Transforming histories:
The visual disclosure of contentious pasts.

By

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Signed Statement of Originality

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Abstract

This project investigates new ways to apprehend and visually reconfigure aspects of concealed or disputed pasts. The intention of this work is to enable a viewer to experience obscured or nearly forgotten narratives - narratives of memory, time, absence, location and representation. The works utilise found and constructed objects and techniques from the visual arts, the museum, the library, the shop, the garden.

One common methodology is the arrangement of multiple objects to activate a surface optically, and encourage a viewer to read it as a means of temporarily holding the objects in place. In doing so they find themselves part of the work. These pieces are experiments in understanding how viewers can travel around an artwork and in this process move their position back and forth, flickering between past and present and personal and national memory. Most works incorporate ideas of movement or stasis either technically or in the story which they may be partially relating to the viewer.

This suggestion of waiting or of motion summons a viewer to enter into the work as a timekeeper. This is an anxious position where many of the materials inviting curiosity, and initially implying the humorous, accrue a sinister edge as the viewer reaches a point of understanding his/her caged predicament within the work.

For the first time all these works will be exhibited together. Showing them in different locations raised considerations of setting both spatial and conceptual - and recent works have developed that are about journeying across time and place.

The investigation has emerged from very personal considerations of the place of memory, forgetting, loss, denial and the potency of the past within my own family. Artists who have explored similar terrain, visually reconfiguring the marginal or the textual, include Gordon Bennett, Fiona Foley, Tracey Moffatt, Christian Boltanski and Fred Wilson.

This project has been a journey through many stories across time. These have inevitably been incorporated into my own memory, my own life, and my own increasingly open narrative of deciphering self in the process of relating the past. Each work has been built from the outcomes of the last, and represents a claiming within a larger consideration of ways to personally invoke and involve nation, viewer and self in acknowledging our entangled histories.
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