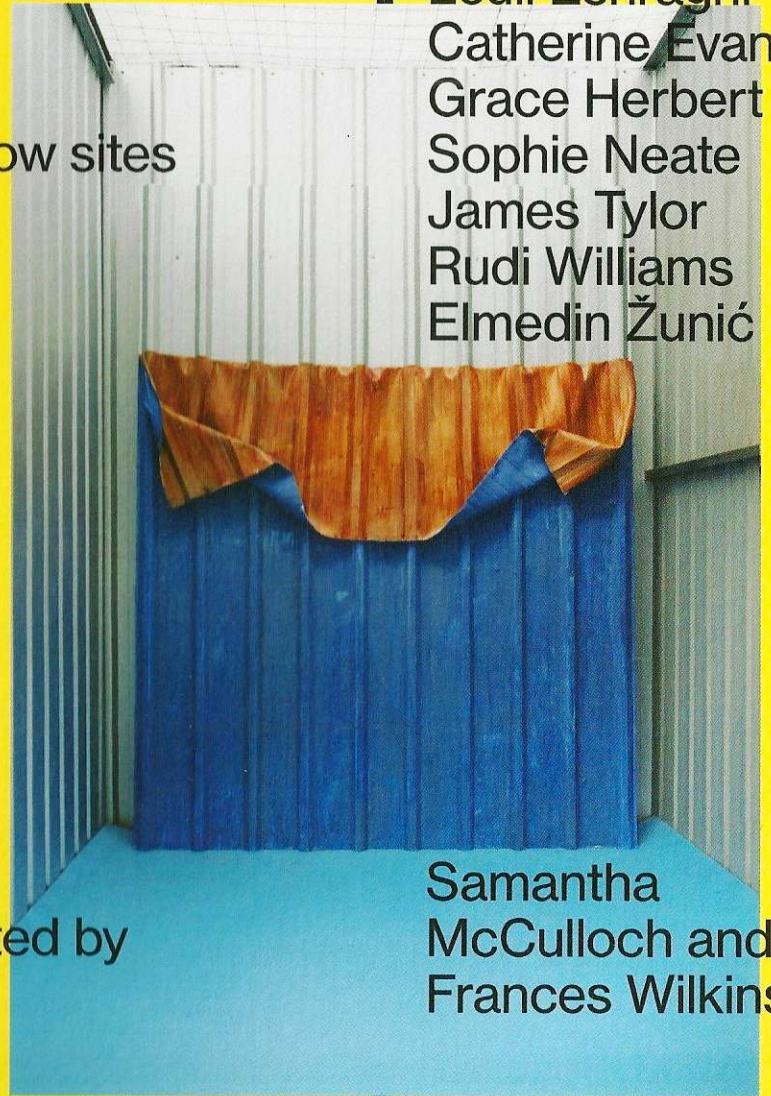


shadow sites

Léuli Eshraghi
Catherine Evans
Grace Herbert
Sophie Neate
James Tylor
Rudi Williams
Elmedin Žunić



Curated by

Samantha
McCulloch and
Frances Wilkinson

On the unconscious
of the exhibition
Notes on two sites—
Gallery Two and Unit X

The topography of Gallery Two both recalls and diverges from that of Unit X

1.3 km apart, about a 16-minute walk

Narrow and long, roughly four large footsteps across

At any time, in either space, the works on display are both whole and part

Photography can index the world. A *trace* bears similar properties; it marks an occurrence in the world. It is a scuff, a grease spot, an imprint or a photographic negative. Proceeding as a series of traces or indices, *shadow sites* activates two disparate, yet approximate sites, Gallery Two at the Centre for Contemporary Photography and Unit X, inside a nearby storage facility.

The exhibiting artists present work across these two locations. The fragmented works bear the traces of one another, but unlike photography's relationship to the world, there is no logical a priori, rather co-production. Insisting on ambiguity as opposed to didacticism, the works challenge the veracity of the photographic

image, opting for shadows, imprints, manipulated imagery and physical intervention.

