: Australian women artists 1920-1950*, Australia's public art institutional collections hold or have

⁷⁵ Craig Batty, *Approved Venues for Creative Work*, RMIT School of Media and Communication, December 6, 2017.

⁷⁶ The Advancing Women Artists Foundation. Accessed February 6, 2019. <http://advancingwomenartists.org/home-1>

⁷⁷ The Cruthers Collection of Women's Art, University of Western Australia. Accessed February 6, 2019. <http://www.lwgallery.uwa.edu.au/collections/ccwa>

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ Sheila: A Foundation for Women in Visual Art. Accessed July 1, 2019. <https://sheila.org.au/>

access to a significant body of work that can provide an alternative perspective to our art history.

In the last 10 years social and interactive digital media have placed control over self-image into one's own hands. Selfies are usually taken with the front camera of a smartphone held at arm's length, to be shared on social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter. Not simply a narcissist's dream, RMIT University's Digital Ethnography Research Centre (DERC), "focuses on understanding a contemporary world where digital and mobile technologies are increasingly inextricable from the environments and relationships in which everyday life plays out."⁸⁰

Although this research project uses the trope of the self-portrait, I generally avoid selfies. I'm more interested in showing you myself through my eyes, in other words what my eyes see, and therefore what other women also experience. I was tempted to call this series *Selfies for the self-conscious* because despite a genuinely abiding interest in self-portraiture, I've realised it is other women's self-portraits I would prefer to see.

The visual approach to making this series is the closest I have come to creating selfies. My reticence in this regard has definitely had an effect upon the way I construct ideas surrounding what constitutes a self-portrait in my hands. Although the scarves need to be exhibited so that the images can be seen, the worn form (self) consciously hides my self-portraits within the folds of the fabric. "Artists . . . [including, but not limited to] Pablo Picasso, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Sidney Nolan, Sonia Delaunay, Ben Nicholson, Jean Cocteau and Andre Derain . . . began using the scarf as soft canvases for their work from the mid-20th Century."⁸¹ Local artists Melinda Harper and Kerrie Poliness created a collaborative series of artist scarves in 1999, which were included in the exhibition *Call of the Avant Garde: Constructivism and Australian Art* at Heide Museum of Modern Art in 2017.

⁸⁰ Digital Ethnography Research Centre, RMIT University and Creative Agency, Swinburne University of Technology Social Media Research Group, "Selfie Subjectivities: Selfie as Method Research Symposium." Accessed October 8, 2019. <https://digital-ethnography.com/selfie-subjectivities-selfie-method-research-symposium/>

⁸¹ Nicky Albrechtsen and Fola Solanke, *Scarves* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2011).

The scarf became a medium that transgressed fine art and commercial design as a means to adorn bodies with artwork not usually created to be worn. This was mutually beneficial to both textile designers and artists from a remunerative perspective, and importantly the form of the scarf doesn't appear to compromise the artistic integrity of the artist. Their limited multiple quality can be akin to traditional printmaking editions as a collectable, editioned artwork.

Series IV | #onthetrain

Examples of the integrated self may be found in installations by Tracey Emin. For example *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With* (1995),⁸² and *My Bed* (1998)⁸³ both use artefacts to communicate an absent self-portrait. Since the late 1970s Sophie Calle “has used photography in a diaristic mode, presented together with extensive written texts. Calle’s work can be interpreted as a form of collaborative self-portraiture.”⁸⁴ In the manner of Emin and Calle, this series of self-portraits is also absent self-portraiture.

As a Post-Impressionist painter Grace Cossington Smith painted public life beyond her home, while she exhibited paintings of interior rooms in her lifelong home, Cossington, from the 1930s. Within the depiction of a domestic space that is so intimately known by Cossington Smith, the nature of the inhabitant is also reflected. Thirty years later her focus on the vibration of colour and light are beautifully mastered in a painting of her bedroom, *Interior in yellow* (1962-1964) (Fig. 23). We also see this room from different viewpoints in *Interior with wardrobe mirror* (1955)⁸⁵ and *Way to the studio* (1957).⁸⁶ The significance of Cossington Smith’s paintings of spaces as “a metaphoric space of the mind”⁸⁷ is noted by literary and art critic Gary Catalano.

⁸² Tracey Emin, *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With*, 1995. Saatchi Gallery. Accessed October 4, 2019. https://www.saatchigallery.com/aipe/tracey_emin.htm

⁸³ Tracey Emin, *My Bed*, 1998. Tate Modern. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/emin-my-bed-l03662>

⁸⁴ Daniel Palmer, *Photography and Collaboration: From Conceptual Art to Crowdsourcing* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 129.

⁸⁵ Grace Cossington Smith, *Interior with wardrobe mirror*, 1955. Art Gallery of New South Wales. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/OA11.1967/>

⁸⁶ Grace Cossington Smith, *Way to the studio*, 1957. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://nga.gov.au/exhibition/cossingtonsmith/detail.cfm?IRN=74582&ViewID=2>

⁸⁷ Gary Catalano, “About the house: the domestic theme in Australian art.” *Art and Australia*, Vol. 21, No. 1, Spring, 1983, pp 86-95.

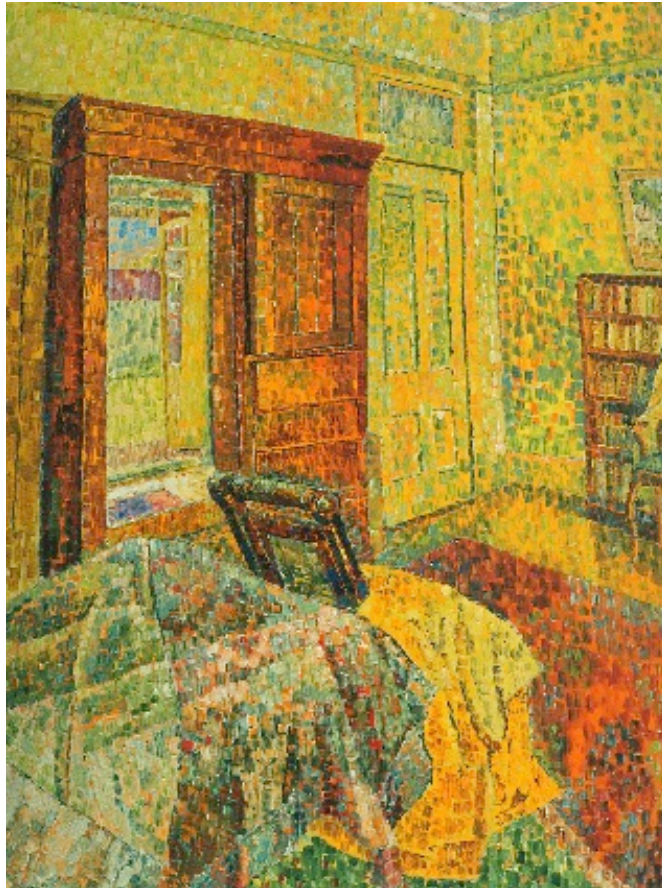


Figure 23. Grace Cossington Smith, *Interior in yellow*, oil on board, 121.7 x 90.2 cm, 1962-64.



Figure 24. Margaret Olley, *Yellow interior*, oil on hardboard, 61 x 76 cm, 1989.

Margaret Olley's studio home is synonymous with the artist herself (Fig. 24). Olley says "Space is the secret of life, it is everything, and I have used it to suit me not only in my surroundings but over time."⁸⁸ Art critic John McDonald observes that "her character may be felt in all her best pictures ... when I look at Olley's paintings it's hard not to think of her."⁸⁹ Both Cossington Smith and Olley referred to the formal elements and qualities in their paintings, and both had a love for depicting beauty. Neither artist verbally articulated the idea that their paintings of interiors and still lives are, in fact, self-portraits, however I would argue that they can be read as such as their work is imbued with such a highly developed sense of self.

Studying in a regional centre has meant making the journey to Ballarat on the train from Melbourne. I would read, occasionally pausing to look out through the window. My eyes would take a moment to adjust their focus from short to long distance. Periodically I took photographs of the views with my phone, the slim form of the phone flattens well against the window and sits easily on the window sill. Some of the images were blurred, the phone camera lens, like my eyes, couldn't always focus on the passing landscape. As the weeks went by I became more intent on trying to capture moments of movement. I can observe what is ahead through the window, with my finger at the ready on the camera button. I don't look at the screen of the camera until later, keeping my eyes on the scenery. When I look at the photographs I have just taken, I can see what is beginning to yield the result I want and adjust my technique for the next photographs I take. Sometimes I note down landmarks of particular interest that I would like to capture better the following week, when the train will pass the same point again.

The rise of digital technology means that I can take many, many photographs and employ great attrition. The process feels accidental, but amplifying the blur has taken some practice. Becoming familiar with how movement and light interacts with the phone camera, I can exploit the possibilities and use the limitations of the technology to advantage, as opposed to using a professional Single Lens Reflex (SLR) camera. At night

⁸⁸ Susan Ostling, "Are you one of us or one of them? Margaret Olley, Ben Quilty and a portrait of a generous friendship." *The Conversation*. Accessed August 25, 2019. <https://theconversation.com/are-you-one-of-us-or-one-of-them-margaret-olley-ben-quilty-and-a-portrait-of-a-generous-friendship-119528>

⁸⁹ John McDonald, "Review: Olley, Quilty and art that triumphs over celebrity." *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Accessed August 25, 2019. <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/review-olley-quilty-and-art-that-triumphs-over-celebrity-20190702-p523cq.html>

time the camera is constantly searching for something to focus upon. This means that blurred scenes can be made from a greater distance as the lens searches for artificial light. There's a magical few minutes at twilight when the camera becomes my eyes. It's too dark outside for me to see anything directly through the window but the camera shows me things, using what little natural light is left in the day.

Philosopher Roland Barthes speaks of “the paradox that, although photography is assumed to represent reality as it is, mechanically and unbiased, it always involves person and social interpretation.”⁹⁰ Since Barthes death in 1980 we have seen the invention of the professional digital editing program Photoshop, in 1987, by Thomas and John Knoll. In the last 10 years many digital applications (apps) have proliferated, enabling anyone to dramatically change photographs taken with a smartphone. Understanding that a photographic image can be highly manipulated is now common knowledge.

I observe a lot of graffiti along the railway line when travelling on the train, and this view brings with it the regular reminder that street art is primarily a male-dominated subculture,⁹¹ and so this series is an homage to San Francisco-based street artist Margaret Kilgallen. Working under street art aliases Matokie Slaughter and Meta, Kilgallen and her husband Barry McGee, also a street artist, worked together painting freight trains in remote railway sidings (Fig. 25). Kilgallen died shortly after giving birth to her first child, Asha, at the age of 33. She had refused treatment for breast cancer during her pregnancy because it would mean losing her unborn child. Kilgallen and I were born in the same year; a coincidence that now, after my own breast cancer diagnosis, makes me pause for thought, and I wonder how her career might have matured.

#onthetrain has at its heart the efficacy of women artists. To be able to work safely. To be and to become. Anywhere. At all times. Melbourne has witnessed the murders of several women in public places during my candidature. The death of Melbourne woman Eurydice

⁹⁰ Brian Schiff, Elizabeth McKim and Sylvie Patron, eds., *Life and Narrative: The Risks and Responsibilities of Storying Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 192.

⁹¹ Alexandra Henry, “Street Heroines.” Accessed February 1, 2019 <http://www.streetheroinessfilm.com>



Figure 25. Margaret Kilgallen drawing on a train, *Beautiful Losers* (still), 2009.

Dixon, in June, 2018,⁹² has weighed heavily on my mind during times that I am walking by myself. In January, 2019 Aiiia Maasarwe was murdered whilst walking home in Bundoora. Natalina Angok was murdered in Melbourne's Chinatown the following April and in May, Courtney Herron was murdered in Royal Park in Parkville.⁹³ Earlier, the rape and murder of Jill Meagher in September, 2012, whilst walking home in the inner city suburb of Brunswick, sparked protests against victim blaming that saw thousands of people take to the streets in a Reclaim the Night rally.⁹⁴ The train provides me with a safe space and passage through locations that I may not otherwise feel able to inhabit alone. I can move through industrial areas and lonely spaces during the day or darkness of night time with relative independence.

