

rhythm of memory is an installation by Brisbane-based artist Judith Wright. The elements used in the exhibition - dressmaker's dummies, shoe lasts, hat lasts, a video of a slowly turning wrapped head, and printed words - trace a journey along the passage of windows. Walking along the windowfront the artist invites people to pace out this journey, to read this sentence of artwork, to recall the memories of their own life journey.

The story which Judith Wright speaks in silence is not a fairytale. There is sadness and poverty - the dummies are stripped bare, feet are bare, wooden, hard, and silent. In the first windows the floors are covered with heads and feet and words are placed at the top of the windows, leaving the central space bare and empty. One has to "work" to connect the objects, the text, and their surrounding space, as if the act of remembering is not easy and is somehow divorced from the daily physical tasks of the body.

When walking the length of the work one finds a rhythm and a movement. The elements repeat and recur, they shift, the words rise and fall in size and strength. Not simply a story or a sentence, the work is also a song - the windows marking intervals of time on a musical staff, forming the bar-lines of a song.

In the second section of windows the dummies stand alone and a video monitor displays a bandaged head which slowly turns for hours on end. The figures are unable to speak and words of silence and darkness hang over them. Language promises to release the silent stories we embody, but language is also a prison, spoken and structured before we were born. In walking along the work the dismembered self is re-membered.

These window cases which line the footpath act as a bridge between interior and exterior. They are somehow neither inside nor outside and thus they have a curious feeling of both privacy and intimacy as well as public show. Wright's work speaks about the relationship between private and public, the transition which is made between private thoughts and feelings and the "official" stories which we tell to others, the transition between the act of remembering privately and the act of remembering collectively.

Beth Jackson
Curator

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Poor Homme is an installation by Brisbane-based artist Anthony Babicci. Eleven large painted faces of men stare out from behind the glass windows onto the city street. That is, they would stare except that, instead of eyes, the sockets in these faces are filled with small landscapes. Babicci has reversed the scale of things so that, rather than small figures in the larger landscape, the faces are many times larger than life-size, and clearly visible only from a distance, while the landscapes are small and intimate and visible only from close-at-hand. The exhibition explores the relationship between person and landscape - the person within the landscape and the landscape within the person.

More specifically, *Poor Homme* explores the "nature" of man and masculinity. Each face is made up of many complex, textured layers pulsating vibrantly with living colours. Larger than life, they testify to the energy and complexity of each individual person. From a distance we can recognise their individuality, but from close range we become embedded in a field of colour, as if placed within a landscape. The eye-landscapes are abstract patterns when viewed from afar, but close-at-hand are clear, picturesque, romantic scenes of a home in the country. This "dream-home", where a man can be king of his own castle, seems to symbolise a social and cultural ideal which governs modern masculinities. Rather than liberating, this dream seems to restrict the men's individuality, obstruct their gaze, and make them similar to one another.

While the faces are lush with colour and texture, there is also something sinister about their massive scale. The cutting of the faces below the mouth and above the eyebrows is suggestive of police identikits, and the sheer number of faces creates the confronting presence of male gangs, clubs, or teams. Babicci explores men not only in individuality but also in collectivity - the complex networks of colours and textures acting as metaphors for male bonds.

Stories appear between the portraits, interrupting them like prison bars. The eye-landscapes and the stories symbolise narratives which shape experience and fashion identity. The artist speaks of his personal experiences and yet his stories have meanings which are wider than his individuality. The exhibition begs the question 'how much of what we see are projections of scenes and stories already scripted, imprinted on our inner eye?'. Our lives are journeys not simply through physical spaces and places, but also through the emotional landscapes of our dreams and desires.

The title *Poor Homme* is a word play which, like the images, generates many levels of meaning. Homme is French for man, but is also similar to the English word home, which in turn resonates with both "homie" (a slang word for a member of a predominantly male youth group), and "homo" (slang for a male homosexual). Poor in English means both financially deprived and emotionally bankrupt. Finally the French "pour" creates the phrase "Pour Homme", meaning "For Him", the name of a popular, mass-produced men's aftershave. The artist's title for these grand-scale works rejects any reading of male heroics in his own actions.