Catherine Evans presents eight images on unfixed photographic paper. Their existence on the substrate is precarious, as the images fade in the ambient light of the gallery, taking on purple and blue hues and tones. Pictured is a volcanic rock stored in the garden of a friend. The rock functions as a metaphor for flesh, its geological form hauntingly human. *Memory Muscle* is informed by the application for the repatriation of First Nation Australian human remains from the Berlin Museum of Medical History at the Charité—Universitätsmedizin Berlin, back to their Indigenous custodians. In Unit X, the rock itself, transported from the garden, is laid on photographic paper. The paper, cut to the shape of the rock's shadow, gradually changes tone. *Memory Muscle* proceeds as a series of shadows and traces of itself, constituted by its relations with both specific and disparate places and times.

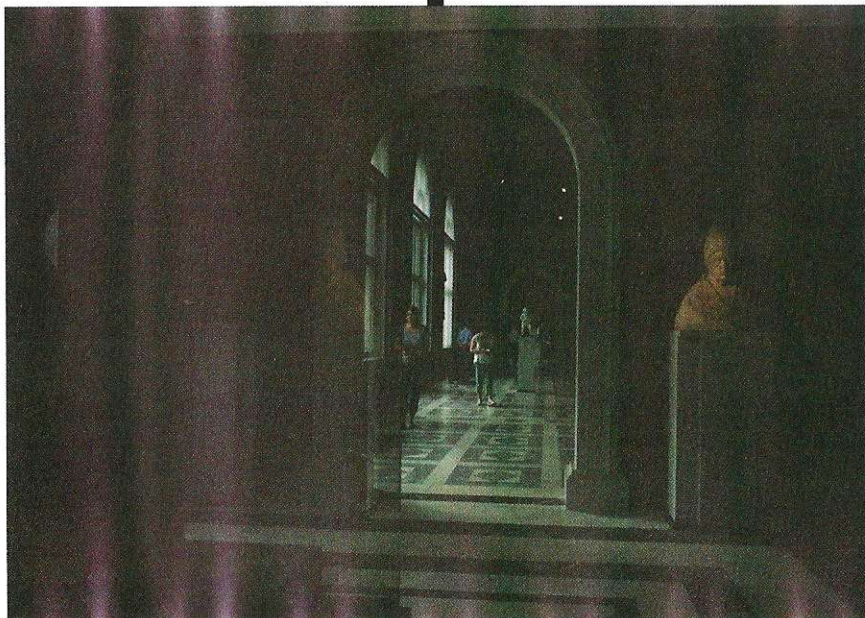
Concerned with conflicted and marginalised histories of place, James Tylor challenges dominant colonial histories of Australia using photographic methods. (*Deleted scenes*) From



an untouched landscape #12 depicts a ruptured photographic image of an undefined landscape. A circular cut-out reveals a rich velvet material beneath the image, alluding to the presence of the photographic lens in addition to the removal of psychological and physical territory. This action highlights the potential for imagery to be physically manipulated. His photographs, functioning as sculptural forms as well as two-dimensional images, are extended into space by a handcrafted wooden waddy (used for war,

fighting and hunting) and a drop spindle (used for stringing human hair and possum fur into string). Coated in black, both objects refer to traditional Indigenous practices but also, perhaps, to the photographic negative.

Using photography as a medium to mine and excavate types of images and processes of imaging in relation to specific and non-specific sites, Grace Herbert's *Ultra Spatial* depicts a marble quarry affixed to the surface of the wall in Unit X. The image absorbs the inconsistencies



and surface of the wall. Her accompanying slideshow on display in Gallery Two, documents Unit X. However, each image is slightly different as Herbert digitally manipulates the documentation, no record is ever quite the same.

Rudi Williams explores relations between architecture, psychological space and photography. *Curtain, Bode Museum Berlin* and *Janus*, photographs taken inside the Bode Museum Berlin and the Istanbul Archeological Museum, depict passageways and entrance halls. Her work is embedded with multiple sites; the museums depicted, the space between the works at the gallery and Unit X in addition to the placement of each photograph within both spaces. In *Curtain, Bode Museum Berlin*, film X-ray exposure has left marks on the film spool.

