

Destiny Deacon

Walk + don't look back.

DESTINY DEACON

Walk & don't look blak

First published on the occasion of the exhibition

[Destiny Deacon: Walk & don't look blak](#)

Guest curator Natalie King

Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

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COVER IMAGE

[Oz Games—Under the spell of the tall poppies](#) 1998/2003

light jet print from Polaroid

100 x 80 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and

Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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AVANT-PROPOS DU DIRECTEUR

Destiny Deacon: Walk & don't look black est la treizième exposition d'une série en cours de projets solo d'artistes Australiens renommés. Située au Niveau 4 du Musée d'art contemporain (le MCA), elle présente des photographies, vidéos et installations issues des quinze dernières années de la production prolifique de Deacon, avec en outre des œuvres produites tout spécialement pour l'exposition.

Il est temps de prêter une attention particulière aux œuvres de Deacon. Depuis le début des années 90, elle est devenue l'une des artistes australiennes les plus renommées, cumulant des expositions à l'échelon tant local qu'international. Walk & don't look black sera cependant la première exposition en solo avec publication de Deacon dans un musée, offrant ainsi un aperçu de la vision incisive et humoristique que l'artiste a du monde. Utilisant ses amis, sa famille et sa vaste collection d'«Aboriginalia», Deacon crée des vignettes insolites, belles, effrayantes et drôles de la vie aborigène contemporaine. Fondée sur son long engagement dans la politique indigène et féministe, l'œuvre de Deacon examine la manière dont le langage et la représentation peuvent être à la fois des outils d'oppression et des armes de résistance.

Le musée d'art contemporain a présenté de manière détaillée l'oeuvre d'un grand nombre d'artistes australiens renommés et ce, depuis l'ouverture des galeries du Niveau 4 en 1999. Ces artistes comprennent Guan Wei, Dale Frank, Mikala Dwyer, Kathleen Petyarre, Lyndal Jones, Hossein Valamanesh, Patricia Piccinini, Dorothy Napangardi, Maria Fernanda Cardoso, Susan Norrie, Callum Morton et Rodney Glick. Une autre initiative du Niveau 4, lancée en 2001, associe un artiste australien à un pair international; ainsi, nous avons vu Ricky Swallow avec le sculpteur texan Erick Swenson, Mathew Jones avec l'artiste britannique Simon Starling, et Jan Nelson avec l'artiste hollandais Liza May Post.

De nombreuses personnes ont contribué à cette exposition et à cette publication. Je voudrais remercier tout d'abord Destiny Deacon pour son engagement dans le projet, y compris pour la production de nouvelles oeuvres. Nous sommes reconnaissants à Natalie King, le commissaire invité à organiser cette exposition, pour son dévouement et son enthousiasme dans la réalisation

de ce projet, ainsi qu'à Virginia Fraser, collaboratrice de longue date de Destiny, pour sa participation et son soutien fidèles. Nous remercions également la représentante de l'artiste, Roslyn Oxley, et ses collaborateurs, ainsi que tous ceux qui ont contribué au catalogue: Richard Bell, Brenda L Croft, Marcia Langton, Djon Mundine, Hetti Perkins et Lisa Reihana.

Le musée est extrêmement reconnaissant de l'aide de longue date fournie par American Express, et en particulier du parrainage de cette exposition, qui fait partie de son programme de soutien pour les projets concernant des artistes indigènes australiens. Nous remercions également la Fondation Gordon Darling pour sa contribution à cette publication importante, et aux ambassadeurs du MCA pour leur soutien continu au programme d'exposition solo du Niveau 4 du Musée.

Suivant sa présentation au MCA, l'exposition ouvrira au centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou à Nouméa en Nouvelle Calédonie avant de continuer vers d'autres lieux d'exposition internationaux. Je voudrais remercier le directeur culturel Emmanuel Kasarhérou et Henri Gama, le chef du Département des arts plastiques visuels et des expositions du centre culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou pour leur soutien sans faille depuis le début de ce projet. Cette présentation constitue le premier partage d'une exposition entre le MCA et un centre d'expositions d'une île du Pacifique, et nous sommes ravis de cette opportunité. Nous sommes reconnaissants au gouvernement de l'état de Victoria, par le biais du Programme international des arts de Victoria, de leur contribution à la tournée internationale de l'exposition, ainsi qu'à l'Ambassade de France à Canberra pour son aide à la traduction française du catalogue.

Enfin, nous remercions encore Telstra pour son soutien constant, permettant l'entrée libre au Musée d'art contemporain.

ELIZABETH ANN MACGREGOR
DIRECTRICE, MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN

DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

Destiny Deacon: Walk & don't look black is the thirteenth exhibition in an ongoing series of solo projects by leading Australian artists on Level 4 of the MCA. It features photography, video and installation from the past fifteen years of Deacon's prolific practice, as well as new work produced especially for the exhibition.

