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CONTENTS

PREFACE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

The Passing of Time in lenticular photographs: research into combining two to four images onto the same photograph using lenticular technology and flowers and leaves as a metaphor for the passing of time. A study taking the form of an exhibition of lenticulars photographs exhibited at the Canberra School of Art Gallery from March 13 to 23, 2003 that comprises the outcome of the Studio Practice component, together with the Report that documents the nature of the course of study undertaken.

INTRODUCTION

THE PASSING OF TIME

CONCLUSION

REFERENCES

APPENDIX

EXHIBITION

CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	4
<i>My proposal for entry</i>	5,6
<i>The first steps</i>	7,8
<i>The lenticular process</i>	9,10
<i>Examples of lenticular prints</i>	11-15
<i>Back to content</i>	16
<i>Semester two</i>	17,18
<i>Art Theory Essay</i>	19-28
<i>Essay bibliography</i>	29
<i>Conclusion</i>	30
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	31
<i>Curriculum Vitae</i>	32
<i>Report bibliography</i>	33,34

FOREWORD

Veronica Calarco, a former ANU staff member, suggested the idea of study, in Photomedia at ANU, to me during a Photoshop course she gave at Photo Access in 2001.

As a professional photographer with thirty years experience, I wanted to produce more than just another hotel brochure or ski resort poster and I thought that studying at the ANU might help me understand what art is, perhaps help me to produce art and give me an insight into the art world.

After an interview with graduate convener Nigel Lendon I sorted through hundreds of slides and black and white prints and came up with a selection that I thought might be appropriate to apply for entry to a graduate diploma.

Not sure whether course work or research was the best approach, as it was a long time since I'd last studied at a tertiary establishment, I applied for both and was accepted for a one year, full-time, coursework, graduate diploma commencing in March 2002.

I already had a project – lenticular prints - that I was pursuing whether I was accepted as a student or not but I hoped that by working with the Photomedia department that I would receive guidance and direction.

My proposal for entry to the course of study

What follows is my original proposal for entry to the graduate diploma, including a brief explanation of how lenticular prints work:

I am interested in exploring multi-layered story telling within a single still image using the three-dimensional and animation effects available through lenticular printing.

It was a glimpse of a picture in an American art gallery earlier this year that inspired me to seek out ways of layering images so that a viewer could see beyond a surface image to an underlying but different background image.

At first I thought the picture I had seen was a hologram. But my research on holograms revealed two aspects that did not ring true, the work in Aspen was viewed in daylight without special laser illumination and the colours were fairly true, without the other-worldly green hue that imbues many holograms. I eventually tracked down the artist, whose work I had so briefly glimpsed, as Linda Girvin who makes animated lenticular photographs.

Methods and resources

The technology to make lenticular prints has been around since the 1940s but was limited to very small items due to the cost and complexity of the technique. Recent developments in suitable plastics and special computer software have made large-scale lenticular printing both feasible and (relatively) affordable. The current maximum available film sheet size is four feet by eight feet (being a non-metric American product). So far, I have found one graphics company in Sydney that produces lenticular prints.

The basic concept as explained by Sean Halloran of Screen Printing magazine on the Screenweb internet site is the simplest I have come across despite it being an inkjet process and not a screen printing one.

"The display," Halloran writes, "includes two components: a clear plastic sheet comprising optical-grade parallel lenses and a graphic design consisting of multiple segmented images that are viewed through the sheet. The lenses, which give the sheet a slightly ribbed finish, display only portions of the graphics beneath, sequencing through two or more distinct images as the viewing angle changes.

The images that make up the graphic are sliced into dozens of strips per inch and reassembled with special software into a bewildering graphic that only makes sense when viewed through the lenticular sheeting."

Halloran also details the different effects that are possible with lenticular printing. They include flipping between two or more images by shifting the viewing position. Motion, morphing and zooming achieved by using multiple images, some of different scale and lastly, three-dimensional pictures where the effect is visible without the viewer changing position.

The result is still a single picture on a gallery wall, albeit one that makes the viewer feels they can walk into it.

Context

Often referred to as winkie/blinkies, small lenticular items are commonly used as marketing gimmicks such as fridge magnets, badges and key rings but that need not eliminate this technique from being used in the services of art.

Another American artist working with lenticular prints, Dorothy Simpson Krause, wrote that: "If the photographic image captures a moment in time then the lenticular image expands the moment and captures a continuing experience."

It is this aspect of lenticular imaging that I would like to explore further, to capture several moments and display them in a single image.

An example could be to show memories of things past using layers of images that allow the viewer to see a room both empty and previously occupied. Another could be dream or real action sequences that take place within a single picture frame like a flower bud opening, maturing and dying. And narratives that unfold across the width of a print in multiple-image sequences. Imagine a Duane Michals sequence in 3-D.

The possibilities opened up by being able to depict three dimensions in a two dimensional photograph are exciting but I feel it is essential to explore these possibilities in a supervised art school environment where critique and guidance are available from people respected in the art world.

In this way I hope to ensure that I am producing art worth exhibiting and not self-indulgent gimmickry or worthless kitsch.

My aim is to give viewers pictures that are richly complex, and at the same time, an intriguing, satisfying experience.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing, my expectations of what could be learned in a one-year course without the benefit of previous study at the School of Art, were probably unrealistic. What I learned very quickly was that I knew nothing of this world and that my previous work/ life experience counted for naught here.

