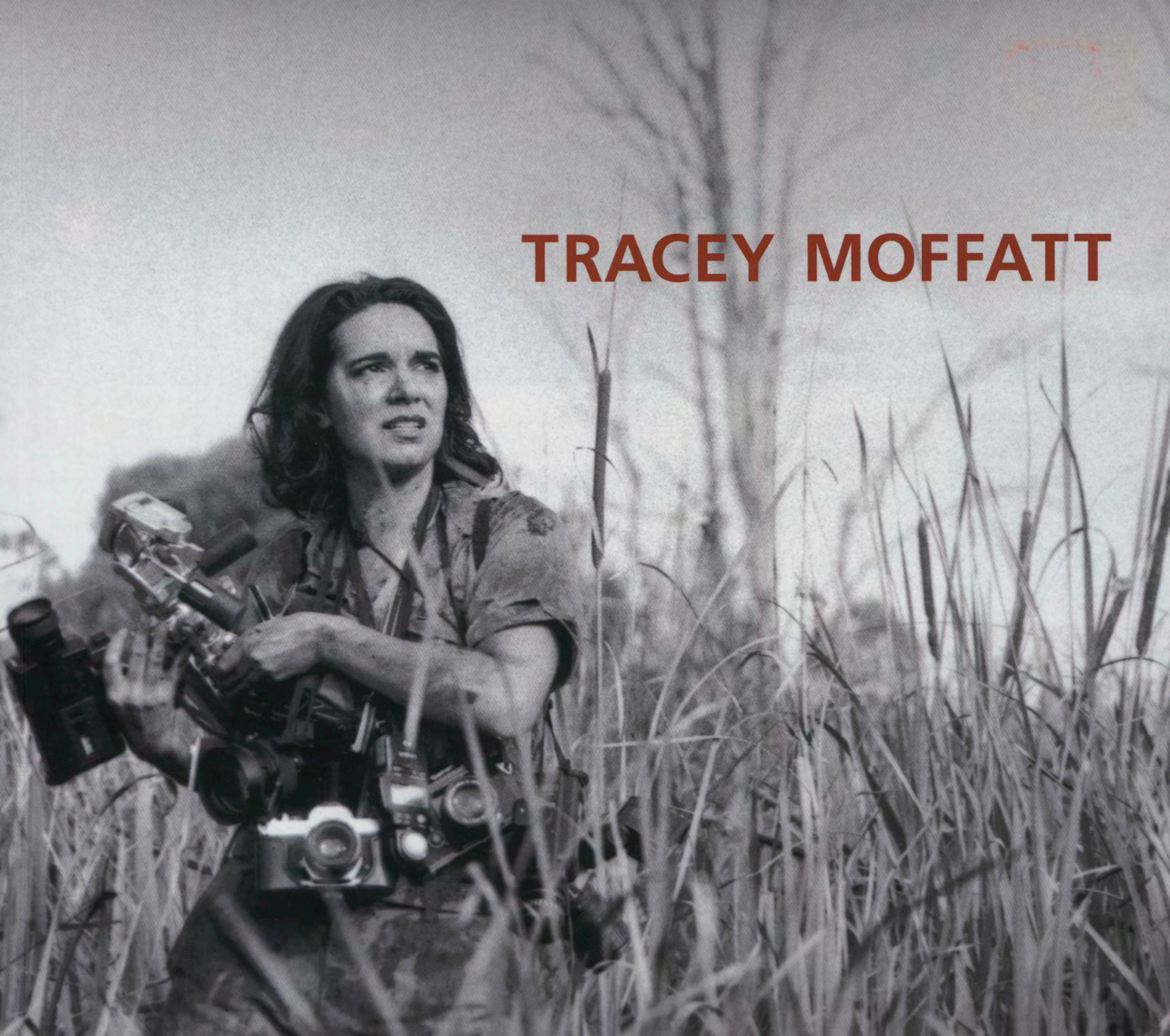


TRACEY MOFFATT

Tracey Moffatt is one of the most acclaimed photographic artists of her generation. In 2001 she held fourteen solo exhibitions and was included in at least seventeen group exhibitions at galleries throughout Australasia, USA, Europe and Asia.

The first overview of Tracey Moffatt's work to be published in the Southern Hemisphere and the most comprehensive written survey of her oeuvre so far, TRACEY MOFFATT offers a timely appraisal of her career both as artist and film-maker. Coinciding with a major survey of Moffatt's work at City Gallery Wellington, this publication includes forty-eight colour reproductions from all her major photoseries to date and numerous black and white images.

Tracey Moffatt's photoseries and films are at once cerebral and visceral, alluring and alienating. Charged with eroticism, violence and humour, Moffatt's work draws on her suburban Australian upbringing, on popular culture as well as traditions of painting and photography, and on the visual strategies of the advertising and film industries. The eleven essays contained in this publication—including comment from the artist herself—explore the breadth of Moffatt's work and offer insight into her complex and troubling examination of the human condition.

TRACEY MOFFATT



from ***UP IN THE SKY***, 1997, series of 25 photolithographic prints

TRACEY MOFFATT

CITY GALLERY WELLINGTON

EDITED BY PAULA SAVAGE AND LARA STRONGMAN

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Front cover image: Tracey Moffatt, *Artist at Work,* 1997, colour billboard, New York.

Back cover image: Tracey Moffatt, from *Up in the Sky,* 1997, series of 25 photolithographic prints.

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from ***UP IN THE SKY***, 1997, series of 25 photolithographic prints

PREFACE

PAULA SAVAGE

Internationally renowned contemporary Australian artist Tracey Moffatt produces work that is at once metaphorical, allegorical and visceral. While her photographs and films engage with many of the major social issues of the present era—land rights, immigration, mass media, globalisation—they also constantly reference and re-imagine her own past as an Aboriginal, born in 1960 and brought up in a foster home in Brisbane. Through her art, Moffatt's personal history becomes a microcosm of her country's recent past, an embodiment of the disorientation of cultural realignment, and an exploration of the emotional schism into which her generation was cast.

Beyond such personal and social issues, however, her practise is remarkably attuned to the central areas of concern in contemporary art. Her work incessantly explores both 'high' and 'low' sources, referencing and subverting the tradition of History Painting so beloved of western art, yet also mimicking the over-egged visual strategies of latter-day advertising conglomerates. She adopts the procedures and effects of the studio photographer, exploiting the manipulation and image-tampering that characterise contemporary commercial style. However, in Moffatt's work glamour becomes danger, exotic becomes threatening, beauty becomes deceit. The pristine surfaces of the advertising world are revealed as a thin veneer laid over more complex and disruptive realities. She uses the pictorial strategies of an industry in which everything is up for sale at face value to render those same things unsaleable by allowing darker undercurrents to surface.

Further to this, the work could be said to have a definable moral centre. But only for a moment. Ultimately this layering of allure and repulsion, innocence and decadence leaves the viewer floundering for any unified response. These images—and series of images—are fragments of a master-narrative which is purposeful but never quite defined. As the extensive published literature about Moffatt makes clear, these works keep generating new meanings and resonances—and each successive series of images qualifies and adds to her previous work.

Not only does Tracey Moffatt's photography engage with Western painting's grand tradition, it also explores the local. For example: besides generalising a cultural moment and/or a phase of 'growing up', her film sequence of surfer images, *Heaven,* alludes to the famous Australian beach resort, Surfers' Paradise, without losing any of its Dante-esque resonance. If masculinity is being scrutinised here—as it so often is throughout Moffatt's work—the central figure in *Something More* (1989) is a post-modern recasting of the female, in this case the Eastern maiden—as chic as Kylie Minogue in Miss Saigon mode, yet oddly distracted. Elsewhere, her female subjects can be curiosities and archetypes—as varied as the characters in a medieval miracle play.

Moffatt's work also presents an ongoing dialogue with the Australian landscape tradition as epitomised by the work of Russell Drysdale and Sidney Nolan. Not only is her photography a response to—at times even an embrace of—cinema, Moffatt herself has directed videos and films.

It is the world of human affairs that the photographs and films keep confronting, in all its brashness, violence, lyricism and absurdity. These images are also a sustained inquiry into the nature of the human body, with its inner and outer cravings. Moffatt's work is an enactment of the struggles, inequalities and moments of harmony that permeate human relationships.

The human condition, as inferred here, is a condition that is under assault not only from the present—with its cultural circumstance, politics and mass media—but from the past, whose legacy Moffatt feels particularly acutely as a person of Aboriginal descent who has lived through what must be considered a grim era in Australian race relations. These photographs and their inferred narratives do not, however, limit themselves to the specific circumstances of their maker—a fact attested to by the immense success these works have achieved far beyond her homeland.

These are striking works reflecting an extraordinary emotional and formal vocabulary. They can be nostalgic but also nightmarish, with a sense of history permeating not only the subject and style of the images but also the techniques and formats enlisted—pertinent examples being the sepia-toned prints of *Up in the Sky* and the arched and oval formats of *Laudanum.*

In the final analysis, the viewer is brought to the recognition that all artworks are 'artful' to some extent. But there is a commensurate awareness that artifice is indeed made up of huge amounts of reality, just as reality—particularly in the modern, media-saturated world—is made up of artifice. Tracey Moffatt's art captures the elusive nuances of a world in which relationships of the most fundamental kind—within families as well as between cultures—are constantly changing, and in which the past is always finding different ways of making itself present.

City Gallery Wellington is proud to present this first major survey exhibition of Tracey Moffatt's work in the Southern Hemisphere, providing an opportunity for New Zealand audiences to experience the breadth of Moffatt's work at first hand. Most of her major series are included, from *Something More* (1989) to her latest *Fourth* (2001). Reproductions of images from all these series are featured in this publication. Moffatt's work in video and film is also being screened in the gallery, including the works that as a film-maker brought her to wide public and critical acclaim: the short film *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1989) and feature *beDevil* (1993).

City Gallery Wellington could not have undertaken this significant publication without the assistance of a great many people. We are appreciative of the fresh insight provided by the contributing writers: Judy Annear, Rex Butler, Chris Chapman, Lynne Cooke, Blair French, Elizabeth Knox, Gerald Matt, Tracey Moffatt, Cushla Parekowhai, Jane Rankin-Reid, Lara Strongman and Morgan Thomas. Together these contributions provide the most comprehensive written survey of Moffatt's oeuvre thus far.

We are extremely grateful to those who have loaned City Gallery Wellington work for the exhibition: Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Reg Richardson, Fiona Sinclair King and Peter King, and the artist herself.

City Gallery Wellington is dependent on the generosity of our patrons. Here in particular we acknowledge the assistance of City Gallery Wellington Foundation Principal Corporate Benefactor Saatchi & Saatchi, the principal sponsor of this exhibition and an important creative partner in the project. We also acknowledge the support of Wellington City Council, core funder of City Gallery Wellington through the Wellington Museums Trust.

Special thanks go to Tracey Moffatt's Sydney gallerist Roslyn Oxley and all the staff at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, whose generous and kind assistance have made this project possible. Finally, our thanks to Tracey herself, whose personal support and encouragement throughout has been gratefully received. In an email to us at the time of the opening, Tracey had this to say to those who might be viewing her artwork for the first time.

'I am forty-one years old and feel that I haven't even begun as an artist. I am still developing and there is so much more I want to explore in regards to the human condition… Contemporary Art is strange. It can take years, even a lifetime to comprehend, and let's face it even then one still may not quite "get it". But you don't have to "get it", you just need to look at it. I have learnt about making art and life from looking at it and living it.'

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR!—THE ART OF TRACEY MOFFATT

JUDY ANNEAR

The importance of Tracey Moffatt's work owes a great deal to its indefinable yet inclusive nature. This quality applies to her use of the mediums of film and photography, and to the various readings that can be made of the content. It is possible to describe her work as elusive, enigmatic, ironic in feeling and tone as well as incisive and dramatic. These ambiguities are also evident in relation to the politics of the works which can be seen, variously, to fit into notions of the post-modern,[1] the post-colonial,[2] and the post-feminist.[3] That the work can also elude such readings, as for example in the 1991 series *Pet Thang* or her feature film *beDevil* (1993), confounds any straightforward, or all encompassing understanding.

Moffatt has noted that she wants 'to create a world, a general world. Australia is a very multicultural nation and this has certainly influenced my work. So I don't want to make some grand statement on race—it isn't about wanting to be politically correct, perhaps it's about always striving for an international look to my work… I'm trying for a "universal quality".'[4] In the same interview Moffatt discusses how she likes 'in-betweenness' in her works and creating images where the audience cannot be quite sure of origin and meaning. This uncertainty, so familiar from dreams and the imaginary, has poignancy as well as bathos. Moffatt is adroit at presenting a plethora of emotionally charged images that the audience may remember from other contexts and be moved by. As Stephen Berg notes, however: 'The fact that we think we see a movie running behind and amongst them is simply a reminder of the great power of Moffatt's photographic stage-crafting, which encourages us to spin threads and forge links where there is actually nothing but gaps and emptiness.'[5]

Ewa Lajer-Burcharth discusses Moffatt's 1997 series of twenty-five photolithographs *Up in the Sky* within the framework of notions to do with 'haunting', phantoms and estrangement: '*Up in the Sky* shares a secret with [her 1989 film] *Night Cries*: its disjunctive filmic structure, its narrativity of elisions, its situations, its flights of poetic fancy, all these aspects may be taken as symptoms of a kind of haunting… Moffatt's vision is a "theatre for no one", offering images that refuse to produce knowledge of the "other" or to situate anyone in a position of knowing.'[6] This view means that the artist herself is able to constantly sidestep any pigeonholing whether on the grounds of race, gender, location, or political and theoretical positions.[7] Rather than presenting her work as belonging anywhere or to anything, Moffatt consistently presents it as emanating from an imaginary which is universalist and dependent on the powerful drives associated with longing and loss, the forces of beauty and horror, and the ripples of trauma and humour.

Moffatt cites as influences artists as diverse as Annie Brigman (1868–1950), Albert Namatjira (1902–59),[8] and Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986); filmmakers such as Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–75), Martin Scorsese (b.1942) and Masaki Kobayashi (1916–96);[9] as well as the broad range of popular culture from television, comics, to mainstream movies including James Cameron's *Terminator*, George Miller's *Mad Max* and Paul Verhoeven's *Showgirls* (1995).[10] It is possible to describe Moffatt as a *flâneur* in Charles Baudelaire's sense of the bowerbird of modernist experience, and yet this is too simple, as Moffatt's world does not depend on the urban, and she is never the anonymous stroller in the crowded city. Rather Moffatt is the ringmaster, the director of her polyglot cast. Moffatt does indeed take images from multiple sources and meld them together, but there is a constant disjunction so that the gaps become as important as any links between images.

Moffatt's most compelling series from the 1980s is entitled *Something More* (1989). Made up of nine black and white and colour images presented in a grid three across and three down (rather like the game of noughts and crosses), the point of view is that of a child—in three of the nine images the view is from above, but in each case the action is occurring at ground level. If the images can be seen to be generated from a child's daydreaming then the longing is to be a beautiful young adult, adored, centre stage and under the 'protection' of forces which are intense, passionate. That the chief protagonist is left for dead on the road, still three hundred miles from the nearest city, is the inevitable result (according to Christian ethic) of wishing for 'something more'. Moffatt plays the young woman in the cheongsam who strides out on the red Australian earth, clutching a pair of reading glasses signifying her desire for learning. The series is shot on a constructed set, similar to that used in the short film *Night Cries* and in parts of her subsequent feature film *beDevil*—an artificially blue sky, distant low hills and bright, dry fields stretching to the horizon. The wooden shack contains a slatternly blonde woman and a beefy, beer-drinking man. Two little Caucasian boys laugh while an Asian youth hastens toward the protagonist. These descriptions, as much as the presentations, are all culturally loaded, in addition to being bathed in drama and emotional tension.