A considered look at Deacon's work is timely. Since the late 1980s, she has become one of Australia's most prominent artists, exhibiting widely both locally and internationally. Walk & don't look black will however be Deacon's first solo museum exhibition and publication, providing insight into the artist's incisive and humorous world view. Utilising friends, family, and her vast collection of 'Aboriginalia', Deacon creates uncanny, beautiful, frightening and funny vignettes of contemporary Aboriginal life. Grounded in her long involvement in Indigenous and feminist politics, Deacon's work examines how language and representation can be both tools of oppression and ammunition for resistance.

The MCA has profiled in-depth the work of a number of significant Australian artists since the Level 4 Galleries opened in 1999. These artists have included Guan Wei, Dale Frank, Mikala Dwyer, Kathleen Petyarre, Lyndal Jones, Hossein Valamanesh, Patricia Piccinini, Dorothy Napangardi, Maria Fernanda Cardoso, Susan Norrie, Callum Morton and Rodney Glick. Another Level 4 initiative, established in 2001, pairs an Australian artist with an international peer, including Ricky Swallow with the Texan sculptor Erick Swenson, Mathew Jones with the British artist Simon Starling, and Jan Nelson with the Dutch artist Liza May Post.

Many people have contributed to this exhibition and publication. I would like to thank Destiny Deacon first of all for her commitment to the project, including the production of new work. We are grateful to the exhibition's guest curator, Natalie King, for her dedication and enthusiasm in bringing this project to fruition, as well as Destiny's long-time collaborator Virginia Fraser for her close involvement and support. Our thanks go to the artist's representative, Roslyn Oxley, and her staff; and to catalogue contributors Richard Bell, Brenda L Croft, Marcia Langton, Djon Mundine, Hetti Perkins and Lisa Reihana.

The museum is very grateful for the longstanding assistance of American Express, and its sponsorship of this exhibition in particular, as part of its program of supporting projects featuring Indigenous Australian artists. Thanks go to the Gordon Darling Foundation for its contribution to this significant publication, and to the MCA Ambassadors for their ongoing support for the Museum's Level 4 solo exhibition program.

Following the presentation at the MCA, the exhibition will travel to the Cultural Centre Tjibaou, Noumea, New Caledonia, and then continue on to further international venues. I would like to thank Emmanuel Kasarhérou, Cultural Director, and Henri Gama, Head of Visual Arts and Exhibitions Department, at the Cultural Centre Tjibaou for their early commitment to working on this project with us. This presentation marks the first time the MCA has shared one of its exhibitions with a Pacific Island venue, and we are delighted at this opportunity. We are grateful to the Victorian Government through the Arts Victoria International Program for their contribution towards the exhibition's international tour, as well as the French Embassy, Canberra for their assistance with the French catalogue translation.

Finally, thanks as always go to Telstra for enabling free admission to the MCA.

ELIZABETH ANN MACGREGOR
DIRECTOR, MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

+ PAGE 9

Me and Virginia's doll (Me and Carol) 1997/2004

light jet print from Polaroid

100 x 80 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and

Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 10–11

Destiny Deacon posing in the Aboriginal Liaison Office,

University of Melbourne, Faraday Street, Carlton 1989

Photograph: Destiny Deacon and Lisa Belleair

Image courtesy of Destiny Deacon and Lisa Belleair

+ PAGE 12–13

My living room, Brunswick 3056 1996

found objects, photographs, video,

fish tank, household furniture

multiple parts, dimensions variable

Installation view, Second Asia-Pacific Triennial,

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

Image courtesy of the artist and

Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane

+ PAGE 14–15

White Australia's Aboriginal Artefacts 1995

mixed media including fabric, objects

Multiple parts, dimensions variable

Installation view, Welcome to Never-Never,

Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne

Image courtesy of the artist and

Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne

+ PAGE 16

Destiny Deacon and Michael Riley

Welcome to my Koori world 1992

from Blackout, ABC TV

video, 10 minutes, sound

Image courtesy of the artists and

Boomalii Aboriginal Artists Co-operative,

Sydney

+ PAGE 23

Koori rocks, Gub words (detail) 1990

black and white photographs

9 parts, dimensions variable

Image courtesy of the artist and

Hogarth Galleries, Sydney





SMILING
NO WAY!

