



Shimmering Spaces: Art and Anglo Indian Experiences

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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June 2016

DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the dissertation is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Rhett Jude D'Costa
August 2016

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

Over my long PhD journey, help, support and expertise has been forthcoming from family, friends and colleagues. Too many to mention here and in fear I may miss someone—print is so unforgiving—I extend my appreciation to this wonderful group of individuals.

However, specific acknowledgement is required for my terrific supervisors, who, for different reasons came and went during my candidature: Dr Sophie Errey, Dr Kirsten Sharp, and Dr Laresa Kosloff. Assoc. Prof. Keely Macarow came on board nearing the final stages and stayed until my completion.

I would particularly like to thank Dr Robin Kingston who has been with me throughout the journey. As my friend, colleague and supervisor I will always be grateful for her wisdom and the trust she showed in me, but most importantly for giving me permission to find, loose, pause and accelerate as fitted the moment. It was this guidance and care, which ultimately made the experience rich and meaningful.

I would also like to thank my amazing and wonderful mother, Phyllis Peters, for her love and stories. My PhD journey really commenced years ago, as I listened intently to her memories and recollections of India. Her Anglo Indian community lit up my world through her imaginative storytelling about food, dances, clothes and parties. Now 84, she continues to be my inspiration. I still listen with love and intent to her words. The thought of her reading what she has so generously shared with me was motivation to finish this journey.

I would also like to acknowledge Kerry Jennings, Aerial Consultancy for the editorial support and Adrian Saunders for the design of the dissertation.

My partner, Charles Young, has supported my endeavour at every stage by giving me the space and time I needed. If not for him, I would not be at this point.

Finally I would like to thank and acknowledge RMIT University, School of Art, who have always been generous in their support as I juggled being a PhD candidate, artist and academic.

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A B S T R A C T

The primary research for my PhD is a series of artworks, which seek to contribute to current discourse relating to culturally composite ethnicities, specifically, the Anglo Indian community, in the context of place, belonging and identity. The artworks draw on my personal experiences as an Anglo Indian, and may be described as autoethnographic, highlighting the often precarious, shifting social and political circumstances and predicaments associated with mixed race communities. A range of attitudinal and creative strategies, including the poetic, ironic, ambivalent and humorous, are used to develop a series of multidisciplinary artworks that utilise a wide range of materials and forms.

The research explores the Anglo Indian's dual ethnicity, revealing uncertainty contained in the indeterminate space of the Anglo Indian and the conflicting and often discursive position of being both compatible and incompatible with aspects of Indian and British cultures. Place and home for the Anglo Indian has often been contested in terms of belonging and being, by Anglo Indians themselves and by the British, Europeans and Indians.

Given that Anglo Indians are a direct consequence of the British imperial encounter in India, the research draws on early historical colonial encounters, to present postcolonial discourses particularly in the humanities and social sciences, and on future considerations, imaginings and possibilities for the community. Rather than being subsumed into European and Indian history, misrepresented, or worse, being written out of history altogether, members of the Anglo Indian community have maintained a strong desire and conviction to narrate their own stories to determine and engage with their developing and evolving sense of a cultural identity in a global and cosmopolitan world.

The word 'shimmer' in the title (*Shimmering Spaces: Art and Anglo Indian Experiences*) examines this space of instability, fracture and unsettledness, as both material and metaphor in the artworks. Rather than determining the space Anglo Indians occupy as binary or oppositional, I claim this unstable space to be an ameliorative, shimmering experience: one which is mesmerising and optimistic, and simultaneously precarious because of its state of fracture. It is in this very state of unsettledness and fluidity where the third space of the Anglo Indian can be inscribed, enunciated and articulated, in spite of their complex history, which brought together in union, coloniser and colonised, sometimes deliberately, sometimes antagonistically and sometimes strategically.

This research puts forwards its primary enquiry of how a space of 'in-betweenness' can emerge in the context of place, belonging and identity in the context of contemporary fine art, and how Anglo Indian identity emerges, evolves and shifts in the context of nationalism, culture, community, history and location.





AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AS A DIAGRAM



The *executive summary as a diagram* visually maps the doctoral journey as a process. Central to this is the title, which anchored the PhD and the research questions, and drove the enquiry. Everything has led from and to this central enquiry. Surrounding this, I developed six clusters:

experiments + thoughts

materials + forms

artist

writers

moments + places

content + concepts.

Information in each cluster has influenced and informed the other in a circulatory way. From these disparate yet related groupings, ideas began to formulate and were brought into the studio making process. Tests and projects manifested these ideas as visual articulations. This thinking-making nexus also continued in a circulatory and reflexive art practice, as theory and practice coalesced simultaneously. Many of the art projects began and evolved, one influencing the next. Many of the art projects overlapped and were kept in a state of proposition and experimentation. A series of artworks evolved from the art projects. These were then tested through exhibition as a way of formulating ideas and propositions and resolving the artworks.

Writing began to emerge at two stages. The first, early writings, which were more narrative, helped articulate ideas in a different modality to the artwork. The second stage of the writing forms the bulk of the dissertation. It is important to note that writing about the artworks came after a significant period of reflection, as if I needed to 'catch up' to them so as to understand their meaning and content over an unfolding of time. In fact, it is accurate to state that the artworks are probably even more complex than the way I write about them.

The writing process and documentation of the artworks, eventuating through drafts, finally becomes the dissertation. Throughout this process, consideration was given to what the final exhibition would include. At the final stages, the exhibition was formulated from selected art artworks. Some of these earlier art artworks were reworked. As well, new artworks were developed as conclusions to the research were drawn. Together, the exhibition and the dissertation engage the research questions.

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(All images are courtesy of the artist unless specified; except other artists' artwork.)

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Fig. 262–267 | D’Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *P.O.S.H.* Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 268–273 | D’Costa, R 2012, preliminary test photographs for *P.O.S.H.* on location at Fryerstown, Victoria. Images courtesy of Julie Millowick.

Fig. 274 | D’Costa, R 2013, *P.O.S.H.* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl paper 285 gsm; 148 cm x 60 cm (framed)].

Between Dreaming and Dying (2015)

Fig. 275–280 | D’Costa, R 2014, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *Between Dreaming and Dying*. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 281–284 | D’Costa, R 2014, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *Between Dreaming and Dying*. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 285 | D’Costa, R 2014, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *Between Dreaming and Dying*. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 286–291 | D’Costa, R 2014, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *Between Dreaming and Dying*. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 292–300 | D’Costa, R 2014, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *Between Dreaming and Dying*. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 301 | D’Costa, R 2015, *Between Dreaming and Dying* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl paper 285 gsm; 97 cm x 66 cm (framed)].

Closeness & Distance (2015)

Fig. 302 | D'Costa, R 2015, photographic documentation for *Closeness & Distance* from Colaba, Bombay, India.

Fig. 303–308 | D'Costa, R 2015, photographic documentation for *Closeness & Distance* from Colaba, Bombay, India.

Fig. 309–314 | D'Costa, R 2015, photographic documentation for *Closeness & Distance* from Colaba, Bombay, India.

Fig. 315–320 | D'Costa, R 2015, *Closeness & Distance* (video stills) (Edition of 3), single channel video projection (2.30 min.).

Fig. 321–326 | D'Costa, R 2015, *Closeness & Distance* (video stills) (Edition of 3), single channel video projection (2.30 min.).

Fig. 327 | D'Costa, R 2015, *Closeness & Distance* (video still) (Edition of 3), single channel video projection (2.30 min.).

Letting things be what they are (2016)

Fig. 328 | D'Costa, R 2016, *Letting things be what they are* (installation test), [eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; height 90 cm]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 329–332 | D'Costa, R 2016, *Letting things be what they are* (detail), [eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; height 90 cm]. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 333–334 | D'Costa, R 2016, *Letting things be what they are* (installation view), [eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; height 90 cm]. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 335 | D'Costa, R 2016, *Letting things be what they are* (installation view), [eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; height 90 cm]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow) (2016)

Fig. 336 | D'Costa, R 2016, photographic documentation of text, one gram of turmeric for each day I have lived in the world.

Fig. 337 | D'Costa, R 2016, studio tests installing, *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)*, [spice, weight 18,888 grams; dimensions variable]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 338–339 | D'Costa, R 2016, studio tests installing, *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)*, [spice, weight 18,888 grams; dimensions variable]. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 340–342 | D'Costa, R 2016, studio tests installing, *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)*, [spice, weight 18,888 grams; dimensions variable]. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 343 | D'Costa, R 2016, *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)* (installation view), [spice, weight 18,888 grams; dimensions variable]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 344 | D'Costa, R 2016, *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)* (installation view), [spice, weight 18,888 grams; dimensions variable]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

PRELIMINARY EXHIBITIONS

Secret Files from the Working Men's College

Fig. 345 | D'Costa, R 2010, invitation for the exhibition, *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*, Project Space School of Art Galleries, RMIT University in conjunction with Midsumma Festival, Melbourne.

Fig. 346 | D'Costa, R 2010, photographic documentation front window text for the exhibition, *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*, Project Space School of Art Galleries, RMIT University in conjunction with Midsumma Festival, Melbourne.

Fig. 347 | Photographic documentation of scan from the original photograph taken by 'Norman' of 'Brad', date unknown. I used the scanned image to develop a digital print, which was used in the artwork, *Brad*. Original image courtesy of Helen O'Toole.

Fig. 348 | D'Costa, R 2010, installation view from the exhibition *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*, Project Space School of Art Galleries, RMIT University in conjunction with Midsumma Festival, Melbourne.

Something in the Air

Fig. 349 | Invitation for the exhibition *Something in the Air* (2010), 27 Gipps Street Gallery, Richmond, Melbourne.

Fig. 350 | D'Costa, R 2010, installation view from the exhibition *Something in the Air*, 27 Gipps Street Gallery, Richmond, Melbourne.

Fig. 351 | D'Costa, R 2010, installation view from the exhibition *Something in the Air*, 27 Gipps Street Gallery, Richmond, Melbourne.

Fig. 352 | D'Costa, R 2010, installation view from the exhibition *Something in the Air*, 27 Gipps Street Gallery, Richmond, Melbourne.

Here with You

Fig. 353 | Invitation for the exhibition *Here with You* (2011), 98 Piper Street Kyneton, Victoria.

Fig. 354–358 | D'Costa, R 2011, *Four Beats and A Moment of Suspension* (detail), [polyester silk, silk, silk ribbon, ceramic figurine, motor, vaulting horse, metal stand, photograph, paper, polyester thread, acrylic polymer; installation dimensions variable].

Fig. 359–360 | D’Costa, R 2011, *Four Beats and A Moment of Suspension* (detail), [polyester silk, silk, silk ribbon, ceramic figurine, motor, vaulting horse, metal stand, photograph, paper, polyester thread, acrylic polymer; installation dimensions variable].

Fig. 361–362 | D’Costa, R 2011, *Four Beats and A Moment of Suspension* (detail), [polyester silk, silk, silk ribbon, ceramic figurine, motor, vaulting horse, metal stand, photograph, paper, polyester thread, acrylic polymer; installation dimensions variable].

2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*

Fig. 363 | Invitation for 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*.

Fig. 364 | Front entrance, 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria.

Fig. 365–367 | D’Costa, R 2013, *Trade* (detail), [spices, wooden platform; dimensions variable], for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Images courtesy of Julie Millowick.

Fig. 368 | D’Costa, R 2013, *Trade* (installation view), [spices, wooden platform; dimensions variable], for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Image courtesy of Julie Millowick.

Fig. 369–371 | Photographic documentation from the one-day relational event *Eat! My Son* as part of the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Images courtesy of Julie Millowick.

Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 2

Fig. 372 | D’Costa, R 2013, entrance to *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 2*, Stockroom, Kyneton, Victoria.

Fig. 373–378 | D’Costa, R 2013, installation view from *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 2*, Stockroom, Kyneton, Victoria.

Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3

Fig. 379 | Invitation for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3* (2013), Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Victoria.

Fig. 380 | D’Costa, R 2013, installing *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Victoria.

Fig. 381–386 | D’Costa, R 2013, installing *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Victoria. Images courtesy of Neale Stratford.

Fig. 387–395 | D’Costa, R 2013, exhibition opening, *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Victoria.

Fig. 396 | D’Costa, R 2013, *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3* (installation view), Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Victoria.

CHAPTER ONE

Fig. 397 | Salcedo, D 2007, *Shibboleth* (installation view), [concrete, cyclone fencing], exhibited at The Unilever Series, The Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London, 9 October 2007–6 April 2008.

Fig. 398 | Salcedo, D 2007, *Shibboleth* (detail), [concrete, cyclone fencing], exhibited at The Unilever Series, The Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London, 9 October 2007–6 April 2008.

Fig. 399 | Salcedo, D 2005, *Abyss* (installation view), [brick, cement, steel, epoxy resin], exhibited at the Triennial of Contemporary Art, Castello di Rivoli, Turin, 441 x 1386 x 1624 cm, 21 September–16 October 2005.

Fig. 400 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Curtain* (installation view), [silk, dimensions variable], photographic documentation – installed in a domestic setting, Fryerstown, Victoria.

Fig. 401–402 | Photograph from street scene in Bombay, India, showing pigments being sold for Holi festival [n.d.].

Fig. 403 | D'Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation from performative gymnastic actions for *Somersault*, Fryerstown, Victoria. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 404–406 | D'Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation from performative gymnastic actions for *Somersault*, Fryerstown, Victoria. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 407 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Somersault*, [vaulting horse, acrylic text, polyester silk ribbon, framed inkjet digital print; dimensions variable], for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Monash University, Gippsland, Victoria.

Fig. 408 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation during the performative aspect for the artwork *Somersault* (detail), [vaulting horse, acrylic text, polyester silk ribbon, framed inkjet digital print; dimensions variable]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 409 | Installation view (2014), of the Dance Hall, Fryerstown, Victoria. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 410 | MacPherson, R 1994–96, "A Pollywaffle for G: Mayfair, 130 Paintings, 130 Signs", [acrylic on board, 130 panels each 91.5 x 61 cm], viewed 19 October 2015, <<http://www.artdes.monash.edu.au/noncms/globe/issue8/ad003.jpg>>.

Fig. 411 | McCahon, C 1969, *The Canoe Tainui*, [synthetic polymer on 8 panels each panel 60.3 x 60.3 cm], viewed 19 October 2015, <<http://www.gowlangsfordgallery.co.nz/exhibitions/the-chief-of-the-canoe?id=8375&eid=8374>>.

Fig. 412–413 | D'Costa, R 2013, *A.E.I.O.U.* (video still), single channel video projection (3.35 min.).

Fig. 414–415 | D'Costa, R 2013, *A.E.I.O.U.* (video still), single channel video projection (3.35 min.).

Fig. 416 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Standard English* (studio tests), [acrylic polymer, graphite pencil on plywood], preliminary studio installation tests, Fryerstown, Victoria.

Fig. 417 | Gill, S 1996, *Fragment #4 from Wonderlust*, (detail) C-Type print, viewed 20 December 2015, <<https://www.accaonline.org.au/exhibition/above-and-beyond-asian-connection>>.

Fig. 418 | Gill, S 2008, *Paper Boats* (installation view), [Encyclopedia Britannica (1968 edition)], at Breenspace, Sydney.

Fig. 419 | Gill, S 2008, *Paper Boats* (detail), [Encyclopedia Britannica (1968 edition)].

Fig. 420 | Gill, S 2008–2009, *9 Volumes from the collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (installation view), [books, glue], Sharjah Art Museum.

Fig. 421 | Gill, S 2008–2009, *9 Volumes from the collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (installation view), [books, glue], Sharjah Art Museum.

Fig. 422 | Gill, S 1993–1995, *Washed Up* (detail), [found glass, engraved; dimensions variable], Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

Fig. 423 | Gill, S 1993–1995, *Washed Up* (installation view) (2010), [found glass, engraved; dimensions variable], Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.

Fig. 424 | Gill, S 1993–1995, *Washed Up* (installation view), [found glass, engraved; dimensions variable], with artist at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

Fig. 425 | Gill, S 2007–2009, *Mine* (installation view), [found materials], Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Fig. 426 | Gill, S 2007–2009, *Mine* (detail), [found materials], Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

CHAPTER TWO

Fig. 427 | Photographic documentation (2009), postcard of Marine Parade, Bombay, sent from my mother while visiting India.

Fig. 428 | Photographic documentation (2009), handwritten text on the reverse of postcard sent from my mother. The 'red X' marks the spot I was born.

Fig. 429 | Map of Bombay as seven islands, viewed 11 November 2015, <<http://theory.tifr.res.in/bombay/physical/geo/7islands.html>>.

Fig. 430 | Photograph 2014, concrete tetrapods at the seawall along Marine Parade, Bombay, India.

Fig. 431 | Photograph 2014, concrete tetrapods at Marine Parade, Bombay, India.

Fig. 432 | Photograph 2014, Marine Parade during a trip to India.

Fig. 433 | Photograph 2010, Sikh man, Goa, India.

Fig. 434 | D'Costa, R 2012–2013, preliminary test works (installation view), during the making of *Reading from Both Sides*, [poly cotton thread on Arches 300 gsm, acrylic polymer], Fryerstown, Victoria.

Fig. 435 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation, testing a range of configurations for *Reading from Both Sides*, [poly cotton thread, acrylic polymer on Arches 300 gsm, wood; 230 cm x 155 cm], Painting Studios, RMIT University, Melbourne.

Fig. 436 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Reading from Both Sides*, [poly cotton thread, acrylic polymer on Arches 300 gsm, wood; 230 cm x 155 cm], Painting Studios, RMIT University, Melbourne.

Fig. 437 | Horn, R 1995, *Gold Mats, Paired (for Ross and Felix)*, [pure gold, 1245 x 1524 x 0.2 mm, 1.8 kg].

Fig. 438 | Kimsooja, 1999–2001, *A Needle Woman* (video stills), 8 channel video installation, silent, 6.33 loop.

Fig. 439 | Friedrich, CD 1817–18, *Wanderer in a Sea of Fog*, [oil on canvas, 98.4 x 74.8 cm], Hamburg Kunsthalle, Germany.

Fig. 440 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Elsewhere* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl paper 285 gsm; 110 cm x 148 cm (framed)].

Fig. 441 | D'Costa, R 2011, preliminary test photograph for *Elsewhere* (highlighting the compass), on location at Fryerstown, Victoria. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 442 | D'Costa, R 2011, preliminary test photograph for *Elsewhere*, on location at Fryerstown, Victoria. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 443 | Kimsooja, 2000, *A Laundry Woman, Yamuna River* (video still), India, single channel performance video 10.30 min. loop, silent.

Fig. 444 | D'Costa, R 2011, preliminary test photograph for *P.O.S.H.* on location at Fryerstown, Victoria. Image courtesy of Julie Millowick.

Fig. 445 | D'Costa, R 2013, *P.O.S.H.* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl paper 285 gsm; 148 cm x 60 cm (unframed)].

Fig. 446 | Elmgreen and Dragset, 2014, *Tomorrow* (installation view), Victoria and Albert Museum, Textile Galleries.

Fig. 447 | Photographic documentation of scan from the original photograph taken by 'Norman' of 'Brad', date unknown. I used the scanned image to develop a digital print, which was used in the artwork, *Brad*. Original image courtesy of Helen O'Toole.

Fig. 448 | D'Costa, R 2010, *Brad* (detail), [adhesive text, woolen shawl, carpet, thermometer, harmonica, motor, ceramic figurine, framed photograph, lamp, digital clock; dimensions variable], for the exhibition *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*, Project Space School of Art Galleries, RMIT University in conjunction with Midsumma Festival, Melbourne.

CHAPTER THREE

Fig. 449–452 | Kapoor, A 1979–81, *1000 Names* (installation view), [wood, gesso, pigment], Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Fig. 453 | Kapoor, A 2007, *Svayambh* (installation view), [wax, oil based paint; dimensions variable], Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Fig. 454 | Kapoor, A 2008, *Memory* (installation view), [corten steel, 14.5 x 8.97 x 4.48 m], Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Fig. 455 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Trade* (detail), [spices, wooden platform; dimensions variable], for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Image courtesy of Julie Millowick.

Fig. 456 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation from the one-day relational event *Eat! My Son*, for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Image courtesy of Julie Millowick.

Fig. 457 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation from the one-day relational event *Eat! My Son*, for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Image courtesy of Julie Millowick.

Fig. 458 | Tiravanija, R 2010, *Who's afraid of red, yellow, and green*, installation and participatory event (installation view), [dimensions variable], 100 Tonson Gallery, Thailand, 20–28 August 2010.

Fig. 459 | Chinnery, G 1804, *Sahib Allum, Sahib Begum* (detail), [oil on canvas].

Fig. 460 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Rumour* (installation view), [flour, wood, motor, eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; 90 cm diameter x 13 cm height (approx.)], for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 2*, Stockroom, Kyneton, Victoria.

Fig. 461 | Photograph of Alexander Haughton Campbell Gardner (1785–1877), one of the last 'white mughals'.

Fig. 462 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Bespoke* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl paper 285 gsm; 148 cm x 105 cm (framed)].

Fig. 463 | D'Costa, R 2011, photographic documentation, fabric selection for the making of the suit worn by me in the artwork *Bespoke*, Central Hong Kong. Image courtesy of Daphne Ho.

Fig. 464 | D'Costa, R 2011, photographic documentation, second fitting with Hong Kong tailors during the making of the suit for the artwork *Bespoke*, Central Hong Kong. Image courtesy of Daphne Ho.

Fig. 465 | Earle, A c.1826, *Bungaree, A native of New South Wales*, Oil on canvas, 68.5 h x 50.5 w cm framed (overall) 81.5 h x 64 w x 7 d cm, The National Gallery of Australia and the National Library of Australia.

Fig. 466–467 | D'Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria. Images courtesy of Julie Millowick and Marion Williams respectively.

CHAPTER FOUR

Fig. 468–469 | Altoff, K 2012, original letters written by Kai Altoff to Christov-Bakargiev; the letters were eventually displayed at the Fridericianum as an introduction to dOCUMENTA 13.

Fig. 470 | Raad, W 1996–2001, *My neck is thinner than a hair: Engines*, [one hundred pigmented inkjet prints, each 9 7/16 x 13 3/8 in (24 x 34 cm), frame 9 13/16 x 13 3/4 in (25 x 35 cm)].

Fig. 471 | Raad, W 1996–2001, *My neck is thinner than a hair: Engines* (detail), [one hundred pigmented inkjet prints, each 9 7/16 x 13 3/8 in (24 x 34 cm), frame 9 13/16 x 13 3/4 in (25 x 35 cm)].

Fig. 472 | Raad, W 1996–2003, *Notebook volume 72: Missing Lebanese wars* (plate 137), [archival inkjet print].

Fig. 473–477 | Patel, H 2015, *The Jump* (edition of 5) (installation view), two-channel HD video installation, 16:9, colour, sound.

CHAPTER FIVE

Fig. 478 | D'Costa, R 2015, *Between Dreaming and Dying* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl paper 285 gsm; 97 cm x 66 cm (framed)].

Fig. 479 | Wall, J 1996, *Citizen*, [silver gelatin print, 181.2 cm x 234 cm].

CONCLUSION

Fig. 480 | D'Costa, R 2016, *Letting things be what they are*, [eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; height 90 cm], image taken in the studio, Fryerstown, Victoria. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

Fig. 481 | Boltanski, C 2010, *Personnes* (installation view), [mixed media installation, dimensions variable], Monument 10, Grand Palais (2010), Paris.

Fig. 482 | GonzalezTorres, F 1991, "*Untitled*" (*Portrait of Ross in L.A.*) (installation view), [multicoloured candies, individually wrapped in cellophane, ideal weight 175 lbs], Gund Gallery, Ohio.

Fig 483 | D'Costa, R 2016, studio tests when installing, *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)*, [spice, weight 18,888 grams; dimensions variable]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

Figs.484–493 | D'Costa, R 2016, *Where Here is Elsewhere* (installation views) School of Art Gallery, RMIT University. Images courtesy of Keelan O'Hehair.

Fig. 494 | Photograph of my mother, Philomena Peters (1947), working for the WACI, connecting Lord Mountbatten (the last Viceroy of India) to the Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru to finalise Britain's withdrawal from India. Image courtesy of Philomena Peters.

Fig. 495 | The reverse of the photograph with my mother's handwriting and the name of the Public Relations photographer for the event (1947). Image courtesy of Philomena Peters.

S E L E C T E D
E A R L Y E X P E R I M E N T S

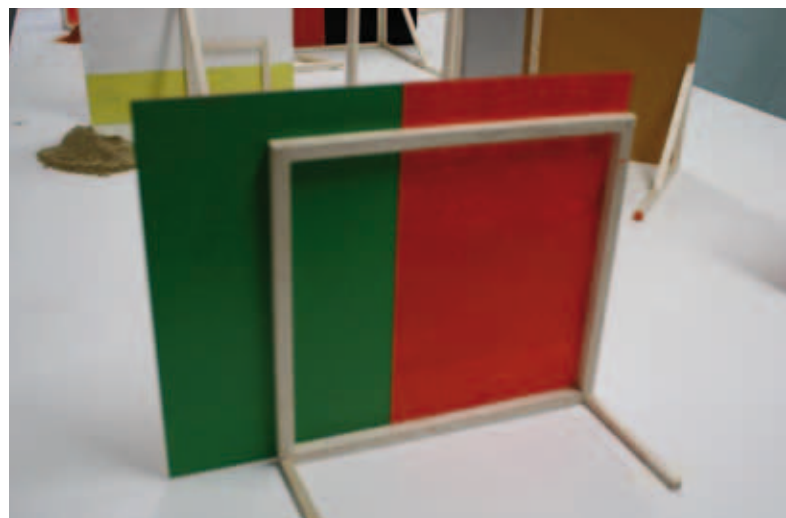
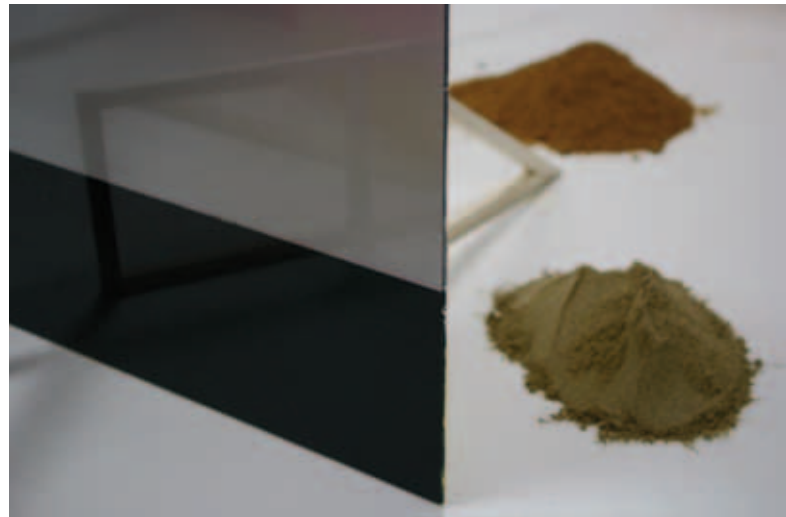
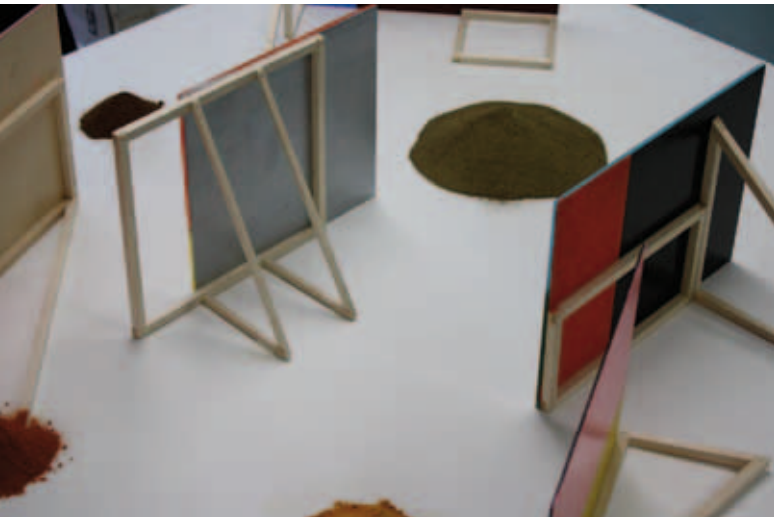
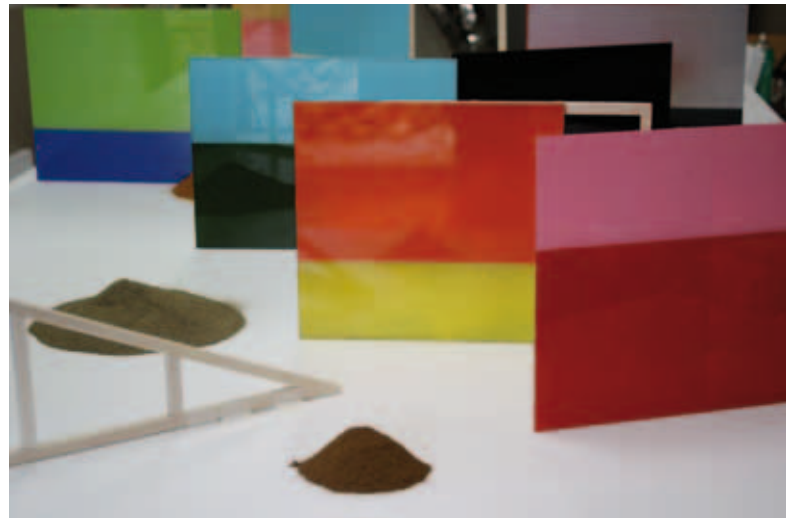
Archipelago (2009–2010)

Fig. 1–6 | D'Costa, R 2009–2010, *Archipelago* (detail), [perspex, acrylic polymer, wood, spices; dimensions variable], images from preliminary studio tests, Fryerstown, Victoria.

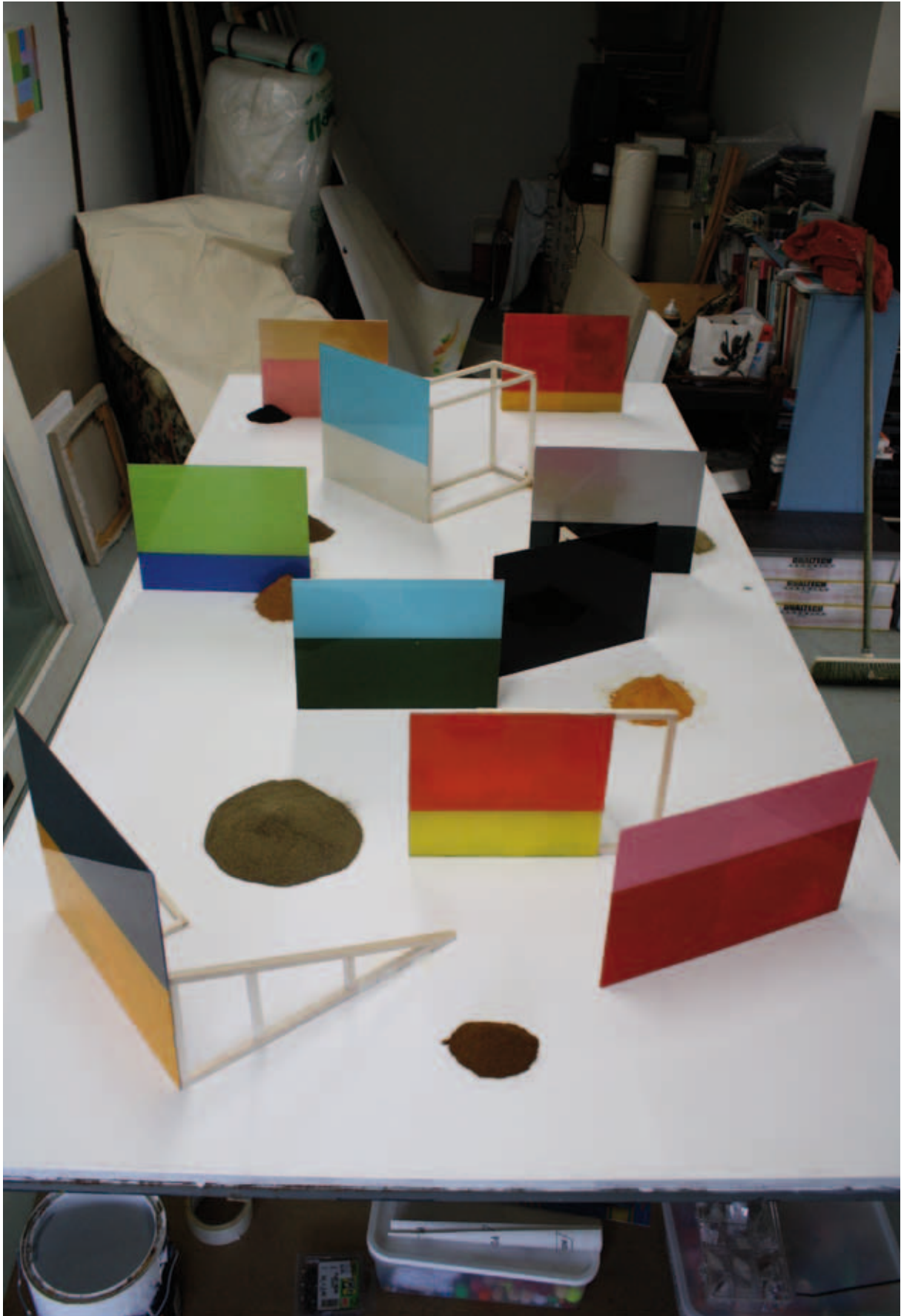


Fig. 7 | D'Costa, R 2009–2010, *Archipelago* (installation view), [perspex, acrylic polymer, wood, spices; dimensions variable], image from preliminary studio tests, Fryerstown, Victoria.

The Colonial Garden (2010)

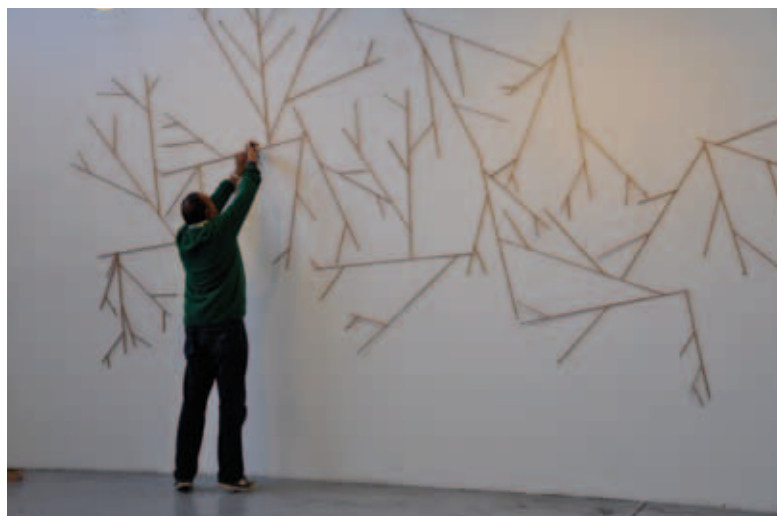


Fig. 8-10 | D'Costa, R 2010, photographic documentation during the installation of *The Colonial Garden*.



Fig. 11-16 | D'Costa, R 2010, *The Colonial Garden* (detail/installation view), [wooden panels, Victorian Ash, acrylic polymer; dimensions variable], for the exhibition *Something in the Air*, 27 Gipps Street Gallery, Richmond, Melbourne.



Fig. 17-19 | D'Costa, R 2010, *The Colonial Garden* (installation view), [wooden panels, Victorian Ash, acrylic polymer; dimensions variable], for the exhibition *Something in the Air*, 27 Gipps Street Gallery, Richmond, Melbourne.

A R T W O R K S

Brad (2010)

I had planned on making a very different work titled 'Rumour' for the Secret Files exhibition. However, quite unexpectedly after returning to Australia, I received an email, with a file attachment, from my very dear and close friend Helen.¹ I had recently visited Helen, her husband Brad² and their daughter Lydia³ at their home in Seattle and while there was invited for Thanksgiving to Mary and Joel's⁴ house.

The email was from Joel to Helen, who then forwarded it on to me. It included an image of Brad when he was young, dressed as a girl. As I opened this file, and saw the enclosed image⁵, I knew I wanted to use it in the show. I contacted Brad through Helen to ask his permission – he agreed.

-
- 1 Helen I have known for many years and is someone I count as a very close friend. Two days after Helen sent me the first file with the image of Brad, she sent me another file, which was an image of herself with Lydia. I can only speculate as to why Helen sent me these images. I have the second image in my personal files. Helen is Irish and a painter's painter. I think I once said to her that she has her feet deep in the Irish bog and her heart in the sky.
 - 2 I met Brad for the first time while I was in Seattle. I had known of Brad as he had married Helen some time ago. If I closed my eyes when Brad spoke I would swear William Burroughs's was in the room speaking to me. Prior to my arrival and completely unbeknown to me, Brad had collapsed and was hospitalised. He nearly died. Clearly the whole experience had been intense and stressful for all parties. Brad is Italian, a restaurateur, an excellent cook and clearly a charming and good-looking man. While at their house, I came upon an image of Brad as a younger man with his son, from a previous marriage. The photograph was on their refrigerator. I do recall commenting on his good looks and it was then that Brad first told me about the photograph.
 - 3 Lydia is Helen and Brad's daughter. She is a magical child and someone who I felt immediately close to. I think it is because she reminds me so much of Helen. And because she reminded me that Princesses are the enemy.
 - 4 Mary and Joel are friends of Brad and Helen. I was invited to their house for a wonderful Thanksgiving celebration – my first Thanksgiving dinner. I liked them very much. Helen had told me how kind and supportive Joel had been throughout Brad's ordeal. Joel is the person who scanned the image of Brad.
 - 5 The image of Brad was taken by Brad's cousin, Norman, years ago. Norman had had the idea that he would like to dress Brad up as a Spanish dancer. Both Helen and Brad on different occasions might have mentioned that Norman was perhaps gay. Recently while I was talking with Helen about the show on Skype, she mentioned that Norman had always taken photographs and painted. Helen referred to him as an untrained artist and commented on how Sherry Levine would have appreciated the quality of the image Norman took of Brad.



Fig. 21 | D'Costa, R 2010, *Brad* (detail), [inkjet photographic print, chair, table, printable adhesive text, woolen shawl, carpet, thermometer, harmonica, motor, ceramic figurine, framed photograph, lamp, digital clock; dimensions variable], for the exhibition *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*, Project Space School of Art Galleries, RMIT University in conjunction with Midsumma Festival, Melbourne.



Fig. 22 | D'Costa, R 2010, *Brad* (detail), [adhesive text, woolen shawl, carpet, thermometer, harmonica, motor, ceramic figurine, framed photograph, lamp, digital clock; dimensions variable], for the exhibition *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*, Project Space School of Art Galleries, RMIT University in conjunction with Midsomma Festival, Melbourne.

Fig. 23 | D'Costa, R 2010, *Brad* (installation view), [inkjet photographic print, chair, table, printable adhesive text, woolen shawl, carpet, thermometer, harmonica, motor, ceramic figurine, framed photograph, lamp, digital clock; dimensions variable], for the exhibition *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*, Project Space School of Art Galleries, RMIT University in conjunction with Midsomma Festival, Melbourne.



Fig. 24 | D'Costa, R 2010, *Brad* (installation view), [inkjet photographic print, chair, table, printable adhesive text, woolen shawl, carpet, thermometer, harmonica, motor, ceramic figurine, framed photograph, lamp, digital clock; dimensions variable], for the exhibition *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*, Project Space School of Art Galleries, RMIT University in conjunction with Midsumma Festival, Melbourne.

Trade (2013)



Fig. 25 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Trade* (detail), [spices; dimensions variable], preliminary studio tests, Fryerstown, Victoria.

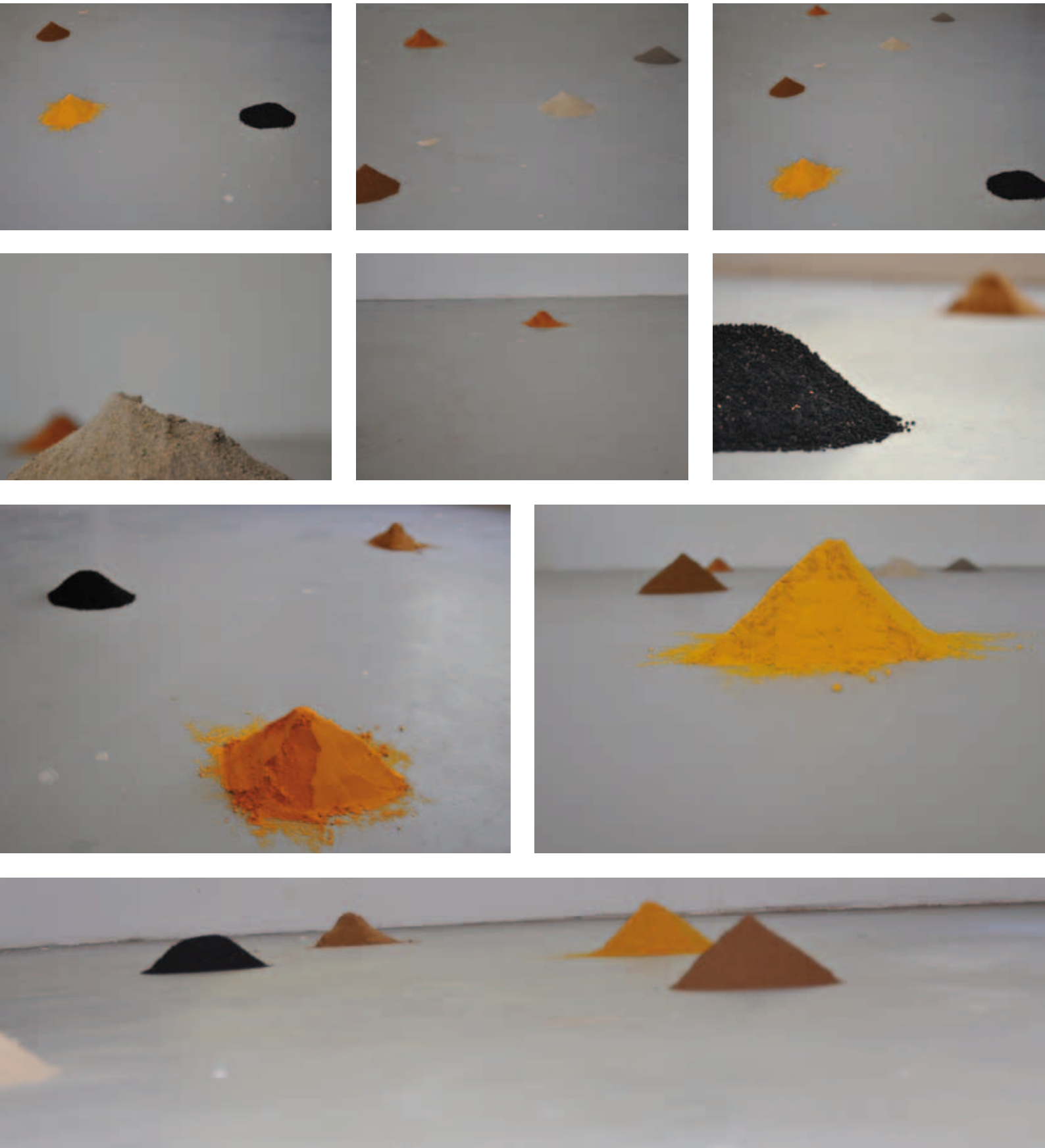


Fig. 26–34 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Trade* (detail), [spices; dimensions variable], preliminary studio tests, Fryerstown, Victoria.



Fig. 35 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Trade* (installation view), [spices; dimensions variable], preliminary studio tests, Fryerstown, Victoria.



Fig. 36 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation installing *Trade* for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, [spices, wooden platform; dimensions variable], Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria.



Fig. 37–41 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation installing *Trade* for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, [spices, wooden platform; dimensions variable], Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Images courtesy of Eddie Ho.



Fig. 42–45 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Trade* (detail), [spices, wooden platform; dimensions variable], for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Images courtesy of Julie Millowick.

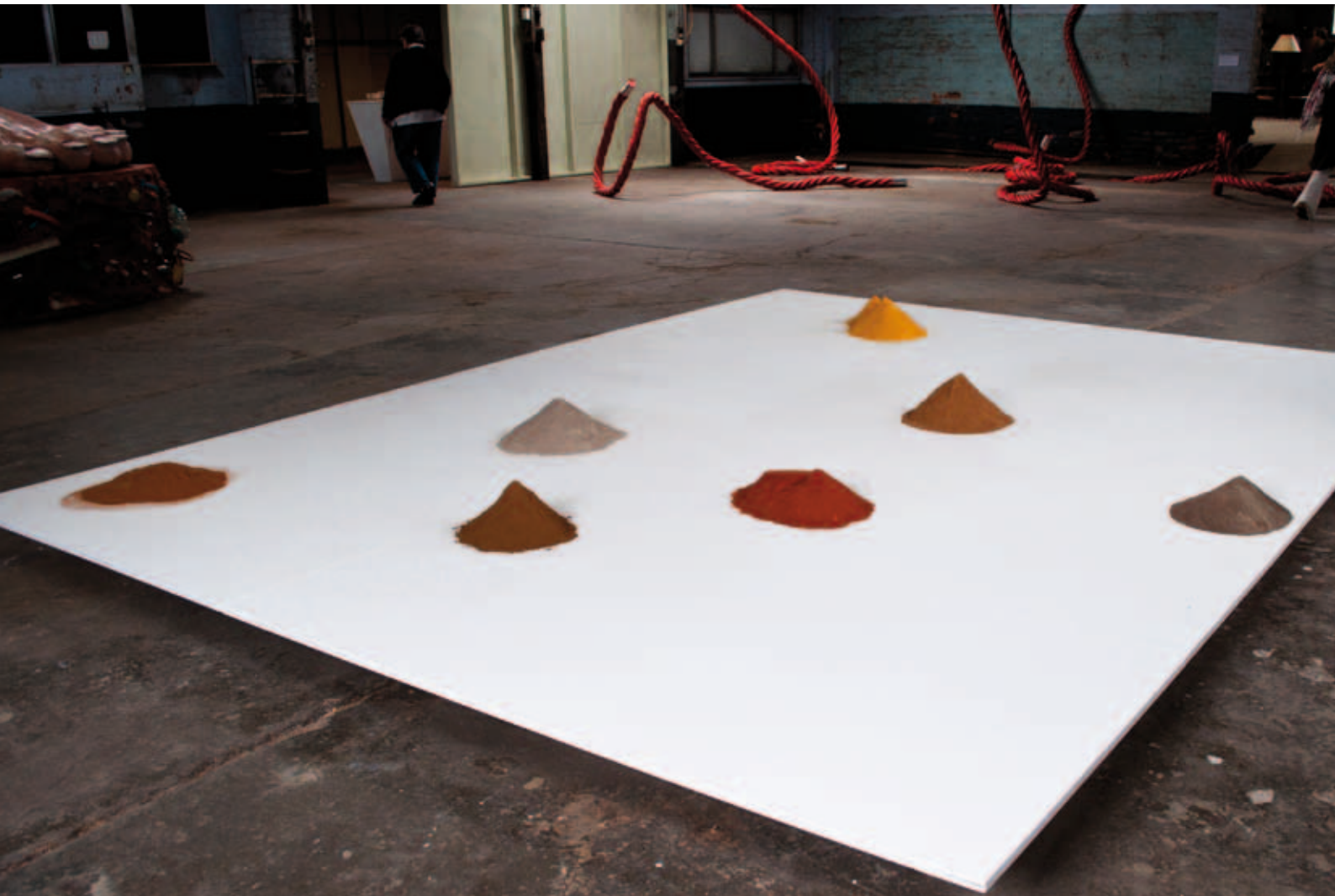


Fig. 46 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Trade* (installation view), [spices, wooden platform; dimensions variable], for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Image courtesy of Julie Millowick.

Eat! My Son (2013)



Fig. 47–52 | D'Costa, R 2013, preparing for the one-day relational event, *Eat! My Son*, for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria.



Fig. 53–58 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation from the one-day relational event, *Eat! My Son*, for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Images courtesy of Julie Millowick.

Rumour (2013)

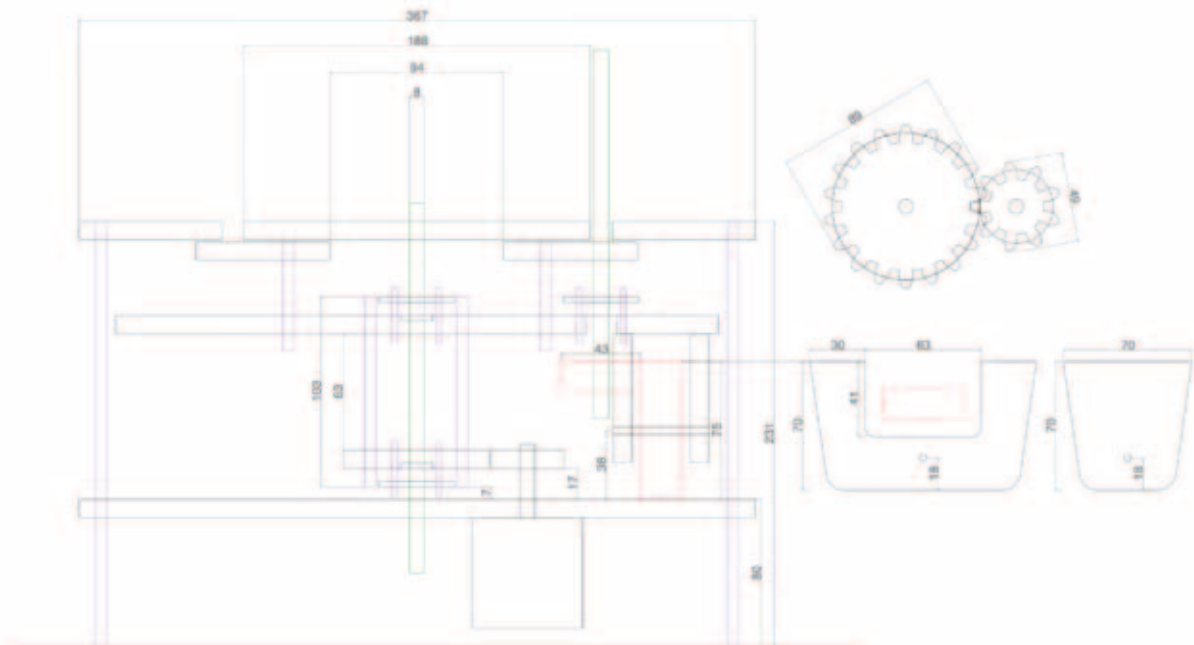
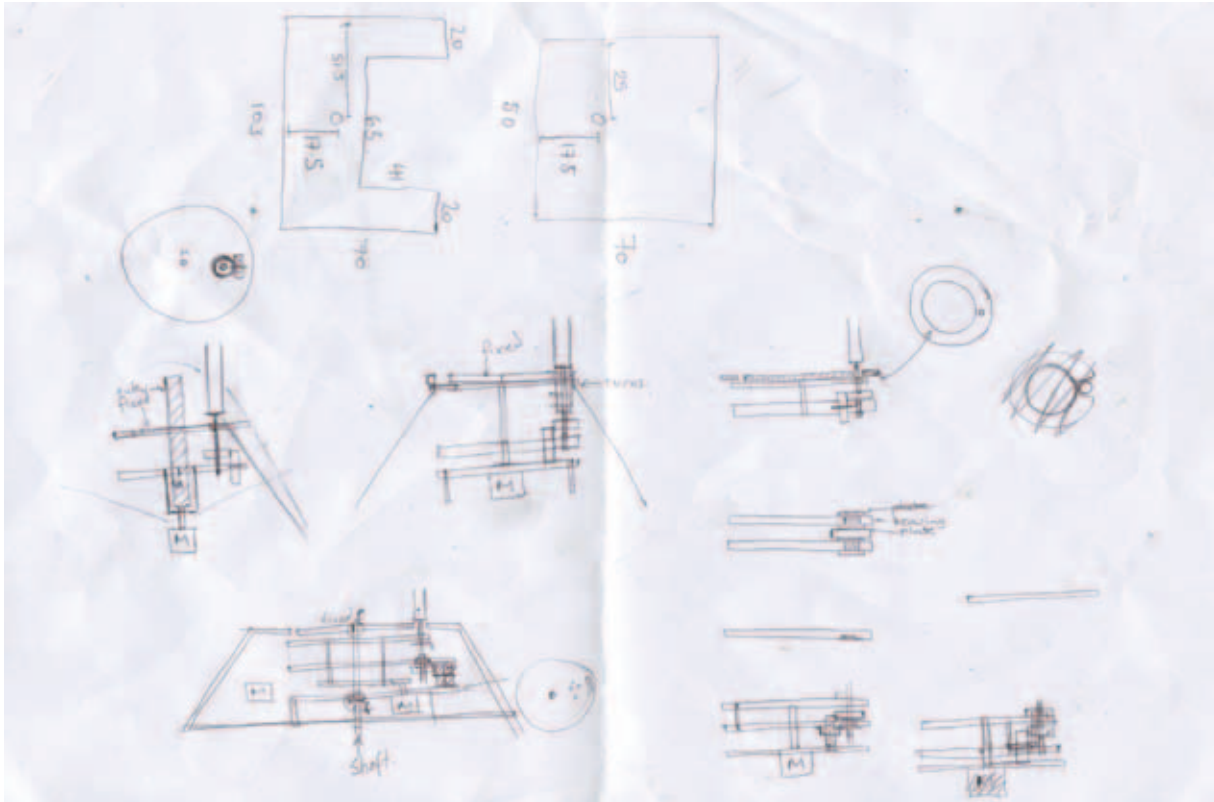


Fig. 59–60 | Technical drawings by Laura Woodward to develop a motorised mechanism for the artwork *Rumour*. Images courtesy of Laura Woodward.



Fig. 61–62 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation, technical testing and installing *Rumour*, [flour, wood, motor, eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; 90 cm diameter x 13 cm height (approx.)], preliminary studio tests, Castlemaine, Victoria.

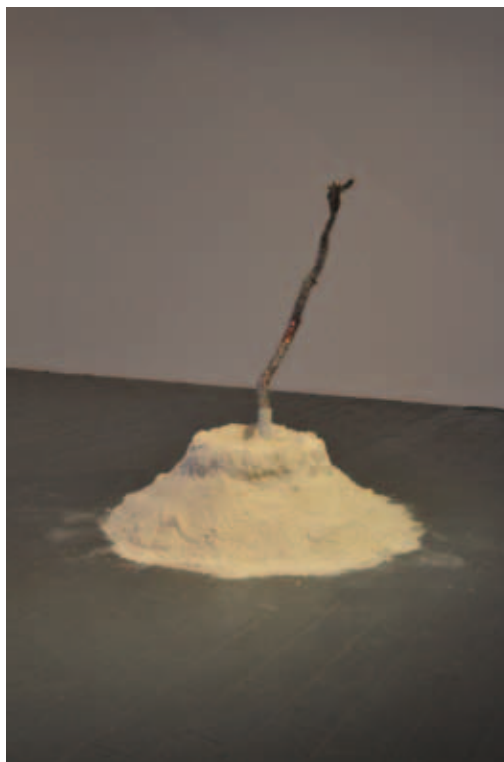


Fig. 63–68 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Rumour* (installation view/detail), [flour, wood, motor, eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; 90 cm diameter x 13 cm height [approx.]], for the exhibition *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 2*, Stockroom, Kyneton, Victoria.



Fig. 69 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Rumour* (detail), [flour, wood, motor, eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; 90 cm diameter x 13 cm height [approx.]], for the exhibition *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 2*, Stockroom, Kyneton, Victoria.

Bespoke (2013)



Fig. 70–75 | D'Costa, R 2011, preparations with Hong Kong tailors for the design, fabric selection and making of the suit worn by me in the artwork *Bespoke*, Central Hong Kong. Images courtesy of Daphne Ho.



Fig. 76–84 | D'Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *Bespoke*. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

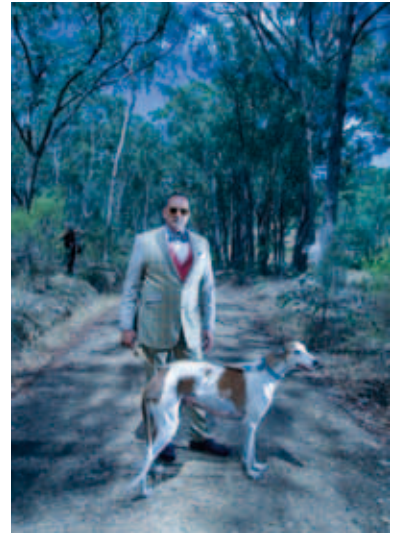
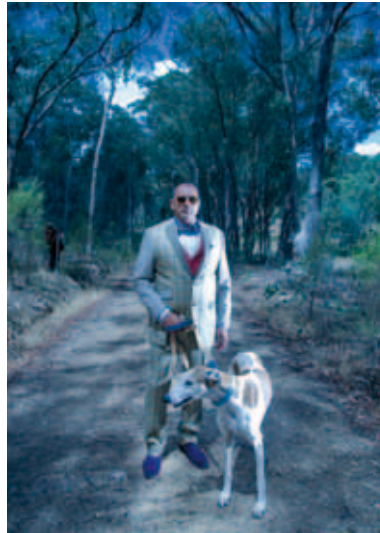
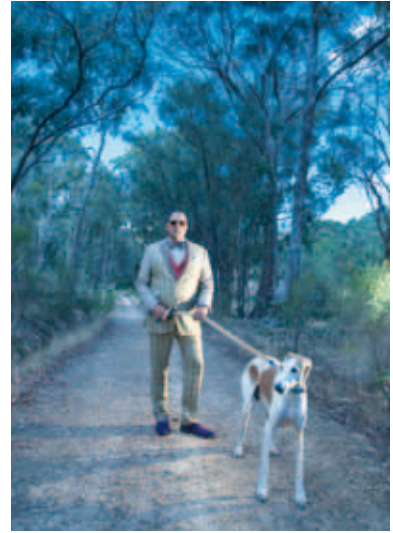


Fig. 85–93 | D'Costa, R 2012, preliminary test photographs for *Bespoke* on location at Fryerstown, Victoria. Images courtesy of Julie Millowick.

[Next page] Fig. 94 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Bespoke* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl paper 285 gsm; 148 cm x 105 cm (framed)].



A.E.I.O.U. (2013)



Fig. 95 | D'Costa, R 2013, *A.E.I.O.U.* (video still), single channel video projection (3.35 min.).

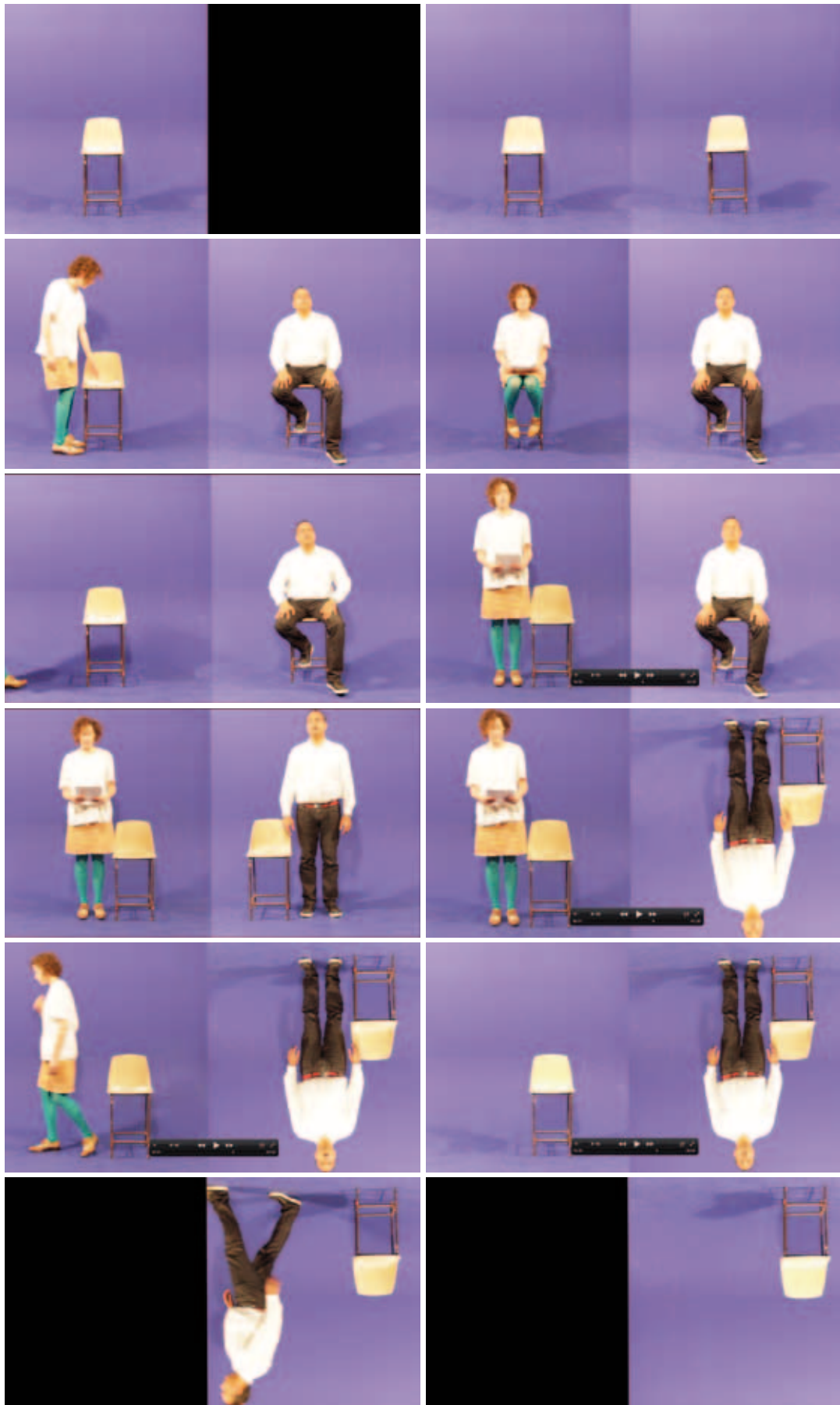


Fig. 96–107 | D'Costa, R 2013, *A.E.I.O.U.* (video still), single channel video projection (3.35 min.).

Reading from Both Sides (2013)

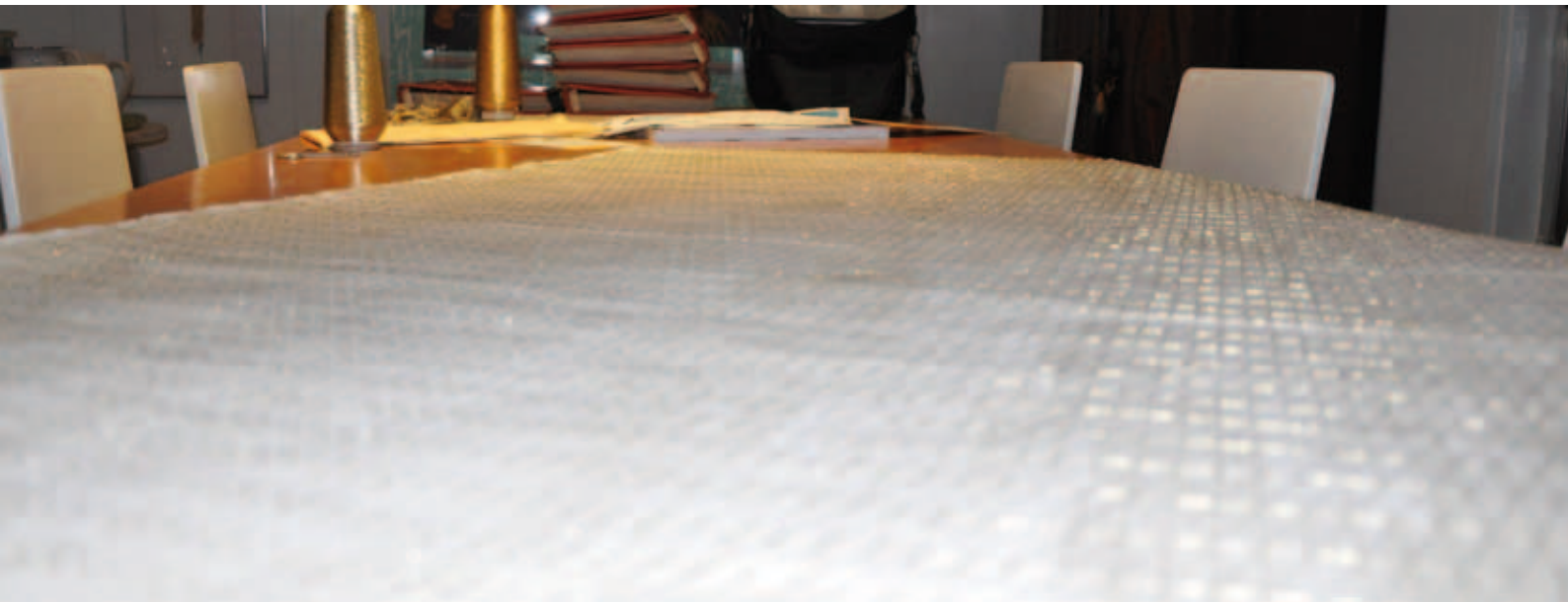


Fig. 108–109 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Reading from Both Sides*, [poly cotton thread, acrylic polymer on Arches 300 gsm, wood; 230 cm x 155 cm], photographic documentation during the making of the artwork, Fryerstown, Victoria.

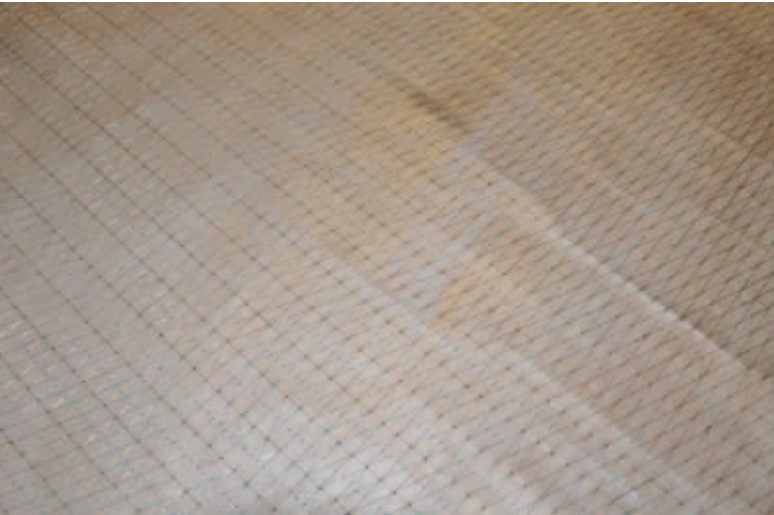


Fig. 110–113 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Reading from Both Sides* (detail), [poly cotton thread, acrylic polymer on Arches 300 gsm, wood; 230 cm x 155 cm], photographic documentation during the making of the artwork, Fryerstown, Victoria.

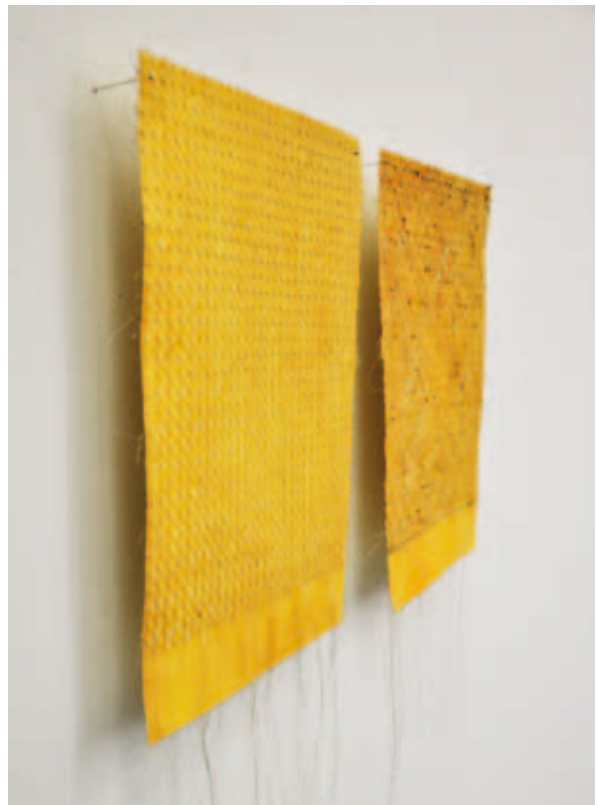


Fig. 114–117 | D'Costa, R 2012–2013, preliminary smaller test works during the making of *Reading from Both Sides*, [poly cotton thread on Arches 300 gsm, acrylic polymer], Fryerstown, Victoria.