As a woman I still encounter the idea that self-regulating behaviour to be safe whilst we occupy urban space is our own responsibility. My home is situated on the fringe of the city in Melbourne, and my work is in the Central Business District (CBD). One aspect of Melbourne's appeal is its network of laneways throughout the CBD. Rebecca Goodbourn

⁹² "Eurydice Dixon's accused killer pleads guilty to rape, murder." *ABC News*. Accessed October 8, 2019. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-11-08/eurydice-dixon-jaymes-todd-guilty-plea-rape-murder/10475992>

⁹³ Anne Davies, "Courtney Herron: woman murdered in Melbourne park died from horrendous bashing." *The Guardian*, Accessed August 27, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/may/26/parkville-melbourne-reacts-with-horror-as-police-hunt-killer>

⁹⁴ Michael Lallo, "Thousands march to reclaim the night." *The Age*. Accessed August 27, 2019. <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/thousands-march-to-reclaim-the-night-20121020-27yln.html>

refers to the laneways as spaces off the map and argues that “[we understand] experience through [mass] categories, reinforcing the subordination of Woman through everyday experience.”⁹⁵ Regardless of statistics there are spaces in the city and in my own neighbourhood where I perceive that I am not safe to be walking on my own because of my gender.

American-born, Melbourne based artist Kate Just creates polemic textile works that examine the personal safety of women from a local perspective, which is also my locale. As well as a solo practice, Just works collectively with others; *The Furies* (2015)⁹⁶ is an installation of large fabric banners on the façade of the St Kilda Town Hall, using photographs of women in her local community performing self-defence techniques. Just facilitated classes where the women involved learnt Hapkido methods for self-protection. Incorporating this potentially life-saving practical skill within an art project visually articulates layers of meaning and equips the participants with the means to protect themselves in the face of aggressive, violent behaviour.

The French 19th Century literary construction of the flaneur describes Man walking the streets as an intellectual observer of lives played out in urban spaces.⁹⁷ Male artists of the 19th Century could occupy this space, whereas women, particularly the middle and upper classes, not so easily. Today it is unhelpful to understand Woman being ‘other’ as the binary opposite of Man. Historically this has shaped the subject matter of women artist’s portraits. Mary Cassatt’s paintings, which she exhibited with the Impressionists, have a completely different viewpoint to her male counterparts. Looking at Cassatt’s paintings in a contemporary context, it would be easy to read her images as traditional and possibly old-fashioned, yet the women she depicted appeared independent and modern. Some of these women were servants or low income women, hired by Cassatt to sit for her (Fig. 26). This would imply that the depiction of domestic space within her work was a conscious decision made by the artist. As a woman herself, Cassatt was privy to the intimate spaces that women occupied.

⁹⁵ Rebecca Goodbourn, “The Grid and the Unnamed Girl: Women, Identity and Safety in Melbourne's Unmapped Spaces.” *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 41:1, 2015. 43-63. Accessed August 19, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13200968.2015.1045056>

⁹⁶ Kate Just, *The Furies*, St Kilda Town Hall, 2015. Accessed April 29, 2019. <http://www.katejust.com/the-furies>

⁹⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, (London: Verso, 1997).



Figure 26. Mary Cassatt, *The Letter*, drypoint and aquatint, 35 x 23 cm, 1890-91.

In the 21st Century my freedom of movement and sense of independence, in terms of place and habitation, is influenced by a self-perception of personal safety. Although I have more freedom from a societal perspective, to go where I please, than Cassatt did, I choose to work at home. The immediacy of being able to address work at any time of the day or night, as well as the financial benefit of not paying for a studio space makes sense for me. Today the separation between work and personal life is relatively indistinct with our ability to communicate via the internet and access information through the world wide web. This means that it is not unusual for a domestic space to be a working space too.

Studying in Ballarat, whilst living in Melbourne, means a V-Line train trip that is regularly repeated, going back and forth, usually once a week. At the micro level, the hermeneutic circle as a methodology works well on a weekly basis. Through this repetitive journey, I now think of the train as an alternative studio space. The time it takes to travel from

Southern Cross station in Melbourne to Ballarat station is about one hour and 40 minutes, and I *feel* safe on the train. At best the internet access on the train is intermittent so I have no digital distractions; no email and no social media. The physical distance means I am freed from the responsibilities of home and work, providing me with uninterrupted time to make and reflect upon my own artwork.

During this research project, in December 2018, I travelled with my family to Japan. As is often the case in my life, domesticity and work combined during this holiday. I relished the blurred possibilities of the high speed bullet train (shinkansen) for making images with my mobile phone. The Japanese term for the aesthetic blur, *boke*, means blur or haze, while *boke-aji* literally means ‘blur quality’ and specifically refers to the out of focus aesthetic produced by a photographic lens. What I did not anticipate was the view of concrete safety barriers outside the window of the shinkansen and there is absolutely no graffiti, anywhere. Grey walls. When I did have a view beyond a concrete barrier the landscape was too far away to really blur the images. After several journeys of failed image making, I decided to concentrate on working from the slower local trains, but eventually I boarded a shinkansen in the dark. I was travelling in Winter when the sun sets at about 4.30pm. With the large scale and high population density of both Tokyo and Kyoto there was plenty of artificial light for my camera to work with at a distance, so the shinkansen can work well as a studio at night.

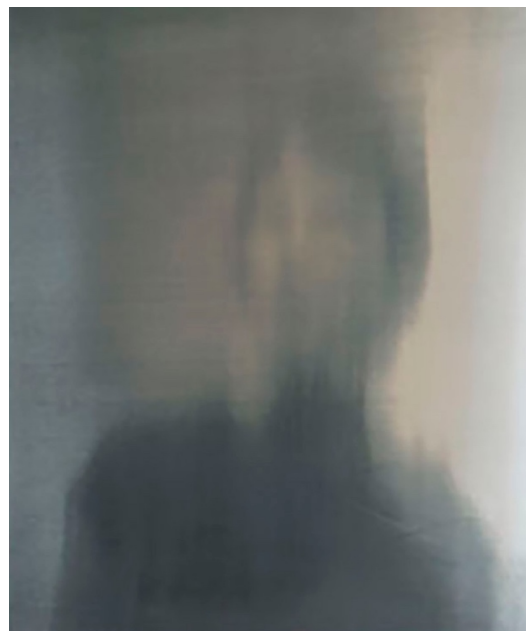


Figure 27. Rebecca Beardmore, *Face to face*, photograph on steel, 89 x 100 cm, 2008.

Artist Rebecca Beardmore uses the blur in her photographic portraiture work. *Face to Face* (2008) (Fig. 27), a blurred photographic portrait on polished steel, interests me because the combination of an image capturing what we can perceive as head and shoulders is recognisable as a portrait, without defining facial features. Beardmore “engage[s] the viewer in the self-conscious act of seeing”⁹⁸ as our eyes search the surface materiality of the substrate and the 3-dimensional depth of the image itself. Whether her work is a portrait or self-portrait remains uncertain. From the mid-16th century, Greek artists have employed mimesis, which means to imitate the world in art. Thus historically, representative features are what we have looked for in a portrait of a person’s face, and a likeness was the purpose of a portrait. Since the mid-19th century western artists have explored non-representational portraiture.

I have regularly shared the images in this series via Instagram @lifeinonechord. I am presenting the photographs for this research project printed on linen squares (Fig. 28). The squares will be pinned by the top corners in order to form a loose grid. The vertical format of Instagram scrolls up and down to view the images on a mobile phone. The movement and trajectory of the subject matter in the photographs is horizontal, due to the movement of the train. These vertical and horizontal movements echo the grid. The fabric moves with the air flow of the viewer when they walk in front of the work, the body disrupting the constraints of the grid. Although each of the series I am presenting within my research project is discrete, all the work has been evolving together over the same period of time and aesthetically I make visual and theoretical connections with the grid in all of the work. The fabric squares can also be assembled in piles, individual images can be moved by hand from one pile to another, collapsing space and time when sitting together.

The way history is documented, and by whom, shows us how current situations have been shaped because history is never objective. Our public museums, art galleries and universities are the repositories for knowledge objects, and with the responsibility of guardianship these institutions address ethical questions through scholarly research. The way information is presented to the public influences our mainstream cultural practices, and manifest and covert perspectives can shed new light upon and frame the past, with a

⁹⁸ Rebecca Beardmore, *Left to Right Face*, Arterreal Gallery, “Finalist: 2016 Fremantle Arts Centre Print Award.” Accessed August 27, 2019. <https://arterreal.com.au/rebecca-beardmore/>

view to the future. Aetiology brings into question the causation of the contemporary condition, which in turn may point to ways in which we can move forward. The following chapter situates women visual artists, who are significant to my enquiry, and writers in this field, both contemporary and historical.

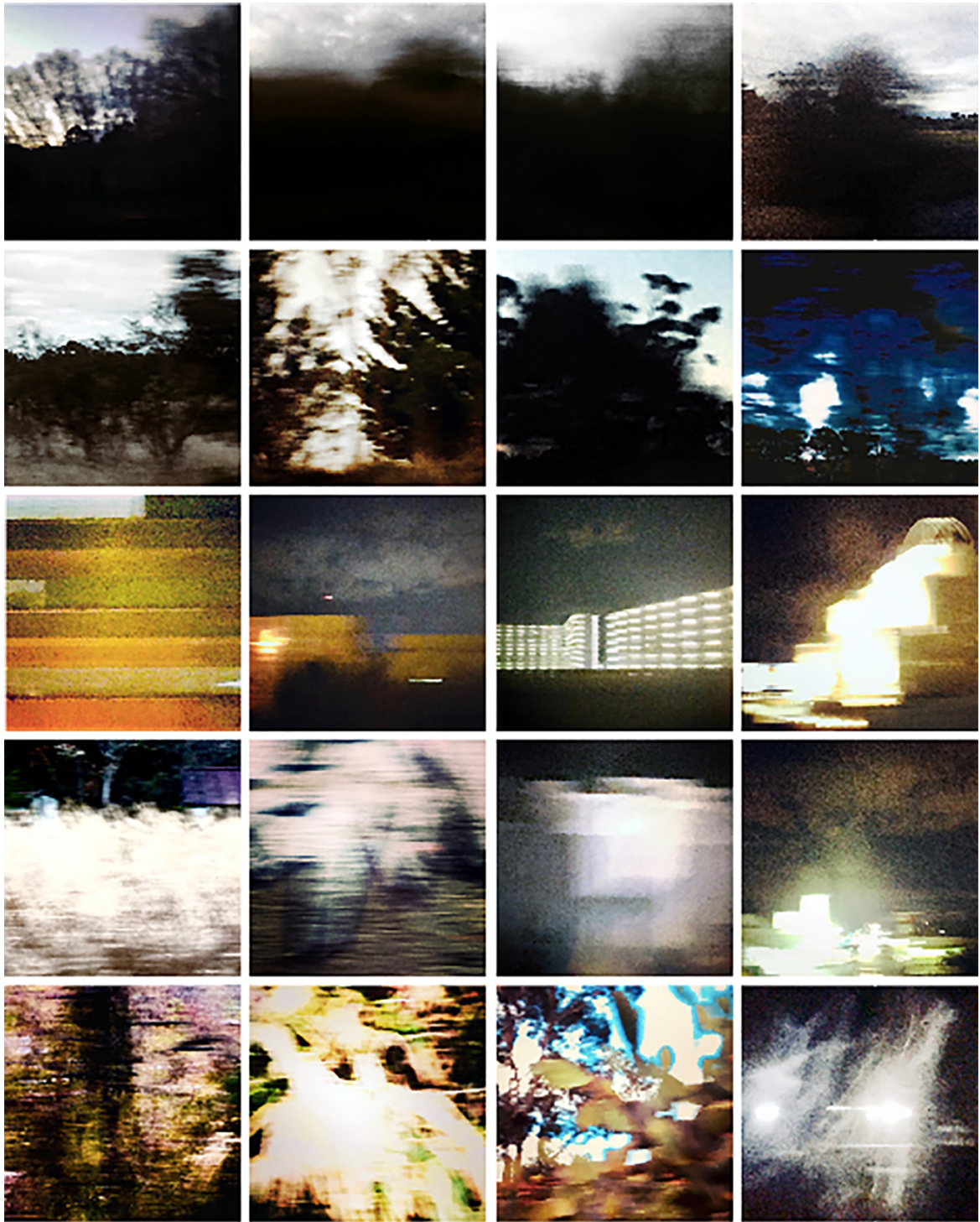


Figure 28. Georgia Janetzki, *#onthetrain (detail)*, digital print on linen, 31 x 31 cm (each image), 2017-19.

Chapter 3

Field of context: Translating the corporeal

The Pliable Plane

Unfolds with words by Anni

In my warp and weft

Tactile language

The blurring of lines between my own making, listening, observing, thinking, reading and writing mean that the research process is all-encompassing, and if one of these elements is missing, my art practice now feels incomplete. For me, listening and reading can apply to objects, materials and words, as well as place and bodies. I communicate through the languages of all these different things. In this chapter I will consider how some women artists express and document the self through their creative art practices.

Academic Victoria Mitchell explores etymology in her essay “Textiles, Text and Techne”, which is included in *The Textile Reader*.⁹⁹ “Within recent literary and critical theory there is evidence of a desire to make sense of the gap between words and things. In this, metaphors referring to textiles have been formative and transformative. Thus Michel Foucault uses the metaphor of interweaving to describe the relationship between things and words.”¹⁰⁰ Perhaps the practice-led research process itself, described in the previous paragraph, as my art practice, can interpolate the space between words and things, as a form of self-portrait that is the sum of its parts.

