

Deeper



Down

School of Creative Arts Cairns

An Exhibition of Doctor of Philosophy

Candidate Work

24 September - 10 October 2013

Luxgallery



Deeper Down

The well-known phrase 'Deeper down' from Banjo Paterson's poem, Song of the Artesian Water, resonates with aspects of research undertaken in the Visual Arts. Doctor of Philosophy students in the field of Visual Arts drill down, deeper down, into their research question to find sensuous means to communicate their findings. In this exhibition, research students Elizabeth Hunter, Heather Tanner McGiffin, Angela Myer, Amy Rodd, Jacqueline Scotcher, Ann Vardanega and Gareth Wild have revealed the outcomes of their research in the form of paintings, photographs, collages and digital videos. By going deeper down, the students have produced artworks that share their insights and direct our attention to their topics. These artworks enable us to gain the benefits of the student's perception and imagination.

Artists have the capacity to direct our thinking. When artists present an image, song or poem, our attention is engaged in a particular way and towards a specific realm. In the exhibition, Deeper Down, Amy Rodd's photomontages shroud the drama of partnership in a make-believe world. The distortion of scale in the images is reminiscent of scenes from Alice in Wonderland. Despite the distorted reality, all seems to be well in this fantasy world. The balanced compositions suggest peace and security, showcasing Rodd's sensitive handling of light. Furthermore, there is a sense of optimism and lightness. This suggests that hope is possible. In this world, souls may meet and possibly remain secure forever. Rodd skillfully uses a cloak of fantasy and romance to reveal the psychological drama of the human need for connection. It is a delicate path Rodd treads. Her work could easily fall into a sphere of overly sentimental kitsch. Alternatively, this work can sensitively reveal secrets of our longings. Rodd needs to walk a fine line and it appears that she has the sensitivity to do so.

Gareth Wild says, "an illustrator shows us the world". According to Wild, an illustrator can reveal imaginative characters or scenes in a more exact manner than is possible through forms such as text. When a writer describes a person or place in text, the reader creates the image in their mind's eye. By contrast, an illustrator, can show the viewer a hither-to unseen world. Wild's oeuvre is based in his long experience of games, in both their physical and digital forms. This background enables him to imagine, and portray, mythical things in all their shock and awe. There is edginess to his illustrations that effortlessly goes deeper down to hidden subterranean layers. The skin of his portrait is missing, revealing sinew and tendons as if this is the norm. This subterranean world Wild creates, operates below the surface and threatens to become reality. His adept use of illustration makes the drama appear to be all too real. There is a disquieting sense that Wild is playing God with his illustrations, and his characters may appear everywhere, some time soon.

Ann Vardanega makes quietly arresting photographs. Her depictions of places and people are menacing. Images of abandoned lunch rooms reveal the drama of past lives. The images suggest the virtues and emptiness of life simultaneously. Haunted by the echoes of memory, these spaces, are powerful and chilling. In a similar manner, the innocence of childhood is disrupted in depictions of two young boys who are shown as guileless and abnormal. Try as we may, there is a foreboding aspect to life that we try to ignore. It is this deeper layer of life which Vardanega seeks to reveal. Persona, Vardanega's current research topic, suggests the true, essential character of a person. It is oppositional to the fake veneer or the false smile which people may adopt to shield a part of themselves from the world or disguise how they feel. Vardanega seeks to capture the revealing image beyond the facade through a series of persuasive portraits. These images transcend the everyday picture and become an arresting testament to humanity. Such photographs function as a window, disclosing the life of others. There is a universal quality to these photographs which makes the work unforgettable.

Pondering the depths of questions about our time on this mortal coil, is master printmaker, Elizabeth Hunter. Her work confronts us with the idea that death is inevitable and it raises the possibility of consciousness after death. The human skull has long been revered and collected. In Hunter's work the skull is used as a connection between the living and the dead. The skull acts as a conduit or a rip in the membrane that separates those who are alive from those who have passed. The veiled skull in her piece Untitled is shrouded in fabric and this disguise suggests a hidden realm in a menacing fashion. This work is confronting. It reminds us that all life is transitory.

Angela Meyer has examined the experience of painters in Far North Tropical Queensland. The light is harsh in the tropics and the bright light casts deep shadows. In some of Meyer's paintings and works on paper, the fleeting dance between light and shadows is pictured. The painting, Theology student, suggests someone who is coming and going. Life can be transitory in the tropics. People come and go. When this fleeting aspect is captured in Meyer's paintings, the work resonates with the play of light and the transience that is a feature of this region.

Jacquie Scotcher's paintings are built up with transparent layers, of textured impasto paint. The layers record the passage of time in a fashion, similar to the way that sedimentary rocks are built up, layer upon layer over time. Scotcher's work indicates a deepening awareness of the tropics. There is a shift from the immediacy of 'picture perfect postcard views' to a deeper investigation of the evidence of lifetimes spent in the region. This is apparent in her depictions of decommissioned sugar cane processing mills, where working lives were started, spent and people secured a living. The past forms a layer in a continuum that extends to the present in Scotcher's moving timescapes.