Something More can be read equally as a post-modern pastiche or a post-colonial narrative where a mixed race girl escapes her destiny of poverty in the lawless countryside through the ambiguous assistance of a whip-cracking, presumably female (the fingernails are long and red) motorcyclist who (it seems) dumps the protagonist far from where she wanted to go. While both post-modern and post-colonial readings 'work', there is interference: the inclusion of images which suggest sado-masochistic acts; the ambiguity of some of the characters and their actions (are the little boys laughing at the protagonist's desire for betterment? Is the Asian youth wearing lipstick?); the combination of humour with tragedy (the final image of the girl flat on the road with her skirt hitched up). There is no straightforward narrative and the viewer seeks a satisfactory conclusion in the same way that one attempts to deal with the blind alleys encountered in a dream. Moffatt's work depends as much upon recognition as it does on dissimilitude, so while it is possible to understand and identify with the vagaries of, for example, dysfunctional family groupings (which appear in many Moffatt works including *Scarred for Life* (1994 and 1999), *Up in the Sky, Night Cries*, or the luxurious sensuality of *Pet Thang* and *Laudanum* (1998)), the viewer is always disturbed by the collisions and elisions between violence and pleasure, passion and loss, in addition to the ongoing lack of resolution.

Moffatt's presentations of 'otherness' can be seen to include those designated by mainstream society as different because of race, skin colour, social and economic status, gender, location, behaviour, as well as those who are subject to what Lajer-Burcharth calls 'the stranger within'.[11] As a consequence, a very broad range of humanity is represented and social and cultural distinctions tend to collapse under the sheer force of the viewer's recognition of commonalities beyond the superficial. While Lajer-Burcharth's argument refers specifically to Moffatt as being subject to the haunting and ghosting which she must then correspondingly work out through her series, it is instructive to consider that the artist also taps into others' sense of being haunted by past experience and the gaps in those experiences. This is particularly true of Moffatt's series *Scarred for Life* and *Fourth* (2001), and may explain how her works maintain their communicability despite their many enigmatic elisions.

Scarred for Life and *Scarred for Life II* were printed on thin off-white paper akin to scaled up pages from *Life* magazine. The first series is of nine images, the second series ten images. Originally designed to be pinned to the wall like street posters, Moffatt used photolithography to print the works in faded colours adding to their ephemeral effect. Photolithography was the most common form of printing used in newspapers and magazines in the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries. While *Life* magazine of the 1950s and 1960s published photo-essays on major world events and presented different cultures to its primarily American audience, Moffatt takes the small yet traumatic humiliations of daily life—the sniping and jibing at difference, the feelings of inadequacy which may indeed scar us for life—and makes these stories equivalent in power.

The tableaux in *Scarred for Life* are set in environments whose very ordinariness contributes to the dramatic tension. Each suburban drama of familial slighting is at once horrifying as much as it may be amusing because of its very mundanity. The viewer recognises similar events from their own past, or strange events that they have witnessed and not quite understood. This is most particularly true of *Heart Attack, 1970* where the point of view is that of the daughter witnessing her naked father in a bedroom 'belting' a girl from the neighbourhood. What the daughter witnessed in actuality may have been a scene of sexual abuse but nothing is necessarily what it seems nor as it is stated. That the father subsequently died and this momentous event is conflated with seeing him with the little girl gives rise to a nebulous guilt because neither event, let alone their conjunction, can be fully comprehended. All other parts of *Scarred for Life* with the exception of *Doll Birth, 1972* take the point of view corresponding to or mirroring the wounded subject. It is this wounding and lack of resolution which then binds the viewer of the work to the viewer of the event described, rather as the subject of René Magritte's *La reproduction interdite* (1937) witnesses only the back of himself, unable to see and understand his own face. Moffatt, unlike Magritte, never leaves the faces of her subjects alone, yet it is in this intense observation—in which the viewer becomes complicit—that one finds a corresponding lack of detailed information about what is really going on. The face itself, with all its supposed information, remains as superficial and open to infinite projection as the surface of any other object that we may scrutinise.

Scarred for Life II has ten stories and again, only one, *Scissor Cut, 1980* is shot from above—the point of view of the parent. In both *Scissor Cut, 1980* and *Doll Birth, 1972* the absolute nature of the punishment seems to far outweigh whatever the crime might have been. We are not told what the little Kwong sisters did in order to have to cut the lawn with scissors. Similarly, the story of boys playing at birthing with a doll seems more amusing than meriting banishment. The *Scarred for Life* series is unusual in Moffatt's oeuvre because of the captions. While the words are compelling, they don't explain the images: indeed they tend to add to their enigmatic nature as though more information is a further dead end. This works directly against the received notion of photographic captioning as necessarily directing understanding. In *Scarred for Life* the intricate webs of thought, action, word and image capturing the chasm of ongoing trauma are presented. Moffatt has said that this series may be a continuing project as 'everyone has a tragic tale to tell'.[12]

There is a parallel between the pathos of *Scarred for Life* and that of Moffatt's recent series *Fourth* (2001). *Fourth* picks out twenty-six elite athletes at the 2000 Olympic Games who just missed out on a medal. As Moffatt has said: 'You almost made it... Fourth means that you are almost good. Not the worst (which has its own perverted glamour) but almost. Almost a star!'[13] These small television screen sized images printed on canvas show the fourth place-getter highlighted in colour while their surroundings, including in some instances those who came ahead of them, fade to monochrome. Moffatt has found and captured the moment when the fourth place-getter realised his or her loss. The mainstream media cameras will linger on the winners, and, sometimes, on those who come last but never on the fourth—the equivalent of nowhere. This moment in *Fourth* can be seen, according to Moffatt, to celebrate the achievement of finishing regardless of the loss, yet the viewer experiences the humiliation of being not quite good enough despite great effort. In *Scarred for Life* the frisson is in sharing the humiliation of being found out or finding something out, of being 'spot lit' at the moment of being judged not good enough.

Laudanum is an elaborate play which operates on many levels: there are references to film (especially F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922)); to the nineteenth-century when women used the opiate-based laudanum as a calmative despite its undoubted addictive and hallucinatory effects; and to the history of photography itself through the use of photogravure. Many of the images in *Laudanum* refer through technique and style to pictorialism—the short lived movement at the turn of the twentieth-century when photography was promoted heavily in England, America and France as an equivalent to the fine arts rather than as a simple recording device. Pictorialism advocated a style which was moody, muted and more akin to printmaking in its tonal range. Photogravure[14] was preferred as was platinum printing—because of the richness of effect. Pictorialists favoured allegorical studies and subjects which could be idealised and romanticised: this other worldliness was in direct contrast to the rapidly urbanising, modernist existence in which most photographers lived.[15] The work of Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) early in the twentieth-century promoted pictorialism as did that of his protégées including Annie Brigman. In France, Constant Puyo (1857–1933), for example, printed romantic nudes cropped into fan shapes (much as Moffatt depicts the servant girl in *Laudanum*), while Brigman worked on her expressive proto-feminist studies of nude women communing with the West Coast American landscape.

The voyeurism of Puyo as much as the wildness of Brigman feeds into *Laudanum*. The horror of possession (whether through dreams or drugs) and the corresponding loss of control (the mistress of the house becomes in shadow form a feminine combination of the vampire Nosferatu and the dishevelled and despised Struwwelpeter[16]) are enhanced by the manipulation of the individual prints. The scrapings in the surfaces and rough circular markings which emulate the convex mirror appearing in some of the images contribute to the sense of an hallucination. Further influences in this work include Pauline Réage's *The Story of O* (1954), where the sado-masochistic master/servant relationship can be seen to serve as a metaphor for coloniser/colonised in the broader social, political and historical sense. Rather than being a moral tale however, *Laudanum* presents the pleasures and pains of dream, fantasy, nightmare, and subjugation with wit colouring the final outcome: the mistress's fantasy can be seen to have sprung from nothing more than a pillow—or is it the body of the servant girl wrapped in the large parcel?

Laudanum has a relationship to the earlier series *Pet Thang* in that the emphasis tends to be on the erotically charged, and strange conjunctions between subject and object. Unlike *Scarred for Life*, *Fourth* or the video *Heaven* (1997) there is no obvious connection to life in the modern world. The nude female figure in *Pet Thang* has closed eyes; her body floats in darkness with the emphasis on face and breast and on the conjunctions between the body and accompanying sheep. A plausible post-colonial reading of *Pet Thang* exists[17] but equally this work can be seen as being a celebration of the pleasures of dream and fantasy. *Pet Thang*, like *Guapa (Goodlooking)* (1995) presents a nowhere space. In *Pet Thang* the lividly toned bodies of sheep and woman emerge from black, in *Guapa* the roller skating women brawl across a flat milky white screen. The illusion in *Guapa* is fabricated out of deliberately cross processing: the series was shot in black and white then printed onto paper used for producing colour. The presentation of *Guapa* also recalls the cool white space of the television screen and it was within such a domestic sphere that Moffatt first saw the American Roller Derby. The memory of the theatre and violence associated with this 1970s all-women contest is presented acrobatically, and such dynamic toughness reappears in various tableaux in the series *Up in the Sky,* where beefy women hack at abandoned cars and men fight in the dust. The tension in *Guapa* between the brawling women, their wounds, the ripped clothing and the clean white space that they exist within is further dramatised by the title of the series—*Guapa*. 'Guapa' was the term used by the locals of Santa Fe at the sight of the artist when Moffatt was in residence at ArtPace producing the work. The cry of admiration by a stranger contains an implicit violence for the object of that admiration. The use of such a term in the title of this series is as ambiguous as 'pet thang' for the earlier work: both can be seen as terms of endearment and both can belittle and be used to assume possession. In addition, who or what in these series is being described by these terms?

Moffatt used photo-silkscreen for her recent series *Invocations* (2000) and pushed the medium to its limits as more than twenty screens were

used in some of the thirteen images. There are three parts to *Invocations*: the little girl in the forest; the woman and man in the desert; and the spirits which appear in the rondels. The little girl 'lost' in the forest is a familiar story from fairy tales, and the style is similar to some Walt Disney animations. Similarly, the childhood imaginary is coloured by fairy tales (such as those moral tales published in the nineteenth-century by the Brothers Grimm) and by popular film (for example, Disney's *Fantasia* (1938)). Interestingly, the little girl is not so much lost as playing, both within the haunted forest and on its border with the desert.

The larger works in this series draw on film references from Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963) to *Mandingo* (1975). Fear, horror, obsession, passion, fight and flight are played out through the figures of the man and woman with ghostly spirits looking on. The rondels depict the spirits embracing or fighting. These strange Goya-esque emanations are as familiar from dreams and nightmares as much as from Goya's late, dark period. *Invocations* presents the quandaries of desire: the little girl may indeed wish to grow up and experience an adult world with its extremes of passion, yet cannot foresee the extent of pleasure and pain. Be careful what you wish for!—this admonition, so common in fairy tales, parallels the desire for 'something more'. *Invocations* can, therefore, be seen to be closely aligned to that earlier series.

Invocations is also about survival, about what can emerge from a seemingly barren landscape, and the moods and feelings which pervade lives we might think of as being poor. The prayers to the gods in *Invocations* can encompass many desires just as the gods themselves can be mercurial. Moffatt works with a pantheon of possibilities and sources which she draws together in order, as she has said, to create reality not capture it. Lynne Cooke has pointed out that, 'By not reproducing reality, that is, by not taking pictures but by making pictures, Moffatt suggests metaphorically that... relationships... are not given but must be constructed—created, literally, from the shards of older stereotypes.'[18]

The collision of these shards within the photographic frame (and from one frame to another) can be peculiarly disjunctive. Moffatt's irony is reserved for the vagaries of human nature and how this is displayed against the backdrop of displacement which is the condition of the modern urban world. The flip side of such displacement can be seen to be an inclusiveness which is tolerant of difference. Moffatt's adaption of lessons learned or images made by other artists is of continual interest. One could argue that all of Moffatt's work is an acknowledgement of the past and its currency in the present, that the work is never a simple pastiche, and politically loaded only because of its inclusiveness.[19] There is an amoral aspect to Moffatt's work in that there is never a clear cut definition of right and wrong nor an intimation that such judgements could or should be made. This is where the work eludes specific political readings. The viewer is invited into worlds which touch on familiar, shared experience whether from memory or from fantasy. Throughout Moffatt's works, in both film and photography, the beauty of surfaces (whether colour or texture), or the strength of her subjects is always present. There is a corresponding tension then between the power these invoke and a certain clumsiness (the 'mistakes' in the surfaces of *Invocations*, the deliberate home video effect of *Heaven*, the bleached tones of *Scarred for Life* or *Up in the Sky*, and the 'jump cuts' from one image to another) which can be jarring because the viewer wishes to fill in the gaps and smooth over disruptions.[20]

Part of the allure of Moffatt's work is her lack of any 'signature' style: if one considers the work of Nan Goldin (b.1953), Cindy Sherman (b.1954) or Bill Henson (b.1955), the specific look and content particular to each of these artists is remarkably consistent. Moffatt's work, by comparison, is consistent in the use of series (or frames) but utterly inconsistent in terms of technique, scale, and the superficial aspects of content. The viewer returns then, to the gaps within the stories being told in each series and their disconcerting familiarity. The notion of haunting, of worlds inhabited by phantoms, of a 'no where' in which anything can happen provides a thrill of recognition and horror. That Moffatt uses the photographic and film mediums—those supposedly closest to our experience of the real—in order to mirror dreams and fantasies, adds to the conundrum which is her work.

1 Moffatt's work quickly eludes a post-modern reading because her 'appropriation' of imagery can never be seen as an emptying of history but rather a bringing forward of an image's origins and meaning in order to further embed these in the viewer's psyche. Moffatt's itinerant and obsessive archiving might therefore be appreciated by Walter Benjamin who admonished: '...every image of the past that is not recognised by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably'. 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', *Illuminations*, USA: Schocken Books, 1988, p.255.

2 For a discussion of Moffatt's work in relation to Homi Bhabha's notions of hybridity in the context of the post-colonial see in particular Isaac Julien with Mark Nash, 'Only Angels have wings', in Lynne Cooke & Karen Kelly (eds.), *Tracey Moffatt: Free-Falling*, New York: Dia Center for the Arts, 1998, pp.9–20.

3 Moffatt's depiction, from the mid 1980s onwards, of 'bad gurrls' and her interest in glamour can be seen to pre-date 'official' post-feminism which was identified around the mid 1990s.

4 Gerald Matt, 'An interview with Tracey Moffatt', in Martin Hentschel & Gerald Matt (eds.) *Tracey Moffatt*, Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz Verlag, 1998, pp.16–25.

5 Stephan Berg, 'Somewhere' in B. Reinhardt (ed.) *Tracey Moffatt: Laudanum*, Ostfildern: Cantz, 1999, p.38.

6 Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, 'A Stranger Within', *Parkett*, no.53, 1998, pp.37–45.

7 See Rex Butler & Morgan Thomas, 'Tracey Moffatt: from something singular... to something more', *Eyeline*, no.45, Autumn/Winter 2001, pp.23–31, for a useful and detailed analysis of the works' relationships to such positions.

8 Australian painter, language group Arrernte.

9 Particularly his feature film *Kwaidan* (1964).

10 The common thread connecting many of these films and filmmakers is the interest in the depiction of the 'outsider' and the effect on the community they enter.

11 ibid, p.43.

12 Tracey Moffatt interview with Michael Cathcart, *Arts Today*, ABC Radio National, Sydney, 31 July 2000.

13 Tracey Moffatt, artist's statement, *Fourth*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, August 2001.

14 The technique of photogravure was invented by Karel Kllc in 1879 and is a photomechanical process using a photographic etching method which produces a very fine detailed impression. Fox Talbot set the groundwork for the development of photogravure with his photoglyphic engraving process, and the technique has been almost continuously used to the present day because of the beauty of the finished product especially through its effects on tissue and watercolour paper. Alfred Stieglitz used photogravure for his editions of *Camerawork* (1903–17), and Robert Mapplethorpe highly prized its aesthetic effects in his own work.

15 See Keith F. Davis, *An American century of photography: from drypoint to digital*, 1999, Kansas City: Hallmark Cards Inc, pp.55–58.

16 From the 1844 children's story by German writer Heinrich Hoffmann (1809–1894).

17 See Lynne Cooke, 'A Photo-filmic Odyssey', in Cooke & Kelly (eds.) op. cit. pp.29–30.

18 Lynne Cooke ibid, pp.23–39.

19 See footnote 1 above, and 'A chronicler who recites events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history.' Walter Benjamin, op.cit. p.254.

20 See footnote 5 above.



SOMETHING MORE, 1989, series of 6 cibachrome and 3 black and white photographs






TWICE
AS
GOOD!
KRIESLER








AJS


BRISBANE 300 miles



















Birth Certificate, 1962 During the fight, her mother threw her birth certificate at her. This is how she found out her real father's name.