But my year of study had unexpected rewards too – the art forums; access to the art library, where Georgina Buckley was very helpful; the chance to listen to visiting artists in photomedia; Martyn Jolly's terrific studio theory lectures; visits to galleries with Helen Ennis and Gordon Bull, the friendliness of the other coursework graduate students and the delight of seeing exciting and innovative work produced by students in all workshops.

The first steps

At the beginning of the academic year I had no actual experience of making lenticular prints and I had only seen a very limited number of them i.e. one, therefore I felt that the first course of action was to master the technique to find out what was possible. But from the first meeting with Martyn acting as my supervisor it was clear that content was everything.

I therefore made a few assumptions from what I had read, heard from other people, gleaned from the web and concentrated on content albeit with the niggling feeling that I had the cart before the horse, which as it turned out, was the case. The lesson here was to not assume the correctness of second hand information.

I wrote a studio practice unit outline, as follows:

Aim 1. To produce at least one lenticular print by the end of semester one. At this stage I am interested in the ability to flip between several different images on the one print depending on the angle from which it is viewed.

I hope to progress to lenticular 3D and animation at a future date.

The first concept I would like to illustrate is the baby boomer generation coming to terms with its own mortality.

This is the hippie generation that was never going to grow old, that rebelled against its parent's and society's values, that grew up under the shadow of possible nuclear extinction and was therefore here for a good time not necessarily a long time.

Growing old and facing death was not a baby boomer concern until the vast majority of them hit their 50s this century.

I thought to use a baby boomer symbol of the 1960s, i.e. printed t-shirts - appropriated men's undershirts as outer wear – as a metaphor for the generation and flowers through their lifecycle as the metaphor for aging. To this end I have transferred images of a rose from bud to faded flower onto t-shirts and photographed them on women's bodies of different ages. These I hope to combine onto one lenticular print.

The second concept I am working on this semester is unreal landscapes, constructed, idealised landscapes made up of multiple images combined in Photoshop. If funds allow I would like to use lenticular flip technology for this as well.

Methods and resources

Improving my Photoshop skills by attending classes and workshops and having access to tutors who can solve problems.

Access to tutors who can guide my concept in the direction of art and help prevent me from falling into the trap of merely displaying technological wizardry.

Context

Relatively few artists are working with lenticular technology (probably because of the high material costs) so there is as yet no great body of work to study. Much of the lenticular work I have seen is in the realm of superficial technological wizardry without a deeper reason for being displayed. The result is not only freedom to experiment, but also the possibility of discovering new reasons for using the technology.

I heard nothing more and I assumed that the proposal was acceptable.

First semester was a period of culture shock I spent much of it trying to figure out how the system worked, expecting to be notified of events only to find out afterwards where the information had been posted. At my first presentation to a workshop session, the group could not imagine what I was describing, after looking blankly at me they energetically put forward their own ideas of how I should treat the subject which they assumed was death but was in fact aging, their ideas didn't relate to my vision and I couldn't understand why I had to change what I was trying to achieve and switch to their ideas. Compared to discussing concepts and ideas with clients and art directors facing a room full of honours students was extremely daunting.

I lost whatever remnants of self-confidence remained when I saw Martyn, who said my work looked like something produced by a 20-year-old design student. No doubt he was right but I felt rather down for a while.

There were many other incidents and times when I wondered what on earth I was doing in photomedia but having committed to this year of study - I'd put my business on hold, moved to Canberra and paid the fees - I continued.

The university culture of criticism was foreign to me. A friend said if you want praise, a university is not the place to find it and he is certainly right, but it wasn't praise I was looking for, only guidance.

The Lenticular process

A couple of trips to Sydney following up leads on studios with lenticulars experience proved fruitful. Robin Ford at Tranneys offered to produce my lenticulars for \$1500 each but he also pointed me towards a supplier of the lens material and off-handedly mentioned that this supplier gave away free interlacing software. Until then the quotes I'd had from software manufacturers ranged from \$US 1900 to \$US 8000.

Another graphics studio: The Definitive Group offered the same rate, that is \$1500 per finished print but the owner, Michael Harrington, was happy to do a contra for brochure photographs. I built up my credit and kept on experimenting at home. Everyone I spoke to warned me that lenticulars involved a lot of trial and error. I was to find out the truth of this throughout the year.

I met Ivo Lovric, a MAVA student recently returned from a year in Germany who had lenticular experience. He said that he had an interlacing software manual but that it was in German. I offered to translate the manual for him (German was my first language) but heard no more about it. Ivo and Gilbert Reidelbauch suggested that we combine an order for lenticulars sheets from America and I agreed.

With the software that came with my order I proceeded to experiment with multiple images to find out what worked and what didn't. It became clear early on that despite being told that it was possible to combine up to 15 images, combining more than two and getting them to appear in the right order was difficult. Therefore my plans of showing a flower going through six phases from bud to wilt was not going to be possible on one lenticular.

One major difficulty was that I'd ordered 40 lines per inch material but received

30 lines per inch and I didn't discover this until a lot of time and material had been wasted.

I settled on two and three way flips as the best solution. By rearranging the order in which three images were interlaced I could get them to appear as I intended, thus ABC from left to right came out as ACB and by entering them as ACB they then appeared as ABC.

Separation between more than two images was problematic, the software offers multiple choices and by systematic experimentation (and many computer crashes) I came to the conclusion that an average of each image worked best. What I didn't find out until much later, (when Ivo passed on a copy of an interlacing software manual in English), was that the ratio of the number of images to the resolution seemed to determine the separation.