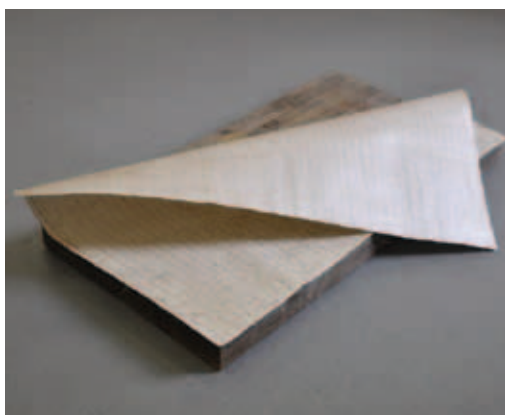
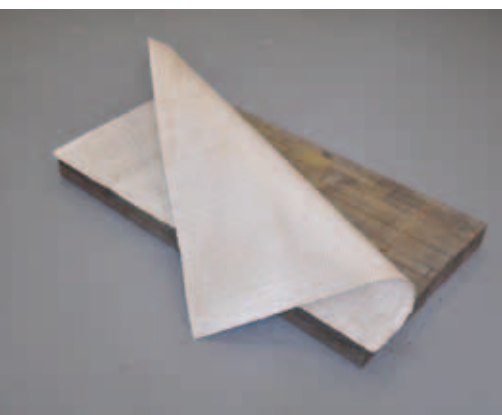


Fig. 118–129 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation testing a range of configurations for *Reading from Both Sides*, [poly cotton thread, acrylic polymer on Arches 300 gsm, wood; 230 cm x 155 cm], Painting Studios, RMIT University, Melbourne.



Fig. 130 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Reading from Both Sides*, [poly cotton thread, acrylic polymer on Arches 300 gsm, wood; 230 cm x 155 cm], Painting Studios, RMIT University, Melbourne.

Standard English (2013)



Fig. 131–134 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Standard English* (studio tests), [acrylic polymer, graphite pencil on plywood], preliminary studio installation tests, Fryerstown, Victoria.



Fig. 135–142 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Standard English*, [acrylic polymer, graphite pencil on plywood (81 panels)], preliminary studio installation tests, Fryerstown, Victoria.

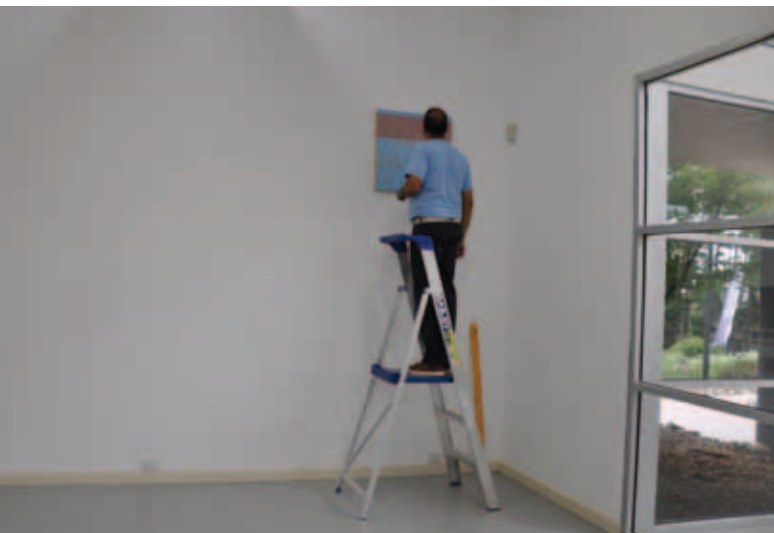


Fig. 143–146 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation installing *Standard English* for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, [acrylic polymer, graphite pencil on plywood (81 panels)], Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland, Victoria.



Fig. 147–154 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Standard English* (details), [acrylic polymer, graphite pencil on plywood (81 panels)], for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland, Victoria. Images courtesy of Eddie Ho.



Fig. 155–156 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Standard English* (installation view), [acrylic polymer, graphite pencil on plywood (81 panels)], for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland, Victoria.

Somersault (2013)

1. an acrobatic movement in which the body is rolled over, feet over head, either forward or backward, on the ground or in midair, finally returning to an upright position

Meanings: Tumble *n.* Turn over *v.*

Synonyms: flip, forward roll, flip flop, cartwheel, head over heels

Definition:

flex-i-ble *adj*

1. able to bend or be bent repeatedly without damage or injury
2. able to change or be changed according to circumstances
3. able to be persuaded or influenced

Meanings: Supple *adj.* Adaptable *adj.*

Synonyms: lithe. Agile, flexible, limber, elastic



Fig. 157 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation during the performative aspect for the artwork *Somersault* (detail), [vaulting horse, acrylic text, polyester silk ribbon, framed inkjet digital print; dimensions variable]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 158–166 | D'Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation of studio tests with vaulting horse, Fryerstown, Victoria.



Fig. 167 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Somersault* (detail), [vaulting horse, acrylic text, polyester silk ribbon, framed inkjet digital print; dimensions variable].

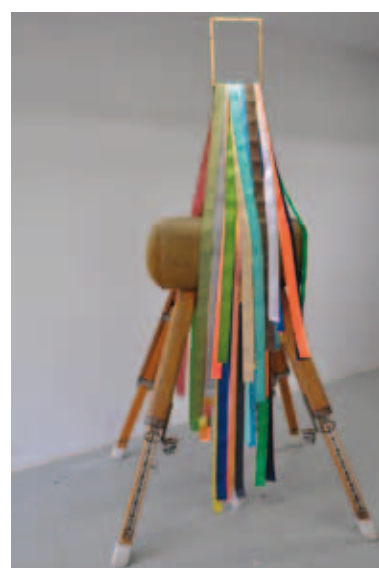
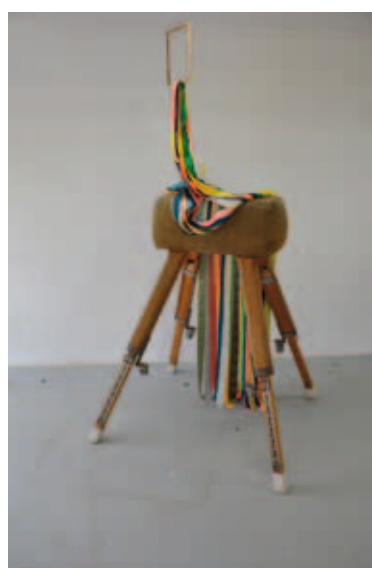
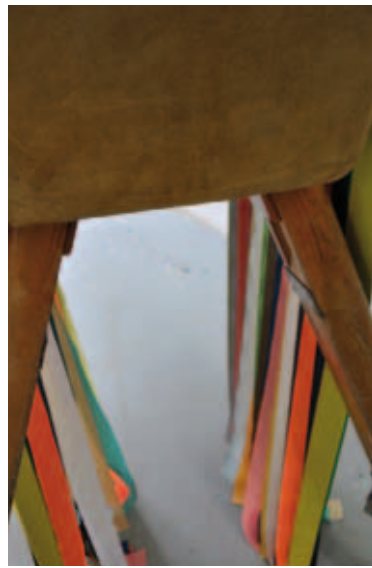


Fig. 168–179 | D'Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation of studio tests with vaulting horse, ribbons and metal stand, Fryerstown, Victoria.

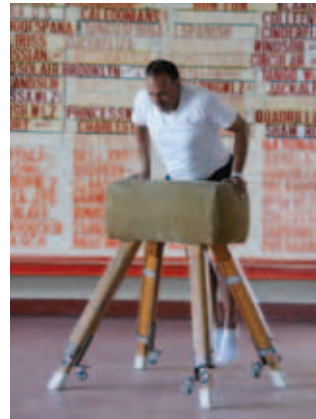


Fig. 180–195 | D'Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation from performative gymnastic actions for *Somersault*, Fryerstown, Victoria. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 196 | D'Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation from performative gymnastic actions for *Somersault*, Fryerstown, Victoria. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 197 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Somersault*, [vaulting horse, acrylic text, polyester silk ribbon, framed inkjet digital print; dimensions variable], for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Monash University, Gippsland, Victoria.

Curtain (2012)



Fig. 198 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Curtain* (white version) (detail), [polyester silk; dimensions variable], photographic documentation – installed in a domestic setting, Fryerstown, Victoria.

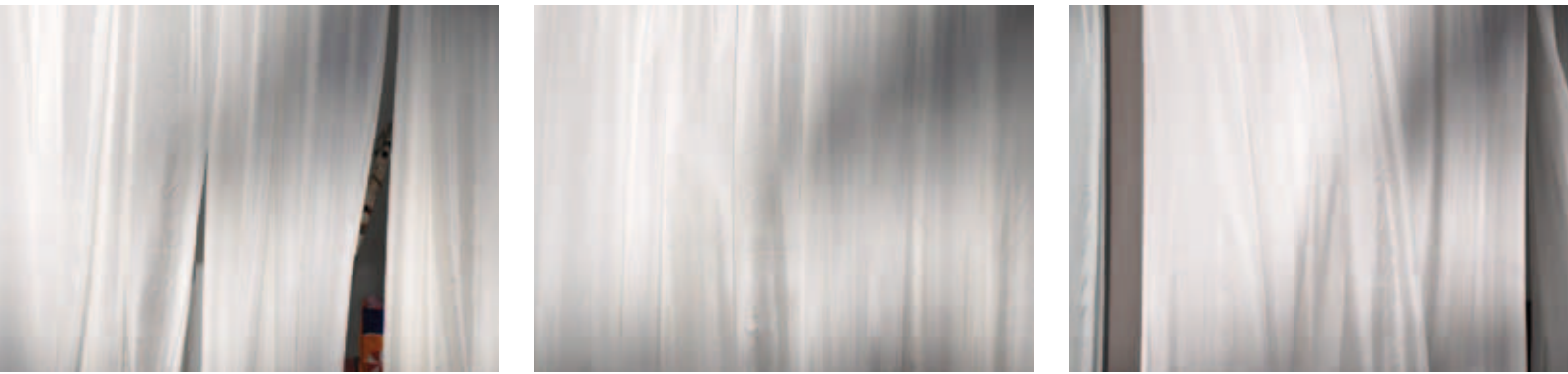


Fig. 199–203 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Curtain* (white version) (detail), [polyester silk; dimensions variable], photographic documentation – installed in a domestic setting, Fryerstown, Victoria.



Fig. 204 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Curtain* (white version), [polyester silk; dimensions variable], photographic documentation – installed in a domestic setting, Fryerstown, Victoria.



Fig. 205 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Curtain* (detail), [silk; dimensions variable], photographic documentation – installed in a domestic setting, Fryerstown, Victoria.



Fig. 206–209 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Curtain* (detail), [silk; dimensions variable], photographic documentation – *installed in a domestic setting, Fryerstown, Victoria.*



Fig. 210 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Curtain*, [silk; dimensions variable], photographic documentation – installed in a domestic setting, Fryerstown, Victoria.



Fig. 211–216 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Curtain* (detail), [silk; dimensions variable], photographic documentation – installed in a domestic setting, Fryerstown, Victoria.



Fig. 217–222 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Curtain* (installation view), [silk; dimensions variable], photographic documentation – installed in a domestic setting, Fryerstown, Victoria.

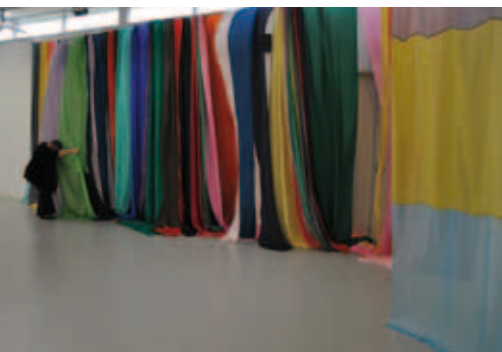


Fig. 223–229 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation installing *Curtain* for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland, Victoria. Images courtesy of Neale Stratford.

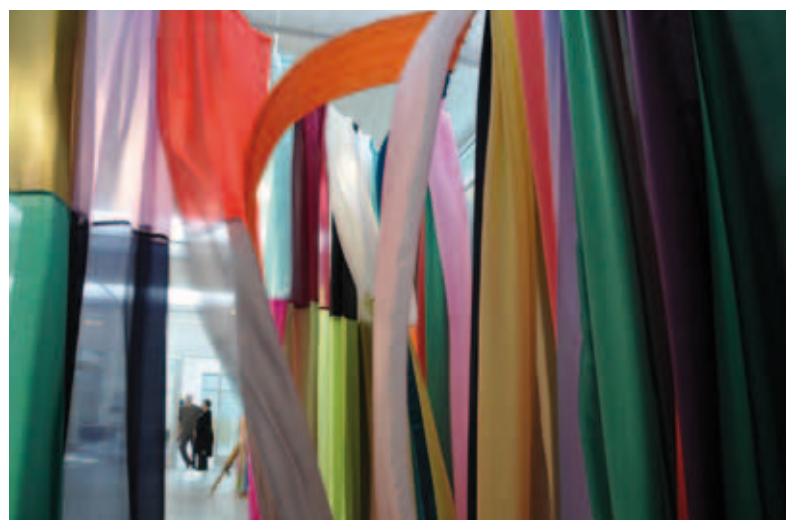
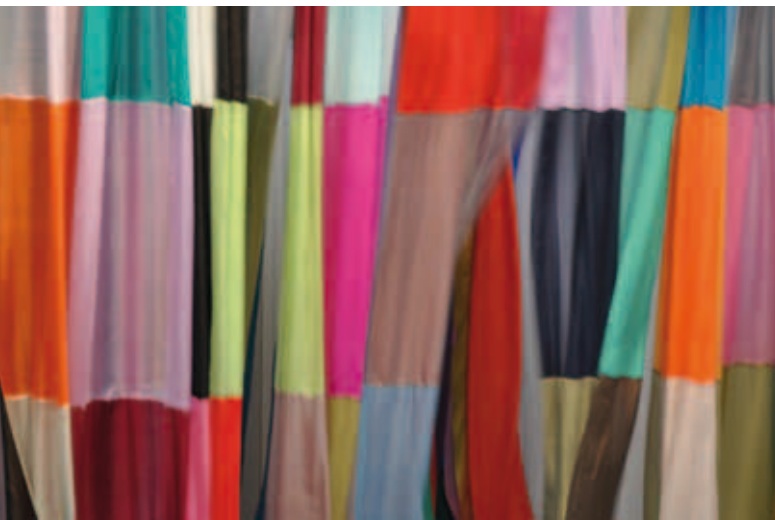


Fig. 230–235 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Curtain* (detail), [silk, polyester silk, metal hanging system; 8 m x 3.8 m], for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland, Victoria.

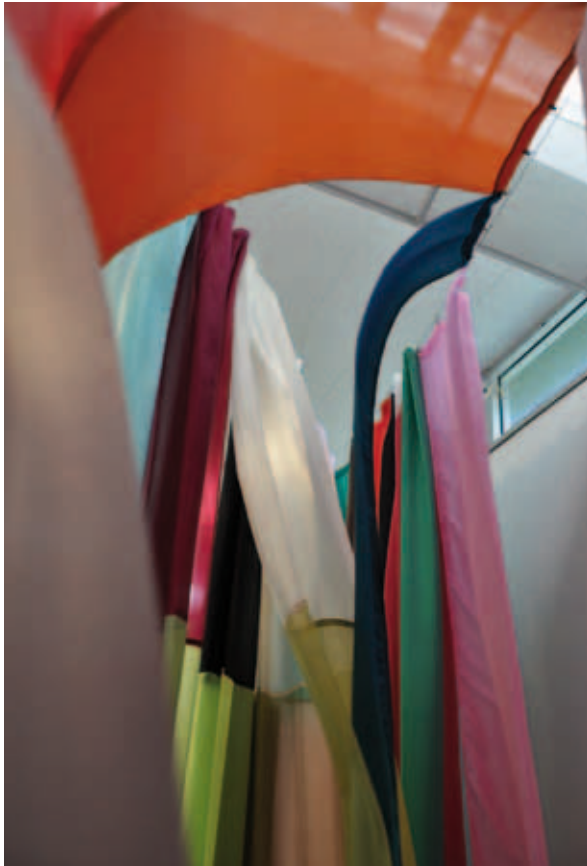


Fig. 236–239 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Curtain* (detail), [silk, polyester silk, metal hanging system; 8 m x 3.8 m], for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland, Victoria.



Fig. 240–241 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Curtain* (installation view), [silk, polyester silk, metal hanging system; 8 m x 3.8 m], for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland, Victoria.

Elsewhere (2013)



Fig. 242 | D'Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *Elsewhere*. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 243–254 | D'Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *Elsewhere*. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 255–260 | D’Costa, R 2012, preliminary test photographs for *Elsewhere* on location at Fryerstown, Victoria. Images courtesy of Julie Millowick.



Fig. 261 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Elsewhere* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl paper 285 gsm; 110 cm x 148 cm (framed)].

P.O.S.H. (2013)



Fig. 262–267 | D'Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *P.O.S.H.* Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

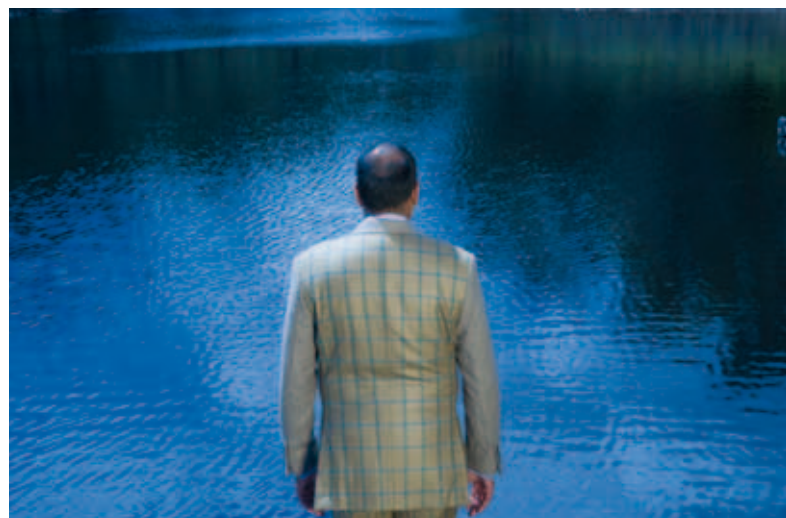


Fig. 268–273 | D’Costa, R 2012, preliminary test photographs for *P.O.S.H.* on location at Fryerstown, Victoria. Images courtesy of Julie Millowick.



Fig. 274 | D'Costa, R 2013, *P.O.S.H.* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl paper 285 gsm; 148 cm x 60 cm (framed)].

Between Dreaming and Dying (2015)



Fig. 275–280 | D'Costa, R 2014, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *Between Dreaming and Dying*. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 281–284 | D'Costa, R 2014, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *Between Dreaming and Dying*. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 285 | D'Costa, R 2014, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *Between Dreaming and Dying*. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 286–291 | D'Costa, R 2014, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *Between Dreaming and Dying*. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 292–300 | D'Costa, R 2014, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria, for the artwork *Between Dreaming and Dying*. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 301 | D'Costa, R 2015, *Between Dreaming and Dying* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl paper 285 gsm; 97 cm x 66 cm (framed)].

Closeness & Distance (2015)



Fig. 302 | D'Costa, R 2015, photographic documentation for *Closeness & Distance* from Colaba, Bombay, India.



Fig. 303–308 | D'Costa, R 2015, photographic documentation for *Closeness & Distance* from Colaba, Bombay, India.



Fig. 309-314 | D'Costa, R 2015, photographic documentation for *Closeness & Distance* from Colaba, Bombay, India.



Fig. 315–320 | D'Costa, R 2015, *Closeness & Distance* (video stills) (Edition of 3), single channel video projection (2.30 min.).

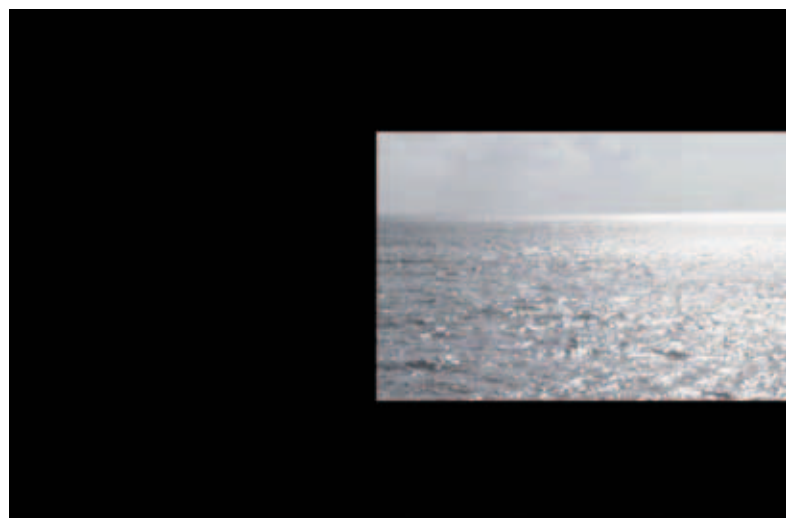
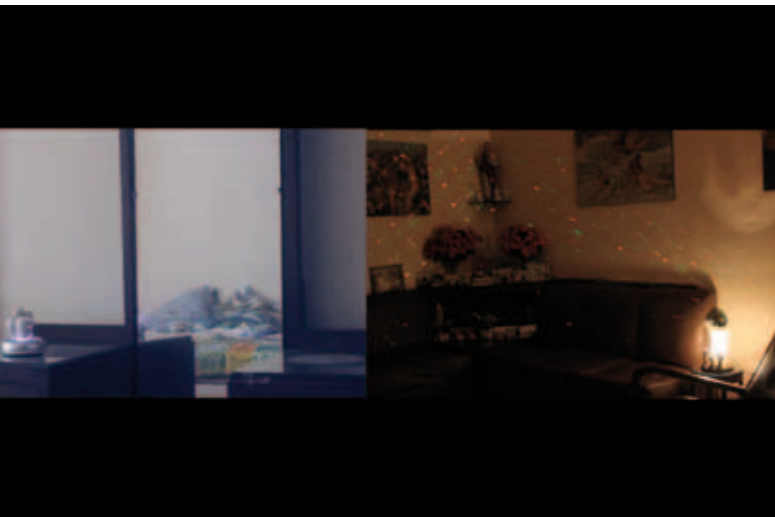
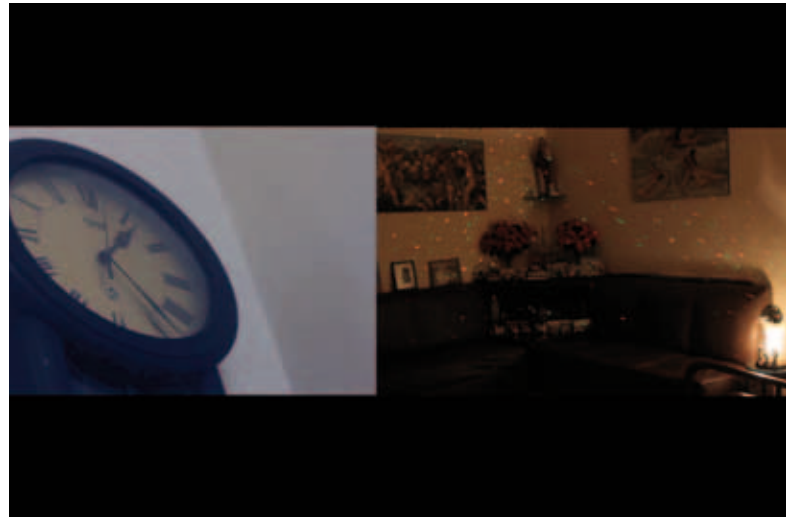
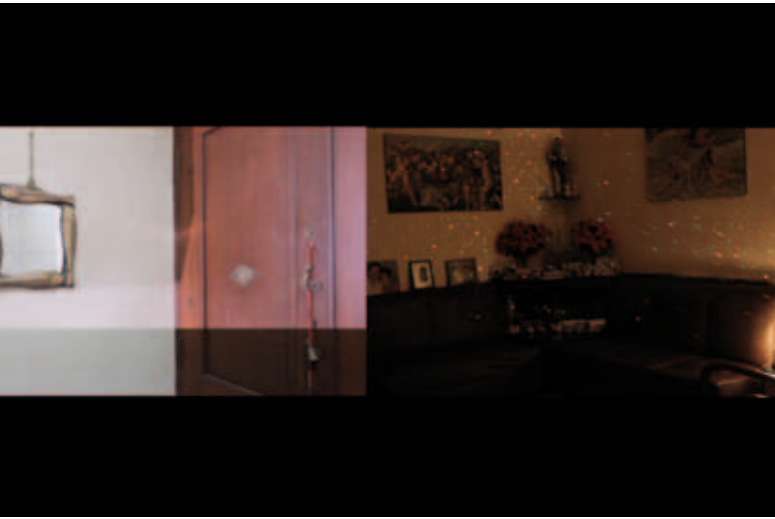


Fig. 321–326 | D'Costa, R 2015, *Closeness & Distance* (video stills) (Edition of 3), single channel video projection (2.30 min.).



Fig. 327 | D'Costa, R 2015, *Closeness & Distance* (video still) (Edition of 3), single channel video projection (2.30 min.).

Letting things be what they are (2016)



Fig. 328 | D'Costa, R 2016, *Letting things be what they are* (installation test), [eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; height 90 cm]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

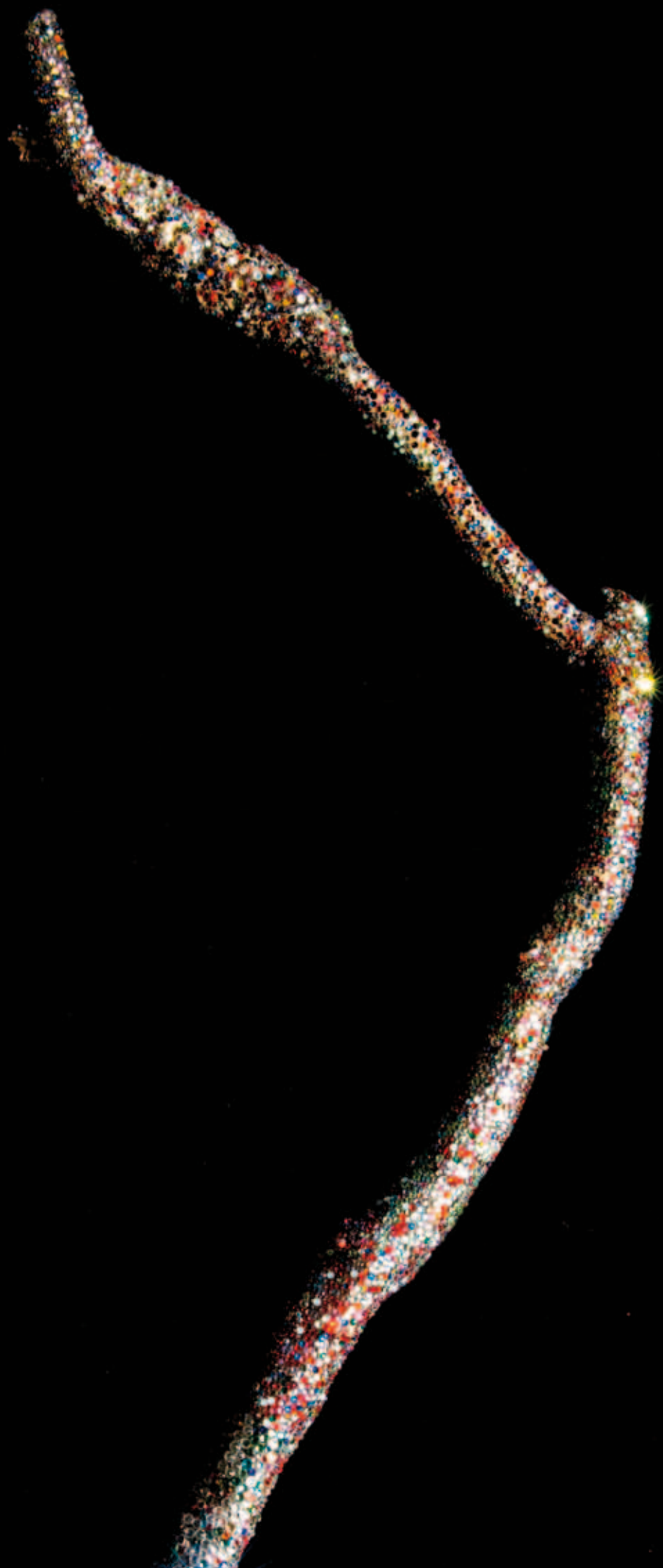


Fig. 329–332 | D'Costa, R 2016, *Letting things be what they are* (detail), [eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; height 90 cm]. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 333–334 | D'Costa, R 2016, *Letting things be what they are* (installation view), [eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; height 90 cm]. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

[Next page] Fig. 335 | D'Costa, R 2016, *Letting things be what they are* (installation view), [eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; height 90 cm]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.



How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow) (2016)

1 gram/1 day = 18 888 grams/days

June 15 2016

Fig. 336 | D'Costa, R 2016, photographic documentation of text, one gram of turmeric for each day I have lived in the world.



Fig. 337 | D'Costa, R 2016, studio tests installing, *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)*, [spice, weight 18,888 grams; dimensions variable]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 338–339 | D'Costa, R 2016, studio tests installing, *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)*, [spice, weight 18,888 grams; dimensions variable]. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 340–342 | D'Costa, R 2016, studio tests installing, *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)*, [spice, weight 18,888 grams; dimensions variable]. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 343 | D'Costa, R 2016, *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)* (installation view), [spice, weight 18,888 grams; dimensions variable]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 344 | D'Costa, R 2016, *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)* (installation view), [spice, weight 18,888 grams; dimensions variable]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

P R E L I M I N A R Y E X H I B I T I O N S

Title of Exhibition: *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*

Project Space School of Art Galleries, RMIT University in conjunction with Midsumma Festival, Melbourne. Curator: Stephen Gallagher
5–25 February 2010

Title of Artwork: *Brad*

Inkjet photographic print, chair, table, printable adhesive text, woolen shawl, carpet, thermometer, harmonica, motor, ceramic figurine, framed photograph, lamp, digital clock
Installation – dimensions variable
2010

Title of Exhibition: *Something in the Air*

27 Gipps Street Gallery, Richmond, Melbourne. A satellite exhibition as part of the Drawing Out Conference conducted by RMIT University. Curator: Martina Copley
25 May – 6 June 2010

Title of Artwork: *The Colonial Garden*

Wooden panels, Victorian Ash, acrylic polymer
Installation – dimensions variable
2010

Title of Exhibition: *Here with You*

Stockroom, Kyneton, Victoria
18 June – 10 July 2011

Title of Artwork: *Four Beats and A Moment of Suspension*

Polyester silk, silk, silk ribbon, ceramic figurine, motor, vaulting horse, metal stand, photograph, paper, polyester thread, acrylic polymer
Installation – dimensions variable
2011

Title of Exhibition: 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*

Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine Victoria

15–24 March 2013

Title of Artwork: *Trade*

Spices, wooden platform

Installation – dimensions variable

2013

Title of Artwork: *Eat! My Son*

A one-day relational event where food prepared and cooked by my mother and I was shared with the community.

Title of Exhibition: *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 2*

Stockroom, Kyneton, Victoria

11 April – 5 May 2013

Title of Artwork: *Rumour*

Flour, wood, motor, eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals

90 cm diameter x 13 cm height (approx.)

2013

Title of Artwork: *Reading from Both Sides*

Poly cotton thread, acrylic polymer on Arches 300gsm, wood

230 cm x 155 cm

2013

Title of Artwork: *A.E.I.O.U.*

Single channel video projection

3.35 min.

2013

Title of Artwork: *Bespoke*

Inkjet photographic print on Hahnemuhle gloss fine art pearl paper 285gsm

148 cm x 105 cm (framed)

2013

Title of Exhibition: *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*

Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Victoria

17 April – 17 May 2013

Title of Artwork: *Curtain*

Silk, polyester silk, metal hanging system

8 m x 3.8 m

2013

Title of Artwork: *Elsewhere*

Inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle gloss fine art pearl paper 285 gsm

110 cm x 148 cm (framed)

2013

Title of Artwork: *Somersault*

Vaulting horse, printable adhesive text, polyester silk ribbon, framed inkjet photographic print

Installation – dimensions variable

2013

Title of Artwork: *Standard English*

Acrylic polymer, graphite pencil on plywood, spirit levels (81 panels)

Installation – dimensions variable

2013

Secret Files from the Working Men's College (2010)

FEBRUARY

Friday 5 to Thursday 25 February

OPENING Thursday 4 February 5–7pm

FLOOR TALK Thursday 11 February 12–1pm

Secret Files from the Working Men's College

[ANON]	KATE JUST	DREW PETTIFER	DAVID SEQUEIRA
RHETT D'COSTA	NICK PANTAZOPOULOS	JON RIETHMULLER	GLENN WALLS
RICHARD HARDING	SPIROS PANIGIRAKIS	JONAS ROPPONEN	

Curated by STEPHEN GALLAGHER

What hides behind those doors and dark spaces of the Working Men's College? *Secret Files from the Working Men's College* highlights some of the talent that over time has been fostered and released from the School at Art of RMIT University. Gallagher brings together artists who reflect on gay lifestyle through the subtle inclusion of queer content into their art practice.

This exhibition is part of the Midsumma Festival's Queer City.



Glenn Walls, *Super/ost* (detail), 2009



PROJECT SPACE/SPARE ROOM
23 - 27 CARDIGAN STREET CARLTON



MANAGED BY RMIT University School of Art

CURATOR/COORDINATOR Stephen Gallagher ADMINISTRATOR Andrew Tetziuff

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TELEPHONE 03 9925 4971 OPENING HOURS Monday to Friday 10AM - 5PM

SUPPORTED BY BADDAGINNIE RUN

Fig. 345 | D'Costa, R 2010, invitation for the exhibition, *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*, Project Space School of Art Galleries, RMIT University in conjunction with Midsumma Festival, Melbourne.



Fig. 346 | D'Costa, R 2010, photographic documentation front window text for the exhibition, *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*, Project Space School of Art Galleries, RMIT University in conjunction with Midsumma Festival, Melbourne.



Fig. 347 | Photographic documentation of scan from the original photograph taken by 'Norman' of 'Brad', date unknown. I used the scanned image to develop a digital print, which was used in the artwork, *Brad*. Original image courtesy of Helen O'Toole.



Fig. 348 | D'Costa, R 2010, installation view from the exhibition *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*, Project Space School of Art Galleries, RMIT University in conjunction with Midsumma Festival, Melbourne.

Something in the Air (2010)

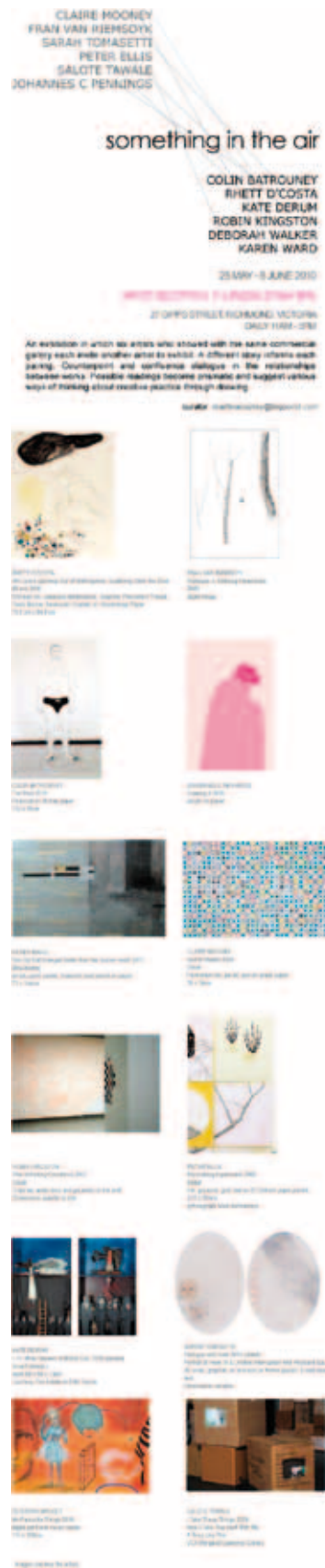


Fig. 349 | Invitation for the exhibition *Something in the Air* (2010), 27 Gipps Street Gallery, Richmond, Melbourne.



Fig. 350 | D'Costa, R 2010, installation view from the exhibition *Something in the Air*, 27 Gipps Street Gallery, Richmond, Melbourne.



Fig. 351 | D'Costa, R 2010, installation view from the exhibition *Something in the Air*, 27 Gipps Street Gallery, Richmond, Melbourne.



Fig. 352 | D'Costa, R 2010, installation view from the exhibition *Something in the Air*, 27 Gipps Street Gallery, Richmond, Melbourne.

Here with You (2011)



Fig. 353 | Invitation for the exhibition *Here with You* (2011), 98 Piper Street Kyneton, Victoria.

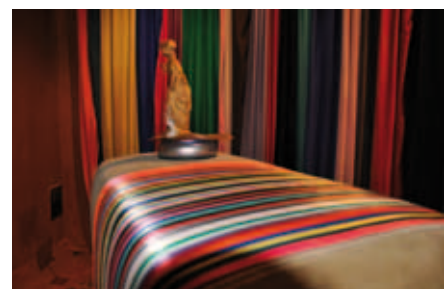
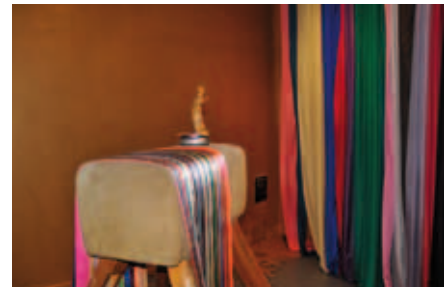


Fig. 354–358 | D'Costa, R 2011, *Four Beats and A Moment of Suspension* (detail), [polyester silk, silk, silk ribbon, ceramic figurine, motor, vaulting horse, metal stand, photograph, paper, polyester thread, acrylic polymer; installation dimensions variable].

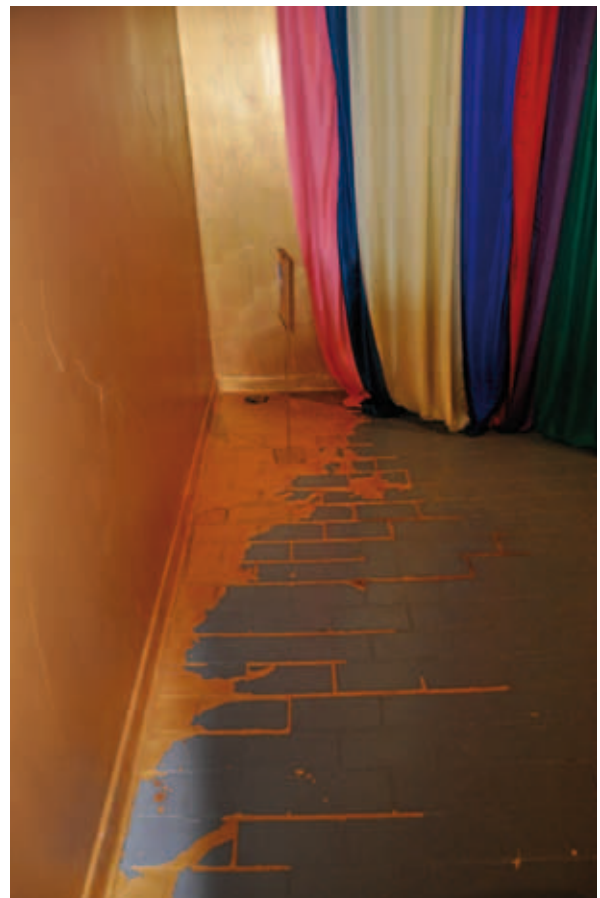



Fig. 359–360 | D'Costa, R 2011, *Four Beats and A Moment of Suspension* (detail), [polyester silk, silk, silk ribbon, ceramic figurine, motor, vaulting horse, metal stand, photograph, paper, polyester thread, acrylic polymer; installation dimensions variable].



Fig. 361–362 | D'Costa, R 2011, *Four Beats and A Moment of Suspension* (detail), [polyester silk, silk, silk ribbon, ceramic figurine, motor, vaulting horse, metal stand, photograph, paper, polyester thread, acrylic polymer; installation dimensions variable].

2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*


VISUAL ARTS BIENNIAL – PERISCOPE

PERISCOPE: CASTLEMAINE STATE FESTIVAL VISUAL ARTS BIENNIAL

Fourteen local and national artists!

Twelve premiere Festival works!

Exhibited across a range of extraordinary sites, including an abandoned car salesroom, a former police lock-up and an original miner's cottage, *Periscope* explores: ruin, kitsch, abundance, alchemy, peepshows, history, projection and place.

Curated by Deborah Ratliff, the exhibition offers immersive engagement with some of the most creative individuals from the central goldfields region. Sugar from one, salt from another, mounds of spice, the artist's mother, distilled concoctions, water, platinum, sound recordings, double adaptors, Chinese Hong Bao, plants, stoneware, discarded homewares, a reconfigured 1972 Holden Kingswood...

Compelling, complex and sometimes strange, the third Castlemaine Festival Visual Arts Biennial presents artists' individual and collective responses to the Festival theme, Elemental.

Hunt & Lobb Building

Daniel Armstrong
Julie Collins and Derek John
Rhett D'Costa
Pia Johnson
Ben Laycock
Jessica Ledwich
Tanya Schultz
Dean Smith
Leslie Thornton
Frank Veldze
Jason Waterhouse

Tutes Cottage
Tara Gilbee

Old Police Lock-up
Clayton Tremlett



Fig. 363 | Invitation for 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*.



Fig. 364 | Front entrance, 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria.



Fig. 365–367 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Trade* (detail), [spices, wooden platform; dimensions variable], for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Images courtesy of Julie Millowick.

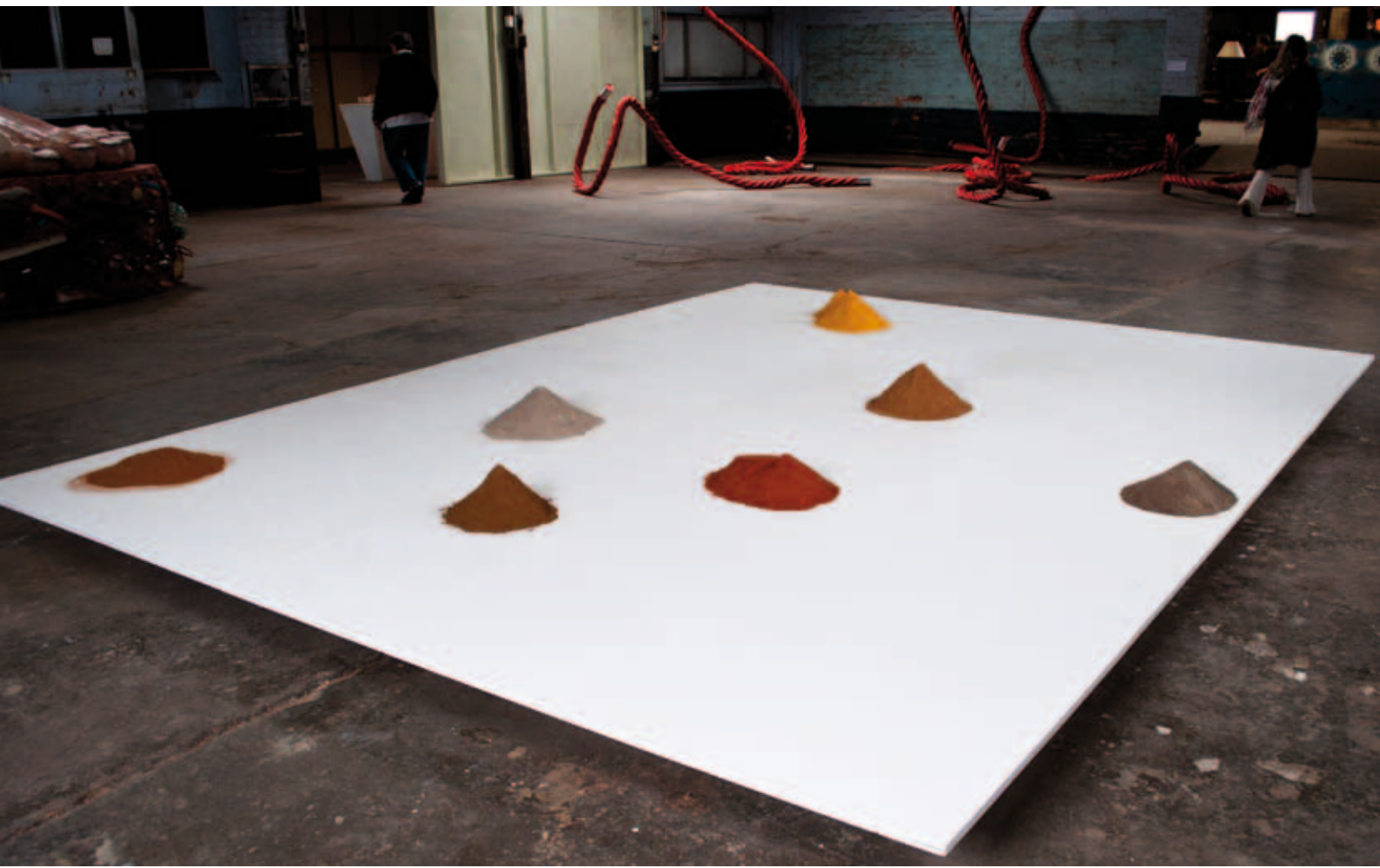


Fig. 368 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Trade* (installation view), [spices, wooden platform; dimensions variable], for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Image courtesy of Julie Millowick.



Fig. 369–371 | Photographic documentation from the one-day relational event *Eat! My Son* as part of the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Images courtesy of Julie Millowick.

Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 2 (2013)



Fig. 372 | D'Costa, R 2013, entrance to *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 2*, Stockroom, Kyneton, Victoria.



Fig. 373–378 | D'Costa, R 2013, installation view from *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 2*, Stockroom, Kyneton, Victoria.

Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3 (2013)



Gippsland Centre for Art and Design

**Shimmering Spaces:
Exhibition 3**

Projects 6 -9
Standard English/Somersault/Curtain-
Inbetween/Elsewhere

Rhett D'Costa

You are invited to the opening of this exhibition on Tuesday, 16 April, 2013 at 5pm.

Exhibition dates: 17 April to 17 May
Hours: Mon to Fri, 9am - 5pm
or by appointment.
Building 6S, Monash University,
Gippsland Campus, Churchill, 3842
Phone: (03) 5122 6261

Image - Rhett D'Costa
Somersault (detail), 2013
Vaulting horse, inkjet photographic print, polyester ribbon, vinyl text, Dimensions variable

S W I T C H B A C K
G A L L E R Y


Fig. 379 | Invitation for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3 (2013)*, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Victoria.



Fig. 380 | D'Costa, R 2013, installing *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Victoria.

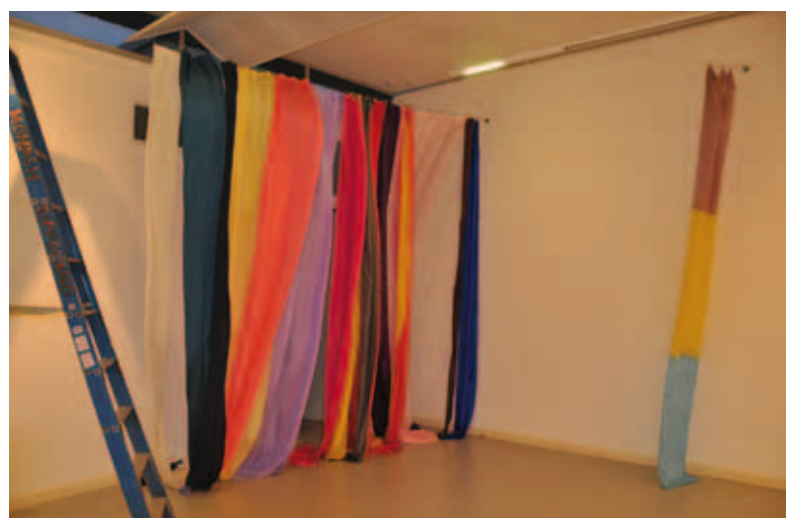
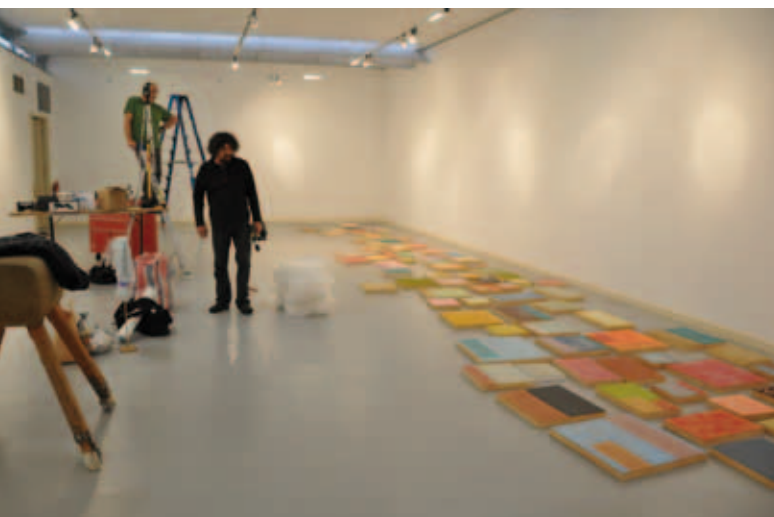
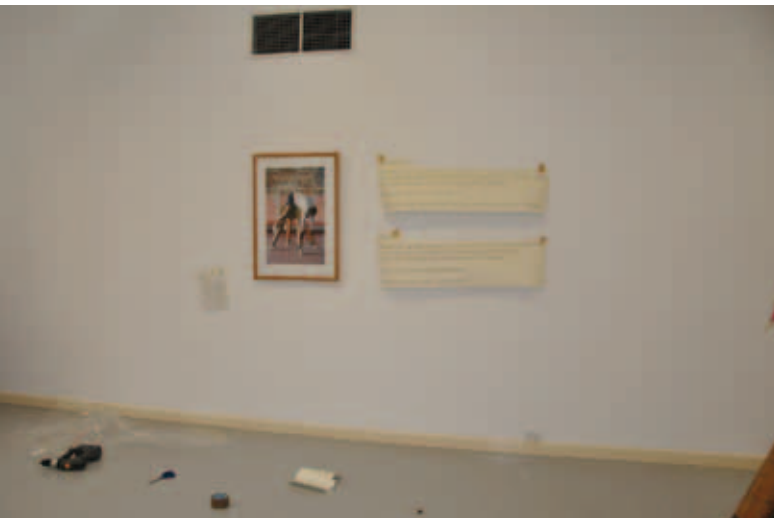


Fig. 381–386 | D'Costa, R 2013, installing *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Victoria. Images courtesy of Neale Stratford.

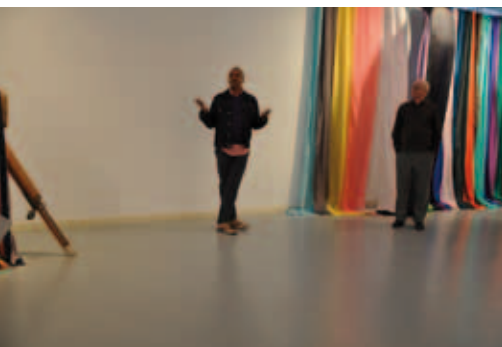
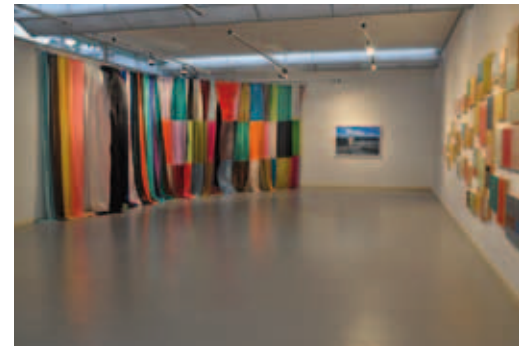


Fig. 387–395 | D'Costa, R 2013, exhibition opening, *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Victoria.



Fig. 396 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3* (installation view), Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland Campus, Victoria.

INTRODUCTION

[...] the 'right to narrate' as a means to achieving our own national or communal identity in a global world, demands that we revise our sense of symbolic citizenship, our myths of belonging, by identifying ourselves with the 'start-ing-points' of other national and international histories and geographies. [He continues] It is about placing oneself at the intersections and interstices of these narratives as a way to emphasize the importance of historical and cultural re-visioning (Bhabha 2004, p. xx).

Cultural identity, place and belonging are important leitmotifs in contemporary art and in everyday life. The desire to feel part of a group or community in the context of a nation, one's ethnicity, social standing or locality, is intrinsic to human identity. Yet issues relating to identity, place and belonging, have become increasingly politicised, entangled and problematic in the context of mobility, globalisation and heightened border security. The complex politics involved in defining (and then protecting) borders is contentious and in some instances, seemingly unresolvable. Border conflicts arising from disputes relating to natural resources, culture, language, ideology, religion, politics, ethnicity and historical references to national ownership, are not specific to any one region. Evidence of this can be seen across the globe, both historically and in contemporary society. China's historical claims to Tibet, the Kashmiri region between India and Pakistan, the dismantling of Yugoslavia into separate countries, the heavily militarised zones between North and South Korea and the ongoing conflicts between Israel and Palestine, are examples that highlight the complexity when considering questions and answers to place, belonging and identity.

Discourse around where we belong, who we are, how we are represented and who has the right to determine these choices, are not new questions. However, they continue to be compelling and relevant questions, which I examine in relation to the Anglo Indian community. How we choose to represent who we are, or how we are defined, or to whom we may feel an allegiance, is symptomatic of the shifting and contingent spaces we operate out of in a more deterritorialised world, particularly in cultural and spatial terms.

Writing on the 7th International Biennial of Sharjah (2005), sociologist Laymert Garcia dos Santos asked, 'Who has the right to belong to the future of humanity, and who is condemned to disappear?' (2008, p.

58).¹ Less than twenty years later, we see evidence of this very question being played out in a world that continues to be divided by race, class and culture. The human crisis in Syria, for example, articulates the complex interrelatedness of belonging, place and identity and makes Santos' remarks feel compellingly present and relevant.

A sense of belonging is often tied to owning land or land we believe, belongs to us. Santos in his essay, *Belonging and Not Belonging* (2008), makes us consider the idea of belonging in a different context. Santos argues that the reason we desire a sense of belonging is directly tied to capitalist structures. He cites the semi-nomadic people of the Amazon, the Yanomami's relationship to land as distinct to Western thinking on the subject. The Yanomami believe that they belong to the land rather than the land belonging to them. Therefore, because of this very clear distinction, the Yanomami cannot understand the demarcation of territory. For them, territorial demarcation does not exist. Santos cites this example as it

[...] clarifies the problem of belonging by contrasting the 'primitive territorial machine' with the 'civilised capitalist machine'. In the former, man's foundational relationship is with the land; in the latter, it is with abstract value. If this is true, it begs the question: how is it possible to 'belong', in the age of globalised capitalism, other than in a proprietary sense? Can belonging – to a country, to a people, to a nation – still make sense? Would it not be preferable to focus on not belonging [...] (Santos 2008, p.50).

The idea of belonging, is an issue the Anglo Indian community has had to face in the context of India, the Indian community and British colonisation. Because 'The Anglo Indian community are the 'mixed race' progeny of British colonialism' (D'Cruz 2006, p. 11), they have also had to negotiate their desire to belong to a British culture to which they associated with more than an Indian culture.

The term itself, 'Anglo Indian', is contested and has its own complicated history, which I discuss in chapter three. For the purposes of this research I use the term Anglo Indian, to refer to India's mixed race community, specifically as it relates to British and Indian miscegenation. As a marginal minority group they have received regular stigmatisation by the British and Indian community who never really accepted their legitimacy (D'Cruz 2006, p. 11). Consequently, issues of homeland, nationalism, cultural identity and belonging, have encircled the community from early colonial beginnings to Indian independence, and two waves of emigration. These three key moments in history have significantly impacted on the culture and attitudes of the Anglo Indian community in India and its diaspora.

While my research draws on my own personal experience and my own dilemma with identity, it is a situation I believe many Anglo Indians continue to grapple with. As academic, Glen D'Cruz states, 'personal genealogies need to be complemented by an understanding of how the individual is entangled in a network of institutional regimes and discursive practices' (ibid. p. 19). Anglo Indians tried to establish a normative British identity and cultural heritage by attempting to trace their European family genealogy. But as D'Cruz argues, an individual's identity is shaped by many factors. A personal genealogy needs to be seen in the context of a range of historical situations and circumstances (ibid.). My research attempts to untangle the complexity of discursive discourses around race and place in the context of Anglo Indian identity. This untangling of discursive practices has been the domain of postcolonial studies. It has relied on 'people from colonial historical provenances entering the academy and "asking questions that come

1 The publication, *Belonging and Not Belonging*, was published in 2008, after the 7th International Biennial of Sharjah in 2005. Portions of Santos' essay, *Belonging and Not Belonging*, which appears in the abovementioned publication, were previously published in German as 'Europa aus der sicht des Südens', in *Via Regia*, vol. 52–53, Erfurt, Europäischen Kultur-und Informationzentrum in Thüringen, July/August 1997–May 1998, pp. 31–38.

from their histories” ...’ (Bhabha 1991, p. 48, cited in D’Cruz 2006, p. 20). My research asks these same questions as a result of my own relationship to ‘colonial historical provenances’ (D’Cruz 2006, p. 20), through my own experiences of belonging and emigration as an Anglo Indian. D’Cruz comments on how the explosion of scholarly interest in empire and its aftermath is not the result of some belated gesture of generosity on the part of academic institutions. Rather, it comes from non-European people having a personal investment in work that attempts to account for their exclusion from the venerated canons of the Western academy (D’Cruz 2006, p. 20).

My research began by asking, what appeared on face value, to be simple questions about identity. What does it mean to be, live and experience the world as an Anglo Indian and how does being an Anglo Indian impact on or influence how I make artworks? Questions, surprisingly, I had previously not thought about critically in my life or artistic career. However, these questions (and many more) sat like a soft ache in my consciousness. I knew I was an Anglo Indian because my parents told me and because, as I would find out, I fitted the definition of an Anglo Indian according to the New Constitution of Independent India (1950, Article 366(2)). Growing up I would listen to my mother’s stories she narrated about her life as an Anglo Indian and about the community of which she was so clearly proud. However, there seemed to be so many gaps, such as, why we were so engaged in British rather than Indian customs and ways of living. Or the fact that we were born in India and looked Indian, yet there seemed to be very little evidence or any form of attachment or nationalistic engagement with India. Instead there was an insistence of separating ourselves from our own Indian ethnicity, preferring to privilege our English and European genealogy and Anglo Indian race.

My PhD became a way to focus an enquiry around these questions as a way to fill in the gaps and come to a deeper and more critical understanding of how being Anglo Indian impacted on the way we lived in the world and how this in turn, influences art practice.

If postcolonial writing, particularly that of Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Salman Rushdie, point to identity as shifting and evolving, as opposed to a static and fixed representation, then my research adds to this discourse particularly from the context of self-representing Anglo Indian experiences within a fine art context. My research puts forward, through a body of artworks, how dual or mixed race identity loses and gains perspective by occupying the space in-between British and Indian cultures.

There has been and continues to be, extensive focus on the ideas of hybridity and identity in fine art, particularly in artworks and art criticism produced during the 1980s and 1990s. However, there is a gap in existing practice-based research in the context of dual ethnicities, specifically regarding the Anglo Indian community.

In *Contemporary Asian Art* (2010), writers Melissa Chiu and Benjamin Genocchio ask compelling questions around Asian art practice. Such as, ‘What is it that distinguishes a work of art by a contemporary Asian artist?’ (Chiu and Genocchio 2010, p. 9). Referencing this very question, I deliberate over what is it that distinguishes a work of art by a contemporary Anglo Indian artist? Chiu and Genocchio clearly understand the challenges inherent in their question around the idea of ‘Asia’ itself. Here they describe Asia as a ‘discursive concept [rather] than a homogeneous geographical, social or even cultural entity. It is an idea more than a location’ (Chiu and Genocchio 2010, p. 10). In the context of my research and art practice, I would recognise and align my artworks more with contemporary Asian artists rather than contemporary Western artists in terms of shared attitudes, references, themes and ideas, particularly when they engage

with memory, cultural, social and historical circumstances. However, I remain unclear as to whether I can or would, describe myself as an Asian, Indian or Anglo Indian artist. I certainly could under the Chui and Genocchio definition. But I remain unsure. In their discussion of the emergence of Asian art, Chui and Genocchio state:

After World War II, many Asian nations gained independence from European colonial powers, and with this came new borders and an emphasis on developing and promoting local cultures as a sign of nationhood (Chiu and Genocchio 2010, p. 24).

In the case of India, the Chui and Genocchio statement is valid. Post Indian independence, the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru wasted no time in promoting India as a modern country divorced from its colonial past and historically separated regional traditions. Nehru was determined to present India as a progressive and modern country ready to define its sense of nationhood and to embrace the challenges and opportunities of global citizenship. But where did this leave the Anglo Indian in terms of claiming their own sense of culture and identity? Where would the Anglo Indian be positioned in the discourse of Indian nationhood? Particularly given how strongly they aligned and felt connected to British and European culture.

Anglo Indians were generally ignored or made invisible in British and Indian history. When they were mentioned by early British colonial writers (Rudyard Kipling [1865–1936], James Mill [1773–1836], Thomas Babington Macaulay [1800–1859]), it was often in derogatory terms, reducing the community to unfair clichés. Early Anglo Indian writing, driven by the community itself, was a way for the community to write its own sense of self-representation.

A significant amount of research continues to be developed internationally, both by Anglo Indian and non Anglo Indian academics, relating to the Anglo Indian community. However, most of this research is within literary writing and the social sciences, particularly in the field of social anthropology, and not within the context of practice-based fine art research. As a practicing artist, I wanted to engage with what it means to be an Anglo Indian and how living within this in-between space could be explored and signified through practice-based research.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. Each attempts to pull apart and put together the primary issues of cultural identity, place and belonging in the context of my own experiences, accounts and circumstances. These include: being born in India, emigrating, citizenship, nationalism, returning to India and living as part of an increasing Anglo Indian diaspora in a globalised, transnational world. I also examine Indian history from colonisation to independence, and into the present from the perspective of the Anglo Indian community. I discuss how these issues become manifest in my artworks and how other artists engage with content related to my artwork. I attempt to establish a chronology, which moves backwards and forwards through the historical and the present, weaving in my own personal experiences in relation to the wider Anglo Indian community. The research therefore takes into account a discursive relation to my own evolving Anglo Indian identity and personal examples of my experiences as an Anglo Indian.

Chapter one scopes, orientates and formulates the research. A lengthy chapter, it immediately introduces the reader to the idea that this PhD and its structure are, in many respects, discursive and meandering. I discuss the reality of the Anglo Indian experience from both an historic and personal standpoint,

particularly reflecting on key early life experiences both in India and Australia. I describe in depth three of my artworks that confront these experiences, *Somersault* (2013), *A.E.I.O.U.* (2013), and *Standard English* (2013). I also discuss the works of three artists, which are important in outlining similar concerns, by investigating the nature of their practice. This chapter illustrates that the research will be a complex read, that the reader will be required to hold a myriad of ideas in their head in order to sense the atmosphere, and the complex historical and experiential weight of the reality Anglo Indians live through.

The chapter begins with theorist, Stuart Hall's discussion of power and exploration of the space between binary distinctions. This leads to an investigation of Doris Salcedo's installation, *Shibboleth* (2007), which opens up the very space in and between divisions and borders, challenging the idea of marginality and exposing the very space of Western power, authorship and domination. It relates directly to writer and academic, Olivia Guntarik's compelling questions, 'Whose perspective of the world is history being framed from?' and 'What if we were to re-frame, re-position and self-represent history?' (Guntarik 2013, p. 5). *Shibboleth* (2007) exposes the relevance of borders to my research, which led to the making of my artwork *Curtain* (2012).

Chapter one continues with a discussion of how the various parts of my PhD ... the dissertation, the artworks and the final exhibition ... relate to each other. It owes acknowledgement to Dr Bianca Hester's PhD, *material adventures, spatial productions: manoeuvring sculpture towards a proliferating event* (2007), which helped me understand the various components of a practice-led PhD, as a way to engage my own relationship to the thinking-making and theory-practice nexus she discusses. While the placement of this section in the chapter may seem disjointed, it serves to illustrate the discursive nature of the research and acts as an exemplar of how the writing will weave together the varied discourses with my artwork.

This leads to a discussion of the methods I use across the theoretical and practical components of the research. I work with methods that complement both the theoretical research and the art making process by employing a heuristic and autoethnographic methodology to allow for a more symbiotic relationship between the theory-practice nexus. I discuss eisegesis, as a way of writing, put forward by Francesca Rendle-Short (2010), as well as the curatorial processes Tacita Dean employed for the exhibition, *An Aside*, at the Camden Art Centre, London in 2005. Writing for *Frieze* magazine, curator, Max Andrews described Dean's curatorial approach as 'wayward anthropology' (2005, para. 1), referring to the way she allowed the exhibition to build its own form of internal logic by following her nose and allowing one thing to lead to another, often in serendipitous and oblique ways.

Rendle-Short and Dean became models who informed my *loose thinking, meandering, incidentals, incorrectness, failure and not knowing*, to operate legitimately throughout this PhD. Central to this idea is *finding* a way, rather than *knowing* a way, allowing a non-predetermined journey to evolve, and to notice deeply and reflectively along the way. This form of thinking allowed me to embrace the personal and anecdotal as legitimate ways to think, act and create. Art critic, Adrian Searle, writing on Dean's show for *The Guardian*, lauds Dean's curatorial approach:

Artists often make the best curators, firstly because they have a better feel and engagement with objects and images, secondly because they are altogether quirkier, freer, by nature more interesting – which is why they are artists in the first place. They think differently and have a more personal stake in looking at and thinking about art (2005, para. 1).

The chapter concludes by putting forward two primary research questions: how Anglo Indian identity emerges, shifts and evolves in the context of nationalism, culture, community, history and location; and how the development of artworks can allow for a space of 'in-betweenness' to emerge in the context of an evolving Anglo Indian identity that isn't fixed but rather is shimmering, mutable and fractured.

Chapter two draws on writing three personal reflective accounts from actual experiences, as a way to bridge the textual aspects of the dissertation with the creative process of making art. The initial writing in these chapters occurred at the early stages of the research and concurrent to the early stages of the studio making process. The three reflective accounts began with what I describe as *poetic meanderings*. They were first written to find a way into the PhD through stories and lived experiences. I listen with intent to my mother's stories of India and Anglo Indians. They bring to life an India I did not know or had the chance to experience from the perspective of being an Anglo Indian. These stories help me understand my history and who I am. They provide 'conditions of possibility' (D'Cruz 2006, p. 14) for what I can imagine as an Anglo Indian.

I then wrote back 'into' these three initial reflective accounts, expanding the ideas. The writing in this chapter becomes, therefore, a mix of reflective, narrative and academic styles of writing. However, I still refer to them as 'reflective accounts' as I wanted the writing in this chapter to maintain a feeling of being unedited, a flow of consciousness, or as academic Peter Elbow describes it, 'freewriting'.² Elbow describes freewriting (he transcribes it as one word) as writing without editing, which therefore allows for a personal honesty and a more intense state of perception and language production to be present in the writing (Elbow, 1973). These early writings were crucial in positioning the relationship between writing and making art as a way to find and articulate my research enquiry.

The three reflective accounts in chapter two include: the city of Bombay, the sea, and the experience of life intersecting with art practice. The first account, *Starting from X*, commences with receiving a postcard from my mother while she was in India in 2009. On it she inscribed an 'X', to show the place I was born. This postcard shifted my thinking back to India. The reflective account was written at a time when I was reading Salman Rushdie's, *Midnight's Children* (1982) and becoming absorbed in his factual and fictional narrative. This first account sets up ideas of narrative, memory, non linearity and non synchronous ways of thinking about my Anglo Indianness as a fractured, incomplete, provisional or even circulatory way of being in the world. It allowed me to re-think cultural authenticity as a fractured and mutable space.

In the second reflective account, *To be somewhere else, looking at the sea, closeness & distance*, I recount ideas to do with water, particularly the sea, which has played an important role in my life. Each country I have lived in or spent significant time in—Singapore, Hong Kong, India and Australia—has been colonised and is surrounded by sea. This second account also deliberates over the act of looking in the context of subject and object, and the compositional device of Rückenfigur, where the back of a figure looks into the picture as a doubling of both subject and object.