Anni Albers recognised and privileged the language of material practice as a dialogue between maker and material¹⁰¹, eschewing the intellectual proclivity of words.¹⁰² Yet her insightful collection of published essays, written in the 1930s, take nothing away from her respected art practice. On the contrary, her own writing adds to our understanding of Albers as an artist. In the context of practice-led research, Albers’ essays could be

⁹⁹ Victoria Mitchell, “Textiles, Text and Techne.” *The Textile Reader*, Jessica Hemmings, ed. (New York: Berg Publishers, 2012).

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*, 10.

¹⁰¹ Brenda Danilowitz, ed. *Anni Albers: Selected Writings on Design* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 26.

¹⁰² *ibid*, 27.

described as part self-portrait. Foucault's metaphor of interweaving is apt, as her words are crafted with the integrity and strength of the warp, interwoven with her materially experimental weft. This is evident in Albers' essays, imploring us to listen to materials as we work *with* them, implying that what we do with materials will vary our processes and outcomes for the better if we can put ego to one side and allow ourselves to be guided by the material itself. Art practice, facilitated by the practice-led research process becomes a shared experience with materials and processes, which I believe can play a part in circumventing the notion of individualistic brilliance that permeates our patriarchal reading of art history.

“What made Albers a philosophical weaver were her attempts to work against the grid.”¹⁰³ We can see this demonstrated in Albers' woven works based on language, such as *Haiku* (1961) (Fig. 29) and *Code* (1962) (Fig. 30) that explore her understanding of communication within ancient weaving and a contemporary eye for expanding those insights. Sheila Hicks, a student of Anni Albers at Black Mountain College, North Carolina, in the United States,¹⁰⁴ is an exemplar of breaking with the grid, her organic woven shapes emphatically defy the straight lines of warp and weft (Fig 31).

The Textile Reader, edited by academic Jessica Hemmings, brings together a broad collection of writing about textiles. “Thinking gathered ... [around] textile scholarship”¹⁰⁵ is divided into six parts; Touch, Memory, Structure, Politics, Production and Use. In this book, Hemmings privileges writing concerning textiles, with all the seduction of textile materiality, but through words. Her decision to foreground the validity of writing, in its many forms, within creative practice-led research surrounding textiles, predicates the material as a means for thinking and communicating. Textile as storyteller is relayed in the short stories *Autobiography of a Pocket Handkerchief*¹⁰⁶ and *The Blank Page*,¹⁰⁷ offer examples of how writers use textiles to “adopt the point of view of an object”.¹⁰⁸ Textiles as absence of a body is covered in the essays *The Parody of the Motley Cadaver*:

¹⁰³ Sharon Tsang-De Lyster, “Anni Albers – Weaving a discipline of resilience.” *The Textile Atlas*. Accessed June 30, 2019. <https://www.thetextileatlas.com/craft-stories/anni-albers>

¹⁰⁴ Anni and Josef Albers emigrated to the United States from Germany in 1933 when the Nazi Party closed the Bauhaus. Black Mountain College was founded the same year.

¹⁰⁵ Jessica Hemmings, ed., *The Textile Reader*, xxiv.

¹⁰⁶ James Fenimore Cooper, *The Textile Reader*, Jessica Hemmings, ed., 99-116.

¹⁰⁷ Isak Dinesen, *The Textile Reader*, Jessica Hemmings, ed., 33-36.

¹⁰⁸ Jessica Hemmings, ed., *The Textile Reader*, 99.

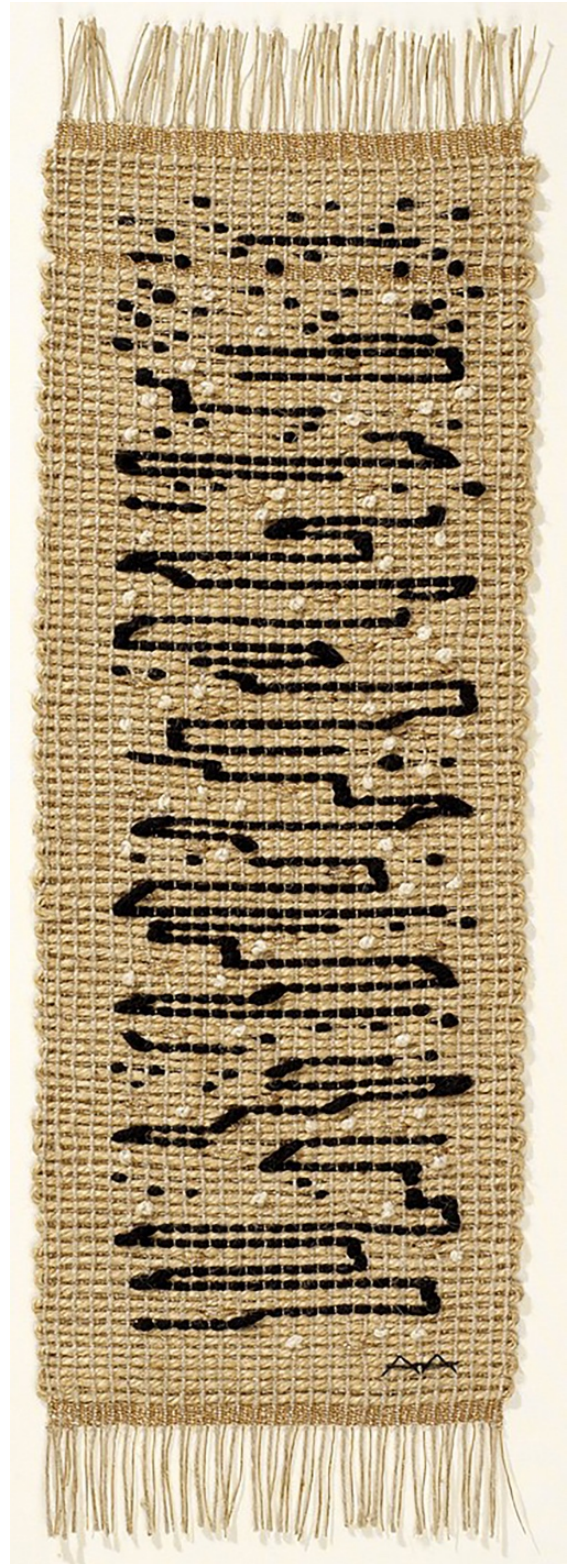


Figure 29, left. Anni Albers, *Haiku*, pictorial weaving, 56 x 18 cm, 1961.

Figure 30, right. Anni Albers, *Code*, pictorial weaving, 58 x 18 cm, 1962.



Figure 31, Sheila Hicks, *50 Years*, weaving, dimensions variable, 2011.

Displaying the Funeral of Fashion,¹⁰⁹ *Texts from the Edge: Tapestry and Identity in Australia*,¹¹⁰ and the poem *100% Cotton*.¹¹¹ I tend to categorise myself as a visual artist, but never as a writer, since for me, writing has an element of ‘otherness’ to it. Yet my practice includes writing, amongst other things, and I see it as a creative process. Bringing these different strands of creative practice together perhaps defies my own assignment, with its capacity for limitation.

Fragile thread, it floats
Woven through the warp once more
Softens history

¹⁰⁹ Robin Healy, *The Textile Reader*, Jessica Hemmings, ed., 89-98.

¹¹⁰ Diana Wood Conroy, *The Textile Reader*, Jessica Hemmings, ed., 223-233.

¹¹¹ Pamela Johnson, *The Textile Reader*, Jessica Hemmings, ed., 286-287.

Throughout *The Subversive Stitch*,¹¹² art historian and psychoanalyst Rozsika Parker explores accounts about embroidery written by women, and embroidery artworks, to piece together a compelling account of how the act of working with needle and thread became thought of as a naturally feminine activity, with a locus as a domestic craft. Embroidery became emblematic of class distinction, the activity defined not as work, but as a leisure activity that demonstrated selflessness by making things for others. Embroidery presents a conundrum, as on the one hand it has been used as an extraordinarily successful means to subordinate women within western patriarchal society, and on the other, embroidery has provided solace, enjoyment and gratification to many women, and continues to do so. It is this dichotomy that is present throughout the history of embroidery, and my own contemporary experience with the tapestry needle attests to the pleasant and meditative nature of the weaving process, soothing my agitation regarding the content of the pieces within the *Weaving Women* series.¹¹³

Body politic

Nineteenth century suffragists used their embroidery skills to make banners for their public demonstrations, displaying an astuteness that harnessed their feminist messages, through needle work, for political gain.¹¹⁴ Akin to the suffragettes, who employed their feminine parasols, covering them with feminist colours and emblems, I have utilized the femininity of the silk scarf to create feminist banners for my *Photogenic Drawing with Turmeric* series. Art historian, Linda Nochlin has been a consistent and prolific voice for feminist politics, capturing the zeitgeist during the formative years of second wave feminism that began in the 1960s in the United States. In *Representing Women*,¹¹⁵ Nochlin examines the visual representation of women in 19th and 20th century western painting, and asserts that “identity, absence, marginality and opposition”¹¹⁶ are recurring themes within the essays of this volume. Methodologies that she calls ‘ad hoc’ inform her varied approach to each subject, and this ad hoc approach means that Nochlin’s methodologies are fit for purpose and positioned to extract unique elements within each theme.

¹¹² Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

¹¹³ See appendix.

¹¹⁴ Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, 198-199.

¹¹⁵ Linda Nochlin, *Representing Women* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999).

¹¹⁶ *ibid*, 12.

Nochlin died in 2017, and her final book, published posthumously, *Misère: The visual representation of misery in the 19th Century*,¹¹⁷ examines 19th century French art, which has always been her focus. Through critical enquiry, Nochlin re-contextualises art history to expose how art historians have influenced the patriarchal reading of art in the past, which has implications for history moving forward, with legacies that contribute to the marginalisation of ‘other’. Nochlin’s legacy emphasises the importance for contemporary female artists to create and document our own histories now, for the following generations, as a means to move art history into a more diverse space.

Following the format of the 2001 conference *Women Artists at the Millennium* at Princeton University, a collection of essays by artists and art historians comprises a book of the same name, presented in sections titled “Legacies, Spaces, Subjectivities, and Identities.”¹¹⁸ The conference, convened by academic Carol Armstrong, addressed the question posed thirty years before by Nochlin, “Why have there been no great women artists?”¹¹⁹ In this volume, Nochlin also revisits the notable question in her essay and reframes it as “Why have there been great women artists?”¹²⁰ This opens the question to the paradox of the contemporary canon and arguably legitimizes the practices of artists in terms other than immutable greatness and singularity.

Continental feminist philosophy asserts that women need their own voices to express difference. As a linguist, post-structural theorist Luce Irigaray recognises the masculine construction of language and suggests new readings that displace the patriarchal understanding of woman as ‘other’.¹²¹ Luce Irigaray’s theories have at their foundation continental philosophy and it is useful to see this branch of philosophy from a feminist standpoint, rather than the prevailing male view. Irigaray is a contemporary of Nochlin, both born at the beginning of the 1930s. Almost two generations later, sociologist and phenomenology researcher Sara Ahmed is my contemporary. Ahmed works at the point where feminist, queer and racial studies intersect; her book *Living a Feminist Life*¹²² was

¹¹⁷ Linda Nochlin, *Misère: The Visual Representation of Misery in the 19th Century* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2018).

¹¹⁸ Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher, eds., *Women Artists at the Millennium* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2006).

¹¹⁹ *ibid*, 21.

¹²⁰ *ibid*, x.

¹²¹ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985).

¹²² Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017).

written in conjunction with her blog *Feminist Killjoys*.¹²³ Using social media to facilitate a continuing examination and conversation about what it means to approach our thoughts and actions from a feminist viewpoint extends the currency of the printed book in real time. I'm interested in how the philosophical argument and everyday activity can combine to influence the way we do things. Nochlin also discusses the visual shift in the portrayal of the everyday by contemporary artists within her book *Realism*.¹²⁴ A focus on the everyday can highlight the inglorious as a catalyst for change.

Second wave feminist artists identified with the dictum, 'the personal is the political'. Using textiles as a medium still associated with the feminine, the home, and the status of craft to express this adage brings the realm of women's domestic experiences into the public, political space. Exemplars of politically motivated, second wave feminist artists, Miriam Shapiro and Judy Chicago, eschewed the individualistic status of the canon in favour of collective experiences within their processes of making art. I am working with textiles in a different time, and the feminist message of the craft medium is now a well-established means of expression for artists. *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With* (1995) (Fig. 32), by Tracey Emin employs patchwork sewn inside a tent to convey her absent self-portrait. Rozsika Parker, in the updated introduction to *The Subversive Stitch*, first published in 1984, explains that "... Emin employs embroidery as the prime medium of personal life not to proclaim that the personal is the *political*, but that the personal is the *universal*."¹²⁵



Figure 32. Tracey Emin, *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With*, tent, patchwork, 122 x 245 x 214 cm, 1995.