With the manual and its handy charts I tried to interlace four images and the result was acceptable. Separation is not entirely clear between the four images and four or more images would obviously work better with almost identical pictures rather than the time lapse type of frames I was attempting to use. The order of appearance with four images also took much experimentation to sort out, I settled on an inverse order, that is, to appear as ABCD the images were interlaced as DCBA.

I often wondered whether spending \$US 1900 on the software would have given me a version that behaved in a more predictable fashion. I emailed Dorothy Simpson Krause at the Digital Atelier in Denver asking if they offered lenticular workshops she replied with a no, adding that they had had their software for five years and it was still problematical.

The following photo pages are examples of my lenticular work on the theme of time passing. I chose to use different time frames in different images from 12 hours, (Morning, Noon and Night), to several days (Tulip Blue), to several months with fresh and dried flowers (Roses Forever) and fresh and pressed flowers as in Victoriana Lily and finally, to several years (Kids Grow Up So Fast These Days I & II). In two works (Kids II and the installation, At Home Facsimile), the time frames in the portraits run over years while their backgrounds are in a different (shorter) time zone, the incongruity suggesting time flying way before you realise it.

- p12 Victoriana Lily, a two-way flip refers to the practice of drying and pressing botanical specimens, very popular as a decorative art in Victorian times. Fresh and dried lilies alternate in view against a carved timber frame typical of the era representing several weeks between each phase.
- p13 Tulip Blue, a three-way flip of a single white tulip opening almost flat as if undecided whether to remain a tulip or claim kinship with the daisy family. The time frame covers several days.
- p14 In Time Steps, each step up is a new season from the bare branches of winter to the tender young leaves of spring and onto the luscious, full leaves of mid summer thereby representing a period of six months.
- p15 The Flower Ball explodes into bloom from tight green buds that sprout red stalks to hold the final bright pink flowers and on to their pale final phase before wilting, a time period of a week.









Meanwhile back to content

I wanted to produce 80 cm by 100 cm prints for the final exhibition that meant file sizes of around 280 MB for each of the two, three or four interlaced images. I was using medium format film (my own cameras) to have sufficient quality to go to this size and queuing up (without much success) to scan the slides on photomedia's scanner and computer. At the same time I tried to gain access to the lighting studio. The logistical nightmare of arranging models, blooms and studio availability was too much for me, after several weeks without success, except at 7am or after 10pm even on weekend nights and with assessment looming, I gave up and worked in the living room at home in Canberra. The computer lab's file size limits also made working at home the only solution for me.

I sought help with Photoshop, something I'd assumed would be readily available at the School of Art, some of the things I was trying to do were taking a very long time, I was hoping to find shortcuts or quicker methods of achieving my ends.

Martyn sent me to PhD student, Tracy Benson's class but it was basic to the point of explaining file formats. Peter Fitzpatrick's class was at about lesson four. Time was passing, in between getting appointments with Martyn, or anyone else, to even ask the questions, was at least a week, sometimes longer by which time I'd either found a solution by myself or given up.

Eventually a set of advanced Photoshop training CDs I'd ordered months before from America arrived and solved many of my problems.

An excursion to Kialoa was a welcome break, I was among artists making art and having a good time, for my piece I built a sandcastle in the shape of a croquebouche wedding cake decorated with shells, topped with a miniature bride and groom and photographed in sequence as the water approached and eventually engulfed it. I thought to make a lenticular for my theme of aging baby boomers based on the fact that no-fault divorce and the subsequent high divorce rates were major issues affecting baby boomers in the 1970s.

I photographed a toy soldier attached to the interior mirror of a car with the war memorial viewed through the windscreen because the Vietnam War was another big baby boomer issue. This set me off on other things hanging from the mirror, with other views behind, like the toy bridal couple with 1960s style church through the windscreen- easy to find in Canberra. I took a trip to the Woden cemetery looking for baby boomer references.

I tried other approaches rather blindly, a pop-art style poster, kitsch of the 1960s

garden gnome variety but I really had no idea of what I was supposed to be doing. The workshop sessions felt like sitting an exam each week without knowing what the questions were or what the judging criteria was for that matter.

At semester one assessment my work was judged to be too illustrative and I came to the realisation that the baby boomer idea was probably too ambitious an issue for me at this stage of my fledgling art career.

Semester two

Just before the start of semester two I ran into Ivo Lovric, experienced student that he is, and he did his best to put me right on 'ugly' images in art, he said images need not be beautiful but they had to make us think, they must have sociological significance. Not long afterwards a seminar on Pierre Bourdieu was advertised on the notice board so I went up to Sydney to attend. I came away convinced that life was too short to make art and worry about French sociological theory but then I'd also thought that images needed to be attractive or at least arresting before people would look at them long enough to ponder their deeper meaning, my learning process was evidently going to be a long one.

For semester two I simplified my proposal to 'time passing', something lenticular technology is particularly suited to. At semester one assessment Helen Ennis had complimented one of my flower pictures – the first positive word I'd heard since starting the graduate diploma. And feeling like Mark Twain, who said he could survive six months on a good compliment - I continued with the flowers on Helen's recommendation.

Shooting on medium format and film was too long a turnaround time in processing and scanning to be useful in the limited number of weeks available so I switched to a five-mega-pixel digital camera for everything and worried about the final resolution later.

As it happened using Genuine Fractals, interpolation software, gave acceptable results up to A0 size.