Tracey Moffatt

Birth Certificate, 1962, from ***SCARRED FOR LIFE***, 1994, series of 9 offset prints



Tracey Moffatt

Doll Birth, 1972 His mother caught him giving birth to a doll.
He was banned from playing with the boy
next door again.

Doll Birth, 1972, from ***SCARRED FOR LIFE***, 1994, series of 9 offset prints



Tracey Moffatt

Heart Attack, 1970 She glimpsed her father belting the
girl from down the street.
That day he died of a heart attack.

Heart Attack, 1970, from ***SCARRED FOR LIFE***, 1994, series of 9 offset prints

Mother's Reply, 1976

On the night of her first school dance, she asked her mother what she thought. She replied *"you don't dress a pig up unless ya gonna eat it."*



Tracey Moffatt

Mother's Reply, 1976, from ***SCARRED FOR LIFE II***, 1999, series of 10 offset prints

Scissor Cut, 1980

For punishment the Kwong sisters were forced to cut the front lawn with scissors.

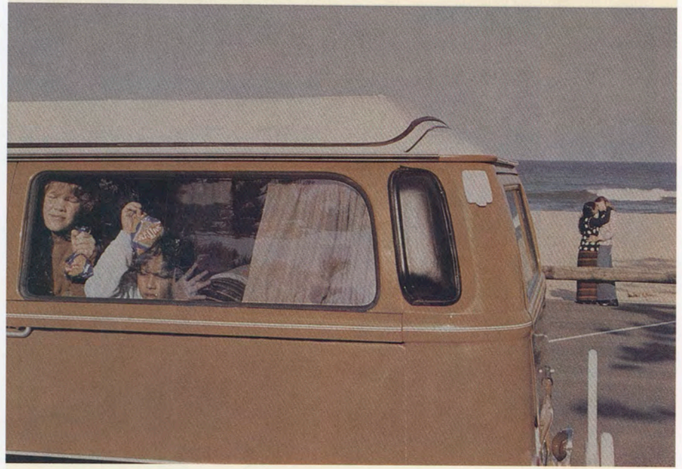


Tracey Moffatt

Scissor Cut, 1980, from ***SCARRED FOR LIFE II***, 1999, series of 10 offset prints

Piss Bags, 1978

Locked in the van while their mothers continued their affair, the boys were forced to piss into their chip bags.



Tracey Moffatt

Piss Bags, 1978, from ***SCARRED FOR LIFE II***, 1999, series of 10 offset prints

AN INTERVIEW WITH TRACEY MOFFATT

GERALD MATT

Deleuze and Parnet once said: 'Empiricists are not theoreticians, they are experimenters: they never interpret.' Do you see yourself as more of an 'experimenting artist'—within the meaning of the above quote—even though your works are based on detailed preparations and concepts?

The most interesting artists in history have always been experimenting artists. Most artists I know are such dissatisfied people, dissatisfied with everything so of course they must constantly be reinventing with their art. Perhaps this dissatisfaction is the reason that they are artists in the first place—I know it is with me.

Although I make careful detailed preparations before I work in my films and photography one must always be open to elements of surprise that do surface. I can have an original idea for an image and plan it out but the final outcome can be something different. My final image of choice can have a slightly different mood and feel. Most of the time it is better.

In an interview, you called yourself an 'image-maker'. The pictures you make are cinematographic or photographic, using media that reproduce reality. However, your pictures are characterised by an alienation of reality, partly by exaggeration, by surreality. When referring to your representations of nature, you like using the expression 'landscape of imagination'. In interviews and texts, reference is made to Aboriginal art, dreams, and some genres of film or painting in this context. What is the relation between realistic and fictitious means, especially when it comes to getting messages across?

I think all my imagery comes from my subconscious, from dreams. I am not talking about when I dream at night (these are far too weird and sick) but the dreams I have when I am awake. We can dream with our eyes open. This is why I have been hesitant to be written about as a social commentator. I think my work is very dream-like.

The *Up in the Sky* pictures look a little like photo documentary, but there is still a surreal quality. Some of the images are in fact what I saw and photographed but most are staged up, set up. I like that people can't tell which is which, I like that there is an 'in-betweenness' about them.

In the *Guapa* pictures the women Roller Derby queens are obviously shot in a studio. I wanted it to feel like a nowhere space. I like that the images lack a time frame—they're just hanging there.

What are the most significant sources you tap into when creating the fictitious/artificial part of your pictures?

I like to create my version of reality, the work comes from me, what I know. Things I have seen and experienced, and things I think I have seen and experienced. Maybe it's just an exaggerated version of my reality. Sources of inspiration come from everywhere, from the beautiful formal quality of 1960s' Japanese cinema—films such as Kabayoshi's *Kwaidan* (1964). This was a film of four ghost stories shot entirely in a studio with artificial sets—Kabayoshi apparently even painted the sky backdrop himself.

But then I can look at trash-TV—this is what I grew up with. I didn't grow up with 'high-culture', so for me as far as visual went, it was television. I am from a working class background, and I was only accessing what was available. But thank God I also read a lot—everything from Charles Dickens and the Brontés to comic books (which I would beat my brother up for) to soft porn (which I would take to school to be popular with).

Were there any specific films important for your work—for example, the bizarre Australian cinema classic Charles Chauvel's *Jedda* from 1955? And what about horror movies?

Jedda was an overblown melodramatic and I think racist Australian film made in the style of a Hollywood western. It was about an Aboriginal girl taken from her

tribe and raised by a family as a white girl on a desert cattle property. I cannot bring myself to say that *Jedda* was an 'important' film, but I certainly liked the look of it. I recreated the interior set of the cattle property's main house and put it into my own short film *Night Cries*.

Most of all I suppose it is the visual element in certain cinema that is inspiring me. But feel and mood often come from literature, and in particular southern American writers such as Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote and the great Carson McCullers—a woman writer who I believe originally inspired Truman Capote. These writings always remind me of where I come from—the North of Australia, the sub-tropics. In a sense a holiday paradise—the heat, the joy but also the terrible mood of fear and racism. This mood is evident in my *Something More* photoseries.

As for horror film I think nothing has ever matched Hollywood's *The Exorcist*. It's the scariest film ever made. I like a lot of Hollywood movies, I like the Italian American directors like Martin Scorsese, I like *Terminator II* and the *Mad Max* trilogy—it is the big spectacle that appeals.

But I always have a weakness for anything European—made before 1970 and in black and white like the dream films of Jean Cocteau. What an artist he was! His skill in changing between the different media—he made films, he wrote plays and designed for the theatre and what about his beautiful drawings. One of his famous quotes is: 'When the pillow is warm you must turn it over'... For me he is the artist's artist.

What about painting, as an artistic language, also in respect of its flexibility in creation?

You know when it comes down to it I wish I was a painter. There isn't anything greater and nothing hypnotises like painting. Nothing fascinates more than what the human hand can do. I think for ninety-nine per cent of people to this day photography and film is a foreign media. It is technical, expensive and most people don't get the chance to try it. From an early age, all of us in every culture in the world have been handed a pencil, a brush and some paper. From the first day of school we are made to make our mark but very soon most of us discover to our own horror that we can't do it—except for Johnny in the next row. Does Johnny grow up to become an artist? Very rarely.

So for most of us this must be the first tragic inadequate thing we find out about ourselves—that we can't move paint around. I know that I can't move paint around, you can look at my awful storyboards to see this—so I moved into other areas. Perhaps my work is all about painting—sometimes writers describe my 'palette'. This delights me.

I would like to mention Georgia O'Keeffe. I first came across her in art school, there was a revival of her in the early '80s. The interesting thing about her was that she was completely American and that she wasn't looking a real lot to Europe for her sources.

Susan Sontag once said: 'Only that which narrates can make us understand.' Your films and photoseries also often have a narrative element. How important is the narrative for your work—for example, from the angle of linking real and artificial components? Does it serve to enhance understanding, the way Sontag said?

My work is full of emotion and drama, you can get to that drama by using a narrative, and my narratives are usually very simple, but I twist it. In the *Up in the Sky* pictures there is a story line, but the hanging order of the pictures can change it around. There isn't a traditional beginning, middle and end. You can be in the present and shift to the past and come back to the present—it's playing with time and space. As for Sontag's saying that 'only what narrates can make us understand'—unfortunately in the case of what I do and the reactions I've had from a lot of people—my twisted narratives only serve to baffle!

Would you link the historically or culturally significant traditions you use in your works (for example, 'ghost-stories' of Aborigines or the cycle of Irish legends in *beDevil*) with the notion of mythology? How would you define this notion, which you actually do not use yourself as far as I know, and how does it relate to your work?

It is a personal mythology that I use. I wouldn't say that I was drawing on Aboriginal legends, stories because I think that it is too easy and I actually think that I don't have a right to do it. My images are so personal that a lot of time they embarrass me. I'm always saying: 'Oh my God, don't make me watch *Night Cries* again!'

For me the film is deep and it probably has something to do with my relationship with my mother—the love, the hate. I made this film at a time when I had these feelings but now I don't have them any more. Must be a Freudian thing when artists say that their work 'repulses them'. Look at Woody Allen, he can't stand to look at his films so don't make me look at mine.

'Multicultural' is a buzzword frequently applied to your work. Occasionally, I believe I can detect ironic elements when you deal with ethno-social themes, expressed, for example, in the idea of trading roles or plays on clichés (as in *Nice Coloured Girls*). Is there a political intention behind your work? How do the respective ethnic communities react to your way of representation?

Within all my work I want to create a world, a general world. Australia is a very multicultural nation and this has certainly influenced my work. So I don't want to make some grand statement on race—it isn't about wanting to be politically correct, perhaps it's about always striving for an 'international' look to my work.

I have made political films, once in 1983 I worked on a documentary about an Aboriginal land rights protest which was both exhilarating and a nightmare. Some members of the group or rather the 'collective' I made it with didn't agree with the film so they destroyed it (literally with scissors—on the night of the film's premiere they chopped up nine months of hard work) and it was never seen.

This incident turned me off making political films. But the irony is, and we all know this today, that these important well made documentaries about issues like indigenous land rights and the nuclear disarmament and the environment really did help to reveal things—educate the public and change the world.

I want to say that if people want to read my art that I'm making now from a political perspective then they are welcome. I just get a little exasperated because this reading usually comes from the 'left' and they are most of the time ignoring how I strive for poetry and make statements about the human condition—they can't see that I'm trying to play with form and be inventive.

I think that the fact that I'm trying for a 'universal' quality, not just 'black Australian' is the reason why my work is getting attention. But try telling this to some writers...

The artificial part of your work also includes the formal aspect of fabrication, staging, choreography in your pictures. This is true of many of your films and photoseries. Moreover, some critics think that your photoseries have 'still photography' qualities. This is corroborated by a look at your storyboards.

I have never just produced a single photograph and tried to make it stand alone as an artistic statement. Though of course art collectors have bought single images from my series—so perhaps certain pictures do appeal by themselves. For me it is the narrative. It is difficult for me to say anything in one single image. With working in a photographic serial I can expand one idea—give it further possibilities. It makes photography close to film in its possibilities.

Every photoseries changes completely in look—colour or no colour—glossy or matt—big or small. I don't believe that I have an identifiable style, because

I don't do the same thing twice. I don't think one can readily look at my pictures and say 'oh yes, that's a Tracey Moffatt'. Not in the way you can say this with a Robert Mapplethorpe print. When I first saw a Mapplethorpe picture I couldn't get over the shocking deadly precision in them—they were like ice. Photography never looked like that before him—now it's commonplace, it's everywhere—in advertising especially.

With the *Scarred for Life* photoseries I have again changed the format. I have integrated rather ordinary washed out colour compositions with text describing the scene. I was inspired by looking at 1960s' American *Life* magazine layouts. A kind of snapshot photography—very everyday moments based on real life tragic funny childhood stories of my friends and myself. I felt that this was the only way to keep power in the image—to be ordinary, it does resonate. People remember the little boy giving birth to the doll. I could have shot this in a more clever dramatic way but in the end it had to be like a scene one would see as they passed and glanced in the living room door. In the case of this picture it is the mean mother's point of view. Also as well at the time I made this work I had no money —it was a purely practical thing to produce something low key and inexpensive.

Now in 1998 I have more money and I'm making an elaborate photoseries based on historical erotic texts. Please don't ask me to say more on this—I believe it is bad luck to talk an idea up too much before you execute it. Just shut the hell up and do it, is my motto—words are cheap!

What are the specific qualities film and photography have for you (for example, as regards to immobility/movement, and reception)? How much leeway is there for spontaneity, for example, in your photographs and films? Where do you place yourself?

I love both film and photography. I don't want to create a division. My relationship to film and photography has to do with, as I mentioned previously, such things as money. It is a long time in-between film projects—film costs so much money and you have to find this money. So in the meantime I'm going crazy—my obsession to create makes me crabby.

Photography is much less expensive—less equipment needed, smaller teams to work with, etc. Photography is always a wonderful challenge, it is all about what one can pull off with a camera, it's the way you use a camera and then how you choose to print the images—so many possibilities it is mind boggling. Of course now with computer manipulations the possibilities make you exhausted even thinking about it.

I like the art world as well as opposed to the film world (though both can be just as pretentious). I've just gotten sick of being literally pushed around at those crowded loud international film festivals although I guess the Venice Biennale is not different! I like seeing things on white walls. The contemporary art world is light years ahead in ideas. So often it is much more rewarding intellectually for me to have 'exhibitions' as opposed to 'film screenings'. Let's face it, hardly anything (save a few things) inventive and stimulating and beautiful has been made in cinema past the date of 1977. I have a theory about this but won't go into it now. Don't start me off!

How do you relate to the traditions of photography and cinema?

I am constantly scanning old photography books and old films. There is no way that one can be an artist of substance without doing one's homework.

In your works you frequently appear as a performer (*Something More, Pet Thang, beDevil, Scarred for Life*). What is the part that autobiographical elements play for you, in the context of self-expression on the one hand, and in the engagement with more general social, cultural and political themes on the other.

It is often a technically practical thing to cast myself in my work. Often I can't find anyone else to do it—often as well as a money saving thing. It feels as natural for me to be in front of a camera as behind it.

In fact I have never analysed this—as I try not to with most things. When one is too academic it gets in the way of creation. I have no precise plans to appear in my future films or photographs. It's not like I'm Cindy Sherman (I do love her fat ugly wizard series from 1996). I like to direct and cast other people though this is always the hardest thing in the creation of my art—to find the right face. I go insane running after people I see on the street and often I get insulted!

Maybe the autobiographical aspects in my work have to do with using myself —probably it is as simple as this.

In an interview you once said you were a 'control freak'. You also direct your films, as you said before. For your photoseries you recruit professional teams, work in studios, with actors and props similar to movie production. You are scriptwriter, performer/actress and director, all rolled into one. The fact that you fulfil such a multiplicity of functions indicates that you, as an avant-garde film-maker, have the greatest possible share in the work, but the massive expenditure involved in the production also points to commercial cinema.

Control freak? Yes! I do want everything my way—to begin with. One has to keep some sort of control. But I love teamwork nevertheless. If I didn't like to work with people I would be a painter—like my fantasy—alone in my studio with my brushes and canvasses and paint in my hair, with the answering machine on all the time. But I like communication—I think I can communicate well though I'm demanding.

I like to bring the best out of my collaborators. They are always throwing in their ideas—how can they not contribute? They are creative people whom I choose for a reason and I'm lucky to be working with them.

For example, for my film *Night Cries* I worked with a wonderful theatre designer, Stephen Curtis, who created a very hard, artificial desert landscape of the Australian outback. I initially wasn't so sure about it being so hard but I went with his interpretation of my script. Now of course I like what he did. When the film premiered at Cannes Film Festival—seven years ago—some critics thought I was influenced by Robert Wilson, the avant-garde American theatre director. At the time I was not familiar with Robert Wilson's work.