Beth Jackson
Curator

Dresses for Henrietta Lacks is an installation by Brisbane-based artist Jill Barker. Dresses made of silver contact paper have been adhered to the windows. They shimmer and glint like the magic ball-gowns of girlhood fairytales, but when viewed from other angles they are dull and metallic like the knights' armour from those same stories. The very shiny side remains hidden from view, and the dresses remain flat and two-dimensional. We can glimpse them in the mirrors and imagine their fullness rather like those fairytales of our childhood. What we do see in three dimensions is our own familiar reflections in the mirrors. The dresses shimmer like an unreal ideal of femininity which has shaped and continues to shape our real bodies, identities, and life stories. In the shop window-front space of consumerism we become voyeurs of our own identities, imagining ourselves in other costumes, motivated by desires to be different and desires to be the same.

Henrietta Lacks was a black American woman who died in Baltimore in 1951 from cervical cancer. A sample of her cancer tissue was sent to Dr Grey at the Johns Hopkins medical school. These cells were the first human cells to be kept alive, proving to be a breakthrough in bio-medical research and genetic science. Dr Grey named the cell-lines HeLa (an abbreviation for Henrietta Lacks) and sent samples all over the world. HeLa became the gold standard in cell research, the benchmark against which all results were judged. Henrietta's family were never told of the research - permission for the cell sample was never sought. Dr Grey claimed the donor's name was Helen Lane or Helen Larson (supposedly in order to protect her anonymity). In the 1970s Henrietta's name was released and the Lacks family were shocked. Despite the benefits of their mother's unknowing donation, to them a part of their mother is still living and is being made to live on. Johns Hopkins took tissue samples of the four remaining children and thereby established the clonal nature of cancer - another huge scientific breakthrough. Henrietta's story foreshadows the complex questions of ethics which surround bio-medical research and genetic science today.

Many black and other Americans today, including Henrietta's family, lobby for official recognition for Henrietta and pay tribute to her contribution to Western medicine. This exhibition by Jill Barker is one such tribute. Prior to becoming an artist, Jill Barker studied bio-chemistry where she worked with HeLa cells. While not intending to be a literal interpretation or representation of Henrietta, the exhibition has many metaphorical resonances with her story. All dresses are made from paper patterns. Each of these dresses contains intricate structural patterns, like the DNA and other cell and molecular structures of which we are all composed. These dresses are identical in shape and scale but they contain minor variations in their patterned compositions. This is similar to our own composition where as humans we vary individually within a general genetic structure or pattern. Ultimately it is these small variations which maintain genetic health. Cancer cells, in their clonal nature, do not die, but they kill their host because of the very fact that they prevent diversity. The vigorous nature of Henrietta's cancer cells led to her medical immortality and her death.

Beth Jackson
Curator

Stolen Generation is an exhibition by artist Joanne Currie, a member of the Gunggari Aboriginal people of Southern Queensland. The work is a fence-line made from a mixture of materials, from traditional ochres to barbed wire, from emu feathers to petrol drums, sunk firmly into red earth. The work symbolises both the strength and the suffering of Aboriginal peoples.

The title "Stolen Generation" refers specifically to the practices of the Australian government from the early 1900s through to the 1970s of forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their families and transporting them to government settlements and missions. This practice went hand-in-hand with the removal of adult Aboriginal peoples from their traditional lands and communities. Together these practices contributed to a rapid breakdown of Aboriginal cultures and family life. The removal of children has been a source of untold grief within Aboriginal communities.

In Joanne's work the feathered poles represent the children who have been removed, while the barbed wire both separates them (from their mothers, their families, their cultures, lands, and traditions) and binds them (into European institutions, practices, and values) through violence. The half-petrol drum, commonly used for containing campfires, has been covered in traditional spray-painted ochre hand-designs, symbolising Aboriginal people's determination to make community in even in their enforced states of poverty. The hand-prints were made by Joanne's own children, Christy, Jessy, and Stevie. Similarly, the car-seat covered in traditional painting, symbolises Aboriginal self-determination, the making of a collective home for the removed ones to return to.

The barbed wire has been painted with the colours of the Aboriginal flag - black, red, and gold. Joanne Currie's exhibition speaks of the immense suffering of Aboriginal peoples through European colonisation, but also of Aboriginal people's strength in their survival, their stories, and the continuing projects of reclaiming their lands and cultural traditions. Joanne invites us all, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to walk along this fence-line and consider the borders within and around ourselves which exclude and deny others. There are gaps in the fence, places where we can see through to the other side without violence, openings of trust where we may even cross over.