¹²³ Sara Ahmed, *Feminist Killjoys*. Accessed October 8, 2019. <https://feministkilljoys.com/>

¹²⁴ Linda Nochlin, *Realism. Style and Civilization* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

¹²⁵ Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch*, xv.

Emin has a singularly stellar career as an artist, definitely not along the lines of the collectivist generation that went before her, although her subject matter does not speak of a charmed life and this is where the work *is* universal. Yet Emin's acclaim is not an example that I can relate to. The statistics on gender that I have gathered for the *Weaving Women* series tell a different story for the majority of contemporary women artists. In relation to my own work, the personal may well be universal *and* political.

A catalogue written for the *Contemporary Australia: Women* exhibition by curator Julie Ewington and various contributors,¹²⁶ provides a local perspective on the influence of the feminist movement within the arts in Australia, currently and historically. This collection of essays acknowledges Australian women's art practice, bringing together contemporary artists from emerging to established practices as they explore social and political discourse, processes, materials, life experiences and women's art in relation to canonical art history. The idea of alternatives to the canon is founded on the weight of a historical framework that does not serve or recognise all members of the community well in a contemporary context. Exhibition catalogues are an important historical document, accessible long after an exhibition has finished, and provide curatorial intent and context. "The National Gallery of Victoria's Shaw Research library ... holds an extensive archive of rare printed matter including books, artist and exhibition ephemera."¹²⁷ Archives such as this, collecting and recording catalogues and the seeming minutiae, are an invaluable resource.

Body language

Frances Borzello interprets Western art history from a feminist perspective, concentrating on women artists spanning the 16th Century to contemporary practice, primarily in Europe, Britain and the United States, in her book *Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-portraits*.¹²⁸ Through the specific genre of self-portraiture, Borzello provides a focus on both the artists themselves and their oeuvre. Displaying a wide range of practices and approaches to the female self-portrait is refreshing and calls attention to my own need for examples of artists that I can relate to, and that allow me legitimate self-perception as an artist. Although

¹²⁶ Julie Ewington, *Contemporary Australia: Women*. Queensland Art Gallery; Gallery of Modern Art (South Brisbane, Queensland: Queensland Art Gallery, 2012).

¹²⁷ Shaw Research Library, National Gallery of Victoria. Accessed March 30, 2019. <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/plan-your-visit/shaw-research-library/>

¹²⁸ Frances Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-portraits* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2016).

women of colour are included in this volume, Australian indigenous artists are not represented here. Nora Heysen is the only Australian artist listed, her painting being in the western art tradition that originated in Europe.

In Australia our euro-centric understanding of what constitutes a self-portrait is being recast to embrace indigenous artists' perspectives. "The great Utopia artist Emily Kame Kngwarreye often explained that her paintings were about 'the whole lot', meaning that her existence and her country were inseparable, and this was always represented in her work, irrespective of its style. Indigenous artists Australia wide demonstrate this concept of self in paintings of home / country."¹²⁹ The Aboriginal context for the word Country is a combination of land, culture and nature. Although the Archibald Prize for portraiture has its origins in western art history, Australian indigenous artist Weaver Jack's painting, *Weaver Jack in Lungarung* (2006) (Fig. 33), was included as a finalist in the Archibald Prize in 2006. "The inclusion of Weaver Jack's portrait of her birth country in the Prize is testament to a more mature critical understanding of Aboriginal contemporary art at work in the establishment."¹³⁰



Figure 33. Weaver Jack, *Weaver Jack in Lungarung*, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 101 x 167 cm, 2006.

¹²⁹ Jane Raffan, "The 'I' in Indigenous art." National Portrait Gallery. Accessed January 18, 2018. <http://www.portrait.gov.au/magazines/46/indigenous-portraiture>

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

Artist Julie Dowling, of the Badimaya language group, combines her aboriginality with the western painting tradition of figurative self-portraits, to create a visual connection with her ancestors. Dowling compositionally brings together her body and her forebears bodies with Country, in the painting *In Our Country* (2002).¹³¹ Through the similar use of colour and tone for both skin and Country, Dowling successfully demonstrates the inextricable links between generations of Australian indigenous peoples and Country. Similarly, artist Fiona Foley, of the Badtjala language group, identifies with other First Nation peoples in her photographic series *Wild Times Call* (1994).¹³² Foley inserts herself into historical style black and white photographic self-portraits, wearing American Seminole dress. In the photographs *Nulla 4 Eva IV and V* (2009),¹³³ Foley has created colour photographs, situating the images in a contemporary context, wearing an Islamic woman's burqa. "Her manoeuvres are not only intended to sidestep stereotypes and unsettle expectations of the Aboriginal artist, but also to signal affiliations with international First Nation peoples and their shared concerns."¹³⁴

Elvis Richardson contributes a significant body of work to support women's art practice in Australia by documenting women artist's institutional representation in The CoUNTess Report. We both express our anger and frustration differently over the issue of female under-representation. For me, the act of walking through the areas of art galleries that are accessible to the general public, whilst counting what I see in that context, provides a visceral starting point that is physically very much a part of the creative process of making the artwork.

South African artist Zanele Muholi calls herself a visual activist. Identity politics inform Muholi's photography, documenting the lives of the African LGBTQI+ community

¹³¹ Julie Dowling, *Self-portrait: In Our Country*, National Gallery of Australia, 2002. Accessed October 5, 2019. <https://artsearch.nga.gov.au/detail.cfm?im=37840&pictaus=true>

¹³² Fiona Foley, *Wild Times Call*. Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, 2001. Accessed October 5, 2019. https://www.roslynoxley9.com.au/artists/12/Fiona_Foley/36/33888/

¹³³ Fiona Foley, *Nulla Forever IV and V*, Niagara Galleries, 2009. Accessed October 5, 2019. <https://niagaragalleries.com.au/artist-gallery/fiona-foley/exhibitions-342/2009-fiona-foley>

¹³⁴ Fiona Foley, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia. Accessed March 27, 2019. <https://www.mca.com.au/artists-works/artists/fiona-foley/>

through portraiture.¹³⁵ *Somnyama Ngonyama – Hail the Dark Lioness* (2016),¹³⁶ a series of 365 black and white photographic self-portraits, emphasise her dark skin through the monochromatic nature of the medium, and collectively the series expresses events, moments and identity. The theft of hard drives from Muholi's home in 2012 that contained five years' work documenting gay and lesbian Africans, whilst leaving expensive camera equipment untouched,¹³⁷ suggests homophobic attitudes at work, within a somewhat traditional society. Standing up to prejudice with her own lesbian identity, a stance that has violent repercussions for individuals in South Africa, is important work that Muholi continues to make, shaping history as we have not seen it before.

A counterpoint to Muholi's necessarily transparent identity are the New York-based Guerrilla Girls, an anonymous female, feminist art group, publicly addressing institutions and individuals who perpetuate the underrepresentation of female artists. Their eclectic practice includes performance, installations and printed ephemera. Their highly visible artwork is now sought after, but by wearing their signature gorilla masks, the individual artists' identities remain an enigma. A lack of personal identity does not deny the physicality of the self-portrait, whilst their anonymity enables their brand of political activism and notoriety to become the mark of their work. They are the shadow that we cannot know in the face of artistic recognition of their practice. The Guerrilla Girls are an example of successfully agitating for change through collective practice that also manages to overturn the concept of individual genius that the traditional western art history canon promulgates.

The indexical trace

Renaissance painter Sofonisba Anguissola is one of the first female artists with extensive documentation of her work, and she appears to be an anomaly, as one of the few female painters to be included in Giorgio Vasari's 'Lives'. *Self Portrait at the Easel* (1556)¹³⁸ records Anguissola as artist. As was the custom for females, Anguissola could not study

¹³⁵ Zanele Muholi, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Accessed March 27, 2019.

<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/zanele-muholi>

¹³⁶ Zanele Muholi, "Somnyama Ngonyama – Hail the Dark Lioness." *The Guardian*, 2016. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2017/jul/14/zanele-muholimy-somnyama-ngonyama-hail-the-dark-lioness-in-pictures>

¹³⁷ Matt McCann, "Theft Stalls, but Does Not Stop, a Project." *The New York Times*, 2012. Accessed March 27, 2019. <https://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/23/theft-stalls-but-does-not-stop-a-project/>

¹³⁸ Sofonisba Anguissola. *Self Portrait at the Easel*, National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1556. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://blog.nmwa.org/tag/self-portrait-at-the-easel/>

anatomy or figure drawing like her male counterparts, so she painted many self-portraits throughout her life. Her longevity has provided us with an invaluable and comprehensive visual account of a female artist's self-image before the age of photography. Similarly, centuries after the death of baroque artist Artemisia Gentileschi, contemporary feminist art historians are reconsidering her life story for present day artists, critically examining her portrayal of strong, heroic women from myth and biblical stories.¹³⁹ In *Self-Portrait as La Pittura* (1638)¹⁴⁰ Gentileschi combines the self as female painter with the allegory of painting symbolized by the female figure. Both artists demonstrate the value of themselves as practicing artists through self-portraiture.

Berthe Morisot's *Self-portrait* (1885)¹⁴¹ rejects the male artist's perspective that portrays women as passive and decorative. She looks directly at the viewer, the fresh brushstrokes and bare canvas capture the moment without sentiment. Morisot's work is bold and modern in composition. American-born artist Mary Cassatt, who settled in Paris, was a contemporary of Morisot. Cassatt's *Portrait of the Artist* (1878)¹⁴² shows her without concern for the viewer, in an unusual asymmetric composition. Both women exhibited with the Salon and the radical Impressionists, however Cassatt did not align herself with any particular art movement in her later career. Morisot and Cassatt were actively painting in a society that did not allow bourgeois women to mix in public places such as cafes or bars. Cassatt's subject matter was women and often she portrayed the relationship between mother and child, these are intimate depictions of domestic life from a woman's perspective. I am particularly drawn to her drypoint and aquatint prints of the 1890s that refer to the qualities of Japanese printmaking, known as Japonisme, because her technique demonstrates the modern use of pattern, and a sensitive yet unsentimental approach to her subjects.

¹³⁹ Sheila Barker ed., *Artemisia Gentileschi in a Changing Light* (London; Turnhout: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2017).

¹⁴⁰ Artemisia Gentileschi. *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting (La Pittura)*, 1638. Royal Collection Trust. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://www.rct.uk/collection/405551/self-portrait-as-the-allegory-of-painting-la-pittura>

¹⁴¹ Berthe Morisot, *Self Portrait*, 1885. Accessed October 4, 2019. https://library-artstor-org.ezproxy.lib.rmit.edu.au/asset/ARTSTOR_103_41822001806700

¹⁴² Mary Cassatt, *Portrait of the Artist*, 1878. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accessed October 4, 2019. http://www.metmuseum.org.https://library-artstor-org.ezproxy.lib.rmit.edu.au/asset/MMA_IAP_1039652377

Photographer Vivian Maier's life story reads like an urban myth. Born in 1926, her work has only relatively recently reached the public's awareness. An intense interest in photography is revealed in over 100,000 negatives, discovered at auction in 2007, having been sold by Maier to pay debts.¹⁴³ Maier tends to be categorised as a street photographer, having created a considerable archive that documents the latter half of 20th century urban America. Of particular interest to me is her use of reflection to create self-portraits, placing herself within the frame of the street. Her extensive archive of self-portraits over many years is a powerful record of her life, akin to artist Sofonisba Anguissola's self-portrait paintings during the Renaissance. Maier died in 2009, so unfortunately she did not live to see the recognition of her work, yet by purposefully placing herself within her own work holding a Rolliflex camera, which produced superior quality images, I believe that she understood her value as an artist. To have been recognised earlier may have created different conditions for her art practice.