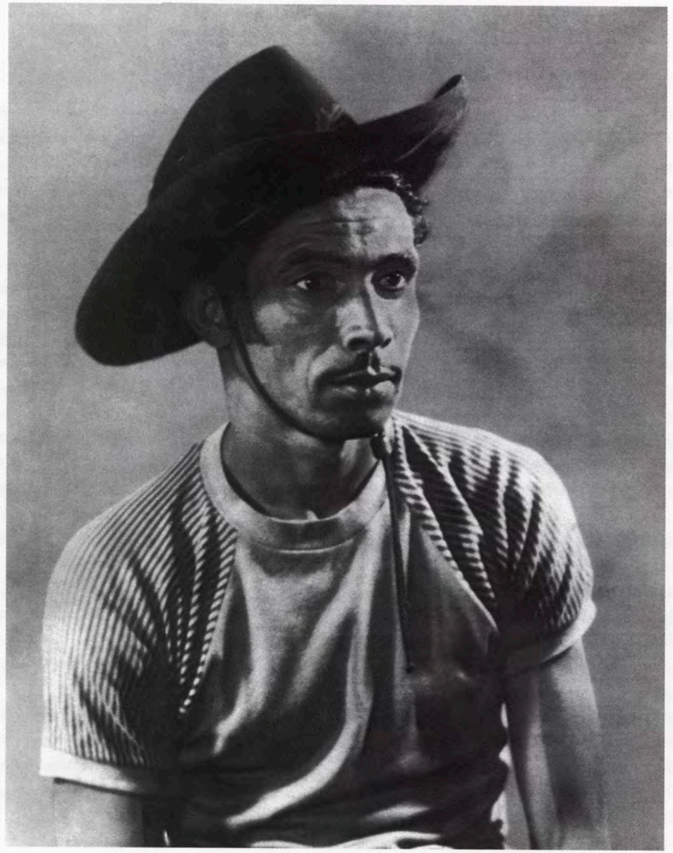
So I can either take my creative teams' ideas on board or not use them. But initially it is always Ms Moffatt's ideas and obsessions they are helping to put on the gallery wall or on the big screen.

None of them should complain because I always pay them well!

Is the boundary between avant-garde film and mainstream cinema of any importance to you? Could you imagine working in something like 'mainstream cinema' in the future?

I do want to make a mainstream film. I'm working on a film script now which I cry over because it is so hard to do. It will be as challenging as anything I've ever tried to pull off. As an artist you must face change. This also has to do with my energy—I always want to move onto the next thing. I think it is fine to switch between worlds like loving both trash and classical and obscure literature and going from Antonioni to Schwarzenegger.

But one of the main reasons is [that], as I regretfully rocket towards forty… I want to finally make some money.



Beauty (in mulberry), 1994, from ***BEAUTIES***, type C colour photograph

TRACEY MOFFATT'S BEAUTY

REX BUTLER AND MORGAN THOMAS

It was the photoseries *Something More* (1989), along with the short film *Night Cries,* made the same year, that first brought Tracey Moffatt to critical attention. To summarise a plot that remains almost defiantly elliptical, it is the story of a young woman, of indeterminate racial origins, who dreams of escaping her humdrum existence in outback Australia and getting away to the city. We encounter her in the first image gazing off into the distance, while another woman (her half-sister? her father's mistress?) looks on indifferently, her own chances of finding 'something more' long since gone. Later, an Asian boy (a boyfriend? an admirer?) begs her to stay, but after holding up the dress she will wear she packs up and leaves. Before she can reach her destination, however, she is caught up in a bizarre sexual encounter with a highway policewoman or biker. In the last image of the series, she lies slumped in the middle of the road, her beloved dress hitched up around her waist. She is still some three hundred miles short of Brisbane.

Of course, related in such a schematic fashion, this sequence of events looks melodramatic, even ludicrous. It is the oldest story in the book, the backwoods beauty who yearns to be discovered in the big smoke and comes to an unfortunate end. And the blatantly painted backdrops, the flimsiness of the set, the make-up and super-saturated colours all remind us of the artificiality of the scenario. It is as if this often repeated story has been boiled down to its most recognisable, even archetypal highlights: the heroine's passionate look off-screen, the jeering schoolboys, the dress held up before the mirror, the father's thrown knife, the hastily packed bag, the grisly death. Yet there are aspects of Moffatt's presentation which intrude on this all-too-familiar tale. The disparate origin of the characters, the boy's make-up, the abrupt changes in costume, the emphasis on isolated details, the skewing of the narrative sequence—none of these quite seems to fit the mythic template Moffatt invokes.

But Moffatt's treatment of her material is not simply parodic. There is too much invested in it for that. If this scenario has all the elements of a typical B-movie, Moffatt's quotation of these elements is not designed to empty them of all affect. Nor does it result in burlesque, as is so often the case with contemporary Australian films which transpose these elements to an outback setting. If anything, we would say that in *Something More* Moffatt is following someone like the director Douglas Sirk, a long-admitted influence. In Sirk's *Imitation of Life* (1959), for example, the theme is precisely the problem of racial identification, of a young black woman escaping where she comes from and wanting to be or being mistaken for a white woman. Moffatt's *Something More* looks back to Sirk, but a kind of knowing exaggeration—a refusal of the disbelief his films depended on—here infiltrates his over-ripe and generically saturated melodrama. This is where a certain *camp* might be discerned in Moffatt's work. Referring to the episode involving the woman in leather, Gael Newton, one of Moffatt's commentators, writes: 'The high camp melodrama of the bikie image skates close to making the viewer suspect that it is their own gullible appetite for melodrama and titillation that is being sent up.'[1]

This camp sensibility can be found everywhere in Moffatt's work. It reveals itself in her marking of a gay or feminised male presence in her images, for example, the ballet dancers of *Some Lads* (1986) or Australian performance artist Luke Roberts in *beDevil* (1993). It reveals itself again in her fascination with traditional icons of masculinity, from the images of an Aboriginal stockman in *Beauties* (1994) to the surfing Adonises of *Heaven.* It is tempting to suggest that behind all this Moffatt is making an implicit comparison between her situation as an urban Aboriginal woman in white Australia and that of gay men in straight society. Certainly, this camp is part of Moffatt's public persona. It is evident when she speaks of her love of popular culture, her upbringing in a white working-class family and the steady diet of TV watching that sustained her throughout childhood. It is also apparent when she speaks with equal enthusiasm of American sports shows like RollerDerby and the esoteric Italian Neo-Realist films of Pier Paolo Pasolini.

In its indiscriminate search for new sensations, in its reuction of art to a form of show business, in its levelling of cultural hierarchies (in which everything is equally interesting, equally valid), this camp is our contemporary anti-aesthetics *par excellence*. And at times Moffatt comes very close to this anti-aesthetics. Her work is notable for its insistent hybridity, its confusion of genres, its accenting of particular subjectivities and desires. These qualities invite us to see her as engaged in an attack upon conventional Western standards of taste, revealing the exclusions behind their supposed universality. Indeed, Moffatt's very light-heartedness, the way she does not take art seriously—a common refrain throughout her public statements about her work—would make her criticisms all the more damaging, all the more corrosive. Here, against the decorums of any identifiable culture, Moffatt might be seen to be proposing a perpetual iconoclasm, in which conventions are pushed to their logical limit for ultimately humorous effect. (There are strong elements of this in *Something More*.)

Alternatively, her mix-and-match eclecticism would attest to the never-ending series of differences that supposedly characterise contemporary society. We would see this, for example, in the fictitious 'self-fashioning' of gay culture that often comes up in Moffatt's work. It can also be seen in an early Moffatt photograph *The Movie Star* (1985) in the figure of David Gulpilil, with his body paint, his stubbies, his can of Foster's, his Rastafarian dreadlocks and Michael Jackson playing on his ghetto blaster.

And yet there is something insufficient about seeing Moffatt's work in terms of this post-colonial hybridity, for all of its explanatory power. There is always 'something more' to these images. But what is this 'something more'? Moffatt's commentators have been reluctant to admit it—it is almost unspeakable today—but it is *beauty*. This beauty runs all through Moffatt's work, from, precisely, *Beauties* to *Guapa (Goolooking)* (1995), from *Nice Coloured Girls* (1987) to *Some Lads*, and on to *Heaven* (1997). The truly daring thing about Moffatt's work is not her pst-colonial hybridity, her fusing of different tastes and genres, but the fact that her engagement with all these things takes place in the name of beauty.

Even though this beauty is inevitably historically determined—it contests a given consensus of taste by proposing something new, something more—it is at the same time *un*historical, *un*timely. If this beauty challenges the specific forms it takes in the West in the name of a wider, more inclusive (let us say, non-Western) version, it is also more universal than even the wildest eclecticism. That is why, if it can be seen as a critique of the universal subject, there is also something 'excessive' about it that recognises that this critique would always be over-determined by what it opposes. Why, for instance, those particular cultural markers singled out for attention in *The Movie Star*? Are they not, in whatever combination they are put together, merely the mirror image of that Western subjectivity they would want to challenge? Beauty opens up a way out of this historicism. Like the movie star himself in his ease and nonchalance, there is something about it that goes beyond its role as ideological critique and intimates a pleasure that demands universal assent. (And it is important to note that Moffatt in speaking about her work always emphasises the universality of her concerns, the way they are not autobiographical or 'Aboriginal' but apply to everyone.)

Can we not see *Something More*, finally, as an allegory of the fate of this beauty today? As embodied in the glowing, ecstatic figure of the young woman—played by the artist herself—it is always out of place, excessive, 'something more'. It is a beauty that is endlessly traduced, travestied, corrupted, parodied and even left for dead; but it wreaks its revenge in the very form in which this occurs. (*Something More* perhaps retells the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, of an immortal beauty who must remain underground so that her maker can escape.)

This leaves us with two points to consider. Beauty now, but not only now, is ineluctably subject to the fluctuations of taste and history. As if by necessity, it takes on distorted, exaggerated, hybrid and even posthumous forms. Yet it also has to be taken 'straight'; it has to 'strike' us (we have to be struck by it). This is the lesson of beauty in art, all the way from mannerism to Douglas Sirk. *Artist*, the video Moffatt made for the 2000 Biennale of Sydney, was made up in part of sequences from films in which works of art are destroyed. It was beautiful. In another way, this leads us to the thought that so-called 'critique' in art is always a debate over aesthetics. This critique is ultimately undertaken in the name of another, more universal, more radical, conception of beauty. In art, nothing less than 'something more' will ever do.

1 Gail Newton, 'Tracey Moffatt: Cover Girl', *Fever Pitch*, Annandale: Piper Press, 1995, p.17.



Tracey Moffatt

Charm Alone, 1965

His brother said, *'croked nose and no chin – you'll have to survive o charm alone'.*

Charm Alone, 1965, from ***SCARFD FOR LIFE***, 1994, series of 9 offset prints

SCARRED FOR LIFE

BLAIR FRENCH

There's no place for nostalgia in *Scarred for Life*. Childhood is a battleground in these nineteen image/text vignettes (produced in two series, 1994 and 1999). Moreover, each individual work betrays the persistence of childhood and adolescent trauma lodged within adult memory. Each work is generated from such memory of psychological scarring—of moments in which childhood consciousness is fractured by the abrasive intent of others. *Scarred for Life* represents moments of transition between childhood naiveté and mature states of self-awareness as a social subject. As Adrian Martin describes it, Tracey Moffatt's work 'dramatises… the primal violence of socialisation—the invariably traumatic way in which each individual must be "inserted" into an ever-widening set of social, institutional frames.'[1] Some of the pictured scenarios appear trivial, others overtly devastating, yet all are treated as being of equal emotional impact. For whatever reasons, all continue to gravely scar adult subjects.

Children are beaten, berated or simply ignored by their parents. Boys are caught cross-dressing, or playing with a doll. Siblings and peers taunt each other. A daughter witnesses her naked father abusing a girl from down the street. Other children fear their drunken father. Two sisters are pictured cutting the lawn with scissors as punishment for some unspecified indiscretion.

Not all of these actions, however, are depicted within the images themselves. In the first series in particular subjects are frequently pictured alone in distressed repose. These images resonate with a familiar sense of torment, yet as images alone they convey little information of the abrasive acts that caused such states of mind. Similarly, in other works depicting multiple subjects the detail of their interaction would remain a mystery but for the caption texts that provide narrative context. Sometimes the text describes what is actually occurring in the image, so sharing in its temporality. In other instances it describes an action that precedes the image. Most importantly, the texts reference the generating subjects (the 'she' or 'he' being scarred), so alerting us to the basis of the works in their acts of recollection, or more generally to the condition of memory *as* representation. As German critic Andreas Huyssen states: 'The past is not simply there in memory, but it must be articulated to become memory. The fissure that opens up between experiencing an event and remembering it in representation is unavoidable.'[2]

This fissure is replicated as a structural principle right throughout Moffatt's work, but most obviously in the image/text form of *Scarred for Life*. However Moffatt does far more here than manifest memory's play of recollection and imagination in image/text form. She situates the work within a resonant historical context by mimicking the structure and style of *Life* magazine picture spreads. This picture magazine allusion evokes the resonance of real experience. This is not just 'reality' as historically depicted within such publications, but the publications' own very affective functions of imparting 'knowledge' of the 'wider' world to readers in suburbia's furthermost outposts, fuelling a Western cultural imaginary in the last moments before the domination of electronic media.[3]

As with much post-modern image/text work of the 1980s in particular, *Scarred for Life* stresses the influence of pre-existing representational structures and forms upon the development of identity. What is new here, however, is the manner in which image and text compliment and augment each other within the picture magazine model in deceptively complex manners, without fragmenting or undercutting their respective veracity. The picture magazine model concentrates the reality effect of these little moments of ridicule and disgrace, simultaneously opening up their (documentary) specificity to general recognition. As Rex Butler and Morgan Thomas have noted: 'These episodes are idiosyncratic, incongruous, odd, not at all what we tend to think of as "normal" or as having occurred to us—and yet it is also true to say that they summon up something universal, something that seems particularly meant for us.'[4]

Such 'universality' is made possible by the fleeting, ambiguous nature of the *Scarred for Life* works. Neither image nor text impart much information alone, and yet nor do they complete each other hermetically. Other subjects might be imagined here, other experiences projected into the fissure between representation and memory, image and text. After all, the core subjects are named in only one of the nineteen works. Parents, who do the bulk of the scarring, are often absented from the images or depicted as faceless, shadowy or partially obscured figures. They are simultaneously specific perpetrators of abuse and generalised incarnations of traumatic memory. Even the apparent racial specificities or stereotypes depicted within certain works do not foreclose their appeal to shared experience.

Crucially, the images shift us about as viewers in our relationships to these 'primal scenes'. On occasion we are visually allied with the parental perpetrator, confronted with the face of a daughter recoiling from our blow. Elsewhere we take the place of the central subject, aligned with that consciousness forever scarred. More often, however, we occupy a non-participant's position, either that of the intruding photographer peering over shoulders and around corners or a less engaged viewpoint, holding the instant of trauma at distance.

Our personal access to these scenarios is enhanced by the absence of dominant authorial figures claiming the experiences as their own. The adult psyches that give rise to these images are all pervasive, yet intangible. And as still images the works cut across narrative temporality. We are left to conjure their pasts and presents from fragments of our own.

In this regard it may be useful to conclude by considering Moffatt's only feature film to date, *beDevil* (1993), bringing into relief the ongoing dialogue between the image structures, narrative conditions and imaginative possibilities of photography and film which typifies Moffatt's practice. The key subject of 'Mr Chuck', the first of the trilogy of 'ghost stories' that make up *beDevil,* is an apparently incarcerated Aboriginal man called Rick. His face is lined, his hair greying and voice most raspy when he breaks into frightening bursts of laughter. Rick's physical scars are visible in the form of self-inflicted tattoos. His psychological scars are equally exposed.

As the form of the ghost story demands, Rick is haunted by past events both depicted and retold throughout the film. We are witness to acts of scarring as well as their subsequent impact upon Rick. Yet in true Moffatt fashion, our experience as viewers is bound within a labyrinth of multiple imaginings, representations and mediations. In the film, Rick as a young boy receives a fearful beating from an 'uncle' whose identity is never revealed. Along with the second narrator, a European woman who befriends the young Rick, we only hear the beating take place behind closed doors. This 'real' violence merges with Rick's other-worldy experience of being dragged down into the syrupy brown waters of a swamp by the 'ghost' of a drowned American GI. The older Rick recalls this experience in harrowing visceral, even sexualised terms. We never find out how Rick manages to physically flee each scene of violence, only that the two—standing in turn for the social and the psychological—have merged into one inescapable scene of trauma lodged at the core of his unconscious. Unlike Moffatt's photographic series, her film visualises the impact of this childhood trauma through time upon an adult subject.