I finish the chapter with the third reflective account, *The story of Brad*, which discusses the process and development of my artwork, *Brad* (2010). This project opened the way for me to think about my art practice as a multimedia and multidisciplinary process in the context of my research. It also established my studio process as evolving rather than being predetermined, allowing a coalescing of life and art to

2 'Freewriting' is a phrase and method of writing used by Peter Elbow, Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, <http://wac.colostate.edu/jbw/v8n2/elbow.pdf>, viewed 28 February 2015.

operate serendipitously. This studio process was crucial and would not have come about without noticing how the evolving story in the *Brad* project, could be used for the development of artworks throughout my PhD.

The ideas of place, identity and belonging as the central issues in the research, become translated into four of my artworks: *P.O.S.H.* (2013), *Elsewhere* (2013), *Brad* (2010) and *Reading from Both Sides* (2013), which I discuss and weave into the chapter.

Chapter three examines the early history of the Anglo Indian community and covers the period from the early 17th century, when the British first arrived in India, to their formal departure when India gained its independence in 1947. It accounts for the role of trading companies, such as the East India Company, which led to the eventual colonisation of India and the establishment of the British Raj, and the impact these events had on the evolution and changing circumstances of the Anglo Indian community. It examines the agency of the trading company and its role in the context of the British government, the building of Empire as a way of contextualising the union of Indians and the British, and the evolving and shifting attitude toward miscegenation during this time.

This chapter moves to a more present tense by discussing the large exodus of the community from India after Indian independence, including my family's own personal emigration experiences to Australia.

The chapter also includes a discussion of the definition of an Anglo Indian and its contestations, from inside and outside the community. As Anglo Indian writer Frank Anthony noted, 'Even the British in India had no precise appreciation of who and what an Anglo-Indian really was' (Anthony 1964, p. 1).

The chapter discusses four artworks. *Trade* (2013) and *Eat! My Son* (2013), which articulate the complex relationships between coloniser and colonised and draw on the ideas of Martinique revolutionaries and authors, Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon, to discuss the emotional and psychological impacts these encounters had on the psyche of both coloniser and colonised. *Trade* (2013) and *Eat! My Son* (2013) allow for a shift in the discourse from anger and blame to optimism and hope. *Rumour* (2013), engages with folklore during the Indian mutiny and *Bespoke* (2013), examines social norms in terms of dress codes, as ways to demarcate difference between the British and their Indian subjects. It also interrogates Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry, a device I draw on in *Bespoke* (2013) as a way of problematizing and undermining normative and established cultural hierarchies.

Chapter four examines Letters and Asides I wrote to a fictitious character during the development of my artwork *Bespoke* (2013).

This chapter comments on Christov-Bakargiev's vision of *dOCUMENTA* 13, which sets out four conditions: the act of re-performing, being under siege, states of hope and optimism, and retreat and sleep. The experiences of the Anglo Indian, as I describe throughout the research, seem to run parallel to Christov-Bakargiev's vision. In many of the artworks, I act out through a restaging or re-performing, experiences of the Anglo Indian ... *Bespoke* (2013), *P.O.S.H.* (2013), *Elsewhere* (2013), *Somersault* (2013), *A.E.I.O.U.* (2013) ... often under siege ... *Rumour* (2013), *Correspondence* (2012–2015) ... or in states of hope and optimism ... *Curtain* (2012), *Reading from Both Sides* (2013), *Standard English* (2013), *Eat! My Son* (2013) ... or retreating and asleep ... *Between Dreaming and Dying* (2015), *Closeness & Distance* (2015), *Letting things be what they*

are (2016), *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)* (2016).

This chapter also discusses the complex art practice of Walid Raad, as a way to highlight the negotiation between objectivity and subjectivity, knowledge and belief, historical documentation as archive, and fiction and lived experience.

The chapter goes on to discuss the linking roles between artworks, narrative and text, and finishes with the Letters and Asides that articulate these connections through narrative writing.

Chapter five commences with a poem I wrote titled, *Remember and Forgetting* (2015), and leads to an examination of Anglo Indian writer Margaret Deefholt's poem, *Homesickness* (2003), which articulates the fracture and dislocation felt by Anglo Indians in the context of home. The chapter focuses on how place and belonging, in the context of staying and leaving India, attributed to an evolving identity formation for Anglo Indians. Two events that can be attributed to this urgency, which cultural geographer Alison Blunt describes, were the failed attempts at establishing a homeland in India as a form of a utopic model and the significant waves of emigration by Anglo Indians after Independence in 1947.

In this final chapter, I also discuss two of the artworks, *Between Dreaming and Dying* (2015) and *Closeness & Distance* (2015), which highlight the spatial concepts of home as sites of belonging, in relation to identity formation for Anglo Indians. I include a discussion of 'nostalgia', drawing particularly on academics Alzena D'Costa's and Alison Blunt's analyses and discussion about the important role of (and what I would argue is) the legitimacy and necessity of nostalgia for the Anglo Indian community in determining a sense of self and a sense of place.

Finally, I consider my own diasporic condition and how the larger diaspora of Anglo Indians maintain a sense of identity through community in their adopted homelands.

Like the beginnings, the conclusion is multiple. I describe the conclusion as a set of circulatory 'acts' because I noticed that many processes and aspects of my PhD felt more circulatory than linear. They have included a series of turns, pauses and manoeuvres, which involved curves rather than straight lines, often circulating around a series of issues and conditions. For example, the art projects were informed by life experiences and vice versa. Historical facts intertwined with imagined fictions, to the point where I was unsure which was informing the other. And then there were the locations, such as Bombay, where ideas and experiences stemmed from and led back to each other. Each of these concluding acts engage and review the context of the research enquiry and attempt to simultaneously reach conclusions and open up future considerations.

CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEWS AND ORIENTATION

I was not one of midnight's children. My belated birth, some years after the midnight hour that marked India's tryst with freedom, absented me from that epochal narrative. I was not there to witness the emergence of India and Pakistan, born together from a cleft womb, still as restless in relation to each other as the day they stepped into the harsh light of nationhood. But great events persist beyond their happening, leaving a sense of expectation in the air like the telling vacancy of weather, the silence, that often follows a spectacular storm, never letting you forget that it happened. My childhood was filled with accounts of India's struggle for Independence, its complicated histories of sub-continental cultures caught in that deadly embrace of Imperial power and domination that always produces an uncomfortable residue of enmity and amity (Bhabha 2004, p. IX).

1.1 ORIENTATING AND FORMULATING THE RESEARCH

This PhD began with a very different research focus.

It commenced by reviewing a career over twenty years as a practicing artist working primarily within the area of abstract painting. I wanted to explore alternate models of abstraction, which did not sit within the dominant Western model. The rationale for opening up this enquiry stemmed from my dual Eastern and Western ethnicity.

However, in the process of examining my relationship to Western abstract painting, it was the very idea of an East–West distinction that pricked my attention. As a result, it would be ethnicity/race/culture and its impact on an evolving sense of Anglo Indian identity that would become my focus. By asking a series of initial questions such as: What does it mean to be and live as an Anglo Indian?¹ How did Anglo Indians evolve as a minority Indian group? How did historical events such as colonisation and independence, impact on the Anglo Indian community? How is the Anglo Indian community perceived and represented, both within and outside of the community? How have these perceptions been created? How did having

¹ The hyphenated term itself 'Anglo-Indian', I believe, is problematic. It can be construed to describe what kind of Indian a person is, creating a qualifying distinction, which immediately separates the community from other Indians in a way that implies a higher status and at the same time denigrates the position of the Indian. As well, the term can be perceived as privileging the English side of culture over the Indian side of culture by placing 'Anglo' before 'Indian'. I have deliberately removed the hyphen from the name of the community in this research for these reasons, referring to the community as 'Anglo Indian'.

a dual ethnicity impact on the way I engaged my art practice? These questions would eventually lead to asking how Anglo Indians negotiated the in-between space created by their dual ethnicity and how this impacted on art practice.

As I considered the validity of this enquiry, I recognised that while there has been and continues to be, extensive focus on ideas relating to hybridity and identity in fine art theory and criticism—particularly during the 1980s and 1990s—and extensive research on the Anglo Indian community—particularly in the social sciences—there was a gap in existing research, which engaged with fine art studio-based research in the context of dual ethnicities, specifically in respect to the Anglo Indian community. This would become my research. Therefore it is important to recognise that this research is neither in the disciplines of anthropology, sociology nor art theory and criticism exclusively. Rather, it draws on these fields as necessary, examining the questions posed by the research within the context of studio-based research.

■ BETWEEN BINARIES

Central to this research is my questioning of my relationship to the occidental. Growing up in Australia and studying at an art school focused primarily on Western culture, I took for granted the influences inherent in this framework that influenced both my life and my art practice. Having lived all my life in countries that have been colonised, has created a situation where, despite my dark skin, I have come to think of myself as *almost white*. Cultural theorist, Kwame Anthony Appiah, writing in the updated foreword for Frantz Fanon's seminal book, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), discusses Fanon's ideas about colonialism and racism and the psychological impact this has on the way black (non white) people feel and perceive themselves. Appiah discusses how Fanon drew on his own experiences in the French Caribbean, developing accounts of how the 'dominant colonial culture identifies the black skin of the Negro with impurity; and how the Antilleans accept this association and so come to despise themselves' (Appiah 2008, ix). He cites example such as:

The day the white man confessed his love for the mulatto girl, something extraordinary must have happened. There was recognition, and acceptance into a community that seemed impenetrable. Gone was the psychological depreciation, the feeling of debasement, [...] She was no longer the girl wanting to be white; she was white. She was entering the white world (Fanon 2008, p. 40).

Citing another example, Fanon continues accounting for the psychological impact felt when a white woman shows love for a black man. The black man notes:

I want to be recognized not as *Black*, but as *White*. [...] – who better than the white woman to bring this about? By loving me, she proves to me that I am worthy of a white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man (ibid., p. 45).

Fanon's examples illustrate the deep set negative attitudes dark skinned people felt, as held by colonising whites. The complex psychological attitudes of both the coloniser and colonised, as Fanon highlights throughout the text, become entangled in distorted images and understandings of each other and themselves.

This negative attitude toward themselves and their desire to be English, seems embedded in the psyche of the Anglo Indian, who constantly desires whiteness. His association with whiteness grants him entrance into a white world, which he feels he has a right to ... if he can disguise or deny his Indianness.

Without really focusing on the issues of my own sense of identity—specifically in the context of culture—I was nevertheless always aware of my difference: such as my darker skin colour and my slightly odd accent, which over time has evolved into an Australian accent. However, doubly confounding was that I was not different enough. Representation and difference, is often reliant on polarised, binary opposites: black/white, good/bad, civilised/primitive (Hall 2013, p. 16). Philosopher, Jacques Derrida, has also argued:

[...] there are very few neutral binary oppositions. One pole of the binary, he argues, is usually the dominant one, the one which includes the other within its field of operations. There is always a relation of power between the poles of a binary opposition (Derrida, cited in Hall 2013, p. 225).

‘What really should therefore be written is, **‘white/black, men/women, masculine/feminine, upper class/lower/class, British/alien** to capture this power dimension in discourse’ (Hall 2013, p. 225). Based on these ideas I can understand how my ‘assimilation’ into my adopted country impacted on my thinking of myself as ‘white’. However, there is also the space between the binary, which needed reassessment. *Brownness* is neither black nor white. In the case of the Anglo Indian it is mixed, often in differing levels of tint. As an Anglo Indian and migrant, relating to culture and its influence on identity made me feel as if there was a need to reclaim or rebuild my sense of identity.

My reclaiming or rebuilding of an identity was in itself a doubling experience. Firstly, I had to reclaim my Indian heritage. Although born in India, I was never made to feel as if I was an Indian. My family made themselves separate from Indians in terms of their customs, language and religion. They felt a stronger connection to their European and British culture. The Indian community invariably rejected Anglo Indians because of our association with the British during colonialism. My parents’ choice to immigrate meant leaving my ancestral home and becoming part of a large diaspora of Anglo Indians.

Previously, I had not considered my dual ethnicity and a need to claim my Anglo Indian identity. The contradictory feelings of belonging and unbelonging simultaneously, led to a state of ambivalence. Homi Bhabha discusses what it’s like to live within a world-system that points in a direction away from you, your country or your people (Bhabha 2004, p. xi), and refers to how ‘Such neglect can be a deeply negating experience, oppressive and exclusionary ...’ (ibid.). As an Anglo Indian, the very language itself—‘you’, ‘your country’, ‘your people’—has inherent problems in terms of claiming Anglo Indian space, which feels cracked and split. It is ideas of belonging in the context of place and identity that steered this research.

■ CRACKS AND CREVICES

Columbian artist Doris Salcedo’s seminal installation, *Shibboleth* (2007) at the Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London, convinced me to look within the ‘cracks’ to consider and to use my own experiences as an Anglo Indian in my art practice. The accompanying catalogue for the exhibition commences with a quote:

Shibboleth is a negative space: it addresses the w(hole) in history that marks the bottomless difference that separates whites from non-whites. The w(hole) in history that I am referring to is the history of racism, which runs parallel to the history of modernity, and is its untold dark side (Salcedo 2007, p. 65).

Salcedo’s powerful visual statement to engineer a physical inscription through the space of the Turbine Hall, both literally and metaphorically, goes right to the heart of Western power and domination both within the field of art and the wider world.

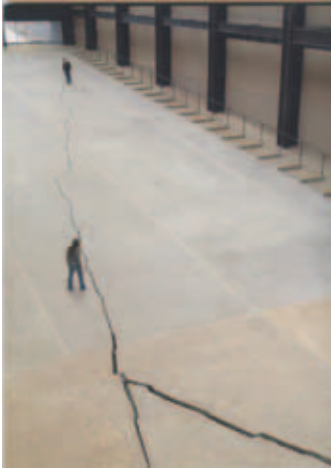


Fig. 397 | Salcedo, D 2007, *Shibboleth* (installation view), [concrete, cyclone fencing], exhibited at The Unilever Series, The Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London, 9 October 2007–6 April 2008.

Shibboleth presents unequivocally, a challenge to the 'predominant Western-centric understanding of modernity' (Todoli 2007, p. 6). At a time when the Tate gallery was assessing its collection of international art (Todoli 2007), Salcedo's *cut* became a reminder that, 'the history of colonialism and racism is the Janus-face of the history of Enlightenment ... To look towards the future we need to face the past' (ibid., p. 7). In the Director of Exhibitions for the Tate Modern, Achim Borchardt-Hume's essay, *Sculpting Critical Space* (2007), he states:

Museums and art galleries are repositories of history. Popularized in the nineteenth century, they are intimately connected to the ideology of nationhood and, as a result, deeply entangled in the Yin of Enlightenment, democracy and Utopian rationalism and the Yang of colonialism, racism and exclusion of 'the 'other'; [...] (Borchardt-Hume 2007, p. 17).

Cultural theorist, Paul Gilroy, echoes these sentiments in his essay for Salcedo's *Shibboleth* catalogue, *Brokenness, Division and the Moral Topography of Post-Colonial Worlds*. He suggests:

[...] the intractable effects of division can only be answered with a morally acute return to the idea of humanity – reconceptualised on a worldly scale in an explicit opposition to the idea that racial hierarchies and ethnic divisions are absolute. *Shibboleth* suggests something else as well. It endorses the proposition that institutions like the museum and the gallery will have to be damaged if they are going to be adequate to the task of managing the relationship with otherness, with difference. Damaging those institutions is now an affirmative procedure (Gilroy 2007, p. 29).

Both Borchardt-Hume's and Gilroy's comments lay bare the role museums and galleries have long ignored. Salcedo's physical 'damage' (cracking the substructure of the gallery) highlights their own shortcomings, which they will have to address. *Shibboleth* (2007), cuts deep into the substructure of the museum's history (metaphor) and architecture (material), literally exposing cyclone fencing embedded in the crevices, a contemporary material ubiquitous with the building of barriers and fences to demarcate boundaries for both inclusion and exclusion. *Shibboleth* (2007), exposes the markers, stories and traces of the historical power of Modernity and simultaneously, the history of racism. These discourses cannot be repressed, ignored or built over. Salcedo provides the opportunity for us to confront these legacies in ways that allow for a critical space for generative, constructive communication. In this context, *Shibboleth* (2007), is an affirmative and optimistic gesture. In the physical destruction and damage to the architecture, there lies hope for humanity. *Shibboleth* (2007), is a complex artwork, which exposes and lays bare history and its catastrophes. *Shibboleth* (2007), gives me permission to look metaphorically into the crevices of the Anglo Indian culture,



Fig. 398 | Salcedo, D 2007, *Shibboleth* (detail), [concrete, cyclone fencing], exhibited at The Unilever Series, The Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London, 9 October 2007–6 April 2008.

as a way to find stories and experiences that help to reclaim and heal Anglo Indian space, rendering it self-represented and authentic.

Salcedo's oeuvre often conveys the voice of the disenfranchised in relation to conflict and the burden associated with particular events in history. The events Salcedo selects are invariably political. For example, in the proposal for the installation, *Abyss* (2005), for the Triennial of Contemporary Art, Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Salcedo states:

Room 18 is clearly a space of political practice, not a space of human habitation. The social practices inherent in the spatial forms of this room remain present today, more than a century and a half after it ceased to be a centre of power.

Abyss addresses the sheer extra weight the powerful ones exert over disenfranchised populations. It is an attempt to address the irreconcilable disparity that prevails in the social practices of our time [Salcedo 2005, p. 119].



Fig. 399 | Salcedo, D 2005, *Abyss* (installation view), [brick, cement, steel, epoxy resin], exhibited at the Triennial of Contemporary Art, Castello di Rivoli, Turin, 441 x 1386 x 1624 cm, 21 September–16 October 2005.

Salcedo's art interrogates injustices in history to make us face what we may prefer to forget. As cultural theorist and artist Mieke Bal says, 'It [Salcedo's artwork] has been consistent in its passionately meticulous preoccupation with politics, memory and the pain of others' (Bal 2007, p. 44). Adding, '[...] she rubs the past into the present object and in so doing she blocks the process of forgetting' (ibid.).

Reassessing or facing those moments in history that become forgotten as a result of what Bal (2007, p. 43) describes as 'wilful amnesia', is essential if we are to heal from the experience of these moments. Salcedo's artworks provide us with exactly these opportunities to face and heal from our past.

Salcedo makes artworks that draw on her lived experiences and the politics of her native Columbia. As Bal states in her essay, *Earth Aches: the Aesthetics of the Cut* (2007), for the catalogue, *Shibboleth* (2007):

The crevice opens up the world's primary division as a field inside which things go on; where people live. The border is not a line but a space, negative or rather, made negative, but not really empty. Here, in the surfaces of that deep crevice's walls, lies Salcedo's humble aesthetic; her angry optimism (Bal 2007, p. 61).

Ultimately it is this 'angry optimism' in which I am particularly interested. Reading Aimé Césaire's, *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955), makes one angry. It is very much a declaration of war: a treatise of the injustices committed during colonialism. There is much to be angry about in the injustices relating to power and domination during colonialism and thereafter. But I am interested in how to move from this anger to optimism. I think Bal's description of Salcedo's work is apt in this equation.

■ CURTAINS AS PERMEABLE BORDERS

In many ways, the Anglo Indian community can be viewed as a border culture that was displaced in India, *before* its diasporic movements even began. Therefore the Anglo Indian experience of belonging and

sense of identity has always been affected by borders between Indian and British cultures, whether it be language, location or cultural ideologies.

A community that seems to have been made relatively absent historically and contemporaneously is in danger of disappearing into the fissure, without being able to reconcile its own sense of being and belonging. As mentioned earlier, Salcedo's art practice provides an impetus to look into the Anglo Indian's own metaphorical crevice, which acts as a point of division between Indian and British cultures. Architect and academic, Eyal Weizman, in his essay, *Seismic Archaeology*, for the *Shibboleth* catalogue, says Salcedo claims that the '... negative space of the crack exposes a colonial and Imperial history [that] has been disregarded, marginalised or simply obliterated ...' (Salcedo as cited in Weizman 2007, p. 34). In relation to the Anglo Indian community, exposing the space of the crack provides the opportunity for a voice to be heard, transcribed and re-examined. Colonial and Imperial history has often 'disregarded', certainly 'marginalised', and sometimes 'obliterated' the Anglo Indian story.

The desire within the Anglo Indian community to self-represent through stories continues to be strong. In *Art and Otherness*, art critic Thomas McEllivey, put forward the idea that:

[...] no one cultural form will be enforced on all. Instead, it will be one culture made of many cultures, one history made up of many histories - a whole made of disunited fragments, with no imperative to unite them. Peoples clinging to their own heritages, traditions, languages and styles of selfhood insist that they be written into history as themselves, and that their picture of us, with elements we might not relish, be written into that history too. Even more, they demand that they will write the history (McEvilley 1992, p. 132).

McEllivey's comments represent the desires of many minority or marginalised groups, such as the Anglo Indian community. A postcolonial world provides the Anglo Indian with the scope to self-represent their own history and how this history implicates a rewriting of already written histories.

With this impetus to reconsider borders and boundaries, I made the artwork *Curtain* (2012). It consists of two curtains made of coloured silks. Each curtain consists of a series of individual panels that hang parallel to each other. The first curtain is made of a heavier opaque polyester silk. Each length is an individual colour. The second curtain is made of a more translucent silk fabric. In this curtain, three sections are sewn together to create each panel. Hung together, the three coloured sections of each panel read as a grid of varying colours. The two curtains are displayed in a way so that when installed, they intersect. Each of the individual panels in each of the curtains is not joined, which allows the viewer to move in and between the folds of the fabric, crossing freely from one space to another.

When I first conceived of the artwork I was reflecting on the idea of divided spaces that simultaneously separate and allow access. The curtain would mark a threshold where the viewer could choose to engage with the installation aesthetically and physically. As much as I wanted the viewer to be able to move freely in and out of the folds between the panels of each curtain, I also wanted the artwork to stand as an open invitation where the choice to engage was an option available to everyone. These borders do not carry the compartmentalised spaces so customary during the



Fig. 400 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Curtain* (installation view), [silk, dimensions variable], photographic documentation - installed in a domestic setting, Fryerstown, Victoria.

colonial period or the existing and new borders of our contemporary world. Instead the beautiful colours in *Curtain* (2012) become an invitation and celebration, where crossing between spaces is always possible.

I collaborated with my mother to produce *Curtain* (2012). I had previously worked with her on other art projects. For instance, she had knitted striped and grid coloured patterns from a series of paintings, into blankets so they could be used domestically. For the curtain project, we discussed what criteria would be used in the colour selection process for each series of panels. I encouraged her to recall the beautiful colour combinations in the saris she sometimes wore in India and to draw on these experiences when combining colours for the curtains.² Interestingly she left almost all her saris in India, not seeing any need for them when we immigrated to Australia. My mother left many things back in India: family, friends and the familiarity of place. Those of us who emigrate and leave our ancestral birthplace, leave many things behind—physically, psychologically and mnemonically. Juliana Engberg, in the exhibition she curated for the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, *The Biography of Things* (2015), notes how ‘things carry and have histories’ and how artists have ‘started to look beyond the museum, and connected collections to things in the world that also have stories to tell’ (Engberg 2015, p. 5). Engberg’s choice of titles is interesting and idiosyncratic. What exactly is a biography of things? If a biography, by definition, is an account of a person’s life, particularly the important parts, then is Engberg asking us to consider what are the important parts we should consider? What I find important and relevant to my research is what Engberg is highlighting—‘things (such an aloof, undefinable and unquantifiable word) in the world have stories to tell’. And furthermore, that the important parts are a personal, subjective choice. It is this search for ‘things in the world’, which are material and ethereal that my research is attempting to find and bring forward as artworks.

■ HOLI COLOUR!

Colour combinations in Indian textiles, including saris, have always influenced the way I think about and use colour in my everyday experience and artwork. Particularly colour combinations that unexpectedly work together. For instance, pinks that sit between turquoise and olive green. Orange hues that appear to be in harmony with pale blues. My relationship to colour always seemed different to what I experienced and was taught at art school. I was not self-consciousness when using colour, allowing discordant and contrasting colours to sit next to harmonious colours. I never referred to a colour chart or a colour wheel. Instead, I relied on an intuitive, personal experience of colour, which included combinations seen in the bazaars, street life and beautiful fabrics from India. This was a palette I chose from uninhibitedly.

The first images I made as a young artist related to my memory of the Hindu festival, Holi. The festival is celebrated by people throwing coloured dyes over each other. For weeks leading up to the celebrations, local bazaars sell coloured pigments stacked high in powdered mounds in rich intense hues of blue, yellow, red, purple and green. As well as pigments with glittering, shimmering interference, dusts are added to create dazzling, sparkling effects. I was always drawn to the lush intensity of these powdered mounds. On subsequent trips back to India, I often seemed to encounter this particular festival.

² In India everyone in my family wore Western-style clothing. Only on certain occasions did my mother wear either a salwar kameez or a sari. She had beautiful saris. The Anglo Indians in Bombay my parents socialised with all wore Western-style clothing. It seemed to be standard, the ‘custom’. It differentiated them from the Indian community. I remembered that each time I saw my mother in a sari, I thought she looked extraordinary. By this, I mean I sensed she looked different to the way I was accustomed to seeing her. Although I was only six years old, I knew instinctively that there was something askew each time I saw her wear a sari. It felt special: both different and yet natural.



Fig. 401–402 | Photograph from street scene in Bombay, India, showing pigments being sold for Holi festival (n.d.).



It is difficult to think of India, and not think of colour. Conversely, it is difficult to think of colour and not think of India. Colour seems related intrinsically to India's culture and is manifested specifically in its array of spices from markets, textiles (including Indian saris), the richly painted Hindu temples and deities, and general bazaar culture. One need only walk down any street in India to be almost overloaded by visual dazzle. This may include a vernacular ready-made religious offering on a street corner of a blue Brahmin house with rich marigold, red roses or a deity in silver and gold. The eye is always catching glimpses of colour juxtaposed in ways that operate outside of the way I was taught colour theory at art school.³ My relationship to colour is through life experience rather than an academic understanding through art. I do not think objectively about colour when I use it in my art practice. Colour, instead, is emotional, subjective and mnemonic, as well as cultural and aesthetic.

I do not know if asking my mother to draw on her memory of colour combinations from saris she had worn in India was an emotional experience. I do not know how it made her think about her past experiences in India. Or if these thoughts and experiences were fraught with joy or sadness or both. When she eventually decided on colour combinations for the curtain, I could understand her choices, both formally and aesthetically. Mine probably would have been similar, (despite our age and gender difference), because I too had experienced and seen these colours, as she had. There was a bond, which was familial and which connected us to a place still strongly present in our lives. The result of this collaboration between my mother and me, connected through our experiences and memories of India, is a beautiful abstraction: a 'painting' that floats lightly, recalling the spaces and colours of our remembered and experienced India. This project allowed us to move back and forth, between present and past states. In this way, 'History is brought into the present' (Bal 2007, p. 61) for both of us.

■ EXPERIENCE AS A METHOD

My research draws on personal experiences as an Anglo Indian, which has consciously differentiated me from others in India and Australia. Drawing on lived experiences was important to this research because experiencing something carries a higher level of personal and emotional investment. 'Experience' is knowledge gained from direct involvement. The reason I privilege experience as a method in this research is because it plays such an important role in the studio methodology. I use the inconsistency of memory,

3 I am referring specifically to Western scientific theories on colour. Such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (*Theory of Colours* 1810) and the Bauhaus artists of the early 20th century, particularly Johannes Itten and Josef Albers.

which both remembers and forgets, as an opportunity to use factual and fictional accounts of events and stories in the development of the artworks.

The experiences I drew on to develop the artworks relied on my own memory of certain events, as well as the recounting of events through stories my mother told me. For example, when I first came to Australia I was very conscious of my accent, particularly when I had to sing the national anthem. Another was my inability to do a somersault as a child in India. These events became the catalyst for two artworks: *A.E.I.O.U.* (2013) and *Somersault* (2013), respectively.

■ SOMERSAULTS

The artwork, *Somersault* (2013), draws on the memory of an experience in India during my childhood. At the age of five, I had my first experience of prejudice and racial difference because I could not do a somersault. What I suspected, without being able to articulate at the time, was that the gravity of the experience was never about being able to do a somersault. I would not have known the terms 'racism' or 'prejudice' then. The school I attended was mono-racial. We were all ostensibly Indians; our differences based on religious beliefs rather than race. My inability to do a somersault was an experience that stayed with me and which I (re)performed forty-five years later in a dance hall in central Victoria, Australia. This haunting experience was re-staged using tropes from the original experience, recoded with attitudinal shifts that allow for humour and the absurd to operate as counterpoint to the seriousness of not being accepted by my Indian peers. In re-staging the event (remembered across forty-five years) accuracy fails, as does the protagonist who really cannot do a somersault. On closer inspection, the ribbons he wears with pride on his shirt, are not for gymnastics but athletics. Their very authenticity remaining open to being challenged.



Fig. 403 | D'Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation from performative gymnastic actions for *Somersault*, Fryerstown, Victoria. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 404–406 | D'Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation from performative gymnastic actions for *Somersault*, Fryerstown, Victoria. Images courtesy of Marion Williams.

The gestures he re-performs—from poses he has seen and linked to real gymnastics—are juxtaposed with poses that are amateurish, awkward and that attract humorous responses from viewers. He is too tall, overweight, and the wrong shape for a gymnast. Perhaps the young boys in India were right to laugh if these present photos are indicative of his gymnastic prowess.

I delayed resolving the artwork as I did not have a clear idea of the form the artwork would take. I therefore kept the project in a state of experimentation, eventually allowing the process to dictate the form. The process included performing pseudo gymnastic acts, photography as documentation of the



Fig. 407 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Somersault*, [vaulting horse, acrylic text, polyester silk ribbon, framed inkjet digital print; dimensions variable], for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 3*, Monash University, Gippsland, Victoria.

performative process, and a narrative of the original experience that guided the project. Material objects—ribbons and a vaulting horse—were used as props during the experimentation and as objects in the final installation, with text outlining the definition of the words *somersault* and *flexible*. The final artwork was arrived at through a series of tests and experiments. When eventually installed, the artwork became a combination of text, object and photography, its content carrying multiple meanings.

The text in the artwork, which includes the dictionary definition of the word *somersault*, takes us back to the beginning of the narrative. The situation began with not being able to do a somersault as a child and the distress this caused, as it exposed a layer of 'difference' for the artist, which he took as a sign of not being accepted racially. Underneath this text, the word *flexible* is defined, which opens the narrative to metaphor as a life lesson for the Anglo Indian artist—he needs to be flexible if he is to be successful in doing a somersault and if he is to survive in the world as an Anglo Indian. His body fails this test of flexibility as a child and as an artist in re-performing the event as art.

The photograph in the installation shows the artist slumped over the vaulting horse, mimicking its form, as if to move attention away from his inability to do a somersault and not being accepted by his Indian peers. His bodily gesture slumped over the vaulting horse can be interpreted as failure or fatigue. His repeated actions during the performing of gymnastic acts, which fail again and again, lead to a state of exhaustion. But the image is tinged with humour and pathos as the activity is, ultimately, absurd. The weight and size of the artist as gymnast lacks grace and poise, traits expected of a gymnast. Lightness is replaced by a heavy lumbering form slumped over the vaulting horse. The red and white text in the background of the photograph, formally connect to the red and white gymnast's top. The texts on the walls of the dance hall (as represented in the photograph) reference the names of ballroom dances. The space the

The text in the artwork, which includes the dictionary definition of the word *somersault*, takes us back to the beginning of the narrative. The situation began with not being able to do a somersault as a child and the distress this caused, as it exposed a layer of 'difference' for the artist, which he took as a sign of not being accepted racially. Underneath this text, the word *flexible* is defined, which opens the narrative to metaphor as a life lesson for the Anglo Indian artist—he needs to be flexible if he is to be successful in doing a somersault and if he is to survive in the world as an Anglo Indian. His body fails this test of flexibility as a child and as an artist in re-performing the event as art.



Fig. 408 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation during the performative aspect for the artwork *Somersault* (detail), [vaulting horse, acrylic text, polyester silk ribbon, framed inkjet digital print; dimensions variable]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

artist has chosen to re-enact his actions is in a hall he goes to weekly to learn line dancing. His teacher is a graceful ballroom dancer. His actions on this day would not resemble the grace one associates with these dances. The idea of ‘grace’ itself is an affirmative trait, required by a gymnast and a dancer, which the performing Anglo Indian does not possess.

The hall walls are covered in text handwritten by his teacher’s father, also a ballroom dancer. The artist selected this space as he was drawn to the aesthetic quality of these texts that resembled and are reminiscent of the artists Robert MacPherson’s and Colin McCahon’s text based artworks. In MacPherson’s painting, *A Pollywaffle for G: Mayfair, 130 Paintings, 130 Signs* (1994–96) and McCahon’s artwork *The Canoe Tainui* (1969), the handwritten quality of the text represents the personal. In its matter-of-fact descriptions, the text tells stories from history and the present. They are lists. MacPherson’s list describes ubiquitous fast food and truck stop eateries in Australia—‘chicko rolls,’ ‘soft drinks,’ ‘battered sausages’. The viewer becomes immersed in a quintessential Australian vernacular, transported to a time and place reminiscent of family car holidays to beachside locations in the 1970s. McCahon’s text reveals connectedness through Maori genealogy. It includes a list of fathers, sons and daughters that traces a history and tradition of Maori ancestry and culture—‘Te Mihinga had a son who was Whakarua whose son was Mokohorea whose daughter was Wairupe whose son was Te Huhu who married Maumau.’ Both artworks transport the viewer to a time and place that may or may not hold specific reference for them. However, the scale and graphic quality (white text on black backgrounds) demand our attention. We become compelled to find meaning in the words. Not as objective cerebral knowledge, but rather a deeper poetic resonance that connects us to the idea of culture and tradition. Our bodies, because of the scale of the artworks, are implicated in experiencing the work. It is not just about looking at these artworks. We engage with the work physically. The handwritten form of the text brings the artist directly into the content and context of meaning. As viewers, we might not be able to make art, but most people can write. Therefore the work immediately becomes accessible for an English speaking audience. As viewers we negotiate the space and time that each artist creates in the artwork. For MacCahon, it is Maori tradition, for MacPherson, it’s Australian culture. As well, we become implicated in each artist’s personal relationship to their ideas. There is personal investment in the chosen form (the handwritten text). Finally, we relate the artist’s ideas and experiences to our own,



Fig. 409 | Installation view (2014), of the Dance Hall, Fryerstown, Victoria. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.



Fig. 410 | MacPherson, R 1994–96, “A Pollywaffle for G: Mayfair, 130 Paintings, 130 Signs”, [acrylic on board, 130 panels each 91.5 x 61 cm], viewed 19 October 2015.



Fig. 411 | McCahon, C 1969, *The Canoe Tainui*, [synthetic polymer on 8 panels each panel 60.3 x 60.3 cm], viewed 19 October 2015.

making connections in the context of our own tradition and culture and time and place. We imagine what our lists would read like from our experiences in the world. Both MacPherson's and McCahon's artworks remind us that cultures that appear bound, will at some point intersect. It is within these intersections that hybridity, creolisation and mixed races evolve and which connect us through shared stories of being in the world.

Unlike MacPherson and McCahon, the text of ballroom dances in the hall in Fryerstown, was never conceptualised and conceived as an artwork. Yet, it operates in similar ways. For the maker, it illustrated the dances he danced and was taught. For the viewer it transports us to a specific time and place. As these dances lose their position in the popular imagination, they become nostalgia, for a generation who remember the 'good old days'. Similarly, for the generation of Anglo Indians, such as my mother, who when they meet at reunions and dances, invariably talk about past dances and social activities, which play such an important part in Anglo Indian culture.⁴

In the final installation of *Somersault* (2013), (see figure 407), the vaulting horse is presented with carefully overlapped layers of ribbon, alluding to the way ribbons might be displayed on a successful horse in an equestrian pageant. The earlier photographs of the vaulting horse (see figures 158–166) appear animated as if this anthropomorphic form can itself somersault and land on its feet. The vaulting horse can proudly wear all the ribbons of success the Anglo Indian artist represented in the photograph cannot (see figure 403). The vaulting horse stands as actual object in real space, while the Anglo Indian is reduced to photographic representation. *Somersault* (2013), leaves the viewer in this oscillating experience of humour and awkwardness, negotiating the relationship of the object that stands proud, draped in success (symbolised by the ribbons) to the vulnerability of the slumped Anglo Indian artist in the photograph. The text between each form is represented as factual, taking on the form used in dictionary definitions. It is a slippery artwork where content is open and interpretive, sitting between poesies and praxis. The viewer is encouraged to feel unstable, unsure about whether this event is tragic, pathetic or comical, or whether this event is based on actual or fictional events. *Somersault* (2013), attempts to materialise the space and experience of the Anglo Indian; a space that ultimately sits indeterminately and ambivalently between thresholds of failure and success, irony and sincerity, mimicry and authenticity, and rejection and acceptance.

■ ACCENTS AND PRONUNCIATIONS: 'YOU SPEAK FUNNY' ... BACKGROUND TO THE ARTWORK *A.E.I.O.U.* (2013)

A.E.I.O.U. (2013) is a video work that revisits another childhood memory. This time the memory relates to language, accents and pronunciation, and exposes my personal 'shibboleth'. Salcedo's choice of the word 'Shibboleth' as the title of her artwork is significant. Shibboleth has biblical references to an incident between the Ephraimites and the Gileadites. The Gileadites made the Ephraimites pronounce the word 'shibboleth' to test their tribal allegiance, knowing the Ephraimites could not pronounce the word correctly, saying 'sibboleth' instead, and therefore were killed (Chapter 12, 'Book of Judges' 12:1–12:6, *Holy Bible, Old Testament*, King James Version).

⁴ Like many Anglo Indians, my mother was a very good dancer. For further discussion on dancing and Anglo Indian culture, see D'Cruz, G 2003, *My Two Left Feet: The Problem of Anglo-Indian stereotypes in Post-Independence Indo-English Fiction*, Academia, http://www.academia.edu/3147077/My_Two_Left_Feet_The_Problem_of_Anglo-Indian_Stereotypes_in_Post-Independence_Indo-English_Fiction, viewed 28 October 2015.

It is this linguistic act to determine difference and division that I am interested in and that led to the development of a video work I made titled *A.E.I.O.U.* (2013). The artwork highlights my insecurity and vulnerability about national identity and belonging in Australia. It references a particular experience I had in primary school, in Australia, which marked my difference and a growing self-consciousness of being different (see figure 95, figures 96–107).

I was six years old when we arrived in Australia. It was 26 January 1970, Australia Day. As new migrants, there were many factors we needed to consider in adjusting to life in Australia, but I did not envisage that language would be one of them. English is the primary language in my family and the only language I can speak. One of the main reasons my parents chose to emigrate from India was because they could see their children would struggle with the Indian languages, which were being used more pronouncedly within a growing nationalistic, pro-Indian environment, after independence in 1947. Arriving in Australia, I was not aware of and therefore unprepared for, the long, lazy sounding enunciations in the Australian accent. I was made to feel self-conscious about being different in Bombay, India, through the somersault experience. Almost 9,818 kilometres away in Melbourne, Australia, it would be my accent that would mark my point of difference.

It was brought to my attention by some of my new classmates that I 'spoke funny'. At my primary school in Australia, we learnt the vowels of the alphabet by repeating aloud what the teacher said, as a rote learning exercise. Except I quickly noticed I did not enunciate the sounds in the same way as the teacher or the other students. I listened intently trying desperately to mimic that same sound. The teacher would go around the room, with each student pronouncing one letter at a time. I used to count ahead to my letter. I wanted 'E' or 'U' as I could closely mimic their sounds, whereas 'A', 'I' and 'O' tripped me up. This was my shibboleth, a linguistic password that would disclose my true identity and create a shamed sense of not belonging.

I practised by myself in front of a mirror, drawing out an elongated sound for an 'A'. To me it sounded similar to 'I'. Although no one laughed or ridiculed me in any way, I was starting to recognise that I was different to my Australian peers, not just because of my brown skin. It was the same feeling I had in India about the somersault. I was made to feel different in my country of birth and in my newly adopted country. In both places I was made to feel as if I had to assimilate: to the Anglo-Saxon in Australia and to the Indian in India. I could not be, or celebrate, my own sense of cultural identity as an Anglo Indian.

During this same time at school, we sang the popular English nursery rhyme *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* (1852), in rounds. Again the words with the letters 'A' and 'O' ... 'row', 'boat', and 'down' ... caused anxiety as my pronunciation of these words marked my difference. We also, each Monday morning at school assembly as the Australian flag was hoisted, sang the national anthem, *God Save the Queen* (1745). This was now my national anthem and Queen Elizabeth was now 'my queen'. How could I understand the politics behind this act of nation-building at the age of six? I did not know any differently. My immediate family all immigrated to Australia and became Australian citizens. Singing the national anthem each Monday was a form of nation-building (propaganda). It conveyed a sense of how Australia saw itself. Connected to an Anglo Saxon, white settler history. I had inadvertently become a part of this vision, of what my national identity would become. In India my parents always saw themselves as being part of the Anglo Indian community, the only minority group of India that did not have its own geographic location or native state. Without being able to reconcile my own sense of cultural belonging between a

real motherland of India and an imagined fatherland of England, I was now an Australian citizen, in a country with a national anthem shared with Britain. I do not recall ever singing a national anthem in India.

■ ARRIVING IN AUSTRALIA: ASSIMILATION, MULTICULTURALISM AND CITIZENSHIP

We arrived in Australia three years before Al Grassby, then Australian Minister for Immigration, launched his vision for a more ethnically plural Australia, which fundamentally assisted and supported migrants to call Australia home without abandoning their own sense of culture.⁵ It was also the official end of the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, commonly referred to as the 'White Australia Policy'.⁶

As a newly formed Australian citizen I would have to embrace a white settler, Australian culture attempting to negotiate shifting government agendas between assimilation and multiculturalism. Government and theoretical debates, and societal attitudes toward immigration, citizenship and Australian national values have meant that historically in Australia, multiculturalism has been contested, in terms of policy and as a concept. A research paper titled *Multiculturalism: a review of Australian policy statements and recent debates in Australia and Overseas* (Koleth 2010), highlights the shifting government debates and attitudes around immigration, multiculturalism and citizenship.⁷

In the ABC television drama, *Redfern Now* (2012) written, directed and produced by Indigenous Australians, an episode titled *Stand Up* (2012, November) takes up the story of a young boy who wins an Indigenous scholarship to attend one of Sydney's most elite and prestigious private schools. On his first day, the students stand and sing the Australian national anthem at assembly, as is the long standing school custom. The young boy, Joel Shields, (Aaron McGrath) stands but does not know the words. It is not something he has given much attention. His teacher notices he is not singing. That evening, Joel tries diligently, to learn the words to the anthem, so he can sing like all the other students.

Singing the anthem soon becomes an issue at home. Joel's father, Eddie (Marley Sharp), is troubled by the situation, as he strongly believes his son should not stand up and sing the anthem, as he does not believe it is *his* anthem. His mother Nic (Ursula Yovich), is proud of her son, and is aware what attending this school can mean for Joel's future. She is happy for him to partake in school activities and does not see why her husband is creating a situation that could jeopardise their son's future. The situation quickly escalates as Joel's parents, teachers and other students buy into the underlying politics associated with the situation and divisions set in. The students at the school support Joel's action (which is unintentional), believing he should not have to sing the national anthem. The headmaster threatens expulsion if he does not sing. His poetry teacher is sympathetic but knows his hands are tied. Joel is caught between conflicting traditions: the school's, which fosters white settler traditions and his father's, in recognising Indigenous Australians' right to their own traditions. As the situation continues escalating around him Joel, who until this point does not fully disclose his position, exhorts, '*it's not that I don't want to sing the anthem, it's just that every time I open my mouth to sing, nothing comes out*' (*Redfern Now* episode 4 *Stand*

5 For a full transcript of the research paper see http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/grassby_1.pdf, viewed 20 November 2015.

6 For further reading on multiculturalism, Australian immigration and the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, see <http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/people-like-them/the-white-picket-fence/timeline/?selected=3>, viewed 24 March 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/archives/80days/stories/2012/01/19/3415230.htm>, viewed 20 November 2015, <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/a-z/immigration-restriction-act.aspx>, viewed 20 November 2015.

7 For further reading on the research paper to which I make reference, see Koleth, E 2010, *Multiculturalism: a review of Australian policy statements and recent debates in Australia and overseas*, Research Paper no. 6, 2010–11, Social Policy Section, Parliament of Australia, Canberra, http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1011/11rp06#_Toc275248119, viewed 20 November 2015.

Up, 2012). It is a powerful moment. The body's physiology overrides any form of political correctness or grandstanding. Joel does not have to consciously decide what to do. His body dictates its own response by its inability to sing. The decision is made for Joel by his body, impervious to which response may be correct, ethically or politically. Australia is caught in its own dilemma, unsure how to reconcile its indigenous population, diverse migrant cultures and its white settle culture, which invariably holds the position of power.

Relating this episode to my own situation of arriving in Australia and to the artwork I had made, seemed to validate the complexity associated with nationalism, citizenship and belonging. I had already made *A.E.I.O.U.* (2013) prior to seeing this episode of *Redfern Now* (2012), so could empathise and relate to Joel's situation. I wondered if I had been older when we arrived in Australia whether I would have questioned singing the national anthem? What does becoming a citizen of an adopted country mean? What do you gain by taking on the national and cultural conditions of your adopted nation, and what do you lose and leave behind in terms of your ancestral place? Is assimilation an accepted way of making palatable, Fanon's ideas of dependency and inadequacy, which black people feel in a white world? (as discussed in *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1958). Or is it another form of power?

■ *A.E.I.O.U.* (2013)

A.E.I.O.U. (2013) is a 3.35 minute single-channel looped video. It begins as a split screen with an empty chair in each space, which is entered and exited by two protagonists. The blue screen background flattens the space, removing any sense of depth of field, creating a neutral ground. The ambient background sounds in the video, are from the studio during the making of the video.

The video starts with the image of a ubiquitous chair placed in the centre of two split frames, one frame mirroring the other. After 23 seconds, a male figure enters the right screen in jeans and white shirt. He



Fig. 412–413 | D'Costa, R 2013, *A.E.I.O.U.* (video still), single channel video projection (3.35 min.).

occupies the seat and exhales loudly as a way to relax. He shuffles awkwardly and from his gestures one senses his self-consciousness and mild anxiety. He is middle aged and has dark skin. Almost immediately, a younger, female figure enters the left screen, picks up some notes from the seat and sits down. She looks more poised and assured. She has striking curly, red hair, fair skin and turquoise leggings that stand out from the purple hue of the blue screen. As she settles into her seat, a *hissing* followed by *shhh* sounds becomes audible. It is unclear initially, from where the sound is coming. Neither party seems to be aware of the other. The female protagonist glances down at her notes, briefly, before looking directly at the camera. Both sit full frontal, now looking directly at the camera, which is out of shot in front of them in

the studio. It becomes apparent now that the male on the right is making the sounds. The female begins making the same sounds as if imitating the male. For a moment their sounds synchronise. The sounds they are making seem to be the beginning of a word they are practising. Neither articulates what the word is ... as if it belongs to another form of archaic language. Each finally stops. The male first, followed by the female. Silence.

Just over a minute of the video has passed. The male figure becomes fidgety as if anxiety and doubt are starting to set in. The male looks to the right of camera and then down to the floor, rubbing his sweating hands on his jeans and moisturising his parched lips with his tongue. He is becoming more anxious, as if he knows what is about to come next. Meanwhile, the female again looks down at the paper she is holding with both hands. It appears to be a script she is following, telling her what to do next. She takes the lead. The brown-skinned male is left to hopelessly follow. She begins to recite the vowels of the alphabet, looking again directly towards the camera. 'A', 'E'. Her accent is strong and ubiquitously Australian. When she finishes reciting the letter 'E' the male begins in a voice louder than hers, booming out the letter 'A'. His accent is not Australian. South African or English with a hint of Indian: a hybrid accent. Whatever his accent, it is audibly different to hers. Each finishes the fifth vowel and immediately starts again. During the first iteration it does not feel as if one is following the other. Their actions seem independent of each other. However, during the second delivery, one senses, because of the timing of the spoken vowels, that the male is now following the female's lead, repeating and trying to mimic her as a rote learning exercise. When the second recital of the vowels is complete, the male figure glances across to the right of screen as if looking for endorsement or encouragement for his effort. The female, dispensing with reciting the vowels, breaks into a chorus of the popular English children's nursery rhyme *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* (1852). As if singing in rounds, the male joins in. The variation in accents is pronounced, particularly certain words. As the female finishes her rhyme, she stands, adjusts her chair and pauses. Meanwhile, the male recites certain words from the song that he pronounced differently to her. The words; 'row', 'boat' and 'down', are his own shibboleth. These are the words he fears will disclose his difference. This is what his anxiety was about. When he finishes, the female begins to recite the words from the first verse of the English (and former Australian) national anthem, *God Save the Queen* (1745). It seems she is unfamiliar with the tune and the words of the anthem. She is too young to have ever had to sing this particular national anthem and therefore refers to her notes:

God save our gracious Queen!
 Long live our noble Queen!
 God save the Queen!
 Send her victorious,
 Happy and glorious,
 Long to reign over us,
 God save the Queen (God Save the Queen, 1745, unknown publisher).

While this is occurring, the male gets up from his seat and stands prepared. Before the female figure completes the verse, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, the right frame rotates 180 degrees. The male protagonist is now presented in the frame standing upside down. He too begins reciting the national anthem. Except he does not need a script, seeming well-versed in the words and tune. One suspects he has sung this anthem often. While he is singing, the female left of screen finishes the verse and puts her script on the seat. In an over-dubbed voice (which is recognisably hers), the female's voice repeats the words of the anthem, while the male keeps singing in the real time of the video. The female exits the left screen, leaving an image of the empty chair. Now the voice of the male too is over-dubbed, making

it sound as if the anthem is being sung in rounds, occupying both screens. The male continues singing. When finished, he exits into the space of the black left screen, leaving the upside down chair in the right screen for a few seconds before it too blackens and the video ends.

The overarching tone and feeling throughout the video is one of deferral, negotiation and vulnerability. It is difficult to measure how to respond to either of the protagonists in the video. It is also difficult to determine what the narrative is in the video as it does not explain or narrate any background experience or information. However, if we examine the video through the lens of Fanon's ideas (as outlined in *Black Skin, White Masks* [1952], where both coloniser and colonised become psychologically damaged as a consequence of colonialism's inherent use of psychological and physical violence), it can elucidate interesting ideas around binaries and hybridity. The space Fanon describes in *Black Skin, White Masks* [1952], is separate and distinct: the white space of the coloniser and the black space of the native. Yet, as the title of Fanon's text suggests, the subject is configured from the same (white) dominant space. It is for this very reason that the hybrid, such as the Anglo Indian, was a challenge for the colonialist obsessed with categorisation and clear demarcation as forms of power and control. The Anglo Indian subject operated out of both spaces fluidly, crossing margins and negotiating between binary opposites. Sameness and difference, equality and inequality are experienced simultaneously and negotiated by the hybrid whose agency is discursive. His brownness, (not just a mixing of white and black), complicates categorisation and potentially infiltrates and destabilises power relations. Therefore, the brown Anglo Indian must be seen as black or 'not white'. His whiteness (because genetically he has some) can only ever be a mask.



Fig. 414–415 | D'Costa, R 2013, *A.E.I.O.U.* (video still), single channel video projection (3.35 min.).

In the video, there is sameness in formal terms, in the space, colour, textual narrative and compositional balance; yet there are differences: male/female, fair/dark complexion. The 180 degree rotational flip in the video is an important marker in determining what the work might be about. This flip only happens in the space of the male protagonist, who is not the binary opposite of the female, but rather the in-between agent who can flexibly flip a space out of its own expectations. Only when the white female finally exits her space, marking it blank, can the Anglo Indian conveniently enter and occupy this darkened indeterminate space. He can because it is the only space (once blank) he is allowed to occupy. His categorisation is ambiguous and contradictory. He must negotiate his place in the world in the context of nationalism and citizenship, race, culture and identity. His shibboleth marks his difference. He wants to be the same as the fair skinned Australian and at the same time to maintain his difference. He ultimately gets caught in the space between reality and his desires, hopes and expectations. He continually rotates in a world, which for him is both simultaneously upside down and right side up.

■ *STANDARD ENGLISH* (2013):
NATIONALISM AND TEXT

Following on from the ideas in *A.E.I.O.U.* (2013), I concurrently developed a multi-panelled text-based installation, titled *Standard English* (2013), which focused on ideas of place and belonging specifically in the context of nationalism. The artwork commenced as three separate paintings on a series of separate wood panels. These panels captured in text, poetic musings of place and belonging. On each I wrote the following: 'in this place', 'to be somewhere' and 'here with you'.



Fig. 416 | D'Costa, R 2012, *Standard English* (studio tests), [acrylic polymer, graphite pencil on plywood], preliminary studio installation tests, Fryerstown, Victoria.

What became interesting when I finished these initial panels, were the joins between the panels. When pulled apart they fractured the words and consequently dislocated meaning. I made 81 panels in varying sizes. For this artwork, I initially drew on academic Benedict Anderson's seminal text on nationalism, *Imagined Communities* (1983), by collecting words and phrases from the book. This led to a collection of text from a range of reference books, which I felt, engaged the Anglo Indian experience in general and my lived experiences in particular.

Anderson's concept of the nation as an 'imagined community', is built on the idea that people in communities build deep-set attachments without actually meeting each other face-to-face. As Anderson says, 'It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (1983, p. 6). Anderson's concept of 'communion', works in the context of the Anglo Indian community. However, it falters in the context of Anglo Indians developing a cohesive sense of nationalism in relation to being Indian. In the 'minds of each', Indians and Anglo Indians alike, does not sit a comfortable communion, due to the Anglo Indian's dual ethnicity and fractured sense of belonging (because of their strong association with British culture). Fractured because of a fluctuating sense of acceptance and rejection by both Indians and the British during colonial rule and as a consequence of large numbers emigrating in the years after colonial rule. This points to an inability, for many in the Anglo Indian community, to feel a sense of place or sense of national identity in relation to their place of birth, India.

Academic, Lionel Caplan, connects class distinctions within the Anglo Indian community to split national allegiances. As British rule was coming to an end, 'increasing voices were heard within the community urging association with the nationalist project' (Caplan 2004, p. 25). During the 19th century, the colonial government of the time in India, implemented policies and better infrastructure in education, civil services and defence. The Anglo Indians who were employed in these fields and benefitted and prospered from this, identified more with their British counterparts. Caplan justifiably cites the Anglo Indian elite as wanting the community to connect with a sense of Indian nationalism. The very poor and disadvantaged within the community showed little that distinguish them from having a connection to their European or British antecedents. He refers to the middle ranks of Anglo Indians who continue to lay claims to a British allegiance and identity (2004, p. 26).

If we think of the Anglo Indian community as being part of the Indian nation with shared attachments, Anderson's argument becomes slightly tenuous. Certainly, during the period of British settlement in India, Anglo Indians fought for the British army when deemed appropriate, and for the Indian princes and

the Indian Army.⁸ Their allegiances shifted to optimise their own advantage. Their sense of community did not align with any sense of nationalism. However, what is important in Anderson's accounts is the significance of language and education, particularly the circulation of knowledge through what he describes as 'print capital' in developing a sense of national identity (British) as part of the Imperial project in India. As he notes:

[...] 'India' only became 'British' twenty years after Victoria's accession to the throne. In other words, until the 1857 Mutiny, 'India' was ruled by a commercial enterprise – [members of the East India Company] not by a state, and certainly not by a nation-state (1983, p. 90).

Anderson also notes, Thomas Babington Macaulay's, the president of the Committee of Public Instruction in 1834, declaration that, [...] a single shelf of a good European library is worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.⁹ Anderson continues noting Macaulay's comments regarding the introduction of an English educational system, which would create 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect' (cited in Anderson 1983, p. 91).

Anglo Indians would become important for the British in establishing the Imperial project in India, because of language—another reason they were looked upon with suspicion by the Indian community. Fanon illustrated this well with the Antillean experience: 'To speak a language is to appropriate its world and culture' (Fanon 2008, p. 21). As Fanon and Anderson illustrate, words and language can be powerful tools in circulating knowledge and building a sense of nationhood. Words can bring communities together and pull communities apart. They can be poetic, dogmatic, oblique or interpretive.

Anglo Indians have had a divided sense of nationhood between India and Britain. I am not convinced there was ever a 'sense of communion' for Anglo Indians in the context of nationhood. Their imaginings of a nation-place, oscillated and was determined by class, shifting social and political environments and attitudes of the British and Indian communities: those that imagined a communion with India and those that imagined a communion with Britain.

The artwork, *Standard English* (2013), is textual. It weaves together words, the space between the words and the contextual relationship of words to create a space for the viewer to consider ideas of how Anglo Indians might be represented in the world in relation to place, identity and belonging. Textual analysis helps researchers make sense of how people live in the world and how people from various cultures are represented. By fracturing and separating words, in *Standard English* (2013), meanings become more elusive and interpretive. In some instances the words and phrases are so fractured and broken that logic collapses. However, one hopes the strands of meaning and content can be picked up again as the viewer moves spatially between and across related words in the installation. The installation requires the viewer to walk from one part of the work to another. The eye can move from one word or set of words to another, building and shifting meaning as words are added and subtracted to extract an evolving meaning and interpretation around ideas of place and belonging. Reading *Standard English* (2013), forms its own sense of textual analysis in the context of how words are both connected and disconnected. This visually inscribes the experience of fracture in the context of the Anglo Indian's experience of their world. This world is colourful and optimistic, and fractured and disjointed.

8 For a detailed account of these circumstances see Anthony 2007, pp. 23–147.

9 Anderson's low opinion of this comment can be noted in his footnote in the text (footnote 17 p. 91).

The script in *Standard English* (2013) is not the handwriting of one Anglo Indian. It varies and the style of script changes, to acknowledge the multiple voices in the community that sometimes align and are at other times disjointed. I deliberately used different styles of script for the words so as to not make the artwork feel as if it had been written by one author, therefore making the work seem less formal and more accessible. As the viewer moves right to left there is more space in-between the panels, which allows for reflection and introspection between words. When I installed the work at the Switchback Gallery, Monash University, Gippsland (2013), I included a set of small orange spirit levels that sat on some of the panels to signify a sense of measure, equality and balance amongst the disjuncture. However, I decided to remove this in the final version of the work as I felt the meaning was too literal and that disjuncture, rather than balance was more important in the work. Ultimately it is my intention that *Standard English* (2013) opens a space of identification as counter-narratives. I want viewers to reflect on the words in the text, to build their own stories about their own life and culture in relation to words and language.

■ SIMRYN GILL: INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN PERSONAL AND WORLD HISTORIES

Simryn Gill is an artist who has used text and language as important markers in her art practice. Just as significantly, she is also an artist whose art practice has become important in the context of my own, as a consequence of this research. In the absence of any traditional Anglo Indian artists for me to reference, I have attempted to create my own artistic language to forge a new form of self-representation that speaks to the experience of the Anglo Indian, through lived experience and world histories. Gill's engagement with ideas relating to identity, representation and place across a range of visual codes, materials and forms, became an exemplar of how I could negotiate the complex discourses around the conceptual ideas we share and how I could open up an art practice to engage a multidisciplinary approach to my art practice.

My first encounter with Gill's artwork was through a photograph, *Fragment #4 from Wonderlust* (1996). The image was of curator, Lee Wen Choi, wearing a suit made from coconut fibre, riding the MRT (Mass Rapid Transport) in Singapore.

Gill's artistic practice is informed by her life stories and about the places in the world she lives, works and feels a sense of belonging. Gill was born in Singapore, is of Indian descent, grew up in Port Dickson, Malaysia and currently lives in Australia. When I first met the artist in Singapore in the 1990s, she discussed the complexity of where her family could and could not live based on citizenship, nationality, visas and passports. You sense in Gill's art practice natural connections between life and her art. There is a deep sense of awareness and appreciation of knowledge and history, both personal and global, in her artworks. Gill finds moments of intersection, between her own personal, lived histories and world histories, to create artworks with humble and ordinary materials. You are always reminded of what I describe as 'quiet time', when encountering Gill's artwork. This is apparent in the processes she uses to make, collect and display her artwork. The passing of time has a constant presence, which is what imbues her artworks with a deep sense of humanity and compassion.



Fig. 417 | Gill, S 1996, *Fragment #4 from Wonderlust*, (detail) C-Type print, viewed 20 December 2015.

During the early 1990s, I was invited to view a work she was making in her garden by rolling the leaves of large tropical plants into a typewriter and embossing the leaves with text. That same year she would cut pages from *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or, the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (Darwin, 1963) into long strips, gluing them together to form trails of half decipherable text. These trails of text were entwined with the aerial roots of an old Banyan tree at the historic colonial site of Fort Canning, Singapore. This work would eventually become one in a series of large scale black and white photographs titled *Forest* (1996). Other works from this series used texts from *Robinson Crusoe* (Defoe, 1719) and *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad, 1899). Gill's choice of books is important. Each introduces complex themes of place and the instinctive human struggle to survive and belong. The works are a beautiful, complex and subtle intervention of interlocking and supplemented histories and narratives across time and space. Gill's choice of texts and her decision to manipulate and use the text to mimic the roots of a Banyan tree at an historic colonial site, allude to another colonising of sorts. Her title, *Forest*, as well as the photographs themselves, conjure images of dense growth, as the strongest species will survive and colonise the other. Text, time and the mobility and transplantation of ideas, forms and materials are important to Gill's oeuvre; reflecting her own anxieties and deliberations around a sense of place and belonging.



Fig. 418 | Gill, S 2008, *Paper Boats* (installation view), [Encyclopedia Britannica (1968 edition)], at Breenspace, Sydney.



Fig. 419 | Gill, S 2008, *Paper Boats* (detail), [Encyclopedia Britannica (1968 edition)].

In another of her artworks titled *Paper Boats* (2009), Gill invited the audience to make small origami boats from disused and discarded pages from an *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1968 edition) she had collected from an opportunity shop. Again, ideas of the mobility and transference of knowledge become important and significant markers, which are represented in a playful

and participatory way. *Old* forms of knowledge and outdated technologies that store this knowledge, are given resurgence. Gill makes us remember and remain explicitly connected with our past. Reminding us of our shared history. The viewer becomes implicit in the experience and knowledge of the artwork.

For the 9th Sharjah Biennial (2009), Gill produced *9 volumes from the collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (2008–2009). The work consisted of nine spheres placed directly on the floor, reconfigured from the pages of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, which she found at a library sale in Sydney. For the duration of the exhibition, the audience was encouraged to handle the forms as a way to signify the mobility and fluidity of textual histories, meaning and materiality, and to challenge the colonising rigidity of the museum space.

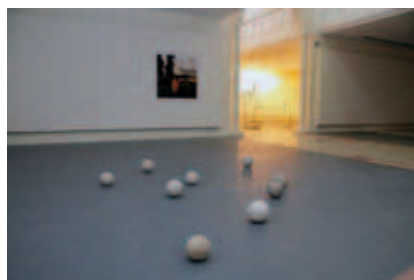


Fig. 420 | Gill, S 2008–2009, *9 Volumes from the collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (installation view), [books, glue], Sharjah Art Museum.



Fig. 421 | Gill, S 2008–2009, *9 Volumes from the collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (installation view), [books, glue], Sharjah Art Museum.

The use of text, the transferability of knowledge and the passing of time are best reflected in the artwork, *Washed Up* (1993–1995). For this work, Gill collected shards of glass that had washed onto the beaches at Port Dickson, Malaysia and St. John's Island, Singapore. Selected words were then sandblasted and etched on the fragmented forms. This invited association and the building of narratives, without explicitly pointing to a specific single story. Gill played with the idea of display, opting for either a single pile of the selected shards or to install the work mimicking a shoreline. Both configurations allow for their own possibilities of form and content. The pile sets a condition of indeterminacy, as if waiting for future decision-making by either the artist or the public. This suspension of a predetermined form creates the idea of future possibilities. The installation of the work to follow an imagined shoreline alludes to liminal division of space, which brings and sets loose, forms and knowledge across the ebb and flow of the sea's coastline.

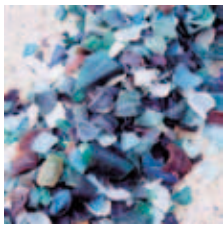


Fig. 422 | Gill, S 1993–1995, *Washed Up* (detail), [found glass, engraved; dimensions variable], Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

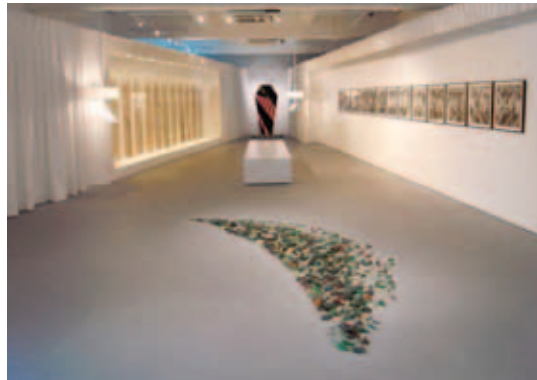


Fig. 423 | Gill, S 1993–1995, *Washed Up* (installation view) (2010), [found glass, engraved; dimensions variable], Singapore Art Museum, Singapore.

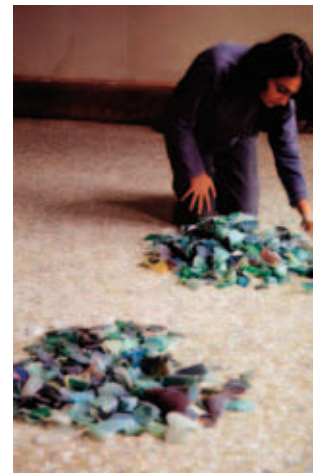


Fig. 424 | Gill, S 1993–1995, *Washed Up* (installation view), [found glass, engraved; dimensions variable], with artist at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

In an article for *The Australian* newspaper (25 May, 2013), on the announcement of her selection as the Australian representative for the 55th Venice Biennale 2013, Gill discussed future projects after Venice. One included revisiting a section of the Pilbara coast that distantly faces the coast of India. Gill has noticed that each day the tide goes out about 1.5 kilometres, at which time she can be that much closer to the country of her forebears. Her plan is to walk along that coastline picking up whatever she finds (Hauser 2013, para. 16). There is a deep sense of conviction and knowledge in Gill's art practice in relation to time, place, history and belonging. She thinks about her presence and time spent in places and her sense of belonging in relation to the places she inhabits, noticing important markers, which are given signification in her artworks.

In a short documentary video for the ABC arts program online (Zeccola 2013, 3.39 sec.), Chairman, of the Australia Council for the Arts, Rupert Myer, describes how Venice is organised by national pavilions, so there is a sense that artists are representing the country they come from. In the same interview, curator, Robert Storr, describes how Gill started making work in Australia about trying to make sense of this place she did not really understand or feel she fitted into (ibid.). Gill follows, articulating her relationship to this complicated question of national identity:

I'm a permanent resident in Australia, I'm not an Australian by citizenship, but I have lived there for 25 years and I think in that sense, the way in which I represent Australia is to represent that Australia functions in many different ways (ibid.).

Rupert Myer's comments on how artists are in 'a sense' representing the country they come from, is deliberately slippery. Gill's response is astute. While she points out she is not an Australian citizen, she also opens up the idea of how Australia 'functions in many different ways'. Clearly, 'national identity' and belonging have to be flexible and negotiable, not just for the artist in this case, but also in relation to the country they are representing. Gill has always had to negotiate her own complex national and cultural identity. An identity that is not fixed or singular but takes into account her ancestry, place of birth and the locations she lives and works in throughout the world. The idea Storr poses, of how Gill made artwork as a way to work out her relationship to place, in this case Australia, is interesting. What is it about a place that gives us a sense of 'fitting in'? How do we come to 'understanding a place'? Does it take an amount of time before one can feel as if one belongs?

Gill does *come* from Australia. Can she 'represent' Australia? Certainly the audience posts underneath the online article raise these very questions of race, authenticity and belonging as citizens negotiate a world both global and mobile, and at the same time bordered and static. The discussion opens up the questions of whether Gill can claim to be Australian and therefore represent Australia authentically. Conversely, on what terms can Australia claim Gill as theirs? Gill's sense of place may be described as fractured or multiple. Her response to her selection for Venice, is articulated astutely. Allowing her to maintain and determine a shifting sense of belonging. One senses this space can only be authentic if it is cast as a negotiated space. It then becomes, for Gill and many artists, a rich repository to research and make artwork from, as it not only acknowledges her acceptance of multiple senses of place, but also challenges what people may conceive as *our* place and not *her* place.

This idea of what we are prepared to trade off and what we desire to hold onto in terms of ownership, is something Gill has deliberated on in artworks such as *Mine* (2007–2009). For this work, Gill collected materials from around her studios in Sydney, Australia and Port Dickson, Malaysia to create a series of spheres that sit directly on the floor.