Mona Hatoum appropriates the decorative line of a male headscarf for her artwork *Keffieh* (1993-1999)¹⁴⁴ to reveal traces of a woman's body by weaving the pattern in the fabric from female human hair. This work considers gender roles within Islamic and Arab culture, as do the barely-there *Hair grid with knots* (2001),¹⁴⁵ which employs weaving, traditionally women's work. Hatoum embraces a traditional technique and subverts the practice through a shift in materials to question gender roles in contemporary culture. Roslynd Piggott is concerned with the status of the body and self. She explores the self through traces, examining the metaphysical qualities of air, glass, water and the repetition of the female subject. *Last light / in Vapour* (2014-15)¹⁴⁶ includes a series of antique lace pieces and Piggott's own fabric responses sit next to the lace, connecting herself with the anonymous work of women from previous generations. The theme of this exhibition is the garden, Piggott refers to the fabric artworks as "micro-gardens or vegetal universes."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ The Malouf Collection. Accessed March 27, 2019. <http://www.vivianmaier.com/>

¹⁴⁴ Mona Hatoum, *Keffieh*, 1993-99. The Museum of Modern Art. Accessed October 4, 2019. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/153219?classifications=any&date_begin=Pre-1850&date_end=2019&locale=en&page=1&q=Mona+Hatoum&with_images=1

¹⁴⁵ Mona Hatoum, *Hair grid with knots*, 2001. The Museum of Modern Art. Accessed October 4, 2019. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/86813?classifications=any&date_begin=Pre-1850&date_end=2019&locale=en&page=1&q=Mona+Hatoum+Hair+Grids+with+knots&with_images=1

¹⁴⁶ Roslynd Piggott, *Last light / in Vapour*, 2014-15. Sutton Gallery. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://suttongallery.com.au/exhibitions/last-light-in-vapour/>

¹⁴⁷ Sutton Gallery. Accessed March 24, 2019. <https://suttongallery.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/rosslynd-piggott-last-light-in-vapour-2015.pdf>

Their square and rectangular forms remind me of enclosed gardens from earlier times, and our contemporary version of *hortus conclusus*, the courtyard. Both the embroidery and the enclosed garden speak of the private, intimate spaces intended for the habitation of women, where they may have practiced their needle work or perhaps based their embroidered patterns upon the plants within the garden.

Anne Ferran considers the gaps in our Australian colonial history. Her work asks who was omitted, by whom and why. Through her examination of museum collections and archives Ferran's artwork honours the nameless women and children previously neglected by historians, encapsulated in the 2014 survey exhibition *Shadow Lands*. These themes are demonstrated in *Float* (2001),¹⁴⁸ photograms that create delicate transparent layers to outer and personal garments and also in the symbolic portraits *Soft Caps* (1995),¹⁴⁹ draping white fabric around the emptiness and invisibility of black mannequin heads. Hatoum, Piggott and Ferran use textiles to re-imagine history and relationship, each from their own perspective.

In contrast, Rachel Whiteread creates hard casts of negative space from domestic objects and dwellings that also speak of absence. *Embankment* (2005-2006)¹⁵⁰ commissioned by the Tate Modern, filled the Turbine Hall with polyethylene casts of the insides of cardboard packing boxes. One idea within this work, made after the death of Whiteread's mother, refers to the process of packing and moving her mother's belongings. The solid mass that materialises space in many of her sculptures helps us to see a void as something tangible, that in this instance, connotes the existence of a person who is not with us physically any longer, as well as and the relationship between mother and daughter.

These contemporary female artists visually express and identify with the residual and implied self to convey ideas, using materials to explore self-portraiture. Women use the corporeal body in self-portraiture to communicate the value of the incorporeal; ideas about

¹⁴⁸ Anne Ferran, *Float*, 2001. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://anneferran.com/photographs-pre-2000/float/>

¹⁴⁹ Anne Ferran, *Soft Caps*, 2001. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://anneferran.com/photographs-pre-2000/soft-caps/>

¹⁵⁰ Rachel Whiteread, *Embankment*, 2005-06. Tate Modern. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibitionseries/unilever-series/unilever-series-rachel-whiteread-embankment-0>

the female self, our spirit and intellect, to express the complexities we face being such a body. Art practice also creates a corporeal trace, providing a means for evidence-based research to recover women artists' work that has never been fully recognised or has languished in museum storage. Undervaluing the work of women artists diminishes the self invested in that work. Women artists need a rightful place in our collective memories and consciousness to reconcile the privation of history, in order to create more inclusive stories and understandings.

Chapter 4

Conclusion: Reconciling the self

Throughout this research project I have asked what visual art's inherent capacity for generating and capturing traces, residues and impressions can express in a material and conceptual way, to explore self-identity and contribute to the current discourse about women artists' history. During my research, walking through art galleries and museums in order to count exhibited artists by gender, I saw the grounds for an argument that acknowledges the systemic challenges so particular to women artists. Confronting how these themes can be visually expressed through contemporary self-portraiture, addressing absence and perspective in the documentation of women's art, has informed my resolve for a sustained art practice that continues to directly address women's retrospective histories, the contemporary archive and narratives for the future.

The actions of women expressing ideas, that we can see through the work of Albers, Atkins, Maier and Kilgallen, as well as our protesting predecessors, expresses their being even though they no longer walk amongst us. I can say the same for my mother-in-law Glenda. Their existence is an important public trace that can easily become invisible without the remembrance of a kind that documents their life and work for future generations. The stories we choose to tell say as much about the society we purportedly live in.

The artwork produced in this practice-led research project has been the foundation for achieving my objectives laid out in the research questions. This practice through materiality engages with theoretical discourse, creating a tangible understanding of conceptual readings. In turn, writing helps to formulate and distil my reading of ideas. Making, reading and writing all allow for reflection (listening and observing), they are all ways of creative thinking.

The *Weaving women* tapestry series attempts to visually articulate women artists' current lack of exhibited representation in our public and state museums and art galleries. The data that informs the tapestries clearly indicates partisanship,¹⁵¹ although galleries and museums

¹⁵¹ See appendix.

are beginning to apply a critical perspective towards the artworks created by women that they already have in their collections, bringing them out of storage facilities for public display. New acquisitions in turn can play an active role in communicating the breadth and overall understanding of women artists careers, by augmenting existing collections.

Photogenic drawing with turmeric addresses the rich history of feminist politics through the symbolism of colour and the form of the banner as protest. The agency of women artists needs representation that places professional status at the forefront of our purpose. Proactively documenting our own work processes, and creating an archive so that others can access a primary resource for understanding our intent, places the work we do, how and where we do it and why, in a context of our own making. In this way we can demonstrate histories in an inclusive manner by sharing the diversity of women's visual voices and narratives. We can make explicit the value of our work through meaningful dialogue in its myriad forms. Practice-led enquiry employing methodologies that support critical exchange places control of my work in my hands. To this end, my practice-led research project is included in an educational archive, for anyone to access through the Federation University Research Online digital repository.

The work in *Looking-glass houses* builds upon the theme of female representation through literal and metaphorical reflection upon belonging and our place inside and outside of the institutional setting. Women artists' power does not have to reside within being an accepted insider; it could dwell within society's value of women artists as significant contributors to arts and culture. It's encouraging to see the establishment of organisations, and the efforts of individuals, to specifically support and further the role of women artists.

In the vein of our societal value of women, *#onthetrain* uses social media platform Instagram, amongst other mediums, as a way to share a diaristic body of work, documenting the challenge of safely occupying public space as a woman making art in dark, industrial, urban or rural places. Being in those places is emphasised by publicly sharing images as they are being made. The one blind spot is censorship by the social media platforms themselves, bringing into question the freedom of artistic expression in the interests of public security and moderation. The general means to censor Instagram is determined by artificial intelligence in the binary code of an algorithm. According to Professor John Cheney-Lippold "[Data] is not a uniform totality but is marked by an array

of both privileging and marginalizing difference.”¹⁵² The value we seek as women artists using this social media platform may be determined by a set of numbers.

Luce Irigaray asserts the feminine, specular other and Michel Foucault describes power as a struggle that only exists with another, whilst Gilles Deleuze, with psychotherapist and philosopher Felix Guattari, describes the nomadic subject. In the Deleuzian sense, being nomadic is not about movement, it is a way of being that cannot be defined. What these four philosophers have in common is a concern for the other, albeit with theoretical variants, that pose new ways to consider otherness without the aetiology of masculinity. Arts-based, practice-led research through the self as researcher has provided structure for establishing that there is a specific need for the exhibition and documentation of women’s art practice.

In conclusion, a common misapprehension around the topic of gender parity for women artists, based upon anecdotal evidence, goes something like this: ‘Oh, I thought that equality for male and female artists was a given now, isn’t that all in the past?’ This research project formally refutes the anecdotal fallacy that discrimination doesn’t exist for women artists in our current climate. Gender equity is inconsistent across the broad divide of women’s professional lives and women artists are no different. To my delight, every day I discover another woman artist of whom I had previously been unaware of. An entire life’s work is dismissed with barely a trace when Her name is forgotten in the annals, disappearing from the collective memory of history. Feminist art history acknowledges women artists and brings their work into our consciousness. Women artists have a right to relatable role models, as corroboration for the value and efficacy of a profession of their own.

¹⁵² John Cheney-Lippold, *We Are Data: Algorithms and the Making of Our Digital Selves* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

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Appendix

The following data was collected to inform the *Weaving Women* tapestry series within this research project. I have divided the data collection into three categories.

The number of artworks on display by:

- Women
- Men
- Gender unknown

I have collected data from the following galleries:

- NGV | International
- Ian Potter Centre NGV | Australia
- Art Gallery of Ballarat | *Romancing the Skull* exhibition
- NGV Australia | *The Field Revisited* exhibition
- Pola Museum of Art | Hakone Japan

For our local galleries, the following figures represent a six-month period in the second half of 2017 and the beginning of 2018, during data collection to inform my artwork. The figures for the Pola Museum of Art in Hakone were collected in November, 2018.

The exhibited artwork throughout the National Gallery of Victoria, at both the International and Australian sites, has a historical bias in earlier works, which continues into the contemporary works on display. Even including the aforementioned discrete exhibitions of Barton, Maudsley, O’Callaghan and Paramor, and despite the efforts of the National Gallery of Victoria to address the gender imbalance, the overall percentage of artworks on display by women in the NGV Australia sits at about 33%. In the NGV International, the overall percentage of artworks on display by women is a disproportionate 8%.

At the Art Gallery of Ballarat I have documented the gender balance within the exhibition *Romancing the Skull*. The overall percentage of artworks on display by women in this exhibition is 23%.

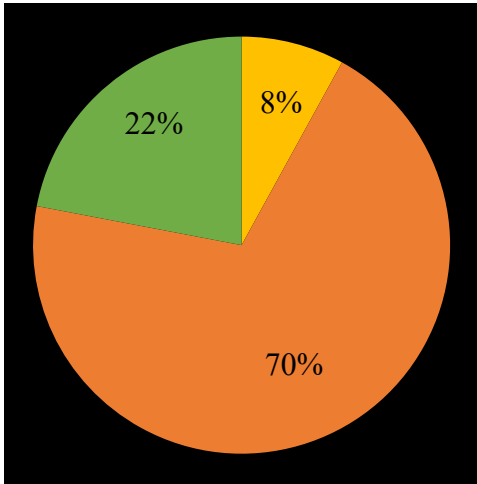
The Field Revisited exhibition recreated the original inaugural opening exhibition *The Field* in 1968 at the new NGV site on St Kilda Road (now known as NGV International). The overall percentage of artworks on display by women in this exhibition is 7%.

Whilst visiting the Pola Museum of Art in Hakone, Japan I was struck by the realisation that I could not find any artwork exhibited by women. A gallery attendant gave me a list of artwork currently on display for a six month period, highlighting one work by a woman – Marie Laurencin. The overall percentage of artwork on display by women throughout the Pola Museum of Art is 0.36%. The museum houses the collection of Tsuneshi Suzuki. At the same time a paid exhibition of Odilon Redon's work was on display.

The architecture firms responsible for the four museums are directed by male architects, with one exception, director Suzanne Waldron. The NGV International building was designed by architect Roy Grounds in 1968. It was redeveloped by architect Mario Bellini in 2003. The Ian Potter Centre building, home to the NGV Australian collection, is a part of Federation Square, designed by LAB architects (directors Peter Davidson and Donald Bates) in 2002. The AGB building was designed by Tappin, Gilbert and Dennehy architects in 1887. The gallery was extended in 2002 by Peddle Thorp architects (directors Peter Brook, Carlo Carallo and Martin Hall). In 2011 Searle x Waldron architecture (directors Suzanne Waldron and Nick Searle) completed the annexe of the AGB. In Japan, architect Tadao Kamei is the CEO of Nikken Sekkei architects, who designed the Pola Museum of Art in Hakone, in 2002.

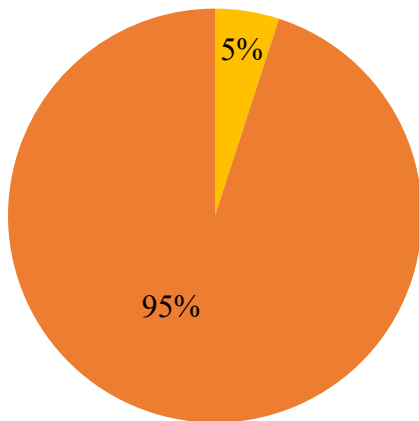
● Female ● Male ● Gender unknown ● Collaboration

NGV | INTERNATIONAL



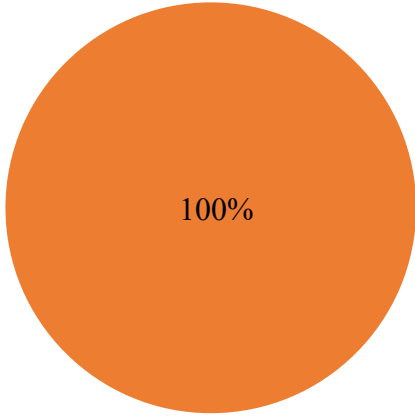
Total figures for artworks exhibited in NGV International.