Finding out what the difference between illustration and art is continued to occupy my thoughts as I trolled the library, eventually I came to a conclusion that satisfied me enough to allow me to continue without feeling a complete failure. It is that artists react to a situation, an emotion or an event while an illustrator describes them. Life became easier, I began to know better what to expect, I stopped taking the criticism to heart and continued to develop ideas I wanted to develop and if

they were to be damned at the end so be it. Martyn kept telling me to get in closer on my flower pictures but everywhere I looked – on crockery, cards, wrapping paper, I saw macro flowers printed on every conceivable surface and I didn't want my work to compete with or be compared to wrapping paper. I soon tired of flower sequences, waiting for flowers to open and then to wilt was time consuming and sometimes it didn't happen at all in Canberra's winter temperatures. A magnificent ginger bud was about to bloom according to the florist who sold it to me but it died without opening as did several strelitzias that had the camera set up on them for days waiting for the big event.

Art theory classes were a relief, at least here there was structure and clear direction (and friendliness), but unfortunately they clashed with Martyn's studio theory lectures. I wrote an exhibition review for art theory in which my lack of experience in academic writing showed, I failed to answer part of the question but received a credit nonetheless.

Around this time my arthritic hip started to cause me a lot of pain, I was scheduled for a hip replacement operation in November after the school year but the pain increased to the point where I felt it better to bring the operation forward and apply for a deferment. The successful operation occurred in October and three months later I felt better than I had for the previous five years.

With renewed energy I worked at producing new lenticular images, a sequence on growing up inspired by a photograph by French photographer, Alain Fleischer, from a book called *Images Imaginees* 1984. In the first of my images a young girl wearing a coronet of roses is reflected above a chest of drawers, the first draw reveals young girls' things, the second, young women's makeup and trinkets and the third reveals women's lingerie with the same coronet of roses but dried.

Another growing up sequence involved a vase of roses on a table with a framed photograph of a girl. Through the sequence of three the flowers wilt a little and drop petals while the girl in the photo goes from a baby to a young girl to a woman. My lenticular is about the way mothers often say that their kids seem to grow up too fast.

Using a distorted or unreal time frame is something that cartoonist Michael Leunig is expert at. One of his cartoon characters wakes up in January but it's February before he gets out of bed and so on up to the punch line where he's at his desk, it's December and he hasn't even read the paper yet. Continuing on that theme I photographed a window inside a lighthouse, again a sequence of three from different heights. The view I placed outside the window is of an ornamental grape vine, first in winter with no leaves the linear twigs forming a heart shape, then in

spring with young leaves and finally with bright green, full summer leaves. Again it's about time passing faster than you expect, anyone over forty will confirm that time appears to accelerate with age. This lenticular would also work in a stairwell, with the lenses running horizontally instead of vertically, the sequence unfolding as you walk up and down past it.

As semester two had finished while I was recovering, there were no more crit sessions to endure, Martyn had time to see me and could give me his full attention, he was enthusiastic and offered helpful advice on everything from how to mount the final exhibition to lending me suitable books for the art theory essay.

The following essay on Australian Contemporary art completed the Art Theory component of this graduate diploma and i have included it in this report.

Essay question

At what point was Australian photography accepted by the larger art world?
Why?
What are the ramifications for contemporary practice?

That the international art community accepts photography as a valid medium for producing works of art is no longer in question. The February 2003 edition of ARTnews magazine (USA) goes so far as to proclaim photography: The Medium of the Moment. Author Deidre Stein Greber cites examples of photography sales at recent auctions in the hundreds of thousands of (US) dollars as proof of photography's importance today.¹

Stein Greber points out that contemporary photographs are also fetching high prices for example: Andreas Gursky's 1997 Untitled V, a monumentally sized picture of some 200 shoes on six rows of shelves sold in 2002 for \$US 611,909. Australia has followed the rest of the art world albeit a little later and at lower prices. Michael Hutek wrote in the Bulletin magazine in August 2002 that:

"The boom in the market for photography can be traced to a 'Kodak moment' in July last year, when an artist's proof of Tracey Moffatt's iconic Something More No. 1 was knocked down at the then Phillips Auctioneers in Sydney for a lazy \$74,000."

As a postscript, in November 2002, a private display ad appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald complete with colour photo labeling the same Moffatt picture "Australia's most recognized photograph" and offered it for sale at '\$150K'. By

December 2002, Sydney collector Reg Richardson had paid \$226,575 for the nine photographs that make up the *Something More* series².

In the international art world, contemporary photography's anointment to the altar of high art was amply flagged by German photographer Wolfgang Tillmans winning the 20,000 pound sterling, Turner prize in November 2001 with a group of 57 'straight' colour photographs.

But this success was a long time coming. Photography had always been considered a lesser art, in Australia there was a push by the Pictorialists as they were known, to be recognised as artists at the beginning of the twentieth century without success. By the 1970s fine art photographers were again claiming recognition as artists but again they remained outside the contemporary art world.

American critic Andy Grundberg writing in the introduction to *Photography and Art* (1988) suggests that the fundamental shift towards acceptance of photography by the American art world began in the 1930s and 40s with influences from pioneering modernist Alfred Stieglitz, gallery owner, photo-artist and editor of *Camerawork* magazine.³

According to Grundberg, the catalyst that brought photography and art into closer contact in the America was the introduction of photographic education into colleges and schools around this time.⁴

This 'inevitable interaction' or reaction had its beginnings in 1937 when the Bauhaus artist, designer and photographer Laszlo Moholy-Nagy set up what was to become the Chicago Institute of Design that 'became a crucible for a new brand of photography with claims to be art.'⁵

Decades later in Australia, when the Prahan College of Advanced Education started teaching creative photography in 1972, the same opportunities for interaction between photography and art gradually arose here with similar results, Anne-Marie Willis writes in *Picturing Australia* that:

...location in the art school milieu encouraged notions of photography as a form of individualized 'personal expression'⁶.