It is not possible to accurately estimate how many children were removed from their Indigenous homes and families (for some generations it may be as high as twenty per cent of the Indigenous population). It is certainly not possible for those removed to re-live their childhoods. It is possible for non-Indigenous Australians to say sorry. The present Government could not. Can you?

The book *Bringing Them Home*, which is included in the exhibition, is the report which resulted from the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, published in 1997. The report included hundreds of first-hand accounts from both the children who were removed and their families. The Report states that:

Indigenous children have been forcibly removed from their families and communities since the very first days of European occupation of Australia. (p.27)

Under the 'protectionist legislation' of the early 1900s Indigenous people were subject to near total control ... Children of 'mixed descent' were forcibly removed from their Indigenous families as the fact that they had some European 'blood' meant that there was a place for them in non-Indigenous society, albeit a very lowly one. ... The reality that Indigenous people did not identify as Europeans, however much European blood they had, was not taken into account. (p.29)

The lack of funding for settlements, missions, and institutions meant that people forced to move to these places were constantly hungry, denied basic facilities and medical treatment and as a result were likely to die prematurely. (p.31)

After 1940 the removal of Indigenous children was governed by the general child welfare law ... Children were no longer removed because they were part white, but because they were found by the court to be 'neglected', 'destitute', or 'uncontrollable' ... Poverty was regarded as synonymous with neglect. It was not until 1966 that all eligibility restrictions on Indigenous people's receipt of social security benefits were fully lifted. (p.33)

During the 1950s and 1960s even greater numbers of Indigenous children were removed from their families to advance the cause of assimilation. Not only were they removed for alleged neglect, they were removed to attend school, to receive medical treatment, and to be adopted out at birth. (p.34)

The election of the Whitlam Labor Government in 1972 on a policy platform of Aboriginal self-determination provided the means for Indigenous groups to receive funding to challenge the very high rates of removal of Indigenous children. Aboriginal legal services began representing Indigenous children and families in removal applications, which led to an immediate decline in the number of Indigenous children being removed. (p.35)

In 1980 family tracing and reunion agency Link-up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation was established. Similar services now exist in all States and the Northern Territory. (p.36)

The fact remains that Aboriginal children are being removed from their families at an unacceptable rate, whether by the child welfare or the juvenile justice systems, or both. (p.425)

Delicious is an installation by Brisbane-based artist Mona Ryder. Quirky creatures assembled from objects and materials ranging from the everyday to the very precious dangle before our eyes, filling the windows with their curious forms. A neon light glows with the words "Mother Other Lover". Mona Ryder's work speaks of the many and varied roles women play and the multiple aspects of femininity.

Ryder's creatures are made from household, domestic materials and objects. **Delicious** gives voice to the private spaces of the home and domestic labours performed mostly by women, which are de-valued and rendered invisible in our male-dominated society which awards status to the new and to the commodity. "Women's work" such as cleaning, decorating, caring and comforting is not considered to be "real work" but as merely setting a stage or creating an environment in which "real work" can happen. Similarly, artists and works of art are also often de-valued and not seen to be a valid contribution to society. **Delicious** satirises and explodes these prejudices. Ryder has over-decorated these windows, covered their surfaces, glutted them with her energy and activity. And, in turn, she activities our own desires, as we are filled with the urge to play, touch, and toy with the works.

Delicious is made from recycled materials, and Ryder explores in repeated patterning the many variations, inflections, and personalities within materials. In this way, the work metaphorically explores identity as something which can be self-fashioned and re-invented continually with the growth and changes that come with history and experience. These creatures are flexible, sensual, elastic, and clever.

in placing materials and objects which are private and intimate into a public window space, Ryder explores the shifting boundaries, both social and subjective, which inform our relationships. The creatures are see-through, with things hidden inside them. They are knotted, and turned inside out. They are adorned with things relating to the body, the female body in particular – nails, hair, combs – and they resemble bodily forms – folds of skin, lips, membrane. In this way, Ryder blurs the artificial boundaries between interior and exterior, between ourselves and our environments, between public and private. For it is these very boundaries which are used to exclude and de-value women and justify violence towards them. **Delicious** re-connects these social and emotional separations through its stitched webs of desire.

Beth Jackson
Curator