Ground level

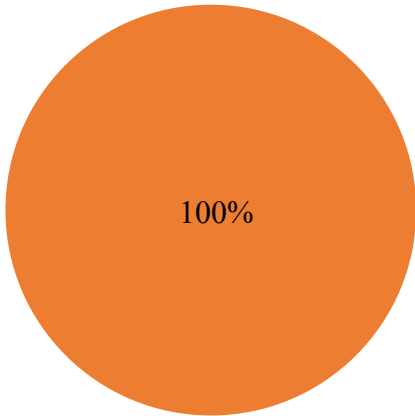


The House of Dior: Seventy years of haute couture exhibited in three gallery spaces.

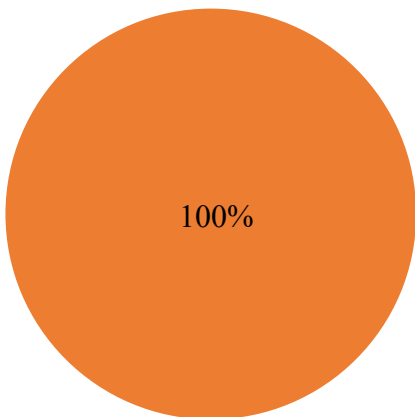
*Maria Grazia Chiuri is Dior's first female creative director, appointed in 2016



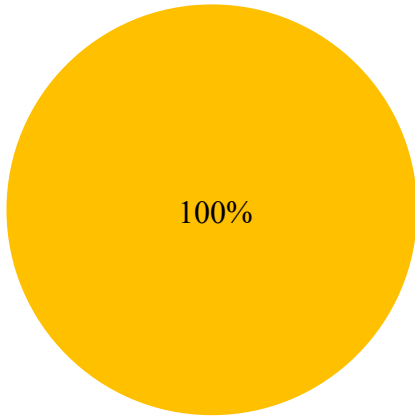
Stained glass and artworks by Leonard French exhibited in the Great Hall.



Federation floor painting by Michael Lin exhibited in Federation Court.

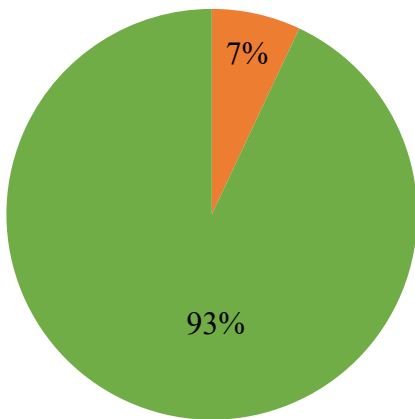


Hokusai exhibited in two gallery spaces.

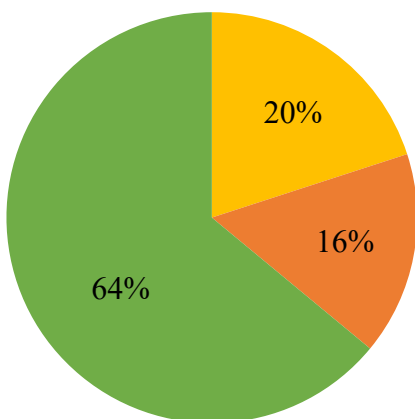


Fiona Hall: Uneasy Seasons exhibited in the children's gallery.

Level 1

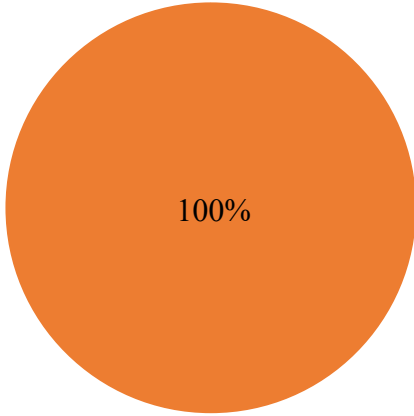


The Art of China exhibited in the China gallery.

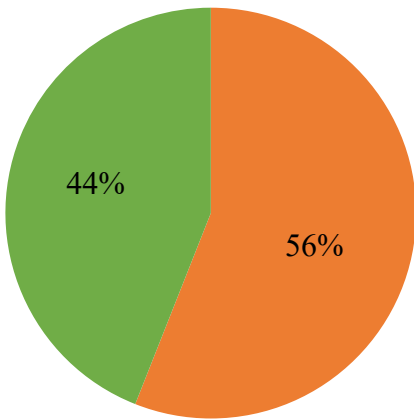


Asian Adornment exhibited in the South-East Asia gallery.

This included an exhibition emphasizing contemporary Asian female artists.

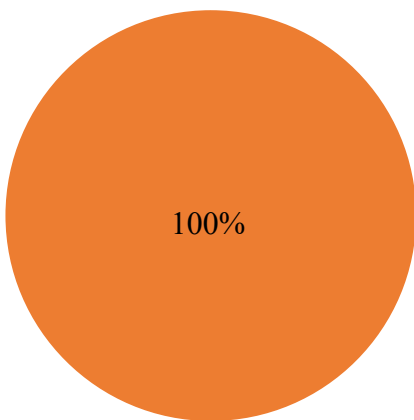


Go Watanabe projection near the escalator.

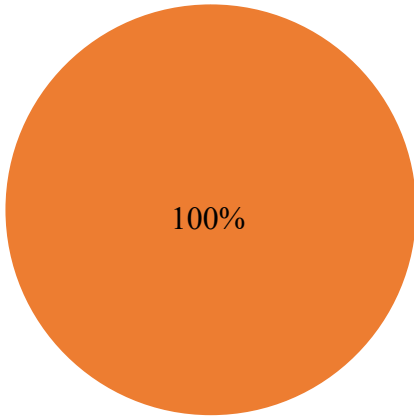


Japan gallery.

*Asian Temporary Exhibitions gallery closed in preparation for the triennial.

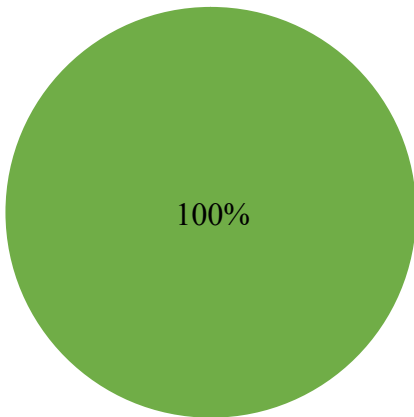


14th – 16th Century Art & Design gallery.

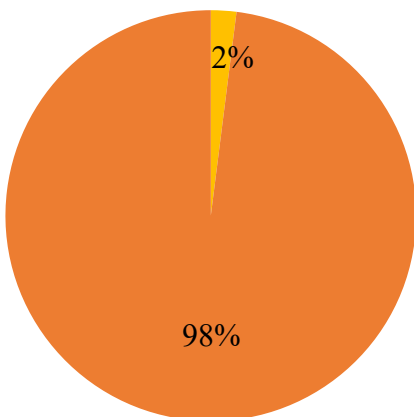


16th – 17th Century Art & Design gallery.

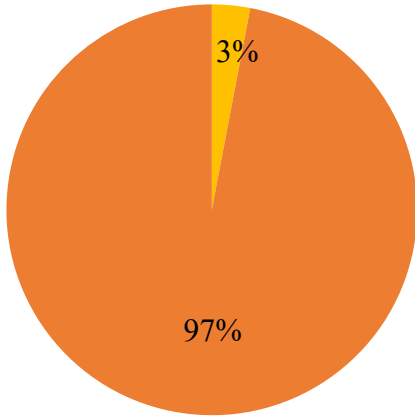
Level 2



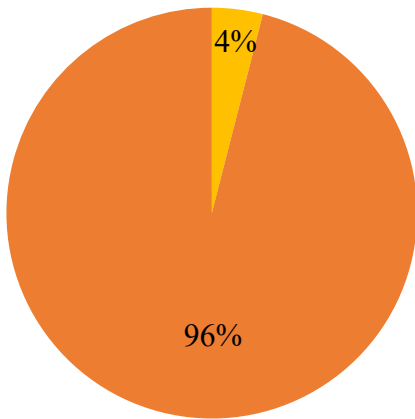
Greek and Egyptian art exhibited in The Ancient World gallery.



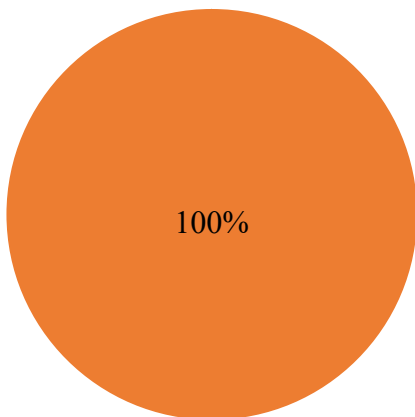
European Decorative Arts and Painting 17th – 18th Century.



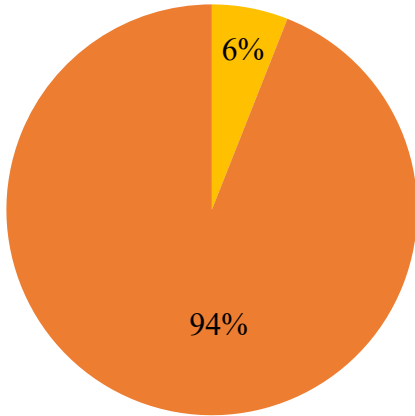
Tudor and Stuart Art.



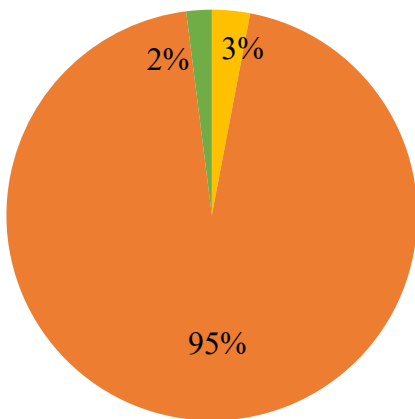
British and European Collection 16th – 18th Century.



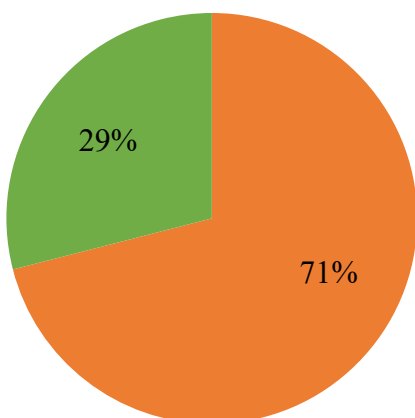
British and European Collection 15th – 17th Century.



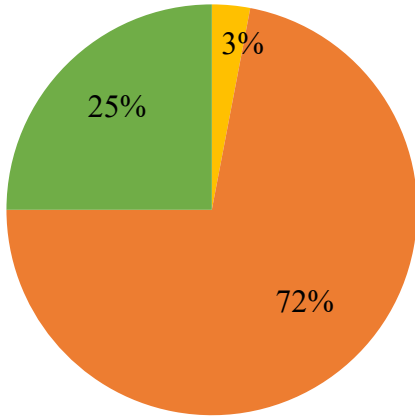
International Collection 19th – 20th Century.



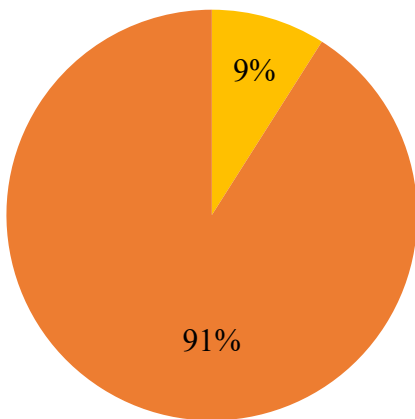
19th Century European salon. John Schaeffer gallery.



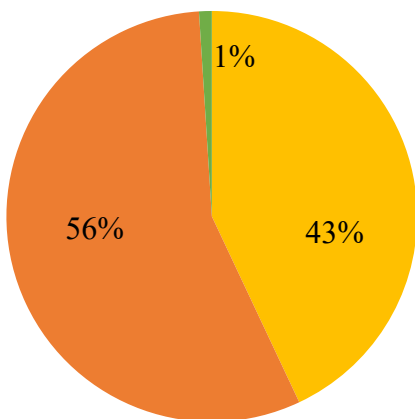
19th Century British and European collection gallery.