Of equal importance is the fact that the commencement of creative photographic education coincided with institutional interest in collecting photography. It was the Whitlam Labor government's noticeably generous arts funding that made collecting possible, this in turn, influenced the rapid proliferation of photographic galleries and exhibition spaces exhibiting what they hoped was collectable art photography.

The 1970s was a creative explosion.⁷

Within a few years the National Gallery of Victoria (1973), the Australian National Gallery through the Philip Morris Arts Grant (1974) and the Art Gallery of New South Wales all "began to collect local and overseas, contemporary and historical fine art photography." And the Australian Centre for Photography was established in 1974.

The brainchild of three professional photographers David Moore, Wesley Stacey and Laurence Le Guay and others the centre's stated aim was to recognize and encourage photography as an art form in Australia⁸.

In this period both documentary and manipulated photographs were being produced but the divergence of straight, that is, fine art photography and creative photography came to a head at this time with creative photography of the Prahans style winning out, leaving straight documentary photography marginalized as a photographic practice rather than an art practice..

Willis writes that it was significant that:

the ACP's first director, Graham Howe was a graduate of Prahans and one third of the photographers represented in the ACP's inaugural show and publication: *New Photography Australia: A Selective Survey*, were either graduates from or teachers at Prahans⁹.

Bill Henson, probably Prahans's most distinguished graduate produced hundreds of prints of anonymous people in crowd scenes after graduating in 1975. Often out of focus, printed very dark and with strange cropping that eliminated parts of their features, this Untitled 1980/82 series of 'fragments of scenes and fragments of people' are on display in the Ian Potter Centre of the National Gallery of Victoria as part of the *Fieldwork* exhibition. And they look quaintly dated, as if made by someone trying too hard to be different, perhaps afraid of being labeled merely a photographer instead of an artist.

I hasten to add that Henson's work from a decade later, from his *Paris Opera* project for example, on display in the same room in the same museum shows all the hallmarks of an artist in his prime.

The 1970s and 1980s were a time of political and social change, the sacking of the Prime Minister by the Governor General, the Vietnam conflict, immigration, boat people and feminism all impacted on society and on how artists viewed their world and responded to it. Isobel Crombie writing in *Second Sight*, Australian

Photography in the National Gallery of Victoria says:

Many artists saw the camera as a powerful aesthetic tool – one without the historical baggage of other media – that offered a fresh way to express their social, political and creative concerns¹⁰.

Film maker Jon Rhodes' method of choice to influence social change was black and white documentary photography, his work on the effects of Bauxite mining on aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory was the subject of a book but his photographs, arranged in short 'filmic' sequences around the walls were also exhibited in galleries.

Max Pam and Carol Jerrems continued the documentary tradition but changed the rules by having their subjects' complicity in the picture taking, their front on, aware eyes, and contrast to Henson's lack of eye contact anonymity.

In Postmodern 1980s Australia, immigrants of non-English origin, women and Aboriginal photographers emerged on the scene.

The impact of feminism was felt in the art world as well as in everyday life, domesticity being a made-to-order subject for feminist photographers. Ruth Maddison exhibited hand-coloured family album-type photographs, familiar, recognizable, everyday subjects, elevated to art.

Women photographers, who first made their mark in the 1980s and continue to do so today, include such well-known names as Robyn Stacey, Pat Brassington, Anne Ferran and Julie Brown-Rrap. Brown-Rrap used her own body to replace the figures in modern masterpieces, famously 'impersonating,' both Christ on the cross and the Madonna as well as various women subjects of the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch.

The women cited above were women artists first and whether they were effective feminist artists as well is argued by Catriona Moore, in her book *Indecent Exposure*, 20 years of Feminist Photography, as being questionable.

Stacey, Brown-Rrap, Brassington, Ferran and others disingenuously proffered the figures of hysteria, frigidity, theft, stuttering and mimicry as the only forms of articulation available to women ...¹¹.

Part Aboriginal photographer and film maker, Tracey Moffatt, brought up as a foster child with a white family in a working-class suburb of Brisbane, first attracted

attention with photographs of young aboriginal dancers, the *Some Lads* series (1986) and a portrait of David Gulpiill (1985) draped over a car bonnet at Bondi beach, dots painted on his nose while clasping a tinnie and grooving to a ghetto blaster¹².

Moffatt's aboriginality infuses much of her work including that now famous *Something More* series in which she casts herself as the Suzy Wong character looking for a better life. Despite being a woman, an Aboriginal and a photographer, Moffatt has successfully avoided the tag 'Aboriginal woman photographer', Bruce James called her an artist with a camera in her hand.¹³

Twenty years on, the best artists continue to produce art that resonates with the viewing public, making the 1980s labels seem almost an academic construct. The fact that an artist's sexual preference, ethnic background or race informs his or her work is accepted in the same matter of fact way that everyone's background, education and family history informs their lives.

With the advent of Conceptual/Postmodernist art, photography became just another method of producing art. Artists used snapshots and found photographs as raw material and appropriated images from the media or even from other artists on the premise that originality is no longer possible. Andy Grundberg describes the American experience¹⁴:

In terms of photography's place in the art world, the legacy of Conceptual Art had been inestimably fruitful.... the advanced artists of the day were commingling photography, performance, language, painting, video etc.

Martyn Jolly in *Photography is Dead! Long Live Photography!* dates the acceptance of photography in the art world to the 1980s.