The careful selection of materials not only alludes to her articulate sensibility, but also to how her choice of materials opens up conversations relating to narratives, stories and histories of place. It is Gill's title for this work which is provocative. She claims what is hers in the exclamation of her title—*Mine*. At the same time, the materials are the detritus of who is already there. As somebody who comes and goes, Gill is claiming the materiality of place as hers too. It is *mine* as much as it is yours. What is Gill actually (re)claiming as hers? One suspects it is more than what she has materially collected. The spherical forms allude to the idea that they can continue to grow. Their forms and placement remind us of the vastness of



Fig. 425 | Gill, S 2007–2009, *Mine* (installation view), [found materials], Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.



Fig. 426 | Gill, S 2007–2009, *Mine* (detail), [found materials], Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

planets and galaxies. Yet, their small scale feels humble and insignificant. It is this contradictory quality that is so compelling in Gill's art practice. She leaves the viewer in a place to sort this out themselves. There is generosity and openness in Gill's work. But there is also a strong conviction and position by which she stands. Gill's artworks, I think, are an answer to Santos' question of who has a right to belong to the future. Gill wants to make sure that those of us who have to negotiate the complex terrain of mixed and fluid forms of identity and place, do have a right to belong to the future, in a multiplicity of ways.

■ BHARTI KHER: MISREPRESENTATION AND CULTURAL AUTHENTICITY

London born, New Delhi based, Indian artist, Bharti Kher, discussing her practice for the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2014, comments on how she is not specifically linked to country, place, location, geography or history and that her art practice is not linked to ideas of authenticity or culture per se. But because of her background,¹⁰ she plays with the idea of misrepresentation in the context of cultural authenticity, describing the idea of hybridity as multifarious and how the self should be seen as multiple. For the Kochi-Muziris Biennale she explored the mapping of trade routes. Trade routes are interesting as they map both journeys travelled, and ideas imagined and translated. What is interesting about Kher, (like Gill), is her commitment to research across histories and locations to come up with forms and images that allow us to reflect on the shared world in which we live today. As well, both artists directly and indirectly engage with the notion of cultural identity in the context of their own cultural hybridity, using its inherent problem strategically, to place their artistic practice within a broader cosmopolitan framework. Both Gill and Kher have a genealogy and ancestry that can be traced back to Indian culture (they both look Indian). However, there is a shared sense of fracture, in terms of place, identity and belonging, which they share with Anglo Indians.

■ BEING AND SHIMMERING

The *Anglo Indian Heritage Books*¹¹ are a cornerstone of Anglo Indian history, written by Anglo Indians. The initial justification for these publications, which date back to 1926, was that:

This small community has had outstanding achievements at every level of society for hundreds of years but that record of achievement has been hidden, passed over or co-opted as British and Indian history.

These books are an attempt to fairly represent the history of the community by works by Anglo Indians themselves. (Simon Wallenberg Press, 2007, inside sleeve)

Examining what constitutes cultural identity within the Anglo Indian community from the perspective of being inside and part of the community, inspired my engagement with the personal and anecdotal. I have used experience as a way of remembering and by definition, forgetting. I have also used storytelling (primarily stories from my mother) and memories of living in India and immigrating to Australia, as a way to develop artworks. These stories circled around codes associated with identity, place and belonging, and raised many personal questions. Why did my family not associate with being Indian, while claiming our ancestral place as India? Why is there a deep desire to be associated with Englishness? Why don't

10 She was born in England and lived there for 22 years before moving to live in India.

11 The *Anglo Indian Heritage Books* include Herbert Alick Stark (1926) and Cedric Dover (1929), Reginald Maher (1962), Frank Anthony (1964). Each edition of these books was updated, revised and published by Simon Wallenberg (2007) under the auspices of the *Anglo Indian Heritage Books*.

I speak Hindi? Why don't we dress like Indians? Why were so many of my family's customs, linked to a place (England) we had never been to or even imagined?¹²

I had always sensed I was separated from India but I did not really consider this was because I was Anglo Indian. This seemed perplexing to me as I was born in India¹³ yet it was this awareness of being Indian and yet not belonging in or to India that I sensed in early childhood and have carried with me throughout my adult life. My mother's stories and my own reflections on India, have kept this gap of understanding completely present in my life. These stories about India and the questions they raised, and recalling my experiences of India, have figured strongly in the development of the artworks conducted for this research. Homi Bhabha's comments on the 'right to narrate so to achieve a sense of identity in a global world' (Bhabha 2004, p. xx)— which is from the quote I use at the start of my introduction—have indeed placed me at the 'intersections and interstices' (ibid.) that have allowed me to 're-vision' (ibid.) my sense of cultural identity as an Anglo Indian. I examined this point of *being* Anglo Indian and commenced an uneasy and difficult path forward by looking back to my past, to my 'myths of belonging' (ibid.). In looking back at 'other national and international histories and geographies' (ibid.), I explored the complex entanglements associated with dual ethnicities.

As an Anglo Indian I am classified as belonging to a mixed race community, which came into being as a result of the Imperial encounter in India. Anglo Indians are a mix of British (or European) and Indian ancestry, but it is not a simple mathematical division. A *soft ache* that sat so deeply in my consciousness for almost forty-five years, as I lived unconsciously in this middle, in-between space of the Anglo Indian, became a priority for this practice-led research. Taking my initial queue from Bhabha's own early awareness and encounters with 'what lay in an oblique or alien relation to the forces of centring [and the oblique] angles of vision and visibility [...]' (Bhabha 2004, p. xi.), allowed me to 'reach beyond and behind the invidious narratives of center and periphery' (ibid.).

'Re-orienting' and re-focusing would become the basis for this research as I projected Bhabha's 'in-between space' as a shimmering space for the Anglo Indian. The research should not be contextualised in the way shimmer is discussed in the context of Australian Indigenous painting, phenomenology in nature, or in more recent deliberations, in the context of high production values in digital printing.¹⁴ While very interesting and engaging, these areas are outside the scope of this research. I use the word 'shimmer' metaphorically to draw on the idea that the optical effects of light on certain surfaces and materials invariably create an effect that is unstable, transient, fractured and shifting. At the same time, these shimmering images and materials can be configured as an ameliorative space, full of hope and optimism. It is these notions of instability and optimism, which I relate to my experience of being Anglo Indian. Therefore it is in this context that the word 'shimmer' should be considered.

12 These customs I refer to were specifically around food, dress codes, religious events, home furnishings, social activities, which I remember as a child in India.

13 We lived in India until I was six years old before we emigrated to Australia in 1970.

14 The ideas associated with how high production values in digital processes are being utilised by artists strategically in reading their images, was hypothesised in the Shimmering World Conference, held at the University of Manchester (2014).

1.2 THE PHD: THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

The various parts of the PhD—developing initial projects¹⁵, making the artworks, testing the artworks in preliminary exhibitions, reading texts and writing the dissertation—occurred at different stages. Sometimes these activities were concurrent, but mostly it was the art practice that led the research. Each influenced the other in ways that built momentum and formulated the enquiry, eventually leading to the final exhibition of selected artworks, which puts forward the outcomes of the research in visual forms.

At all times, the primary framework for the research has been practice-led; the art projects and artworks are the centre of deliberations. I describe the visual experiments as art projects and the final outcomes as artworks. More importantly, the processes involved in creating these artworks, have been the driving motivation and the studio has been the place where contextualising the diverse theoretical readings occurred. This research included drawing on texts from colonial and postcolonial studies, Indian history (specifically that related to Anglo Indian history), anthropology, English and Indian literature, cultural studies, human geography, Anglo Indian writing, contemporary art, and art theory and criticism. This diverse range of disciplines in the theoretical research ran parallel to the diverse processes and materials utilised in the multidisciplinary outcomes of the artworks. There is no art form traditional to Anglo Indian culture, of which I am aware, that I could draw on. This allowed me to be as experimental as I wanted in terms of form, processes and materials, without the constraints of tradition. Like many contemporary artists, and the artists I discuss in my PhD, I was prepared to create artworks across a broad range of forms and media that I believed best represented, or expressed ideas and content relevant to my research.

At various stages, the wide scope of the research bothered and exhilarated me. The range of possibilities was so vast as to be daunting in its scope yet exhilarating because of the lack of limitation and the freedom to create a new visual understanding and language of Anglo Indian representation. While constantly aware of the need for parameters for the research, I cast the widest lens possible to allow for neglected, oppressed and excluded dialogues to be voiced (Bhabha 2004, p. xi).

All the artworks and art projects I created during the research, as well as selected visual documentation of the processes involved in the making of each artwork, have been included in the dissertation. The reasoning is that the processes, through the evolution of the PhD, articulate a thinking–making nexus, which is central to practice-led research. It is the experience and knowledge gained in the experimental making process that visually articulates the deliberations, which after reflection and editing, in terms of form and content, leads to the final resolved artworks.

■ PRELIMINARY EXHIBITIONS AS A METHODOLOGICAL DEVICE

The three exhibitions I held in 2013 particularly (noted as ‘preliminary exhibitions’ in the dissertation), became a very important methodological approach.

I started many of the artworks concurrently, as a way to connect the theoretical research with the studio research ... each informing the other throughout my PhD. I delayed reaching conclusions or predetermining what the outcomes would be for each project. Instead, allowing the studio experimentation to dictate the

¹⁵ The distinction I make between an artwork and an art project is that while working and experimenting on a set of ideas and materials without predetermined outcomes, I refer to this as an art project. Artworks are the outcome from art projects. There may be a series of artworks, which result from an art project.

outcomes. At a certain stage many projects sat in varying states of completion. It was then that, as a methodological decision, I developed a series of preliminary exhibitions to bring many of the art projects to resolution as artworks. This also provided an opportunity to test installing the artworks, to see their relationship to each other in an exhibition space and to see how recoverable content might be to a diverse audience. Because so many artworks resulted from the research, having preliminary exhibitions was a way to test how one artwork related to the next in terms of articulating the intentionality of the research.

The preliminary exhibitions were crucial in establishing artworks that would be selected for the final examination exhibition, which best engaged the research enquiry. As a result of these preliminary exhibitions, I was able to edit and adjust particular artworks and to see if further projects were needed. For example, for the final exhibition I revised the work *Rumour* (2013), choosing to use only the eucalyptus branch covered in Swarovski crystals. This new artwork became *Letting things be what they are* (2016). The spice material from *Trade* (2013) was reused in the artwork *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)* (2016).

I sensed through the process of the writing itself (for the dissertation), that I wanted a range of different voices in the writing without privileging one over the other. These different writing styles attempt to carry the different voices of the artist (poetic, oblique, circulatory), academic (scholarly, analytical) and Anglo Indian (personal, autobiographical), all equally relevant and necessary in the research.

■ BETWEEN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND ART CRITICISM

While my enquiry sits within fine art practice-led research, as mentioned, I engaged other disciplines such as sociology, literary criticism and anthropology, as most published research on the Anglo Indian community is from these discipline areas. By employing concepts from a range of theoretical sources and discourses, the intent was to use these concepts as a means of activating connections for ways of thinking about and engaging with ideas and art practice as it related to my research, not to develop theoretical arguments for or against existing discourses within specific disciplines.

Postmodernism in the 1980s ushered in a revisioning of ideas relating to discourse around the notions of centre and periphery. Homi Bhabha's writings on postcolonialism and hybridity, and Thomas McEville's *Art and Otherness* (1992), engaged with ideas of cultural hybridity and globalisation, arguing for a vision that did not focus on privileging Eurocentricism. Such discourses led to a plethora of exhibitions of artists engaging with these and other ideas inherent in the ever expanding field of postcolonialism, opening up new disciplinary fields of enquiry around, what until then, had been primarily Western-centric.

However, within this context, there seemed to be almost no evidence or commentary on Anglo Indian art specifically. While discourse within postmodernism and postcolonialism engages issues pertinent to Anglo Indians, such as ideas of 'in-betweenness' in hybrid cultures, my focus is on the Anglo Indian community itself through a fine art practice. This is because Anglo Indians *lived* as a hybrid community, between two worlds, as both coloniser and colonised, well before any of these discourses came into being. This is probably why early scholarly research into the Anglo Indian community was in the fields of sociology and anthropology. While I do not or could not refer specifically to Anglo Indian artists in the dissertation, (because I could not find them in my research), there are a range of artists and artworks discussed that do engage and contextualise the research in relation to cultural identity and belonging.

■ LINKING THE ARTWORKS IN AN EXHIBITION CONTEXT: HOMI BHABHA AND ANISH KAPOOR, AND BREACHING BOUNDARIES IN THE FINAL EXHIBITION

In 2014–15, as I began to think about conclusions and the final presentation of selected artworks for the assessment exhibition, I became curious as to how the selected artworks, which were so disparate in material and form, would operate in the context of each other in a space, in spite of their conceptual connections. What narratives and readings would unfold in terms of content and context from the artworks in an exhibition space?

The final exhibition is a selection from all the artworks created for this PhD. One of the important concerns I had was how individual artworks would relate to each other in the final exhibition. While each artwork has its own set of conceptual ideas, signification and spatial parameters, how in an exhibition context could I allow for the selected artworks to operate within their own set of conditions, as well as link, relate and breach these spaces, to generate expanded discourses within and beyond their own conceptual parameters? This was important as there had been, throughout the PhD, a sense of ideas, life and artworks evolving, linking and coexisting serendipitously, where one artwork led to the next and one idea came out of another.

Homi Bhabha's essay 'Elusive Objects: Anish Kapoor's Fissionary Art' (2009), articulates Kapoor's comments on the relationship of each artwork to another in his art practice:

The lateral or relational route that I have been proposing suggests that the authority of the work is less concerned with the Being of the object (its ontology) and more with its *agency*: the object as a form of translation [...] (Bhabha 2009, p. 29).

Each object is then rendered conceptually *incomplete* as its breached boundary reaches out laterally, in a proximate relation, to the next ... and the next ... and the next ... in a chain reaction of signification (ibid., p. 28).

Bhabha's comment about the 'breaching of boundaries' (both spatially and conceptually), informed my decisions in the final exhibition. While there are individual artworks in the exhibition, each with its own set of ideas, I wanted ideas from each work to translate across one another through the curatorial decisions for the exhibition. For example, how does engaging with one work in a space, impact on the experience you have in relation to the next work? And the next? The encounter with each artwork should build momentum within the exhibition, so there is a translation of ideas across works in spite of the diverse forms and materials.

■ READING THE PHD

Therefore, in positioning this research, it would be of value for the reader to 'read' across the art projects and artworks ... preliminary exhibitions and the final exhibition ... and to use the dissertation as a way to expand on the discourses inherent in the research. I have deliberately put the art projects and preliminary exhibitions before the main body of the text as a way to ensure the artworks are seen as primary outcomes of the research. This is not to diminish the importance of the text, but rather to value visual art practice as a complex discourse, within and of itself. It is my intention that the reader arrives at meaning through an accrual of information both in the text and the artwork by reading simultaneously across the artworks and the written text.

The research uses a thinking through making, or practice–thinking nexus, where thinking is intricately embedded in the making process (practice); as well as, practice–writing and practice–reading, where writing and reading influence the studio deliberations, which then open up wider reading–writing fields of knowledge and enquiry.

As, artist–academic, Bianca Hester noted in her doctoral project:

[...] it [the exegesis] articulates the thinking-practice component of the research, a kind of thinking-practice that is inextricably bound up in the making-practice such that each informs the other very closely. Concerns and connections that may not be apparent when engaging projects in a studio or exhibition format are developed by virtue of the process of writing, which enables an engagement with ideas via another modality (Hester 2007, p. 11).

At each point of writing I became aware of a range of voices that needed articulating. Therefore the writing itself became a form of *project*, as well as informing the artmaking process. Hester, in describing the role of her writing for her PhD, comments on this experience:

I have observed that writing causes a process of perpetual differentiation from its object – being the research practice – because the very act of writing develops a series of divergences and possibilities. Thus the writing does not become a description or a tracing of the practice, but a mapping that generates another project, which is the project of writing itself (Hester 2007, p. 11).

The diversity of these fields of knowledge to which I refer, has allowed my art practice to move across large expanses, which I think also reflects the way we live in the world today. Everything becomes possible, available and connected. As Hester describes, ‘... theory becomes an atmosphere which surrounds the practice, perpetually inflecting, influencing, orienting approaches and processes ...’ (Hester 2007, p. 12). This ‘atmosphere’ to which Hester refers, is the way I consider the relationship of theory to practice throughout this research. This very idea of ‘atmosphere’ is what I have aimed to create in the writing. For it is in this ‘atmosphere’ of being Anglo Indian that I believe the answers to my propositions actually lie. These may not be direct answers but rather an ‘atmosphere’ where answers exist, not formally as answers per se, but rather as elusive and amorphous forms of knowledge and understanding. Or as the education and public programs statement for dOCUMENTA (13) noted:

“Maybe” reflects the fact that knowledges are difficult to express and hard to pin down, and that art and artistic research often avoid any form of stable meaning. “Maybe” refers, in positive terms, to the lack of certainty, and of any general statement presenting the whole. It is rather a marker for an active reconsideration of ways of presenting knowledge in the context of art. Pointing to the challenge that art poses to the desire for coherence, and questioning our addiction to words, this program aims to inspire ways of acting inside different ideas and logics. It indicates the impossibility of reducing art—and any other complex form of knowledge—to a single explanation, question, subject matter, or paradigm.¹⁶

Together, Bhabha’s writing on Kapoor’s breaching of boundaries, and Hester’s comments on the ‘closeness’ of ideas across ‘various modalities’, become an important way to think about the intricate relationship between the writing and the artworks, between the development of one art project and the next, and the relationship between each artwork to the other in the final exhibition.

16 See <http://d13.documenta.de/#programs/>, viewed 8 December 2015.

Many aspects of the research have been, to varying degrees, both propositional and provisional. This has been crucial for the development and resolution of the artworks. Maintaining these shifting grounds lies at the heart of the research, allowing the research questions to sit as propositions. If the outcomes of the research, the dissertation and final exhibition, are the answers, these very answers can only be provisional.

At the heart of the research is identity and belonging ... the very idea of 'belonging' has the word 'longing' embedded in it, a temporal idea where 'to long' implies a durational unfolding of meaning over time, which can therefore evolve and shift, over time. A more complex way of considering the answers to my questions would be over a longer duration (a *longue durée*)—as an impermanent and slowly evolving structure. This gradual unfolding as a way of answering the questions is a more authentic way to read the answers if they are to have any legitimacy, coherence and accuracy.

Therefore, this research revolves and circles around a set of provisional propositions as to how one might operate or live out of this middle space in the world rather than espouse a theory to fix, acknowledge, validate or blame. Consequently, I rarely argue a position but circle around a set of propositions, which derive from my lived experience, theory and the visual outcomes from a fine art practice.

1.3 METHODOLOGIES, PROCESSES AND STRATEGIES: HEURISTIC AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS

Throughout the concurrent research processes and activities, I employed two key methodologies: heuristic and autoethnographic.

A heuristic method¹⁷ is a way of finding or discovering that allows for possibilities. This permits speculation and informed guess work, rather than following established formulas as a process, to gain an understanding of information. It incorporates experience-based techniques for learning, utilising intuitive judgements. A heuristic methodology embraces a trial and error and sometimes *working backward* strategy as a way of discovering and allowing for adaptive ways of negotiating decision-making. Working in a creative arts practice is to recognise and value the importance of such methods, processes or strategies in one's art practice. I have used these strategies in all aspects of the research.

Since the research is close to being autobiographical and therefore intimately aligned to my own (the researcher's personal) lived experiences, I have utilised autoethnography (as distinct from an ethnographic qualitative research method) for both the writing and creating the artworks. This method has permitted more reflexive investigations in the context of the experiences had and the experience gained—with storytelling being a valid way to operate in the research as it embraces and foregrounds the personal, experiential and anecdotal.

Autoethnography validates the researcher (myself) as the primary subject of the research; personal stories are crucial to the research, which allows the research(er) to use feelings, emotions, ambiguities, stories,

17 I have drawn from a range of websites to come to a useful understanding of 'heuristic':
<http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/heuristic>, viewed 16 June 2014
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/heuristic>, viewed 16 June 2014
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heuristic>, viewed 16 June 2014
<http://www.yourdictionary.com/heuristic>, viewed 16 June 2014
<http://grammar.about.com/od/d/g/discoverterm.htm>, viewed 16 June 2014.

reflections, emersions and observations (in my case) as ways to understand the social and cultural in the context of being and belonging. Consequently, autoethnography disrupts the binary distinctions between objectivity and subjectivity, researcher and research, and therefore ideas of neutrality itself.

■ LIVED EXPERIENCES AND NARRATIVE ENQUIRIES AS RESEARCH AND ART PRACTICE:
BOCHNER, GUNTARIK AL HADID, RENDLE-SHORT, SPIVAK, RUSHDIE, DEAN

Academic, Arthur P Bochner, has written extensively on narrative enquiry, lived experience and autoethnography. Writing on qualitative social research, Bochner comments:

Gradually, scholars across a wide spectrum of disciplines began to consider what social sciences would become if they were closer to literature than to physics, if they proffered stories rather than theories, and if they were self-consciously value-centered rather than pretending to be value free (Bochner, cited in Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2010, p. 2).

Engaging with the research from the position of autoethnography has allowed me to come closer to understanding my own (his)story (with the writing becoming a form of 'self-cultural' understanding) and more importantly, closer to understanding how my story might reflect, shift or change the attitudes and perceptions around issues relating to the research. I wanted to develop projects that would produce:

[...] meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience [and] that would sensitize readers to issues of identity politics, to experiences shrouded in silence, and to forms of representation that deepen our capacity to empathize with people who are different from us (Ellis and Bochner, cited in Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, p. 2).

While Ellis' and Bochner's comment goes to the core of my project, it is as important, as academic Olivia Guntarik's comment, in writing for an exhibition catalogue on my artwork stated '... [the artist's] themes are not restricted to personal experience, instead personal experience is used as a springboard to open up larger questions about history, memory, place' (Guntarik, as cited in D'Costa 2013, p. 2).

Making art is a creative process. A process that draws on the objective and subjective self, is logical and improbable, reasonable and unlikely, direct and tangential. As artist, Diana Al Hadid states, speaking at the 55th Venice Biennale '... when you feel like you understand something cognitively, but it's also extremely mysterious and doesn't add up, that's when the work is more interesting for me' (Art21 Artist to Artist n.d.).

As an 'artist-researcher', employing an autoethnographic method aligned seamlessly with methodologies I was employing intuitively in my studio practice. Using heuristic and autoethnographic methods, I highlight and draw on the method used by Tacita Dean for the exhibition she curated at the Serpentine Gallery, 2005, titled *An Aside*; a method closely aligned with the principles of a heuristic method. I discuss Dean's curatorial approach to *An Aside* (2005) in chapter two.

I also draw on creative writer and academic, Francesa Rendle-Short's, writing practice and research into the relationship between 'exegesis and eisegesis' as forms of writing, theorised in an article, '*Loose thinking: Writing an eisegesis*' (2010). I first heard Rendle-Short deliver a paper, 'The drawing, breathing, writing body', at the *Drawing Out* conference (RMIT University, 2010), where she offered so seductively the following:

Eisegesis they say, [fundamental theologians], is full of 'loose thinking'; it leads to wrong interpretation. It is a dangerous way of approaching texts because it is highly subjective and allows private readings. [...] This impropriety or promiscuity is just the thing we are looking for here. Think joy and incorrectness in the same breath as knowledge and understanding; find ways to give voice to uncertainty and doubt while at the same time pressing for meaning. Fault-ering gives writers permission to 'fool around' (*fault* here as in the mining term defined by the *Macquarie*: fractures, with dislocation, a 'break in the continuity of a body of rock or of a vein'), to disappear down cracks and think creatively about their work; it opens up possibilities through mistake and failure; embraces the state of not knowing. [...] Eisegesis is a way of submitting yourself to the certainty of the journey —to see *what happens* (Rendle-Short 2010, p. 3).

Using an autoethnographic method, with its close associations to experience, together with a heuristic method, which allows for discovery and chance in the writing and art projects, has allowed for an experimentation of forms to create a multi-layered account of the shimmering spaces of the Anglo Indian experience. However, I have come to realise there is always slippage and accountability between the dilemma of balancing an objective disciplinary method with more subjective, personalised experiences of events lived. Literary theorist, Gayatri Spivak, in *The New Subaltern: A Silent Interview* (2000), attempts to reconcile the disciplinary dilemma faced by the Subaltern group, between history as externalised factual accounts and working in present experiences where objectivity and subjectivity intervene. She comments ... 'I must keep telling myself that history tells us what happened and fiction what may have happened and indeed may happen' (Spivak 2000, p. 337).

In *Midnight's Children*, Indian writer Salman Rushdie, draws on fictional realism and factual historical events to weave an epic story around India gaining independence from the British. It highlights the relationship between the narrator's personal experience of growing up against a backdrop of India's journey from colonialism to post independence. The novel reflects on the social, cultural, linguistic and political diversity of India as it attempts to rebuild its own sense of nationhood.

Rushdie's writing uses the slippage that occurs when objective historical events are interpreted through personal, emotional accounts experienced in life. In *Imaginary Homelands Essays and Criticism 1981–1991* (1992), Rushdie discusses memory and migration. He refers to the idea of looking back to reclaim the city he left, as a space of 'uncertainty', where vision becomes 'fragmentary' (Rushdie 1992, p. 10). But it is this very space between fragmentation that Rushdie recognises he can use in the creative process of writing:

Time and migration had placed a double filter between me and my subject, and I hoped that if I could only imagine vividly enough it might be possible to see beyond those filters, to write as if the years had not passed, as if I had never left India for the West. But as I worked I found that what interested me was the process of filtration itself (Rushdie 1992, pp. 23–24).

I have experienced this very process, having also left a city and returned in an attempt to somehow reclaim it. Rushdie's idea of filtration is interesting. What we choose to 'imagine vividly' beyond filters leads to a complex equation of remembering and forgetting. Over time, what we attempt to remember objectively gets entangled in the emotional subjectivity of forgetting.

In the same article he concludes:

History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and

knowledge. The reading of Saleem's unreliable narration might be, I believed a useful analogy for the way in which we all, every day, attempt to 'read' the world (Rushdie 1992, p. 25).

'Reading the world', must therefore include Bhabha's 'oblique angles of vision' and a 'meandering of sorts' that artist, Tacita Dean, used to curate the exhibition *An Aside* (2005). I have allowed myself to stray and meander to the oblique angles, in an attempt to see what is uncovered as I attempt to read the world as an Anglo Indian. I trusted that there was an internal logic to this process.

What I am arguing for by using autoethnographic and heuristic methodologies, and by referencing—Bochner, Guntarik, Al Hadid, Rendle-Short, Spivak, Rushdie and Dean—is for a space that allows for the poetic, subjective and personal to operate as legitimate and necessary strategies in my research. Each of these accounts and experiences are translated through writing and art practice, which moves the focus from a point of autobiographic subjectivity to wider contexts that open up larger questions relating to place, belonging and identity in the context of the Anglo Indian.

■ ANGLO INDIAN AS POSTCOLONIAL: CAPLAN

At its core, my PhD takes a postcolonial position. While this may seem straightforward, the maze of postcolonial discourse is complex and far reaching in itself. Its definition is by its very nature, contingent and broad. It carries within its scope the thrust to untangle, provoke and dismantle conventions within a colonial discourse and long standing ways of being in the world. What is problematised in this equation, as academic, Lionel Caplan, outlines in his book, *Children of Colonialism: Anglo-Indians in a Postcolonial World* (2001), is that the discourses associated with postcolonialism of 'blurred boundaries, multiple identities, creolised cultures – have been part of the colonial past as well' (Caplan 2001, back cover). Anglo Indians have always occupied this space; thriving and surviving at different times under varying and shifting circumstances throughout history. Anglo Indians are, by definition, a product of colonisation. This splitting into two—half Indian, half British/European—is a simplistic equation that never adds up. Two halves do not make a whole. But rather, they make a doubling of two halves, a double articulation, which means Anglo Indians stay in a perpetual state of 'two half beings' always on the threshold of becoming. The Anglo Indian becomes the physical manifestation and the miscegenation of Bhabha's double articulation:

Both coloniser and colonised are in a process of miscognition where each point of identification is always a partial and double repetition of the otherness of the self ... Less than one and double (Bhabha 2004, pp. 138–139).

Sitting between coloniser and colonised, the Anglo Indian has had to negotiate the demarcated space that surrounds each. Appiah, in his updated foreword to Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), reminds us of the psychological damage caused by colonial racism on both the coloniser and the colonised (Appiah 2008, p. vii). For the Anglo Indian, the predicament of this situation becomes a doubling of this damage because he occupies both spaces.

The very definition of an Anglo Indian has been contested throughout history by British colonisers, Indian governments and the Anglo Indian community itself. Its varying definition has been used by all three parties to position the Anglo Indian socially, culturally, economically and politically, depending on who chooses to (re)present the Anglo Indian and how they wish to represent them. Circumstances, for the Anglo Indian, have always been in a state of flux: from early colonial days to Indian partition and independence, through

periods of intense migration, and finally today in a global environment, where the internet has become a space for forum, organisation, discussion, collection and dissemination of material and information. Who is, was and can be classified as Anglo Indian has created a dilemma of identity for the community. It is these very shifting spaces that have often resulted in the Anglo Indian being stereotyped and essentialised in often very derogatory ways by both Indian and British cultures. As a community, Anglo Indians have attempted to rebuke these negative images, which as writer, Gloria Jean Moore, describes as untruthful and erroneous (Moore 1986, p. 171). I too, have found in my own research, this desire by the community to correct or set straight the way Anglo Indians have been negatively depicted (Anthony 1996, Chew 1997, Moore 1986, Mills 1996). Even stories from my mother draw on stereotypical ways of describing the community, which she would use in both positive and negative ways, depending on what she was discussing. Academic, Glen D'Cruz, in his article, *My Two Left Feet: The Problem of Anglo-Indian Stereotypes in Post-Independence Indo-English Fiction* (2003), discusses his surprise at the widespread appeal of 'corrective image criticism' holds in the community and in academic criticism, citing Dolores Chew and Megan Stuart Mills as two examples (D'Cruz 2003, p. 106). D'Cruz wisely argues around the idea of the 'image' (positive and negative) of the Anglo Indian. As I have mentioned, the community and certain academics have worked hard to rebuke the negative stereotypes associated with Anglo Indians, calling for 'positive' examples to depict Anglo Indians. However, as D'Cruz points out, if these negative stereotypes of Anglo Indians are false and need correcting, what is an authentic representation of Anglo Indian identity which stands in opposition to the false claims? (ibid., p. 107)

■ THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What becomes primary to the research is, how does an Anglo Indian identity emerge, shift and evolve in the context of nationalism, culture, community, history, migration and location? As well, it poses the question, how can artworks allow for a space of 'in-betweenness' to emerge in the context of an evolving Anglo Indian identity that is not fixed but is shimmering and fractured?

What is inherent in these questions are the issues of place and belonging, which are intrinsically linked to culture and identity. Therefore, rather than separate out these issues, the dissertation attempts to examine how the historical colonising of India led to the establishment of the Anglo Indian community. It explores how changing and often conflicting attitudes by both the Indian and British communities had to be negotiated by the Anglo Indian community in terms of establishing its sense of being and belonging, historically and contemporaneously. The research also examines the role migration played in the community and how diasporas led to a rethinking of the idea of home as both nostalgic and ancestral longing in the context of location. Each of these issues is approached from personal experience, and positions as artist, researcher and Anglo Indian, and is contextualised across the lens of colonial and postcolonial discourses, and contemporary fine art practice.

CHAPTER TWO

MULTIPLE BEGINNINGS—THREE REFLECTIVE ACCOUNTS AS BEGINNINGS, EXPERIENCES AND MEMORIES

The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past ... Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the *fin de siècle*, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond': an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words *au-delà* – here and there, on all sides, *fort/da*, hither and thither, back and forth (Bhabha 2004, pp. 1–2).

2.1 LOOKING BACKWARD – THINKING FORWARD

Looking Backward – Thinking Forward makes reference to the title of Homi Bhabha's preface to the *Location of Culture – Looking Back, Moving Forward: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism* (2004). Here, Bhabha attempts to locate and reconcile his own personal history intervening with India gaining its independence. Taking my cue from this as a way to begin, I considered the idea of my own 'horizon' experiences (histories). How far back should I look and in which direction/s? Bhabha asserts that 'Being in the 'beyond' [...] is to inhabit an intervening space [...]' (Bhabha 2004, p. 10), and that this intervening space becomes 'a space of intervention in the here and now' (ibid.). Intervention for the Anglo Indian, becomes a necessity for determining our own presence moving forward from a past where we were defined through an Indian and British lens, which was not always emphatic. This desire to self-represent, for the Anglo Indian, needs to continue, particularly in the arts, because as Bhabha states:

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present (Bhabha 2004, p. 10).

It is precisely this 'innovation' and 'interruption' that I seek for the artworks as a counter narrative to existing Indian, British and past Anglo Indian narratives, which can then occupy an in-between ameliorative space, as 'newness'.

The three reflective accounts in this chapter present 'a sense of disorientation and disturbance of direction', as I look at events and experience across a wide and disparate lens. They are from earlier narrative

style writings commenced at the beginning of my PhD and then reworked at later stages to include a more analytical approach to the writing. So, although I describe them as 'reflective accounts', they read as academic writings with research and citations, but in an informal register revolving around stories and life experiences. This writing signposts motifs, experiences, forms and issues such as the sea, my birthplace and memory, all of which set conditions for thinking and linking motifs, ideas, connections and experiences, which leads to more sustained discussion in this and other chapters, and in the artworks. Occurring at the very early stages of and during the development of the artworks, meant the writing was able to influence the making process in the studio, acting as a bridge between the writing experience and making the artwork. It creates an atmosphere of how to engage the seemingly paradoxical situation between a studio practice, which is necessarily implicit and poetic, and the dissertation, which requires a more explicit account—which can at times, sit in opposition to the studio experience. This chapter makes the writing process a creative project in and of itself.

2.2 REFLECTIVE ACCOUNT 1: STARTING FROM X

■ SALMAN RUSHDIE AND TACITA DEAN: FORMS OF BEGINNING

As a way to begin the research, I first examined Salman Rushdie's novel, *Midnight's Children* (1982) and a piece of text written by artist, Tacita Dean.

Salman Rushdie's novel, *Midnight's Children* (1982), begins with the voice of his central character, Saleem Sinai. The opening line is, 'I was born in the city of Bombay ... once upon a time. No, that won't do ...' (Rushdie 1982, p. 3). Rushdie immediately recognises that 'once upon a time', (as a beginning) ... won't do. He needs to locate the exact moment that would influence what is to come later. The moment at midnight in 1947 when, coincidentally, India gains its independence from the British and when Sinai is born.

The catalogue foreword for the exhibition Dean curated, *An Aside* (2005), discusses the structure her curating process would take:

The task of writing about this exhibition was never going to be easy: a show created through a meandering, ill-formed thought process where the minutest of incidents can, and have, instructed major decisions. [...] My route has not been linear and obedient to the rules of that creed but has sprouted new shoots from various points along the way and gone off in diverse and conflicting directions, leaving me many paths to follow [...] Nothing is more frightening than not knowing where you're going, but then again nothing can be more satisfying than finding you've arrived somewhere without any clear idea of the route. I did not, and could not have, pre-imagined this show; it is not at all what I expected it to be, and that's the point: I have at least been faithful to the blindness with which I set out, and even if my methods have veered from the intuitive to the social, and from the orthodox to the inexplicable, this exhibition has taken form from itself, [...]. I will make no attempt to explain the coincidences or the associative process, because like explaining a dream, this invariably dies in the telling. Instead, I shall go from one aside to the next, hopefully leaving enough space for the works to exist together as a whole as well as alone in their own place [...] (Dean 2005, p. 4).

Dean's comments trust in serendipity and intuition, staying open to coincidence and the potential for emerging themes, as methods which guided her curatorial process. Importantly, her writing creates a space between information (knowledge) and suggestion (belief), leaving room for interpretation. These are factors I too would use in both the studio and writing processes.

Dean too searches for a beginning to her curatorial project. In discussing the selection process for the artworks she says, 'I am not sure if, as I have always believed, this whole process began in New York' [...] (ibid., p. 6). This awareness of 'time and space' not being linear, as espoused by Rushdie and Dean, informs my writing. It may be in the collapsing of these structures that a place of liminality or 'in-betweenness' is where the stories I wish to both make art about and to write about, exist.

My PhD explores histories (time): my history, Anglo Indian history, and the rich and deep complexities of British and Indian history, written often from positions of privilege, power and authority. My research also examines geographies (space) and the exploration of my own migration and mobility, which leads to living in the world through multiple locations. The research involves memory (as it relates to time and space): my fractured experiences of remembering (and forgetting); as well as the awareness of a collective memory of Indian, British and Anglo Indian voices throughout India's history. Writer, Milan Kundera, in *Slowness* (1996), discusses how, moving quickly in the world leads to forgetting and when we want to remember, we tend to move slowly.

There is a secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting. Consider this utterly commonplace situation: a man is walking down the street. At a certain moment, he tries to recall something, but the recollection escapes him. Automatically, he slows down. Meanwhile, a person who wants to forget a disagreeable incident he has just lived through starts unconsciously to speed up his pace, as if he were trying to distance himself from a thing still too close to him in time. [...] In existential mathematics, that experience takes the form of two basic equations: the degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting (Kundera 1996, p. 34).

Perhaps, in light of Kundera's equation, the beginning for my research had already begun. Perhaps it is posited somewhere historically and contemporaneously in my community. And that speed has increased the intensity of me forgetting my own Anglo Indianness. Distance and time has affected my ability to remember. The beginning, which seems so important to me, is in fact contingent on everything else. In this context, the beginning and the end need not be seen as fixed, static points. Perhaps these points shimmer and are shifting, fractured, provisional and locational, and are not simply two: a beginning and an end. There may just be many beginnings and as many endings which are, '[...] here and there, hither and thither, back and forth' (Bhabha 2004, p. 2).

■ LOOKING FOR THE X IN A CITY OF FRACTURED NAMES AND DREAMS

On 16 December 2009 while visiting Bombay, India, my mother sent me a postcard. It included news and well wishes from family. It finished with 'Rhett, the red X in the picture is where you were born. Love & God Bless. Always Mum.' (Peters P, 2009). I looked at the postcard, thinking this could be the beginning for which I was looking.

Bombay is a very large city. I did not know exactly where in Bombay I was born. But, looking at the X on the postcard stirred a range of feelings

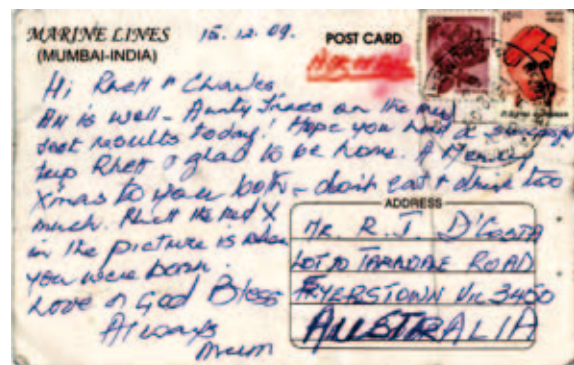


Fig. 427 | Photographic documentation (2009), postcard of Marine Parade, Bombay, sent from my mother while visiting India.



Fig. 428 | Photographic documentation (2009), handwritten text on the reverse of postcard sent from my mother. The 'red X' marks the spot I was born.

relating to place and belonging. I was born in 1964 in Bombay, or Mumbai as it was renamed in 1995—in 1964 it was Bombay and remains so to me. Even though I use the Anglocised name, it is not because of loyalties toward the British. Nor is it a form of nostalgia. Mumbai is the name Maharashtrians use for Bombay. Referring to the city as Mumbai has become a pro-Maharashtra stance orchestrated by the far right regional political party, the Shiv Sena who take an almost militant stance in relation to Marathi and Hindu nationalism.

Historically, Bombay has attracted diverse people to the city from various regional centers and religious groups throughout India. Parsi, Muslim, Anglo Indian, Iranian, Hindu, Sikh and Punjabi, have all made the city their home and have prospered and lived in a fairly harmonious and tolerant environment. The local people of the state of Maharashtra, of which Bombay is the capital, feel as if they are not extended the same opportunities as the people who migrated to the city. It is in this environment and from this platform that the Shiv Sena emerged.

I am not pro-Shiv Sena, which is why I struggle with the name, Mumbai. Through a postcolonial lens, I would prefer to call Bombay, Mumbai. I feel as if I am a migrant to the city, similar to the way I feel about only partially belonging to the country of India. Each time I use the term Bombay, I feel as if I need qualifiers as to why I use the term. Similarly, too, when I am asked where I come from. My answer always involves explanations that negotiate race and ethnicity: *I was born in India. I am Anglo Indian. I don't speak any Indian language. I am neither Hindu nor Muslim nor any of the numerous sects or dialects of India.* I have never been able to say simply, *I am Indian*, even though I look Indian and have dark skin. In India my family always associated with Anglo Indians. When we immigrated to Australia we assimilated quite naturally into the community in Australia, making friends with both Anglo Indian and Australian families. I never felt as if I did not belong in Australia. Perhaps speaking English as my first language may have made this transition easier. Certainly the community became role models for an Australian government who wanted migrants to assimilate into Australian culture.¹

■ WHITENESS AND ANGLO INDIANS IN INDIA AND AUSTRALIA

The first time I met some of my first cousins (my mother's siblings' children) who were visiting Australia, I noticed the cousin who immigrated to Bahrain had fair skin, brown hair, green eyes, Western clothing, and a slight English inflection (perhaps just good private schooling). The other, still living in India, had very dark skin, jet black hair and all the adornments of the Indian attire, and a detectable Indian accent. Academic, Sheila Pais James, who draws on sociologist, Ruth Frankenberg, claims that 'whiteness, like any other racial construction, is not an isolated concept but is situated within a relational and contextual framework' (James 2012, p. 17). To further illustrate this point, I had two aunts who lived in India. Both dressed and conformed to a Western-style of living. One had darker skin than the other. The aunt with darker skin was particularly adamant about not conforming to an Indian way of life, because she was

1 For further discussion on Anglo Indians in multicultural Australia, see IJAIS Vol. 12, No. 2, 2012, pp. 15–28 www.international-journal-of-anglo-indian-studies.org.

proudly Anglo Indian and to her the difference needed to be articulated through dress codes. However this same aunt, when I met her almost fifteen years after she made these claims, had decided to take on all the attributes of an Indian woman. When I asked her about this change she said it was easier; it made living in India easier if she *looked* Indian (Peters V, Bombay, India, 1999, pers. comm.). This aunt identified as Anglo Indian, rather than Indian. Even when she decided to wear Indian clothes, it was not out of a sense of nationalism, but rather assimilation. It made life easier, if she looked Indian. The distinction is also clear that she is prepared to *look* Indian even though she did not *feel* Indian.

Appiah, in his foreword to *Black Skin, White Masks* (2008), mentions how, 'Black children raised within the racist cultural assumptions of the colonial system, can partially resolve the tension between contempt for blackness and their own dark skins by coming to think of themselves, in some sense, as white' (Appiah 2008, p. ix).

Having immigrated to Australia in 1970, we entered at a time when Australia was engaging in a dialogue on multiculturalism. The evolution of immigration in Australian society saw multiculturalism evolve as policy and concept. Prior to this, migrants were expected to quickly 'assimilate' into Australian society. By the 1960s and 1970s, assimilation was replaced with a focus on integration and eventually multiculturalism as the government recognised that migrants may not want to lose their own sense of cultural identity (Koleth 2010).

Academic Sheila Pais James refers to the 'ambiguous identity of "Anglo-Indians"' (James 2012, p. 15). Her article, 'The Anglo-Indians as a mixed race identity in Australia' (2012), focuses on how the aspirations of Anglo Indians and the accumulation of a white identity, evident in the context of colonial and postcolonial India, are refigured on immigration to Australia, and particularly, how Anglo Indians 'negotiate and rework their identity claims in the context of Australian whiteness and multiculturalism' (ibid.). James discusses how Anglo Indians can assimilate in Australian society through either aligning with a dominant Anglo-Celtic culture or through multiculturalism, depending on their skin colour.

The colour of your skin still retains currency. Simply, whiter skin is better as it affords assimilation and association with an Anglo-Celtic culture. It is important to remember that Anglo Indians are a direct consequence of colonialism and therefore their sense of a constructed identity has been in the context of the dominant British, colonial, white, male. Also, it was British and European men who initially interbred with Indian females. Growing up in India, I could see how my family privileged the English side of their heritage, emphasising it more than their Indian side, particularly in terms of lifestyle, food and clothing. Being Catholic and speaking English were also contributing factors. James describes how Anglo Indians have a long history of being positioned awkwardly in terms of dominant whiteness, colonialism and race discourse (James 2012, p. 16). Their position is awkward because of their in-between status, which they had to negotiate based on racial and social prejudices from the British and Indians. Privileging whiteness created a disjuncture within the Anglo Indian community itself. Those with fairer skin attempted to deny their Anglo Indianness. Those with darker skin attempted to assimilate into Indian culture, particularly after Indian Independence. This position was further embraced as whiteness for Anglo Indians was also entangled in English class structures, except through a distorted lens for the Anglo Indian and Indian who attributed whiteness to a high class, making no distinction in the way British society determines class status.

In my own family, there is significant skin colour variation, from very dark skin and brown eyes to very fair skin and blue eyes. As noted earlier, I have observed how my cousins with darker skin seem to lean

toward assimilating with Indian culture in terms of dress and appearance. However, my cousins with fairer skin seem to adopt more Western modes of living. Regardless of whether they live in India or have immigrated to Western countries.

In *Midnight's Children* (1982), when unexpectedly Ahmed Sinai's skin literally fades to white he is secretly pleased, noting how 'he had long envied Europeans their pigmentation' (Rushdie 1981, p. 212). Announcing to his neighbours, 'All the best people are white under the skin; I have merely given up pretending. His neighbours, all of whom were darker than he, laughed politely and felt curiously ashamed' (ibid). In fact, it's not just Ahmed Sinai who is turning white. We find out that:

[...] businessmen [of India] [were becoming very, very pale indeed! It seems that the gargantuan (even heroic) efforts involved in taking over from the British and becoming masters of their own destinies had drained the colour from their cheeks ... in which case, perhaps my father was a late victim of a widespread, though generally unremarked phenomenon. The businessmen of India were turning white (ibid.).

Rushdie's comments are a telling reminder of the legacy of colonialism. Whiteness has infected Indians. The influence of colonialism is *inside* India. Rushdie, I suspect, is also saying that India cannot be master of its own destiny, except through the lens of British colonialism.

■ BOMBAY'S FRACTURED GEOGRAPHY

How appropriate for an Anglo Indian to have been born in a city that was originally geographically fractured. The city—its name, its history—is important to the research as it is a repository of memories and experiences. Bombay is a city that absorbs differences. It is also a city that was built on trade. If there is a city in India that Anglo Indians may claim as theirs, it should be Bombay. Certainly, in my own experience, it is Bombay, more than India that I claim as home, not only because it is my place of birth but because of its state of fragmentation, geographically and culturally. I have made two artworks that engage with the city of Bombay: one at the early stages of my PhD titled, *Trade* (2013) and one nearer the conclusion of the PhD titled *Closeness & distance* (2015). *Trade* (2013) took physical and material form—it needed to at this early stage of the research so my idea could have a tangible, material outcome. *Closeness & distance* (2015), is a video work I made during a visit to Bombay near the completion of the PhD.

Bombay was originally an archipelago of seven islands; through land reclamation, it was joined to establish the city as it is today. The Portuguese arrived and colonised the island in 1534, and established it as a trading centre calling it Bom Bahia. It was the British who pronounced the name as 'Bombay', the name they used after seizing the city from the Portuguese. The British took over Bombay from the Portuguese in 1662. It was a dowry gift from the Portuguese to Charles II, the then King of England, in his marriage to Catherine Braganza, the Princess of Portugal. When the British took over Bombay, it was Charles II who leased it to the East India Company to use for trading purposes.²



Fig. 429 | Map of Bombay as seven islands viewed 11 November 2015.

2 The historical information is from <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/trading/bombay/history.html> and <http://www.mumbai.org.uk/history.html>.

The name Mumbai is derived from Mumba Devi, the patron goddess of the Kolis. The Kolis called her 'Mumba Aai' (Mother Mumba). From this word came Mumbai. The British, however, preferred to call the islands Bombay, a name that has remained in use till recent years. The name of this city is important: its very name is deeply embroiled and contested in its own self-identity politics, and in its historical and colonial past, and postcolonial future. Anthropologist, Arjun Appadurai, in discussing the shift of names from Bombay to Mumbai, refers rightly to the change as a move that 'looks backward and forward simultaneously' (Appadurai, 2013, p. 146).

Looking backward and forward, Mumbai makes historical reference to the Hindu deity, Mumba Devi and to the present forward view of the Shiv Sena. As Appadurai mentions, 'Mumbai had been the name for the city preferred by many of the Marathi-speaking majority, and especially by those who identify with the Shiv Sena' (2013, p. 146). Looking forward, the decision to change the name to Mumbai was part of a national campaign of changing names associated with colonial rule to names associated with a national perspective. He also mentions that '[...] it gains respectability as an erasure of the Anglophone name, Bombay, and thus carries the surface respectability of popular nationalism after 1947' (ibid.). But as he goes on to add, the subtext of this erasure is that it plays into the Shiv Sena's idea of an envisioned future of Mumbai as a 're-Hinduised', 'sacred national space', which is 'ethnically pure' (ibid.).

This erasure of which Appadurai speaks, is perhaps why I still refer to the city of my birth as Bombay. The name holds a multitude of contradictions. I will not use Mumbai, so to avoid any political references or Hindu religious associations, even though using the name Bombay connects it to a colonial past. I cannot help but think about the complexity of the naming of a city in relation to history, politics, religion and nationalism, leading to my fate and which runs parallel to the fate of the Anglo Indian community. The 'X' my mother scratched onto a postcard is perhaps why I struggle with where to begin. The city itself is mixed into my search for form and content. I needed to go back to this X marked place to begin again. The Portuguese (my surname is very much associated with Portugal), the British, the Indian, have shaped not only my sense of who I am but also the way I think about my art practice. I am Anglo Indian (potentially another beginning): half British/half Indian and I am not sure which half is which (as previously mentioned, it is not an easy piece of arithmetic). I am not sure if it is divisional by halves. I do not wish to spend time, at this stage in my life, to find the genealogical facts to this equation. I have heard anecdotal stories from my parents, often seeming to be more interested in highlighting the occidental side of my culture. Indians seem to privilege skin colour. Check the personal section in any daily Indian newspaper and you will see text that repeatedly desires 'fair skin'. Anglo Indians seem to share this desire for 'whiteness'. Better to be white ... you might be able to pass as British. If not, then better to be dark and pass for an Indian. It's the space in-between these two polarities that can lead to complications and falling between the cracks.

■ IN-BETWEEN TETRAPODS AND TIME

What if there were no divisions? In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1982), Dr Narlikar lays forth his plan regarding land reclamation to Ahmed Bhai by asking, 'Land and sea; sea and land; the eternal struggle, not so?' (Rushdie 1982, p. 156). As Ahmed remains silent, Narlikar reminds him, 'Once there were seven islands ... The British joined them up. Sea became land and did not sink beneath the tides' (ibid.). He brings forward from his pocket, a little plaster cast form 'the tetrapod' (ibid.). There is this form again, the tetrapod, in fiction and in fact. I have seen, touched, photographed, drawn, read, written, remembered and forgotten—this form—only to be reminded of it again. Dr Narlikar dies, pushed into the sea as he holds onto a life size concrete tetrapod eventually, '[...] the death had, by



Fig. 430 | Photograph 2014, concrete tetrapods at the seawall along Marine Parade, Bombay, India.



Fig. 431 | Photograph 2014, concrete tetrapods at Marine Parade, Bombay, India.

swallowing large quantities of the sea, taken on the qualities of water [...]’ (Rushdie 1982, p. 210). In the context of the novel, an ironic end.

■ (RE) LOOKING AND REMEMBERING MARINE PARADE

I (re)looked at the image on the postcard sent by my mother. It is a slightly elevated, distant view of a street named Marine Parade. Marine Parade was built on reclaimed land in 1920. I know the location. I’ve walked this street many times. I have come to know this street at different stages of my life: as a child walking along this promenade with my parents for the last time before we immigrated to Australia (1970),



Fig. 432 | Photograph 2014, Marine Parade during a trip to India.

at the age of twentyone visiting India for the first time since emigrating (1985), on holiday (1999, 2009), and a recent visit to look for the point where the postcard photograph may have been taken (2014). The image is both deeply familiar and yet uncannily unfamiliar. I scrutinised this image, trying to understand more than the mass printed image was capable of revealing. Buildings to the left, a road with traffic, a pedestrian walk, the sea wall, a mass of concrete interlocking tetrapod shapes on the foreshore and finally the sea. I was starting to feel a very strong emotional connection to this place—Bombay. It would become important in my research.

2.3 REFLECTIVE ACCOUNT 2: TO BE SOMEWHERE ELSE, LOOKING AT THE SEA, CLOSENESS & DISTANCE

Water shines. Water shimmers. Water glows. Water glimmers. Water glitters. Water gleams. Water glistens. Water glints. Water twinkles. Water sparkles. Water blinks. Water winks. Water waves (Horn 2001).

This second account is about ‘looking’ and the ‘sea’. Both are important to my research. Looking as an act, and water as an idea and motif. I first had this idea because of an image I see each time I start my computer.



Fig. 433 | Photograph 2010, Sikh man, Goa, India.

It is a distant view of the sea from a holiday photograph I took many years ago in Goa, India. It is one of those images that seems to activate memory and longing, because of its lingering, liminal horizon and its shimmering waters. Academic, Bill Ashcroft, acknowledges the usefulness of the horizon in postcolonial discourse as it sends the gaze outwards linking the spatial and the temporal (Ashcroft 2008, p. 41). It proposes we can imagine being there or somewhere similar. The image (on my computer) uses the *rückenfigur* compositional device, which leaves the back of a figure looking into the same space as the photographer and the viewer. This strategy invites the viewer to be transposed into the picture. It promises imagined desires and experiences.

■ RONI HORN SAYING WATER (2001)

The quote at the beginning of this second reflective account is from the Canadian artist, Roni Horn. It forms part of her reflections and insights in the audio work, *Saying Water* (2001)³, in which Horn discusses the Thames River in London, drawing the listener into the aqueous space of the river, revealing a meditation on the possibilities and potentiality of 'us' and water. The rhythm in the work (as with a river) makes the passing of time a fast process and a slow contemplation. The work is often dark and brooding, as can be a river. Death and suicide become reoccurring themes through factual and fictional narratives. Horn reveals the closeness of water to oneself: 'I won't talk about how water is a mirror. I won't talk about how water is a mirror. But it's hard talking about water without talking about oneself' (Horn 2001, 61 minutes).

The pitch in Horn's voice is often singular. Its monotone creates a form of meditation for the listener: 'I never know where I am standing when I am standing near the river' (ibid.). It is this experience of dislocation that water can have when standing looking, which interests me and connects to my research. The shimmer of water has the potential to transport and transcend the viewer. It makes us forget where we are. It becomes formless and ambiguous in terms of locating a time and space continuum.

Horn continues:

Water receives you, affirms you, shows you who you are and all the near imperceptible qualities that are water, tease you with their ambiguities, tease you and extend you out into the world (ibid.).

It is no coincidence that water is a reoccurring theme in art and life. Listening to *Saying Water* (2001), reminds me of how staring into a body of water, such as a river or the sea, makes us question who we are and our relationship to the world. This idea would form the basis for the artwork *P.O.S.H.* (2013), which I discuss in further detail in this chapter.

3 Horn has performed, recorded and published this work on numerous occasions. Each time the duration of the piece varies. The recording I make reference to is the Audio CD publication by the Dia Art Foundation, 2001, Audio 61 minutes.

■ CLOSENESS & DISTANCE: RETURNING TO REMEMBER AND SEE THE SEA

When I visited Bombay for the first time in 1985, I stayed in the same flat we lived in prior to emigrating. It had been fifteen years since my family had immigrated to Australia.

Spatially, everything seemed closer and smaller than I remembered. Most likely, the distortion of scale by memory. Detail was missing. Sometimes the images I recalled seemed real, close and palpable and at other times, distant, irretrievable and vague. Colaba, Cuff Parade, Nariman Point, Marine Parade: all physical places close to me (while I lived in India) and yet made distant with time. I remember in 1985, my mother telling me as we stood at Nariman Point and looked down Marine Parade, that it was here (at Nariman Point) that the land ended and behind us, where the sea began. As I stood on the sea wall and looked back over my shoulder, there was no sea to be seen, only high rise development on reclaimed land.

■ WALKING IN MY NEIGHBOURHOOD: DISTINCTIONS AND DIVISIONS

On a visit to Bombay in 1999, I walked around the expanding Colaba neighbourhood. As I walked further into this new, reclaimed land, I came to a gentrified and affluent area with gated buildings, shaded trees and expensive apartments. The landscape was planned, gridded, and striated in a way that was measured and controlled. There was a sense of permanence about the space. The other side of the street presented a very different visual experience ... the predominately brown landscape of old scrap wood and rusted metal being the main building materials used to construct makeshift dwellings. This materiality exposed disorderly, ramshackled spaces with no visible sense of contemporary designed building practices. The shelters were vulnerable, unstable and impermanent. Referred to as *chollies* they constitute one of the many slum areas in Bombay.

These particular slums sat precariously on the edge of the sea. At any time, this space, the homes of the very poor, could be removed by slumlords, by the government or by the sea's fury. Their space is vulnerable to anything more powerful than themselves. I have never entered a chollie or walked through their narrow, winding maze-like streets, where people work, socialise and live in close proximity amidst their own established order, yet seeming chaos (to the outsider). British architect, writer and television presenter, Kevin McCloud's television series, *Kevin McCloud: Slumming It* (2010), chronicles him spending time living in Dharavi, the largest and most publicised slum area in Bombay. Watching this documentary made me uneasy (the title itself seems patronising). There was a white man, with every good intention no doubt, 'slumming it'. A choice that many in the slums do not have. His privilege is the choice to stay or leave at any time. To have choice is power. What made me uneasy was that I have witnessed this kind of situation often when I have visited India. In India, skin colour and an English accent are still privileged and allow entry to all areas. I observed this often in Bombay at the Taj Mahal hotel. At most hotels, people can come and go at any time. However, there is an unspoken division between who can and can't enter the Taj Mahal. Class, race and social distinctions operate in ways where invisible demarcations seem clear. The authority of colonialism is still prevalent in India, in the psyche of the people, particularly in the context of the poor, where class and status also play a role in terms of access. This reiterates historian, Nicolas Thomas' views, that to think of colonialism as a 19th century phenomenon would be inaccurate. As he points out, colonialism is a thing of the present, not the past. Thomas views ethnographic experiences as a better way of understanding colonialism's continuing effects on human experiences (Thomas 1994). I have witnessed such experiences, as the one I mention, operating in India, where English or European heritage, as distinct from class, still provides access and privilege.

■ *READING FROM BOTH SIDES* (2013)

I stood between these two spaces, the chollies and the gated apartment, for some time ... considering order and chaos, power and control. Polarities, which existed simultaneously from both sides. Unsure about what to make of this division, I stood in the middle of these two spaces, feeling separated and connected to both worlds. This middle space strangely separated and connected me to India.

This experience informed the making of the artwork *Reading from Both Sides* (2013). An artwork that began as a drawing, by stitching a gridded surface of gold thread onto paper. Making the artwork was very labour intensive taking many months to complete. The intensity and repetitiveness of the process gave me time to consider and reflect on the artwork as it was evolving. Perceiving the artwork as a two dimensional drawing, I naturally focused on the front of the work. Standing in front of the work the viewer reads an ordered pattern, structured as a grid. As the viewer moves to the side of the work, the image is read at an oblique angle across the surface of the image, which seems to dissolve the grid into a shimmering amorphous form. Stitching and securing the threads at the back of the work exposed a contrary experience to the logic of the grid. The back of the drawing became a complex weave that seemed to deconstruct the order of the grid on the front of the work, creating a complex mapping of a space that to me feels vulnerable and yet beautiful. The back of the work seemed analogous to the experience of looking at the chollies I encountered, where a rhythm and order of the forms and spaces evolved fluidly.

In the introductory notes to her lecture, *Quilting the Striated*, RMIT University (2010), architect and creative researcher, Dr Janet McGaw notes: 'Although Aboriginal people populated the land, their apparently fluid and nomadic ways and lack of obvious building practice suggested no fixed ties to place to European colonisers familiar with gridded cities, property boundaries and western building practices' (McGaw 2010, para. 1). She continues, 'In his spatial history of early Melbourne, Frank Vitelli argues that Hoddle's grid was the means by which the settler colonial society established, legitimized and grounded their presence and simultaneously masked and concealed an earlier presence' (ibid.).

Reflecting on McGaw's comments, my experience with the chollies in Colaba and with the artwork I was making, I recognised that I wanted to read across both sides of the artwork simultaneously rather than as binary. I wanted to expose rather than 'mask' or conceal any earlier presence. I made two smaller works as tests and installed them side by side on the wall. One showing the front of the work and the other the back. However the outcome was not convincing.

I did not want a distinction between front and back, but rather a soft, circulatory folding form so both surfaces could be read simultaneously. I began to test the work as a three dimensional piece, which sat on the floor rather than on the wall. I wanted the artwork to have a proximity to the ground to emphasise its vulnerability.

Because of the fragility of the paper I did not want to place it directly on the floor, so I made a small, naturally weathered wooden platform for the paper form to sit on. After testing the artwork by folding and rolling



Fig. 434 | D'Costa, R 2012–2013, preliminary test works (installation view), during the making of *Reading from Both Sides*, [poly cotton thread on Arches 300 gsm, acrylic polymer], Fryerstown, Victoria.

the paper, I eventually decided to fold the paper over, allowing its own weight to determine the form.



Fig. 436 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Reading from Both Sides*, [poly cotton thread, acrylic polymer on Arches 300 gsm, wood; 230 cm x 155 cm], Painting Studios, RMIT University, Melbourne.

I was particularly interested in the way the paper touched, revealing and concealing different parts of the surface, recalling artist, Roni Horn's, *Gold Mats, Paired (for Ross and Felix)* (1995).

Encountering Horn's work at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City in 2010, I was disarmed by its visual beauty, purity and simplicity, as well as its open, emotive

and poetic reading. The way the two pieces of pure gold delicately touched in certain places and its vulnerable and precarious placement on the floor, were the ideas I wanted for *Reading from Both Sides* (2013).

■ SMELLING YOUR WAY INTO THE WORLD FROM A VERANDAH

It's the smells of Bombay I remember most vividly. Food, the smells of the bazaar, rain during the monsoons, and particularly the sea, are triggers that reactivate memory. I recall as a child, sitting in our third floor apartment in Colaba, Bombay, smelling the sea daily without seeing it. It was a heavy pungent odour: a mix of salt, fish, and at times, human excrement, mixed together with the muddy smell of rot and decay. They were smells that reminded you of your presence in the world. If I held on tightly to the railing of our verandah and leaned heavily to my right, I could catch sight of the sea; a reminder of both my geography and Bombay's origins and history.

But the verandah of our flat has now been enclosed. I can no longer lean out to see the sea. The verandah is important as the demarcation between inside and out. I would often sit on this verandah as a child, singing about everything that came into view. There was no logical narrative, hierarchy or criteria to include or dismiss forms; I was like a fixed video camera, making visual everything that entered the frame—the ongoing succession of events that were in my world. At an early age, this is how I chose to partake in the world, preferring the distance the verandah provided. It felt safe. I stayed apart, preferring to observe. Looking, I can say now, was important although I did not know that then. I was both a part and apart from Bombay and India. Academic Bill Ashcroft, in discussing David Malouf's novel, *12 Edmonstone Street* (1985), links the importance of 'verandahs to the developing consciousness' (2008, p. 41):

Verandahs are no-man's-land, border zones that keep contact with the house and its activities on one face but are open on the other to the street, the night and all the vast, unknown areas beyond (Malouf, cited in Ashcroft 1994, p. 42).



Fig. 435 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation, testing a range of configurations for *Reading from Both Sides*, [poly cotton thread, acrylic polymer on Arches 300 gsm, wood; 230 cm x 155 cm], Painting Studios, RMIT University, Melbourne.

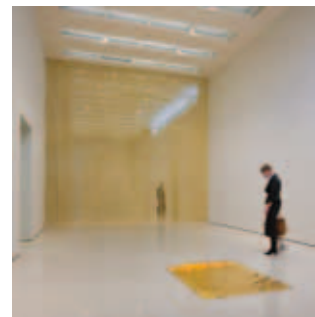


Fig. 437 | Horn, R 1995, *Gold Mats, Paired (for Ross and Felix)*, [pure gold, 1245 x 1524 x 0.2 mm, 1.8 kg].

It is the double orientation of the verandah, which is of interest and relevance for the Anglo Indian who shares this bi-focal vision and this border space. The colonial verandah, like the cantonment, the barracks and the garden, was a liminal space during colonial times. For the British in India during the colonial period, it provided a space of reprieve from the heat, dust and germs ... from Indians and from India itself. It was a space of hierarchy and privilege the British could leave and enter as they pleased. It was a socially controlling space, which as academic, Alan Johnson notes, '[...] enforced the domestic social code that dictated how and where visitors could be received' (Johnson 2011, p. 184). So even at the age of six, unconsciously, I was already separating myself from my place of birth. The Anglo Indian was already acting out his form of separateness and spatialised developing identity. The verandah in this context becomes the conceptualised space of the Anglo Indian, sitting between the order of British privilege and the chaos of India outside. Johnson describes the indispensability of the verandah as:

[...] a space of European leisure in a hot climate; as a threshold where goods from the bazaar are brought to be sold to the English memsahib so she can be safe from marketplace pollution; and as a zone situated between English and Indian spheres of life – in short, a liminal space that combines, but never completely adulterates, the two spheres (a combination that approximates the Anglo-Indian's liminal identity) (Johnson 2011, p. 183).

As a child, I physically distanced myself from the city of my birth, preferring to sit on the liminal space of the verandah ... witnessing the city but not partaking. As an émigré, leaving India created another spatial distancing from engaging with my sense of an Indian identity. How was I to know then, what I know now: that as the physical distance grew between myself and Bombay, the closer I would feel to this place of my birth. I could not speak the native languages, Hindi or Marathi, only English. I looked Indian having dark skin and black hair. But I wore Western-style clothing, as did my parents. As a Catholic, we are not part of any Hindu caste system. From an early age, I was experiencing the splitting of identity along occidental and Oriental trajectories, acted out through social, racial and civil lines. As a six year old unable to find any strategies to operate from this in-between space, I chose instead to sit anonymously and invisibly on the verandah of a flat in Bombay singing. How fitting that I would be born into such an overpopulated city that permitted such anonymity and invisibility.

■ KIMSOOJA: VISIBILITY AND INVISIBILITY

On the occasion of a collaboration between the La Fenice Theatre, the Bevilacqua la Masa Foundation and the Korean born artist, Kimsooja, a catalogue essay titled *Conditions of Anonymity*, by Jonathan Goodman was reprinted for the exhibition in 2005. In his essay, Goodman describes Kimsooja's artistic career as being:

[...] built upon the notion of the anonymous as a metaphor for the wish to merge with forces and circumstances usually acting against the forthright assertion of self. [...] In the elaborations of her anonymity, [...] Kimsooja presents a sensibility acutely aware of the warring contradictions between her desire for an erasure of self and the kind of resolve necessary to confront the environment she so eloquently, albeit silently, strives against (Goodman 2005, p. 113).

Was sitting on the verandah and not partaking in the city my way of erasing my sense of Indianness? Was I subconsciously 'striving against' my environment? This dichotomy to confront and at the same time maintain anonymity toward India was being acted out subconsciously at an early age.

Exhibited as an 8 channel video titled, *A Needle Woman*, 1999–2001, Kimsooja selected eight cities in the world: Tokyo, Shanghai, Mexico City, London, Delhi, New York, Lagos and Cairo.

In each city she stood still in the middle of the frame with her back to the camera as crowds moved around her, most oblivious to her silent action. It is a powerful strategy used by Kimsooja to be simultaneously absorbed into and at the same time apart from the city in which she stands still. Cities are noisy. Her videos are silent. The silence invites the viewer to consider both Kimsooja's, and our own, sense of anonymity as she is absorbed into the city and at other times, at odds with the environment. In both situations there is a sense of visibility and invisibility operating. Asian art historian and curator, Christina Arum Sok, describes Kimsooja's artistic practice as dealing with globalisation at its core (Sok 2014, para. 2). In her essay, *Kimsooja: A Modern Day Global Nomad Transcending boundaries, re-constructing a global identity* (2014), Sok comments: 'Ultimately Kimsooja is the personification and embodiment of transcending boundaries as well as re-constructing identities beyond limiting categories on binaries, into a new type of cultural hybridity' (2014, Abstract para. 4). In the *A Needle Woman* (1999–2001, 2005, 2009) projects, Kimsooja places herself in different countries. In each she positions herself in the same point of the frame, her back to the viewer facing the cities (rückenfigur composition). We see only her dark hair tied in a long ponytail. The image representing a needle both visually and metaphorically. According to Sok, Kimsooja:

[...] describes herself as a needle that weaves through the different cities and experiences the diversity, building a tapestry of global inter-connectedness. She becomes either an expression of the all-too-familiar global citizen or a stranger/foreigner who does not belong. While presenting this contradiction, she also desires to reconcile "perfect immobility and perpetual motion," wanting to exist simultaneously everywhere and nowhere (Sok 2014, para. 2).