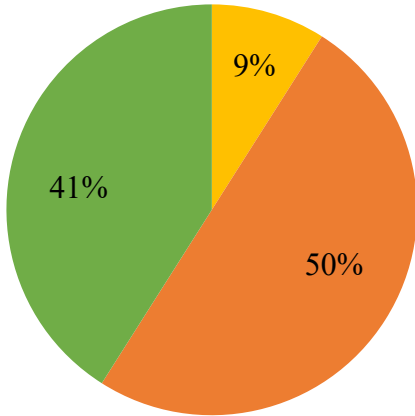
European Decorative Arts and Painting gallery.



International 20th Century Art and Design gallery I.

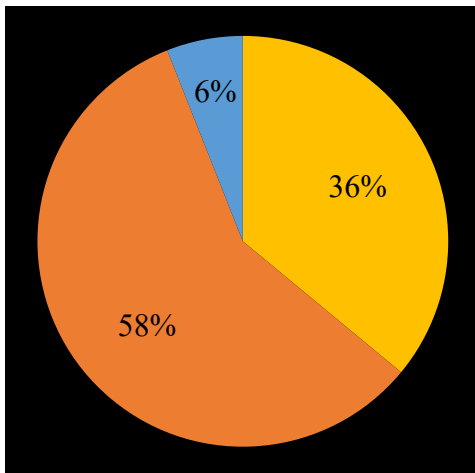


International 20th Century Art and Design gallery II.



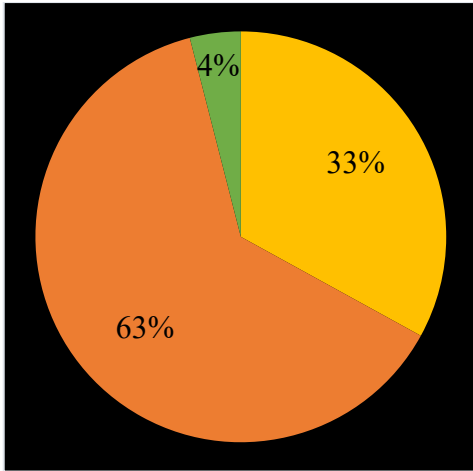
Language of Ornament exhibited in the Decorative Arts Passage.

Level 3



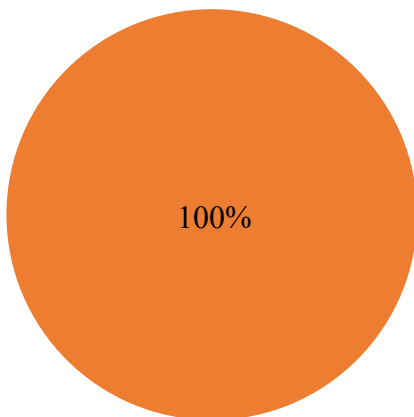
Total figures for artworks exhibited in the *NGV Triennial*.

IAN POTTER CENTRE | NGV AUSTRALIA

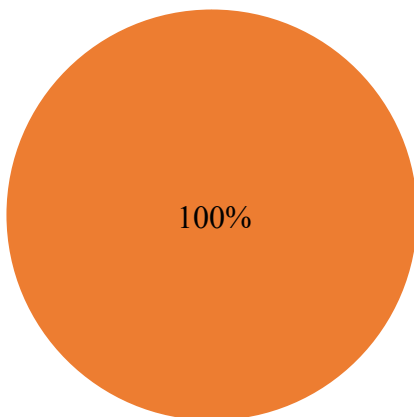


Total figures for artworks exhibited in NGV Australia.

Ground level

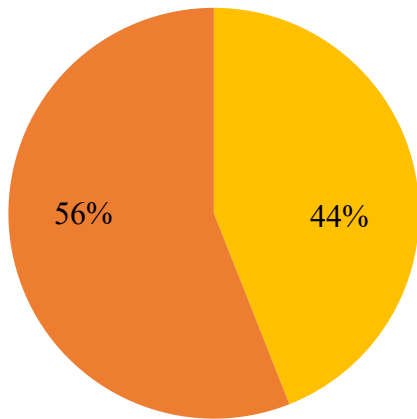


Akio Makigawa *Spirit and Memory* exhibited in foyer.

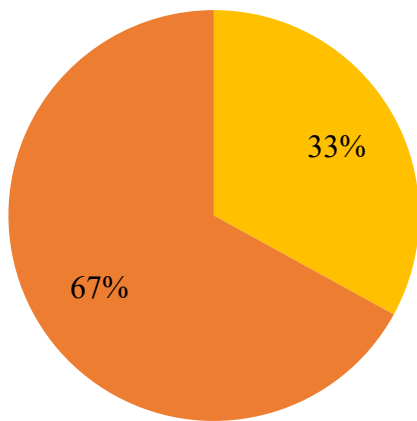


Gareth Sansom *Transformer* exhibited in four gallery spaces - Temporary Exhibitions.

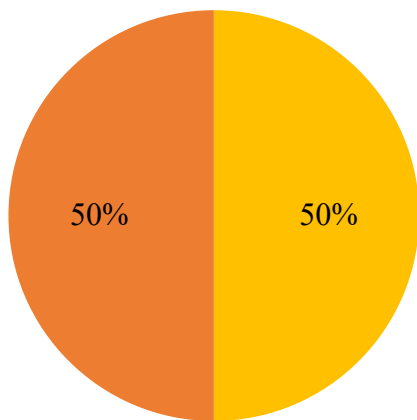
The Pool curated by Isabelle Toland, Amelia Holliday and Michelle Tabet.
NGV Design Studio.



Spoken word artwork curated by Hetti Perkins.

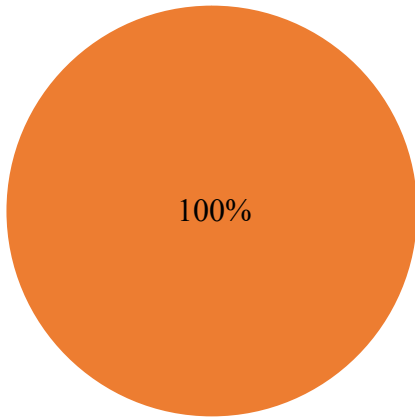


Visual artwork.

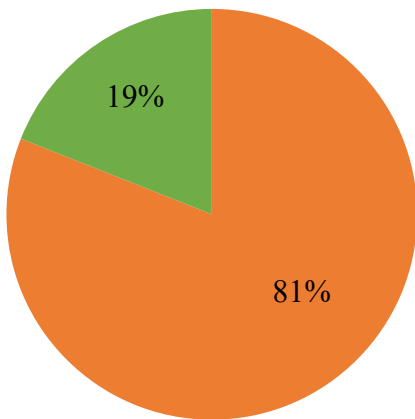


Olfactory artwork.

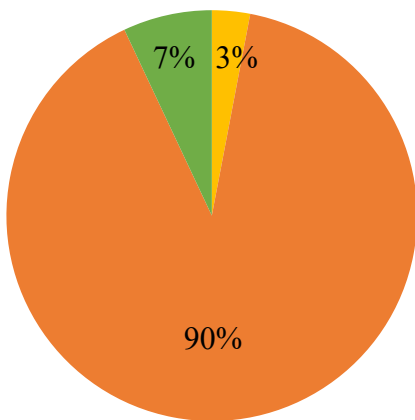
Level 2



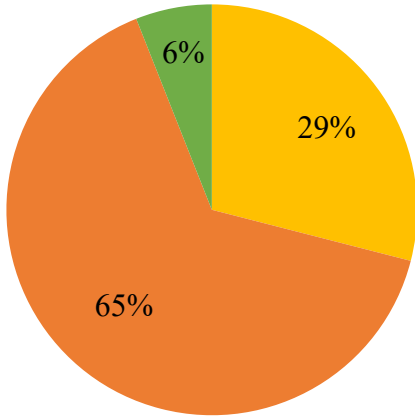
Akio Makigawa *Spirit and Memory* exhibited in foyer.



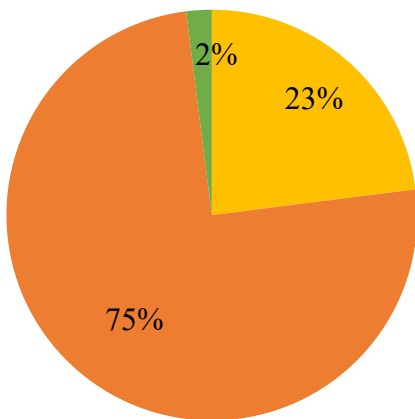
19th Century Australian Art exhibited in gallery I.



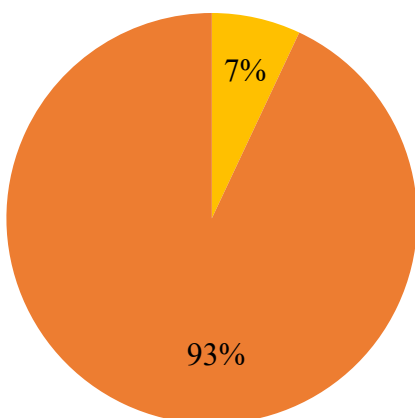
19th Century Australian Art exhibited in gallery II.



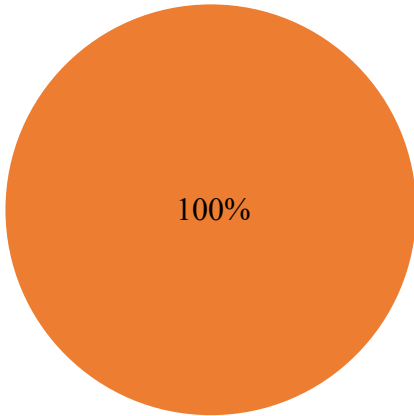
20th Century Australian Art exhibited in gallery I.



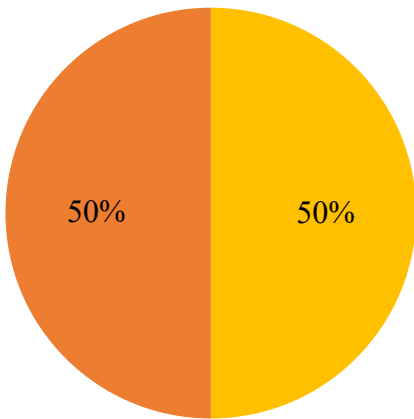
20th Century Australian Art exhibited in gallery II.



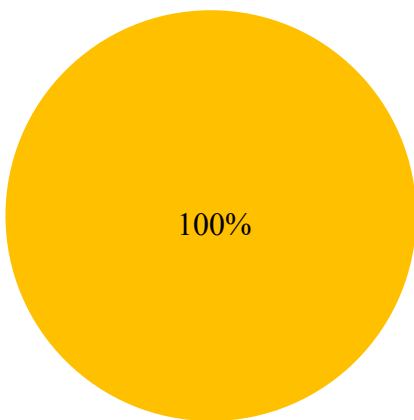
Heads Up portrait busts exhibited in walkway between galleries.



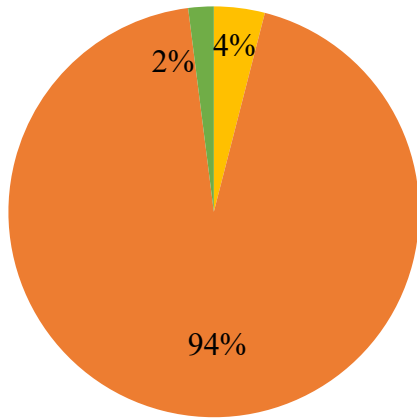
Harold Cazneaux. Walkway.



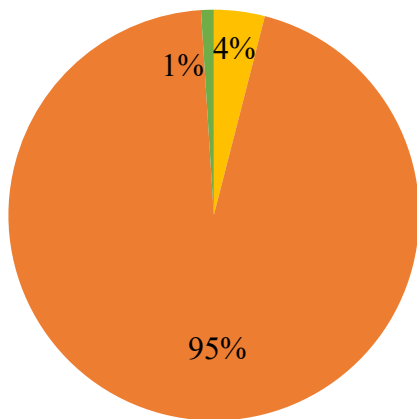
Guy Keulmans and Kyoko Hashimoto, Ben Landau and Lucille Sciallano. Walkway.
(Attributed to both pairs of collaborating artists)



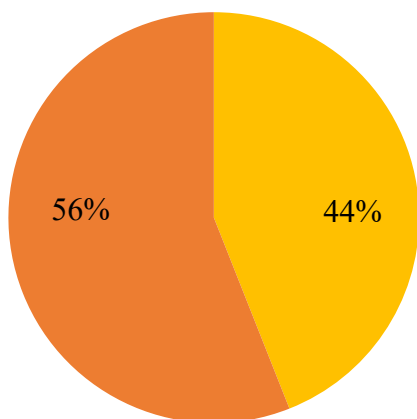
Claudia Moodoonuthi. Walkway.



