



# Reconfigured/ Rediscovered

23 January – 10 April 2021

# The permeability of photography

'Reconfigured/Rediscovered' features seven artists who experiment with expanded forms of photography and invite us to consider how images operate and relate to reality. Throughout the exhibition each artist steers away from a traditional relationship between camera and print; instead they negotiate the possibilities of installation, time and space, and early photographic techniques. Treating photography not just as an image but also as an object, they question the very nature of pictorial representation and photography's inherent self-reflexivity.

Daniel Crooks manipulates digital imagery and footage as though it were a physical material. Working predominantly in video, photography and sculpture, he breaks time down into individual frames, creating 'time slices' that are normally imperceptible to the human eye. To create the works in his 'Portrait' series, Crooks mounted a video camera onto a robot which moved around in a very particular pattern over a period of twenty minutes, never crossing the same point twice. Splicing together multiple viewpoints, the resulting portraits are eerily mechanical and impersonal. While the portraits look quite disorienting, no part of the subject has been left out, it has simply been displaced. These works highlight the inability of a photographic image to provide a comprehensive, indisputable version of the world.<sup>1</sup>

Izabela Pluta is a Polish-born Australian artist who re-conceptualises the function of images by combining varied languages of photography in order to explore the nuances they embody as physical objects. Exploring concepts of place, space and time, her work draws largely on finding, fragmenting and reconfiguring things that are both photographed and found.

Pluta admits, 'I have this very precarious relationship with photography. I am invested, consumed by and in love with the medium... but then I try to resist its language, or I question its use. Maybe that's why what I make is increasingly shifting – moving across, photographing out in the landscape or in the studio, collecting material I then disorientate from the original source.'<sup>2</sup>



Pluta's work 'Figures of slippage and oscillation', explores assumptions around how place is depicted and perceived. The work features 60 silver gelatin paper negatives created from a set of out-of-date atlases. Working in the darkroom, Pluta creates the paper negatives through a process of contact printing. Created without a camera, the process produces undulations in the image where the original map lifts away from the photographic emulsion. Areas of the image become blurred, resulting in disorienting geographical entities and a lack of state borders. While these works are conceptually anchored in Pluta's experience

as a Polish migrant to Australia, the process of dislocating the features of each map also proposes a critique of the procedures of colonialism, hegemony and the effects of globalisation.<sup>3</sup>



This idea of exploring photography not just as an image but also as an object carries through the work of Peta Clancy. 'Throughout my practice I have engaged with cutting, piercing and crumpling photographs as a way to encourage the viewer to question what it is they are looking at' says Clancy.<sup>4</sup> Her work explores relationships between photography and time through the imagery of skin. Both photography and skin have the capacity to record the passage of time in varying ways. To create the series 'She carries it all like a map on her skin' Clancy photographed family members, printed out the photographs, reworked them using a fine needle and then re-photographed them before enlarging them. Over time Clancy also became interested in the backs of the prints and the impressions created through the pinning process, which give a sense of mapping the body and the landscape. By installing one work in the exhibition so visitors can see both the front and back of the print, we are reminded of the physicality of these photographic prints, and they become much more than just an image.

Our understanding of photography is tied to the experience of looking through a viewfinder or device, and this understanding is challenged when a camera is removed from the equation. This is how Danica Chappell creates her works, allowing controlled amounts of light to expose light sensitive photographic paper under darkroom conditions. Thoughtfully investigating the material properties of photography, Chappell works backwards and forwards between positive and negative, immersing herself in a very hands-on and time consuming process to create vibrant abstract photographs. In some instances the positive transparencies used to create prints become the works themselves, as is the case with 'Indexing'. Great attention is paid to the way Chappell's works are installed and interact with the space. Gallery lighting becomes an extension of the work, reminding visitors the essence of photography is an interplay of light over time, whether a camera is involved or not.

Perhaps more than any other artist in the exhibition, Christian Capurro's work skirts the edge of an already expanded field of photography through his works 'Disport' and 'ICEdust'. Never before exhibited together, these two bodies of work represent the artist's diverse interests and fascination with 'bodies, reproduction, (mis)translation, and erasure.'<sup>5</sup> Employing the trusted and essential tool of the photographer, 'Disport' exploits the sculptural possibilities of tripods, arranging them in haphazard and gravity defying ways. Capurro acknowledges the playful nature of the works through their titles; disport meaning recreation or amusement and h, b, a, f in the titles of each work referring to sections of the tripods as head, body, arse, and feet.

Displayed alongside 'Disport' is a selection of works from Capurro's ongoing series 'ICEdust', featuring large scale scanner-interpolated photographs. Capurro appropriates commercial imagery and over processes them with an electronic dust filter designed to clean dust particles from scanned negatives. The result is vaguely

familiar imagery that looks like a pixelated corrupted file. While the dust filter works in a very random way, the process creates striking imagery that is beautifully composed – no doubt the hand of the artist prevailing.