A chance occurrence reifies the image. The real and the simulated interweave across its surface.

The material saturation of the photograph is apparent in Elmedin Žunić's *Document #335* and *Document #336*. Researching memory and trauma in relation to the war and genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Žunić embeds the photocopied black and white photographic image in cement, the bricks and mortar of history. Image, document and matter cannot be separated. A plastic sheet bearing the residue of the cement casting process is mounted on the gallery wall while the cast leans against the wall of Unit X.

The spatial and emotional qualities of Unit X and the gallery are the subject of Sophie Neate's site-specific performance. Mapping the topography of the Unit, peeling, imprinting,

laying down and rolling up, Neate tests the emotive and physical qualities of her materials and Unit Y, before remarking these coordinates in the gallery space. Placed in Unit X, peeled latex holds the form of the corrugated iron walls of Unit Y while it is also pictured in a series of digital photographs presented in Gallery Two.

Léuli Eshraghi navigates the relationship between text, body and site. Concerned with the agency and embodiment of language, the erasure and resurgence of Wurundjeri narratives, Eshraghi's artwork *Absences* evokes hybrid oral and textual histories, interweaving temporalities, cultural experiences and languages.

Walter Benjamin referred to photography as a technology of the 'optical unconscious'.¹ Here he borrows from psychoanalysis, alluding to the camera as an extension of human vision and observation. That extension could be said to occur in at least two ways. The photograph freezes an instant in time, holding the image, yet that image of the past endures as an exposure. Between the instant and the duration, the photograph allows vision to interrogate areas of the image otherwise passed over. In that respect it permits the world to reveal itself in an instant, but also over time, in a different form of time, in a photographic time. To linger on the image allows for discovery of otherwise unseen aspects of the world. Photography could then be said to offer a means of operating on the unconscious of the world, for lodging it within a specific frame of reference and order.

The idea that photographic practice expands the visual scope of surface appearance may be applied to *shadow sites*, which allows for glimpses behind the veil of the gallery space. Whereas such spaces generally remain unseen, this exhibition seeks to mine the valence of their invisibility, to explore what role the unseen has in the production of an exhibition. There

appears then a parallel between the actions of photography and those of a curatorial endeavor. Both attempt to make sense of the mass of images and materials that flow through and co-constitute experience. This exhibition, then, examines its own unconscious, just as the works on display explore the repressed, and the relation between the visible and the invisible.

¹ Walter Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography' in Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (eds), *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings Volume 2 1927-1934*, Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 512.

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Catherine Evans

Opposite page
Catherine Evans
Memory Muscle 2016
unique print on
unfixed black and
white photographic
paper, 34 x 26 cm

Memory Muscle examines the recent repatriation of human remains from the Berlin Museum of Medical History at the Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, back to Australia, over a century after they were removed.

Catherine Evans is a non-Indigenous Australian artist who grew-up in the post-colonial context of Australia in the 1980s and 1990s. She is interested in examining what these remains and their movement across the globe can represent.

Their meaning is in constant flux: in museums they exist as scientific objects to be scrutinised, but add a memory and history to them and they quickly exceed their materiality. For living communities these remains are highly symbolic, they become representative of past atrocities and can be witness to histories that are often excluded from mainstream narratives. Repatriation of these objects can be a platform for renegotiating memory politics.

By choosing to use unfixed photographic paper, Evans creates an image that never rests, that mirrors this exchange of objects and material, not only between Germany

and Australia, but also between mineral and organic, the human and the geologic. *Memory Muscle* looks at how body and material are exchangeable; depending on where one sits in relation to history and politics.

Catherine Evans is a contemporary visual artist currently based between Berlin, Germany, and Melbourne, Australia. After studying Science and Asian Studies at the Australian National University, Canberra, she went on to study photography at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts (with first class honours) in 2011.

Working across both photography and sculpture, Catherine's current studio research investigates the intersection of human and geologic timescales and sites of exchange between the body and material. In her most recent artwork she has begun to excavate the very materials of photography itself—approaching light-sensitive materials sculpturally.