Photography moved from the margins towards the centre of the art world's interests in the 1980s. The key to its reinvigoration is the way it had embraced installation as a *modus operandi*.¹⁵

Performance artists in particular found that the record of their 'ephemeral' art became the art after the event. Australian performance artist Stelarc's 'Event for Stretched Skin, 1974' gruesomely involved his body being suspended horizontally over a one ton rock, held up by 18 hooks inserted into his skin that attached to an overhead beam. His detached expression and groovy '70s headband were in stark contrast to the blood dripping down his naked buttock during the event that continues to exist only in the photographs sold as postcards and larger format

prints afterwards.

In Australia the effect of Postmodernism's absorption of photography for its own ends really started to be seen in the 1980s. The Art Gallery of New South Wales' biennial survey show of new talent, *Perspecta* included both documentary and creative photographs in 1981, but less so by 1983 in the second *Perspecta* show where photographic works got larger and creative constructs began to dominate the subject matter.

Perspecta editor Anthony Bond writing on the new course of art, (not just photography), in the 1985 catalogue gives a clue on the ever increasing size in pictures:

What has re-emerged in the 1980s is an appreciation of the importance of the material presence of the work, a 'physicalisation' which does not disavow the importance of conceptual rigor.

The number of artists selected for the Bicentennial *Perspecta* of 1988 was reduced to 17, including three photographers, down from 30 in 1985 because the works were to tour Australia and overseas and needed to be 'a refined and coherent structure'¹⁶.

Julie Brown-Rrap showed a colour transparency mounted in Perspex that measured 180 by 91 centimetres, Bill Henson's images had grown to 106.5 by 80.5 centimetres and finally Jacky Redgate's Cibachromes each measured 102 by 127 centimetres, all imposing dimensions sufficient to hold an art museum's wall especially when placed beside contemporary art of other mediums.

The Sydney Biennales tended to feature the same Australian photographers as the *Perspecta* shows presumably because top talent was in limited supply. Henson's images in both shows were as dark, ambiguous, mysterious and full of fantasy as ever, a possible result of the "Melbourne art world ferment... where theatre, performance, visual arts, experimental film and music had considerable influence on each other," according to Judy Annear writing in *What is this thing called Photography? a series of essays on the decade 1975 to 1985*¹⁷.

Bill Henson continued through the 1990s and on, as one of Australia's most respected photo artists, still the master of melancholy, producing very large portraits often juxtaposed with brooding landscapes. His trademark intense black backgrounds, vibrant colour details and somber faces showing their direct lineage back to his *Untitled* 1980s series of unaware people waiting at traffic lights.

As for contemporary practice in the new millennium, the National Gallery of Australia's survey show *Tales of the Unexpected*, aspects of contemporary Australian Art in 2002 featured contemporary photography beside paintings, collage and video and included Rosemary Laing's photograph of a bride flying over the Blue Mountains, part of her *Flight Research* series on its poster and advertising - to popular acclaim. The *Sydney Morning Herald* went so far as to feature the flying bride on its cover on the opening weekend, with the caption: Here comes the bride ... at 32 feet per second¹⁸.

Curator Dr Deborah Hart said in a talk for ANU students that:

The works cross boundaries, not only of time but also of mechanics, there are paintings suggesting film, (Anne Wallace), paintings that incorporate photography (Robert Boynes' silkscreens), photographs incorporating paintings (Lyndell Green and Charles Brown) and Rosemary Laing's directed performance photographs.

Filmic ambiguity, most often meaning fragments of actions, as in Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* of the 1980s and Tracey Moffatt's *Something More* series, appears to be as highly regarded a quality today as it was twenty years ago. Sherman's constructed scenarios masqueraded as documentary photography that is, purporting to capture a moment in time, but that moment in time existed only in Sherman's imagination. Sherman's constructed images struck a cord with young photographers everywhere, in fact Sherman's influence is still felt in the ambiguous, fragmented filmic photographs being produced today. When an artist can create their own reality, reality becomes less interesting and classic documentary photography has therefore become less interesting to the art milieu. Dr Hart writes in the catalogue of *Tales of the Unexpected* that:

These diverse artists... do not prescribe straightforward narratives with beginnings or endings; instead they engage us with images that suggest fantastic tales and poetic dream states that are part of an endlessly entrancing continuum of imaginative and unexpected possibilities.¹⁹

Again and again, ambiguity is praised, Bill Henson's installations of 'highly lyrical images are essentially concerned with untranslatable emotions'.²⁰ In the Australian Bicentennial *Perspecta* catalogue, editor Anthony Bond writes that Henson's work consists of unconnected glimpses that distort time and space, as 'film makers have long understood.' It almost seems that artists like Moffatt and Henson were seeing how much detail they could leave out, knowing that viewers brought up on the modern, image-rich diet of press, television and films, could complete the narrative in their heads.

Alasdair Foster, director of the ACP writing in *Blink*, a book surveying 100 photographers, 10 curators and 10 writers published in 2001, put his case for ambiguity in photographic art:

... in an age of uncertainty, ambiguity becomes insight, reality is found in paradox; and truth becomes relative.... There is a degree of ambivalence in the works (chosen) which is characteristic of our uncertain times. The viewer has to bring a level of personal interpretation; these images suggest rather than state....

These images do not seek merely to exploit the uncertainty of our times, but to fuel that creative instability to bring forth possibility.