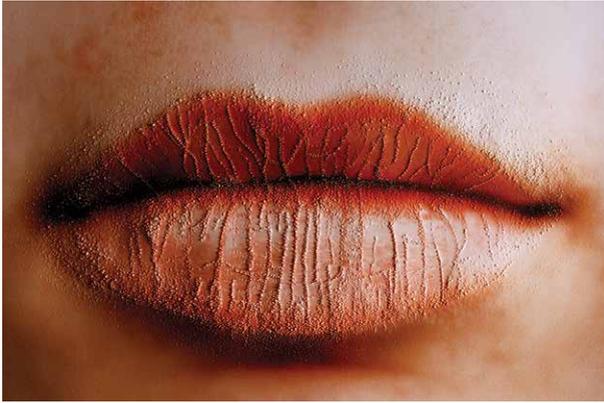
Ben Cauchi's practice continues this examination of the nature of photography and how images operate. He uses very early photographic techniques such as the wet-collodion photographic process, which produces ambrotypes and tintypes – one-off positives on glass or metal. Cauchi's imagery is moody and memory provoking, familiar yet removed from reality – a reminder the past was also a present, and the present is becoming past.<sup>6</sup> Conceptual trickery is at play here – Cauchi employs 'authentic' photographic processes to create works that look like they were created in another era, but we are forced to acknowledge they are created by a contemporary artist. Cauchi's work highlights photography's artificiality and inability to represent the complete and absolute truth.

Robyn Stacey is also inspired by the magic of early photographic techniques. Stacey transforms entire rooms into walk-in camera obscuras, then documents the results during fleeting moments when the conditions are just right. The camera obscura is created

by blacking out a room and making a small aperture to the outside world. This is the only light source in the room and the external view is projected (via the opening) into the room. The outside world wallpapers all the surfaces of the room, and because light travels in a straight line, everything appears upside down and in reverse. Watching people, cars and clouds moving through the room, Stacey describes the experience as 'one of being in the world but removed from it at the same time.'<sup>7</sup> This exhibition features a selection of works from Stacey's series 'Dark Wonders', presenting photographs of well-known artists' studios, homes and creative spaces overlaid with the view outside.

Despite the widespread presence of photographs and images in our everyday lives, the artists in 'Reconfigured/Rediscovered' still find room to explore the nuances and idiosyncrasies of photography. By questioning and interpreting the purpose of images, they challenge our understanding of what photography is, or could be.

- 1 "Daniel Crooks - Remapping", Anna Schwartz Gallery, accessed 3 December 2020, <https://annaschwartzgallery.com/exhibition/remapping>
- 2 Kathleen Linn, "Izabela Pluta", Artist Profile, accessed 3 December 2020, <https://www.artistprofile.com.au/izabela-pluta/>
- 3 "Izabela Pluta | Figures of slippage and oscillation", Art Space, accessed 3 December 2020, <https://www.artspace.org.au/program/ideas-platform/2018/izabela-pluta-figures-of-slippage-and-oscillation>
- 4 Peta Clancy, email correspondence, 8 December 2020.
- 5 Christian Capurro biography, accessed 11 December 2020, <http://www.christiancapurro.com/bio.php.html>
- 6 Art Gallery of New South Wales Collection, accessed 11 December 2020, <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/456.2009/>
- 7 "Camera Obscura", accessed 11 December 2020, <https://robynstacey.com.au/exhibitions.html>



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*Cover:*

Christian Capurro, 'Disport\_1(055)hw1-19', 2019, photographic tripod, dimensions variable, installation view of 'Two Shores', Reading Room, 2019, image courtesy of the artist.

*Centre spread:*

Izabela Pluta, detail from 'Spatial misalignments', 2018, silver gelatin photographs, 3 sets of 20 unique prints, 61 x 40.6 cm (each diptych), image courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney.

Danica Chappell, 'Eye Glass (for Glass Eye)', 2019, chromogenic photograph, custom steel frame, 70 x 50 cm, edition 1 of 1, image courtesy of the artist.

Ben Cauchi, 'That which can be seen is not all there is', 2013, ambrotype, unique, 36 x 28 cm, image courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery.

*Above:*

Peta Clancy, 'She carries it all like a map on her skin', 2015-16, chromogenic print, 52.5 x 80 cm, image courtesy of the artist.

Robyn Stacey, 'King William Room, Parliament House', 2016, type C print, 110 x 156 cm, edition of 5, image courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery.

*Back cover:*

Daniel Crooks, 'Portrait #11 (Hannah)', 2012, Lambda photographic print, 130 x 130 cm, image courtesy of the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery.



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