In my family's third floor Colaba flat, the verandah, which separated inside from outside is where I set the conditions for finding my own place and space. It is no coincidence that for the first six years of my life, this verandah was the space that permitted me to sing uninhibited and to occupy the contradictory feelings of being a part and apart from the world. Sok describes how Kimsooja's work:

[...] transcends its singular purpose as an aesthetic object, in order to enhance our understanding of our position in the world. She provides us with insight as to how art is sincerely intertwined with our own existence and experience of the world (Sok 2014, *Transcending Boundaries*, para. 1).

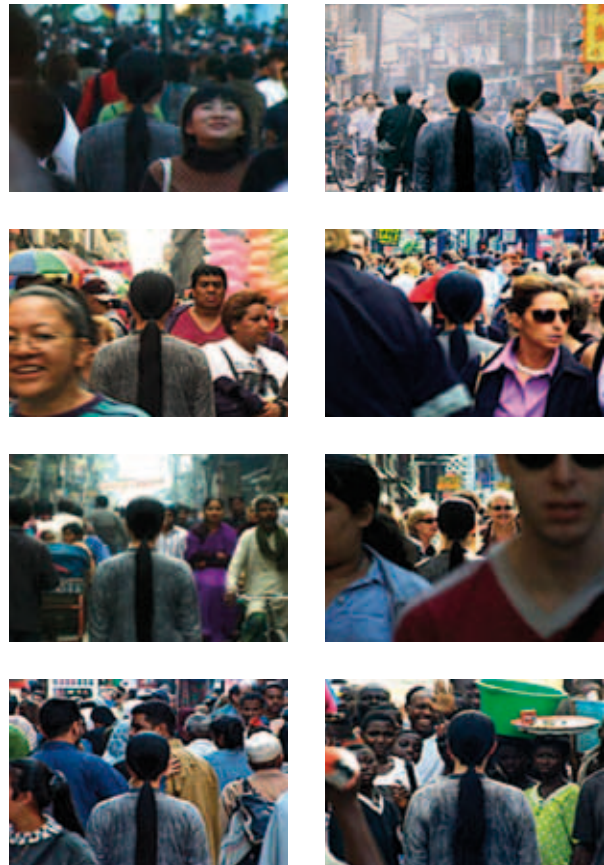


Fig. 438 | Kimsooja, 1999–2001, *A Needle Woman* (video stills), 8 channel video installation, silent, 6.33 loop.

Intertwined experiences from the world and art practice are what many artists draw from and certainly are what provide a rich resource for this research.

■ THIRDSPLACE: INCLUSIVE SPACE THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF LIVING

As I recall and reflect on the smell of the sea from Colaba, it carries with it so much weight. There is a heaviness to history with its locational positions, truths, half told stories, incidences and slippages—when facts become fictional and fiction becomes easier to fathom than truth. As Rushdie has commented, ‘History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings’ (Rushdie 1992, p. 25). As I write and recall my own life stories, which are intrinsically related to the research, I question my own reliability and my own filters. As I use fact, fiction and memory, I have to trust in the authenticity of my own voice. This is how I interpret cultural geographer, Edward Soja’s idea of a ‘thirdspace’; as an inclusive space that encompasses thinking about and interpreting socially produced space. Soja’s idea of a ‘thirdspace’ is interesting to my research because its very definition is indeterminate, yet inclusive. Soja makes us think about geography and history as interactive and intertwined as well as being real and imagined. Space becomes a dynamic field of continuous change through lived experience. As I recall my stories and remember things forgotten (or not thought about consciously), I struggle to align geography and history authentically. Perhaps I too will give into Soja’s idea of a ‘thirdspace’. After all, is it not this ‘in-betweenness’, which I seek to open up, re-voke, re-vise, re-edit, re-call and re-examine as a sense of living in the world as an Anglo Indian?

■ THE DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY

Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in her *TedGlobal 2009* talk titled, *The danger of a single story* (2009), discusses how single stories determine how we think about others and how others think about us. She begins with her own experiences of growing up reading British literature, which she could not identify with ... because she had not discovered African writers. She cites examples of people around her, and of herself, creating a set idea of who people are, based on how they are portrayed in writing or the media. As her awareness and recognition of her own African cultural identity matures, she comes to recognise how the ‘single story of Africa ultimately comes ... from Western literature’ (Adichie 2009, 6.34 minutes). Adichie identifies how the single story directly relates to power: ‘How they are told, who tells them, when they’re told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power’ (ibid., 9.36 minutes). Adding, ‘Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person’ (ibid., 10.11 minutes).

Adichie advocates for the importance of engaging with many stories from many voices and vantage points, both positive and negative stories, to avoid a singular form of representation. She comments how ‘The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story’ (ibid., 12.56 minutes).

There are many parallel stories I can identify with in the context of the Anglo Indian community and its sense of developing a cultural identity. They too were written into representation through English literature in derogatory ways, reducing the community to negative stereotypes.

■ IMPOSSIBLE GEOGRAPHIES

In the essay, *Modernism's Possible Geographies* (cited in Doyle, L & Winkiel, L 2005), academic and writer, Jessica Berman, discusses Leopold Bloom, the protagonist in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), and his connection to water throughout the novel, referring to the 'geography of water as a global phenomenon, one that makes distinctions between landmasses, or between center and periphery, moot' (Berman 2005, p. 289). The sea is vast. It is many things to different people. In the context of my PhD, the sea is a division and a link, a spatialised field of narratives, both past and imagined future, which holds complicated stories of migration to an adopted homeland in Australia and a longing for my ancestral home in India. This doubling of experience mirroring my dual ethnicity. Both aspects become negotiated experiences of claiming space as home, imagined and real. For me, the sea is the space between that connects human-landscape-time interrelations and, which underpins constructions of social identity, race and belonging.

In the same essay, Berman quotes a scene from Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* (1928) to express the interrelatedness of geography, time and the *longue durée* so as to 'escape the constraints of borders' (ibid., p. 296).

[Orlando] walked very quickly uphill through ferns and hawthorn bushes, startling deer and wild birds, to a place crowned by a single oak tree. It was very high, so high indeed that nineteen English counties could be seen beneath, and on clear days thirty, or forty perhaps, if the weather was very fine. Sometimes one could see the English Channel, wave reiterating upon wave. Rovers could be seen and pleasure boats gliding on them; and galleons setting out to sea... To the east there were spires of London... and perhaps on the very sky line, when the wind was in the right quarter, the craggy top and serrated edge of Snowdon herself showed mountainous among the clouds (Woolf 1928, cited in Berman 2005).

Berman points out the fantastical nature of Woolf's claims, noting that the landmarks mentioned could not physically be seen from this vantage point. I am interested in how cultural geography accounts for the human experience in the context of landscape, which becomes particularly relevant in negotiating one's sense of place in relation to mobility and globalism. In Woolf's novel, Orlando doesn't age, changes from a man to a woman and encounters a range of characters across history. The relevance of Woolf's novel to my research, is in the idea of identity and place as transgressive. Orlando transcends time, space and gender, allowing the narrative to relate across time and space simultaneously, rather than statically, accounting for multiple vantage points and possibilities. Orlando has to adjust to changing circumstances. In my mind, he/she could be cast as the Anglo Indian, negotiating identity in the context of shifting boundaries and circumstances across history and geography.

■ RÜCKENFIGUR

Returning to the image on my computer screen (see 2.3) ... is a photograph I took because at a certain time each day, I was in the habit of sitting and looking out to the Arabian Sea, reflecting my six year old self. It was time spent daydreaming and imagining. Each day I began to notice an elderly Sikh man in white shirt, white trousers and white turban, as he was in my direct view as I looked out to sea. He sat on the edge of a fishing boat, opened his black umbrella and looked out to sea. Rather than looking out to sea too, I began to look at this man looking out to sea. The subject in my photograph became this man looking out to sea. The rückenfigur composition I used in the photograph of this man, was often used in 19th century European painting. *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1817–18), by Casper David Friedrich, is exemplary of this technique, where the figure is seen from the rear and placed in the foreground of the picture plane.

Wanderer above the Sea Fog (1817–18), is an allegorical painting, which engages with the Germanic tradition of Romantic landscape painting. In the painting, a 19th century gentleman stands assured on a precarious rocky precipice, in a classic rückenfigur pose, contemplating the smallness of man in relation to the greatness of Nature and God, a theme central to German Romanticism. On the website for the *Hamburg Kunsthalle*, where the painting is part of the museum's permanent collection, art historian Jenks Howoldt, describes the figures in Friedrich's paintings as 'representing the loneliness of the modern subject placed in a majestic landscape, as well as the failure of man in a hostile natural environment' (Howoldt n.d., para. 9). I was particularly struck by Howoldt's phrase 'failure of man', when I embarked on making the photograph *Elsewhere* (2013). But failure not in the context of the natural environment, but in man's own sense of being in terms of power and conquest.



Fig. 439 | Friedrich, CD 1817–18, *Wanderer in a Sea of Fog*, [oil on canvas, 98.4 x 74.8 cm], Hamburg Kunsthalle, Germany.

■ LOATHING AND DESIRE: *ELSEWHERE* (2013)

Elsewhere (2013), is a large staged photographic work. The photograph was initially part of three photographs I had planned to make and show together. However, when I printed the images it was clear that the original intention to show the photographs as a suite, had been superseded by new readings in each. I therefore separated them into three distinct photographic works. *Elsewhere* (2013) is a photograph of myself dressed in the same suit as *P.O.S.H* (2013) and *Bespoke* (2013). All three photographs were shot in the same location, Fryerstown, Victoria, where I live.

The photograph *Elsewhere* (2013) makes reference to ideas of power and world domination, themes central to the Imperialist project. Drawing on tropes from *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1817–18), the protagonist in *Elsewhere* (2013), stands on the precipice of a man-made stone wall; one foot on a model globe, holding a eucalyptus branch covered in shimmering Swarovski crystals, surveying the landscape of the central goldfields of Victoria, Australia. He wears sunglasses to filter the harsh glare of the Australian light, so he can focus his gaze out to a distant point far across the horizon. His stance and sharp attire do not seem, in anyway, to represent failure. Unlike the figure in Friedrich's painting, the protagonist in *Elsewhere* (2013) does not ponder the world existentially, but rather, references colonial conquest ... mimicking the Imperialist perhaps? The landscape becomes the space to conquer, and to claim and own. The figure in *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1817–18), stands almost in silhouette, blending into the rock formation on which he stands. In Friedrich's painting, the landscape feels bigger, both symbolically and geographically than the figure, which is the intention. In *Elsewhere* (2013), the figure



Fig. 440 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Elsewhere* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl paper 285 gsm; 110 cm x 148 cm (framed)].



Fig. 441 | D'Costa, R 2011, preliminary test photograph for *Elsewhere* (highlighting the compass), on location at Fryerstown, Victoria. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

is closer to the front of the picture frame, dominating the landscape. Although not visible in the photograph, the protagonist wears a compass around his neck helping to locate his place in the world ... or perhaps plotting his next conquest.

The model globe in the photograph makes symbolic reference to the British Empire's control and domination of the world. Historian and writer Stuart Laycock's book, *All the Countries We've Ever Invaded: And the Few We Never Got Round To* (2014), estimates that ninety percent of the world's countries may have been invaded at some time in history by Britain. In this context, the drunken words of Mr 'Whisky' Sisodia in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) ring very true: 'The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they do do don't know what it means' (cited in Bhabha 2004, p. 9).

In academic, David Morgan's essay, *The Discipline of Looking* (cited in Kimssoja *To Breathe* 2005), he mentions how the rückenfigur device is used:

[it] lures viewers into the painting, directing their vision and pulling them to the picture plane, which tends to vanish as they compare themselves to the figure, perhaps even regarding the figure as another version of themselves, or their fictive counterpart within the work of art (p. 57).

In *Elsewhere* (2013), the viewer becomes both externalised witness to the event and complicit in the act of claiming (colonisation), as in Australian settler history. I employed two photographers for the project. The main photographer captured the image for the final artwork using specific lighting and filters to give the photograph a sense of the theatrical. The second photographer was used to capture the event as documentation but also to bear witness to the authenticity of the event—the photographs becoming evidence, in case historical facts get skewed. I deliberately had photographs taken with the external photographic equipment in the picture frame as a way of inscribing the space and the event as authentic—the technology will capture the objective truth.



Fig. 442 | D'Costa, R 2011, preliminary test photograph for *Elsewhere*, on location at Fryerstown, Victoria. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

The photograph can be seen as a reenactment, or metaphor, of conquest. In this context, the Australian landscape (in the photograph) the protagonist claims (metaphorically) was never 'nobody's land' (Terra Nullius). What makes this idea of Terra Nullius even more insidious is that British colonisation policies were framed in a way that acknowledged an Indigenous presence, but justified land taking by noting that the Aboriginal people were too primitive to be owners and sovereigns, because the British government could not recognise or negotiate with an identifiable hierarchy or political order (*Documents of Reconciliation*, Howard 1998, para. 2).

The meaning in *Elsewhere* (2013) is intentionally slippery and layered. As I have noted, the viewer can read this work as a metaphor, or cliché, a pun or ironic, in relation to colonial conquests. The globe, with the protagonist's foot resting on it, could be read as symbolising total control and domination. Maps and cartography were often used as imperialising strategies to claim, by registering empty space, therefore erasing any form of acknowledgement, of pre-existing knowledge, persons or culture (or acknowledging a presence perceived as being primitive).

Conversely, can we read the image as claiming back territory and place by the Anglo Indian, mimicking and at the same time parodying, the quintessential colonialist Englishman? The protagonist can also come to represent the colonial male settler as the ambivalent figure. A figure who is both agent and beneficiary of the Imperial enterprise but 'not a full member of the Imperial club back home' (Lawson and Tiffin 1994, p. 231). The settler male sits in the in-between space, which the Anglo Indian also occupies.

He is both mediator and mediated, excluded from the unmediated authority of Empire and from the unmediated authenticity of the indigene. From this half-empowered limbo he fetishises yet disparages a Europe, which in turn depreciates him while envying his energy, innocence, and enterprise. Simultaneously he infantilises, displaces, and desires the indigene completing the hierarchy of parallel loathing and desire. (Lawson and Tiffin 1994, p. 231).

The protagonist in my photograph becomes indeterminate in terms of meaning, depending on who he is and what he represents. He wears the suit of the 'in-between man' becoming both coloniser and colonised. In this context, the protagonist and the artwork become dialogic, perpetuating an internalised dialogue extending in multiple directions, informing and being informed by past, present and future events, each influenced and influencing the next. Ultimately it is the interconnected space of multiplicity that the protagonist, the Anglo Indian artist, occupies as an extended experience of actual and imagined self.

The title of the photograph suggests the protagonist in the photograph imagines a place 'elsewhere' he cannot articulate or inhabit. Ultimately, *Elsewhere* (2013) becomes a space of displacement and un-belonging. A space somewhere across a distant horizon—home perhaps—a fractured space across platforms and landscapes, which operates in ways that can only be understood in a nonsynchronous and atemporal way, mapping topologies with indeterminate borders and boundaries occurring simultaneously in time and space. Academic, Jean Fisher, writing on belonging and the experience of cultural dislocation says:

[...] for the diasporian subject dislocated from his or her place of origin and the indigenous person disposed by colonial occupation, hard-won citizenship rights often do not imply cultural belonging to national identity or the prevailing symbolic order; cultural identity is often imposed by forces outside the self, and the psychosocial dimensions of identification are fraught with ambivalence and contradiction. Roots are already rhizomatic and multilingual; the self is already doubly or even multiply inscribed with the other. 'Here' is also 'elsewhere' (Fisher as cited in Boullata, 2008, p. 62).

Fisher's comment on the diasporic subject articulates both the figure and landscape in *Elsewhere* (2013). The figure dislocated from his origins, and the landscape, become both real and imagined. He both belongs and does not, depending on who he is and what he is representing. The photograph attempts to reveal and conceal multiple layers of content.

■ KIMSOOJA LOOKING AT THE YAMUNA RIVER

Rückenfigur is used often and to great effect by the Korean artist, Kimsooja, in her videos: *A Needle Woman* (1999–2001, 2005, 2009) series and *A Laundry Women, Yamuna River, India* (2000). The video, *A Laundry Women, Yamuna River, India* (2000), shows a woman (the artist) in the foreground facing the river with her back to the viewer. Rivers in India, such as the Yamuna, are often both sacred and profane. They necessitate the everyday rituals of washing, drinking, defecating, as well as the spiritual acts of cleansing.

In the video, a solitary figure stands looking at the river. The video is 10.30 minutes in duration and looped. It seems like a long time to watch a river and a video work, as little appears to change. We may ask what is her role here at the river? The title suggests a menial, lower caste role, which Kimsooja makes egalitarian. She becomes the dhobi wallah.⁴ Everything in the video seems still, as if we are looking at a photograph or painting. Kimsooja has set the camera perspective at a slightly elevated vantage point so the viewer looks down on the figure and the river. The river becomes a field of nondescript tonal greys. We cannot see a horizon. Little changes, in the picture frame. Except after a while one notices delicate shifts in light and atmosphere, and the moving river. Fragments move in and out of the picture frame silently ... there is no sound. Kimsooja, asks the viewer to look at her looking and in doing so, questions the very act of looking. The distinction between I and you dissolves in the act of looking. What am I and you looking at? The question folds in and out. I (the viewer) become Kimsooja and Kimsooja becomes the river. Conversely, the river becomes Kimsooja and Kimsooja becomes the viewer.

Curator Barbara Matilsky's essay quotes Kimsooja's experience during the making of the video: 'I was completely confused ... [about] whether it is the river which is running and moving or myself' (Matilsky 2003, para. 4). Matilsky discusses how the artist's perceptions of her body to the river were 'turned upside down [becoming] immersed in and at one with the water' (ibid., para. 4). Kimsooja wants her viewers to experience what she experiences. Like the river and life, the flow is back and forth, in and out. As she explains, 'That is why my body is facing against the viewer. Look at what I look at ...' (ibid., para. 7). The object and subject distinction is transcended. Shimmering surfaces like water, lend themselves to acts of transcendence, in both a spiritual and religious sense. Both Roni Horn in *Saying Water* (2001), and Kimsooja in *A Laundry Woman, Yumana River, India* (2000), remind us of the amorphous form of a river (water) and how one can both find and lose oneself in this aqueous and indeterminate space.

■ P.O.S.H. (2013)

For this research, I developed a photographic artwork titled *P.O.S.H.* (2013), which engaged with my relationship to water. I took a range of images during the photographic shoot, eventually selecting a wide view of the landscape with a figure standing on the edge of the picture frame looking out to the landscape.



Fig. 443 | Kimsooja, 2000, *A Laundry Woman, Yamuna River* (video still), India, single channel performance video 10.30 min. loop, silent.

⁴ According to *The Concise New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, dhobi wallah is defined as 'a native washerman serving the military. Of Anglo-Indian military origin', Dalzell and Victor 2014, p. 234. In common knowledge, dhobi wallah is known as the washerman in India.

However, what became essential in the final image was the water itself, as a shimmering space, almost unreal in its physicality. I cropped the image removing any sense of location so the space becomes an indeterminate field.

The image of the shimmering water seems to resemble the image of white noise on a television screen. I liked this idea that the image could be either shimmering water or white noise from a technological device, as both images seem to uncannily allude to a space for contemplation. The figure is central in the space of the picture frame looking at the water. I printed the image as an elongated panorama to convey a sense of vastness of space. As such, the water could be located anywhere and is rendered universal. Ironically, it was actually shot in central Victoria, in the middle of a drought. My intention was to achieve a sense of theatrical light in the photograph, as if it were removed from reality.

The title *P.O.S.H.* (2013) refers to the idea of class and status. *Posh* is a colloquial word used to distinguish a person from a high class. The word was derived from sea travel, where the privileged class could select the best part of the ship for their seaward journey: Port / Outward / Starboard / Homeward. The Anglo Indian is conscious of class structure, which was so important to the British as a way to distinguish difference and superiority. Anglo Indians aspired to be part of this structure, but knew they did not belong or would never be accepted at the rank they desired—*posh-ness*. They desired all the privileges associated with this higher rank, perhaps because initially, Anglo Indian children, born of English officer ranks, were given all the privileges English children would have received back in England. Their sense of later insecurity perhaps based on their indeterminate and shifting social classification.

The artwork *P.O.S.H.* (2013) raises many questions. What is this Indian man dressed in a woolen country style, English suit doing here in central Victoria in the heat of summer? His attire is unsuitable for this landscape, suggesting he does not belong in this setting. His place feels historical, not present, as if he has somehow been transported into a future state for which he has not prepared. What is he looking at or into? Is he thinking about his past, his present state or his future? (Whatever that is?) Is he thinking about life or death? His presence in the photograph is very formal. What is he preparing for or is he simply giving in to the beautiful shimmering surface of the water, and like Kimsooja and Horn note, becoming indistinguishable from the water?

What becomes articulated in the artwork is the ambivalent, contradictory circumstances and a 'doubleness', of belonging and not belonging, a state the Anglo Indian internalises, regardless of where he is located in the world. This process of miscognition within the context of identification, or specifically



Fig. 444 | D'Costa, R 2011, preliminary test photograph for *P.O.S.H.* on location at Fryerstown, Victoria. Image courtesy of Julie Millowick.

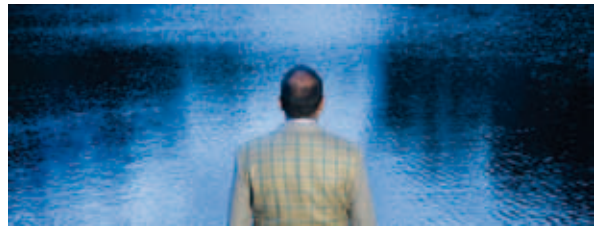


Fig. 445 | D'Costa, R 2013, *P.O.S.H.* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle Fine Art Pearl paper 285 gsm; 148 cm x 60 cm (unframed)].

his own sense of identity, creates a state of constant uncertainty and therefore, perpetual deferral for the Anglo Indian. He cannot decide where he belongs in the world because historically this decision has been made for him, by the British and by Indians. He has no choice but to stare into the indeterminate space of water, as a way of claiming his sense of a physical, psychological and social territory and identity.

■ RETURNING TO WATER

Returning to the beginning of the second reflective account (see 2.3) ... I never saw the Sikh man's face. Not that seeing his face would explain his presence at Goa. Looking at the image on my computer screen and recalling my experience, I began to think about what histories the sea held for this solitary figure and what was behind this ritual he seemed to respect and honour each day? What did he see in our shared shimmering sea? In what ways were our histories connected? What actual or remembered histories brought him to this point in time? His dress code suggested his home would be the Punjab region in India, which borders Pakistan. If so, he would know about borders and partition because this region was hurriedly divided in two at independence (1947), separating land, religions, cultures, communities and people. This act, hastily developed by the British, would see the largest mass migration of people in human history and the civilian deaths of almost a million people (Bates 2003, para. 1).

I ask these questions because I suspect his looking into the sea may have something to do with imagining somewhere else, as a past or present experience and future imagining. Partition, after the British left India, may have shaped, separated and fractured his history. His presence each day on the beach at Goa, looking into a shimmering sea, which too appears fractured, may be his way of bringing him closer to his imagined place of longing and belonging physically and metaphorically. It echoes Gill's desire to stand on the Pilbara coast so each day the sea is a little closer to her Indian forebears (see 1.1). This figure looking at the sea and the idea of belonging, is what interested me. This was our shared connection. Had we both a fractured sense of belonging, as a consequence of colonialism and/or emigration? What real and imagined geography and history were we considering simultaneously as we looked at and *became* the sea? A shimmering space as fractured and unstable, as history and geography can be, making us unsure and uncertain of who we are and where we are in the world; raising contradictory feelings: belonging and (un)belonging, surety and unsureness.

It seems fitting to finish this second story with quotes from artist Roni Horn's monologue, *Saying Water* (2001) (discussed earlier in this chapter). Horn engages with a range of ideas about water, in often poetic ways. What I am particularly interested in is the way Horn's idea of the strange feeling of a confused state one experiences when looking at water, where time and space, lightness and weight, nearness and distance, collapse and dissolve, and where the idea of self and identity sit in a state of evolution.

Can the river [or the sea/water] dissolve your identity? Just standing near it? Just standing near by and watching it? ... Confused? Lost? Larger expanses of water are like deserts. No landmarks, no differences to distinguish here from there. If you don't know where you are can you know who you are? Just tumult everywhere, endlessly. Tumult modulating into another tumult all over and without end. The change is so constant, so pervasive, so relentless that identity, place, scale, all measures lessen, weaken, eventually disappear. The more time you spend around this water, the more faint your memories of measure become. I wander in my thoughts. I go places. Water is lubricant to other places. Water is lubricant to other places. It dilutes gravity when you're in it. It reduces friction when you are around it. Almost any form of water; rivers, lakes, oceans, even sinks will do. My mind roams freely, breezily near it. My mind

takes me backward and forward. Time has no direction near water. Water is lubricant to other places; it catalyzes memory and aspiration. Time has no direction near water (Horn 2001).

2.4 REFLECTIVE ACCOUNT 3: THE STORY OF *BRAD* (2010)

Brad (2010) is the title of an artwork I made when I first commenced this research. At the time, I did not think it would play a role in my PhD. However, it became important, not because of the content, but rather because of the methods I employed in making the work and how the artwork evolved out of a lived experience. The processes and materials I used were significantly different and removed from my previous artistic practice, which had focused primarily on painting. Making the artwork *Brad* (2010) provided an opportunity to reconsider processes, materials and formal outcomes in my art practice. This shift in a studio method, set the conditions I would use in all the PhD art projects and resulting artworks. This shift initially felt destabilising and precarious ... I was using a range of processes and forms with which I was not as familiar. However, it felt liberating, as if I could consider the appropriateness of material, processes, methods and forms, in relation to content, in my research. It was the beginning of a multi-disciplinary practice-led research, which was to include objects, drawing, painting, installation, video and photography.

I also allowed real life narratives to be used as content for the artwork in discursive ways. It made me consider the relation between fact and fiction, and how facts sometimes felt like fiction. In conversation with Pulitzer Prize winning writer, Geraldine Brooks, newspaper person Virginia Trioli asked her how she managed to negotiate the relationship between historical facts, and myths about her subject, David, in her book, *The Secret Chord* (2015). Brooks responded: ‘... he shimmers in the magical area between history and myth’⁵ (*ABC News 24* 2015, television program, Trioli, Melbourne, 10 November).

As the narrative of my artwork *Brad* (2010) unfolded, at times it seemed like art imitated life and at other times, as if life imitated art. The story felt as if it was inhabiting that magical space to which Brooks alludes as shimmering because the facts behind the story seemed fictitious. It became difficult to differentiate between the two.

I also explored the ideas of artists Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset, in their project, *Tomorrow* (2014), at the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum. In an interview with the then Director of Programming at the V&A Museum, Damien Whitemore, Dragset comments on how they (Elmgreen and Dragset) get their ideas from daily life, where anything may inspire them (Whitemore 2014, para. 5). They discuss how they designed their studio in a way so as to ‘mix private lives with the more work-based activities, where the transitions between your private personal life and your public image becomes kind of blurred’ (ibid., para. 2). This made me aware that my research was going to be discursive. It would potentially happen anywhere and at anytime and I would have to stay attentive.

Tomorrow (2014), by Elmgreen and Dragset is an artwork that comprises written text published as a manuscript for a film, and a series of rooms in the textile galleries of the V&A redesigned to look like the film set for the script. Elmgreen says:

‘Tomorrow’ is almost like a film set from a not yet realized movie. It could be a Visconti or a Bergman movie. A domestic setting inhabited by a fictional character, about whom we have made a whole script.

5 Geraldine Brooks speaking on the ABC, News 24, 10 November 8.45 am.

Our starting point was creating his home with all the objects and artefacts and artworks, furniture included [...] (ibid., para. 9).

When commencing the PhD, I had a prior commitment to an exhibition titled, *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*, curated by the School of Art, Gallery Coordinator, RMIT University, as part of the Midsumma Celebrating Queer Culture Festival in Melbourne, 2010. I had an idea for the show, but was busy with other projects so just let the idea sit. I had planned a trip to Seattle and to New York in November/December 2009. I stayed with a very good friend and artist. She was married, with a child, and had lived in Seattle for a number of years. When I arrived in Seattle,

the first thing she mentioned was that my timing to visit could not have been better. Her husband had nearly died. He had been in hospital for weeks having been revived on three separate occasions. During this ordeal a range of secrets and truths, for years concealed, were now being revealed. When I met her husband at their home, he was so thin that it was hard to imagine he could support his own weight.

One day I noticed a photograph on their refrigerator, of a very handsome man with a young child. After a series of questions it turned out that the picture was of my friend's husband and his son, from a previous marriage. I could not see any form of resemblance between the person in the photograph and the person standing in front of me that day. Before I could stop myself I said, '*you were so handsome*'. He laughed at both my immediate embarrassment and I suspect his own selfconsciousness, considering what he looked like now. He acknowledged that he was handsome (as many people had told him this throughout his life) and then added that people often mistook him for being gay ... I laughed in a slightly uneasy way as I could not quite work out the context for the statement. He continued telling me that when he was young, his cousin, who was a few years older, would often dress him up as a girl and photograph him. I felt unsure what to make of this story. It felt as if it had double meanings and innuendos. I said that I would love to see the photograph. I wasn't sure I actually wanted to, but out of politeness, I felt I should be interested. It was clear he was a very interesting man with a colourful and fascinating past. He seemed to trust me almost immediately, probably because of my long friendship with his wife. It was a difficult time for them, as the revelations, which had come out with his hospitalisation, had reached a point where they agreed that they would separate. There were logistics they had to work through. In a strange way my presence seemed necessary as both support and relief for this family. It was strange being in such a personal and intimate situation, which was also charged with an undercurrent of impending upheaval.

Near the end of my visit we were invited to a Thanksgiving dinner at their friends. After two weeks I left my friend in Seattle. From there, I went to New York. I kept thinking about my friend and the complexity of her situation. I was also beginning to think about this work I needed to make for the exhibition back in Melbourne. By now I just wanted to withdraw from the show. I really wanted to get my head space into my PhD. I felt that conceptually I could not make any connection between the PhD and the premise for this exhibition to which I had committed. While in New York, I received an email from my friend with an attachment. The attachment was an image of young 'girl' with a fur hat, blue clip-on earrings and a blouse pulled down below her shoulders. She posed seductively on the edge of a cane chair, with a hand knitted shawl draped over her lap.



Fig. 446 | Elmgreen and Dragset, 2014, *Tomorrow* (installation view), Victoria and Albert Museum, Textile Galleries.

I could not make out the age of the person in the photograph. However, she appeared too young to be photographed in this sexualised way. Yet, there was a relaxed, calm, self confidence evident in the posture of the girl. She seemed to be in control of the situation. In the background scene was a painting, which may have been a Renoir reproduction, with expressive brushstrokes. The painting seemed to be hanging on a faux wood panelled wall. To the right of the painting, was a crucifix. The photograph was clearly staged for the camera. Her gaze was slightly to the left of centre, where most likely the camera was set up. The photograph had a cream border around all four sides. I do not know how big the original print of the image was. I realised I was looking at the image my friend's husband described to me in Seattle. My friend had found the original photograph. The friends we had Thanksgiving with had scanned the original photograph, creating another border around the original border. It was a deeply compelling photograph. I felt intrigued and at the same time a little uncomfortable looking at it as I was not sure what to make of the whole situation. What had started as an aside conversation, had built momentum. That night I kept going over the story in my head trying to recall the whole experience of the trip to Seattle; the multiple narratives that crossed paths over time, the context in which to read the narratives, facts, emotions, innuendo, suggestions, asides, the future, past, and the present. I tried to untangle facts, memories, ethics, life and art. I felt as if I was inside a film script that was playing out in life. There was so much grey space in the stories, which left me destabilised. My art practice and living in the world collided. I decided at that moment I would make an artwork about this experience for the Melbourne exhibition. I jotted down notes trying chronologically to remember the narrative as factually as I could. I immediately sent a text message to my friend and to her husband ... to share with them my idea, and to get their permission to use the photograph and to make an artwork about the experience. I shared with them the awkwardness I felt ethically. They said they explicitly trusted me and granted me permission. I sat up late into the night (early morning) writing a script as a way to begin the process of developing an artwork.

When printing the photograph back in Melbourne, I deliberately created another border around the photograph, as I wanted to show the border in the original photograph, the border when the photograph was scanned, and then my border when I reprinted the image from the scan. I knew the photograph was central to the final work, but I also wanted the story in the artwork.

Originally, I was going to print the text as a letter for the audience to read. However I decided the writing and the photograph needed to carry the same weight in the final presentation. It was the story itself that intrigued me the most. It was a personal story, said in passing, which seemed fractured. It was full of gaps and begged many questions, which I chose not to ask, as the answers did not seem important. No attempt was made to extract any further information from the story than what the narrator wanted to share. Conscious that the iteration of the story was an oratory experience, I was not sure how a printed text of the story would translate. When writing the story, I wanted the main body of the text to be brief. In the final version it is two paragraphs. It is the five footnotes—which read as asides—that provide



Fig. 447 | Photographic documentation of scan from the original photograph taken by 'Norman' of 'Brad', date unknown. I used the scanned image to develop a digital print, which was used in the artwork, *Brad*. Original image courtesy of Helen O'Toole.

background and context to the information in the body of the text. It seemed important to not give too much information away. I wanted the tone to feel conversational and discursive, as it was when it was told to me, except that now, I had become part of the story, and I wanted to ensure this was apparent in the text. I wove my parts into the writing, exposing the process of the narrative developing as a story in itself and as an artwork. At the same time I wanted the story to maintain a sense of the personal, as it entered the public domain.



Fig. 448 | D'Costa, R 2010, *Brad* (detail), [adhesive text, woolen shawl, carpet, thermometer, harmonica, motor, ceramic figurine, framed photograph, lamp, digital clock; dimensions variable], for the exhibition *Secret Files from the Working Men's College*, Project Space School of Art Galleries, RMIT University in conjunction with Midsumma Festival, Melbourne.

To maintain this sense of the personal and the intimate, (for the artwork), I created a tableaux of a living room ... a chair, lamp, rug and side table. On the table was a photograph of my friend and her daughter. Included was a thermometer, harmonica and a small digital clock and compass to remind us of our present time and location in the world. A small ubiquitous ceramic figurine slowly rotated 360 degrees on a mechanised motor. This figure was supposed to be the objective arbitrator in real time, bearing witness to events past, present and future.

After exhibiting *Brad* (2010), I reflected on the methodology and structure I used to make the artwork and realised its importance as a way of thinking about structure, narrative and perhaps even exploring my own personal archive as a way of developing the research.

The work, *Brad* (2010), became crucial as a way to think about narrative, time and materiality. It somehow gave me permission to embrace personal stories as a way to consider memory and identity as a series of files waiting to be explored and examined. The story of *Brad* (2010) is personal. I wanted to ensure that everything I wrote was factual. Remembering stories can be fraught with anxiety and responsibility. Like many stories, the story of *Brad* (2010) unfolded across time and space as human emotional experience: causal, serendipitous and full of happenstance.

2.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

I included these three early pieces of writing (reflective accounts) as they helped form a set of interrelated ideas about my research. The first two pieces were written at a time when I was trying to find correlations between a studio-making practice and a writing practice and where the writing itself could, as Hester noted, become a project in itself (Hester 2007, p. 11), (see 1.1). The writing helped articulate a series of remembered experiences about place and identity. It was an important link between the studio and the writing space.

The third piece of writing further blurs the boundary between experience, writing and a studio process. It makes us aware of noticing the world as present experience, not only as a remembered past. It also brought the use of text as form into the research, as well as using a more multidisciplinary method in the studio. Relationships between methods, processes, form and content in both the writing and the art projects/artworks became more fluid as a result of this artwork.

CHAPTER THREE

SHIFTING GROUNDS—DEFINITIONS, HISTORIES AND CONTESTATIONS

Even the British in India had no precise appreciation of who and what an Anglo-Indian really was (Anthony 2007, p. 1).

The definition and status of Anglo Indians has shifted and changed as a result of British and Indian politics, power and social attitudes. The constitutional definition of Anglo Indian is fixed and limiting, and has outgrown its relevance in contemporary society; it needs to be critically reconsidered allowing for a more discursive and flexible definition.

The period of interest in this chapter extends from the early 17th century, when the British first arrived in India, to their departure at Indian independence in 1947 when waves of Anglo Indians emigrated during the 20th century. This rich and complex period highlights the role of the East India Company, the British Empire and emigration as three distinguishing points in history that directly impacted on the Anglo Indian community because of British and Indian governance decisions, and changing attitudes toward Anglo Indians in Indian and British society, both in India and in England.

It would be an ambitious project to cover in detail, events around these periods, as the field is too large and specialised, and sits outside the scope of this research. However it is important to engage this history in my research as an understanding of the historical roots of the Anglo Indian community contextualises, rationalises and gives gravitas to the narratives Anglo Indians wish to articulate through the telling of their own (his)story. It empowers the community to narrate and navigate the world through self-representation.

The rationale for entering this area of history is based simply on the premise that there would be no Anglo Indian community today if it were not for early adventures by the Europeans and British into India. The legacy of what was created, as a consequence of these maritime adventures, is significant. The attitudes and discourse developed as a result of the meeting of Western and Eastern cultures is deeply complex. Eurocentrism's collision with Eastern attitudes was never straightforward or equal in terms of power. Colonisation brought with it levels of imbalance, discrimination, power, racism and the psychological damage for both the coloniser and colonised (Fanon).

At different stages of this research, I recall going through a range of emotions as I read into, and reflected on, the circumstances of being Anglo Indian. Reading Césaire (1955) and Fanon (1952, 1961), I felt sad and angry regarding the blatant discrimination in colonialism, and colonial language. I wanted to blame, to be angry and to voice this anger. However, for the studio-based research, I employed humour and compassion as strategies to shift my anger about colonial ideas and colonial writing, to ensure that ultimately, the space and voice I brought forward in the artwork would be one of hope and optimism. Four artworks engage ideas and issues raised in this chapter: *Trade* (2013) and *Eat! My Son* (2013), which I discuss in 3.2 Part A; a kinetic sculpture titled *Rumour* (2013), which I discuss in 3.2 Part B; and *Bespoke* (2013), which I discuss at the end of the chapter in 3.2 Part C.

3.1 COMING INTO BEING: DEFINITIONS AND A MERRY-GO-ROUND OF REJECTION AND ACCEPTANCE

The definition of who Anglo Indians are, is contested and problematic—both within and outside the community. Anthony (1964) devotes a chapter to this vexed question, citing a range of differing forms and names for the community throughout its evolution, including Indo-Briton, Eurasian, AngloIndian, Statutory natives of India, Domiciled European, East Indian (Anthony 2007, pp. 1–8). Different terminology was used in different contexts, adding confusion to the term Anglo Indian. British residents in India used the term ‘Eurasians’ to describe people of mixed European and Indian descent. ‘Domiciled European’ was applied to the offspring of Europeans regularly or permanently domiciled in India; the term was also historically used to describe people who were born and raised in India, but who were of British descent. There is a large diaspora of Anglo Indians living in other countries who marry other Anglo Indians and therefore describe themselves as Anglo Indian even if they have never been to or lived in India. There are also mixed Indian/British who don’t associate with being Anglo Indian in terms of a defined community. They see themselves as English-Indian or Australian-Indian, choosing to use their adopted country nationalistically, claiming and identifying with their Indian ethnicity rather than their Anglo Indian race. Finally, there are some people who have chosen not to lay any claim to being Anglo Indian, but rather, make reference to their adopted citizenship.

The Anglo Indian community is recognised as a legitimate, minority group in India. It is also one of the smallest groups, in terms of population, in India. However, it is important to understand that ‘no precise enumeration of Anglo-Indians in India has ever been made. The last census that enumerated them as a distinct category was in 1931, but owing to conflicting definitions of the community and faulty data-gathering methods the official reports were not reliable’ (Gist and Wright 1973, p. 3).

The new *Constitution of India 1949: Article 366(2)* states:

[...] an Anglo Indian means a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India and is or was born within such territory of parents habitually resident therein and not established there for temporary purposes only; [...] (Constituent Assembly 1949).

It is particularly noteworthy that any relationship to the maternal side of progenitors is completely excluded. This exclusion continues to be raised as a point of contention within the community, particularly by academics researching Anglo Indian communities (Blunt 2005, D’Costa 2013, Andrews 2014). Such formal distinctions have created unfair and exclusionary instances of discrimination, socially and

economically. Academic Robyn Andrews puts forward a strong discussion of this point, noting that at the time of writing the definition into the Constitution:

[...] it was probably safe to assume that by giving males certain privileges, females were therefore provided for. More than a century after its composition, this gender bias is a problem (Andrews 2014, p. 23).

Changing the constitutional definition of Anglo Indian is important, not only to include a matriarchal position: the existing definition is limiting and historicises the community as existing at a certain point in time. How can it account for existing diaspora and future generations of offspring who align their culture with being Anglo Indian? Maintaining the status quo with regard to the constitutional definition creates a culture that looks backward and fixes a way of defining themselves through the lens of colonialism.

However, Andrews notes that changing the definition in the constitution is far from unanimous among Anglo Indians (ibid., pp. 26–27). Drawing on her own experiences with New Zealand Maoris, Andrews puts forward a comparative model, which is a more fair and equitable definition that includes a ‘[...] combination of ways of life, that is, culture, and some objectively based ‘proof’ (i.e. descent), and self-identity’ (ibid., p. 29).

For this research, when referring to Anglo Indians, I focus on people of dual, mixed race heritage, specifically British and Indian. When discussing the *Anglo Indian community*, I am always conscious of speaking in general terms. My words can never account for the multifaceted, diverse and individual opinions and views in the community. I do not undertake this research as a way to plead a case for or against the community. Rather, my aim is to examine personal and historical accounts and experiences, as a way to extrapolate situations and circumstances that feed into the formal and conceptual ideas in this practice-led research.

On a personal level, I have always been made aware of my Anglo Indian identity by my parents and their adopting of tropes and social customs relating to the community, such as food, social dances, celebrating religious customs relating to Christianity, dress codes and stories from Anglo Indian lifestyles in India. In this context, Anglo Indians self define their Anglo Indian status as attitudinal more than constitutional. As I grow older, my interest in the community has grown. I am not a member of any Anglo Indian association¹, but I have come to recognise, through my art practice particularly, that there are ways that I think and make art and live in the world, which have always drawn on non occidental knowledge, despite my academic studies occurring very much within an occidental trajectory.

3.2 HISTORY: LOSS AND GAIN FOR THE ANGLO INDIAN COMMUNITY

Part A – The Company (1600–1874)

The influence the East India Company had, in the establishment of the British in India, cannot be underestimated. Its military, political and commercial activities were significant for both British and Indian history. From its inception in the 1600s, it played a central role in the development and establishment of the Imperial project (otherwise known as the British Empire or British Raj).

¹ The Anglo Indian Association has been a stalwart organisation, which works politically, economically and socially to keep the community aware of its history and culture and to stay connected globally. It has official self-organising branches through India, Australia, England and Canada.

It is important to acknowledge the close and often complex relationship of the East India Company to the British government, the princely states of India at the time and its direct involvement with the beginnings of the Anglo Indian community. This tri-partisan relationship would affect and influence the Anglo Indian community, leading to the establishment of traits, customs and attitudes, which still prevail in the Anglo Indian community today. These include issues relating to class, status and prejudices indicative of behaviours during the British Empire particularly, and points to the continued legacy of early colonial thought in contemporary, postcolonial societies.

After developing and consolidating early trading opportunities in India, (prior to establishing the British Empire), the men from the East India Company were faced with the growing problem of how they would live with the Indian people and create a space that was both part of and apart from the local community. The British recognised that they needed the Indian as both work and military force. Over time, as British ruling and working class settled into India, they started to engage with the community by mixing business with pleasure. In the early days of British settlement, it was mostly men from the East India Company who came to India. Many of these men began to develop relationships with Indian women that led to cohabitation and miscegenation. It was not uncommon at this time for a British man to have an Indian mistress.

As the East India Company prospered, the directors of the company recognised the need to create financial incentives (such as the pagoda coins issued by the Company) that supported and encouraged British soldiers to marry and have children with native women, and to christen the new born. This engineered intermarriage policy was perhaps the beginning of the Anglo Indian community (Anthony 2007, p. 12). However, the development of the Anglo Indian community was very much established along military and civil lines, rather than through trading. As the territories of the Company grew they needed protection against the Dutch, French and Portuguese, who also had their own trading and colonial ambitions. The East India Company also had to negotiate fighting between Indian clans and tribes, supporting particular sides based on their own economic interests. This constant fighting and warring between various factions would fall to the growing Anglo Indian community, who played central roles in British and Indian armies in India. By 1750, the Anglo Indian population had grown and outnumbered the British population in India (ibid., p. 17). This increase in population caused concern for the British as it was seen as a threat to their power.

Forms of prejudice toward the East India Company always existed in Britain. The relationship between the British government, the governors of the East India Company and the men who manned the ships that sailed to India, was clouded by prejudice as a result of the strict hierarchy of the English class structure. Class division and moral correctness were in conflict with the adventurous, often unscrupulous behaviour and vast amounts of money, profit and power the company could wield. In John Keay's narrative history, he states:

A hundred years ago the high-minded rulers of British India regarded merchants as a lesser breed in the hierarchy of imperial pedigree. To 'gentlemen in trade', as to servants, ladies, natives, [and] dogs, the brass-studded doors of Bombay's and Calcutta's more exclusive clubs were closed. Like social climbers raising the ladder behind them, the paragons of the Raj preferred to forget that but for the 'gentlemen of trade' of the East India Company there would have been no British India (Keay 1993, p. xix).

If the attitude and language was not denigrating enough, what would eventually be particularly frowned upon in Britain, was that 'its servants were believed to have betrayed their race by begetting a half-caste tribe of Anglo-Indians ...' (ibid.). It was this prevailing attitude in Britain, which underscores the racist attitudes toward the Anglo Indian community.

However, Anthony paints a very different picture for the Anglo Indian. He points out that during the early stages of cohabitation between English men and Indian women, there were few negative attitudes regarding such unions, noting that the 'origin and growth of the Community have been along quite formal and legitimate lines' (Anthony 2007, p. ii). He goes on to add that, in these early periods of British occupancy (1639–1791), there was little, if any, discrimination between British and Anglo Indians, adding that at these stages:

The Anglo-Indian sons of British fathers were taken freely into the covenanted ranks of the British services and reached the highest positions of trust and responsibility. Ninety per cent of Britons, including the most highly placed, married Anglo-Indian women (*ibid.*, p. iv).

It is difficult to distinguish the role that the British class system played in this equation, particularly given that Anthony refers to the 'most highly placed' British. This implies that perhaps distance between England and India allowed for a loosening of civility and moral codes, as much as class distinction (for the time being).

Anthony goes on to describe these times as 'the days of prosperity and great influence for the community' (*ibid.*) where the community had 'become perhaps the most wealthy and influential community in India. Members of the community filled the highest posts in the civil and military departments. There was no discrimination, either social, economic or racial' (*ibid.*, p. 19). From Anthony's accounts it would seem that the Anglo Indian community aligned itself with the British (in India), who seemed to accept them into their ranks. Anthony also notes that the Indian population treated the Anglo Indian community 'not only with respect but even with deference' (*ibid.*). It is worth noting (as Anthony points out), that like the British population, the Anglo Indians had restrictions placed on them, such as not being allowed to acquire agricultural land or to live outside certain parameters around towns and settlements (*ibid.*, p. 18). From these accounts it would appear the Indian community aligned the Anglo Indian with the British, seeing them as distinct from their own (in spite of the fact that Anglo Indians were born in India), associating them with subjugation and colonial rule. Again, from Anthony's accounts it would seem that the Anglo Indian was content to accept their aligned status with the British.

It is again also worth noting that no mention is made of opportunities for the female offspring from such unions. It is unclear what status they received within the community, from Anthony's accounts. However, as prejudices grew toward the community:

[...] women probably drew a disproportionate amount of British hostility aimed at the Anglo-Indian community precisely because they were seen as the principal and most visible 'mimics', constantly holding up a mirror in which Europeans imagined themselves parodied (Caplan 2001, p. 65).

The situation for the Anglo Indian would change as concerns grew between the British government and company directors back in England, and the growing British colony in India. From early settlement by men from the East India Company, to the establishment of the British Empire in India, the Anglo Indian community would become a pawn in the shifting circumstances that destabilised them socially, culturally, politically and economically. Anglo Indians, caught in-between two cultures, attempted to manoeuvre in this space to make the advantage theirs. Becoming more Indian when necessary and more British when necessary. However, it is important to note that the power to choose was not always theirs.

As the prosperity and influence of the community grew, as did the actual numbers of Anglo Indians, so too did prejudices from Britain. The British, as a result of misguided fears, implemented measures that

excluded the Anglo Indian community from entering officer ranks of both the military and civil services, or from going overseas for further study. Consequently, many of the men, with 'soldiering in their blood, offered their swords, forged in the military traditions of their fathers, to the leading Indian princes' (Anthony 2007, p. v). Anthony cites the 'first betrayal' by the British toward the Anglo Indian community as a result of friction between the directors of the East India Company in England and the Company men in India. There was a belief that positions of responsibility and influence should be bestowed on the relatives and sons of shareholders in England, rather than on persons born in India or on persons 'with an intermingling of Indian blood' (ibid., p. 19). This growing negativity and the nervous attitude of the directors of the company back in England toward the growing Anglo Indian community, (led in parts by racist attitudes, greed and power), led to the directors commissioning a report by Lord Valentia (*Voyages* 1811, over 4 volumes). Citing references to the far off crisis in Haiti with the Mulattos², Valentia reported the following:

The most rapidly accumulating evil of Bengal is the increase of half-caste children. They are forming the first step to colonisation by creating a link of union between the English and the natives. In every country where this intermediate caste has been permitted to rise, it has ultimately tended to its ruin. Spanish-America and San Domingo are examples of this fact. Their increase in India is beyond calculation: and though possibly there may be nothing to fear from the sloth of the Hindus, and the rapidly declining consequence of Musalmans, yet it may be justly apprehended that this tribe may hereafter become too powerful for control. Although they are not permitted to hold office under the Company, yet they act as clerks in almost every mercantile house; and many of them are annually sent to England to receive the benefit of a European education. With numbers in their favour, with a close relationship to the natives, and without an equal proportion of the pusillanimity and indolence which is natural to them, what may not in future time be dreaded from them! (Valentia, cited in Anthony 2007, p. 22)

Subsequent to this report, immediate orders were implemented that discriminated against the Anglo Indian community as a way to control their growing numbers, and potential influence and domination. Noteworthy, is the discriminatory language Valentia feels he is at liberty to use in his disdain for both Indians and Anglo Indians. It is clear that the engrained negative attitude of the British toward Indians and Anglo Indians, was a general rule. Essential and central to this fear, was a growing belief that the Anglo Indian community would become 'too powerful to control'. Almost immediately, the social standing and employment opportunities for the Anglo Indian community diminished. While Anthony puts particular emphasis on Valentia's report, Valerie ER Anderson in her doctoral thesis (2011), cites earlier examples of ongoing British concerns in relation to Anglo Indians and racial purity (Anderson 2011, p. 20). She also cites Anglo Indian writer, Cedric Dover (1920–1962), who believed that drawing on the experiences of the mulattos in Haiti was simply a cover by the shareholders of the company to ensure employment and wealth for their own families and relatives (ibid, p. 18). Regardless of whether it was Valentia's report that led to discrimination toward the Anglo Indian community, what is important, as Anthony attests, is:

The complex of greed, baseless fear and brazen ingratitude was to be the guiding motive of policy towards the [Anglo Indian] Community in the next few years (Anthony 2007, p. 19).

2 Mulattos generally are described as persons of mixed European and Negro blood. It is a phrase that historically relates to the European, African, Caribbean and American experiences of mixed race persons. It is a phrase that was often used pejoratively.

■ MOUNDS OF SPICE AND COLOUR *TRADE* (2013) AND *EAT! MY SON* (2013)

Trade (2013) was one of the first artworks I developed for the research. It is an installation consisting of free-standing mounds of spice. *Eat! My Son*, (2013) was a one day relational³ event, which involved sharing food prepared and cooked by my mother and me. This event was held in the same site as the installation, *Trade* (2013) during the Castlemaine State Festival 2013. Together, *Trade* (2013) and *Eat! My Son* (2013) engage Bhabha's question: 'How does the post-colonial condition influence the problem of the Past?' (Bhabha 2009, p. 33). The primary intention for *Trade* (2013) is to bring forward problems inherent in trading practices during colonial times, specifically relating to exploitation and power. *Eat! My Son* (2013) shifts this condition by presenting a space of inclusion and non-hierarchy, where food is cooked (using the spices from *Trade* (2013)) and freely shared among the participants.

As I discuss in chapter one (see 1.1), one of the first influences that made me focus on my Indian heritage was my experience of the Hindu festival, Holi. I would not partake in the festival celebrations, instead, as a six year old, I would watch this event from the safety of our verandah in Colaba, Bombay. When I returned to India for the first time, fifteen years after we immigrated to Australia, it happened to be at the time of the Holi festival. I was able to recall and revisit the mounds of pigments displayed on carts in the local bazaar. This visual experience (as distinct from the conceptual), was what I recalled when I first started to develop *Trade* (2013).

■ ANISH KAPOOR AND INDIA: THE ANXIETY OF ATTRIBUTION

This same experience of seeing and experiencing the pigment mounds in India, also influenced the sculptor Anish Kapoor's early pigment works, *1000 Names* (1979–81).

But the question lingered for me ... why did I need to go back to India to find a way forward with my art practice? Why were the pigment mounds I saw in India so important to me? Why did I need to go back to such experiences in India as a way to help understand and articulate my Anglo Indian identity? Homi Bhabha's essay, *Evasive Objects: Anish Kapoor's Fissionary Art*, tackles this question directly, by asking why diasporic artists are subjected to a 'peculiar cultural biography which often *disfigures* [my emphasis] the nature of their conceptual work' (Bhabha 2009, p. 26). Bhabha notes how postcolonial artists often, regardless of the content of their work, are 'trailed by the anxiety of attribution', which he describes as being the same as a 'politics of identity' (ibid.). He continues, cautioning:

[...] the attempt to connect a cultural context to an artist's consciousness – especially when the work's materials are foreign and unfamiliar – results in a sentimental exercise in establishing the artist's 'authenticity'... rather than a critical engagement with the 'authority' of the work.

Those of us with post-colonial pasts, diasporic presents and God-only-knows-what-and-where futures are tired of being subjected to the authenticating claims of identity (ibid. pp. 26–27).

What Bhabha is arguing for in the context of himself, Kapoor and other postcolonial diasporic artists, is a distinction and focus on the authority of the artwork rather than the artist's authenticity, as it relates to identity. As he states: 'Authenticity favours the transmission of tradition; authority enhances the translation of tradition' (Bhabha 2009, p. 27).

3 The use of the word refers to a phrase first coined by French art critic, Nicolas Bourriard, in the catalogue essay for an exhibition he curated, titled 'Traffic', in 1996. The term, as described in his book, *Relational Aesthetics* 1998, refers to 'a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space'. Writer and curator, Claire Bishop, critiques and expands on Bourriard's definitions and sets both a historical and theoretical context for participatory art practices. See, Bishop C 2006, *Participation*.

The distinction Bhabha makes between *transmission* and *translation* in the context of *authenticity* and *authority* is important. I think the idea of distinguishing transmission, which implies an unchanging and fixed position, as opposed to translation, which allows for a more negotiated discourse, is very necessary. However, I am not convinced that one has to play off authenticity and authority against each other. I think to discuss authenticity is to consider it as content, as distinct from authority, which I would read as signifying form.

In the same essay, Bhabha states: 'As artists of a post-colonial background begin to transform the tastes and traditions of the Euro-American metropolitan *milieu* they are trailed by an anxiety of attribution' (ibid., p. 26). While I do not disagree with Bhabha's viewpoint, I think it is up to the artist to determine how they position and negotiate this relationship between attribution and authority. The discourse does not have to be about the artist's authenticity over the authority of the work or vice versa. In Kapoor's work, I would argue that authenticity as it relates to identity is not mutually exclusive to a critical engagement with the authority of the work. In fact, in Kapoor's situation, to talk about his authenticity (in the context of identity), is intrinsically linked to a critical engagement of his work. I believe Kapoor's artistic practice is framed by notions of identity. I agree with Bhabha that artists with postcolonial pasts and diasporic presents, should not have to be 'subjected' to authenticating claims of identity. But I do not feel that this position is always one of subjection either. For Bhabha to describe 'the attempt to connect a cultural context to an artist's consciousness ... as a *sentimental exercise* [my emphasis] in establishing the artist's 'authenticity'... rather than a critical engagement with the 'authority' of the work' (ibid., pp. 26–27), I think is a bow overstretched. There are legitimate instances where such a discourse is not totalising. For example, in the context of the Anglo Indian artist, the anxiety of attribution, as it relates to identity, becomes doubly conflated because of the anxiety of belonging in terms of a precarious and ill-defined dual racial status, as well as a relationship to place, given the lack of a clear sense of belonging to their place of birth (India). For the Anglo Indian artist particularly, it is essential to position the question of authenticity as the critical engagement of their work so that they can stake their claim in this space, before they can move beyond it, as Bhabha argues. Anglo Indians, diasporic and those still in India, have always had to negotiate loss and gain in the context of their identity formation, well before, as academic Lionel Caplan (2001) identifies, there was any postcolonial theorising in the context of creolisation or multiple identities or blurred boundaries.

Bhabha's essay on Kapoor begins with a discussion of both Bhabha's and Kapoor's city of birth—Bombay. Bhabha focuses on the area around Colaba, which was also my neighbourhood as a child. His descriptions of the area and his memories of growing up there revolve around ideas of nationalism and tradition in relation to cosmopolitanism and globalism. Despite all of the shortcomings in the city, Bhabha describes the 'sense of a post-colonial avant-garde – tilted away from the orthodoxies, eastern and western – coexisting in an excited atmosphere of innovation and experimentation' (Bhabha 2009, pp. 25–26).

For this reason, Bhabha insightfully begins a complex discussion of Kapoor's oeuvre by focusing on 'Bombay rather than Buddhism' (ibid., p. 30)—transcendence is often the primary issue discussed in Kapoor's work—because Bhabha believes the 'phenomenological structures of experience revealed in the everyday enactments of urban life are of fundamental importance in the understanding of "scale", "shape", "objecthood", "skin" and "colour" [...]' (ibid.). In this context, *1000 Names* (1979–81), is the pivotal work that informs much of the later works in Kapoor's oeuvre. It signposts the importance of his cultural background and cultural memories (clearly an authenticating experience). Yet Bhabha notes how Kapoor becomes 'impatient with critics who have invested his works with a cultural heritage that has restricted

their ability to occupy the world as cosmopolitan constructs, free to represent how and what they will' (ibid., p. 33). I would agree with Kapoor—to a degree. No artist wants to restrict the discussion of content in their artwork, particularly if it essentialises the way the artist and artwork is represented. Bhabha too supports this position—to a degree:

The artist must never be hampered by history, and yet no man is free to live without his shadow. How does the post-colonial condition influence the problem of the Past? For our generation – we, who followed the midnight's children of India's independence – the cultural past represents the problem of relating to a transnational and 'translational' cosmopolitanism that conflicts with longstanding traditions of cultural nationalism [...] (ibid.).

However, I cannot agree with the viewpoint that to engage Kapoor's artworks with a 'cultural heritage' restricts or 'conflicts' their ability to occupy the world as 'cosmopolitan constructs'. On the contrary, I believe to read Kapoor's work *through* cultural heritage, both anchors and opens them up to 'occupy the world as cosmopolitan' (ibid.).

Bhabha's comments become doubly complex in the relationship between ideas of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, depending on who and where the audience and artwork are situated, and through whose and which lens the work is received. For example, does the contextual reading and reception of a postcolonial, diasporic artist's work shift depending on the location in the world from where the work is viewed? India or London, for example? Kapoor only held a major exhibition of his work in India for the first time in 2010. At the opening of the exhibition in Delhi, Kapoor was quoted as saying 'I have internalized and mythologized the country in a very real way' (Kapoor cited in Prakash n.d.). In the same article, Prakash also quotes Kapoor: 'Red is a colour I've felt very strongly about. Maybe red is a very Indian colour. I am Indian. My sensibility is Indian. I welcome that. I rejoice in that, but the great battle is to occupy an aesthetic territory that isn't linked to nationality' (ibid.).

Kapoor has no problem attributing his works and ideas to his Indian ethnicity and culture (as distinct from claims to nationality). He believes he does not have to talk about India. It is present in everything he makes, as are the deep reflections and propositions he sets for himself. In conversation with curator, Greg Hilty, and Director of the British Council, Andrea Rose, Kapoor talks about his early days and influences while he was at art school. It is interesting to note that he never really considered India important in the context of being an artist. As he says, it was not until artist and lecturer, Michael Craig-Martin, said to him that at some point he (Kapoor) would have to deal with being Indian, that Kapoor considered this was important (Hilty and Rose 2010–2011, para. 36). As I mentioned, growing up and attending art school in Australia, I also did not consider India (or being Anglo Indian) as having anything to do with making art or being an artist. It was lecturer and painter, William (Bill) Ferguson, who first brought to my attention that my relationship to colour could be directly related to being Indian. Like Kapoor, until that moment (the cusp between modernism and post-modernism), I had not considered how or why my culture, ethnicity or race would have anything to do with making art.

Kapoor too encountered mounds of pigment at bazaars and road shrines, on his first visit to India after finishing art school. *1000 Names* (1979–1981), carries all the signifiers in form and content that Kapoor would reference in later works. As he says, 'Whenever I have difficulty, I always go back to the pigment pieces. I always look at them again. When I was making them, I felt more alive than I'd perhaps ever been in my life' (Hilty and Rose 2010–2011, para. 44).

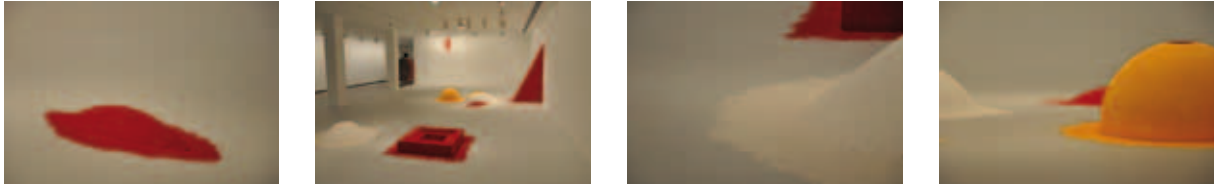


Fig. 449–452 | Kapoor, A 1979–81, *1000 Names* (installation view), [wood, gesso, pigment], Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

For Kapoor, colour, forms and memories from past experiences, are all archived and iterated serially and materially. Ideas of 'Indianness' are easily recoverable in the forms, colours and the materiality of *1000 Names* (1979–1981), particularly ideas that relate to the traditional forms, materials and philosophies of India. As Kapoor's work matures, India is not left behind. I would argue that Kapoor's later works are an extended iteration of *1000 Names* (1979–1981). Later works acknowledge and occupy the space of geography and history, and at the same time transcend them, which is what Kapoor has sought for his art practice.



Fig. 453 | Kapoor, A 2007, *Svayambh* (installation view), [wax, oil based paint; dimensions variable], Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Works such as *Svayambh* (2007) and *Memory* (2008) open up bigger, more complex and inclusive conversations with space. Space is no longer just the physical space of India (as national space), but something that engages with its deep traditional, philosophical and spiritual centres. Space transcends national boundaries and becomes memory and imagined, as well as material and physical. It becomes the space of what Appadurai would describe as the social imaginary. These later works open the conversation beyond the oppositional: us or them, East or West or any of the other binary oppositions Bhabha so convincingly targeted. Instead, Kapoor's later works breach the boundaries of their cultural origins. They do not leave them behind, but rather expand them out into the world so their meaning becomes inclusive of a local and global discourse simultaneously.



Fig. 454 | Kapoor, A 2008, *Memory* (installation view), [corten steel, 14.5 x 8.97 x 4.48 m], Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Bhabha and Kapoor are close, not just as friends, but as two people who share a history, a culture and a space, which they both interrogate through varying modalities: poetically, philosophically, materially and textually. They engage each other and the world through these different modalities in relation to past and present, representation and identity, wholeness and fragmentation. Kapoor's work is there to be experienced by everyone who encounters it. As he says (as quoted by Bhabha): 'Come on, come over here. I can engage you deeply and my space will infiltrate yours' (Bhabha 2009, p. 30–31). Kapoor's quote reminds us of our shared space, regardless of history and geography. This is a beautiful idea of borderlessness and inclusiveness, on which I expand in my artwork, *How much does your history weigh? We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow* (2016) (in the conclusion of this research).

■ MOUNTAINS AND LOVE: BACK TO *TRADE* (2013) AND *EAT! MY SON* (2013)

In reference to the coloured pigment mounds I had encountered in India, *Trade* (2013)—as idea, material and form—relates to the spice islands, which is what initially brought trading companies, such as the East India Company, to India. I had made artworks about islands previously probably because I have lived and worked on four ‘islands’ that had all been colonised by the British—India, Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Bombay (Mumbai) was originally seven separate islands, which were connected by land reclamation. In response to this idea, *Trade* (2013) became an installation consisting of seven mounds of spice placed directly on the floor. The site and space determines the scale and placement of the forms. Each mound/ island consists of approximately three kilograms of spice. Their close proximity to the ground is important for two reasons. Firstly, I associate sitting on the ground with being in Asia and secondly, I wanted the production of the artwork to have a real sense of economy, in terms of building techniques, so it felt uncomplicated visually, as well as appearing transient and ephemeral. (In the Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial 2013, I had to show the work on a floating floor, which was not ideal.) The artwork has two important trajectories, the first, as forms that were symbolic of physical land formations (mountains) and secondly as the material itself, that is as a food substance, which is something fundamental and intrinsic to all people.

As the viewer walks around the mounds of spice, the olfactory experience creates a heady, lingering odour, perhaps recalling past memories, geographies, histories and personal encounters. In fact, the olfactory encounter was the experience many people responded to first. The smell, during the exhibition, was alluring and pungent. Yet, the initial intention for the artwork (before I made it) was to explore the anxiety of colonial history in the context of trading practices, which implies a negotiated sharing of goods and commodities, but which in reality, were often unscrupulous and exploitative.

The title, *Trade* (2013), has other more contemporary connotations in a global world, where trade in goods, services, markets and even people, continues to involve capitalist enterprise where dominant cultures often exploit market share and cheap labour. In this context the artwork takes on a double meaning. Under its appearance of beauty and aesthetics, lies a darker conceptual premise relating to domination, power and exploitation. The artwork may remind us of the spice mounds encountered in spice bazaars or with the pleasures of food, but, more insidiously, their relationship to land formations, foregrounds colonial conquests. This *claiming* of land becomes central to colonialism and contemporaneously, also suggests the fragility of globalisation, as demarcated boundaries become contested, land is reclaimed, ecologies threatened, geographies shifted and people displaced. The legacy of trade exposes both a necessity for economies and commerce but also opportunities for exploitation and power.

The strong olfactory experience shifted the content of *Trade* (2013) bringing the artwork into a postcolonial space of agency, encounter and affirmation. Using the spices to make food to share, sets up the conditions for the second component of the project: *Eat! My Son* (2013). This relational event included the preparation of a staple, ubiquitous Anglo Indian meal of rice, pepper water (rasam), dhal and a pickle. This meal was made collaboratively with my octogenarian mother and then shared with the general public at a one-day



Fig. 455 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Trade* (detail), [spices, wooden platform; dimensions variable], for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Image courtesy of Julie Millowick.



Fig. 456 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation from the one-day relational event *Eat! My Son*, for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Image courtesy of Julie Millowick.

event in the Castlemaine State Festival (2013). The preparation and sharing of food is fundamental to all human cultures and potentially collapses conventions of difference. The title for this event comes from a common phrase my mother always uses. Food is one of the ways my mother shows her love for her children. For my mother, and probably many mothers, the making and sharing of food is intrinsically linked to love. To partake in a shared meal resonates deeply in both Eastern and Western cultures. For my mother, '*Eat! My Son*', is a sign of devotion and unconditional love. A full belly is a sign of deep contentment. The exclamation to '*Eat!*' is a call that all will be right, just and equal in the world, even when it is not. As a child in India, I recall how food was prepared at regular intervals by the tenants in the building we lived in and shared communally with anyone who was in need of a meal. For my mother, '*my son*' goes beyond our close familial bond: it is a loud, inclusive, celebratory exhalation for everyone to partake and participate—to love and share our commonalities as people, through food.