An artist who has mastered the art of filmic ambiguity that requires the viewer to fill in the blanks is Patricia Piccinini's. Her latest installation at the NGV entitled *Sandman* features large scale, immaculately presented colour prints, a film and a sculpture and the whole hangs together on a girl with remnant gills on her neck who comes to us from the sea. The photographs do not form a continuous narrative thread instead, as with film stills, you are expected to make up the continuity between scenes yourself. Scenes of the girl with a boy and his quintessentially Australian, Holden Sandman panel van; the girl with other teenagers; a beach scene, and the boy speaking on a public phone at night while the girl waits by the panel van under a streetlight. In the middle of the gallery floor the van has been transformed into a barely recognizable black blob while the film of the girl swimming under water plays in the background.

At the recently opened Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne a retrospective of Patricia Piccinini's work is on show where it is clear that she has an obsession with cars and trucks as well as scientific experiments and the possibly grotesque results of such experiments gone wrong. Her hyper-realistic sculptured figure of a young girl playing with flesh-coloured blobs - supposedly stem cells, was on view at the Sydney Biennale last year. Piccinini deserves all the accolades coming her way (she is to represent Australia at the next Venice Biennale) for her wonderfully ambiguous and thought provoking work.

The fact that contemporary photographs have become big, brazen, digitally manipulated (more often than not), constructions from the artists' imagination and more ambiguous and unsettling in content than was the case before the 1980s means that truth in photography, that domain of documentary photography is now wholly separated from the art world. Perhaps the current David Moore retrospective at the National Gallery of Australia will spark a resurgence of interest in documentary photography. If so the goal posts have been moved, even before

digital manipulation photography's shiny image as a recorder of truths was tarnished. Darkroom manipulation had been a fact of photographic practice since its invention and much of the early tasks digital manipulation software was called on to do was emulate common darkroom practices. Aside from after-capture trickery even the photographer's viewpoint: "is inevitably the consequence of cultural, social and political beliefs."²¹

That is to say that what the documentary photographer chooses to photograph is rarely the whole truth and what he/she chooses to frame is influenced by social conditioning, personal ideology or perhaps by what the commissioning editor dictates.

The boom in contemporary photography 'that speaks to a younger generation' is due in part, to the ease of digital manipulation according to Geoffrey Cassidy of auction house Sotheby's, Australia, because he says: "you can now push photography around like you can push paint around... and work on a big scale."²² The divide between artists using photography and photographers, that is fine art photographers still exists and while contemporary art that happens to be a photograph is fetching high prices at auction 'important photographs by Dupain, Cotton, David Moore or Harold Cazneaux can be had for a song'²³ .

Some evidence of photographs not being automatically valued as highly as other media still lingers in some quarters and this is evident in the way that many photomedia artists feel pressured to produce works in other media in order to be considered a complete artist. Gallery shows of photographs accompanied by a short film or video have become almost de rigueur, perhaps a self-reflexive way of avoiding the stigma that can still attach itself to mere photographs in Australia. Finally, the wider Australian art world appears to have absorbed contemporary photography into the bosom of contemporary art as a result of conceptual and postmodernist experimentation with different media that also involved the appropriation of photographic imagery in the 1980s. Photography then became just another tool at the artist's disposal; originality of authorship was considered passé with snap shots, newspaper images, video stills and other artists' images being considered suitable grist for the postmodernist's mill.

The result for contemporary photographic practice has been the freedom for artists to construct and/or manipulate images freely and to have their photographs (if that is what their art consists of) considered equally as deserving for inclusion in gallery and museum exhibitions as paintings, sculpture or other media.

Helen Ennis's comments: This gives a good account of the factors impacting on art photography's acceptance by the art world. An appropriate bibliography

too. However, your argument (eg of the works of different artists) is not as fully developed as it could be. Overall still not a lot of depth. The standard is high in the credit range.

¹ "The private sale in 1999 of Man Ray's Glass Tears (1932-33) for substantially more than a million dollars... has been followed by at least a half-dozen more sales in the seven-figure range according to several dealers." ARTnews magazine USA, February 2003, p109

² Art/Photography article by Suzanne Brown, Qantas magazine December 2002 p 31,32

³ Photography and Art Andy Grundberg, Photography and Art, Interactions Since 1946, Andy Grundberg, Kathleen McCarthy Gauss, LA County Museum of Art USA 1987 p26

⁴ Idem p 26 In higher education photography often was (sic) incorporated into art departments, where interaction with painting and the other arts was inevitable.

⁵ idem

⁶ Anne-Marie Willis, Picturing Australia, A History of Photography, Angus & Robertson Aus.1988 p219

⁷ Isobel Crombie, Second Sight, NGV p77

⁸ Anne-Marie Willis, Picturing Australia, A History of Photography, Angus & Robertson Aus.1988 p220

⁹ Anne-Marie Willis, Picturing Australia, A History of Photography, Angus & Robertson Aus.1988 p224

¹⁰ Isobel Crombie, 2nd Sight Australian Photography in the National Gallery of Victoria, Isobel Crombie and Susan van Wyk 2002 p77

¹¹ Catriona Moore, Indecent Exposures, 20 Years of Feminist Photography 1994 p159

¹² Gael Newton, Tracey Moffatt Fever Pitch, Piper Press1995 p 14

¹³ Bruce James, Photo Files: An Australian Photography Reader, Power Publications and ACP 1999 cited in Adrian Martin's review of same in What is this thing called Photography? Pluto Press 2000 p59.

¹⁴ Photography and Art p 143 In 1970s America conceptual artists in particular began to see the photographic image as an important facet of the visual universe and to use it in work that was not intended to be photographic.

