

Where knowing and not knowing touch.

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This film was part of an exhibition at a contemporary art gallery¹ in Sydney, Australia, titled 'Where knowing and not knowing touch'. It embodies part of an ongoing project that generates a space for researching relationships and questioning binaries— between artist and audience, aesthetics and (inter)subjectivity, the psychic and the social. As a group of artists and art therapists we have worked together for several years on site specific art installations and interactive performances (Linnell, Perry, Pretorius & Westwood, 2005, 2006, 2007; Perry & Westwood, 2007; Westwood, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). We have taught together in the Master of Art Therapy and the former Graduate Diploma in Expressive Therapies at the University of Western Sydney in Australia.

While we conceptualise our collaborations as contemporary art, our positioning across the domains of art, therapy and education challenges the separation of the aesthetic sphere. We are primarily concerned with a relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 1998/2002; Hyland Moon, 2002), with the subjective, relational and emotional resonances of art. In our work we aim to open up a critical site for moments of aesthetic experience that connect and resonate with our audiences in surprising and moving ways.

Working with film, photography, drawing, painting, writing and installation, with made and found objects and memorabilia, we explore the intersections of memory and imagination. We bring spaces that are generally experienced as private and interior into a social and cultural domain, connecting and blurring our early biographies and re-collected images, creating memories and fictions of childhood that are somehow more resonant and 'true' than the story of any one of us alone. We create a play of ambiguities, a 'hauntology' (Venn, 2002) of figures and shadows that play across a suggestive emotional landscape. We touch upon unspeakable moments of love and connectedness, of fear and loss. We work on the borders of knowing and unknowing, attempting to make visible that which is hidden or inaccessible. While our work as artists and art therapists is inevitably associated with the discourse of the confession, we also seek to move beyond a simply confessional mode. Our audiences are invited to 'return the gaze'. They become our co-researchers through artist facilitated sessions and performances that engage them in arts based responses to the work.

This film provides an imaginative window into this work.

References

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¹ At the Vanishing Point www.atthevanishingpoint.com.au

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