I held this event under the auspices of the Castlemaine State Festival on the opening festival weekend, 16 March 2013. On the day, we shared food with almost 200 people over a two-hour event. There were no instructions, signs or queues. As meals were prepared and plated, helpers moved through the crowd giving food to anyone who wanted to partake, in a way that was democratic and non-hierarchical. My mother was in attendance, talking and sharing anecdotal stories about motherhood, sons, food, recipes, India, Anglo Indians and love. She didn't talk about art, directly. As I mentioned earlier, my mother's stories have played a major role in my PhD and growing up as an Anglo Indian. We often cook together, as a way to share and connect. I continue to cook with her and collect her recipes.



Fig. 457 | D'Costa, R 2013, photographic documentation from the one-day relational event *Eat! My Son*, for the 2013 Castlemaine State Festival, Visual Arts Biennial – *Periscope*, Hunt & Lobb Building, Castlemaine, Victoria. Image courtesy of Julie Millowick.



Fig. 458 | Tiravanija, R 2010, *Who's afraid of red, yellow, and green*, installation and participatory event (installation view), [dimensions variable], 100 Tonson Gallery, Thailand, 20–28 August 2010.

Thai born artist, Rirkrit Tiravanija, has built his artistic career on preparing and sharing food. While his art practice might primarily engage with the social interaction involved in this process, his work is deeply political and profoundly humanistic. His generosity and deep humility sit behind each of his symbolic interventions. Engaging with everyday actions and commonplace materials, Tiravanija's works provocatively dismantle conventions, structures and models of power and capitalism. His actions take on important issues in the world today—homelessness, displacement, poverty, freedom of speech. It is this agency in his work, which is an exemplar of how art can

play a vital role in bringing about social change. Acts from everyday experiences and kindness become catalysts to provoke necessary change in the world.⁴

Part B – The British Empire: adventures leading to power (1858–1947)

The origins and history of Anglo Indians (the Indian-European minority community of India) are inextricably linked with the politics of [British] colonial India (D’Costa 2006, p. 1). This has had a direct relationship and influence in establishing stereotypical traits, often derogatory, associated with the Anglo Indian community. It also led to an entangled and complicated definition and recognition of who an Anglo Indian is because of changing terminologies and desires to separate along racial lines, associated with colonialism. The shift in attitude toward Anglo Indians in the 17th century (during the East India Company) to the British Empire during the 19th century (1858–1947), saw Anglo Indians increasingly separated, ostracised and distanced from colonial officials. Caplan cites many examples from early records that clearly articulate the prejudices existing toward the community (Caplan 2001, pp. 60–61). This led to attempts to deny their own being, by using social status, class and racial codes to align, infiltrate and mimic Englishness, erasing their own sense of Anglo Indian identity. Their brownness and ‘chee-chee’ accent⁵ became their metaphorical shibboleth. As much as the British attempted to erect boundaries to make distinct the Anglo Indian community from their own guarded community, there were instances when Anglo Indians, because of their mixed race ethnicity, blurred these boundaries, making them an even bigger threat to the established order. Caplan discusses how the British used the census as a way to control the Anglo Indian population and mark them as distinct. However, their very ambiguous and shifting definition caused the biggest problems in accurately defining, locating and consequently controlling them. No one could appropriately fill the cracks and stop the fluid space Anglo Indians occupied. What is particularly interesting is that while the British were attempting to define and categorise who an Anglo Indian was (as a form of social, racial and class distinction), Anglo Indians were doing the same by closing ranks around who legitimately was allowed to be classified as an Anglo Indian, attempting to guard their own identity from infiltration by Indians, for social, racial and employment opportunities.⁶

■ IDEAS AND MASTER PLANS

It would be naïve to think that the British Empire was never a fully developed, predetermined construct, but one that developed momentum, accruing structure and definition through early experiences in maritime adventures and economic opportunities from trading companies. One could argue that the British deeply believed it was their destiny to civilise and rule the world, and to force their governing and educational systems, culture and morality onto other civilisations. Said (1979, 1993), Appiah (2005), Bhabha (1994) and Guha (1997), all argue convincingly that Empire or Imperialism, was always in the consciousness of a European trajectory, where domination meant global domination and was an accepted way of thinking and acting. Britain’s mission to civilise India, as they did in Australia (as did the Portuguese in Angola and Timor, and the French in Algeria), involved implementing British (Western) systems of law and education, particularly to *improve* the way of life for Indians and at the same time to redefine India in its own image. What is important to understand, is that educating Indians meant teaching the colonised in

4 Socially engaged art is one of the key practices in contemporary art today. For further reading on artists and projects see Thompson, N 2012, *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991–2011*; Doherty, C 2015, *Public Art (Now): Out of Time, Out of Place*; Bishop, C 2012, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*; Kester, G 2013, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*.

5 Caplan (among many academics) notes how the British mocked and ridiculed Anglo Indian accents and used the derogatory phrase ‘cheechee’ to describe the way Anglo Indians speak (Caplan 2001, pp. 64–65).

6 For a very comprehensive discussion of colonial boundaries, see Caplan 2001, Chapter 3, pp. 59–83.

ways that benefitted the coloniser (Guha 1997, p. 171). Education also operated as a form of control and authority between the British (educator) and the Indian (being educated). Academic and writer, Nagaraju Gundemeda, comments on how:

[...] the *administrative* [emphasis added] interests of the British were reflected in the famous British official Lord Macaulay who, while addressing the British Parliament on February 2, 1835, said that: "We must at present do our best to form a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect" (Gundemeda 2014, p. 58).

It was this form of calculated discourse that engineered the Anglo Indian, who seamlessly fits the above description. The Anglo Indian community became the '*class of persons*' who are '*Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect*' who could sit between the British ruling class and the subjugated Indian. If, ultimately, Britain failed in establishing a totalising ideological hegemony over India because it assimilated Indian culture in its own image (rather than abolishing elements from its pre-colonial culture), Anglo Indians, I would argue, became its legacy in its civilising mission. This engineered community would occupy the middle ambivalent space where they were often despised by the Indian community for doing the work of the British and conversely looked down on by the British who ensured they only allowed the Anglo Indian to reach a certain level of authority and social standing.

Whichever way you are inclined to think of the British Empire, at its height it ruled over a quarter of the world's population and a third of the world's land mass. In its early days in India, a population of some six thousand British managed to wield power over almost two million Indian people, convincing them of British superiority. How did they manage to create this psychological upper hand over the Indian population? While grandiose durbars and architecture were strategically used to extravagantly display power and convince the locals of British supremacy (*Empire* 2012), it was the idea of a civilising mission including British honour and their supposed moral integrity, as well as the need by the British to impose their will on others, which allowed such a small group to wield power over such a large population.

■ MORALS, MANNERS, HONOUR AND SPACE AS FORMS OF POWER

Historian and writer David Day notes that the British based their story on portraying themselves as 'selfless bringers of a civilized modernity to an otherwise savage land' (Day 2008, p. 145). Day goes on to explain how the British emphasised their moral integrity by establishing rules and guidelines that created a distancing between them and the Indian population. He cites examples, such as Indians not being permitted to wear European shoes when appearing before British officials, or not being allowed to sit on chairs when in the company of British officials for fear of implicitly acknowledging a position of equality (*ibid.*).

Indians were also discouraged from adopting British manners, which would acknowledge their capability of being civilised. Day notes how the '[...] foundation story of the British Raj remained unattached to the lands that they sought to control and largely alien to the people they sought to convince of their superiority' (*ibid.*). Academic and historian, Steven Patterson, examines how the roles of honour and rank guided Imperial conduct, particularly in terms of race, class and gender so as to maintain a hierarchical position. He discusses how empires are built and maintained on notions of superiority, which are cultivated in as many different realms as possible, such as the political, economic, cultural and martial domains, and always relying on unequal distributions of power (Patterson 2009, p. 23). He particularly cites 'honour' as a socialising form of power, as distinct from military and political power, which the British Raj used

to great psychological effect in maintaining the superior, upper hand. As honour is typically associated with power over a low order, and because it needs to be closely associated with hierarchy, it was used as a regulating device to minimise contact with Indians and to keep British society in clearly delineated physical and social boundaries such as cantonments and private members' clubs, where the codes of acceptable behaviour were clearly defined (ibid., p. 24). Patterson argues:

While the importance of colonial masculinity and the importance of gender in constructing an ideology of rule cannot be belittled, and ideas about British blood and race informed much of the Anglo-Indian⁷ outlook, ideas about honour were intertwined with those of class, race, and gender. The story of the Raj is not simply a tale of white over black, male over female, colonizer over colonized, and upper over lower class, although all these explanations have merit. It is instead a story of carefully constructed imperial identities formed out of British history and customs and proper and improper modes of imperial behaviour (ibid., p. 25).

If we are to accept Patterson's argument, then it becomes clear as to why it was essential to not just deny or control, but to erase Anglo Indian identity and history. As a community we became too high a risk to the fixed construction of British identity. It was never a question of acknowledging the value of the community. The community's presence and evolving identity, in every way challenged and disrupted the construction of Imperial identity.

In the BBC production *Empire* (2012), Jeremy Paxman, narrates how the British public schooling system became a breeding ground for future prefects of a colonial class and governors of the Empire. It fostered an unshakeable self-belief in privilege and the right to rule. It was also where the development of Christian morality and civility became entrenched. Generally, Paxman notes, public schools in Britain created a particular kind of British male who learnt from the classics, fostered strong Christian values, frequented clubs and engaged in sport—all contributing to establishing and moulding a certain character, which was transported to India as an Imperialist model and became entrenched during the British Raj.

■ SHIFTING MORAL GROUNDS AND SPATIALISED SEGREGATION

Sea travel from Europe to India was long, dangerous and arduous. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, directly linked the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea, allowing ships to move between Europe and India without having to traverse Africa. A consequence of the significant reduction in travel time meant more English women began to arrive in India, bringing a growing Victorian, moral conservatism that led to discriminatory behaviour by them taking a moral, high ground that often manifested in racist attitudes toward Indians and Anglo Indians.

Anglo Indians, who, until this time, were more readily accepted into English social circles because of their socially derived dress codes, language and physical appearance (if they had fairer skin colour), again had to manoeuvre between these new prejudices, where their codes of dress and language were now used against them in British circles. This attitude was also reflected in England, as a result of British literature, where Anglo Indians were seen as subversive and Anglo Indian women as having loose morals. As Caplan notes: 'The Anglo Indian woman was seen as silly, brainless, fast, loose and shameless' (Caplan 2001, p. 63). At this time, children born from unions between British men and Indian women were often seen as a

7 It is important to note Patterson's use of the term Anglo-Indian, which refers to British domiciled in India, rather than the constitutional definition of an Anglo Indian; though it could also stand correct for the Anglo Indian as defined by The Constitution of India.

physical reminder of this degradation, and therefore resented and shamed. There was also a sense of British superiority in terms of race, and therefore little interest in acclimatising to Indian values or its culture.

The British moved to the cooler hills away from the heat, where they built hill-station bungalows and gardens as spatialised models of separateness. These bungalows and their gardens became strategies to separate themselves from not only the heat, but more importantly from the dirt and filth of India (literally and metaphorically). The majority of women who came to India often lived in complete fear of moral degradation, dirt and disease.

However at this time there was an abundance of literature written by British female novelists living in India. While much of it ultimately supported the Imperial project, recent academic research into their writings (which at the time were not given serious academic attention because of their romance genre), sheds light on the attention given to race relations and mixed race communions, which did not necessarily degrade the Anglo Indian. As academic, Melissa Edmundson Makala, notes:

[...] British women closely observed inter-cultural relations during their years living in India, they increasingly began to have a more vocal role in critiquing the successes and failures of the imperial mission. Indeed, their own subaltern status as women gave these writers a sympathetic perspective on the plight of minorities in India, and their marginal status between the official male realm of government and the nonofficial environment of the bungalow gave them the ability to recognise and appreciate other instances of liminal existence around them. They used the non-threatening form of the popular romance in order to voice their concerns about the effects of imperialism (Makala 2014, p. 492).

As Englishmen were in charge of the political will at the time, the views in these novels were not supported throughout the community. Perhaps if these writings had been given the same attention and status as their male counterparts, the experience and situation for the Anglo Indian might have taken a different course. Rather than the frequent derogatory status the Anglo Indian is given in most early literature and history, as a consequence of their half caste status, these novels act as a more sympathetic counter-narrative.

■ CLUB RULES

Everything had to be done to create a home away from home for the British in India and in doing so, a separation by clearly defined codes was established and then guarded (by the British). Central to this was the establishment of 'Gentlemen's Clubs' developed on the same model as members' sporting clubs back in Britain. These clubs helped to maintain a sense of shared values and a reassurance of national British identity and decorum, which these men were taught at their elite public schools (*Empire* 2012, DVD, BBC, Britain).

■ USEFUL CITIZENS AND A MIDDLE GROUND

As Anthony notes, the period 1858–1919 saw the Anglo Indian community play a major role in building and developing civil services in India. It is often noted in general terms by Anglo Indians and in Anglo Indian writing such as Anthony's, that the Anglo Indian community was established along military and particularly civil lines. Valerie Anderson's research details how being 'useful citizens', was a major focus of the British for Anglo Indians in the 19th century (Anderson 2011, p. 155). Anderson notes several reasons for this, specifically:

Anglo Indians should not become an embarrassment for the British that would then expose their superiority as a myth. Secondly, they should not pose a threat to British hegemony by directly challenging British authority or encouraging Indians to rebel. Thirdly, Anglo Indians could be used as a lesson to show Indians the advantages of European or British life choices such as a British style of education, moral Christian values and cooperation with administrative services. Fourthly, there were increasing jobs which needed filling by people the British could control and trust because of their European blood. For these utilitarian reasons, Anglo Indians had to be prepared to live and work in ways which British felt appropriate for people with European descent and at the same time could be excluded from the power and status of the European elite (Anderson 2011, p. 155).

As a consequence of British and Indian laws, governance and social attitudes, Anglo Indians were 'effectively forced into a middle-ground, literally and metaphorically, between colonial British and Indian identities' (ibid., p. 156).

The railway systems, the telegraph and postal services, customs, the police and marine services all were closely associated with the Anglo Indian community, as were nurses, teachers and secretaries. While history attributes implementation and developments in these areas to the British in India, it was very much the Anglo Indian community who made these services and systems operate.

■ DALRYMPLE'S *WHITE MUGHALS*

English writer and historian William Dalrymple accounts for an alternate consideration of the stereotypes associated with the relationship of the British in India toward Indians.

Caplan also notes how:

During the seventeenth and eighteen centuries British officers and officials employed by the East India Company were much less concerned than their nineteenth century successors about drawing rigid social and cultural boundaries between themselves and the local populace (Caplan 2001, p. 60).

He continues, mentioning 'countless examples of European men who "went native", became "Indianized" – dressing, dining and generally living in the fashion of local dignitaries [...]' (ibid.).

Drawing on primary historical research for his book *White Mughals* (2003), Dalrymple highlights instances of Indian conquest over the British imagination. He accounts for how some British became entrenched in the Indian way of life, adopting cultural codes and customs in terms of clothing, philosophy, lifestyle and religion. There are photographs and paintings from the colonial period that illustrate how some British men became intoxicated and were seduced by the Indian climate and culture (Dalrymple 2003, pp. 142, 270).

Central to Dalrymple's argument is that the complexity of the Imperial project was not just about dominance and subjugation—it also included open exchange and negotiation. I would argue that dominance and subjugation, and exchange and negotiation, existed at different times and at different levels. There may have been, in the early stages of trade, a greater sense of negotiation and respect between British and Indian subjects, however as the British built their Imperial project, this was quickly superseded by domination and subjugation. The plight of the Anglo Indian became tied up in this shifting space, struggling to represent and claim their own sense of worth and dominion. This relatively new community, which seemed to confound socially accepted ideas of race and ethnicity, had little voice

as the British controlled how the Anglo Indian was perceived in society. These 'children of colonialism'⁸ become caught in-between the political and social manoeuvrings of their own community, and the British and Indian people. This continued throughout history as Anglo Indians were written in and out of histories according to both Indian and British discretion. There is a fine example of this in George Chinnery's *White Mughals* painting of James Achilles Kirkpatrick's and Khair un-Nissa's two children.

The caption for the painting reads:

The celebrated portrait by George Chinnery of James and Khair's two children, Sahib Allum and Sahib Begum. Shortly after the picture was painted in August 1805 the children were booked onto the Lord Hawkesbury for the passage to England as William George and Katherine Aurora Kirkpatrick, names they would bear for the rest of their lives (Dalrymple 2003, image insert between pp. 270–271).



Fig. 459 | Chinnery, G 1804, *Sahib Allum, Sahib Begum* (detail), [oil on canvas].

Examples of overriding, erasing, or choosing to not disclose personal historical connections in relation to racial identity, is more common in British culture than acknowledged. Dalrymple, writing in the online section of *The Guardian*, titles his opinion piece 'One sure way for Britain to get ahead – stop airbrushing our colonial history' (2015). In the article, he suggests that, given the tense situations currently in the world between Islam and Christianity, the exchange, cohabitation and negotiation between Moghul and British during the colonial period could be used as exemplars today ... if Britain was prepared to openly educate, discuss and acknowledge its *dark* [my emphasis] side during colonialism. He argues that if Britain is not prepared to face and accept the '*blackest* [my emphasis] of imperial experience', [then how could it be open to other] 'perhaps surprising, moments in imperial experience' (Dalrymple 2015, para. 7).

In the same article, Dalrymple cites how the wills of employees from the East India Company showed that 'in the 1780s more than a third of British men in India were leaving all their possessions to Indian wives or mixed-race Anglo-Indian families' (ibid., para. 9). He goes on to highlight how this number subsequently declined, so that by the middle of the 19th century this practice had all but disappeared. He deduces, therefore, that 'Anglo-Indian society went from a deeply multicultural world to one of virtual apartheid in as little as two generations' (ibid., para. 12). Dalrymple asks us to reconsider colonialism's multiple stories and experiences that include affirmations as well as deeply problematic events. Importantly he notes:

There is a great deal of Indian blood in modern British veins, and many families – my own among them – have suppressed histories of Indian great-grandparents; it is not just Prince William who has a deliberately forgotten strain of Indian blood (ibid., para. 9).

In light of Dalrymple's remarks, it is worth reflecting on the fact that history is undoubtedly an evolving process, which relies on conviction, truth and courage. If race had not turned into an ideology as part of the Imperial project, perhaps the circumstances for the Anglo Indian community may have been different. Instead, Anglo Indians also seemed to adopt this culture of denial. When physical appearance permitted, some Anglo Indians attempted to pass as European or English, denying or concealing any relationship or

8 The phrase makes reference to Lionel Caplan's fine book, *Children of Colonialism: Anglo-Indians in a Postcolonial World*.

connection to being Anglo Indian or Indian. This inferiority trait can only be attributed to subjection the community felt under colonialism and its continuing impact thereafter.

■ MUTINY AND CHAPATIS

The British in India, during the period of the East India Company and the British Raj, lived under actual and psychological threat in the context of rebellion and mutiny by the Indian population. What has been described as the Indian Rebellion of 1857, or the Sepoy Rebellion, or Indian Mutiny (by the British), or the First War of Independence (by the Indians), was a defining event in the history of British rule in India. Significant blood was shed, particularly Indian blood, and unspeakable atrocities were acted out by both sides.⁹

Anglo Indian military expertise was used by British and Indian armies at different times during this period. While the Anglo Indian may have felt initial allegiance to the British, in terms of blood ties or imagined connections to a homeland in Britain, or religious and language affiliations, this did not stop them fighting for both armies. As a deep feeling of nationalism intensified among the Indian population, hostilities reached levels where mutiny was inevitable. Historical accounts cite growing levels of anxiety among the British as they sensed their reign collapsing. Rumours and stories circulated around insurgency and uprising. A range of stories circulated about British attempts to undermine the social and religious lives of Indians.¹⁰

The story I was most interested in and which relates directly to producing the artwork *Rumour* (2013), was the story of the circulation of chapatis.¹¹ The artwork *Rumour* (2013) draws on an event that is often cited as both folklore and historical, regarding the circulation of chapatis during the period just prior to the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Rumour and innuendo were rife at this time, as both the Indian and British communities were attempting to make sense of conflicting events and stories. The British could sense uprising but were baffled as to how the Indian population was organising themselves and communicating with each other across the vast continent. One such story was that secret messages were being sent from village to village inside chapatis.

It does not matter to me, whether this account was factual or not. I was intrigued by this story and wanted to make an artwork about the event and about the meaning of the word itself. 'Rumour' is such a slippery word. It can be simultaneously truthful and full of lies and it can be dangerous and hurtful. It can potentially be subversive. It sits in a space that can reveal long kept secrets. It has the potential to ruin people. It can build momentum and lead to insurgency and revolt. It can override logic and truth. It is indeterminate, oblique and obscure. Homi Bhabha, in referencing a descriptive passage from John Kaye and G. B. Malleson, *History of the Indian Mutiny* (1888), interrogates the indeterminacy of Kaye's and Malleson's text, which describes the chapati story (Kaye and Malleson as cited in Bhabha 2004, pp. 287–288). Bhabha notes: 'Whether we take the chapatis as historical "myth" or treat them as rumour, they represent the emergence of a form of social temporality that is iterative and indeterminate' (2004, p. 286).¹²

9 It is outside the scope of this research to cover these events in detail. For further indepth information see Kaye, J 1864, *A history of the Sepoy war in India, 1857–58*; Wagner, K A 2010, *The Great Fear of 1857: Rumours, Conspiracies and the Making of the Indian Uprising*.

10 For a general overview of events and stories during this time see Dash, M 2012, *Pass it on: The Secret that Preceded the Indian Rebellion of 1857* at <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/pass-it-on-the-secret-that-preceded-the-indian-rebellion-of-1857-105066360/>.

11 Chapatis, a ubiquitous flat bread made from flour are eaten throughout India and are particularly associated with poorer Indian communities because they are a staple in their diet.

12 For a wider more complex reading of the chapati story, in the context of the indeterminate circulation of meaning, refer to Bhabha 2004, Chapter 9, 'By Bread Alone', *The Location of Culture*.

■ RUMOUR (2013)

The artwork *Rumour* (2013) is a temporal, kinetic sculpture. It consists of a motor encased by a wooden frame, which is placed directly on the floor. Atta, the flour used to make chapatis, is built up around the frame as a mound covering and concealing the motorised framework. Protruding from the top of the atta mound is a stick, which slowly rotates in a slow, double, circulatory movement, mimicking a contemporary dough hook used in kitchen mixers to make dough. The stick is from a piece of mistletoe I found during frequent walks in the Box-Ironbark Forests in the Central Goldfields in Victoria. The landscape, predominantly Grey and Yellow Box and Red Ironbark Eucalyptus, has a specific mistletoe that parasitically attaches itself to its host, mimicking its appearance in both foliage and flower. I was interested in this idea of the mistletoe because of its mimicry quality. I covered the stick in individual Swarovski crystals to create a homogenising layer between the mistletoe and the eucalyptus. The crystals shimmer as the light catches the stick while it rotates in the atta mound. It is mesmerising, watching the stick in its circulatory route around the flour. It moves in an almost serpentine way, because of the form of the stick and the double circular motion. It is a dazzling and seductive work. Nothing happens as it perpetually orbits in its defined path. When contextualised through the historical lens of the Indian mutiny, the artwork feels treacherous in its beauty waiting for the *right time* to strike and claim back India from British Imperialism. In discussing the chapatti story, Bhabha astutely notes the role of time in the context of agency:

The indeterminate circulation of meaning as rumour or conspiracy, with its perverse, psychic affects of panic, constitutes the intersubjective realm of revolt and resistance. What kind of agency is constituted in the circulation of the chapatti?

Time, I believe, is of the essence. For it is the circulation of the chapatti that initiates a politics of agency negotiated in the antagonisms of colonial cultural difference (2004, p. 287).

Rumour (2013) takes the form of Bhabha's 'negotiation of cultural difference'. The repetitive circular motion of the rotating stick marks time. We get caught neither in the volatility of panic, nor the violence of revolt. Instead the homogenising crystal covering of the stick and mistletoe negates cultural difference, rendering instead a mesmerising space in waiting, which can also be read as resistance.

Part C – Emigration: leaving India (1940s–1970s)

With the withdrawal of Britain from India and India gaining its independence, Anthony ascribes the burden as falling onto himself 'to find a place of recognition for the community in an Independent India' (Anthony 2007, p. vii). Much credit should rightly be attributed to Anthony for the work he did for the Anglo Indian community, particularly in establishing political rights in independent India and in creating some form of unity and solidarity among Anglo Indians in terms of definitions, aspirations and claiming a historical voice for the community. The four books that form the series called the *Anglo Indian Heritage Books*, of which Anthony's, *Britain's Betrayal of India: The Story of the Anglo Indian Community* (1964), is



Fig. 460 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Rumour* (installation view), [flour, wood, motor, eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; 90 cm diameter x 13 cm height (approx.)], for *Shimmering Spaces Exhibition 2*, Stockroom, Kyneton, Victoria.

one, are valuable sources as introductory summaries of Anglo Indian history. They are written by Anglo Indians and are records of each author's personal accounts of Anglo Indian history and culture. They provide a unique insight into how Anglo Indians viewed their own community's sense of forming identity in the context of shifting social and political circumstances that affected relationships with both the Indian and British people (Anderson 2011, pp. 15–16). What becomes central to Anglo Indian concern as Britain prepared to leave India, was the very question of allegiance and home. Where did the Anglo Indian community belong? If the equation of Anglo Indian space and identity formation was complex during colonisation, how would Anglo Indians engage a postcolonial India?

The period after independence played a pivotal role in the community's history, which saw a large exodus of Anglo Indians emigrating from India in three diasporic waves (Blunt 2005, Caplan 2001, Mahar 1962 cited in Andrews 2007, p. 37). The first wave of migration is after 1947, when most Indians immigrated to England as some form of (imagined) returning home; the second in the early 1960s, when Hindi replaced English in India, as the national language; and the third began in the 1970s when, under family reunification, Anglo Indians migrated to Commonwealth countries.

This third category is the one I found myself in when my family chose to leave India and immigrate to Australia in 1970. Later conversations with my mother suggest my family's decision to leave India was based on economics and future opportunities for her children. As a family who had adopted an English lifestyle in India and lived fairly comfortably, my parents sensed that opportunities for their children would become more limited in independent India, particularly as we did not speak any Indian languages. This was compounded by the fact that India was moving to a more nationalistic and pro-Indian culture. Aunts from my father's side of the family had already immigrated to Australia, England and Canada. On my mother's side of the family, one brother had relocated to the Middle East, but her remaining siblings chose to stay in India. Our family was granted entry into Australia based on family reunification policies.

Caplan describes the Anglo Indian community as having a 'spirit of emigration' (Caplan 2001, p. 130). Prior to India's Independence, there were estimates of between 250,000 and 300,000 Anglo Indians in India (Anthony 2007, p. 9). Anthony describes how the inaccuracy and inconsistency of census data around Anglo Indian numbers was based on how an Anglo Indian was defined (Anthony 2007, pp. 8–9). After Independence, there was a consistent exodus of Anglo Indians over the next fifty years, reducing the numbers by almost half (Blunt 2005, Caplan 1998, Anthony 1964, Mills 1998, Williams 2002, Younger 1987 as cited in Andrews 2007).

The 'Quit India' movement, launched in 1942 as a civil disobedience, independence movement, called on the British to leave India. This, and the unstable situation experienced by Anglo Indians socially, politically and economically, leading up to this, impacted significantly on Anglo Indians who also chose to leave India. As Andrews, argues, it was not a question for Anglo Indians as to whether they should leave India, but how to leave India (Andrews 2007, p. 33), despite calls from within the community to 'remember that we are Indians. The community is Indian. [...] The more we love and are loyal to India, the more will India love and be loyal to us' (Anthony 2007, p. 150). This attempt to claim Indianness through loyalty and love, did not stop the large exodus of Anglo Indians to Commonwealth countries. Andrews, drawing on research by Ali (2007), and Kandel and Massey (2002), on the culture of migration, argues that the drive to leave India is 'so ingrained that it has become part of their [Anglo Indians'] culture' (Andrews 2007, p. 33). She also notes that Anglo Indian 'identity contributes to their pattern of migration' (*ibid.*, p. 34). The idea that Britain was home because of alignment with English cultural norms such as dress codes,

religion, language and in some instances physical appearance (rather than Indian ways of being), became motivating factors that contributed to the migration of Anglo Indians.

The shifting circumstances, as cited by Anthony (1964), became a typical scenario for the Anglo Indian, in what was a complex theatre of revolving fortunes, which meant they were often caught in-between political, social and economic decisions made by the British and Indians. This caused the 'split psychology of the community' (Anthony 2007, p. i), as loyalties were often divided. Drawing on Fanon's ideas, Anglo Indians carry with them the split psychosis of both the coloniser and colonised as they are never sure where their allegiances lie in the context of India and Britain.

Later events, for many, including my family, move this displacement from a psychological to a physical one, as a consequence of emigration. Anglo Indian's split hybridity becomes doubled through race and across place, and doubled again for the diaspora community. That is, their sense of identity is initially split across place, because of their inability to reconcile India as home and because of their colonial miscegenated past. Upon immigration to their adopted country, they split again, attempting to negotiate their sense of place in their newly adopted country. If they are fortunate to feel a sense of connectedness to their adopted country and they marry within their newly adopted community, their offspring have to negotiate another splitting across national, social and racial grounds.

Anglo Indians who remain in India also experience this double split hybridity, but in a slightly different way. As Anglo Indians who do not necessarily accept their status in India because of a historical colonial past (where they identified with a British identity), and with their genealogy also imprinted in a colonial past, their social and identity status sit between the real, symbolic and the imagined.

The conflicting idea of 'place and home as belonging' actually gets located deep in the psyche of Anglo Indians at a very early stage of their existence. Many Anglo Indians live between the national boundaries of geography and the imagined spaces of home. Without having ever been anywhere near the shores of Britain, many Anglo Indians, particularly those who lived in India and grew up under British rule, seem clear that England will always, in their hearts, be home. This sense of 'home' as adopted, ancestral and imagined, is covered further in chapter five.

■ *BESPOKE* (2013)

I have chosen to finish this chapter with a discussion of my artwork *Bespoke* (2013). It is one of the key projects in my research as it articulates the complexity of the ideas of identity, authenticity, place and belonging.¹³

There is a photograph in Dalrymple's *White Mughals*, of a man seated wearing a tartan suit, with matching turban and a feathered plume. The caption for the image reads:

The mercenary Alexander Gardner, one of the last of the white Mughals, in his tartan *salvar kemise*. Gardner had his photograph taken 'clothed from head to foot', according to his autobiography, 'in the 79th tartan, but fashioned by a native



Fig. 461 | Photograph of Alexander Haughton Campbell Gardner (1785–1877), one of the last 'white mughals'.

¹³ I refer to *Bespoke* in this introductory instance as a 'project' as it involved a long and complicated process. The outcome from this project was a photographic artwork titled *Bespoke* and a series of writings I titled *Correspondence* (2012–2015).

tailor in a garment of his own invention. Even his *pagri* [turban] was of tartan, adorned with the egret's plume, only allowed to persons of high rank' (Dalrymple 2003, image inserted between pp. 398–399).

The photograph is circa 19th century, a time when strict dress codes determined both social and cultural ranks. It is a fascinating image that would have challenged existing dress codes of its time. It cannot be read as ironic or pastiche within the context of its time. The question is, what was this man attempting to achieve in adorning this attire for the portrait? His biography sheds light on a military and cultural history that would explain some of the symbolic choices in the photograph, such as his sword and Scottish tartan. One can surmise that the garment symbolises a man caught between two cultures, feeling connected to both simultaneously; one Scottish, the other Indian. Being an old photograph, it lacks detail or sharp focus, however in the protagonist's bodily gesture and seemingly faraway gaze, it feels as if he is quite assured of his decision. Assured enough to pose for a photograph that becomes documentary evidence of his conviction at the time. Did he want future generations to see and learn from this image? Was taking this photograph an act of celebration, resistance, or both? The photograph makes visual the double union this man had to place, culture and tradition: as if fate had brought him to this moment where it seemed befitting and natural to wear the tartan symbolising his ancestral place in the style of the *salvar kemise* of his adopted cultural home. It feels both idiosyncratic and peculiar, and simultaneously authentic and accurate. Peculiar, because it defies convention and creates a discursive reading of mimicry. The usual practice in copying is the suppressed subject mimicking the master. In this instance, the role is reversed therefore distorting the conventional reading of mimicry, substituting instead, a confused or alternate state of cultural identification. What is being mimicked is thrown into question. How does the suppressed subject in colonialism read this image? Conversely, how does the coloniser read the image of the man in tartan? As the colonising subject, how do we read his performative act? If it were the Indian dressed in this costume we could consider the act as exposing the artificiality of the symbolic expression of power of the coloniser. It challenges who the suppressed subject is and supports Fanon's thesis that in colonialism, the psychology of both the coloniser and colonised are deeply affected (Fanon 1952).

I decided to create an artwork about dress codes involving a suit, as a symbolic marker for belonging.¹⁴ I am unsure how or why this first came into my consciousness. Perhaps it might have been at a gathering at my home. An Indian friend arrived in a Punjabi pant-suit. He looked authentic and self-assured. In the middle of central Victoria, a predominantly white Anglo Saxon community, a man with very dark complexion looked like he belonged. Perhaps it was a form of exoticism ... but I hope that was not the case. I admired and maybe, just envied him a little. He is Hindu and speaks Hindi. He was born in India, so religiously, culturally, visually and racially, there seemed to be an authenticity to his identity ... which raised the issue of my own sense of (in)authenticity. Could I ever be authentic in terms of my cultural identity? Can Anglo Indians maintain any form of authenticity in terms of their cultural identity? Or is their authenticity, by its very definition, untrustworthy because it sits in a state of perpetual deferral? Standing next to him, I felt less Indian. Even less than I would normally. It stirred the same feelings of a strange discomfort I always feel when I am in India of belonging and unbelonging.

The final photographic artwork, *Bespoke* (2013), has the protagonist standing central in the picture frame on a dirt track, dressed formally in a three piece suit, wearing mirror reflecting sunglasses. He holds a greyhound by a lead, which looks poised to exit right of the picture frame. Eucalyptus trees in the background appear reminiscent of gum trees in early 19th century Australian colonial paintings, such as those by John Glover. The blue of the sky is bright and typical of a hot, dry Australian summer. The

14 I had not seen the photograph in Dalrymple's books when I commenced making my own suit and conceptualising the project.

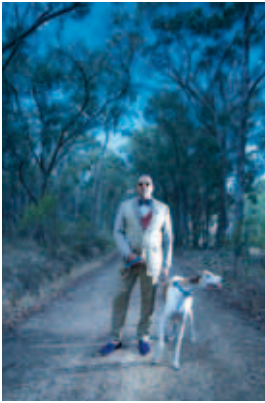


Fig. 462 | D'Costa, R 2013, *Bespoke* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl paper 285 gsm; 148 cm x 105 cm (framed)].

Bespoke (2013) was a complex artwork to realise. It involved working with tailors in Hong Kong for the fabrication of the suit, working with two photographers *in situ* in central Victoria, and finally, working with print technicians to have the photograph printed. Choosing to have the suit made in Hong Kong was a pragmatic decision given that I often travel to Hong Kong. I could have considered Saville Row tailors, but apart from the prohibitive costs, transcribing an English tradition into an Asian context was appealing. Enterprising British tailoring firms established businesses in Shanghai originally, then moved them to Hong Kong as a result of the unrest and uncertainty during the Chinese Communist Revolution. Today, Hong Kong is synonymous with bespoke tailoring.

At all times during the project, I did not want the work to become ironic or pastiche, even though the context of the work sat very close to the margins of irony and pastiche, and sincerity. Who did I want to be ironic toward?



Fig. 464 | D'Costa, R 2011, photographic documentation, second fitting with Hong Kong tailors during the making of the suit for the artwork *Bespoke*, Central Hong Kong. Image courtesy of Daphne Ho.

light in the photograph is deliberately theatrical, reflecting the idiosyncratic nature of the scene. The protagonist has dark skin and seems to be of Indian descent. He wears a splendid suit, the fabric and cut of which make reference to a quintessential English country squire. Closer inspection reveals that ubiquitous English fabrics—plaid, herringbone and hounds-tooth—are all incorporated in the suit. The protagonist also wears a purple check gingham shirt, purple suede Paul Smith brogues, a bow-tie and a red vest.



Fig. 463 | D'Costa, R 2011, photographic documentation, fabric selection for the making of the suit worn by me in the artwork *Bespoke*, Central Hong Kong. Image courtesy of Daphne Ho.

Working with tailors in Hong Kong, I was conscious that things could get lost in translation. I stayed open to these possibilities. I was introduced to reputable tailors and worked with them in designing, selecting fabric and fitting the suit. Even though I had a friend who spoke Cantonese accompany me for the briefings, I sensed, from the amount of laughter, that the suit I was requesting was, in their context, peculiar and ridiculous. I wanted the suit and indeed this project to straddle these circumstances of interpretation, context and displacement. It was important that the suit alluded to the traditional, and at the same time sat at odds with this idea. As the title suggests, I wanted a bespoke garment, one that was unique and fitted to my tastes and desires. Because I was not located in Hong Kong, the fitting and the making of the suit had to occur over an extended period, during which time my body weight and shape fluctuated significantly, so each time I had a fitting for the suit, adjustments had to be made. It was as if the suit did not want to fit me or that my body did not want to fit the suit. Like Joel Shields in *Redfern Now* (2012), (see chapter one), my body was engaging with its own form of resistance. Even after the final fitting I

felt the suit was *not quite right*. It did not physically feel right the way a bespoke suit should. The suit was becoming metaphorical. Why was this Anglo Indian man trying to fit into English clothes?

The idea of things being *not quite right* was the tone I was attempting to achieve in the artwork. I wanted it to straddle the middle space between being awkward and normal, sincere and ironic, so it would feel real and authentic, and at the same time not quite right. An ill-fitting suit was the most appropriate outcome to achieve this. In the context of the project, the bespoke suit would have to be ill-fitting for it to create its own form of authenticity. I asked the tailor to make it tighter and more ill-fitting, but subtly. I was starting to understand the symbolic importance of the suit. I stood in the tailor's showrooms exhilarated, with perplexed tailors who could not understand why I would want a bespoke suit to not fit. I looked into the mirror and wondered what I was looking at, trying to make sense of the project in terms of finding form for slippery and oblique content, which was both right and wrong, simultaneously. I was not attempting to mimic an English gentleman. But what was I trying to be? What was wrong and right about the image in front of me? Who and what was I attempting to represent? What was I going to do with this suit in terms of an artwork? Was the suit the artwork? Or was it important that I wear the suit and if so, where and in what context?

I eventually chose to shoot a photograph of me wearing the suit, on a typically hot summer's day in the Australian bush in the Central Victorian Goldfields region. The land is close to where I live and the edge of the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park. This place is synonymous with settler history as it experienced one of the largest migrations in history when people flocked to the Australian goldfields in search of their fortune. I walk in this area on a daily basis and am reminded of British settler history by the shards of English ceramics found on the ground and by the stone ruins encountered in the national park.

As an Anglo Indian migrant, I often feel displaced in this harsh environment just as early settlers may have felt arriving from Europe and England. Certainly the hot, dry air and unforgiving harsh environment stands in stark contrast to the humid, wet air and urban space of Bombay, where I was born. This is my home now, the place I belong as an Australian citizen. I wanted to represent this sense of belonging and unbelonging simultaneously, in the photograph, where ideas of multiple fracture and dislocation are deeply embedded in the image and reverberate externally to draw the viewer into this shared experience of dislocation. Writer and art critic, Jean Fisher, writing on contemporary American Indian artist, Jimmie Durham, quotes Durham:

One of the most terrible aspects of our situation today is none of us feel that we are authentic. We do not feel that we are real Indians. But each of us carries this "dark secret" in his heart, and we never speak about it ... For the most part we just feel guilty, and try to measure up to the white man's definition of ourselves (Durham cited in Fisher 2008).

Durham's comments penetrate our psyche. To not feel authentic in the context of culture and tradition, as Durham points out, sits as a 'dark secret'. To not 'speak about it', becomes a doubly painful experience. His final remark regarding guilt and trying to measure up to a white man's definition, cuts to the heart of the problem. Durham voices the tragedy of the situation, where all his people can do is try to be what white men want them to be. This scenario we see acted out throughout colonialism and which continues to impact significantly on the colonised. However, where I find hope and a glimmer of optimism is in Durham's comment '[...] For the most part'. This implies that their *own* sense of who they are, is still very much present. It also carries with it a space for agency and resistance; the desire to *be* who they are, runs even deeper than who they are expected to be. As an artist, this is Durham's agency. He has to *be* and

bring artwork into the world that authenticates his being, and at the same time he has to resist defeat by voicing the 'dark secret' and creating a space of hope and optimism now and in the future, for himself, his community and the rest of humanity.

Is this what the protagonist is doing in *Bespoke* (2013)? Attempting to measure up to a white man's definition of himself? Or does he stand full frontal in the picture looking straight ahead at the viewer in defiance and resistance? He wears mirrored glasses, which reflect the viewer's gaze. This activates two propositions. Firstly, through the lens of hybridity it:

[...] allows for those that are gazed upon to gaze back and challenge normative constructions of identity. It also allows for the possibilities to select or accumulate aspects of whiteness that are necessary to engage and access opportunities, which lead to certain privileges. In this way hybridity as an identity paradigm challenges the white gaze (Bhabha, cited in Pais James 2012, pp. 17–18).

The Anglo Indian, as a hybrid community, negotiates its rejection or claims to whiteness, depending on normative circumstances, to 'access opportunities' throughout its existence, well before any theorising on hybridity was established in postcolonial discourse.

Secondly, the protagonist conceals and (because it is a static photograph), therefore perpetually defers recognition of his identity. If however, the viewer were to encounter the protagonist in real time, they would only partially recognise who it might be and in doing so, become partially cognisant of their own presence in the reflective property of the mirrored glasses. The protagonist's presence becomes implicit in the viewer's and vice versa. In this way, we all become implicated in Fanon's discourse on the psychological impact of coloniser and colonised, as broken and damaged as a consequence of colonialism. As cultural theorist, curator and art critic, Nancy Adajania, notes:

[...] the endemic trans-regional leakages of people, ideas, goods and services have ensured that the postcolonial is everywhere, that identities are played out as performance rather than as inheritance, and that (to twist Fanon's celebrated image) the colour of the mask offers no clue as to the possibly surprising colour of the face beneath (Adajania 2010, p. 223).¹⁵

Adajania's comment, that 'the postcolonial is everywhere', acknowledges the interchangeability and interconnectedness of cultures. More importantly, her reference to the performative rather than inheritance, acknowledges and empowers change from within. It also implies that we do not have to wait to dismantle existing power structures, slow and steady 'leakages' is enough to shift and bring about change so that identity becomes fluid and 'surprising' rather than binary. Discourse can no longer be contained within the defined binary of black or white. We are all the subject in postcolonialism. From Adajania's perspective, the protagonist in *Bespoke* (2013) conveys his identity as an empowered character inscribing and claiming his own position in the world. His suit resists classification. When the Anglo Indian protagonist wears the suit he is claiming a post-postmodern position by diverting the use of irony and instead presenting an authentic position of his own desire. He would like the viewer to accept his wearing of the suit. However, he will wear the suit regardless. He has claimed his own being. His performative act (as temporal) has captured and represented as a static photograph ensuring its presence in the future as historical and archival.

15 See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* translated by Charles Lam Markmann, MacGibbon and Kee, London, 1968.

The dog in the photograph is a pedigree greyhound. The pure bred animal stands in contrast to the half-breed Anglo Indian. The greyhound is a beautiful creature and one of the few breeds that have not been genetically tampered with by dog breeders over history. The greyhound can be dated back to Egyptian times, through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Closely associated with the aristocracy and nobility, the greyhound was often represented in art. Ironically, in contemporary society the greyhound is often associated with the working class because of the sport of greyhound racing, referred to in common knowledge as the poor man's thoroughbred.

In the photograph, the dog becomes symbolic of mixed associations in the context of breeding and social standing. Its pose is dynamic, with its front leg looking as if it is on point, pulling to the left in the field of the picture as if ready to exit the narrative, while the protagonist pulls on its collar and lead, attempting to keep it under control. The mouth of the animal is open in a manner that is between menacing and friendliness. Despite this dynamism in the pose of the greyhound, it is the protagonist's stance and gaze that holds and fixes directly outward to the viewer in a way that is assured and challenges the dominant stereotype of the male Anglo Indian as possessing a meek and weak character, as often defined in English literature. He can now own and is in control of this beautiful pure bred animal.

The photograph attempts to capture that 'decisive moment' (Cartier-Bresson 1952) before the protagonist and the dog exit the picture frame (despite the fact that the photograph is staged). The protagonist is aware of the camera and poses accordingly. Everything in the photograph is choreographed, except the dog's movements. That day, over a hundred photographs were taken to find the exact image that brought the organisation of form and content together cohesively. The backdrop of the cathedral-like arching Australian gumtrees becomes a perfect foil for the Anglo Indian protagonist to claim his sense of a fluid and evolving cultural identity.

Mimicry can be an agent for social, cultural and political change. It plays a pivotal role in the reading of the image *Bespoke* (2013) and as I will demonstrate, in Augustus Earle's painting, *Bungaree or Boongarie* (c1775 -1830), and Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* (1977-81).

Homi Bhabha's reading of mimicry is, I believe, particularly interesting and complicated because it potentially engages with both an intentional and unintentional subversion and resistance. In its straightforward use, in copying or aping the colonizer, the colonized exposes the system of colonialism's hollowness. Complex power relations between colonizer and colonized, sits at the heart of colonial mimicry. In colonial mimicry, the ruler (British) wants the ruled (Indian) to be like them, (evolved in their own image), *but* never the same as the hegemonic cultural system. As Bhabha notes, '[...] colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a *subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*' (2004, p. 122). He continues, '[...] in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference' (ibid.).

It is at this very edge point, that causes tension and anxiety for both colonizer and colonized desires. What constitutes 'almost', is the crucial point of slippage. The desires for sameness and difference and the ambivalence it causes, ruptures and shifts power between colonizer and colonized, through the subtle nuances between mockery, imitation, irony, mimicry and repetition. It is the space between mimicry and subversion (mockery), which destabilizes control and power in the civilizing mission.

Through the use of mimicry, from the perspective of the colonizer, the civilizing mission is represented as working. However it mustn't work *too* well. From the perspective of the colonized, the image he translates (through mimicry) can be both transgressive, disparaging, mocking, and simultaneously an attempt to have what he thinks he desires. Ultimately, as Bhabha notes, 'The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority' (2004, p. 126). What is most significant in Bhabha's analysis of mimicry in colonial discourse is its 'partial representation/recognition of the colonial object' (ibid). In avowing only partial Western ideology to the colonized, failure (from the perspective of the colonizer) is inevitable in terms of complete change. What can be created can only ever be a 'partial presence', [...] 'inappropriate colonial subjects.' [...] 'a partial vision of the colonizer's presence; a gaze of otherness, [...] (ibid). As Bhabha reminds us, 'In mimicry, the representation of identity and meaning is rearticulated along the axis of metonymy (2004, p. 128). The colonized is only a resemblance of... 'not quite/not white' (2004, p. 131).

Through the lens of mimicry, *Bespoke's* (2013) performativity, however, confounds any singular reading of the photographic image. The Australian landscape, the greyhound, the suit worn by the protagonist, and the protagonist's role and identity, take on heightened and multiple meanings by challenging dominant Anglo Saxon discourses around land and belonging. Having an Anglo Indian dressed as an English dandy in the Australian landscape ruptures accepted and established normative codes. The image is both believable and incongruous. It is ironic and authentic. It mocks and desires. It simultaneously accepts, hijacks and reroutes expectation.

Augustus Earle's famous portrait of the New South Wales aboriginal Bungaree or Boongarie (c1775 -1830), as a postcolonial reading through mimicry, operates in a similar way to *Bespoke* (2013). Dressed in an abandoned English officer's uniform, the portrait uses the tropes of gentrified portraiture, usually of white men, to deliberately create a confusing compound identity. In Earle's portrait, the protagonist stands proud and deftly tilts his hat in a welcoming gesture to new arrivals to his land, portrayed in the background of the picture. It is a brave and complex image for its time.

It is important to read the image from the perspective of the protagonist and the painter. Bungaree was clearly an interesting and fascinating character. Mimicking the English in dress and manner was a strategy, which granted him access to obvious positions of privilege and opportunity. His mocking gesture, if it indeed was seen in this context, was obviously tolerated by the colonialists of the time, probably because his 'partial semblance' caused no threat to their authority. His dark skin, his torn clothes and the fact that he wears no shoes, are important signifiers which mark him as different and lower in English hierarchical class codes. His English uniform may be perceived (and therefore reduced) to a humorous, non-threatening trope. But its provocation is also undeniable.

Artist's such as Earle, seemed clearly fascinated by this character. There are numerous portraits and illustrations made of him during his time. It is difficult to determine how such formal portraits of Bungaree were received at their time.¹⁶ For the artist, the subject matter would have been fascinating. For an audience, was the image received as humorous? Enigmatic? Provocative? Were such portraits seen as anthropological, as art, or as historical documentation? Or were such images just part of the overall civilizing mission to develop the indigenous person's image in the eyes of the colonialist?

16 It is beyond the scope of this research to identify primary documents which elucidates how the painting was perceived at the time it was painted. Therefore for the argument I put forward, I can only speculate as to its received perception, prior to postmodern and postcolonial discourses, which can potential shift its content when examined through these lens.

Bungaree's imitation of whiteness through the adoption of Western dress codes, renders the image as both subverting hierarchical codes and desiring them.

A contemporaneous postcolonial reading of the work today provides both a conceptual and contextual reading which would have to be different to its historical intentions. A postcolonial reading empowers the subject in a more complex way as it implicates the colonial viewer of the time, in our present lens. Through this lens, the image of Bungaree can be read through the adoption of mimicry and mockery simultaneously from and across the colonizer and the colonized, from the spatialized time of the present. In this way, the portrait of Bungaree functions in ways similar to the *Bespoke* image, by turning the lens back on Englishness and challenging normative attitudes. Does Bungaree really want to be English? Does he really see English culture as superior? Or can we assume by his slightly wicked grin, that his mimicry is a form of resistance? From Bungaree's perspective his gesture proposes he can *be* the same as the colonizer, if he wanted to. But the answer to this question remains ambiguous. And because of the colonizer's unwavering racialized superiority complex, he knows Bungaree can never be him. The image sets up a subtle yet complex balance of power, which becomes more precarious than assumed. As well, by using mimicry the colonized can represent their own ambiguous self, occupying two worlds simultaneously and most significantly, bringing a third space into being, which ruptures and recodes held expectations.



Fig. 465 | Earle, A c. 1826
Bungaree, A native of New South Wales
 Oil on canvas
 68.5 h x 50.5 w cm framed (overall) 81.5
 h x 64 w x 7 d cm
 The National Gallery of Australia and the
 National Library of Australia

While there are a range of artist's who engage mimicry as a device in their artwork; Michael Cook, Yasamasa Morimura, Augustus Earle, Cindy Sherman. It is Sherman's work I find particularly intriguing, because of her steadfastness in locating her work at a point where the images both subvert (which is no doubt her intention), but also reinforces, (according to some feminist critics of her work) patriarchal discourse and power.

In her chapter on Cindy Sherman's practice titled, *Untitled Film Stills: Reproductive or Transgressive Mimicry?* (2000), writer and curator, Maura Reilly discusses how Sherman's 'deconstructivist endeavor succeeds precisely because it wreaks semiotic havoc within the system' [...] (2000, p. 119) and ruptures normative signs of representation. She adds, 'It is via the tactical strategy of mimicry, by actively playing the stereotype of the passive female, that Sherman attempts to expose 'femininity' as a fictitious social construct' (ibid).

Sherman oscillates between negation and reaffirmation of her tropes. Her success, I would argue, is in the very ambiguity of her vacillating roles between victim and victimizer, author and actor, absolute and other. She inhabits two positions, never settling in one space thereby refusing closure. She is in many ways the quintessential postmodern artist, whereby I read her images in the way Reilly describes them, as '[...] "surface", gender comes to be understood as a façade, as a mask that one can take off, or put on, at will' (ibid). It is within its very excess that Sherman's images transgress the stereotype by mocking its naturalness, rendering it absurd (ibid. p. 131.).

However, Sherman's pictures continue to function in a problematic manner, because she remains (almost) loyal to her source. This is the criticism against her work, that while it attempts to critique the

patriarchal discourse, it in fact reinforces it. Where is the necessary and continual point of slippage, excess and difference, which Bhabha insists on for mimicry to operate successfully?

I would argue on the other side. It is this very severity and repetition, which maintains the image as ambiguous – even though we may know Sherman’s clear feminist position. Mimicry, as ambiguous, allows the picture to occupy both spaces for the viewer; one, which critiques and splits the hierarchical discourse and the other that reinforces it. It is both complicit and transgressive – its partiality is both its accelerator and brake.

As Reilly notes, ‘all deconstructivist strategies are ultimately ambivalent and contradictory precisely for this reason – because they are doubly and [partially] coded, because the “master’s tools” are being utilized to dismantle the “master’s house”’ (ibid p. 133). That is, the critique sits *inside* the discourse, simultaneously disrupting it and being complicit.

Mimicry relies on deferral, partiality, gesture and ambiguity to succeed. In order to break from the code, the mimic must *talk back*, by refusing to repeat loyally the source. In Sherman’s *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–81), it is the inclusion of the shutter cord into the picture, which problematizes the image. It is Sherman’s way of talking back. The shutter cord shifts the image from being natural to being constructed; reinforcing or hijacking expectation and power. The viewer is forced to reconsider their relationship to the image and simultaneously the artist’s intentionality. As Reilly so astutely concludes, [...] ‘mimicry becomes critical precisely at its most reflexive moment’ (ibid p.133).



Fig. 466 – 467 | D’Costa, R 2012, photographic documentation during the photo-shoot at Fryerstown, Victoria. Images courtesy of Julie Millowick and Marion Williams respectively.

When shooting *Bespoke* (2013) I used two photographs. One to take the image I would use as the final artwork and the other to document the process and validate its (indexical) truth. There are many instances where I would deliberately include the photographic apparatus in the photograph as a way, similar to Sherman, to challenge the validation of construction versus truth. Another way of showing the difference between the construction of the image and the naturalness of the image was to make both photographers use different filters on their cameras to denote the difference between the theatrically constructed image (blue light) and the 'natural' image (orange light).



CHAPTER FOUR

BEING: THE MULTIPLICITY AND INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BELONGING

History is always ambiguous. Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge. The reading of Saleem's unreliable narration might be, I believed a useful analogy for the way in which we all, every day, attempt to 'read' the world (*Rushdie 1992*, p. 25).

4.1 CORRESPONDENCE: BACKGROUND TO THE LETTERS AND ASIDES FOR THE BESPOKE PROJECT

Correspondence (2012–2015) is the title for two Letters and two Asides that were created during the process of making the artwork, *Bespoke* (2013). The Letters were written to a character named Thyssen Krupp, who worked for a company named *Thyssen Krupp and Associates – Tailors of Distinction*; both are fictional.¹

The Letters are written by the Anglo Indian character who is the protagonist in the photographic artwork, *Bespoke* (2013), who also happens to be the Anglo Indian artist/researcher. So in this context, it is self-referential. However, the relationship between the Anglo Indian as acted out in the three artworks—*Bespoke* (2013), *Elsewhere* (2013) and *P.O.S.H.* (2013)—and the artist/researcher, is left intentionally ambiguous. The Anglo Indian as represented in the photographs inhabits both the space of the real and of fiction. The protagonist, who is not named and only referred to as the 'Anglo Indian', becomes the avatar of the artist/researcher, acting out the expectations and desires of his community's failures, hopes and anxieties.

The artist/researcher is also the narrator in the Asides. An 'aside' is a device used often in theatre as a way for characters in a play to step out of their character and speak directly to the audience. The two Asides in *Correspondence* (2012–2015), operate in a similar way. They are neither descriptive of the process, nor background to the process of making *Bespoke* (2013), but rather, a way to write about ideas during the process of thinking and making *Bespoke* (2013). *Correspondence* (2012–2015) was never conceived as an

¹ Thyssenkrupp is a global German engineering firm. I came across their brand name in an elevator in Hong Kong. I was struck by the name for no particular reason, except that I thought, amusingly, it sounded like a name the film makers, Ethan and Joel Cohn, would use for a character in their films. I would find out later that, Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza was a significant art collector and connoisseur, and founded the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Spain. For further information see https://www.thyssenkrupp.com/en/konzern/geschichte_grfam_t3.html and <http://www.museothyssen.org/en/thyssen/coleccion>.

artwork, though there is no reason why it cannot become an artwork in the future. The Asides, besides narrating the story relating to the suit, also weave in oblique references to the other artworks in my PhD. One example is the tearing of the letter [the breaking up of words in the sentences], which is in reference to the same strategy of fracturing words used in *Standard English* (2013). In this way, the Asides sit inside the fictional narrative and simultaneously make reference to the real space of the artist/researcher living in central Victoria and making artworks for his PhD.

■ NEAR INVISIBILITY—CHRISTOV-BAKARGIEV'S FOUR CONDITIONS FOR DOCUMENTA 13:
THE ACT OF RE-PERFORMING, UNDER SIEGE, IN A STATE OF HOPE – DREAMING,
ON RETREAT – SLEEPING

I cite German artist Kai Altoff's, experience at *dOCUMENTA 13* (2012), as an example of how form can unintentionally become an artwork (in spite of the artist's original intentionality), and as a way to highlight the complexity and anxiety artists feel in their art practice in terms of process, form and content.

As you entered the vastness of the Fridericianum at the exhibition *dOCUMENTA 13* (2012), you encountered three works, all barely visible in terms of form, yet working in beautiful unison to create a condition of hope and optimism in the face of failure and anxiety. Ryan Gander's, *I Need Some Meaning I Can Memorize (The Invisible Pull)* (2012), is a gentle breeze barely noticeable and undetectable as either natural or artificial. Writing for *Art in America*, curator and art critic, Gregory Volk, describes the work as 'gentle but pronounced ... this breeze envelops you, pushing you in some directions and pulling you in others' (2012, para. 1). It is a work that feels natural and assuring, yet ambiguous in its presence.

As the breeze leads you through the vast empty spaces, the sound of Ceal Floyer's *'Til I get it right* (2005), echoes. It consists of a seamlessly edited version of Tammy Wynette's song of the same title. Floyer uses only two looped lines repetitively, 'I just keep on / 'til I get it right', which become almost a melancholic mantra of failure and hope. As, curator and writer, Eva Schaffer, notes, it becomes 'a comment on the futility of trying to reach perfection as an artist, or of artistic production itself' (Socks 2012, para. 7). It is one of those artworks, which once Wynette's silky voice gets in your head it stays—like an earworm.

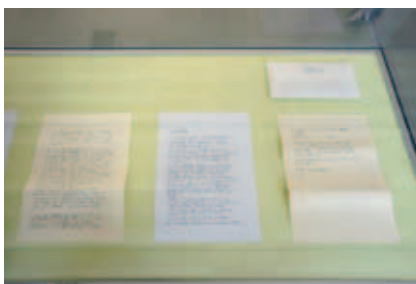
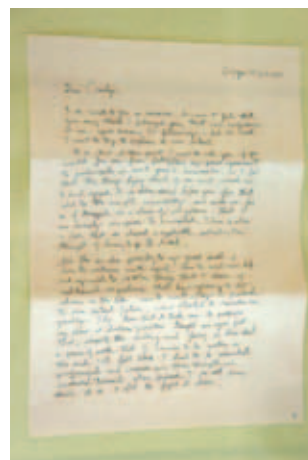


Fig. 468–469 | Altoff, K 2012, original letters written by Kai Altoff to Christov-Bakargiev; the letters were eventually displayed at the Fridericianum as an introduction to *dOCUMENTA 13*.



The third artwork, is a vitrine containing a five page handwritten letter by the German painter, Kai Altoff, to the artistic director of *dOCUMENTA 13* (2012), Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, apologising for his decision to opt out of the exhibition, and seeks Christov-Bakargiev's forgiveness. It is a heartfelt letter, which spells out the personal fears, anxieties and fragility an artist feels when making art. I can only assume that Altoff gave Christov-Bakargiev permission to allow the letter to represent him as the artwork.

Together these three works—particularly Altoff's, which except for Christov-Bakargiev's fine curatorship, was never intended to even be an artwork—set the conditions to enter the complexity of her vision of *dOCUMENTA 13* (2012), a vision that extends across time and space, to create a sense of rest and hope in a world under siege and full of anxiety. As she notes:

dOCUMENTA 13 is located in an apparent simultaneity of places and times, and it is articulated through four main positions corresponding to conditions in which people, in particular artists and thinkers, find themselves acting in the present. Far from being exhaustive of all the positions that a subject can take, they acquire their significance in their interrelation. The four conditions that are put into play within the mental and the real spaces of the project are the following:

- On stage. I am playing a role, I am a subject in the act of re-performing.
- Under siege. I am encircled by the other, besieged by others.
- In a state of hope, or optimism. I dream, I am the dreaming subject of anticipation.
- On retreat. I am withdrawn, I choose to leave the others, I sleep (Christov-Bakargiev cited from press information *dOCUMENTA 13* (2012), para. 5).

In the above context, I see *Correspondence* (2012–2015), as sitting in-between and interrelated to the artworks and the other forms of writing in the other chapters of my PhD. I have included them in the dissertation as they allow for a more creative, reflexive and discursive way of presenting ideas in another modality (other than artworks). An earlier version of the Letters also appeared in a catalogue publication for the three exhibitions I held in 2013.

4.2 WALID RAAD: ARCHIVES, STORYTELLING AND HISTORY AS FACTUAL AND FICTITIOUS

Born in Lebanon and residing in New York, artist Walid Raad, uses a range of formal strategies in his art practice—installation, literary essays, performance, photography and video—to examine the contemporary history of Lebanon, particularly the complex civil wars between 1975 and 1990. Raad's reputation as an artist is built on the astute structuring of his performances as 'an earnest archival researcher' (Westmoreland 2008, p. 204), investigating the history of the Lebanese civil wars and the representation of the broader Arab world. Working mainly under two longterm projects, *The Atlas Group* (1989–2004) and *Scratching on things I could disavow* (2007–ongoing), Raad gleans from both historical and factual information, which gets reconstituted with fictional information (pseudo-factual), to create his own forms of artwork, using the 'mimicry of the archive' as a way to bring into question the authenticity of history (Rogers cited in Westmoreland 2008, p. 204).

He uses narrative to shift 'subjective stories into believable and ostensibly objective histories' (Westmoreland 2008, p. 203). Raad is convincing in combining traditional models of historic research, such as the structure of the archive, with fictional storytelling. By interjecting forms of personal experience, he challenges how history is remembered and represented—sometimes a combination of actuality and fabrication.

Interrogating the gap between representations of history and memory, Raad 'aims at making visible the processes that render certain perspectives silent, invisible, and dislocated in these popular histories of victimization' (Westmoreland 2008, p. 201). Raad examines consequences of encounter when information enters the public realm and becomes construed in ways that lay bare existing frames and structures, which often support division, prejudice and power. Raad's performative presentations take the viewer on 'narrative excursions ... to critique the representational models inherited from western modernity

and challenge official modes of erasure' (Westmoreland 2008, p. 204). Raad's process of researching, collecting, collating, refiguring and archiving stories, events and information—usually outside of the grand narratives (gambling historians, for example)—ensures a multi-perspectival lens on events that circulate around histories. Rather than trying to impose a narrative that:

[...] stands in opposition to the dominant one, Raad inserts an alternative story within the master narrative to rupture its integrity. And using the guise and terminology of historical research allows Raad to cloak his fictions in fact and thus to subvert the meaning constructed in western discourse about Lebanon and the Middle East more broadly (Westmoreland 2008, p. 202).

Negotiating fact from fiction gets deliberately blurred through the information presented and as a consequence of the formal structures he uses to register and display the information. For example, entering and navigating the 'archive' on the website for *The Atlas Group*, (see *The Atlas Group Archive*, <http://www.theatlasgroup.org/>, viewed 16 June 2014), quickly becomes disorienting in terms of determining what is factual from what is invented. As the home page on the website notes:

The Atlas Group is a project established in 1989 to research and document the contemporary history of Lebanon. One of our aims with this project is to locate, preserve, study, and produce audio, visual, literary and other artefacts that shed light on the contemporary history of Lebanon (The Atlas Group 1989–2004, para. 1).

The statement sounds plausible and authentic, which is Raad's intention. However, while Raad exclaims, 'one of *our* aims', the group is only represented by Walid Raad. Any other character associated with the Atlas Group is fictional. Watching Raad's videos and looking at his photographs, it becomes hard to distinguish the historical document from the contemporary artwork. Raad is a master of concealing and revealing information. What he presents is deliberately divergent and discursive. In fact, Raad completely conflates form, content and process in the making and presentation of his work. In one of his publications, *Scratching on Things I could Disavow: A History of Modern and Contemporary Art in the Arab World Part 1_Volume 1_Chapter_1 (Beirut: 1992–2005) A Project by Walid Raad* (n.d), you are presented with a box that contains a series of foldouts, text publications and other books with images, diagrams and photographs. He is deliberately obtuse. Text is sometimes rendered so small it is impossible to read. Images are given no context or captions. If there is a sequential logic to Raad's publication, he is not going to tell you what it is. The title for this publication is also the title for a series of exhibitions in different locations. Each configuration for the exhibition is specific to the site: Como 2009, Paris 2010, New York 2010, London 2010. The way to get closer to Raad's overall vision is for the viewer to become the researcher of his scattered and displaced archives. You have to read the artwork and interrogate the forms and ideas that reference the world and Raad's world with all its back stories and asides, to navigate his long-term projects, exhibitions and publications; and if you can, to work closely through the complex and discursive labyrinth of beliefs and knowledge ... at which point you might get an understanding of, or glimpse of, Raad's complex engagement with and in the world. Inside the labyrinth of Raad's oeuvre, he offers the 'opportunity to imagine the impossible' (Westmoreland 2008, p. 211), where the 'very notion of experience is itself in question', and where this very 'question illustrates the tension between knowledge and belief as modes of experience' (ibid., p. 207).



Fig. 470 | Raad, W 1996–2001, *My neck is thinner than a hair: Engines*, [one hundred pigmented inkjet prints, each 9 7/16 x 13 3/8 in [24 x 34 cm], frame 9 13/16 x 13 3/4 in [25 x 35 cm]].



Fig. 471 | Raad, W 1996–2001, *My neck is thinner than a hair: Engines* (detail), [one hundred pigmented inkjet prints, each 9 7/16 x 13 3/8 in [24 x 34 cm], frame 9 13/16 x 13 3/4 in [25 x 35 cm]].

For example, in the website archive, each document is given its source. One of these is the historian Dr Fadi Fakhouri, who as it turns out is fictional, as is the whole archive, which is supposedly housed in Beirut and New York. Both the character, Fadi Fakhouri, and the archive itself, are presented objectively and factually. Yet, as with the writing, subjectivity and the poetic leak through in ways that allow the work to become personal, emotive and human. What Raad presents as research (seemingly) fails. Under scrutiny, his findings bare cracks and cannot be validated. As an artist, this is exactly his intention. Raad is actually meticulous in his decision-making, presenting research as artworks, which (as Westmoreland highlights) challenge the very authenticity of experience differentiated as objectified knowledge and subjective belief.

Often, what is presented, when you think more constructively about historical documentation, are important moments and events. Raad, however, will often focus on the oblique or absurd: *My neck is thinner than a hair: Engines*, 1996–2001, is a series of photographs that supposedly attempt to locate every bomb ever detonated during the civil war, or idiosyncratic events like the gambling habits of fictional historians (*Notebook volume 72: Missing Lebanese wars, 1989/1998*), which again are presented as a series of photographs. Raad's art practice generates 'cultural fantasies erected from the material of collective memories' as a consequence of attempting to understand the 'possibilities and limits of writing their histories' (Raad 2004, cited in Westmoreland 2008, p. 207).