Heather Tanner McGiffin is a migrant. Her experiences of migrancy include: memory; loss; assimilation; distance and nostalgia. These are represented in her work. The piece Nostalgia consists of two screens displaying rotating circular forms moving slowly towards or away from the viewer. This emulates the manner in which our memories of people and places float in and out of our consciousness. For migrants, life is experienced in two parts: there is the old world or country of origin and the new world where they now reside. These subdivided worlds are represented by the two digital screens. On one screen, light forms rotate on a dark background while on the second screen, the order is reversed with darker forms on a light background. Occasionally, a circular form floats off the edge of the screen becoming half a circle while another half circle appears on the second screen, completing the whole. This union suggests those times when, somehow, the two worlds of a migrant merge. The rotating forms are lace d'oyleys referencing elements of McGiffin's homeland. Nostalgia is a never ending piece. The forms rotate forever like the lived experience of the migrant. Their worlds rotate separately, disconnected, by the tyranny of distance.

Deeper Down unearths concerns, desires and sources of contemplation. When artists create work, they do so, not only on their own behalf but also on the behalf of the wider community. We, the viewers, benefit from the artist's struggles and the way in which their ideas are tested and resolved. We can learn more about life by viewing the artwork of Elizabeth Hunter, Heather Tanner McGiffin, Angela Myer, Amy Rodd, Jacqueline Scotcher, Ann Vardanega and Gareth Wild.

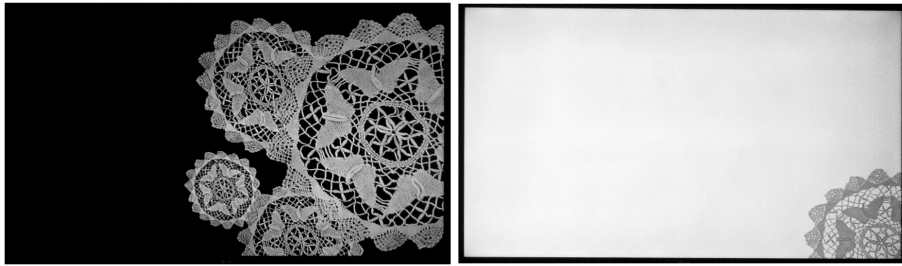
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Heather Tanner McGiffen

Nostalgia 2013, Screen based New Media

The objective of my art work is to examine feelings experienced through migration. Nostalgia (working title) is one component of a proposed full room installation exploring nostalgia; a sentimental longing for a period in the past, or a sadness due to the unsatisfied desire to return home.

From time to time I am nostalgic for England; the home of my childhood. Those years are remembered as idyllic through the perspective of physical distance and the passing of time. My England is a place of never ending picture postcard prettiness; thatched and beamed cottages, country gardens and rolling countryside.



Angela Myer

2013, *Theology Student*

This portrait is a study painted from life and extends a discussion I had with a peer artist Zane Saunders, about tropical paradise. We spoke about the spirit of place and how paintings focus the intent of the journey of discovery of place in tropical space and act as a reference point to return to. The painting as a point of reference can convey meanings and ideas. We discussed the exchange between the artist and the subject, and the painting and the audience. We thought elements of the painting including the archaeology, history, symbolism and literacy act to communicate meaning. This painting is a study about the conversation generated from a shared interest in theology and a parallel life growing up in Kuranda within both Western and Indigenous traditions.



Amy Rodd

Untitled 1 2013

Composite Digital Photograph

Embracing the imagination and the imaginative qualities I had as a child, this exhibition work was inspired by the Cottingly Fairy photographs of 1918. My artworks were created to propel the modern viewer into a fairy tale world. As an artist the ability to create these imaginative worlds has been crucial in my development and dealing with reality in my own unique way. This series was about enjoying the process of creating a magical world

Gareth Wild

Zombie Portrait, 2013 Digital Illustration

My art practice centres on the creation of synthetic worlds, drawn entirely from the imagination. To ensure a consistent level of believability, attention to detail must be maintained at every level of the design process. The featured work, *Zombie Portrait*, is a design asset used to depict a particular element of one such world. Modelled after the John Russo zombie archetype, the depicted character shows signs of intelligence – a menacing quality absent in countless modern zombie designs.



Ann Vardanega

Kellie, 2013

Digital Photograph

My work looks to reveal the *persona* within the photographic portrait. *Persona* that outer mask that may change with time and place sometimes revealing and other times hiding the inner thoughts of the subject. This image of Kellie is one from a series of self-portraits.



Elizabeth Hunter

Untitled, 2013

3D drawing, mixed media

In this 3D drawing I have incorporated sculptural elements that I am working on for an installation. The base of the drawing are old etching proofs that I have revisited to create a rich layering that the viewer can literally look into. the drawings a vehicle for me to push new ideas and explore the possibilities for new experimental work.



Jacqueline Scotcher

Winter Drive, 2013

Synthetic polymers & mixed media on canvas

This series of 'snapshot' artworks highlights the unassuming beauty found on the margins of the Cairns region. During a tropical winter the weather is crisp, sugarcane is harvested and big blue skies consistent; my annual experiences of this season are layered in materials and snapshot memories repeated in a continuum of time that moves through the landscape. Cane trains, abandoned sugar mills, unique details, signage and the road itself become representations of my 'winter drives' reflecting personal experiences rather than the typical vistas of the region.