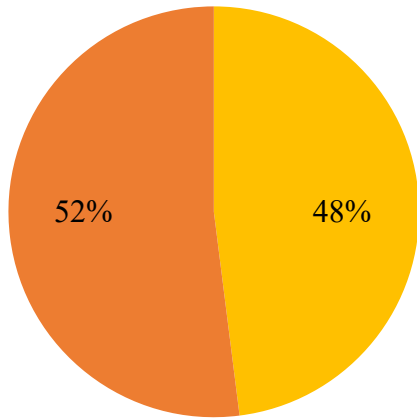
The Joseph Brown Collection exhibited in gallery I.



The Joseph Brown Collection exhibited in gallery II.

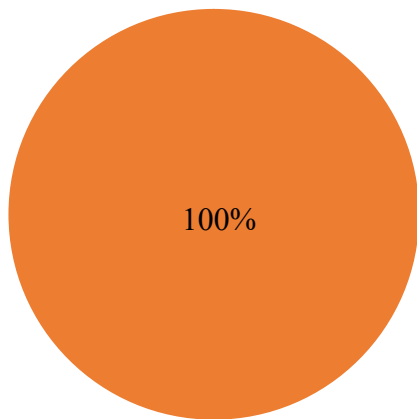


20th – 21st Century Australian Art in gallery I.

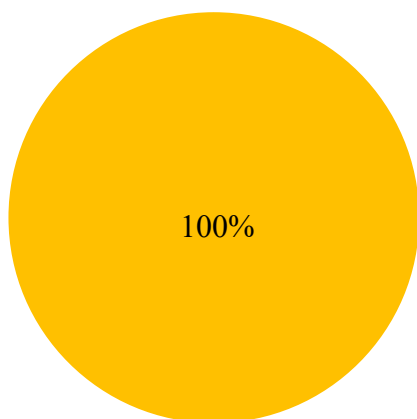


20th – 21st Century Australian Art in gallery II.

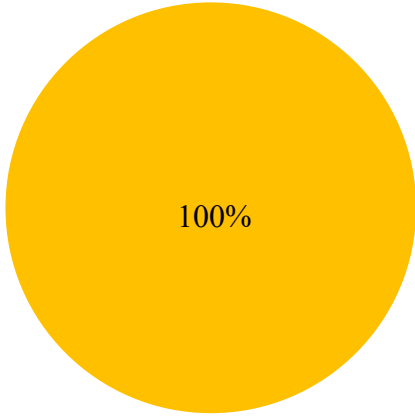
Level 3



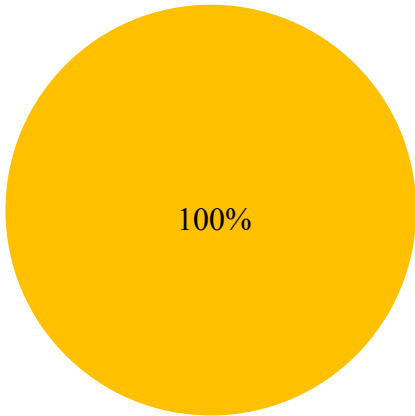
Akio Makigawa *Spirit and Memory* exhibited in foyer.



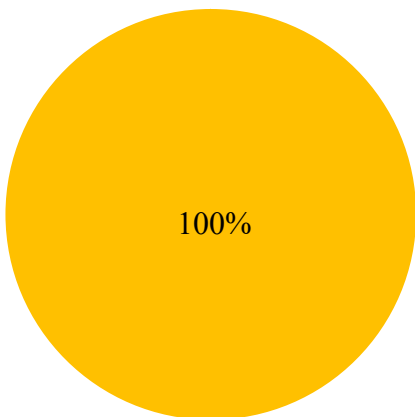
Del Kathryn Barton in two galleries.



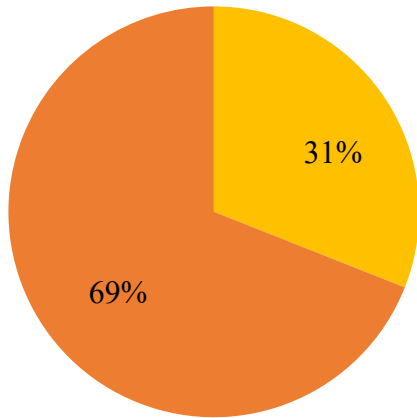
Louise Paramor in two galleries.



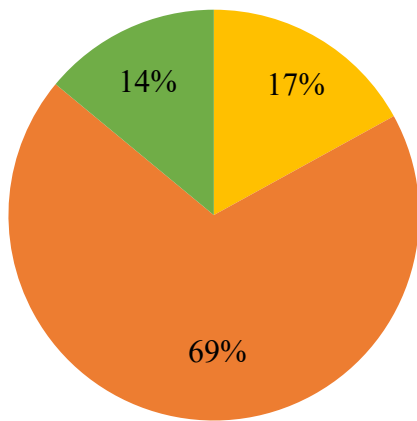
Mel O'Callaghan in one gallery.



Helen Maudsley in one gallery.

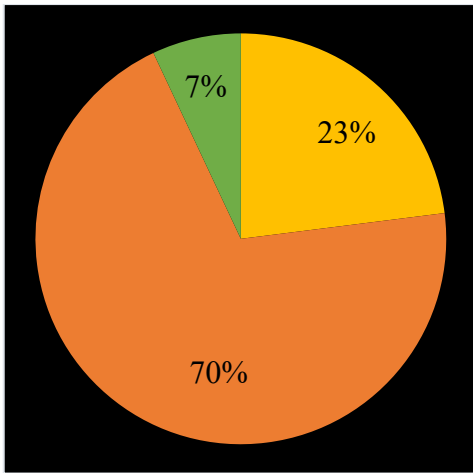


Colony, Frontier Wars. Indigenous Collection in gallery I.

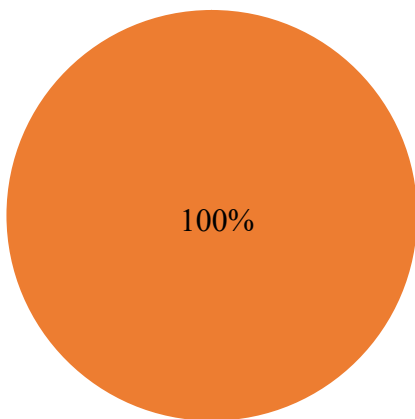


Colony, Frontier Wars. Indigenous Collection in gallery II.

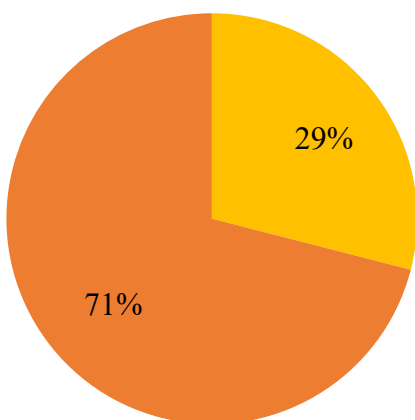
ART GALLERY of BALLARAT *Romancing the Skull*



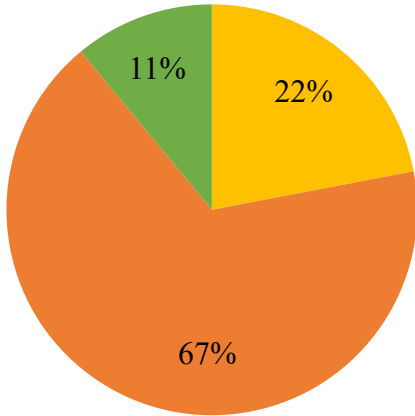
Total figures for artworks exhibited in *Romancing the Skull* exhibition.



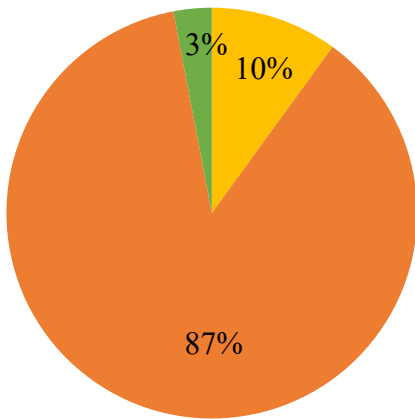
Gallery 1.



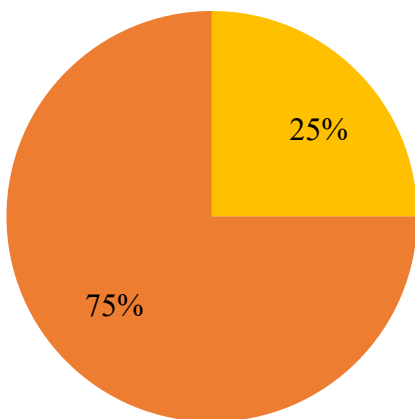
Gallery 2.



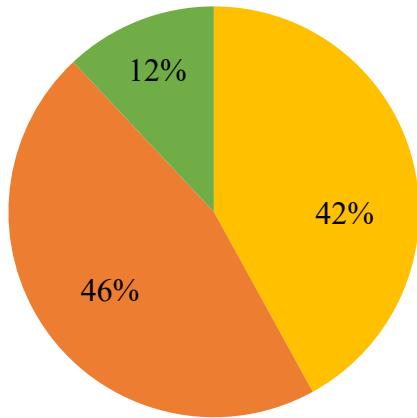
Gallery 3.



Gallery 4.

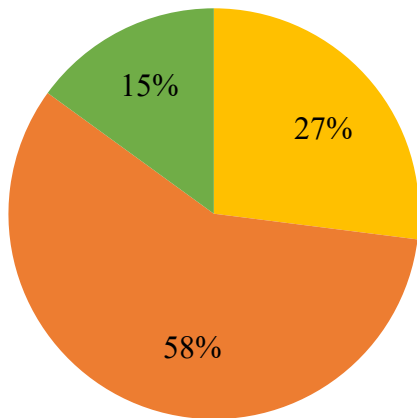


Gallery 5.



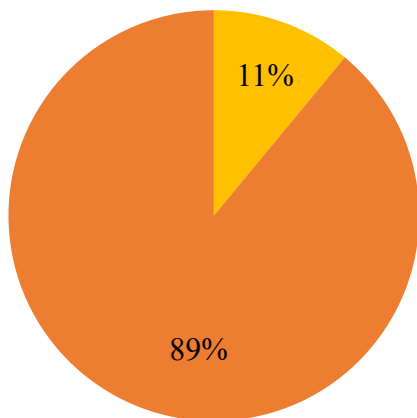
Gallery 6. *Vanitas Memento Mori.*

*includes the Fiona Hall artwork, new acquisition commissioned by AGB



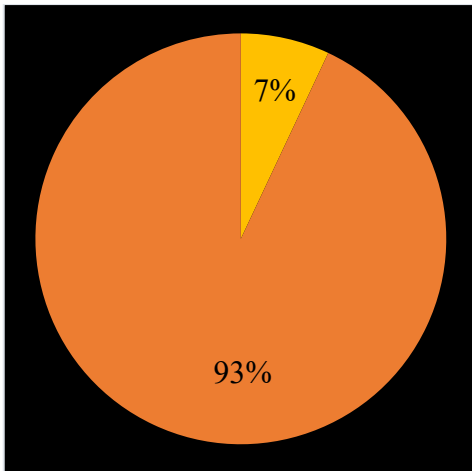
Gallery 7. *Gallery of Rogues.*

*includes the Sally Smart artwork that takes up two walls, new acquisition commissioned by AGB



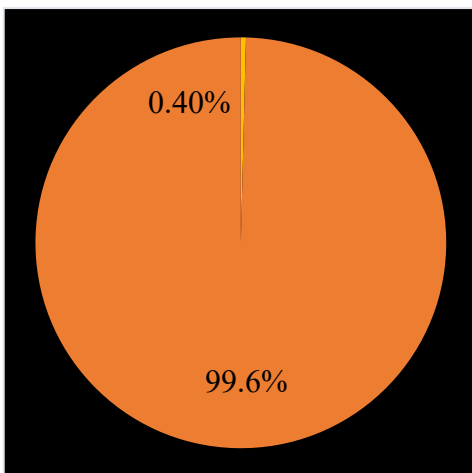
Gallery 8. *The Calaveras of Jose Guadalupe Posada.*

NGV AUSTRALIA *The Field Revisited*



Total figures for artworks exhibited in *The Field Revisited* exhibition.

POLA MUSEUM of ART Hakone Japan



Total figures for artworks exhibited in the Pola Museum of Art.