Although the basic subject of traumatic childhood experience is the same, the determining subjects and complex yet hermetic temporal structures of 'Mr Chuck' are crucially absent from *Scarred for Life.* The temporal and subject ambiguities of the photographic work are the very qualities, along with their particular stylistic evocation of 'real' experience, that draw us psychologically into what are otherwise openly 'fictional' *mise en scènes.* Both film and photographic series share, however, Moffatt's quintessential triple evocation of imagining, representation and socialisation as core determinants of being. Memory, after all, is always part recall of actual experience, part imaginative projection, and no less real for being so.

1 Adrian Martin, 'Moffatt's Australia (A Reconnaissance)', *Parkett*, no.53, 1998, p.26.

2 Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*, New York and London: Routledge, 1995, pp.2–3.

3 I have written elsewhere at greater length regarding the significant rhetorical force of the picture magazine model for *Scarred for Life*. The efficacy or rhetorical import of this model remains even when so many images in the second series are located within a televisual age (the 1970s and 1980s) marked in part by the relative cultural irrelevancy of the documentary picture magazine as a means of accessing the wider world. See Blair French, 'Thoughts On, About, Against the Real: Tracey Moffatt's Scarred for Life', in Department of Art History, *Predictions: The Role of Art at the End of the Millennium: Papers Presented at the Conference of the Art Association of Australia and New Zealand*, Victoria University of Wellington, 2–5 December 1999, Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington, 2000, pp.102–7.

4 Rex Butler and Morgan Thomas, 'Tracey Moffatt: From Something Singular… to Something More', *Eyeline*, no.45, 2001, p.26.

FROM 'A PHOTO-FILMIC ODYSSEY'

LYNNE COOKE

Up in the Sky (1997), Tracey Moffatt's largest photoseries, is also her most complex and sophisticated in its manipulation of the dual languages and histories of film and photography. Shooting outdoors on location, Moffatt for the first time dispensed with scenography, and hence with landscape as a backdrop, as well as with allusions and methods drawn from painting. Hinged around a triangular love relationship that also involves issues of paternity, *Up in the Sky* introduces numerous subsidiary characters in scenes that are imbued only rarely with the degree of artifice that characterised her earlier work. Photographing on location in daylight produces a flattening effect that not only tends to fuse her subjects into an ensemble aligned on a single plane, but welds them indissolubly to their milieu.

Starting within a decrepit bungalow housing a white woman and a black baby, the settings rapidly move outside to reveal a shantytown sprawling over flat terrain. Beyond, even more barren desert reaches are crisscrossed by monumental embankments of elevated highways and littered with abandoned vehicles. A place of ruin more than of uncharted frontier, this is home to a trove of social misfits, to white trash as well as deracinated Aborigines. In this radically revised version of the WestOutback, Moffatt, in characteristic fashion, reverses roles so that her car-wreckers/salvagers are muscular women, tough female successors to *Mad Max*'s hooligans. Likewise, what were formerly epic fights between archetypal heroes are reduced to mere skirmishes in the dust between black and white youths brandishing nothing more lethal than a pocketknife. Notwithstanding the softening focus and monochromatic tonality of each image, this is no lost Eden: anarchy lurks just below the surface in this liminal dystopia.

Like *Night Cries* (1989), *Up in the Sky* is closely linked to a pre-existing work, in this case to Pier Paolo Pasolini's masterpiece of Italian neorealist cinema, *Accattone* (1961). Basing her episodes in large part on incidents within Pasolini's narrative, sharing his preference for street actors over professionals, and structuring many of her shots in memory of his, Moffatt, like her mentor, evolves a form of realism that refutes naturalism. Yet in reprising his world of social marginals, Moffatt, not surprisingly, substitutes the mother-whore for his pimps. Her chief protagonist thus becomes a pregnant woman, her figures of institutional authority nuns, and her workers auto predators. In switching her focus from one gender to another, Moffatt undermines the mockery implicit in the refrain sung jestingly by one of Pasolini's men about his 'meal ticket', turning the implication of the phrase 'up in the sky', which she adopts as her title, from denigration to approbation. The last photograph in the series depicts the young Aboriginal suitor (father?) as a tiny figure dwarfed by the parched rolling hills. In contrast to that of his forbear in Pasolini's film, an unmitigated solitariness, not death, is his destiny. Given that Moffatt's ambiguously ironic pastiche is not shorn of pathos, it recalls the recent fiction of Sam Shepard and other devotees of the contemporary American West. Where the West (Outback) was formerly constructed in terms of archetypes and as a site of the mythic, these contemporary rewritings present it as ineluctably subject to the historicity of representation. Consequently, what formerly was parsed as alienation now takes on another colouration. Étienne Balibar persuasively argues that contemporary society has 'moved from the thematics of alienation to the thematics of alterity; the sign has been reversed. It is no longer a question of alienating oneself or overcoming one's alienation,' he contends, 'but instead of knowing what one makes of alterity.'[1] In the mixed-race society of *Up in the Sky*, race relations per se are not the issue, alterity has multiple referents, multiple castes.

Counterpointing the oneiric existentialism that is the fate of the lone male, a sense of community—albeit a fragile and provisional one—coheres around the woman and child, who are always depicted as socialised, integrated as opposed to marginalised. If Shepard's fiction explodes the myth of the West to demonstrate that it lives on only in the imaginary, as an existentialism available only via reverie, Pasolini's oeuvre is branded with the conviction that entry into the social order is the equivalent of death. Equivocating between these related visions, *Up in the Sky* presents its chief protagonists as ultimately trapped in the antimony between the universal and the historical, the condition and the conditioned, the transcendental and the empirico-historical.

The linear narrative of *Accattone* automatically becomes more elliptical when translated into the static medium of photography, but Moffatt renders it more disjunctive by her treatment of character and, above all, space and place. Her protagonists, too, remain strangely impersonal, aloof even in close-up, but, in contrast to the Italian's, her miscellaneous vistas resist being reconciled into a single location. The discontinuity of the pictorial space precludes the positing of a unitary, coherent identity to this terrain, which becomes a social space where people seem inadvertently to have ended up, as distinct from a desired destination. Not no-where in that it is a place marked by particularity even if divested of identity, this alienated nonplace is a heterotopic space, a space that has lost its homogeneity and forfeited its systems of interconnections. Linkages here depend on movements of affectivity, on attempts to group and unite—to act collectively—irrespective of how limited, tentative, contingent, and temporary such attempts must inevitably prove.

The majority of divergent allusions that make *Up in the Sky* so visually rich are derived from cinema, from both its commercial and fine-art modes.[2] Formally, Moffatt also plays with standard cinematic techniques. Images in this series, in particular, seem filmic in that, however elusive the narrative, their unfolding is more important than the link each has to its referent, whereas the opposite is the case with still photography, in which the individual representation typically appears more tightly tied indexically to its source, to what was but no longer is. This cinematic effect is reinforced by the slightly fuzzy quality of the printing, which divests the motifs of the precise definition that in photography conventionally stresses its indexicality, its specificity and actuality. On occasion, Moffatt puts illusionism further into question in what is becoming a more subtle language of self-disclosing artifice in comparison with her former highly stylised idiom. For example, in several images the bystanders bemusedly look directly at the camera, and hence to the very place occupied by the viewer. Elsewhere, the ground is arbitrarily and vertiginously tilted as if to correspond to a player's point of view but the subject is never identified. Or, a medium shot of a scene of the mother bathing in a child's wading pool is unaccountably bisected by a foregrounded pole. This rephrasing of standard cinematic camera angles or setups disorients and destabilises, underlining Moffatt's characterisation of this location as a social limbo, and, consequently, reinstating her burgeoning preference for the conjectural over closure.

The larger canvas limned in *Up in the Sky* has an epic quality new to Moffatt's oeuvre. Overlaying the photographic and filmic, and mass-cultural as well as high-art idioms, Moffatt has developed a synthetic polyglot style, which is at once referentially apposite and finely attuned technically for probing the complex relations between the ontological condition and the sociohistorical. By the artist's own account, her prime motivation is a desire for images.[3] As a survey of her art over the past decade reveals, this voracious appetite purloins a compendious farrago of media, modes, and norms of representation. Certain subjects or stories, usually stemming from childhood, act as catalysts. While originating in personal experience, they are never confined to the autobiographical, but depend upon the realm of collective memory. The heterogeneous borrowings, quotations, and parodic rewritings in which they are manifest reinforce this locus in the contemporary imaginary. For although Moffatt, like Pasolini, is a pasticheur as much by passion as by calculation, her subject is ultimately, and always, the historicity of representation.

1 Étienne Balibar, 'Globalization/Civilization 1', *Politics—Poetics: documenta X—The Book*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Cantz, 1997, p.783.

2 Pasolini's other works, most notably *Oedipus Rex* (1967), are particularly relevant to this analysis.

3 See Tracey Moffatt, 'Fever Pitch', in *Tracey Moffatt: Fever Pitch*, Gael Newton (ed.), Annandale: Piper Press, 1995, pp.5–6.



UP IN THE SKY, 1997, series of 25 photolithographic prints
















































from ***PET THANG***, 1991, series of 6 colour photographs





from ***LAUDANUM***, 1998, series of 19 phogravure prints on rag paper









INDOLENTIA, OR FREEDOM FROM FEELING

LARA STRONGMAN

Tracey Moffatt's *Laudanum* (1998) is a crime scene. In an isolated Victorian colonial mansion, a murderous drama between two women is being played out. The house is tightly shuttered. It is a camera obscura, a dark chamber in which a white society woman and her Asian servant are held captive under the influence of the drug laudanum. Initially languid and indolent, the mood quickly becomes menacing. Pursued by shadows and claw-like hands, the maid is subjected to the increasingly violent sado-masochistic whims of her mistress. Moffatt's camera peers through windows and snoops at keyholes, the sole witness to a Gothic tale of power and persecution.

Laudanum is pure Victorian melodrama. From the opening shot of the imperious mistress descending the sweeping staircase while the maid scrubs the floor—a Herculean task akin to that of the Kwong sisters in Moffatt's *Scarred for Life II* (1999), who are punished by being compelled to cut the lawn with scissors—the story descends further into sexual depravity and violence. The Asian maid's head is pushed down to a table and her hair forcibly shorn by her maniacal mistress. Following an ambiguous sexual encounter she is thrown to the floor and slumps insensible in a corner. Her body is finally bundled and tied with rope, to be left in the entrance hall like a sack of laundry.

The series appears like stills from a silent movie—stagey images which have lost their imaginary intertitles ('Aha! The she-devil rises from the flames!' 'The innocent maid is ravished by the demon poppy juice!'). *Laudanum*'s parable of virtue overcome by vice was a hallmark of the Victorian melodrama, a popular form of entertainment descended, through baser hands, from the Gothic novel and Romantic epic poetry. Like the first silent movies, melodrama is a theatre of endpoints, where character development is subsumed by a plot-driven narrative. Good is pitted against evil: failure is a close cousin of success. Moffatt's first excursion into the genre was her epic *Something More* (1989), in which a heroine from the back blocks—significantly in relation to the Asian victim of *Laudanum,* wearing a cheongsam or traditional Chinese dress —dreams of a better life, but finds only violent death on the road to the big city.

A member of the first generation to grow up with TV, Moffatt is a lover of the genres of popular culture. She describes 'a whole 1960s childhood and 1970s adolescence spent glued to the television or with my nose in a book. I took in everything from the schlock to the sophisticated....' Drawn to spectacle, she cites the influences of her childhood as 'violence in sport... big budget Disney technicolour works of art... the English Classics... *Phantom* and *Archie* comics, cheap detective novels and lurid *Mandingo* books.'[1] Moffatt has dealt with contemporary melodramatic spectacles in various genres: sports photography (*Fourth,* 2001), Roller Derby (*Guapa (Goodlooking),* 1995), surf movies (*Heaven,* 1997), and animated horror cartoons (*Invocations,* 2000). *Laudanum*'s points of reference include Victorian pornography, Russ Meyer-esque 'vixen horror' movies, and the opium-induced nightmares which scarred the lives of nineteenth-century Romantic poets—the first artists to champion the creative potential of laudanum.

The alcoholic tincture of opium, laudanum was as commonly available in the nineteenth-century as aspirin is today. It was prescribed as a medicine for a variety of ills, from the trifling to the life-threatening: among the Romantic poets, who used laudanum for its visions of other worlds and earthly paradises, Samuel Taylor Coleridge took it initially for a stomach complaint, while Thomas de Quincey, author of *Confessions of an Opium Eater,* took it first for toothache. Laudanum was given to fretful Victorian babies to keep them quiet, and in the proprietry mixtures of Mother Bailey's Quieting Syrup, Godfrey's Cordial and Black Drop, laudanum —cheaper than gin—was commonly available to the industrial working classes as a respite from the drudgery of their existence. Addiction to laudanum was particularly common among women, for whom it was used to control 'hysteria' and other female ailments.

'Indolence' was Samuel Taylor Coleridge's favoured euphemism for laudanum, which he took in copious quantities between 1796 and 1821. Indolence, for Coleridge, meant freedom from feeling, its original Latin denotation: an artificial release from both physical pain and spiritual suffering. It was a sense of pleasant detachment from the cares of the world, where the moral will was submerged in a flood of visions and hallucinations—'a green spot of fountains, and flowers and trees, in the very heart of a waste of Sands.'[2] Induced by laudanum, indolence was a state in which artistic inspiration was made possible.

Indolence, however, had its dark side. In 1802, as his fondness for laudanum became full-blown addiction, Coleridge wrote to fellow poet Robert Southey of his opium-induced nightmares, describing:

> the fiendish Crowd
> Of Shapes and Thoughts that tortur'd me!
> Desire with Loathing strangely mixt,
> On wild and hateful Objects fixt.

His friend Joseph Cottle, to whom Coleridge had confessed 'slavery to opium', warned him sternly to abjure the drug. He wrote, 'All around you behold the wild eye! the sallow countenance! the trembling hand! the disordered frame! And yet will you not be awakened to a sense of your danger, and I must add, your guilt?' Cottle might as well have been describing the crazed anti-heroine of Tracey Moffatt's photoseries, *Laudanum,* whose feverish demeanour owes much to accounts of the Romantic poets' wilder abuses.

The hallucinatory opium-clouds of Coleridge's poetry rise again in Moffatt's photographs. Printed using the photogravure technique—a nearly obsolete method which combines etching and black and white photography—the images are faded and indistinct, as if belonging to the more primitive technologies of an earlier age. This creates a sense of strange emotional distance, like scenes glimpsed in a dream as if underwater or behind gauze. Using the fade-dissolve convention of horror movies, where the vertical hold slips sideways, the image itself is distorted at moments of crisis in the story, while the face of a looking glass is occluded like a murky pond. Mirroring the savagery of the narrative, violence has likewise been done to the surface of the images, which have been stained and scratched as if in a frenzy.

Like the Roller Derby rink of *Guapa*, *Laudanum*'s Victorian mansion is a closed female world suffused with violence. Unlike *Guapa,* though, where the struggle is for bodily dominance of the game between equal opponents, or *Lip* (1999), Moffatt's compilation of Hollywood film clips of black servant characters answering back, the Victorian maid never has a chance. Drugged by her mistress, she literally loses control of herself, and is subjugated to the dark will of the opium. Similar struggles for ownership of the body, and dominance over the mind, have made regular appearances in Moffatt's work. In *Up in the Sky* (1997), somewhere nameless out in the desert an Aboriginal man and a white man wrestle endlessly in the heat and dust. 'Her father's nickname for her was *"useless"*', reads the byline of an image from *Scarred for Life* (1994); while elsewhere in the series of small suburban tragedies, a daughter cops a brutal backhander from her mother on Mother's Day. It is worth noting here that while the moral high-ground of the melodrama is conventionally occupied by the heroine, Moffatt's villains, as well as her victims, are just as likely to be female, and the emotional heart of an image as often belongs to a male character.

For the nineteenth-century Romantic poets, indolence—or opium taken in the form of laudanum—was a state of mind beyond emotion, where the world of appearances dissolved and the shadowy realm of the imagination emerged. Opening the door to what Gaston Bachelard has described as sleep's 'inn for phantoms', indolence was a waking dream, allowing an artist the emotional distance to observe and record without foreclosure of the moral will that might come from participation in real life. It offered freedom from feeling: the ability to hold the world at one remove. In the twentieth-century, such artistic distance became the war correspondent's ethical dilemma: whether to intervene at the scene, and ruin the picture, or instead to capture the image and with it the emotional empathy of the viewer—and by so doing, possibly change the future.