¹⁵ Martyn Jolly, Photography is Dead! Long Live Photography! Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney 1996

¹⁶ Perspecta editor Anthony Bond, catalogue 1985 Perspecta, Art Gallery of NSW 1985.

¹⁷ Judy Annear, What Is This Thing Called Photography? Australian Photography 1975-1985, Pluto Press Australia.

¹⁸SMH

¹⁹ Dr Deborah Hart Artonview, no.30.p 3

²⁰ Perspecta catalogue 1985

²¹ Frits Gierstberg, Blink 2002 p420

²² Suzane Brown writing on Art/Photography in the Qantas magazine December 2002 p31.

²³ Michael Hutek writing in the Bulletin magazine August 6, 2002 p70.

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Conclusion

What did I get out of my year of study? A change of attitude certainly and despite the agonisingly difficult time I had adjusting to the course the positives are indeed weighty. I feel privileged to have been able to attend Martyn Jolly's studio theory and Helen Ennis's art theory lectures, both are highly qualified, highly respected lecturers and experts in their fields.

The art forums and visiting artists programs were not only entertaining but provided me with a small window on the workings of the art world, which in turn made me feel less excluded. From having announced at my introductory talk that unlike my audience I was only a photographer not an artist, I can now call myself a photomedia artist without cringing.

If I could do it over again I would be a part-timer and allow myself more time to absorb the culture, the foreign language of art and to enjoy more of what the school has to offer.

I have partly slotted back into my old life of commercial photography (thank God for client loyalty) and I'm enjoying it again, I no longer feel constrained by the overly-detailed, repetitive briefs but rather find myself looking for new and different angles and ways of achieving the desired results.

My obsession with making moving and 3D pictures with lenticular technology has not gone away and I will continue to experiment, seeking it's limits and hopefully using these to manifest my visions.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the help of Michael Harrington of the Definitive Group, Sydney who put his graphics studio and staff at my disposal to experiment with the lenticular software, who produced my first trial image and who assembled and mounted the exhibition prints. Aligning and mounting the print to the lens is the most delicately precise phase of making lenticulars.

Ivo Lovric helped enormously by providing a manual for the software in semester two that suddenly made things work. I would like to thank Gilbert Reidelbauch for ordering the lenticular lens material from America through his department.

I also wish to acknowledge Denise Ferris for listening to me in semester one when I was suffering from culture shock and needed guidance and a little encouragement rather than criticism.

Lastly I couldn't have completed this course without my husband Allen Oliver's help. I used his PC, (the free lenticular software is for PC only), his IT knowledge through the many crashes, his university experience, his Canberra house, car and digital camera as well as enjoying his financial and emotional support.

Curriculum Vitae

Professional Experience: Freelance commercial and sports photographer.

1978 – 2003 Clients include Thredbo, Perisher Blue, Selwyn Snowfields, the Perisher Valley Hotel, Crackenback Cottage, Novotel Lake Crackenback Resort, Thredbo Valley Lodge, NPWS and others.

Work consists mostly of photographing to a brief for brochures and other advertising material and covers the full spectrum from lighting set-ups for interiors and food photographs to outdoor sports action photographs.

1971 – 1978 Freelance photographer, sold through Agence Explorer, Paris.

1970 – 1971 Worked at Studio Ethel, Blvd St Germain Paris, as a portrait and wedding photographer.

1968 – 1970 Worked as a camera operator in London then as an assistant photographer at the Tin Research Institute.

1967 Worked part-time, then full-time as an assistant to Melbourne commercial and advertising photographer Laurie Thomas.

1964 – 1966 worked part-time for a wedding and portrait photographer in Brunswick while studying photography full-time at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

Freelance journalist:

1999, 2000 and 2001 contributor of text and photographs to The Age and The Sydney Morning Herald.

Winter 2000 and 2001 regular columnist for The Sydney Morning Herald travel section.

1999 Editor and photo editor of Powderhound Ski Magazine published by Morrison Media.

1993 – 1998 Editor of The Snowy Times, Jindabyne published by Macquarie Publishing, later bought by Rural Press. This was a full-time, all year round position that included writing, sub-editing, photographing and some design and layout.

1975 – 2001 regular contributor of text and photographs to all Australian ski and snowboard magazines Occasional contributor to Inside Sport, Playboy, Simply Lite (Women's Weekly), Gear magazine and many other general interest magazines.

Professional Qualifications

1998 Intensive sub-editing course UTS

1964-1966 Diploma of Illustrative Photography, RMIT passed 31 of 32 subjects. Completed final subject (social science1) for RMIT Diploma by correspondence from London in 1969, conferred 1970.

Other

1997 Employed by Channel Seven as a commentator for the Mt Buller World Cup.

1992 Employed by the Nine Network as an interpreter/driver for the Winter Olympic Games Albertville, France.

1981 Qualified as an international judge in freestyle skiing and represented Australia at World Cups, World Championships and Olympic Games (Calgary, Canada 1988).

1978 – 1980 Australian Freestyle Ski Champion, competed for Australia at World Cup level. 1977 Qualified as a ski instructor both in Australia and Austria.

Biography

Born Margot Dvorak in Baden bei Wein, Austria, 1947, family migrated to Australia as displaced persons in December 1949.

Attended primary school in Sydney, Tumut and Cooma while father worked on the Snowy Scheme.

Family became Australian citizens in 1956.

Attended high school in Melbourne then Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

Lived in Europe 1968-1975 then alternated winters in Australia with summers in Europe till 1993.

Year round resident of Jindabyne since 1993.

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