What is revealed in Raad's art practice is that it is not important whether the work, or sources or documents are accurate and factual, or imagined and fictional. What is important is how easily factual and fictional information can be manipulated, misconstrued and re-presented. Raad is not formally interested in the distinctions of what is factual and what is fictional, but rather in how information is circulated and received, entering our systems of believing and accepting. Mark Ryan Westmoreland, in his PhD dissertation, *Crisis of Representation: Experimental Documentary in Postwar Lebanon* (2008), makes this argument and claims further the distinction that '[...] "belief" stands in dialectical opposition to "knowledge." Raad does not favour one over the other, but he challenges claims that knowledge provides a correct "cognitive relation to the world" and belief a flawed one' (Westmoreland 2008, p. 205). It is the breaching of these boundaries between 'belief and knowledge' in which I am interested. The way we live in the world as human beings and the way we re-perform acts guided by evolving belief systems that challenge the correctness of knowledge, is what I attempt to achieve in the artworks. If the difference between belief and knowledge is certified evidence, as Raad



Fig. 472 | Raad, W 1996–2003, *Notebook volume 72: Missing Lebanese wars* (plate 137), [archival inkjet print].

argues, then the question (asked by Raad) is ‘how any proposition becomes true and false and what constitutes evidence’ (Raad, cited in Westmoreland 2008, p. 206).

Raad relies on the role of narrative and memory as strategies that can lead to the construction of both identity and history. Everything is not as it seems, literally. However, it is important to not think that Raad is an inexact researcher or that he is not careful in how he negotiates and uses fictionalised accounts and authentic archived information. Nothing is further from the truth. Raad is meticulous in his research and intentionality. What Raad exposes with such precision, is the multiplicity and instability in events and stories that shift and fracture in time and space. Fragmentation reconfigures as new narratives form and dissolve in the unfolding of stories, sometimes bringing things together only to see them again fall apart in a circulatory way.

Raad works from that precarious space of unclear demarcation, sitting between and oscillating at the edges of actual and imagined, fake and authentic, belief and knowledge, and memory and forgetfulness. Raad circumscribes the boundaries of representation and then circumvents its veracity. For example, to return to the character, Dr Fadi Fakhouri, we find out he was an eminent historian, recently deceased, who donated his works to *The Atlas Group*. Raad goes to great lengths to ensure the authenticity of his sources. In *Civilizationally, we do not dig holes to bury ourselves* (1958–59/2003), we are presented with a series of black and white photographs purported to be taken by Dr Fakhouri. They are images of the doctor in hotel rooms, cafes and tourist locations around Paris and Rome ... except in reality they are photographs that have been digitally manipulated and altered, and are actually images of Raad’s own father (*Museum of Modern Art*, New York 2015).

In his more recent long-term project, *Scratching on things I could disavow* (2007–ongoing), Raad expands his exploration to consider how the Middle East is both perceived and represented against a backdrop of military, political and economic structures and the expanding infrastructure of the art world in the region, in terms of museums, galleries, biennales and art fairs (*Museum of Modern Art*, New York 2015).

Encountering Raad’s exhibitions creates a disarming feeling.² It is often difficult to recover content from what is presented within and outside of the context of art criticism. The viewer has to decode what is presented, well after experiencing Raad’s exhibition. To understand his work, one has to seemingly engage with multiple artworks and projects simultaneously across various modalities, forms and materials.

Underpinning Raad’s work is the idea of trauma and anxiety, as it relates to the history of Lebanon as a consequence of war. But what is more compelling is the idea of trauma itself as a deeply disturbing experience in the context of how the Orient, as one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other (Said 1978), is undergoing another more perverse ‘orientalising’ of sorts in the context of recent events surrounding Islamic cultures. Specifically, the distorted perception of how Muslims are being imaged and represented (as dangerous and as terrorists) in the Western media and popular discourse.

In excerpts from a multimedia presentation–performance, *I Feel a Great Desire to Meet the Masses Once Again*, delivered at the *Home Works III* festival (November 2005) in Beirut³, Raad draws on the experience of Canadian Maher Arar—who was detained in transit in the United States (US) and consequently

2 I found this to be the case at his exhibition in New York, *Scratching on Things I Could Disavow: A History of Art in the Arab World/ Part 1_Volume 1_Chapter 1*, [Beirut, 1992–2005] November 6–December 19, 2009, at the Paula Cooper Gallery 534 W 21st Street, NY.

3 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca00-b6uQ-s>, viewed November 2014.

imprisoned in Syria for ten months—and combines this with his own fictionalised accounts of being detained and questioned at an airport in the US. As the narrative unfolds between the interrogating Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents and Raad, and as items from his luggage are unpacked, questioned and rendered suspicious ... photographic self-portraits, nude images of himself with dead animals and airline safety cards, become recontextualised and connected to the prevailing anxiety of Islamic terrorism and threats within US border security. New meaning, as evidence, is transplanted onto the situation. What starts as humorous and absurd, quickly shifts to menace and escalates to a situation of volatile uncertainty. As Raad's narration of the story builds and the evidence from Raad's luggage mounts, he asks the agents, 'What is the nature of this exchange? What do you call it?' The agent replies, 'I call it a conversation'. Raad asks, 'You don't call it an interrogation? A detention?' To which the agent replies, 'No, it is a conversation, nothing else' (Raad, 2005).

But how can the conversation only be about what it is and nothing else? It is the space between belief and knowledge as it relates to experience that sits inside the conversation, which creates the disjuncture. Raad elegantly exposes this rupture, where neo-orientalist ideas still prevail. Raad becomes the circumstantial victim because of the prevailing fear and condition of our times in the context of global terrorism articulated through a Western lens.

What is most significant about Raad's art practice in the context of my Bespoke project, is the very idea of destabilising authenticity as it relates to historical knowledge, subjective experience and fictitious memory, where the 'neat divisions' of 'fact/fiction', 'objectivity/subjectivity' are destabilised (Westmoreland 2008, p. 209).

Correspondence (2012–2015), which appears later in this chapter, emphasises the interrelationship between subjective belief and authentic knowledge. Particularly the two Asides, where the text attempts to weave actual events in the various art projects and artworks with reflective and fictional accounts of both characters—the Anglo Indian and the English assistant. Like Raad, the nature of process, form and content as it relates to art practice and personal narratives from everyday experiences, coalesces in ways that expose neo-colonialist attitudes towards race and class.

4.3 LINKING NARRATIVE, ARTWORKS AND TEXT

Armed with these abovementioned accounts (Christov-Bakargiev's opening for dOCUMENTA 13, and Walid Raad's art practice), along with the knowledge that narrative has played a key role throughout my PhD—such as my mother's orated storytelling, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*—I revisited the Letters and Asides, and extended them, using narrative as a linking device between the artworks. Sometimes the references to the artworks are direct and at other times oblique. I also make reference to actual experiences, actual events—past and present—as well as fictional encounters.

These Letters and Asides sit in-between an artwork and text in the dissertation ... as a linchpin between the artworks, experience, life, memory, stories, facts and fiction.

4.4 TEXT AS SCRIPT AS POTENTIAL ARTWORKS

The Letters and Asides were initially written in 2012. Rewriting and editing them in 2015, I saw them as potential scripts for a short video or live performance, similar to the project *Tomorrow* (2014), by

Elmgreen and Dragset. The front cover for the *Tomorrow* (2014) catalogue states the title, followed by 'Scenes from an unrealised film by Elmgreen & Dragset'. On the first page is a quote by director, Ingmar Bergman: 'I write scripts to serve as skeletons awaiting the flesh and sinew of images' (Bergman cited in *Tomorrow* 2015, p.1).

Throughout the research I was undecided as to whether or not I needed to make a field trip back to India, specifically to Colaba, Bombay. I finally decided it was important to go back, given that India, as a physical and imagined place, played such a central role in the research. (Perhaps India and Colaba were my scripts awaiting 'the flesh and sinew of images'.) But I was unclear as to the purpose of the trip and what I would actually do there. Would I collect visual information? Make an actual work in India? Walk the streets trying to absorb the complexity of the city and my own relationship to it?

It felt uncanny that as I was preparing for a final visit to Bombay, India as a fieldtrip, I thought that there may not be a formal outcome, in terms of an artwork, from the visit. Perhaps there would be no 'flesh and sinew of images' but only a script of sorts. Months leading to the trip, I was fraught with anxiety as I grappled with attempting to find form and images for a project about being in India. I imagined writing about the making of an artwork as I sat in the flat where I was born 52 years ago. Time and distance were again part of the equation in terms of knowing where my place/s are in the world, as an Anglo Indian. A sense of feeling displaced as an Anglo Indian, as well as leaving and returning to India, and looking for a place as home, are issues I discuss in the final chapter along with the artwork *Closeness & Distance* (2015), which is the video I eventually made in India.

4.5 HETAIN PATEL LEAPING IN SPACE AS SPIDERMAN

The idea of being and belonging as both a psychological and geographical construct in relation to the self is explored by British born artist Hetain Patel, often using humour and storytelling to investigate shifting forms of cultural identity. His artwork draws on ideas related to migration and his own familial experiences of the Indian diaspora, exposing the entangled space of identity in relation to culture, tradition and more contemporary societal and familial expectations.

Relationships between the desire to maintain and belong to both an adopted and ancestral home and culture are explored often in both humanist and empathic situations. Patel exposes the ruptures and divisions that need to be negotiated in everyday circumstances of living in the world.

The Jump (2015) shown at the 8th Asia Pacific Triennale (APT) in Brisbane, consisted of a two channel HD video projection, which was viewed by entering a darkened room. The first video the viewer encounters is of a single figure (the artist) in a home-made Spiderman outfit crouched in a pose reminiscent of the superhero character and of many Asians. The space in this video is an atmospheric space filled with a misty smoke-like vapour. There is an epic sounding instrumental soundtrack, which works well in developing and building a tension as the crouched figure, in very slow motion, leaps across the space landing and staying in the same crouched position. The screen goes blank and the soundtrack ends. The viewer walks around to the other side of the screen where a second video commences.

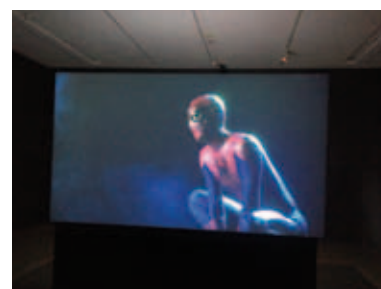


Fig. 473 | Patel, H 2015, *The Jump* (edition of 5) [installation view], two-channel HD video installation, 16:9, colour, sound.



Fig 474–475 | Patel, H 2015, *The Jump* (edition of 5) (installation view), two-channel HD video installation, 16:9, colour, sound.

This second video begins with quite a formal scene of the artist's extended family dressed in traditional Indian clothing in a domestic space. According to the text in the APT catalogue, the video is staged in Patel's grandmother's living room in Bolton, England. It is the same room Patel spent the first five years of his life and it is also where each member of his extended family stayed when they first immigrated to Britain (APT8 2015, p. 253). It is a small room. The camera is shot is tight, barely able to contain and present everyone in the room.

The video pans very slowly from right to left of screen. The male members of the family stand, while the female members are seated in the lounge in front of the men. Almost all the members look directly toward the camera. Except as the camera pans, the viewer notices a couple of the members discreetly glance toward where the camera is moving. Eventually when the camera gets to left of screen we see the same figure from the first video, crouched on the couch.

Now all the family members watch as the figure leaps in very slow motion, landing on the floor in front of the couch. He slowly turns and fixes his gaze on his family who, without emotion, gaze back.

The jump or leap is a simple yet dramatic action. It is the only action in the video. It is a strangely beautiful and completely engaging action to watch. It is absurd and humorous, and obliquely and eloquently sets out the ambiguous and often contradictory feelings of belonging and dislocation migrants experience.

I find Patel's choice of a fictional superhero fascinating. In the artist's notes for the catalogue, it mentions him wearing the Spiderman outfit because it is 'the only superhero costume he found where he could completely cover his skin and not appear as the Asian or Indian superhero (APT8 2015, p. 253). However there are other interesting implications in his choice. Spiderman, as a fictional character, received his super powers after being infected by a spider bite. The characterisation of Spiderman is often as a lonesome figure who struggles with a darker, psychological turmoil. He is the outcast and outsider of his community.

So what does Patel, as Spiderman, represent in the video? The complete concealing of his skin colour and ethnicity renders him within the realm of fantasy yet subjectively present in the reality of his familial home. Each holds the other's gaze. What has the spider bite infected him with? What hybrid monstrosity has he become? One who no longer wears the marking and costume of his tradition and culture. Yet still occupies the same space and history as his family. Even the white-skinned family members in the video have adopted the traditional Indian costume and are accepted as part of their family. How do they share in the same social imagining of their future? The question is left unanswered,

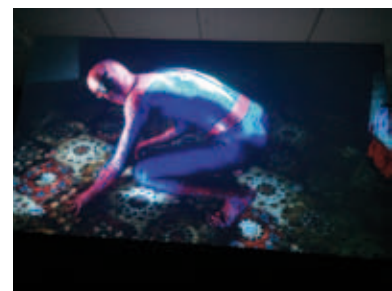


Fig 476–477 | Patel, H 2015, *The Jump* (edition of 5) (installation view), two-channel HD video installation, 16:9, colour, sound.

leaving the space for the answer open. The viewer can scrutinise the faces of the family members in an attempt to try and determine what they are thinking. But it can ultimately only be speculation. Patel, in this video occupies the subaltern space, shared by hybrid cultures, migrants and now infected monsters. Through the recontextualising of cultural norms and motifs, Patel's *leap* dislodges the existing framework, which majority groups are comfortable with and replaces it with an unstable and fluctuating personae somewhere between fantasy and reality.

4.6 CORRESPONDENCE (2012–2015)

■ THE FIRST LETTER TO MR THYSSEN KRUPP

To: Mr Thyssen Krupp
 Thyssen Krupp & Associates – Tailors of Distinction
 71-72 Jermyn Street, London, SW1Y 6PF

23/1/2012

Dear Mr Thyssen Krupp

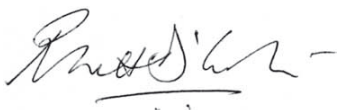
May I introduce myself, as such introductions, I am led to believe, are important. A letter of introduction, written by the right person, would have been befitting; an acknowledgement that perhaps 'I may be accepted and belong'. Unfortunately I have no such letter.

I write thus, with trepidation and anticipation in seeking your advice regarding my attire. (An attempt to dress as the quintessential English country gentlemen). It is said 'Clothes make the Man' (would Beau Brummell have said that?).⁴ I am aware of the esteemed and rich tradition of Saville Row and with this in mind, I thought a bespoke suit, tailored to the highest specifications, would surely hold me in good and fair esteem.

I could not decide on fabric, but finally narrowed it down to three ubiquitous English fabrics—a plaid, hounds-tooth and herringbone—and used all three. Of course I considered a Harris Tweed, but chose to show restraint, which is the English way—yes? A gingham shirt, matching Irish linen kerchief, Paul Smith purple brogues, a classic, handmade, (virtually bespoke), bow tie and a red waistcoat—the red relating specifically to the ceremonial and military attire of the English nineteenth century with a nod to the red hunter's jacket and the dandy—completed the outfit.

I wanted to consider everything and make it perfect! I am sure you can read between the lines in sensing my delight at the result. But I must not get ahead of myself, as it is your professional validation, which I await. Who other than a man of your distinction and fine breeding could know better? Please sir, I am at your mercy that you will deliver a good report.

Awaiting a reply with anticipation.



Rhett D'Costa

4 Born George Bryan Brummell (1778–1840); Brummell was considered the leading voice in men's clothing for his time, see www.britannica.com/biography/Beau-Brummell-English-dandy, viewed 12 December 2015.

■ THE SECOND LETTER TO MR THYSSEN KRUPP

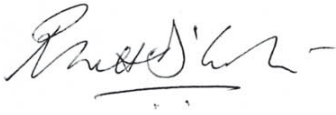
To: Mr Thyssen Krupp
 Thyssen Krupp & Associates
 Tailors of Distinction
 71-72 Jermyn Street, London, SW1Y 6PF

14/02/2012

Dear Mr Thyssen Krupp

I wrote to you on the 23/01/2012, introducing myself and requesting your honest and expert opinion regarding the enclosed photograph of myself dressed in the fine clothes befitting an English country gentleman. Perhaps the letter was not received? Or that it was misplaced? I therefore enclose another copy for your consideration. I know that you must be so very busy to even entertain my humble request. But perhaps you might make a little time in your busy schedule to respond. I stay open to your expert suggestions and recommendations. And as previously, await your esteemed reply with anticipation.

Respectfully



Rhett D'Costa

■ THE FIRST ASIDE: THE ANGLO INDIAN, REFLECTING AND AWAITING A RESPONSE IN FRYERSTOWN, AUSTRALIA

The Englishman thinks too much above himself to write. I think? Bhabha is right in quoting the character, Mr 'Whisky' Sisodia, from Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses: 'The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means'* (Bhabha 2004, p. 9).

Or perhaps Mr Krupp did receive the letter and thinks highly of the suit. Perhaps the people at Thyssen Krupp & Associates are thinking of how, at this very moment, to *copy* the suit for their own purposes. Should I continue on this quest? Or resign myself to accept my differences? Have I failed? Is the suit a failure? Am I a failure?

Perhaps I should have used the Harris Tweed as well? Why show restraint? After all I am not English. Will they ever write? Why should I care so much about their opinion anyway? They are only tradespeople—tailors! Not real English gentlemen. For what reason do I need their validation?

And what to make of the management at the Calcutta Club, insisting on a 'colonial' dress code to enter their Raj-era, Georgian style, Gentleman's Club? Imagine, in 2012 these rules still persisting? The great Indian artist, M F Husain cannot enter because his 'kurta' doesn't meet the club's dress code. And Gopalkrishna Gandhi (Ghandi's grandson) will not attend because he too is not 'allowed' to wear his kurta. To think, this club was initially formed to challenge the racism of other gentlemen's clubs.⁵

Has the world gone completely mad? Everything is topsy-turvy. They will not dare turn me away! Not in my resplendent suit. No Indian or English will have that right, not this time. Not Brahmin, not English educated, no family name or honour. Mixed! Everything is mixed up. Marsala-mixed-up.

Of course I will I write again! Or wait ... I shall wait but for how long? I seem to always be kept waiting.

5 The information used was referenced from Nelson, D 2011, 'Calcutta Club faces revolt over "colonial" dress code', *The Telegraph*, viewed 13 March 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/8576420/Calcutta-Club-faces-revolt-over-colonial-dress-code.html>.

■ THE SECOND ASIDE AT THE OFFICES OF MR THYSSEN KRUPP & ASSOCIATES, LONDON, ENGLAND

The letter arrives, six days to be exact, after it was sent. On a bitter-cold, sunless, English day at 4.45 pm, just 45 minutes from 'knock-off' time, the first and original letter from Mr Rhett D'Costa is opened in the back cutting rooms of Thyssen Krupp & Associates, by Mr Krupp's personal assistant.

The assistant, as I describe him, feels like a cliché—a non-descript man of very fair complexion, slight build, glasses perched low on his sharp nose affecting a humourless air, who is granted permission to open company mail. He reads the letter quickly ... it has been a long, thankless day. Bemused, a little chuffed at the tone of respect in the letter, and then irritated that the request involves a response, something he knows he will have to follow up.

Now, with only 35 minutes before leaving the establishment, having had to listen to the subtle arrogance of the snobbish clientele, the tone in their voices, that smug indifference of the privileged, private school class ... the assistant shuffles through the papers and looks at the photograph. He can hardly believe what he is looking at. It is an affront to his learned aesthetic. He compares the letter and the photograph, one in each hand. It is completely ridiculous: the suit is ridiculous, and the man wearing the suit even more ridiculous.

He can't find space at this moment to feel any kind of empathy with the tone in the letter or the photograph. He leans into the photograph looking closely with and without his glasses; perhaps the answer might lie between sharpness and a blur. The person in the photograph is smug. Ridiculous is right. Really! This 'fellow', this 'Indian' in the photograph, should know better; should really know his place. What is he playing at?

The assistant is, by now, angry with this whole business. His initial bemusement and slight irritation, shifts to annoyance and now anger. He can feel the tension growing in his body. If everyone just knew their place and stayed there. Literally! It would solve so many problems. He is reminded immediately of all the Indians he has to encounter in his life, taking up room, applying for his job, speaking in odd accents and those cooking smells that forever linger around the stairwells of his flat; and all this in his own country. He notices how they look at him. He knows they want what he has; that they are scheming and planning to take it, even as they smile and offer him their food.

Everything is topsy-turvy. This whole business of immigration and globalisation and multiculturalism is to blame for all the problems he has to contend with today. It is too complex for him to fathom and comprehend. He wants a simplistic answer to all this. Simple words like, '*Stop the Boats*', which he has heard Australian politicians use, when watching television. Three words, easy to understand and nod in quiet agreement each time he sees stories about refugees in the news.

The workshop has a large industrial clock on the wall. The assistant had taken to spending too much time watching the second hand move in a circulatory act around the numbers on the clock face. He takes solace in this repetitive act and the precision of its machinations. It comforts him to know that time could be contained and compartmentalised in the roundness of the clock's form. To think of time in any other way only led to anxiety. He liked boundaries and clear distinctions, in general. He didn't like variables or anything indeterminate. He saw this as weakness.

His pocket watch chimed. For a very long time now, he had fallen into the habit of running his personal watch fifteen minutes faster than the actual time. The minutes and hours in the day moved too slowly. The world moved too slowly. The assistant liked speed: it was easier to forget the present state of affairs. The fast pace of the city provided an anonymity that he required. He did not want to know the strangers who now lived in his neighbourhood, who had darker skin and odd accents. If he was aware of Milan

Kundera's mathematical equations about remembering and forgetting in the context of speed, he would agree with the writer's hypothesis. Moving through the world quickly made him forget.

His personal, unspoken, thoughts dissolve as he relaxes his shoulders. It is officially closing time. He carefully folds the letter, enclosing the photograph and then, as carefully and deliberately, proceeds to tear the letter in half and in half and in half again until there can be no evidence of words that were once sentences, sentences that were once paragraphs and paragraphs that spelt out an[other] person's hopes, dreams and aspirations.

Words lie broken.

The narrative is displaced and fractured on the torn pages; meaning still exists, but differently now. Clutching fragments of photograph and letter in his hand, he hastily stuffs the pieces into his coat pocket, unaware that two pieces quietly glide to the workshop floor ... where the words, 'I am sure' and 'distinction and fine breeding' lie face down. These words would later, no doubt, be swept up with all the other workshop floor debris, by the migrant cleaner, working in England illegally for below award rates.

At exactly this same instance, in Fryerstown, Australia, while walking his beloved greyhound in the bush, the Anglo Indian turns toward the sound of an almighty crash. It is right behind him. Even if he could hear the sound of the letter tearing in London, it would have been drowned out by the weight of the eucalyptus branch lying shattered on the track on which he was walking. He closes his eyes and shudders as thoughts of weight, history and his own sense of mortality enter his mind simultaneously. He knows it was a close call. That branch could have killed him. He is used to uncertainty always surrounding him. But prefers not to think too much about it. Unconsciously, he crouches to the ground as if gravity provided no other option. He opens his eyes and stares at the huge fallen limb from the tree. He consciously, this time, picks up a stick among the scattered debris ... a branch from a mistletoe⁶ once attached parasitically to the eucalyptus, mimicking its appearance in everyway, now lies detached from the host.

The Anglo Indian consciously picks up the mistletoe, sensing an invisible bond between this stick and himself. He starts to mark the dust with the stick, making small circles in a repetitive way, mimicking the way his mother mixed atta with her hand when making chapatis. Recalling India, often with sentiment and nostalgia, was becoming a reoccurring theme recently and with more frequency. He would remember the sounds of crows from the flat in Colaba at early morning, the Gateway of India, the heat and light. It would be misleading to suggest, that there existed deep, complex narratives in these recollections for anyone else. Others may simply see a montage of images—tetrapods, the sea, interiors, images close and distant, in and out of focus—as just that, a collection of forms and images representing nothing more than what they are. But he knew intimately that stories lived in the images. And that there were connections between the images that traced narratives, which he never really talked about. Who would he talk to about this stuff from his past anyway? He didn't know there was anything to talk about. Now though, these thoughts and stories and images were becoming more and more important in his life.

He left India when he was six years old. Not his choice. How could it have been his choice? Although he knew India wasn't his home anymore, there was still this strong longing for ... 'home', even though he loved his home in the Australian bush. In his head he knew this and was completely accepting of this. But his heart was confusing him. His heart or some part of himself was left behind. Each time he went back to visit family in Bombay, in Colaba, at 303 Pushpa Bhavan, the flat he had spent the first six years of his life in, he looked for these traces, these parts left somewhere on the door handles, on the floor, in

6 The mistletoe is a point of contention among nativists and scientists in the central Victorian region. It was common belief that the mistletoe did irreparable damage to the host and therefore should be eradicated. However, recent evidence indicates that contrary to such common believe, most mistletoe does not damage the host. Refer to *ABC News*, 2012, 'Mistletoe not an environmental vandal: scientist', reported by Tom Nightingale 11 July 2012, <http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2012/s3543478.htm>, viewed 27 October, 2014.

the air. His DNA was present in the flat. He now understood Bachelard's ideas of poetry and space. He could feel the Frenchman's thesis in his heart.⁷

It is impossible to imagine as the taxi pulled away from Colaba in 1970, what this six year old was thinking. He was leaving his best friend, the moist heat of Bombay, and the view from the balcony flat where he sat for hours, singing about things he saw. He didn't know what Australia was, where it was or what the view would be and from where. Would he be able to see the sea and feel a moist sea breeze as he could if he leant forward, and then to the right on the verandah in Colaba? He didn't know what distance meant. It didn't matter then, as he looked out of the rear window of the taxi on the 25th day of January in 1971. (Until recently, he had thought it was 1970, until his mother showed him the stamp in her passport.) That last day in India, he didn't cry, even though everyone else did—how could he know why or what emigrating meant. He didn't know what 'forever' meant, when he asked his mother how long they were going to Australia. Time didn't stretch that far into the future for the six year old. It didn't matter, then. Theorising over a time-space nexus wasn't an option. There was only this strange sense that leaving India really didn't matter that much, then. It was mattering more now, not then. Then, India was only a small space, Bombay/Colaba/303 Pushpa Bhavan. The rest of India was alien. Not a part of him. He could not formulate any questions, then. He did not need any answers then either. Even now, he is unsure what the right question is to ask. Besides, what could he do with the answer?

He sits for a moment on the dry Australian dust track. Reflecting on his history was making his body feel very heavy at that moment. The dryness in the atmosphere was sucking all the moisture from his skin. This didn't happen in Bombay. Enjoying the in-between fuzziness of remembering and forgetting, he decides to keep the stick as a memento or marker of this moment, not knowing what else to do with it at this time. He didn't know what else to do with the complexity of time/place and space. He needed to give this equation form; a form that would help him make sense of all of this. He wanted clarity. For so long now, and forever now⁸, he knew he would never have the clarity for which he longed. It wasn't that he just wanted the clarity of knowing where he belonged ... but the assurance of belonging. He felt stuck, but not in a bad way. The stick would do. It was form that would gradually help him get closer to his own acceptance of things.

He stood up and walked slowly, with his dog, to the cleared field further down the track, his white dhoti and kurta standing out starkly against his dark skin. He felt liberated in a strange way, wearing this Indian costume. It wasn't what he would normally wear. Or wear in public. But in his own solitude, the garment felt loose and relaxing. It made him feel surer of himself, in a paradoxical way. He entered the field where his dogs loved to run. Walking, meandering, browsing, daydreaming and generally wasting time seemed to take on importance these days. It's what mattered. He liked the slowness of the country and rural living, and the intimacy that small towns still have.

He lay on the bleached grass, closed his eyes and dreamt about living and dying and the space between Fryerstown, Australia and Colaba, India. He smiled, closed his eyes, waiting and imagining a 'strange state of the world, in which all seems to exist at once' (Hoptman, 2014). He felt like the character in Jeff Wall's large scale photograph, *Citizen* (1996) ... asleep on the fringe of belonging and unbelonging.

Back in London, it is now past closing time at Thyssen Krupp & Associates. Behind the door between the shopfront and the backroom, the assistant begins to hear muffled voices of other staff preparing to

7 The text makes reference to Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958).

8 I purposely use this phrase 'forever now' as a specific reference to the painting exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, curated by Laura Hoptman, which draws on ideas of 'atemporality' first cited by science fiction writer William Gibson. In the catalogue essay for the exhibition, Hoptman bravely puts forward statements such as, culture no longer 'define[s] the time in which we live', but rather reflects 'a new and strange state of the world in which, courtesy of the internet, all eras seem to exist at once'. See Museum of Modern Art 2014, *The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World*, Museum of Modern Art, <http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/1498>, viewed 13 February 2015 and Farago, J 2014, 'The Forever Now review: calling time on avant garde', *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/dec/12/the-forever-now-review-calling-time-avant-garde>, viewed 13 February 2015.

finish their working day. Hastily, he conceals the torn letter and photograph in his coat pocket. Clearing his throat, he walks to the mirror to straighten his classic three piece suit made of a worsted wool fabric. Closer inspection would register tired, worn areas. But no one gets this close to the assistant. A measured distance is always maintained. This time he takes a little more care than he normally would; adjusting his lapel, his bow tie and his waistcoat. He looks at his reflection. He can't smile, afraid it might manifest as a smirk and someone may notice. He feels a sense of pride and an air of contentment, almost a smugness, an entitlement. At this moment he feels sure of his place in the world. Somewhere higher in the order of things than the (Anglo) Indian trying to claim a position, which this assistant clearly believes he has no entitlement to.

Preparing to leave his workplace for the day, he decides he will walk for a little while through the city to clear his head. Walking through the city always created this odd feeling where everything felt familiar (as he remembered it before foreigners started arriving) and therefore comfortable, but at the same time so unfamiliar and disorientating (because so much had changed). To avoid this disarmingly conflicting situation, he imagined a place somewhere else, warmer, but not foreign; somewhere like Australia. He needed to withdraw and retreat. A small country town perhaps, where there are eucalyptus trees and people who speak the same language and have the same skin colour. A comforting thought. He too was tired. He imagined walking in the countryside and lying down and sleeping in a field, away from the structures and expectations of his place in the world. His imagining longed for less complexity, expectation and the weight and burden of history.

Somewhere he had happened upon a remark: 'The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means' (Rushdie 1988, p. 343). He didn't know what it meant. But he knew he didn't want to engage with foreigners. Being English, he felt he shouldn't have to. He would never find out what that quote means. How could he? Instead he turned his thoughts back to Australia, a place he had never been to. As he walked away from his place of business, which had so unsettled him at the end of the day, he looked forward to a nice cup of tea ... at home.

CHAPTER FIVE

HOME AND NOSTALGIA—PLACE AND BELONGING, LEAVING AND RETURNING, REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING ...

[...] exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge – which gives rise to profound uncertainties – that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind (Rushdie 1991, p. 10).

Place and belonging, in the context of staying and leaving India, have attributed to an evolving identity formation for Anglo Indians. Two events that can be attributed to this situation were firstly, the failed attempts at establishing a homeland in India as a utopic model and secondly, the significant waves of emigration by Anglo Indians after Independence in 1947.

My two artworks, *Between Dreaming and Dying* (2015) and *Closeness & Distance* (2015), highlight the significance of the spatial concepts of home as sites of belonging, both as lived experience and imagination, in relation to identity formation for Anglo Indians. These artworks engage the idea of nostalgia, drawing particularly on academics, Alzena D’Costa’s (2006), no relation, and Alison Blunt’s (2005) analyses and discussion of the legitimate and necessary role of nostalgia for the Anglo Indian community in determining a sense of self and a sense of place.

It is within this nostalgic framework that I have considered my own diasporic condition and its influence on my art practice, and how the larger diaspora of Anglo Indians maintain a sense of identity through community in their adopted homelands by looking bifurcately backward and forward simultaneously.

5.1 BETWEEN REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING

Remembering and Forgetting (2015)

I remember Bombay – I was born there

I remember our apartment in Colaba

I remember the many colour combinations in saris

I remember leaving India – and crying when I left
 I remember returning to visit India – after we emigrated and crying again when I returned
 I remember my cousins who live in India
 I remember the Gateway of India
 I remember the breeze and the coolness of the worn cement floors in our apartment

 I remember the heavy rain of monsoon
 I remember the sea ending at the wall along the Apolla Bund
 I remember certain noises as the city woke each morning
 I remember quietness as the city rested at night
 I remember the Strand cinema. Just around the corner from where I lived
 I remember the smell of corn cooking on street vendor's stalls
 I remember the sweet, sour and hot taste of Bhel Puri
 I remember kite season and the glass in the coloured string to cut the other person's kites
 I remember playing marbles as a child
 I remember colour in the festival - Holi
 I remember sitting on our veranda singing and watching the street below
 I remember I couldn't do a somersault at school
 I remember playing cards with my servant, Agnes
 I remember I can't speak any Indian languages
 I remember the smells of India – pomfret, the sea, rain and the dirt from the street
 I remember to remember India
 I remember to not forget India

 I am forgetting Colaba
 I am forgetting the Strand cinema. Just around the corner from where I lived
 I am forgetting the smell of corn from the street vendor
 I am forgetting kite season
 I am forgetting how to play marbles
 I am forgetting Holi festival
 I am forgetting sitting on the veranda watching the street
 I am forgetting playing cards with my servant
 I am forgetting Agnes
 I am forgetting the smells of India
 I am forgetting housie
 I am forgetting The Radio Club
 I am forgetting the sound of crows
 I am forgetting the height of trees in our street
 I am forgetting the distance between places in the neighbourhood
 I am forgetting the pace of India
 I am forgetting the water tank at the back of our building
 I am forgetting the Gateway of India
 I am forgetting my way around Colaba
 I am forgetting if I even look Indian
 I am forgetting detail
 I am forgetting if I ever belonged there

[D'Costa R, 2015]

I wrote the poem, *Remembering and Forgetting* (2015), from childhood memories, and from subsequent trips to India since emigrating. The poem reflects forms and experiences that operate between remembering and forgetting India, a place that is ambiguous for me in the context of home. The poem also connects writing to my artworks. For example, many of the forms expressed in the poem—the sound of crows, the Gateway of India, the apartment in Colaba—become montages in my video, *Closeness & Distance* (2015). Academic, Nigel Rapport, notes: “‘Home’ brings together memory and longing [...] (Rapport 1998, p. 8). However, with it comes distortion. As D’Costa argues, ‘the illusionary plays a prominent part in the diasporic construction of homeland because, as time passes, the place of origin remains stagnant in the memory of the migrant while in reality it has evolved (D’Costa 2006, p. 5). In the video, *Closeness & Distance* (2015), time passes slowly as a way to remember. Narrative is alluded to through the use of montage images from experiences of my home and the neighbourhood when I lived in India. The images move in and out of focus, they linger on forms, such as keys and doors from inside the apartment. They use the device of a split screen as a way to activate and further fracture the act of remembering.

5.2 ANGLO INDIAN WRITING AS A FORM OF REMEMBERING

D’Costa remarks on writings produced by the Anglo Indian community, such as Margret Deefholts, which ‘remember, idealise and pine for a colonial past – a time when the Anglo Indian community felt a sense of belonging in India’ (2006, p. 8).

But to which India did Anglo Indians feel this sense of belonging? If it is colonial British India then to what extent did the British allow Anglo Indians to feel as if they belonged? If it is India, the same question can be asked of Indians. The British and the Indian community made the Anglo Indian community feel *unhomed*.

D’Costa comments on how the process of writing allows Anglo Indians to articulate their own history. As she describes, ‘narrating home’ allows the community to challenge the idea that Anglo Indians were simply in India as ‘lackies’ for the British. It confirms they had their own knowledge and experiences in the country in which they were born and lived (2006, p. 8).

Prominent Anglo Indian, Blair Williams, established an Anglo Indian literary contest that became a vehicle for Anglo Indians to voice their own stories and poems and to build their own sense of a community history. A selection of this prose was subsequently published as *Voices on the Verandah* (2004). Writing the preface for this anthology, Williams asks important questions: How are communities defined? And how are histories of small groups recorded? (Williams 2005, p. v).

He continues by answering his own rhetorical questions:

Stories passed from generation to generation are one way; the studies of anthropologists, sociologists and historians are another. But perhaps popular literature is the most common repository of such knowledge (ibid.).

He adds:

We are the custodians and purveyors of our Community’s history, its culture and values. And we owe it to ourselves, to our future generations [...] to provide them with source material which goes beyond distortions of fact and derogatory literary stereotypes. Before the last generation of Anglo-Indians born in British India fades away, the need to document our stories and our way of life thus assumes paramount importance (ibid., pp. v–vi).

D'Costa, in describing Williams' project, exclaims: 'Williams recognizes that personal stories and experiences of individual Anglo-Indians constitute historical knowledge' (D'Costa 2006, p. 7). Publishing the stories will '[...] usher this knowledge into the public space of literature so that it can become a part of what he [Williams] hopes will become a canon of specifically Anglo-Indian history' (ibid. pp. 7–8). D'Costa asks 'How is a relationship between a community and its home established through history production?' (ibid., p. 4). Citing theorist, Thembisa Waetjen: 'A homeland is the landscape ... of historical memory that offers tangible images of rootedness and grounded community' (Waetjen, cited in D'Costa 2006, p. 4). D'Costa continues, putting forward Waetjen's argument: 'Land becomes national territory [...] through the stories that relate it to a people' (ibid.). What D'Costa recognises is that Waetjen's construction of nationalism centres on the interconnectedness of 'historical memory, nationality and home', which stands in contrast to considering nationalism based on 'ethnicity' (D'Costa 2006, p. 4). In summary, D'Costa's argument allows for the construction of Anglo Indian storytelling to operate as knowledge production so that home and belonging can then be articulated through historical remembering as it relates to nationalism, as opposed to considering nationalism through ethnicity. This argument therefore legitimises India as home for the Anglo Indian community.

■ HOMESICK

It is important to note that I wrote *Remembering and Forgetting* (2015) and made *Closeness & Distance* (2015) before I encountered Deefholt's poem, *Homesickness* (2003). I say this because I was initially very selfconscious of how nostalgic my poem and video are. It was not my intention to make them nostalgic. Reading Deefholt's poem, *Homesickness* (2003), helped validate my own experiences and nostalgic references in my poem and video.

Homesickness

I want to walk again along the city street
 Thronged with people;
 The hawkers, the beggars, the urchins,
 The hurrying office workers
 All jostling by me.
 I want to hear again the
 Noise and clatter of the crowds;
 The honking cars, the wheezing buses,
 The confusion and clamour
 Beating around me.
 I want to smell again the
 City's dust, spices, rotting detritus
 And dung and urine stench of the sidewalks;
 The sweaty, sour, strong musk of
 Swarming humanity
 Heady within my nostrils.
 I want to feel again the
 Throbbing life of a crowded, dirty City,
 Its colour, its movement, its intensity,

Its vitality infusing
My own heart's beat.

India is my blood, my bones.
The land,
Its harsh contrasts ...
Blazing days, clamorous nights;
Its cruelty, its violence,
Its huddled, wretched filthy slums,
Its destitute skeletal poor.
Its children with swollen bellies,
Carrying naked children on their skinny hips,
Dusty, matted hair and large black eyes,
Streetwise urchins.

And beyond the City's frenetic beat,
Its tranquil timeless villages,
With mud-walled huts,
Set under the dappled shade
Of flickering leafed pipal trees.
A brown, bare-bodied farmer,
Plodding the fields behind thin oxen
And a wooden plough,
Tilling through the flowing centuries,
Watching the sunset blaze
The stubbled fields.

Small towns with neem-tree shaded
Rickshaw wallahs dozing in the lethargic
Dusty glare of a summer afternoon.
The harsh screech of country parrots
Amid scented mango topes;
And the plaintive questing call
Of brain-fever birds
Across twilight lawns of
Red-roofed bungalows
Left over from the days
Of the old Raj.

(Deefholts 2003)

I read Deefholts' poem, *Homesickness* (2003), in two parts. In the first two stanzas, Deefholts feels present embracing the experience of India and Indians, in all its grittiness. The first line of the poem, 'I want to walk again along the streets', articulates both Deefholts' bodily presence and experience in the space of India, as well as her desire to do it 'again'. Clearly, the first experience of walking in India has stayed with Deefholts as a memory, which makes her long for the experience again. Throughout the first

stanza of the poem, Deefholts makes her intentions clear. She demands to experience India again. Her exclamation is 'I want', not 'I would like' or 'I hope I can'. 'I want' is repeated four times in the opening stanza. But what is stopping her from doing this? I would argue it is both the act of emigration that physically removes her from India, and the British and Indian historical narrative that psychologically erases her presence from India. However, it is in the act of writing her own Anglo Indian narrative into the space of India, as a form of claiming back, which ensures no one will or can prevent her from desiring and acting out her performativity. Her awareness of India is both sensorial and physical. She 'walks', 'hears', 'smells' and 'feels' ... there is nothing passive or distant about her presence in India. Deefholts' India is not separate and privileged. She is in the heart of crowds being 'jostled by workers' in the streets where there are 'hawkers, beggars and urchins'. If we are unconvinced by the opening stanza of Deefholts' visceral relationship to India, the opening line of the second stanza hits the reader, leaving little doubt as to the deep feelings she has for India: 'India is my blood, my bones' (ibid., p. 115). Deefholts does not say that India is *in* her blood and bones. But rather that it *is* her blood and bones, as if to emphasise the depth of her conviction. This distinction ensures that India cannot be erased or drawn out from her body or psyche. It is as much visceral as it is psychological. As D'Costa comments:

In this passionate statement the reader can see that, from an Anglo-Indian perspective, [...] 'living India' is internalized so that it becomes the very core of Anglo-Indian identity in an emotional and spiritual sense (D'Costa 2006, p. 10).

The language Deefholts uses to describe the urban spaces in the first two stanzas sits in contrast to the more rural spaces she describes in the last two stanzas. The urban space is described as 'wretched', 'filthy' and 'dusty', and is language reminiscent of the way the British often described India ... as hot, dirty and filthy. The language is strong, expressive and present. In the third and fourth stanzas Deefholts describes rural scenes in an airy, romantic way. One senses a longing for an idealised way of life, which the British attempted to project during their encounters in India. You don't sense she is or has been present in the spaces she describes. Certainly not while the British were present. The metaphor of the sunset and the choice of words—'left over', 'twilight', 'old'—alludes to closure and a past. Deefholts enacts an imagining and desire of her presence in this space. At the heart of Deefholts' poem is this contradiction of belonging as physical and imagined, which the Anglo Indian bares. Deefholts clearly recognises and accepts the real space of India as home, as well as a 'pining' for a past that she has idealised. She occupies a space of both dreaming and dying—dreaming as longing and dying as letting go.

5.3 HOME: GEOGRAPHY AND EMIGRATION

Over the next few weeks her belly did not distend, but shrunk as the baby grabbed at the insides of her womb in terror of emerging countryless [sic]. In the following months she vomited maps; projectile spews that hit the concrete floor and splashed warmly around her ankles, vomit with pink gobbets shaped like far off lands—Australia, Canada, England. The child would have to go to one of those civilised places—India now was no place for decent Anglo-Indians! Certainly Iris had seen how other Anglos had made fleeing India possible; English passports opened many doors. Her brown friend Dottie Goodall used a forged one to leave India, landed at Heathrow wearing a face pancaked white with Pond's Foundation Powder No.1 and brown hands and legs. Dotty had to convince the Customs officer she didn't need to be quarantined (Butler 2007, cited in Andrews 2007, para. 4 and 5).

The above extract is from Anglo Indian writer Keith Butler's short story, *Sodasi* (1988). It humorously underpins what writer, Lionel Caplan (1995), has described as 'a culture of emigration' (cited in Andrews 2007, para. 15), in the context of the Anglo Indian community. This culture of emigration, Caplan notes, is bound specifically to a desire for home and by association, identity, for Anglo Indians. As academic, Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, proffers:

Geography or location is thus at the heart of Anglo-Indian identity. [...] The geographic imagination of 'the home', therefore, is crucial to the Anglo-Indians, and seeking this home has remained a hallmark of Anglo-Indian identity even today. 'Home' for the Anglo-Indians has been a contested site shaped by different influences of culture and power, [...] Seeing Britain as fatherland and India as motherland or having an image of itself as a 'homeless' community within the country of their birth are the two important aspects of the community's identity (Lahiri-Dutt 2011, para. 3).

As I have stated throughout the writing, Anglo Indians seem more culturally aligned with Britain than India. Prior to Indian Independence in 1947, the spatial politics of home for Anglo Indians was shaped by imaginative geographies of both Europe (particularly Britain) and India. Although Anglo Indians are born and domiciled in India, they have not, historically and contemporaneously, been able to feel as if India is their home. Instead and ironically, they imagined Britain as home and a British way of life, despite being largely excluded from it. As academic Alison Blunt describes: 'In many ways, Anglo-Indians imagined themselves as an Imperial diaspora in British India. [However], Indian nationalism and Indianization gave new political urgency to Anglo-Indian ideas of home and identity' (2005, p. 2). With the British leaving India and India reclaiming its own postcolonial vision of itself, Anglo Indians were left to question their own sense of being and belonging.

5.4 IDEAS OF HOME AND BELONGING

■ SHARED MEANINGS

As Blunt notes, 'The idea of a homeland is [...] bound up with the politics of place, identity and collective memory' (2011, p. 74). Quoting academic Thembisa Waetjen's ideas of homeland as having 'legitimate claims to a natural sovereignty' (Waetjen 1999, cited in Blunt 2005, p. 74), Blunt points out that:

[...] claims to 'natural sovereignty' are often closely tied to claims of *national* sovereignty, as the idea of homeland is often mapped onto national space. Ideas of both homeland and nation exist materially and imaginatively, and may relate to a place that exists in the present or as a dream, is remembered from the past, or is yet to be created (2005, p. 74).

Referring to the German term *Heimat*, beyond the more usual historical references used to signify racial superiority and exclusivity in Aryan sovereignty, Blunt cites academic Christopher Wickham's writing on artistic depictions of *Heimat*, noting how he believes that the term is no longer necessarily bound to ideas of the nation, but rather evokes longing and belonging, serving 'as a point (or sets of points) of reference for individual social identity' (Wickham CJ, cited in Blunt 2005, p. 75). Wickham states: 'for artists of the late twentieth century *Heimat* is not of the past; it has a place in the process of moving from the present to the future and is constantly under construction; there can be no question of return' (ibid.).

In the book *Belonging and Globalisation: Critical Essays in Contemporary Art and Culture* (2008), Palestinian artist and art historian, Kamal Boullata's essay, 'Sharing a Meaning: An Introduction' (2008), draws on

historian Frederick Bohrer's discussion of the shared meaning of the word *belonging* across English and Arabic lines. According to Boullata, Bohrer's accounts of the English meaning of the word, before it implied possession or ownership, originally had more *spatial* implications associated to its meaning. *Belonging* alluded to two things that sat in parallel or ran alongside each other in length, not necessarily in the same place, but that shared something significant wherever they were located. The Arabic meaning alludes to activity that unfolds over time (Bohrer, cited in Boullata 2008, pp. 12–13). Together, each meaning of the word 'belonging' becomes, in the above context, equations of space and time. It is a both an illusive and poetic proposition that unfixes location and advocates the temporal. Simultaneously, it proposes a lingering of sorts—a form of deferral. Seen together with Wickham's comment of home being constantly under construction, it creates a state of possibility to dream and imagine. Again, 'under construction' implies states of deferral and hope.

■ INVISIBLE CITIES AND IMAGINARY HOMELANDS

In magic realist writer Italo Calvino's novel, *Invisible Cities* (1979), emperor, Kublai Khan, bound by the fixity of place, engages explorer, Marco Polo, to describe the magical cities he encounters on his travels. Having conquered territories, Khan has come to understand with both relief and melancholy that the conqueror [coloniser] will not know or understand the conquered [colonised] (Calvino 1979, p. 10). In his vast kingdom, Khan recognises the burden he has created and inherited as conqueror: 'It is the desperate moment when we discover that this empire, which has seemed to us the sum of all wonders, is an endless, formless ruin, [...]' (ibid.).

Khan relies on Marco Polo's descriptions of the mind (imagination), as accurate accounts of the real (fixed in geography). The places Marco Polo orates cannot exist in the way they are described. He conjures images that are fantastical and imagined, which collapse conventional structures of time and space. Yet, as we find out, Marco Polo is describing the city of Venice. His descriptions are subjective, emotive and poetic. They have a sense of being both real and fictional. The cities he describes feel meandering, simultaneously evolving and decaying over time, and are haunted by a sense of loss. You read the descriptions of places in *Invisible Cities* (1979) and feel as if you have been there some time in the past, or that you will go there in the future, or that you just might presently be there now. It occupies an atemporal space. Reading *Invisible Cities* (1979) disorients location. You feel as if you are floating in Calvino's textual references to a place of dying dreams. Yet, by the time you get to the end of the book, this place, wherever or whatever it might be, while elusive, also offers hope:

The Great Khan's atlas contains also the maps of the promised lands visited in thought but not yet discovered or founded: New Atlantis, Utopia, the City of the Sun, [...]

Kublai asked Marco Polo: "You, who go about exploring and who see signs, can tell me towards which of these futures the favouring winds are driving us."

For these ports I could not draw a route on the map or set a date for the landing. At times all I need is a brief glimpse, an opening in the midst of an incongruous landscape, a glint of lights in the fog, the dialogue of two passersby meeting in the crowd, and I think that, setting out from there, I will put together, piece by piece, the perfect city, made of fragments [...] (ibid., p. 126).

Calvino's words echo felt experiences of Anglo Indians in terms of their sense of place as 'there' (wherever we want there to be). The 'glint of light in the fog', and 'fragments' that are 'pieced' together create hope and home. It is in this context of longing and dreaming, in Wickham's idea of home being 'under

construction', Bohrer's shared meaning of belonging across space and time and Calvino's poetic writing of hopefulness, that, my artwork *Between Dream and Dying* (2015), should be considered. Home, in the context of the artwork, accounts for ideas of nation, but is not bound by it. Rather, it considers the idea of home across time and spatial terms. It is oriented towards a splitting of home as a site of geography as real and imagining, and of time as past, present and future. So home shifts from formations of fixity, to an idea of *between* (dreaming and dying), which is fluid and democratic. It encompasses, Calvino's poetic translations of spaces imagined, but not yet found that may well be in ruination but still provide hope.

■ BETWEEN DREAMING AND DYING (2015)

The artwork, *Between Dreaming and Dying* (2015), is a framed photograph. The photograph sits tightly against the inside edge of the frame creating a sense of containment. The imagery in the photograph consists of a grass field with a digitally fabricated horizon line, a single male figure in white garments lying in repose, and a dog that seems to be moving toward the figure. It is an ambiguous image, as ambiguous as its title. The title suggests that the figure is *between* a mental or psychological state of dreaming and dying. But what exactly is the connection between the acts of dreaming and dying? Perhaps both may involve the physical act of lying down, both involve the process of some form of transcendence from the physical realm to a form of non physicality, and both words are used as verbs. They are in the process of being acted out, rather than complete. Therefore, in the image, the viewer can deduce that the figure is



Fig. 478 | D'Costa, R 2015, *Between Dreaming and Dying* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl paper 285 gsm; 97 cm x 66 cm (framed)].

either dreaming or dying as both can lead to similar states in the mental or non physical realm. But it doesn't account for the in-between state of these two activities. Perhaps the image attempts to put forward the idea that the protagonist might be occupying either or both states. The answer to this question is intentionally ambiguous.

The pose, the white garments and the character's Indian ethnicity, operate as signifiers that allude to death. In Hindu custom, a dead body is usually prepared in white garments (white being symbolically connected to death) and is cremated. It is most Hindu's desire to die and be cremated at the burial ghats on the sacred river Ganges, in Varanasi, India. I have visited these ghats and witnessed Hindu cremation ceremonies. I recall the experience, being both profoundly spiritual and disarmingly pragmatic. While there are significant rituals attached to the ceremony, I was also surprised by its ordinariness. There were street dogs sitting menacingly around the funeral pyre as bodies, in different stages of deconstruction from cremation, were floated on the river. The physicality and literalness of death seem to demystify the deep ritualistic and ceremonial process attached to dying.

So what is this body doing in this site in the photograph? The photograph is not natural. It has been specifically performed. You would not expect to see a body in these garments in this pose in the Australian bush. I would suggest that both states, 'dreaming' and 'dying', have to accept the idea of 'letting go', which is the crucial point in the image. So what is being 'let go' by the protagonist in the picture? Contextually, it is the idea of his sense of place as fixed. He lies in this suspended state in a cleared paddock in central Victoria. The bleached grass suggests a hot, dry climate. A horizon line has been created by cutting and digitally stitching two images together, suggesting a precarious precipice in the picture and rendering

the landscape in the photograph as spatially disorienting. It is difficult to register depth of field and scale. Like the protagonist, the space in the photograph is ambiguous and indeterminate. It feels like both an actual and an imagined terrain. The body, either dreaming or dying seems besieged by the menacing landscape, by the heat, by the dog making its way to the body, and by death itself.

The intention in the photograph alludes to the protagonist lying in repose between the present, material space of Australia, his home, and simultaneously, the past, imagined space of India, his original home. He lies in the present space of Australia while imagining his past in India. His situation is simultaneously one of rest and anxiety, which sets the conditions of him imagining what the future may hold for him in terms of 'home'. He is in the state of living and dying, between his adopted home and his ancestral home, not privileging one over the other, but rather accepting his state of being, where his imagination of home becomes borderless and multiple. The spatially ambiguous landscape in the photograph presents, here and elsewhere, simultaneously. As an Anglo Indian, he has negotiated his home(lessness) as being between places. As Lahiri-Dutt, in discussing home in relation to Anglo Indian identity, states:

This home is more a product of the imagination and a site of everyday lived experiences, a locality where feelings of rootedness ensue from mundane and daily practices. *This* home is a place with which one remains intimately connected even when physically alienated from it (2011, para. 3 [emphasis added]).

The Anglo Indian protagonist in the photograph now accepts his status as Indian, his place of birth (registered in his dress code), as well as his rootedness to his present locality. However, while the locality is Australia, there is nothing in the landscape that identifies the location as specifically Australian. It is a homogenous grassland (the grasses in this space not being indigenous to the place). While he imagines a place elsewhere, his 'lived' experiences are here. He is both under siege and at ease, in-between states of dreaming and dying. In the context of a transnational and globalised world, migrants who intentionally or unintentionally, leave their place of birth, negotiate every day, the fracture of lived experiences, of belonging as home and in exile simultaneously. Anglo Indian share this circumstance of fracture with the migrant. As both migrant and Anglo Indian, his experience of place is doubled.

This way, the protagonist in *Between Dreaming and Dying* (2015) is located in a simultaneity, of places and times. His presence articulates:

[...] the four positions corresponding to conditions in which people, in particular artists and thinkers, find themselves acting in the present. He is in the act of re-performing. He is under siege. He is in a state of hope and optimism dreaming in anticipation and is in retreat, sleeping (Christov-Bakargiev 2012, para. 5).

■ *CITIZEN* (1996)

Artist, Jeff Wall's black and white photograph, *Citizen* (1996), also depicts a solitary figure in repose in an unspecified park setting. In Wall's photograph, the title tells us that (presumably) the character in the photograph is a citizen. But a citizen of where? A world citizen? A citizen of Canada, similar to Wall? In what context does Wall use the word 'citizen'? Should we equate citizen with the legality of citizenship, which offers a person the right to be domiciled in a country? Does the figure in the photograph have legal citizenship to be in the country in which the park is located? Or is Wall using the word to challenge this very notion of Santos' question (about who has a right to belong to the future)? Issues such as these make Wall's photograph so interesting and compelling. We are left with the question as to what this

person is doing lying in this park. He looks as if he belongs and yet there is this sense that he should not be there. Is he safe sleeping in the public space of the park? This tension Wall creates, sociologist, Laymert Garcia dos Santos, describes as 'the ironic illustration of a borderline relationship that disturbs us because it has the concreteness of a waking dream' (Santos as cited in Boullata 2008, p. 51). Santos, in discussing Wall's work, comments on the way *Citizen* (1996) opens up complex readings of belonging in terms of transgressing the borderlines between the private and public, noting how the figure is in complete surrender to sleep, as if he is at 'home' with and in, the space.

In light of the circumstances of the world in which we live today, in terms of migration and the displacement of so many people as refugees, the title of Wall's photograph takes on other layers of complexity. As Santos himself has asked so pertinently: 'Who has the right to belong to the future of humanity, and who is condemned to disappear?' (ibid., backcover). Being a citizen in a country like Canada gives the figure the opportunity to surrender in the space of relative safety—it is safe to sleep in the space of Canada and the world ... because I am a citizen? As Santos says, 'This naturalness astonishes us because it intensely expresses the relationship of mutual belonging that is established between the citizen and the space of citizenship' (ibid., p. 51). It is this very state of 'naturalness' and mutual belonging as citizen and citizenship, which the Anglo Indian cannot have. Where does the Anglo Indian find naturalness and belonging, except in the space of the imagined or in the space of indeterminacy?



Fig. 479 | Wall, J 1996, *Citizen*, [silver gelatin print, 181.2 cm x 234 cm].

5.5 FAILED UTOPIA: MCCLUSKIEGANJ

As a community in India, Anglo Indians have always been dispersed, unable to lay claim to a particular city or state or region of India, which other minority groups can. In the online version of *India Today*, the headline for an article spells out the failure of an idea to establish a homeland for the Anglo Indian community: *McCluskieganj: The dying of a dream*.¹

The first line of the article states: 'This is the place where a dream died' (Dilip Bobb, Farz and Ahmed 1991). The article uses strong words to spell out a failed vision that Anglo Indian businessman Timothy McCluskie had for the community between the 1930s and 1940s. Established under the auspices of the 'Colonization Society of India (CSI)' in 1933 and promoted through brochures and the society's monthly journal, many Anglo Indian families settled in McCluskieganj, building spacious bungalows and developing social lifestyles based on British tastes, which they valorised. Although, at the time, McCluskie received much criticism and was discouraged by members of the Anglo Indian community, he continued with his plan. Ironically, he would only visit McCluskieganj once before his untimely death.

At its height in the early 1940s, McCluskieganj was home to around three hundred families; today only about twenty remain (Blunt 2005, p. 74). The fertile land at the foothills of Chota Nagpur, in the eastern state of Jharkhand, acquired by McCluskie for his dream, probably seemed idyllic at the time, mimicking a model similar to the cooler hill stations established by the British during the Raj. His idea seemed to

1 McCluskieganj is the most cited example of the Anglo Indian community's attempt at finding a site to live as a community. For a contextual reference, see Anglo Indian film maker, Harris, P 2009, *Dreams of a Homeland*, DVD, Go More Films, Melbourne.

re-perform the class attitudes of the colonising English. Except that historically, Anglo Indians were not accustomed to *doing* agricultural work or rural living. As academic Christopher Hawes noted:

It [the Anglo Indian community] was also always deeply infected by the class attitudes of the British. What was gentlemanly, what wasn't gentlemanly. One of the reasons why farming colonies failed is because Anglo-Indians didn't want to be farmers. The reason why they didn't want to be farmers was because they didn't want to cross the line between the ruler and the ruled. The ruled are the people who dig and the rulers supervise the diggers [...] (Hawes 1997, p. 4).

Given that the first groups of families who moved to McCluskieganj were primarily retired, fairly prosperous men, they were too old to consider hard agricultural work and as Hawes notes, farming would have been considered below their status. Anglo Indians are a community who are predominately urban, living in the larger cities of India and holding white collar jobs. Agriculture was not in their blood. They brought their children with them, assuming they too would settle in the community and prosper. However, due to a lack of employment opportunities, the children once grown, left (*The Times of India*, Achintyarup 2007, para. 11 and 12). Soon families started to move away, back to the cities or migrated.

Historically, given the important role and strong educational standing of Anglo Indian schools in India², it is no surprise that today, what is standing as a beacon of hope, is the establishment of the Don Bosco Academy in McCluskieganj. This school, which boards its students, is playing a central role in providing opportunities for the town to evolve from its forlorn state.

In chapter four of Blunt's book, *Domicile and Diaspora: AngloIndian Women and the Spatial Politics of Home* (2005), she quotes from an article in the *Sunday Mid Day* in 1992, by Vaihayasi Daniel on McCluskieganj, describing the place as 'Chota (little) London'. Daniel's account of the place is reminiscent of times during the British Raj. After describing a somewhat ubiquitous Indian rural scene of the Chota Nagpur hills, she adds:

And then abruptly – in the middle of nowhere – the distinctive southern Bihari countryside lapses into an absurd time warp. Delicate tea roses. Neatly planted bougainvillea edges. White picket fences. Tidy English country-style cottages, trimmed with lattice-work ... Bleached faces, neither brown nor white. Quaint accents [...] (Daniel, cited in Blunt 2005, p. 72).

The article describes a space for Anglo Indians that feels at odds with the rest of India and is clearly oriented towards an Imperial ideal. The way Anglo Indians are described as 'neither brown nor white with quaint accents', puts them out of place with the local Indian community. As Blunt notes: 'McCluskieganj appears to be out of place; an uncanny settlement that evokes memories of an imperial past and culture both distant and strange and yet present and domesticated' (Blunt 2005, p. 72). It seems clear that Imperial Britain plays a significant role in shaping the Anglo Indian idea of home. McCluskieganj characterises an ideal of home, based on a concept, which while grounded in the landscape of India in its present form, is also premised on imagining England as a colonial past and a possible future. As Blunt describes it: '[...] a

2 Perhaps because English is the community's first language, Anglo Indian schools have played a central role in education in India (see Anthony 2007, pp. 401–439). However, it is also worth noting Hawes' comments in relation to Anglo Indians and schooling, with which I would agree. Hawes sees the problem with the hill schools Anglo Indians attended and which were run on British public school lines, as raising expectations for the Anglo Indians in terms of receiving highlevel ranking jobs. It also, therefore, didn't allow for any shared development in education with the Indian community, which meant that after 1919, where university degrees were required for these higher level jobs, Anglo Indians missed out as there were very few Anglo Indian scholars in Indian universities, and very few in British universities because they could not afford the cost (Hawes 1997, p. 5).

longing for home was embodied in practice, oriented towards the future as well as the past, and shaped by a sense of place that was both proximate and distant' (ibid., p. 73).

Hindsight might be a lens that gives vision clarity, but I believe the name itself, the 'Colonization Society of India', should have been enough to have recognised the inherent flaws in McCluskie's scheme. Given that India was moving to its own form of nationalism, it would not want another form of colonising by a community with British claims. As Blunt describes: '... McCluskieganj was envisioned as a place for racially exclusive nation-building' (ibid., p. 78). It was a place *created* as a homeland by Anglo Indians, rather than *returned* to. But what makes McCluskieganj so interesting, as Blunt points out, is that it offered a vision for a:

[...] 'dream of independence' that was located within British India and remained loyal to the British Empire, and offered a vision of a homeland and nation that *opposed* [my emphasis] the vision of independence held by anti-imperial nationalists in the 1930s and 1940s. Settlement at McCluskieganj was legitimated through appeals to an imperial parental heritage, likened to white colonization and settlement in places such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada, and used to imagine a future for India as a dominion within the British Empire. As such, Anglo-Indian home-making at McCluskieganj can be understood in terms of an imperial nationalism. And yet settlement at McCluskieganj was also legitimated through an appeal to India as home, which was encapsulated by the Hindi word *mooluk*. McCluskieganj was thus a paradoxical place, reflecting a homing desire for both Britain and India (ibid.).³

This double visioning, not just in reference to home, but also identity, was both a point of celebration and a fundamental problem for the Anglo Indian. This is evidenced in the project at McCluskieganj, and through Anglo Indian writing of their stories—specifically, a project developed through the establishment of CTR Inc. Publishing, New Jersey, by Anglo Indian, Blair Williams: *Women of Anglo-India: Tales and Memoirs* (2010), *The Way we Are: An Anglo-Indian Mosaic* (2008), *The Way We Were: Anglo-Indian Chronicles* (2006), *Voices on the Verandah* (2004), *Haunting India* (2003), *Anglo-Indians* (2002).

Despite criticism from the All-India Anglo-Indian Association about the scheme, its president at the time, Henry Gidney, who took over as CSI president, after McCluskie's death, visited the settlement on many occasions, bought land and envisioned building 'Gidney Castle' at McCluskieganj (Blunt 2005, p. 74). Although he too died before he could act out his idea, his actions I would imagine, encouraged Anglo Indians to follow suit.

I am sure the scheme held the best intentions for a community that suffered a crisis of identity. With India moving toward independence and the uncertainty this would bring for the community in terms of employment and social standing, McCluskie's vision must have sounded appealing at the time. Particularly in light of India's processes to 'Indianise', which put additional pressure on the community to find alternate ways to think about its place in India. As a model of colonisation, McCluskieganj suffered from the same problems of racial exclusivity and often derogatory references to pre-existing indigenous communities, if they were acknowledged to exist at all. Blunt draws on writing in primary documents, specifically the *Colonization Observer*, to highlight remarks relating to the local indigenous community as 'simple folk' and 'trustworthy to a degree'. Such attitudes toward indigenous communities are hallmarks of colonising models, including the Australian example. Again, drawing on primary sources, Blunt makes reference to remarks made by Anglo Indians about other Indians of Christian persuasion 'posing as

3 See Blunt (2005, pp. 78, 87–9, 91, 103, 105, 204) for various references to the term, and particularly primary documents, such as the *Colonization Observer* circa 1930s, which uses the term 'mooluk' as a way of describing McCluskieganj.

Anglo-Indians', and quotes an Anglo Indian from Karachi as saying 'Let this evil therefore be stamped out ... by insisting on proofs of European parentage on the father's side' (ibid., pp. 89–90). Such remarks and attitudes by Anglo Indians, which echo colonial British discourse in terms of desiring racialised exclusivity and romanticised visions for McCluskieganj, highlight the complex, contested and often distorted and embarrassing, relationship Anglo Indians had toward their sense of identity.

5.6 ANGLO INDIAN EXODUS

As Britain prepared to exit India the senior members of the Anglo Indian Association attempted to create opportunities for the community in Post British India. It was clear that Britain was not going to privilege the Anglo Indian community any more than other minority communities in India. The Simon Commission Report (1930, pp. 42–45) made it clear that the community would have to make its own opportunities and rely less on the government for special consideration or opportunities in relation to employment (cited in Lahiri-Dutt 2015, p. 63).

In conversation with Anglo Indian academic, Glen D'Cruz⁴, Hawes discusses how he too has always seen the Anglo Indian community as being very dependent, as a result of circumstances often beyond their control, of being institutionalised from an early age (Hawes 1997, p. 4). It was in this atmosphere that McCluskie drove forward with his visionary, but doomed, scheme. Anglo Indians recognised they would have to reconcile their relationship with India, a country to which previously, they had not culturally related. Author Owen Snell's insightful remarks, made in 1944, challenged the Anglo Indian in terms of shifting their vision to a postcolonial and pro Indian perspective:

How can the Anglo-Indian ... whose communal life, from its very inception, has been completely divorced from the tide of Indian national feelings and aspirations form an integral part of the Indian nation? He does not fulfil the least of the obligations demanded by the citizenship of the country, a neighbourly attitude towards the other communities. How can he fit into the matrix of a united and national India? He has always looked upon the Indians and will continue to look upon him, as his social inferior and still stubbornly remains unrepentant. The essential feeling of goodwill and sympathy is lacking exacerbated by the fact that the Anglo-Indian clings tenaciously both to his religion and to his culture. It is quite impossible, in other words, to make a good Indian nationalist of the Anglo-Indian, who is without roots in the soil, and turns to the west for his every spiritual sustenance (Snell 1944, p. 32, cited in Lahiri-Dutt 2015, p. 64).

Whether or not this is an accurate account of Anglo Indian attitudes toward India, Snell's comments reflect the perception that people, particularly the Indian community, felt toward Anglo Indians. Except (not as an excuse), I would argue that India has always suffered from creating any politically stable form of nationalism. It has always struggled to overcome sectarianism within its ranks. Division between different religious and political groups keeps India in varying forms of national instability. Given the vast regional differences—in terms of cults, religious persuasions, sects, language and social beliefs, food etc.—India often feels like a fragmented country where loyalties operate at regional rather than national levels. For example, the underlying tensions between Muslims and Hindus have exploded into bloody rioting on numerous occasions, without any clear path to future cohesion. However, even within the Anglo Indian community, Snell's comments seem to hold conviction.

4 The conversation between D'Cruz and Hawes occurred in 1997; Hawes had just published *Poor Relations: The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India, 1773–1833* (1996) and D'Cruz was a doctoral candidate with the University of Melbourne.

In a lecture in 1938, delivered by an influential member of the Anglo Indian community, Mr Percival Damzen pointed out the prevailing attitudes among Anglo Indians, either intentionally or unintentionally:

We have two very significant complexes. The first and more easily understood is the inferiority complex to the Englishman, and the second and less easily understood is our reaction to this inferiority complex by a much more heinous complex – that of superiority to the Indian ... it has been with us a long while without our recognising it, when we must overcome both these complexes. [sic] The Indian of today is to be our lifelong ally. The European will soon become a migratory creature (Damzen, cited in Lahiri-Dutt 2015, p. 68).