For Moffatt, who has pictured herself as a war photographer,[3] the struggle for personal identity and self-determination is a battlefield. While temporary freedom from feeling is a necessary part of the artistic process, Moffatt's images of human tragedies, from the suburban frailties of *Scarred for Life* to the operatic nightmare of *Laudanum,* defy the viewer to maintain a similar emotional distance.

1 Tracey Moffatt, 'Fever Pitch', in *Tracey Moffatt: Fever Pitch*, Gael Newton (ed.), Annandale: Piper Press, 1995, pp.5–6.

2 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, letter to George Coleridge, March 1798. Quoted in Molly Lefebure, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Bondage of Opium*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1974, p.56.

3 For the billboard which advertised her exhibition at the Dia Center for the Arts, New York City, in 1997, Tracey Moffatt art-directed an image entitled 'Artist at Work', in which, dressed in fatigues and festooned with cameras, she features as a war correspondent emerging from the field.



from ***INVOCATIONS***, 2000, seriesf 13 photo-silkscreens printed with ultraviolet inks on textured Somerset satin paper

INVOCATIONS

JANE RANKIN-REID

In mainstream cinema's story line, artistic visionaries are often the first to register spiritual transformation. Historically, however, they have been trivialised by relentlessly superficial portrayals of creative expression. Many of the twentieth-century's finest artistic moments, not to mention their cultural intentions or lasting effects in our society, have failed to galvanise the film industry sufficiently to make it worthwhile bank-rolling the idea of an artist as a compelling character in the modern fable. As cinema eases into its second century of existence as an art form, contemporary photography seizes every opportunity to re-examine the multiple frame's artistic symbolisation of emotional momentum in our society. This is the opulent vein in which Tracey Moffatt's *Invocations* (2000) exposes the paradox of film and television's inescapable grip on the disposition of spirituality in the modern imagination.

In endeavouring to characterise the 'ecstatic' in contemporary mythology, it may be worth considering the idea of God staring into the cooling waters of His bathtub the day before He finished building Earth. His oblique reflection would provoke a question which has preoccupied artists' imaginations thenceforth throughout history. God's challenge to portray His benign majesty stipulated that He had to look like somebody who mattered. The search was on for an iconic sensation of His unseen presence. One of Art's toughest jobs in the Christian millennium has been to summons the sacred revelation of His all pervasive being, without quite enough access to the Lord's own profile to make it profitable, particularly in today's world.

Tracey Moffatt's *Invocations* remind us that God's elusiveness has been at his own expense. Her imagery of rapture and retribution suggest that although the angels have fared beautifully and the saints have had their share of the pictorial foreground, God's unseen look has dated considerably because of His obsession with media privacy. In summonsing His guarded omnipotence, Moffatt lumps this god amongst many into a disharmonious cast of supernatural forces dramatising her visual ideas of ethereal transformation.

A suite of thirteen photographic based images, *Invocations* unites multi-layered silk-screens to loosely narrate a series of spiritual revelations and erotic awakenings. Televisual symbols of catastrophe, lust, illumination and vengeance animate *Invocations*' turgid race of good against evil. To increase the sensory presence of all-powerful metaphysical forces, Moffatt uses pre-loved classical dramas from popular media's memory files. Consequently, *Invocations*' illumination of non-denominational religiosity finally drags neo-classical ideals of enlightenment out of the Victorian dining room and onto the desert's sandy floor.

The images in *Invocations* are infused with the contents of a number of mythological caskets. Moffatt's treatment of culturally malignant avengers and divine operators haunts her subjects with multiple symbolic powers. In compelling them to embrace archetypal Freudian fears, Moffatt brings high pitched sentiment to her vocabulary of anguish and enchantment, adding substantially to the serialisation of the desert's unfolding melodrama. In populating her scenarios with black men, women and children instead of the perma-tanned daytime TV stars, Moffatt insinuates mainstream media's operatics into the lives of all viewers, not just some white ones. In this overdue cultural shift bearing down on television's midday ratings, Moffatt's heroines are photographed draped in clinging satin or demure children's frocks, disabusing many conventional desert stereotypes in the bargain.

An established film-maker, Tracey Moffatt has a unique ability to breed images which speed up the delivery of potent social messages. Moffatt's photography exposes the theatrical complexities of her narrative plot-points but a sense of impatience pervades *Invocations*' painstakingly layered visual reveries. Painting would be too slow for Moffatt's story-telling. Carefully fused tiers of colour, light and volume convert transient imagery into totemic emblems of fantasy at a ruthless pace throughout the *Invocations* series. Fortunately, Moffatt is at ease with her work's subjective piracy of artistic systems and entertainment industry style

values and there is much to be learned from her enlightened approach to image making.

Technically, her epic foreshortened staging is inspired by her directorial fascination with Nicolas Roeg's 1971 feature film, *Walkabout*. She was rapt to learn that the longest cinematic journey of personal interaction between Aboriginal and white Australians to date, was conducted on a beautifully painted set probably less than five metres wide. Roeg's controversial cartooning of the Australian outback has broadly influenced the formal development of Moffatt's stylised visual scenarios, emboldening her to extend the experience of daytime viewing into modern Aboriginal dreamings.

Suburbia and its televisual formula of truncated scenic vistas are significant elements in the artist's visual heritage. *Invocations* expands upon this rich theme by using popular cultural conventions to discover the symbolic effects of the mediation of spirits in the co-existent tribal soul. Equally, Moffatt's search for signs of female spiritual transformation embraces a number of modern literary destinies of iconic loneliness, alienation and the universal search for self. In her stories, Moffatt's luscious, unrepentant heroines become stylishly universal, metaphorically staring into the face of passion's catastrophic temperament.

In *Invocations* no.1, the fecund decay of the Gothic forests of Victorian panoramic painting, transcribed into popular memory through Disney animations, haunt a young girl lying on a bed of flowers. In the second, a voluptuous young woman leans suggestively against a telegraph pole as predatory crows circle overhead. Flash back to the third where a childish vision of a mysterious thatched cottage amidst the demonic forest, spreads welcoming light into the foreground. In the fourth, a woman's torso is at sea in an erotic rondo of heightened sexual tension. In the fifth, she's alone in the desert in a pink satin slip, cast against a cinematic sky filled with crows, while in the sixth, sexual and emotional turbulence melds clouds into drapery as three malignant forces struggle within. In the seventh in the series, a stalwart male reaches to the heavens with one hand while the other conceals his manhood in front of the young woman lying satiated at his feet. Cut to crones flapping overhead baited by leaping dingoes, then to devilish archangels lavishing an infant. In the tenth image, a young male leaps onto the back of the woman while a totemic crow flies overhead. In the eleventh, the girl child emerges from the demonic forest into the desert sunshine. As she turns towards the malignant arboreal powers in the twelfth of the images, she opens her arms wide in a gesture of redemptive salutation. The story consummates in the thirteenth *Invocations* as Moffatt's lens pans over an isometric image of the adults coupling.

Separately, *Invocations*' thirteen highly wrought scenarios compel a storyline alternating between a sugared fetishisation of courage and fear and a sexualisation of mythologised heroism. Yet as an artistic idea, *Invocations* is as provocative as it is sanguine. When Tracey Moffatt embroils her visions of celestial fields into a cataclysmic lap dance with Hades' diabolic inferno, she invests modern household cussing with an entirely new layer of artistic meaning.

EVERY 1'S A WINNER

CUSHLA PAREKOWHAI

Everyone's a winner baby. That's the truth. And I should know, I was one. Once.

Can't remember exactly how the day began but it was one of those compulsory occasions in adolescent life over which the fourteen year old emergent individual has no control. The Combined Cross Country at our local High School was such an event. Here despite passionate protestations of menstrual incapacitation or the imminent attack of asthma, the spirit of participation and co-ed fellowship was unilaterally enforced. The student body was obliged, unless excused by death or some such other debilitating act of God, to assemble promptly at the start of Period Two on the top field outside the main hall. There in the middle of the newly mown grass surface running track we happy few were herded together according to age, athletic inclination and ability to follow verbal instruction, to collectively embrace the joy of sport.

'Attention School. Attention,' intones the intercom, 'would those boys from 3B stop that immediately.' A group of youths gesturing obscenely at Mr Reece, Associate Head of English, amateur photographer and World War II fighter pilot, ignore the loud speaker entirely, 'the next event is the Fourth Form Girls Junior Cross Country. Competitors are advised to take their places at the start.' Young women in regulation running gear with optional footwear mill vaguely around the creosote finish line.

'The rest of School', continues the loud speaker, 'are to remain where they are and be seated.' At which point the second year sixths amble off to recline under a couple of trees.

'Right you lot,' orders Oberleutnant Lillie retired British Marine, suspected sadist and PE teacher, 'fall in.' Waving a gun with unnerving professional precision Lillie clears his throat, 'On your marks, get set.' The starting pistol explodes with a crack. In fleeting unison the nubile female field surge forward for a quick lap around the track before swinging out of the school gate and off down the road. Lickety split.

Except two that is. Myself and a fat, pink faced, special needs girl called Patricia who lived in her own world but who had taken a shine to me. One wet afternoon, while attempting to board an overcrowded school bus, we had been left behind by a driver who refused to admit us on the grounds that kids today were really pissing him off.

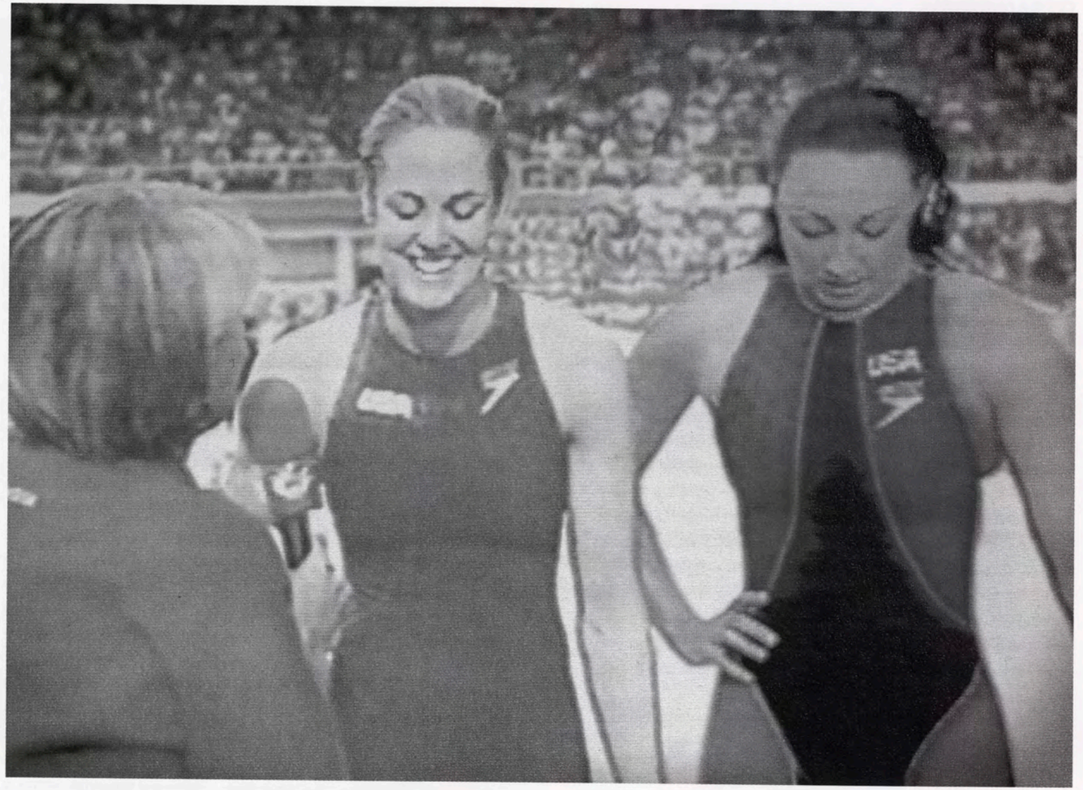
Patricia began to wander. Her direction entirely opposed that of the general field and I, being as I was even in those days a champion of the disadvantaged, nobly determined to follow her. 'Would those girls still to make a start get a move on,' complained the loud speaker, 'Form Three Boys to your marks please.'

Patricia and I strolled the first 400 metres but once out of the school grounds neither of us knew which way to go. Given that the most likely course would require young people to exert themselves in pointless feats of physical prowess the most logical route was off the beaten track. The two of us ended up in Kauri Glen stumbling along a narrow path managing only once to fall in the creek which ran beside the track. Not far ahead the bush was brilliantly lit by the sun. We struck out for this spot only to emerge from the regenerating scrub in a remote corner of a football pitch. In the distance was the slope which led to the athletics track. Scrambling up Patricia and I supported each other until breasting the hill, we arrived.

'And now here come the first two runners in the Fourth Form Girls Junior Cross Country.' Rapturous cheering erupted. 'Well done those girls,' echoed the loud speaker.

This can't be happening, I thought.

And it wasn't.



from ***FOURTH***, 2001, series of 26 colour ink prints on canvas

FOURTH

TRACEY MOFFATT

The story behind my latest photoseries *Fourth* begins in 1997. It was the year that I started to have a lot of international shows of my photography and films. I was told that someone from the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games Committee had telephoned and asked about the possibility of me, being available as the 'official photographer' for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. I expressed interest but after a while I didn't hear back from them. This didn't disappoint me; it only got my imagination going. I fantasized that if I really were to be the 'official photographer' for the Sydney 2000 Olympics I would photograph the sporting events with my own take on it all—I would photograph the losers.

I imagined myself walking into the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games committee offices, plonking a stack of photographs on their desk saying, 'This is what I saw!' They would be looking at images of every athlete who came last. I figured that much of the press would be full of fabulous winners, splashed across the front pages of newspapers all around the world. Wouldn't it be more wonderful instead to see images of the brilliant athletes who didn't make it? Of course none of this happened. To begin with I can barely use a camera with a telephoto lens, let alone push for a spot in the 'press pit' along with thousands of sports photographers from around the world crowding together to photograph the drama of the Olympic Games.

So, at home, alone, in September 2000, there was just me and the television coverage of the Games. It was then that I narrowed my interest down to the position of Fourth. What could be more tragic than coming Fourth in the final of an Olympic games race? It's sadder than coming last because when you come Fourth you have just missed out on a medal. You almost made it, but you just missed out. Fourth means that you are almost good. Not the worst (which has it's own perverted glamour) but almost. Almost a star!

Most of the key moments captured in the twenty-six images which make up *Fourth* are the acute moment when the athlete has just finished their final, turning or looking to see the outcome, and finding out the result… that they came Fourth! Most of the time the expression is expressionless, it's a set look, which crosses the human face. It's an awful, beautiful, knowing mask, which says 'Oh s…t!'

Believe me, it wasn't easy to find these moments since most of the press coverage couldn't care less about anyone in Fourth position after a race. The camera always swings past them onto the winner. I had to concentrate and grab these moments.

My photoseries *Fourth* is no great document of the Sydney 2000 Olympics. I think I'm trying to say something grand about competition in general. That it's beautiful to try. That to reach a final at an Olympic Games is a great achievement. To even be invited to participate in the Olympic Games is a great achievement. To even be athletic in general is a great achievement. To get yourself up and walk down the street is a great achievement. To wake up and face another hideous day is a great achievement. To even think about what you are going to do in the next hour is a great achievement. I could go on and on. Like I said, I have a different take on it all.

New York, 2001

CAST DOWN: TRACEY MOFFATT'S *FOURTH*

ELIZABETH KNOX

In 2000, the artist Tracey Moffatt sat through hours of Olympic Games coverage in order to select a few telling shots of competitors who came fourth in their events.

The men and women of *Fourth* (2001) are like the children and adolescents of *Scarred for Life* (1994)—the girl whose mother has just handed her a copy of her birth certificate; the boy caught giving birth to a doll, his friend as midwife. *Scarred for Life*'s terrible, formative moments appear as though remembered by the people they happened to—the adopted girl, or the boy suspected of strange inclinations. What *Scarred for Life* and *Fourth* share is a sense that their subjects are recreating a moment, looking back and reflecting on something that changed them, something they have to learn to live with. The children and adolescents of *Scarred for Life* seem to muse on the meaning of the moment they are in. *Scarred for Life* tells us that to remember is to realise again, and to feel a stain sink deeper in. Although the images of *Scarred for Life* are acted and art directed, and those of *Fourth* are found then processed, they are *alike*. *Fourth*'s people too are simultaneously living their moment, and remembering it.

The background of each image is whited out. The world behind the fourths is ghostly, dissolving or receding, though the subjects themselves are sharply solid. Perhaps this is the way these people will recall their moment—the spectators' attention has gone elsewhere, but they are caught, self-conscious, and solid with shame.

These faces and bodies, are, for the most part, bleak and exhausted. These people have been selected by something other than that they went looking for—singled-out, not by success, or even by anything as unequivocal as failure, but by an *almost* that they are alone with.

Here is a young man in the pool. The loose straps of his goggles dangle, seeming to suspend the heavy lids of his half-closed eyes. The men beside him—happy, triumphant—are like a newspaper photo; they have faded into document, a documented moment. The fourth will soon be cropped out of this congratulatory group. They are rearing up out of the water, their arms free and in motion. He is submerged to his chin. He is sinking—sinking out of the public moment into the private, a moment already beginning to play itself again, a defining moment, the stain of disappointment.

Now that his race is over, the runner closes on himself, though he accepts the touch of a hand that goes out to meet his. The winner's body is still expanding into his moment, he is reaching out to the world, to the other runners. But the fourth's hand scarcely leaves his side, it is as if he feels he has less right to occupy the space, no right to throw his arms open and gather in the air. He is contracting, retrenching, conserving his energy. He has run the race and gone the distance. But he has to do it all again to get what he desired. Triumph is still so close that it seems possible. But he has to do it all again.

The runner stands beside her team-mate, the place-getter. Perhaps they are being interviewed. The winner glows, like history, like an old news-reel ghost. She is smiling. Both women have their eyes cast down—the winner modestly. But the fourth is *herself* cast down. She shares her team-mate's moment of glory, she breathes the air of excellence, because of her *almost*, her fine effort—but she is thinking, considering her shortcomings, considering what to do next. We can see her thinking, and beginning to learn to live with it.

Two divers enter the water like inverted trophies, like statuettes plunged back into the smelter, their figures melting, perhaps to be re-cast as something more ordinary. (Even when you can't see these people thinking, deciding how to feel, it appears that decisions are being made for them by the strange incandescent material world with which the artist has surrounded them.)

In the group shot the team-mates won't meet each other's eyes, they are inclined away from one another—alone with it—each thinking that he's let the others down. (The backgrounds of all these pictures have become heroic murals, against which the fourths are posed, not fallen, and not ascended either—only cast down and doomed to keep on looking up at all the raised arms.)

The diver is holding his breath behind the barrier of his stiff lips—he might need it later, for though he has completed his dive, it was a wasted effort, and he can't yet come up for air.

Surrounded by the jubilant, the sprinter isn't entitled to wave, to take a big scoop of the white air. What has *he* to share? How can you share 'almost', its uncertainty, its indecision—the banal *drag* of 'not quite'? 'Yes' and 'no' are something. What is 'not quite'? How do you digest it?

There are good-natured, game acknowledgements of effort. The runner waves, his hand at the level of his head. He is polite and dignified. People have supported him—his gesture is for those who cheered while he ran.

The group, sitting together like refugees, are stopped, no longer expectant, only enduring together, mute and apparently attentive to their surroundings, not making a fuss, and not fussed over. They are *there*, there with the winners, but not quite. They all wear masks of *learning to live with it*.

These fourths could be anybody from anywhere. Gender and nationality and race have been distilled out of them by their situation, their condition of 'not quite'. Where is the logic in it? Why first, second, and third? Why only three? But we have all agreed on three—so here are the fourths, at the end of their events, and the end of their expectations—their hopes—and the beginnings of their journeys. They are asking themselves: 'How will I learn to live with this?'





Film stills from ***BEDEVIL***, 1993





Film stills from ***NIGHT CRIES: A RURAL TRAGEDY***, 1989

HALLUCINATION: NOTES ON THE AESTHETICS OF TRACEY MOFFATT'S FILM AND VIDEO WORK

CHRIS CHAPMAN

Since Moffatt's earliest works in the mediums of photography, film and video, the artist has been concerned with establishing illusory scenarios. Moffatt, who is perhaps best known for her globally recognised photoseries, has concurrently produced filmic works that relate to the form and content of her photographs. In 1989, she produced the film *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy*, and the nine-panel photowork *Something More*. Both works are regarded as classic examples of Moffatt's work, and they established a certain aesthetic approach in her practice.

While the works deal with Australian Aboriginal history, and identity politics, they reveal broader commentaries to do with understandings of the landscape, of mythology, of concepts of time and place. The narratives in *Night Cries* and *Something More* take place in a surreal and illusionistic space. Landscapes appear as painted sets. In this case, mountain ranges and brooding skies reference the iconic mid-twentieth century representations of the Australian outback by artists such as Russell Drysdale, Sidney Nolan, and the indigenous artist Albert Namatjira. These inclusions play with the generic and popularised conception of the outback, but they also firmly establish a sense of unreality. The photoseries *Something More* reads like a series of stills from an imaginary film, and possible narratives can only be guessed at. Importantly, the images themselves employ filmic conventions. The overall montage effect is supplemented by close-ups and middle-ground shots, motion blur and the suggestion of the freeze-frame, saturated colours as well as black and white images.

The 1993 film *beDevil* presents three stories in which characters are haunted by past events and memories, and sites in the landscape reveal supernatural occurences that seem to be played out endlessly. The narratives were inspired by ghost stories told among Moffatt's extended family (of Aboriginal and Irish descent) during her youth, and are presented in a hermetic and hyper-real manner.

Like *Something More,* Moffatt's photoseries of the late 1990s present a kind of serialised narrative. *Up in the Sky* (1997) again suggests drama in the outback, again framing images in a filmic manner: the establishing shot, cropped close-ups and expansive landscape vistas. Additionally, the imagery here evokes the aesthetic of the modern approaches to photography taken by Australian artists such as Axel Poignant and Max Dupain. The suggested narrative of the series *Invocations* (2000) is full of strange magic, and certain images suggest scenes from fairytales, others recall classic scenes from Hollywood, such as Alfred Hitchcock's 1963 movie *The Birds.* The 1998 series *Laudanum* takes Moffatt's surreality to an extreme. The hallucinogenic properties of the drug laudanum itself (a preparation of the narcotic drug opium) are manifest in the works via ghostly distorted imagery. The images are presented as faux nineteenth-century photographs, the themes of intoxication enhanced by the suggestion of the visual styles of classic surrealist and expressionist cinema.

Moffatt's 1997 video *Heaven* represented a shift in her practice. This humorous work, playing with a particular Australian archetype of masculinity, takes the form and appearance of a home-made video. The slight mis-registering and flare of colours are characteristic of the video medium. What's more, Moffatt's pans and zooms suggest the work of the amateur rather than accomplished cinematographer. But this approach fits neatly with Moffatt's subject matter. Heaven, it transpires, is the pleasure gained from secretly recording the buff torsos of male surfers as they towel themselves dry and change out of their wetsuits in a city beach carpark. The comedy of their ritualised behaviour, apart from Moffatt's capturing of flashes of nudity, reaches a climax when the artist films the men at close range, attempting to remove a modestly placed towel.

The video aesthetic is also apparent in Moffatt's set of images taken from television coverage of the 2000 Olympic Games, capturing the reactions of athletes who missed out on gold, silver and bronze medals. In *Fourth* (2001), Moffatt isolates her subjects by draining the drenched colours from their surrounds. There is a certain poignancy in their expressions of astonishment or resignation at their defeat, but significantly, they are unaware that this moment is being recorded, much like Moffatt's surfer boys. While Moffatt has previously appropriated the styles of other art forms, here she samples directly from the products of mass media.

This sampling method is also used in Moffatt's recent videos *Lip* and *Artist* (both 1999, collaborations with editor Gary Hilberg). *Lip* is a montage of sequences from Hollywood films depicting black women in the role of maids. Patricia Mellencamp, of the University of Wisconsin says of this work that 'these off-hand moments are biting criticism of racial stereotypes and, simultaneously, demonstrate that these wise-cracking maids were nobody's fool.'[2]

Moffatt's *Artist* samples from Hollywood to create a comedic sequence depicting the artist as a character herself. Including scenes that depict characterisations of the creative process, from Hollywood biopics through to the television show *Absolutely Fabulous,* the work reveals the idea of the artist in the popular imagination. Despite the humour, however, the role of art in society is central to the piece. As Moffatt states '*Artist* is a comedy-like critique of the artist's attitude, but also of the entire art scene, including the critics. For artists in general this means that it's about looking rather than writing. Paying attention to visual language.'[3]

1 Tracey Moffatt, quoted in Lynne Cooke, 'Free-falling', www.diacenter.org/exhibs/moffatt/essay.html.

2 Patricia Mellencamp, quoted on the Women Make Movies website, www.wmm.com/Catalog/pages/c475.html.

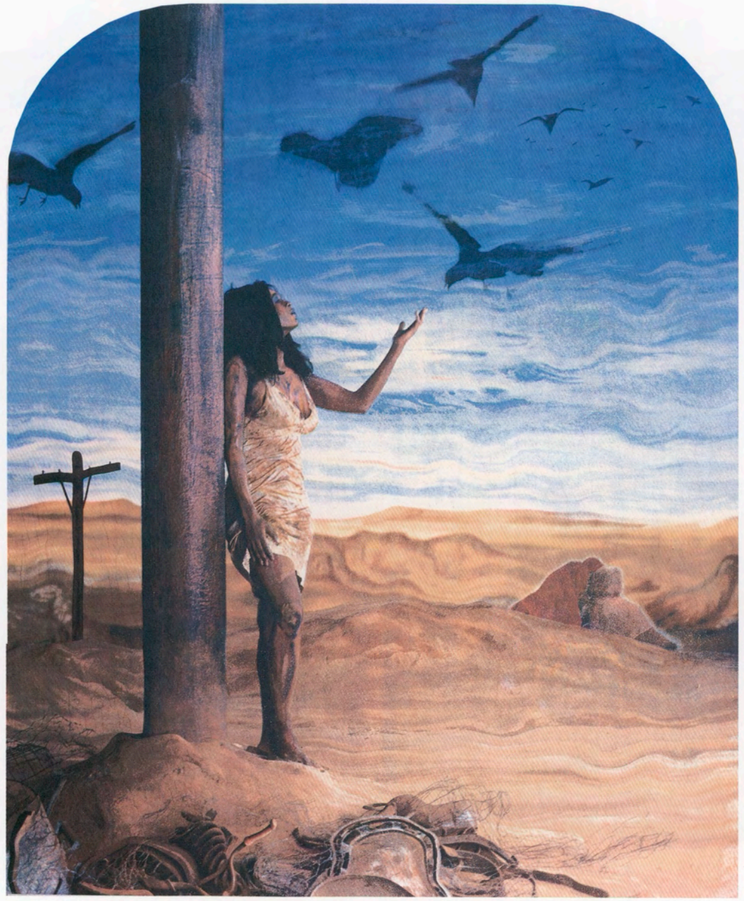
3 Tracey Moffatt, 'Less Words', interview by Boris Kremer, in Boris Kremer, *Audit*, Luxembourg: Casino Luxembourg Forum d'art contemporain, 2001, p.59.



from ***GUAPA (GOODLOOKING)***, 1995, series of 10 black and white photographs on chromogenic paper



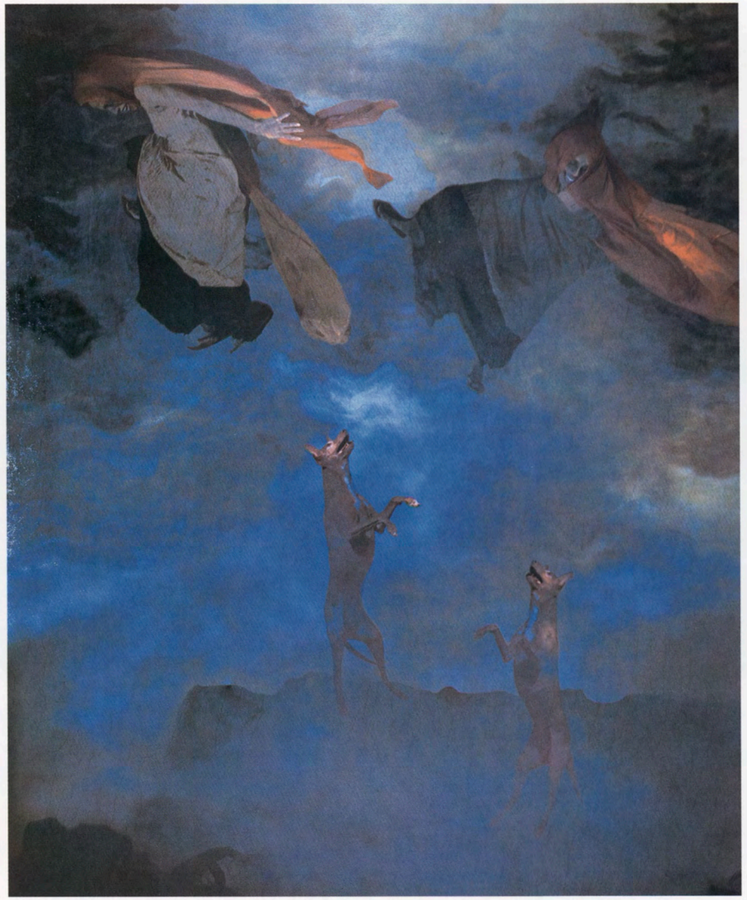




from ***INVOCATIONS***, 2000, series of 13 photo-silkscreens printed with ultraviolet inks on textured Somerset satin paper

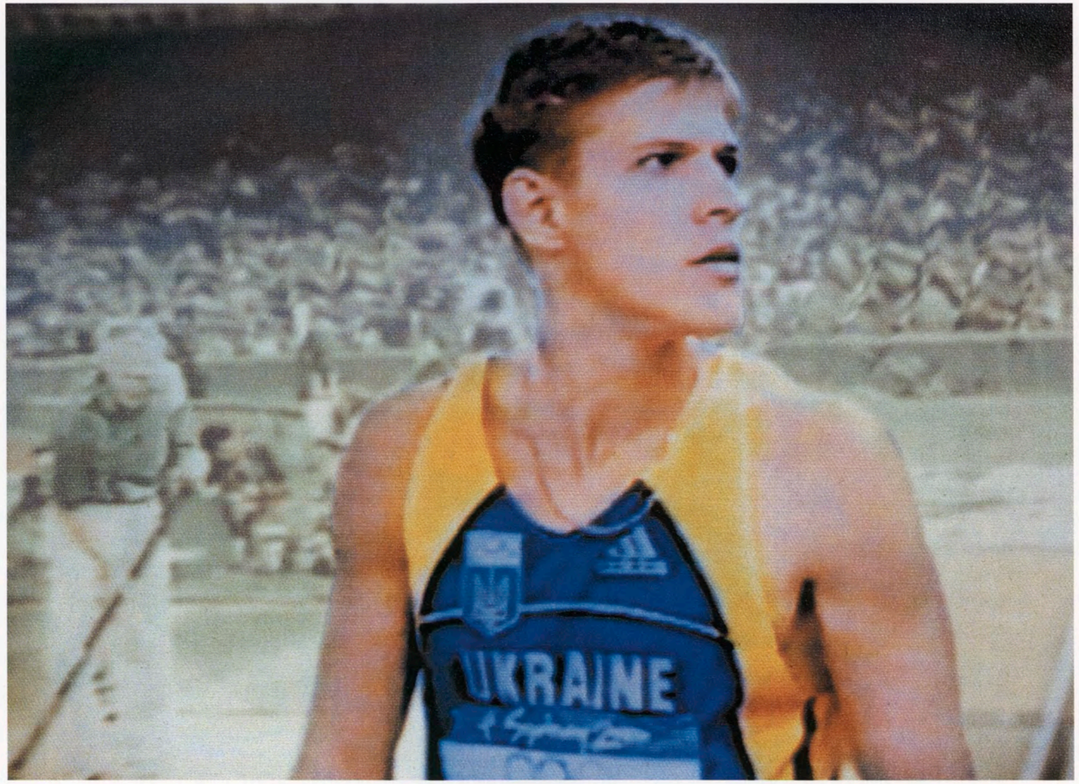














from ***FOURTH***, 2001, series of 26 colour ink prints on canvas


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TRACEY MOFFATT

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Brisbane in 1960, Tracey Moffatt studied visual communications at the Queensland College of Art, from which she graduated in 1982. Since her first solo exhibition in Sydney in 1989, Moffatt has shown her photographic work in numerous exhibitions internationally. She first gained significant critical acclaim for her film work, with the short film *Night Cries* selected for official competition at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival. Moffatt has also made documentary film and music videos. She is now based in New York.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2001
Fourth, Rebecca Camhi Gallery, Athens, Greece
Fourth, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Tracey Moffatt, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan
Invocations, Drill Hall Gallery, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia
Tracey Moffatt, Ausstellung im Kunstforum Baloise, Basel, Switzerland
Tracey Moffatt, Fruitmarket Art Gallery, Edinburgh, UK
Invocations, Victoria Miro Gallery, London, UK
Fourth, L.A. Galerie, Frankfurt, Germany
Fourth, Paul Morris Gallery, New York, USA
Tracey Moffatt, Nassau County Museum of Art, Roslyn, New York, USA; California Museum of Photography, Riverside, California, USA; University of North Texas Art Gallery, Denton, Texas, USA; Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, USA
Tracey Moffatt, Tensta Konsthal, Tensta, Sweden
Tracey Moffatt, Artsonje Centre, Seoul, Korea; Artsonje Centre, Kyongju, Korea
Invocations, Zinc Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden
Some Lads, Conner Contemporary Art, Washington DC, USA