The superiority complex, which Anglo Indians may have held toward Indians, can be seen as a mimicry of the attitude the English had toward the Anglo Indian and the Indian. This form of racialism and its close connections to class, were continually acted out within colonial British India. As Hawes points out, if there is a complex around the Anglo Indian community in terms of inferiority, in the context of race and class, it was the same for the 'British who were as snobbish and class ridden among themselves as they were in relation to the Anglo-Indians' (Hawes 1997, p. 4).

In the prevailing climate of uncertainty for their future in India during the 1930s and 1940s, leading to India gaining independence and moving to 'Indianising' the nation, and the British preparing to quit India, many Anglo Indians were caught in the dilemma of staying or leaving India. Without perceived support by the British or Indian governments, and without a sense of homeland in India, many Anglo Indians chose to leave—despite calls from leaders within the community to stay and align their thinking with establishing Indianisation policies. At Independence, the estimated number of Anglo Indians in India was between 200,000 and 300,000 (Anthony 2007, p. 9). By the 1980s the number of Anglo Indians in India was estimated to be less than half the original Anglo Indian population (Younger 1987, p. 47, cited in Caplan 2001, p. 133).

Immigration during the 1930s to 1950s was predominately to Commonwealth countries, particularly Britain because of its relative open door policy in relation to immigration and primarily because it was perceived as a form of returning home (Gist 1973, p. 41). The second wave saw a large proportion of Anglo Indians migrate to Australia, particularly as it commenced dismantling its White Australia Policy and was more accepting of a vision for a multicultural Australia. It was in this climate that my parents chose to migrate to Australia. Australia would become home. As Lahiri-Dutt points out, Anglo Indians were one of the 'earliest communities to migrate from India to Australia [and are] most likely the largest single cultural group of Indians in Australia' (Lahiri-Dutt 2011, para. 1). If what Lahiri-Dutt says is true—that 'Geography or location is thus at the heart of Anglo-Indian identity' (ibid., para. 3)—then the migratory experience of arriving and settling in Australia would now become the new site that would influence and inform my evolving identity.

Arriving in Australia in 1970 made Anglo Indians an exemplary model for assimilation into an Australian culture. As a community, we adapted to multicultural Australia, remembering that settler Australians were primarily Anglo Celtic. Our experience of modelling and negotiating cultural norms in India under British rule would prepare us well for a multicultural Australia, which, at the time, championed assimilation. Speaking English, having a Christian religion and English lifestyle, I along with many Anglo Indians, would quickly adapt to our new home. I sorted out my accents and pronunciation (almost), and quickly forgot I had brown skin or that I was Indian. My parents and the Anglo Indian community they

associated with in India, made India absent and in many ways invisible for me. Arriving in Australia, it was only the colour of my skin that made people ask, 'where do you come from?'

'According to Australia's 1996 Census there are 36,500 Anglo-Indians residing in this country, just 0.0018 per cent of the total population. The number of Anglo-Indians in India today is estimated to be between 80,000 and 100,000 making up just 0.0000001 per cent of the population, and this small percentage is mirrored in other countries that accommodate this diasporic race' (D'Cruz C and D'Cruz G 2007, p. 113). Given how small the population actually is, most people don't know or have not heard of the Anglo Indian community, therefore making it difficult to explain 'where I come from'. It is a question that does not have a simple answer. Yes, I was born in India, but then the qualifiers begin. I am Anglo Indian, but an explanation of what this means has to follow. D'Cruz and D'Cruz (2007) discuss this very situation they too experience in relation to their own race and ethnicity. Their accounts mirror many Anglo Indian experiences in describing and explaining their fractured sense of race, ethnicity and nationalism.

5.7 BEYOND STEREOTYPES AND DEROGATORY COMMENTS: REPRESENTATION AND RECOGNITION

How Anglo Indians are represented within film and literature (usually stereotyped and derogatory), continues to vex the community. Most writings by Anglo Indians invariably attempts to set the record straight in terms of these often harsh and unfair stereotypical representations. However, D'Cruz and D'Cruz shift the discourse by asking 'why' recognition is so important to Anglo Indians:

[...] if we shift the focus from the question of asking who Anglo-Indians 'really' are to a less presumptuous question, instead asking, [...] 'How have Anglo-Indians been produced as subjects?' then debates about the status of this mixed race need not be about the impossible task of portraying accurate representations. The question asks what makes possible their contradictory forms of (mis)re-cognition, and it leads to an investigation of why 'recognition' for Anglo-Indians has become an issue at all.

Furthermore, when the banality of our own biographies unearths broader public narratives that have given our lives their character and form, we enter a realm that connects anecdote to history, the personal to the political, and identity to power. In allowing ourselves the indulgence of re-reading our own encounters against a racial history that has laid dormant before us, we find ourselves inheriting a responsibility as to what to do with the remains of entanglements between the personal lives and public narratives that situate subjects within [...] our ethnic identity as part of the Anglo-Indian (mixed) race (ibid., p. 112).

What do we do as a community with our 'inherited responsibility' of our 'entangled remains'? D'Cruz's question comes at an important time for our generation who lived with stories of British encounter, rather than firsthand experience of it ... or who are the offspring of Anglo Indians who migrated and do not necessarily fit the formal definition of being Anglo Indian. I can understand why fair representation might be an important issue for previous generations of Anglo Indians, but why as a community do we continue to maintain such insecurity about how we are defined? The answer to this can be seen in two different ways. From the position of the diasporic Anglo Indian, their assimilation into their adopted country gives them a greater sense of security particularly in terms of their brownness. They have reached a stage where their brown skin is not seen as detrimental to their sense of self achievement. For Anglo Indians still in India, there seems to still linger a sense of privileging whiteness. For Anglo Indians in India who have become further 'minoritised', there are not the same levels of institutional security granted, as there are to their counterparts who are living overseas.

As D’Cruz argues:

[...] normative identities can accommodate a variety of despicable characters without fear of infiltrating positive public narratives already in circulation. [...] But when [...] despicable characters belong to a minoritarian culture, [...] there is not the degree of institutional security that would allow such characters to be perceived merely as characters. They become representative of the group to which they belong, as there are too few other public narratives to act as reference points and too few counter-narratives to balance the image portrayed (D’Cruz and D’Cruz 2007, p. 120).

It is absurd to think that there is only one kind of Anglo Indian. D’Cruz wisely asks the community to recognise that who we are or who we can be, is determined by ‘struggles with the same cultural signifiers that determine one’s social status: those of skin colour, food consumption, and genealogical heritage (ibid.)’.

5.8 CRACKING SKIN

When we immigrated to Australia, I began to notice that my skin was beginning to crack. The dry heat of the Australian summer was sucking all the Bombay moisture from my body. My legs were cracking in front of my eyes. Bottles of moisturiser could not help. I still have the scars on my legs; no one notices this but me. It reminds me of my past. I remember that first summer in 1970. We knew very little about Australia and while my poor mother had to adjust—culturally, emotionally, socially, economically, visually—not just for herself but also for her three young sons, in her busy-ness to assimilate as a new migrant, she forgot my legs ... they were left vulnerable to the Australian sun. I lost moisture. So, as I moved culturally to a whiter existence, an assimilated, Anglicised existence, I became darker and darker in the Australian sun, my skin daily cracking dry. The irony doesn’t escape me that in India people seemed to value fair skin. Whereas in Australia in the 1970s, people lay in the sun to become tanned. So ‘becoming tanned’ was acceptable; but I would find out with comments far harsher than the Australian sun, how my black skin would set me apart, again.

I recall the first time I experienced a racial slur in Australia. I was called a ‘darkie’ by a group of young school children. I would have been six years old. I remember being more confused than upset. Having dark skin has always been a point of contention for the Anglo Indian community. Within my own extended family there is a range of skin colour and it was always talked about. I recall my mother telling me how my own father, on seeing my brother when he was born, asked ‘why is he so dark?’ This form of comment is not an unusual situation for both Anglo Indians and many Indians. As D’Cruz and D’Cruz note: ‘[...] the marking of skin colour has been such cause of discomfiture for this mixed race’ (ibid., p. 114). As they note, and I can concur based on my own family experiences, ‘[...] claiming one’s ‘Britishness’ is what underpins so many Anglo-Indians’ quest for recognition’ (ibid, p. 113). As I continued to listen to family stories growing up, like D’Cruz and D’Cruz, I too found it often embarrassing to belong to a race that preferred to ‘side with the British imperialists and not the violated colonized [...]’ (ibid.).

5.9 DIASPORA

So while the migratory experience to Australia allowed my family to act out their Anglicised cultural experiences, as I was growing up I was becoming more interested in my Indian culture and heritage, which I felt I had missed out on. As Blunt describes, home, place, culture and identity were becoming more contested as a consequence of migration and resettlement: ‘Geography clearly lies at the heart of

diaspora both as concept and as lived experience, encompassing the *contested* [my emphasis] interplay of place, home, culture and identity through migration and resettlement' (2005, p. 10). Blunt also describes 'roots and routes' in the context of diaspora, noting particularly how 'roots' might imply an original homeland from which people desire a return, and 'routes' as complicating such ideas, developing a more 'transcultural notion of home', which is not 'bound and located' but rather 'more mobile, and often deterritorialized, intersections over time and space' (ibid.).

Immigrating to Australia may have been a route my family would take that provided a more mobile and transcultural notion of home, but the idea of being 'unrooted' from India was, for me, still unresolved. Blunt is quick to point out that 'such mobility does not preclude what [sociologist] Avtar Brah terms 'a homing desire'. Brah makes the distinction between 'desire for a homeland' and a 'homing desire' within the context of the diaspora space, noting that 'not all diasporas sustain an ideology of "return"' (Brah 1996, p. 16, cited in Blunt 2005, p. 10).

Personally, I was unsure if my experience with India was a homing desire, or a desire for homeland, which led me to return to India, on many occasions, after my first return in 1985. I wanted to live between both India and Australia simultaneously. Academic, Alzena D'Costa, in her article, 'Anglo-Indian Nostalgia: Longing for India as Homeland' (2006), argues convincingly 'that the nostalgia Anglo Indians exhibit in the telling of their (hi)stories can be seen as functioning to re[claim] India as homeland' (2006, p. 1). Perhaps I, like many Anglo Indians, simply needed to 'claim' India as my home, both as a historical principle and as a contemporary imagining. In considering India as home, one would have to take into account that different generations of Anglo Indians would have different experiences of how they perceive India in the context of home. As well, the distinction would have to be made with the diaspora community, which now outnumbers the domiciled community living in India. Have Anglo Indians living in India accepted their Indian ethnicity privileging it over their Anglo Indian race? Has postcolonial India accepted Anglo Indians as Indian? Have Anglo Indians erased their ties with colonial India or do they still engage with the past through a nostalgic lens? These are further questions D'Cruz's earlier questions raise.

Post-independence, and the Indianisation of India, were probably the biggest contributing factors to the community feeling alienated and unable to embrace the national identity, and therefore made to feel 'unhomely' (ibid.). However, as D'Costa also points out, the community has always endured an unsettled position in India, being described as foreigners by the Indians who made no distinction between them and the British. Their position has always been 'contentious within the discourse of Indian national identity' (ibid.).

My first experience of 'going back' to India and back to where I was born, commenced a recognising of my Indianness. In 1985 I visited India and stayed for three months with my aunts and cousins, before going on to England to stay with aunts and cousins who had immigrated there during the 1950s. Going back to the place of my birth was important. I seemed to connect to a place I had not known was important to me. While it was personally rewarding to meet and spend time in England with my family, there was not the same level of deep connectivity that I had experienced with place in India.

Undertaking this research has brought me even closer to a sense of belonging to India, which I had not expected. I was finding that whenever I read or watched anything to do with India, I would cry. The Arabic meaning of 'belonging', as an unfolding over time, was exactly what I was experiencing with India. The idea of home was becoming more important, in the context of my evolving authentic identity, where issues

of intimacy, geography and belonging all became factors. In this equation, India was starting to take on a more critical agency. The nature of 'home', I was beginning to recognise:

Invoke[d] a sense of place and displacement, belonging and alienation, inclusion and exclusion, that is not only intimately tied to a sense of self but also reflects the importance of intimacy. An interest in home and identity within geography can be traced back to the work of a number of humanistic geographers [...] who celebrated the home as a site of authentic meaning, value and experience, imbued with nostalgic memories and the love of a particular place (Blunt 2005, p. 6).

I was recognising that I was falling in love with India. My early childhood experiences in Bombay and Colaba particularly, had given me authentic meaning, particularly of home in the context of spatiality, domesticity and material meaning ... I have such strong memories of our apartment and its belongings, our servant who cooked and played with me and the immediate surrounding neighbourhood of Colaba.

5.10 CLOSENESS & DISTANCE (2015): NOSTALGIA AND INDIA AS HOME

Closeness & Distance (2015) is a single channel video shown as a split screen projection. It is 2.30 minutes in duration. It was one of the final projects I undertook, and involved returning to India. In fact I conceived, developed and made the artwork in India. To that date, all the artwork I had made for the PhD had primarily been made in Australia. I was drawing on experiences had and remembered from India for many of the artworks, such as *Somersault* (2013), and *A.E.I.O.U.* (2013). I was interested to know if the artwork would be different if it were made in India, and if so, how would it be different? I wanted to make an artwork back in the flat I had lived in as a child, in Colaba, Bombay. 'Memory, home and identity have [...] been recurrent themes in work on, and by, people of mixed descent' (Blunt 2005, p. 13).

While organising the logistics for the trip to India, my anticipation and my expectations continued growing. What form would the work take? What would it look like? I started projecting ideas of the flat in Colaba. No one lives in the flat presently; it is owned by my aunt who also immigrated to Australia. It is set up in the same way as it was when my aunt lived there. She uses it when she goes back to India. I knew she had changed the layout of the space from when my family lived in the flat, including enclosing the verandah by building it into the interior space. I also knew that the size of the flat had been reduced significantly from when we lived there. It was now a single room studio flat.

I thought about developing a series of photographs or a video of the empty space of the apartment. I knew the apartment had a heavy atmosphere of the past about it, full of memories. I considered a series of photographic stills, or of me sitting in the apartment. Or I thought about writing a letter to the apartment while I was staying there. The more I thought about the project the more I considered the idea of absence and presence. Of being close to and yet distant from the physical and mnemonic space of the apartment. The apartment was central to the project. It became the site to perform the act of remembering past experiences, together with the performativity of inhabiting the space presently. In this way, I hoped the artwork would be engendered with the interplay of a remembering from different spaces and times (in Australia and India from the age of six and before the making of the artwork) together with the experiential present (in the flat making the artwork).

As time moved along, I came to realise I could not plan too much in advance. I would have to get there and be present in the apartment to see how things would play out. I knew my cousin had studied filmmaking in

India and had made videos for bands and for the company she worked for in the film industry. I contacted her to see if she would help me ... if I decided to make a video. She was happy to oblige. I gave myself a week in India to make the artwork. It was a tight schedule.

Ironically, in applying for my visa to enter India, when I went to collect my paperwork at the visa offices, an administrator working there noted that I was still considered an Indian living abroad, and although I did not have an Indian passport, I was told I would have to renounce my Indian citizenship to obtain the visa for which I was applying. I was promptly handed an 'N Form', which I filled out and signed. It was simple bureaucracy on their part. But after I signed the forms (I did not have any choice as everything was planned), I felt deeply saddened by what I had just signed. I was not sure I was ready or that I wanted to renounce my Indian citizenship. I was just starting to feel, for the first time, closer to my country of birth, and this piece of paper would mean renouncing my 'Indianness', my citizenship. Not able to digest the full implications of this at the time, it is something I am determined to take up with the Indian embassy at a later date.

In India, I spent the first two days walking around my neighbourhood, and spending time in the apartment and in my cousin's apartment in the building next door. I always remembered the name of the building in which my cousin lived: Scheherazade. It felt so exotic. Scheherazade is a story of love and unfinished stories that the princess Scheherazade used as a way to stay alive and win the king's heart. I likened this fable to the Anglo Indian story, as one which needs to continually be told as a way of keeping the community's sense of identity alive.

I eventually decided I would make a video. I wrote out a series of rushes that we would shoot over two days and finally edit in the film and sound studios on the day before I was to leave India.

The final production begins with the title of the video as white text on a black background. After which the image reverts to a split screen. It starts as a black screen, facing left, while on the right screen a tight close up shot of a tropical flower is seen moving in a slight breeze. The image is shot on a handheld device, which shows slight hand movements. The image moves in and out of focus. From this initial image, a series of montage images appear. The word 'Scheherazade' comes into focus. It looks like the entry to a building. It is in fact the entrance to my cousin's building.

The next image is of pigeons sitting on the ground, which was shot near the Gateway of India in Colaba. The image has a slight feathering technique that blurs the image slightly in the lefthand corner. This image leads to a distant shot of the Gateway of India, which is oversaturated in colour and has pigeons flying in and out of the shot.

This image then leads to a corner where the Arabian Sea meets the sea wall at Colaba. A small wave, shot in slow motion, moves gently up the wall surface. Until this point, all images are shot in either silence or soft ambient noise. As the image of the water fades into a tight close up of a red poinsettia in darkness with some form of moving light, a tight close up image of trees, with an apartment behind, appears on the left screen. Simultaneously, the soundtrack from *Ten Guitars* (1967), by Engelbert Humperdinck (1936-) ... also an Anglo Indian, and who went to the same school as my dad ... begins.

The red poinsettias give way to the interior of a sitting room, which is the interior of the flat at Scheherazade in Colaba, where my cousin still lives. The camera pans very slowly left to right as a synchronised set

of lights create a patterned effect across the space. The room is empty and you soon notice that the soundtrack is running at a very slow speed, not the regular speed it should for the song, which has quite a fast tempo. The room is dark, lit only by soft lighting from a series of lamps in the space and the patterned lights. The room has a melancholic mood, which is in contrast to the image on the left screen of the trees. As the camera continues to pan across the room on the right screen, the left screen moves through a series of montage images. The number '303', which looks like the number of a room on a door, moves in and out of focus. As the camera rocks gently, an image of a white wall with two religious pictures on it, one of Hindu deities and the other of Jesus Christ, appears.

Then two old keys with paper tags, hanging from a cupboard move in and out of focus, followed by the image of a mirror with a craft frame that hangs on the wall, and bells hanging from a door. You sense these montaged images are from the interior of a room. They are in fact, images from the apartment in which I grew up. A clock, a kitsch ceramic angel glowing as it turns slowly on a motor, a dressing table with a mirror reflecting a sitting area with two cushions ... all appear one after another.

Meanwhile, right of screen the interior shot of the room gives way to a view of the sea where waves crash into large concrete tetrapods. This image is superimposed over images of the pigeons near a drinking vessel.

On the left of screen, the image moves back outside of the room to focus on a crow sitting in the tree, which begins to move up and down the branch as slight rain drops become visible.

While this is occurring the image right of screen is now of the water swirling around the tetrapods, which are at the front of the screen. The soundtrack blends from Anglo Indian, Engelbert Humperdinck, which fades out, to Paskistani Qawwali singer, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (1948–1997).

The right screen begins to pan upward from the tetrapods to show only the shimmering water of the sea, which floods the right screen. The left screen fades to black, the soundtrack finishes and we are left with a grey scale image of the sea and horizon before it too fades to black and the video ends. This ending recalls Artist Tacita Dean's video, *The Green Ray* (2001), which activates the lure of the horizon. Dean had heard about the phenomena of a green line that sometimes appears at the moment when the sun sets on the horizon behind distant water.

In Dean's video, the camera lingers on the setting sun, waiting and hoping that this phenomena will occur and that the technology will capture this moment.

Closeness & Distance (2015) is a deeply personal video. The images are strongly autobiographical, very poetic and saturated with a feeling of waiting and longing, as if events have passed or lie in a state of suspension. To this end, I stay unsure how recoverable the imagery and content will be for the viewer. When I finished the work, I felt very self-conscious when showing it to other people. I didn't know if the work was only for me, or whether it transcended the personal and allowed for others to view it. I was very unsure whether the artwork was successful or not; but I did not have a criteria to determine its success or failure. It is a very intimate work. I think because it felt very nostalgic. I had not set out intentionally to make the work nostalgic. I interpreted nostalgia as weakness and a trope, which I associated with wistfulness and a romantic yearning for something in the past, which was bound in sentimentality and therefore inauthentic. However, it was not until reading Alzena D'Costa's and Alison Blunt's writings on

the relationship of nostalgia to Anglo Indian longing for India as homeland, and by association, memory (as distinct from nostalgia), that I was able to contextualise why I had made the video *Closeness & Distance* (2015), and what the content might signify, both personally and for the viewer.

Blunt uses the Greek origins of *nostos* for 'return home', and *algos* for 'pain' to define nostalgia as implying homesickness and a yearning for home (2005, p. 13). Quoting historian and geographer, David Lowenthal (whose work engages with ideas of past in relation to spatial practices), 'it is wrong to imagine that there exists some *non-nostalgic* reading of the past that is by contrast "honest" or authentically "true"' (Lowenthal 1989, p. 30, cited in Blunt 2005, p. 14); Blunt confirms the legitimacy of nostalgia as an authentic and honest way for Anglo Indians to engage with ideas of home. Blunt continues, citing poet, Susan Stewart, to make the distinction of memory as being informed by spatial narratives of past and present, while nostalgia represents a 'desire for desire' (Stewart 1993, p. 23, cited in Blunt 2005, p. 14), itself a temporal signifier (Blunt 2005, p. 14). Blunt adds: 'Unlike the sites and landscapes of memory that are located and refigured in the past and present, the spaces of home invoked by nostalgia remain more elusive and distant' (*ibid.*). As a counterpoint to Lowenthal, Blunt quotes Stewart again, who states: 'Nostalgia is a sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience. Rather, it remains behind and before that experience' (Stewart 1993, p. 23, cited in Blunt 2005, p. 14). Blunt argues:

[...] that an antipathy towards nostalgia reflects a more pervasive and long-established 'suppression of home', whereby spaces of home are located in the past rather than the present, in imaginative rather than material terms, and as points of imagined authenticity rather than lived experience (2005, p. 14).

She goes on to say that rather than perpetuating an antipathy toward nostalgia, she interprets the homing desire of Anglo Indians as a 'productive nostalgia' that is enacted in the present, which becomes potentially liberating, and one that is orientated towards the present and the future, as well as the past (*ibid.*). In this context, going back to the apartment (it is not the first time I had been back to the apartment since immigrating to Australia), to make the artwork was, in many ways, a strategy to bring materiality to the imagined and thereby shifting the imagined authenticity of the space to a living, experienced authenticity, one that as Blunt believes, liberates and orientates a process that engages the present, future and past.

In her book, *Home Matters: Longing and Belonging, Nostalgia and Mourning in Women's Fiction* (2001), Roberta Rubenstein, makes the point that even when one returns to the place where one grew up, 'one can never truly return to the original home of childhood since it exists mostly as a place in the imagination' (Rubenstein 2001, p. 4). In returning to the apartment in Colaba and its surrounding neighbourhood, the place of my childhood, I re-connected with the images I remembered from my previous experiences in Colaba, to use in the video, *Closeness & Distance* (2015). Using formal devices such as close ups, slowing down the speed of the video, shifting light sources and colour saturation, moving images in and out of focus and using handheld camera techniques, I was attempting to create an atmosphere where time is both a past and present experience simultaneously. The images I used existed in the past and are still there in the present. I was not attempting to 'authenticate' a past, but rather to allude to it. Rubenstein's comments, while obvious, are also accurate. Her comments hinge on the word 'truly'. One can never 'truly' return because time has moved on. Things change, even when they may still maintain the form of the past. As well, our perception of these things evolve and change. To 'go back' in literal terms, is a spatial movement. However we can also consider 'going back' as a temporal and durational act. Perhaps this is what Rubenstein means when she says:

Nostalgia encompasses something more than a yearning for literal places or actual individuals. While homesickness refers to a spatial/geographical separation, nostalgia more accurately refers to a temporal one (2001, p. 4).

Perhaps, in light of Rubenstein's comments and my own evolving understanding of the video, *Closeness & Distance* (2015), the real subject in the video is time itself, as temporal and durational and as a process of remembering and forgetting. It is, I can now say unashamedly, nostalgic. However, it is in the context of a nostalgia that allows me the privilege of thinking of India as home, which lives in my present consciousness. If I then consider 'time' in relation to home, rather than only geography, home can literally be multidimensional and atemporal.

Alzena D'Costa puts forward the idea that 'India should be regarded as the homeland of the Anglo-Indian community because India is its birthplace and, most importantly, the domain of their experiences, which constitutes the community's historical memory' (2006, p. 2). While I don't disagree with D'Costa's view, I think this perspective is skewed toward the past. I see her view more as a 'looking backward' experience that denotes with accuracy the community's origins. So in this context, India can always be considered as the homeland of a community whose origin was India. However, if we are to consider the contemporary circumstances of the diverse breadth of the community, particularly its wide reaching diaspora, circumstances and situations challenge not only the official constitutional definition of an Anglo Indian, but how the community will define the offspring of the parents who migrated, who are born in the country their parents adopted and are now citizens of. How do we account for the individual (as opposed to the community) who, not only does not meet the constitutional definition of an Anglo Indian, but who also, through self-identification, culturally associates with the country they were born in, particularly if their parents have assimilated to their adopted country and do not engage with their 'Indianness' or Anglo Indianness?

There are many examples where the definition of who is an Anglo Indian will continue to be contested; this is probably one of the primary issues that faces the community if it wants to maintain its sense of who it is, and not see its very nomenclature and culture vanish or become a thing of the past. Andrews clearly points out these challenges that the community faces in the present future and puts forward ways the community may consider in terms of how it defines who it is (2014, pp. 23–31). As Sheila Pas James, points out, 'One of the problems the Anglo-Indian community has always faced is one of "Identity"' (2001, n.p.). It would seem, as James has pointed out consistently in her research, identity is a dilemma for Anglo Indians (2001, 2003) that may continue to be if, as a community, it chooses this path. But, does it really matter? As author and writer, Gary Younge asks *Who Are We – And Should It Matter in the 21st Century?* (2010). Perhaps the Anglo Indian community might take up this very question as it considers not just its 'entangled' past but its uncertain future.

C O N C L U S I O N

CIRCULATORY ACTS WHERE THE END IS THE BEGINNING

No name is yours until you speak it; somebody returns your call and suddenly, the circuit of signs, gestures, gesticulations is established and you enter the territory of the right to narrate. You are part of a dialogue that may not, at first, be heard or heralded – you may be ignored – but your personhood cannot be denied. In another’s country that is also your own, your person divides, and in following the forked path you encounter yourself in a double movement ... once as stranger, and then as friend (Bhabha 2004, p. xxv).

I feel as unsure of how to end as I did of how to begin. I can only think to write a conclusion as a series of ‘Acts’ to represent speculative endings—that moves backward and forward—and which, potentially, becomes a series of beginnings. The notion of ‘Acts’ therefore contains the research in a performative (becoming), state rather than conclusive.

Act 1 – Loosening the hyphen: a journey of meaning which is both personal and critical

I can never be fully sure what Homi Bhabha meant when he wrote the above comment. But it resonates deeply for me as I come to the end of this research. It was not until I asked what it means to be an Anglo Indian did I hear the numerous voices, existing research and discourses that surround my community, which allowed me to also enter this space and to narrate. This forked path has been a double movement. I did feel as if I was a stranger to myself as an Anglo Indian and Indian, but now am a friend. I recall saying to my supervisor, when I embarked on this research, that I wanted it to be meaningful to me. At the time, I did not know what I meant by this comment. So now I can ask myself if it has been meaningful ... I noticed that nearing the end of the research I cried when I watched any movie about India, which never occurred previously. I recognised that each time I went to India I felt deeply connected to place, particularly Bombay, the place I was born. But this more recent pouring of emotion seemed different. It was the Indians in the movies with whom I somehow felt connected. In 1942, Frank Anthony called for Anglo Indians to ‘cling’ to their Anglo Indian culture, but to also always remember they are Indian. I was not present to hear that voice. For reasons of aspiration and security, my parents chose to leave India—a decision that would have been particularly difficult for my mother who was leaving behind her home and her sisters. In 1944, Owen Snell, in his book *Anglo-Indians and Their Future* (1944), asked how Anglo Indians could ever feel a part of India and connected to Indians, given their gaze was always turned to the West.

My research has shifted this gaze, which now genuinely and authentically looks and is connected not so much to a double binding vision (that is half British and half Indian), but to a multi directional vision that accounts for a colonial past, the experience of emigrating, a presence as a citizen in my adopted country, and a future that allows for social imaginings.

The naming of the community as 'Anglo-Indian' and the hyphen between 'Anglo' and 'Indian' anchors and forever links the term to fixed British and Indian cultures—meaning an Anglo Indian can only be imagined and conceived through association to an Anglo-ised or Indian connection. By removing the hyphen I feel as if an Anglo Indian is freed from the shackles of associative representation. So, as an Anglo Indian, my connection is to the community and as a person born in India, my connection is to India. Historically, genetically and culturally, I will always be connected to a British/European ancestry. As a citizen and nationalised Australian, residing in Australia, I will also be Australian. In turn each of these associations provide multiple ways I define my sense of cultural identity and sense of place. It is from this shimmering and fractured space of multiplicity that I live in the world and draw from to engage practice-based research and make art. It cannot be any other way.

Act 2 – A form of rationale

As I come to the end of this research, which has disarmed, confused, exhilarated and helped me understand my own sense of cultural identity and being, it feels necessary to remind myself about the rationale for undertaking the research.

As I mention in the introduction to the dissertation, 'identity' continues to be an important leitmotif in contemporary art and life. Issues relating to cultural identity and belonging are increasingly politicised, complex and problematic in the context of globalisation. Discourse relating to who we are, where we belong, and who has the right to determine these choices, is not new. However, these questions continue to be compelling and more than ever, relevant. Answers, which might have once been given in a straightforward way, are more difficult to pin down as a consequence of greater mobility and multiple states of location. Laymert Garcia dos Santos' question—'Who has the right to belong to the future of humanity, and who is condemned to disappear?'—lingers as a potent reminder regarding the present and future choices we make as human beings. These choices must be considered and acted on from a shared moral and ethical position, rather than rationalised through economics or enforced through positions of power and domination. Otherwise we will continue to live in a world that is divided by race, class, power and culture.

My research began by asking, what appeared to be on face value, a simple and very personal question: What does it mean to be, live and experience the world as an Anglo Indian and how does being Anglo Indian impact on or influence how I make artworks? It is a question, which I surprisingly, had not asked myself critically, at any stage in my life. However, it was an issue that sat as a soft ache in my consciousness. My PhD was an opportunity to make a focused enquiry around this question.

I was born in India. Therefore I should have naturally felt that India was my home. But I seemed to know or was made to feel that it was not. Being Anglo Indian attributed to this feeling. Before I was even born, decisions relating to being and belonging were predetermined because of my mixed race status. As the mixed race progeny of British colonialism, we were made to occupy the precarious in-between space, as complex discursive practices and relations around race and class distinctions and power/knowledge

relations were acted out in experiences between Indian and British cultures. My parents lived through the period of India gaining its independence and were accustomed to seeing their culture as Anglo Indian, aligning with British values and a way of life that was not Indian.

Hall cites the late eighties and early nineties as a period of a discursive rethinking of the concept of 'identity' across diverse disciplinary areas, each critical of the long established idea of identity as fixed, integral, original and unified (Hall 1996, p. 1). A discursive approach sees identity as a construction, a process never completed, which is in a perpetual state of deferral. Identification is in the end conditional, being lodged in contingency. There is always too much or too little—never a proper fit. It obeys the logic of more-than-one. Therefore, because of its very nature of being discursive, it operates across difference, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries (Hall 1996, pp. 2 and 3). In this context (referring to identity), my ill-fitting suit in the Bespoke project, is the most appropriate form it could take.

If postcolonial writers—particularly Bhabha, Said, Rushdie, Hall—all point to identity as a shifting and evolving situation (as opposed to a static representation) then my research adds to this discourse specifically from the context of self-representing Anglo Indian experiences within a fine art context. My research puts forward a body of artworks that focus on how dual or mixed race identity loses and gains perspective by sitting in an in-between space. While there has been and continues to be, extensive focus on hybridity and identity in fine art, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s, I perceived a gap in existing research that engaged with a fine art practice in the context of the Anglo Indian as an individual and collectively as a community.

Anglo Indian identity, as I discuss throughout the dissertation, was primarily ignored in British and Indian history. Or when mentioned in early colonial writing, its reference was often derogatory, reducing the community to unfair clichés and stereotypes. Early Anglo Indian writing driven by the community, was a way to claim back and put forward its own sense of self through self-representation. More recently, research continues to be developed internationally, both by Anglo Indian and non Anglo Indian academics, relating to the Anglo Indian community. However, most of this research sits within literary writing and the social sciences, particularly in the field of social anthropology. As a practicing artist, I wanted to engage with this issue of what it means to be an Anglo Indian and how living within this in-betweenness could be explored and signified through a multidisciplinary fine art practice.

Reflecting on Avtar Brah's conceptualising of 'diaspora space' that has to include not just those who arrive but also those who are already there, and considering the mobility of people across geographies, leads to a rethinking of shared responsibilities of a world where hierarchy will need to step aside if we are to make the world work more compassionately. When Brah speaks of a 'diaspora space', I see it as being an inclusive space of the world.

Diaspora space as a conceptual category is "inhabited" not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words, the concept of diaspora space (as opposed to that of diaspora) includes the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of "staying put" (Brah 1996, p. 181).

It is too late in my research to re-look in detail at Brah's complex ideas in the diasporic space she discusses, but it would be an interesting next project to examine the diasporic space from the context of the Anglo Indian, as an 'emergent space of inquiry' (Hall 2012, para. 6). The diaspora, which as Hall describes is

'always in formation, with their origins and sources always already elsewhere, and their futures still emergent' (ibid., para. 7), provides scope for future research in the context of the Anglo Indian community.

When I think of the Anglo Indian community, like all communities, it evolves in complex ways in the context of larger comparative frameworks. There seems to be three key periods that significantly impacted on the Anglo Indian community's evolution: a shift from trade to colonisation, colonisation to Indian independence, and immigration post independence.

The first period during the 1780s–1830s, as Christopher Hawes' research points out, set out conditions purely in terms of the growth in Anglo Indian numbers, which meant the community had to be recognised:

First of all there were the Portuguese and the Dutch, but it was not until the role of Britain in India started moving from what I'd call a quintessentially "trading" role to one of government and paramount power that numbers of Eurasians started rising very rapidly. The genesis of a Eurasian community was actually linked to that period 1780 - 1830, when the number of British soldiers rose from a few hundred in India to about 30,000. There were few British women for them to marry, so they naturally lived with Indian women. Of course, these soldiers had children, and Eurasians suddenly became a social phenomenon that had to be recognised. So that period is key because it took Britain from trading to rule (Hawes 1997, 2013, p. 1).¹

The second period, loosely from the 1930s to independence, was when Anglo Indians had to consider their position and future in India in light of India gaining independence and its consequential Indianisation policies.

The third period, from 1947 (post independence) to the 1970s and 1980s, saw more than half of the Anglo Indian community immigrate to mostly Commonwealth countries: England, Canada and Australia.

Therefore, the community today needs to be considered from two perspectives. One is the Anglo Indians who remain in India, who are mostly aged and from low socioeconomic backgrounds who struggle financially and rely on government, social welfare and where applicable, extended family members who have immigrated to other countries. The second perspective is the large diaspora of Anglo Indians who have settled and assimilated into the culture of their adopted countries but who also stay connected to their Anglo Indian identity through a plethora of social networking platforms and the numerous national branches of the Anglo-Indian Associations, who stay active and vocal in organising and maintaining social and philanthropic activities, and discourse and publication on and for the community. As the next generation of Anglo Indians matures, they are becoming curious and interested in wanting to know more about the community both historically and contemporaneously through social media, storytelling and academic discourse.

The question that members of the Anglo Indian community invariably raise is whether or not the community will fade away and die out. This question I suspect needs to be considered from a range of perspectives relating to time and space. In terms of time, a colonial (historical) position and a postcolonial (present) position, and space in terms of the community as those domiciled in India and those who have emigrated to create a global diaspora. I believe the issues are hinged on the question of the constitutional definition of an Anglo Indian, which was written at a time and place for specific reasons. If the community

1 Hawes uses the term 'Eurasian' to represent Anglo Indians.

holds on to the constitutional definition, and chooses to be defined in this way, then the constitutional definition in contemporary terms is bankrupt. If the community chooses to hold on to this definition, then it will continue to exclude generations of people who will continue to fall into the gaps, created by the definition. Following this narrow and outdated definition will ultimately historicise the community and fix it to a period in the past because the definition is linked directly to ethnicity and geography. In this sense, the community will eventually decrease and die out. If however, as Andrews suggests, the definition of an Anglo Indian allows for a more flexible and inclusive position where self-identifying is part of the process of identity, then the community, whose members are highly organised and maintain a strong desire to be connected across global platforms, will continue the stories of the Anglo Indian as an evolving, dispersed and diverse community, rather than one which stays fixed, homogenised and historicised.

Act 3 – Looking back while moving forward

As I move nearer to the end of the PhD, I can see the imperative to shift the discourse away from 'looking back' to identity politics and critical imaging, to a more present/future way of being and living; one which maintains a sense of optimism rather than blame and which celebrates the Anglo Indian's fractured and shifting space of mutability and instability with affirmation. For it might be this very state that allows for a more flexible and circulatory experience of the world, not just as an Anglo Indian, but as a responsible and hopeful, world citizen.

In 1984, the exhibition "*Primitivism*" in *Twentieth Century Art*, at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, might have been the first show in the West that ... 'was effectively the beginning of the discourse on multiculturalism in the realm of the fine arts. Five years later, *Les magiciens de la terre*, at the Centre Pompidou in Paris (1989), was the first great counter-proposition' (McEvelley 1995, p. 15).

In his keynote statement for the *Les magiciens de la terre* catalogue (*before* the exhibition), McEvelley offered the following: 'Magiciens hope to provide a sense of the global state of contemporary art with all its fragmentations and differences. The reality of contemporary art as a shared enterprise of artists in Europe, America, India, China, Japan, Australia, Egypt, and so on requires a revised view of history as having multiple streams and multiple directions' (*ibid.*, p. 69).

Writing *after* and reflecting on the criticisms of the show at the Pompidou, McEvelley states: 'There were many distressing signs of residual colonial attitudes' (*ibid.*, p. 153). One of these he discusses was the choice of artists and artworks for the exhibition, noting a general distinction, which pointed to what he described as 'clichés', 'earthy, ritualistic' works by non-Western artists and 'cool, intellectual and conceptual' works by Western artists (*ibid.*, p. 154).

As I come to curating the final exhibition for the PhD, I have this growing consciousness of the fragmented distinction in my practice; the disparate materials, the different forms, which seem to oscillate between the 'earthy and ritualistic' and the 'cool and conceptual'. On one level I feel this is getting in the way of creating a cohesive show. On another level I feel a growing and stronger conviction that this is necessary. After all, from the start of the art projects, there was a natural openness to a diverse and seemingly fragmented art practice in terms of form and material. Perhaps in light of McEvelley's deliberations, my exhibition, even though twenty-five years after the *Les magiciens de la terre* exhibition, is part of this 'next stage in the post-colonial process' (*ibid.*, p. 154). A process, which as I come to the end of the project and

reflect on the world we are living in, is not a dialogue that is finished, or needs apologies, but rather one that needs voicing, writing, making and reclaiming, through an artistic practice. McEvelley states:

We are entering a period where every ethnic group or bonding group or community of taste or belief will write and rewrite its own fragment of history, and probably in many conflicting versions. A more or less unconnected array of micro-narratives will replace, for a time, the single meta-narrative (McEvelley, 1995).

He goes on to discuss the potential pitfalls of such a situation but also poses some important questions:

Why not let the world breathe for a while without a meta-narrative constricting it into a narrow space that is claimed as ultimate? Why not let it feel its way into a future without those totalizing, globalizing, universalizing, redemptionist myths [...] (ibid., p. 145).

My PhD exhibition and deliberations, along with the many narratives that are now being realised, formally and informally, need not be seen (at this stage at least), as inscribing a new, replacing meta-narrative, but rather as allowing the many narratives to settle and be in this state as fragmented, optimistic and shimmering. It (the many narratives) might, as McEvelley notes, be a 'remapping of the terrain for a new and difficult era' (ibid p. 145). But, I believe it is a project, which in the scheme of things, is essential.

What is different twenty-five years later, is that artists who were once considered 'marginal' are not only attempting to represent their artwork within the context of their identity or their culture as it relates to colonial or postcolonial discourse, but also from a genuinely international position from where they are in the world: physically, metaphorically and symbolically. Their artwork therefore becomes authentic because it takes into account experiences and forms of representation, of where they come from, historically, geographically and culturally. This is a natural extension of the artists of today, drawing on and from their plural selves—not as marginal, or hybridised or postcolonial, but from no fixed place in identity or culture. Therefore, I would contend, form, content and method in this equation are best served as ambiguous and performative, slippery and disjunctured—fractured, multiple and shimmering in the hope for a world that can be more optimistic, compassionate, sharing and humane. If, as the signs of our times seem to point to living in a world of catastrophe and fear, then I believe this is the platform and agency for the artist today as truly a world citizen.

So, in light of McEvelley's important questions, I would like to delay my response in putting forward a conclusive end, preferring to let my stories and the stories of others, settle over time and feel their growing and evolving presence in the world through negotiation, inscription and articulation. As Bhabha describes we can then 'emerge as the others of our selves' (Bhabha 2004, p. 56).

The Anglo Indian, in many contexts, wears this ill-fitting and at the same time splendid suit. He cannot wear the clothes of the English gentleman, nor the dhoti of the Indian, for he is neither of these persons. He will have to find his own garment—his own cloth that can become his own skin, inclusive of all colours and tones: black, brown and white. Rather than a 'less than one but double', for he/she is neither less nor a doubling of less. I would prefer Anglo Indians not see themselves as split personalities, a phrase that has commonly been used to describe the community ... but as requiring a flexibility to use a position of indeterminacy and deferral as agency to *become*, to be heard and to be celebrated as a minority, between two cultures who appear less accepting of definitions, which are conditional and contingent, and more comfortable with the settled and essentialist. This discursive definition of identity positions the

Anglo Indian as an agent to live strategically out of and simultaneously, in the space of, its own definition (perhaps as a state of perpetual deferment).

The question of 'who am I?' must take into account 'who I am not.' Therefore, to suspend the answer as simply 'I am' (and here I think of the profound painting of New Zealand artist, Colin McCahon by this title) accounts for a past, present and future deliberation. As Hall notes: 'It accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions' (Hall 1996, p. 4). He adds:

[...] though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (ibid., p. 4).

These questions, which Hall asked in 1996, theoretically, are the very questions the Anglo Indian community has lived through, predating Hall's deliberations—asking itself these questions along the way, firstly as actions from lived experiences, then as nostalgic writings as a form of reclaiming, moving to academic theorising and to a present accepting of a shimmering self as a global, cosmopolitan citizen dispersed across the world. But still connected as we continue to evolve, narrate, find and define our own sense of being and becoming.

Act 4 – The final exhibition: *where here is elsewhere* (2016)

The title of my final exhibition is borrowed from an essay title by curator, Jean Fisher, 'Where here is elsewhere' (Boullata 2008, pp. 61–74). It is an alluring and oblique phrase that recalls an atemporal and locational state of multiplicity. Its lack of specificity renders it indeterminate. Where is Fisher alluding to when she says 'here is elsewhere'? It is both specific and vague. Yet it is also hopeful and inclusive. Fisher is signaling that right here (which can be inclusively read as being anywhere depending on the individual), is also elsewhere. Meaning that here does not have to be read as fixed. It can be somewhere else. The lack of a time-based structure to the sentence, can be taken to mean that here and elsewhere potentially can occur simultaneously. It can be wherever and whenever we want it to be, real and imagined.

My final exhibition for the research, is a selection of artworks that includes: *Curtain* (2012), *Bespoke* (2013), *Between Dreaming and Dying* (2015), *Closeness & Distance* (2015) and two more recent artworks—*Letting things be what they are* (2016) and *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)* (2016).

■ *LETTING THINGS BE WHAT THEY ARE* (2016)

Letting things be what they are (2016), is the shimmering stick that was used in the artwork *Rumour* (2013). After showing *Rumour* (2013), I decided to dismantle the work as there were technical issues that I wanted to resolve. While doing this, I noticed the stick leaning against the window in my studio. I immediately liked the way it casually lent against the window as if in waiting for something ... I much preferred this incarnation. I felt it reflected the state of the Anglo Indian waiting for their moment to



Fig. 480 | D'Costa, R 2016, *Letting things be what they are*, [eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; height 90 cm], image taken in the studio, Fryerstown, Victoria. Image courtesy of Marion Williams.

shine. It seemed in limbo, as if in-between, reflecting while a decision was waiting to be made about its future usefulness. It was in repose, yet signalling its optimistic, shimmering status. My eucalyptus stick covered in crystals, as an object of curiosity and allure, also relates to the 19th century idea (and earlier colonising ideas) of acquiring primitive objects as artifacts for ethnographic display. The Eurocentric desire to display objects and therefore to erase or deny their authentic cultural meaning, became problematic within early modernist practices.² I was interested in the object I had created, which was an artwork but also an (Anglo Indian) artefact. I chose to install the work leaning against the wall so it could be read as a contemporary art object and/or an artefact waiting or forgotten (overlooked) to be encased in its cabinet for display.

■ PERSONNES (2010)

Christian Boltanski's piles of clothes become powerful reminders of the mass quantity of materials relating to human personal belongings gathered as a byproduct from the horrors of concentration camp executions. They signify, through their sheer materiality and mass, the horror and pathos of a recent historical past. The everyday-ness of Boltanski's materials, such as clothes, implicate a collective recognition; we are all implicated in these horrific events. The scars from these atrocities cut deeply and continue to resonate into our present collective consciousness. For *Personnes* (2010), Boltanski's monumental piles of clothes (which form part of the exhibition) become material reminders of encounters between the object and the subjective viewer. You cannot remain outside of this work. Boltanski uses the device of a collective historical memory to draw the viewer into the space of encounter. As part of this immersive installation, a giant crane with a claw-type apparatus, periodically picks up clothes from a pile and releases them to fall randomly back onto the form. The sounds of individual heartbeats envelope the space as the audience moves through the vastness of the Grand Palais. The word *personnes*, loosely translated into English means both *people* and *nobodies*. *Personnes* (2010), like much of Boltanski's work, reminds us of life, death and our collective memory. There are other components to *Personnes* (2010), but it is the pile of clothes picked up by the crane in which I am most interested—its vastness and monumentality are overwhelming and transformative. Standing in the space of *Personnes* (2010), we can recall images from concentration camps of piles of human remnants (clothes, boots, spectacles). Or we can try to remember articles of clothing and imagine the individual to whom it belongs. Ultimately, there is a collective hopefulness in *Personnes* (2010). It is its very ephemerality that carries the weight of human history. We can all relate to the personal experience of clothing. We all own garments, which we wear and which

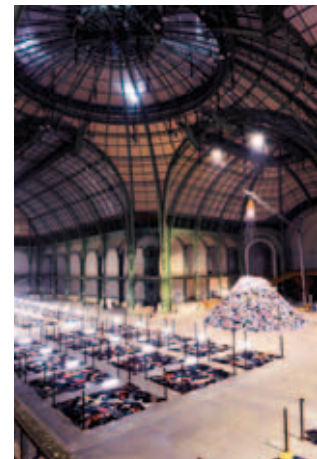


Fig. 481 | Boltanski, C 2010, *Personnes* (installation view), [mixed media installation, dimensions variable], Monument 10, Grand Palais (2010), Paris.

² For broader and more in-depth discussions on 'display' see: Karp I and Lavine S D (eds) 1991, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London; and Karp I, et al (eds) 2006, *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, Duke University Press, Durham and London.

hold memory and stories. [Boltanski has confirmed that he wants all the clothing to be recycled after the de-installation]. Boltanski's artwork carries human signification. The clothing used in the artwork will, after it is dismantled, return to the ordinariness of everyday experience. It will belong to us in the future to be used.

■ "UNTITLED" (PORTRAIT OF ROSS IN L.A.) (1991)

Gonzalez-Torres uses humble candied sweets to create a mound that replicates the ideal body weight of his lover, Ross Laycock, who died of AIDS. It is, in my opinion, one of the most poignant and startling works of this century in its simplicity of form and complexity of content. To encounter the work, "*Untitled*" (*Portrait of Ross in L.A.*) (1991), is disarming. Without any contextual reference it would be easy for a viewer to ask what a pile of sweets is doing in a museum. The accompanying text, which invites the audience to 'take' the sweets, complicates conventional models of museum expectations—where one is usually discouraged from touching the artwork. Yet Gonzalez-Torres invites the audience to partake of the work. As the audience takes the sweets, it reduces the weight of the artwork, which parallels Ross' weight loss due to the AIDS virus. As part of the installation, Gonzalez-Torres stipulates that the pile of sweets should be replenished, metaphorically creating a state of perpetual life.

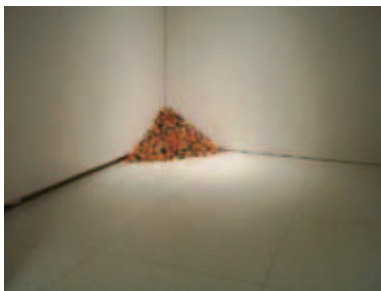


Fig. 482 | Gonzalez-Torres, F 1991, "*Untitled*" (*Portrait of Ross in L.A.*) (installation view), [multicoloured candies, individually wrapped in cellophane, ideal weight 175 lbs], Gund Gallery, Ohio.

In the context of the title, we metaphorically ingest his lover in an act that can be likened to partaking of the consecrated holy communion of the Lord in Catholic ritual. This reading politicises the work, given the Catholic church's negative view of homosexuality and Gonzalez-Torres' openly homosexual references and position his artwork often takes. Inside or outside of this reading, above all, Torres' humble gesture is generous and human. To share openly the most private, intimate and taboo issues of sex and death, and love and loss, in the public realm, is what makes this work significant.

■ HOW MUCH DOES YOUR HISTORY WEIGH? (WE ARE ALL TOGETHER COMPLICIT IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, HERE AND ELSEWHERE, THEN, NOW AND TOMORROW) (2016)

What I find so compelling in Boltanski's and Gonzalez-Torres' artworks, is how such indeterminate forms (piles of ordinary stuff) can activate such powerful human responses. *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)* (2016) is the final artwork I made for this research. It consists of a mound of the spice turmeric weighing 18,888 grams. I have equated time with weight, and have chosen to use one gram of turmeric to represent each day I have lived in the world. Therefore on the 15th June 2016, (the final day before the exhibition is deinstalled), it will be 18,888 days I have lived in the world,



Fig. 483 | D'Costa, R 2016, studio tests when installing, *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)*, [spice, weight 18,888 grams; dimensions variable]. Image courtesy of Marion Williams

which will total 18,888 grams of turmeric. Turmeric is a material I have used previously, in *Trade* (2013), but also prior to commencing this research. Besides its connections to the spice trade, which I examined in the artwork, *Trade* (2013), turmeric is a product used for medicinal (Ayurveda), and culinary experiences. Growing up, I recall seeing my mother rubbing turmeric powder into the leg of one of our pet chickens. It was a bizarre image watching my mother holding a chicken and rubbing a powder into its leg, staining it a bright, glowing, warm yellow. When I enquired further about this action, she discussed the spice's healing properties, which are well documented in both Ayurvedic and Western medical practices. I was particularly struck by the idea of healing. I imagined the spice could be used to heal the ruptures caused by colonialism for both the colonised and coloniser.

When considering how to use the spice, I reflected on the mounds of spice I created for *Trade* (2013). I was attracted to the idea of a mound or pile of something without a determined form, other than the weight and sum of the material. It recalls the artworks "*Untitled*" (*Portrait of Ross in L.A.*) (1991), by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and Christian Boltanski's, *Personnes* (2010), where a pile of material sits within the form created by its own weight.

The question embedded in the very long title for my artwork, comes from a conversation between architect and theorist, Buckminster Fuller, and architect, Norman Foster. Fuller asked Foster, how much his buildings weigh? (This question is also the title of a documentary on the architectural practice of Norman Foster—*How much does your building weigh, Mr. Foster*, 2010, DVD, Dogwoof, S.A.). The question Fuller asks is both metaphorical and practical. It made Foster reconsider the engineering and efficiency of his buildings, which in turn shifted the design and structure of his architectural practice. I suspect it may also have made Foster reflect on his own sense of responsibility in bringing such monumental forms into the world.

Drawing on Fuller's question, my question literally and metaphorically poses: how much would history weigh? The question connects the physical weight of material and the monumental mass of a form (we do not necessarily see almost twenty kilos of turmeric piled on the floor in our everyday experiences), with time, mortality and our collective history. Throughout my research I continually reflected on the weight and connectedness of histories, imagining what material form this could take. It is this very question, which I pose for the viewer of the artwork. I ask them to consider their own history in the question and consequently, to consider how their history is implicated in mine (and mine in theirs). Therefore if we can accept that we are all implicated in each other's histories (and therefore futures), then, hopefully we can start to take responsibility for each other and each other's actions. In this context, our history and our future is collective and shared. In its present state, the pile of turmeric takes an indeterminate form. It's ephemeral state is open to change. It carries into the future, the potential and agency of healing, hope and a shared connectedness.

■ FINAL EXHIBITION 2016 – A DISCUSSION

As I mentioned in 2014-15, I commenced thinking about the final exhibition (see p.178), curious to know which artworks I would select and how their and spatial relationships would build a connective narrative or tissue across the space which captures and engages the research enquiry I had set, and how this new knowledge could be presented within the exhibition context.

I want the final exhibition to be experienced as cerebral, emotional, aesthetic and sensorial. Ultimately I attempt to create an atmosphere within and between the artworks, which allows the viewer to move physically and metaphorically inside the space of the exhibition while simultaneously being transported to the sites within each work; sites which are both actual and imagined. The title for the final exhibition, *Where Here is Elsewhere*, sets these very conditions.

While I know it is necessary, I am still a little hesitant and reluctant to discuss the final exhibition in words as any form of conclusive statement, simply because I don't think I have the capacity to articulate in words that which captures the complexity of exhibition making and curating. The formal, conceptual, aesthetic, instinctive and experiential, together with knowledge, trust, feelings, logic, limitations, risks and doubt all play pivotal parts in developing an exhibition. So what I present as words to articulate the decisions for the final exhibition should only be seen as an attempt to share ideas for what I want the exhibition to do and how I want the viewer to navigate the space. It should only be seen as a consideration and not singularly conclusive.

The final exhibition puts forward an expanded way to consider and experience alterity. It includes a selection of artworks, which creates the shimmering space of the Anglo Indian – as actual, historical, autobiographical, magical and hopeful. After being engaged in the research so intensely for such a long period of time, I was feeling disarmed that the final decisions for the exhibition, (in 2016), seemed to occur almost self-reflexively.

Working across multiple materials and forms creates its own challenges, compromises and problems, particularly when contained within one un-demarcated space, which is the School of Art Gallery at RMIT University. I knew I would need to be judicious and rigorous in the editing process, as whatever artwork I decided on, I would have to ensure that each was granted space to breathe. I wanted a sparseness for the show which facilitated discreet engagement with individual works and at the same time, allowed these artworks to breach their own spatiality in the gallery to form interrelated narrative, formal and conceptual relationships. In this context it would be appropriate to describe the exhibition as a body of discreet artworks and potentially an installation, where each artwork becomes an important component of a whole, therefore also accounting for the architecture of the space (installation).

I would like to say that the final works almost selected themselves as they each play a part in unfolding narratives and creating a transformed atmosphere in the space, which I hope is quiet and contemplative, yet charged in a way, which isn't expected. I knew the exhibition would be risky and ambitious (and even audacious), but strangely it felt quite natural and convincing to take this route because above all else, I wanted the exhibition to have a willingness to experiment, given that experimentation guided so much of the research. Some how I imagined (and was quietly confident) that a very colorfully bold and charismatic curtain that speaks to both Western and Indian registers, two very different photographs of a man in the landscape, a pile of glowing turmeric, a stick covered in shimmering crystals, almost casually leaning against a central pillar, a postcard, and a discreet split screen video with a soundtrack of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Engelbert Humperdinck, would somehow work conceptually, aesthetically, contextually and spatially. That the exhibition would also utilize the floor, ceiling, walls, sound, visual and olfactory experiences, adds to its complexity. This potpourri of forms and materials including abstraction, portraiture and the readymade, in a single space was always going to be challenging. But its very unevenness, fracture and elusiveness was exactly what it needed to be if it was going to legitimately and authentically engage the research. While there are clearly differences in materiality and form within

the artworks, there are also clear and oblique formal, spatial and conceptual relationships, which link the artworks to create a sense of cohesion.

I knew the entrance to the show was crucial. I wanted to create a situation that both allowed and blocked access to exhibition. Placing the artwork *Curtain* (2013) at the entrance would create a screen, which didn't visually expose the whole exhibition immediately on entering the gallery. So on entering the gallery the viewer is confronted with a wall of colour, which is sheer and semi translucent. The lighting will be subdued creating a form of exuberance, decadence and theatricality. In this instance the border (a double curtain) becomes experiential and tantalizing. Perhaps the transportation to far off fantastical place such as those described in the collection of Arabic stories in *One Thousand and One Nights*, or Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (1972), begins at this point of entry – 'here becomes elsewhere' on entering the space. The physical gap provides an entry point through the curtain, luring the viewer, inviting them to enter 'anOTHER' space. Already there is the expectation of moving across time and space, backward and forward, elusive and evocative.

From the invitational gap in the curtain, one will see on the wall, a solitary photograph of a man dressed in South Indian costume, lying horizontally in a grass field. As the title of this artwork suggests, he is either dreaming or dying. There is a dog in the photograph, which appears either menacing or friendly. The photograph is both inviting and unsettling. The content is oblique. The subject matter is both plausible and at odds with expectations. Unsure and unable to work out the narrative, but sensing that a narrative is important in the photograph, the viewer is cast in a state where an understanding of content and narrative may have to be deferred, or that its meaning would unfold incrementally.

The viewer of this photograph, *Between Dreaming and Dying* (2015), doesn't know that the artist has experienced a similar image himself – of Hindu bodies wrapped in white fabric on the banks of the river Ganges awaiting cremation. When he viewed these images, there were dogs hanging around the funeral pyres creating an unsettling image that stayed in his memory. He has watched such rituals of life and death in India. He knows it is the wishes and desires of many Hindus to have their bodies cremated by the river Ganges. But he is not Hindu and where he lives now, there is no sacred river. He can only dream of and remember such experiences. His horizontal position should not be read as failure or hopelessness. Instead there seems to be a form of quiet resistance of the protagonist in the image. He defies his own sense of being and belonging in the landscape. He transports past memory of forms from India into the space in the photograph, which is in Central Victoria, Australia. In turn this photograph in context to the other works in the exhibition, renders the space in the gallery as atemporal.

Back in the space of the gallery, if the viewer turns slightly from this photographic image, they will be caught in the dazzle of a Swarovski covered stick leaning quietly against the central pillar of the gallery, yet ostentatiously shining as if caught in the spot light of the gallery – a beautiful distraction as the viewer, still unsure, attempts to reconcile its form, its material and its role in the gallery space. Narratives from each artwork, commence their own breaching,, creating new and multiple narratives. As if recognizing the viewer's helplessness in attempting to decipher the conundrum, the title of this artwork, *Letting things be what they are* (2016), almost asks or reminds the viewer to self-disarm themselves and to suspend their own expectations. They are not going to work it (the exhibition) out immediately. They will have to relax into the exhibition and allow it to envelop them in its atmosphere.

The crystal covered stick too has background information, which the viewer does not have immediate knowledge of. It is a stick from a fallen Eucalyptus tree from the Australian bush where the artist lives. It is the same site that the photographs in the exhibition, were taken. The Eucalyptus branch has a parasitic mistletoe attached to it. This is what attracted the artist to it. The idea that one form attached itself to the other mimicking its appearance, but not harming it. Two existing forms become a third shining form.

On the next wall, will hang *Bespoke* (2013) (each photograph placed on a wall without any other work in its immediate approximation). The viewer now encounters a man standing vertically in the Australian bush holding a greyhound. He is resplendent in a suit (partially) resembling attire worn by a English country gentlemen, but not quite. There is an excess of fabric choice in his suit, rupturing its own attempts at authenticity.

The viewer can stand back slightly and compare the two photographs. They are the only form (photography) which are repeated in the exhibition. The same person represented in *Dreaming and Dying* (2015), (perhaps the artist) is now in English attire and stands vertically in the landscape. It is a more confrontational image than the other photograph. The protagonist is no longer passive. He stares boldly and directly out of the picture plane holding the viewers gaze.

There are forms which connect these two photographs; a human form (one vertical and the other horizontal), dogs, a landscape, and specific dress codes (English and Indian). There is more overt and recoverable information in *Bespoke* (2013); metaphors and signifiers for the viewer to develop a narrative and conceptual meaning. There is humour in this photograph, no doubt, but a humour, which isn't allowing the viewer to laugh, as the image is also poignant. There is both irony and sincerity and empathy. The artwork is political. It uses mimicry as a strategy to challenge the orthodoxy of being and belonging. The quiet and introspective space of the gallery, is suddenly ruptured. Encountering *Bespoke* (2013) disarms expectation. It is a crucial work, which unhinges and reroutes the discourse around being belonging and identity.

From the two photographs and the stick, the viewer will then encounter a glowing mound of spice; almost 19 kilograms of it. While it seems modest in scale, it also feel monumental. We don't usually encounter this amount of the spice in our lives in this way, piled on the floor, It will occupy a large space in the darkened gallery. It's luminosity is unavoidable as you enter the space, but its encounter is deliberately deferred. The viewer is only now left unencumbered to walk around the pile, to squat at its edges, to smell its aroma, to breathe its healing qualities, to bask in its aesthetic glow, always wondering what it is doing or what it is supposed to represent. It appears to only be what it is. Only a very long title gives entry into the artist's intentionality. Weight, time and connectedness are leitmotifs that are suggested at. Armed with this information, the viewer can consider these concepts in the other artworks as well. A breaching of ideas across artworks continues as the viewer negotiates the complex terrain of ideas, forms and materials, which are neither synchronous or linear.

Finally in a corner in close proximity to the curtain, a postcard is pinned directly to the wall. The viewer has by now circumvented the gallery space. There is no attempt to embellish the postcard in anyway, which might transpose it to a work of art. It is a postcard. Perhaps the artist's postcard he has received during his life. Information which might provide background to its meaning is available from the list of works, "postcard of Marine Parade, Bombay, sent from my mother while visiting India." If we accept as

factual this text, then real life is brought into the content. Autobiography and the personal, reinforce a growing assumption that this project is about identity.

The video work which sits slightly below the postcard is projected directly on the wall on a very small and intimate scale. The video is a split screen showing on one side, collaged images from a place, India perhaps and Bombay specifically. On the other screen the camera pans a dimly lit interior, another place, a different time. It feels nostalgic of a place once lived but left. It feels mnemonic, a remembering of sorts. There is a light source which dances across the space alluding to and in sympathy with the sparkles from the Swarovski crystal stick in the space of the gallery. Strangely the space and light in the video infiltrates the space and light of the gallery. The interior space in the video is the artist's cousin's flat in Bombay, which was the flat next door to the one he lived in before his family migrated. The name of the building this flat occupies is called Scheherazade. He travelled back to both flats to make the video. It was a nostalgic returning of sorts. A way to remember a past which is still very present in his life.

Ultimately, by including the artworks I have chosen for the final exhibition, that appear fractured and disjunctured, in terms of materiality and form, is connected across multiple narratives which breach their own pictorial space to connect new narratives and new knowledge; a knowledge which encompasses multiple belongings, times and places without ever settling in any singularly resolved position. This is the intention for the exhibition and its effect. Things feel both familiar and slightly foreign. There is an in-betweenness which becomes set in the space; a third space is established which I refer to as enunciating the Anglo Indian experience, that has been overlooked, forgotten or excluded from grand narratives. It becomes a site where the shimmering space of Anglo Indianness is encountered, and represented as fractured, as elusive, as imagined, as lived and evolving, always in formation.

■ LIST OF WORKS

RMIT University - School of Art Gallery

PhD examination exhibition – June 2016

Project title: Shimmering Spaces: Art and Anglo Indian Experiences

Final exhibition title: Where Here is Elsewhere

Rhett D'Costa

- 1 D'Costa, R 2013, *Curtain*, [silk, polyester silk, metal hanging system; 8 m x 3.8 m].
- 2 D'Costa, R 2015, *Between Dreaming and Dying* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle Fine Art Pearl paper 285 gsm; 97 cm x 66 cm (framed)].
- 3 D'Costa, R 2016, *Letting things be what they are*, [eucalyptus branch, mistletoe, Swarovski crystals; height 90 cm].
- 4 D'Costa, R 2013, *Bespoke* (Edition of 3), [inkjet photographic print on Hahnemühle Fine Art Pearl paper 285 gsm; 148 cm x 105 cm (framed)].
- 5 D'Costa, R 2016, *How much does your history weigh? (We are all together complicit in one way or another, here and elsewhere, then, now and tomorrow)*, [spice, weight 18,888 grams; dimensions variable].
- 6 D'Costa, R. 2009, postcard of Marine Parade, Bombay, sent from my mother while visiting India.
- 7 D'Costa, R 2015, *Closeness & Distance* (Edition of 3), single channel video projection (2.30 min.).



Figs.484–493 | D'Costa, R 2016, *Where Here is Elsewhere* (installation views) School of Art Gallery, RMIT University. Images courtesy of Keelan O'Hehair.









Act 5 – Connecting stories and serendipitous experiences: ordinary moments in extraordinary histories

In an interview with Anglo Indian academic, Glen D’Cruz, Christopher Hawes points out that interest in the mixed race experience in colonial times is ‘growing rather than diminishing’ (Hawes 1997, p. 5). Anglo Indians such as my mother, are the last of the Raj generation. Their stories maintain currency for their children both in India and the Anglo Indian diaspora. Sociologists, anthropologists and historians continue to show interest in the community, as does Britain who, as Hawes points out, are ‘still in love with its experience in India’ (ibid.). Class and race and its relationship to culture and identity continue to generate discourse both within and in the extended field of art practice. The entangled space of hybrid identities adds to this complicated field of enquiry. As Bhabha pointed out, while hybrid identities were caught in the ‘discontinuous time of translation and negotiation’, they are now ‘free to negotiate and translate their cultural identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference’ (Bhabha 2004, p. 55). My research puts forward a body of artworks that engages with this shimmering field of translation and negotiation, from the perspective of being Anglo Indian, reflecting the community’s lived subjectivity.



Fig. 494 | Photograph of my mother, Philomena Peters (1947), working for the WACI, connecting Lord Mountbatten (the last Viceroy of India) to the Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru to finalise Britain’s withdrawal from India. Image courtesy of Philomena Peters.

Philomena Peters connecting
Lord Mountbatten with
Jawaharlal Nehru
to finalise the
handover

Philomena Peters
Public Relations
1947

Fig. 495 | The reverse of the photograph with my mother’s handwriting and the name of the Public Relations photographer for the event (1947). Image courtesy of Philomena Peters.

It seems appropriate that the final act should be about my mother and one of her many stories. The quote I use at the commencement of chapter one is from Homi Bhabha reminding us that he was not present at that midnight hour that ‘marked India’s tryst with freedom, [...] that epochal narrative’ (2004, p. IX). It turns out, my mother was. She was present as a young woman, working for the Women’s Auxiliary Corps (India) or the WAC (I), when Britain was in the process of handing India back. She was a telephone operator. Her job was to connect telephone cables so that people in different locations could communicate with each other. She showed me a photograph from 1947 of her connecting two cables. She told me her story of how she had been selected to connect (by telephone) Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, with the Congress party leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, who would become the first incoming president for independent India, so they could finalise preparations for the handover. In her words, she remembers saying, ‘Lord Mountbatten I have Mr Nehru on the line’ [and] ‘Mr Nehru I have Lord Mountbatten on the line’, [finishing with the words], ‘I am connecting you now’ (Peters 2015, pers. comm., 12 January 2015). I do not know why the authorities chose my mother. Was it because she spoke English? Was it because she was Anglo Indian? Poetically befitting I think that an Anglo Indian woman (the outcome of a union some 300 years earlier) would play a role in telephonically *connecting* the leaders of two cultures who would begin the process to disconnect their political ties, but not their entangled legacy.

I do not need to know any other details surrounding this story. But it has been incidental experiences and stories such as these that have at certain points guided this research. It is the ordinariness of the everyday moment in the extraordinariness of the historical event, which is so compelling. My Anglo Indian mother was present to do her job in connecting British and Indian male leaders at a landmark moment in British and Indian history; a photograph exists in our personal archives (as documented proof to authenticate and validate the moment), which opens up a plethora of stories surrounding the experience. It is through such stories that we (Anglo Indians), as a community, need to continue narrating, adding to historical and cultural knowledge and beliefs that shimmer as they light a path for our evolving sense of identity and belonging now and in our socially imagined futures.

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