2000
Invocations, Photo & Company, Torino, Italy
Scarred for Life II, Il Ponte Contemporanea, Rome, Italy
Scarred for Life II, Goddard de Fiddes, Perth, Australia
Scarred for Life II, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Tracey Moffatt, Rose Art Museum, Waltham, Massachusetts, USA
Tracey Moffatt, Yerba Buena Center, San Francisco, USA
Invocations, Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, USA
Laudanum, Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle, USA
Laudanum, Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo, Brazil
Laudanum, Robert Birch Gallery, Toronto, Canada
Invocations, Galerie Helga de Alvear, Madrid, Spain
Invocations, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Invocations, L.A. Galerie, Frankfurt, Germany
Tracey Moffatt, Kunstverein Freiburg im Marienbad, Germany; Nuer Leipziger Kunstverein, Leipzig, Germany
Tracey Moffatt, The National Museum of Photography, Copenhagen, Denmark; Gemeente Museum Helmond, Netherlands
Tracey Moffatt, Art & Public, Geneva, Switzerland
Tracey Moffatt, Artspace, Auckland; Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North, New Zealand

1999
Laudanum, Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle, USA; Paul Morris Gallery, New York, USA
Laudanum, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia; L.A. Galerie, Frankfurt, Germany
Laudanum, Victoria Miro Gallery, London, UK
Tracey Moffatt, Freiburger Kunstverein, Freiberg, Germany; Centre National de la Photographie, Paris, France; Galerie Laage–Salomon, Paris, France
Tracey Moffatt, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin, Germany
Laudanum, Rupertinum, Salzburg, Austria
Tracey Moffatt, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporain, Santiago de Compostela, Spain
Tracey Moffatt, Ulmer Museum, Ulm, Germany
Tracey Moffatt, Six Freidrich–Lisa Ungar Gallery, Munich, Germany
Tracey Moffatt, Torch Gallery, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Tracey Moffatt, Lawing Gallery, Houston, Texas, USA
Tracey Moffatt, *Up in the Sky*, Le Case D'Arte, Milano, Italy
Tracey Moffatt, Galeria Helgade Alvear, Madrid, Spain
Tracey Moffatt, Fundacío 'La Caixa', Sala San Juan, Barcelona, Spain
Free Falling, ICA, Boston, USA; Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, USA; Le Case D'Arte, Milano, Italy
Tracey Moffatt, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia and touring through Asia
Tracey Moffatt, Galleri Christian Larsen, Stockholm, Sweden

1998
Up in the Sky, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Tracey Moffatt, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; Curtin University Gallery, Perth, Australia; Monash University Gallery, Melbourne, Australia; Arte/GE Bozen/Bolzano, Italy; Le Case D'Arte, Milano, Italy; Il Ponte Contemporanea, Rome, Italy; L.A. Galerie, Frankfurt, Germany; Würtembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, Germany; Voralberger Kunstverein, Bregenz, Austria; Kunsthalle Vienna, Vienna, Austria; Voralberger Kunstverein, Bregenz, Austria
Tracey Moffatt, Galleri Larsen, Stockholm, Sweden
Tracey Moffatt, Victoria Miro Gallery, London, UK
Tracey Moffatt, Arnolfini, Bristol, UK
Free Falling, Renaissance Society, Chicago, USA

1997
Free Falling, Dia Center for the Arts, New York, USA
Tracey Moffatt, L.A. Galerie, Frankfurt, Germany; Galerie Andreas Weiss, Berlin, Germany; Galleri Faurschou, Copenhagen, Denmark; Casino Luxembourg, Belgium; Fond Régional d'Art Contemporain, Dijon, France
Tracey Moffatt: Films, Musee d'Art Contemporain, Lyon, France

1995
Guapa (Goodlooking), Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, Melbourne, Australia; Mori Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Short Takes, ArtPace, San Antonio, Texas, USA

1994
Scarred for Life, Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, Melbourne, Australia

1992
Pet Thang, Mori Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Tracey Moffatt, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, UK

1989
Something More, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, Australia (toured through regional galleries in Australia)

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2001
a person looks at a work of art…, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Victoria, Australia
::contagion::, Film Centre, Wellington, New Zealand
Feature: art, life and cinema, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand
LUMO 2001, Passion, International Photography Triennial, Jyväskylä Art Museum (Suoja), Gallery Harmonis, and the Museum of Central Finland, Finland
ARSO1, Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland
Trauma, Hayward Gallery with Dundee Contemporary Arts, London, UK
The Promise of Photography, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt
Collaborations with Parkett: 1984 to Now, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
Audit, Casino Luxembourg, Luxembourg
24th International Biennale of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia
Ohne Zögern/ Without Hesitation!, Neues Museum Weserburg, Bremen, Germany
World Without End, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, Australia
Telling Tales: The Child in Contemporary Photography, Campbelltown Bicentennial Art Gallery, Campbelltown; University of South Australia Art Museum, Adelaide; Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth and Warnambool Art Gallery, Warrnambool, Australia
Australian Art and Society 1901–2001, National Gallery of Australia, Australia
Zeitgenossische Fotokunst aus Australien, Stadtisches Kunstmuseum, Chenitz, Germany and Kulterzentrum der Stadt Stuttgart, Germany
Other People's Lives, Eyre/ Moore Gallery, Seattle, Washington, USA
Completing Identities, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, USA

2000
Raconter des Histories, Galerie Laage-Salomon, Paris, France
Paper Cuts, Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco, USA
Ring of Fire, Aotea Centre, Auckland, New Zealand
Deconstructivism—life back into art, David Pestorius Gallery, Brisbane, Australia
Deep Distance—Die Entfernung der Fotografie, Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland
Drive, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand
Veronica's Revenge, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Common Ground, University of Technology Gallery, Sydney, Australia
All Stars 2000, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
Aboriginal Art in Modern Worlds, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia; State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain
Sporting Life, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Photography Now, Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans, USA
Flight Patterns, Museum for Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA
Behind the Scenes, The Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, USA
12th Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, Australia
Logo Merino, National Wool Museum, Geelong, Australia
Rebecca Camhi Gallery, Athens, Greece
Zeitwenden, Kunstmuseum, Bonn, Germany
Zeitwenden, Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung, Ludwig Wien, Austria
Presumed Innocent, CAPC Musée d'Art contemporain de Bordeaux, France
Biennale de Lyon d'Art Contemporain, Lyon, France
Fotografos de los anos noventa en la collection CGAC, Sala Alameda de la Diputacion de Malaga, Malaga, Spain
Zeitgenossische Fotokunst aus Australien, Neuer Berliner Kunstverein Berlin, Germany; and Schlossmuseum, Velbert, Germany
High five, Galerie Schedler, Zurich, Switzerland
100 al 2000: il Secolo della Fotoarte, Fotology, Bologna, Italy
The Citibank Private Bank Photography Prize 2000, The Photographer's Gallery, London, UK
Mommy Dearest, Gimpel Fils, London, UK
8e Biennale de l'image en Mouvement, Centre pour l'image contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland
Artist Films, Kunstverein Munchen, Munich, Germany
Kinder im 20. Jahrhundert, Mitterlhein-Museum, Koblenz, Germany; Galerie der Stadt Aschaffenburg, Germany
Telling Tales: the child in contemporary photography, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne;

and Bendigo Art Gallery, Victoria, Australia
Contemporary Group Show, Fifty One Gallery, Antwepen, Netherlands

1999
girls girls girls, Galerie-Projektraum, Kunsthochule für Medien, Cologne, Germany
Konstruksjon eller virkelighet, Lillehammer Kunstmuseum, Lillenhammer, Norway
Life Cycles, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, Germany
From film, Victoria Miro Gallery, London, UK
La Casa, Il Corpo, Il Cuore, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Stiftung Kunst, Vienna, Austria
Full Exposure, New Jersey Center for Visual Arts, Summitt, New Jersey, USA
Wohin kein Auge reicht, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany
The Promise of Photography, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York; Kestner Gesellschaft, Hanover, Germany; Centre National de la Photographie, Paris, France; Galerie Schneider, Karlsruhe, Germany
Rosa für Jungs Weiss für Madchen, Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, Berlin, Germany
In de Ban van de Ring, Provencial Centrum voor beeldene Kunst, Hasselt, Belgium
Kunstwelden im Dialog, Museum Ludwig, Koln, Germany
Female, Wessel & O'Connor Gallery, New York, USA
Wonderland, Noorderlicht fotogalerie, Groningen, The Netherlands
Nuevas Visiones, Nuevas Passiones, Fundacion Marcelino Botin, Santander, Spain
A Sangre y Fuego, Espai d'art Contemporani de Castellon, Spain
Endzeit, Six Friedrich–Lisa Ungar, Munich, Germany
Telling Tales, Neue Galerie Gesellschaft für bildende, Germany
VII Biennale Internazionale di Fotografia, Turin, Italy
Macht und Fürsoge, Trinitatskirche Cologne, Germany
Missing Link, Menschebilder in der Fotografie, Kunstmuseum, Berlin

1998
Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Gent, Gent, Belgium
Family Viewing, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA
Portraits, Paul Morris Gallery, New York, USA
Echolot, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany
Foto Triennale Esslingen, Esslingen, Germany
Musée Départamantal d'Art Contemporain, Rochechouart, France
Artenergie—Art in Jeans, Palazzo Corsini, Florence, Italy
Die Nerven enden an den Fingerspitzen', Kunsthaus Hamburg, Germany
Presumed Innocence, Anderson Gallery, Richmond, USA
Strange Days: Guinness Contemporary Art Exhibition, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, Australia
Nature of Man, Lund Konsthall, Lund, Sweden
Roteiros' x7, XXVI Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil
Life is a bitch, De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Der Mensch (The Human Being), Kunstverein Schloß Plön, Germany
Pusan International Contemporary Art Festival, Pusan, Korea
Horizont, Brecht Haus am Wiesensee, Berlin, Germany
Fleeting Portraits, Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, Berlin, Germany

1997
Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy
Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, USA
Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London, UK
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia
Printemps de Cahors, Paris, France
Steierischer herbst 97, Graz, Austria
Site Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA
Campo 6, The Spiral Village, Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht, Netherlands
Subject to Representation, Gallery 101, Ottawa, Canada

1996
Fundacao Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil
Campo 6, The Spiral Village, Museum of Modern Art, Torino, Italy
Jurassic Technologies Revenant, 10th Biennale of Sydney, Australia
Prospect 96, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany
Short Stories, Altes Rathaus, Göttingen, Germany

1995
Antipodean Currents, Guggenheim Museum (Soho), New York, USA
Familiar Places, ICA, Boston, USA
'95 Kwangju Biennale, Kwangju, Korea
New Works 95.2, ArtPace, San Antonio, Texas, USA
Perspecta '95, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, Australia

1994
Antipodean Currents, The Kennedy Center, Washington, USA
Power Works, Govett-Brewster Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand
Eidetic Experiences (regional galleries tour, Queensland, Australia)

1993
The Boundary Rider, 9th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

1992
Artists' Projects, Adelaide Festival of the Arts, Adelaide, Australia

1991
From the Empire's End, Circulo de Bellas Artes, Madrid, Spain

1990
Satellite Cultures, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, USA

1988
Shades of Light, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia

1987
Art and Aboriginality, Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth, UK

1986
Aboriginal & Islander Photographs, Aboriginal Artists Gallery, Sydney, Australia

1984
Pictures for Cities, Artspace, Sydney, Australia

FILM AND VIDEO (WRITER/DIRECTOR)

1999
Artist, 10 minute experimental video (collaboration with Gary Hilberg)
Lip, 10 minute experimental video (collaboration with Gary Hilberg)

1997
Heaven, 28 minute video (commission—Dia Center for the Arts, New York, USA)

1995
My Island Home, Music Video (Christine Anu)

1994
Let My Children Be, Music Video (Ruby Hunter)

1993
The Messenger, Music Video (INXS)
beDevil, 90 minute feature drama (Official Selection Cannes 1993)

1989
Night Cries, 17 minute drama (Official Selection Cannes 1990)
It's Up to You, 9 minute health video

1988
Moodeitj Yorgas, 22 minute documentary
A Change of Face, three part documentary, SBS TV (co-director)

1987
Watch Out, 5 minute dance video, Film Australia
Nice Coloured Girls, 16 minute experimental film

PUBLIC FILM AND VIDEO COLLECTIONS

New York Public Library, New York, USA; National Library, Canberra, Australia; State Film and Video Library, Adelaide, Australia; Curtin University, Perth, Australia; Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia; Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia; University of Technology, Sydney, Australia; The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia; State Film Centre, Melbourne, Australia; West Australian Film Centre, Perth, Australia; Institute of Aboriginal Studies, ANU Canberra, Australia; Fundación 'La Caixa', Barcelona, Spain

PUBLIC PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS

Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA; Tate Gallery, London, UK; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, USA; Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA; Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, USA; Museet for Santidskunst, Oslo, Norway; Ministère de la Culture, Paris, France; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Tokyo, Japan; Bard College, Annandale on Hudson, New York, USA; Centre Galego de Arte Contemporanea, S. de Compostela, Spain; The National Museum of Photography, Copenhagen, Denmark; Ulmer Museum Ulm, Germany; Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich, Germany; Folkwang Museum, Essen, Germany; Louisiana Museum of Contemporary Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; Australian National Gallery, Canberra, Australia; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia; Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia; Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia; Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia; Monash University, Melbourne, Australia; Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia; National Library, Canberra, Australia; Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, Australia; Albury Regional Art Gallery, Albury, Australia; Waverly City Gallery, Mt. Waverly, Australia; National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, Australia; Tasmanian State Institute of Technology, Hobart, Australia; Albury Regional Art Gallery, Albury, Australia; Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, Australia; Curtin University, Perth, Australia; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, Australia; National Library, Canberra, Australia; Parliament House Collection, Canberra, Australia; Artbank, Sydney, Australia; University of Technology, Sydney, Australia; University of Wollongong, Wollongong, Australia; Tasmanian State Institute of Technology, Hobart, Australia; Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, Austria; Trinity College Art Collection, Melbourne, Australia

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Tumuke Pōneke
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Of Australian Aboriginal descent, Tracey Moffatt was born in Brisbane in 1960. She graduated from the Queensland College of Art in 1982 with a degree in visual communications. Since her first solo exhibition in Sydney in 1989, she has exhibited her work widely both in Australia and, increasingly, around the world. Her short film, *Night Cries* was selected for official competition at the 1990 Cannes Film Festival. She currently lives in New York.





8345
Tracey Moffatt
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