SUNDAY SPORT



STUNNING SECRET - Page 4
SUNDAY SPORT - EVERY WEEK
IT'S WHY ALIENS WON'T GO HOME

Super Special
MASHI FAWATI
MY BRAIN - P.8

SUNDAY SPORT

WORLD'S LAZIEST SLOB IN BED FOR 57 YEARS

TWO FACED
WOMAN
DIVERSITY



Party

2 WATT ST
THORNHURST
A.A.L.I.

MELBOURNE
WORKERS
THEATRE

3 o'clock

30-50
party starts
with various local talent
Peter Rotamah - MC
Archie Roach + Ruby
Mary Anne Sear + Janice Sear
Maigie McDonald
My Mc Guinness

THURSDAY JUNE 22







EPISODES

'A LAUGH AND A TEAR IN EVERY PHOTO'

NATALIE KING

EPISODES

‘A LAUGH AND A TEAR IN EVERY PHOTO’¹

Walk & don't look blak presents a series of intensely disturbing and disarming episodes by Australian Indigenous artist Destiny Deacon. Tinged with an acerbic humour, her performative photographs, video and installations of Aboriginal kitsch are melodramatic. Spanning fifteen years of practice, Walk & don't look blak is a focused and selective survey of Deacon's vast opus that draws out recurrent themes: landscape, portraiture, narrative and phantasmagoria. Based on a unique type of political tragicomedy, Deacon's significant national and international profile is distilled into her first major institutional exhibition. Here, she takes on a directorial role amidst a wondrous array of bloodied boomerangs, levitating dolls and maimed kangaroos. Staged and choreographed, 'it's about (re)creating a world of my own outside my own world.' At times, stories emerge from her domestic scenarios as narratives unfold with tales of dispossession, alienation, incarceration and violence.

Partly fictitious and partly autobiographical, Deacon's world is populated by a cast of dolls, family and friends who enact 'soap opera' vignettes. As a result, her cast of stand-ins recurs as characters are reconfigured into different scenes. Deacon dramatises human comedies and tragedies in her TV tableaux. Within invented and fabricated dioramas, her entourage is accompanied by masks, props and costumes revealing human foibles. Take Oz Games—Under the spell of the tall poppies (1998): Dorothy lies inert, perhaps delirious, on a lion's lap, resplendent in a red costume with tiny sparkly shoes and a bow in her hair. Deacon's rendition of the Judy Garland Technicolor classic—The Wizard of Oz (1939)—replaces the enchantment of the dazzling land of Oz with the Tin Man holding an axe adjacent to a dishevelled Scarecrow. This is no Emerald City. Positioned below a row of poppies, Deacon's title alludes to 'tall poppies'² and an Aussie version of this famous road movie. Here traits are exposed, feelings and mixed emotions uncovered in a parodic setting. Characters seem to be acting up and acting out.³

Indigenous television was a pioneer of mini-television soap operas in Australia and Deacon was an early writer and performer of this genre. In the video I don't wanna be a bludger (1999) Deacon gives her wheelchair-bound cousin Harold (Michael Riley) a book on magic tricks from Moreland City Library for his birthday. Harold's party is a banquet of cheap junk food with the guests dancing in their party hats

and shoving green jelly into his quivering mouth. Deacon's character, Dolores, appears in a previous scene as a Romanian/Koori gypsy fortune-teller. Although I don't wanna be a bludger was commissioned for the major exhibition Perspecta 1999 at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Deacon and Riley worked in the distinctive soap opera genre, which is more akin to television.

Set almost entirely in a kitchen, Welcome to my Koori world (1992) is another collaboration with the late Michael Riley, for Blackout on ABC television. Here, Dolores force-feeds her plastic baby Otis popcorn and accidentally chokes him. She bemoans the loss of her husband, represented by a dreadlocked plaster bust on top of the fridge, who went out for butter a few years ago and never returned. The drama continues with a card playing scene and a recipe demonstration for minced meat. Also contributing to The Masters series for ICAM on SBS, Deacon has invented hilarious Indigenous stories and characters for video, film and television.

There is much laughter in Deacon's work—wicked gags that are at once entertaining and sometimes shocking. Humour is literally enacted in Last Laughs (1995) as three women act up for the camera. Flanked by two Aboriginal women, the central, 'white' figure tosses her head back, sinking amidst her friends. This is a taunting, confident satire, with one figure clutching a black doll in front of a corrugated iron, battered fence. Perhaps amused by a sinister joke, who will have the last laugh here? Calling herself an 'old-fashioned political artist', comedy is the basis for Deacon's politics and tragic laughter. By telling jokes, Deacon irreverently exposes vulnerable attributes. For her, there is 'a laugh and a tear in every photo'.⁴

A self-taught artist, Deacon has announced that 'I came to being an artist late, working as a teacher of Australian literature and culture first. Becoming an artist was the last bastion for an unemployable girl.' Initially, Deacon trained and worked as a teacher, then as a Commonwealth public servant, a broadcaster, an actor and activist. For a time she tutored and lectured in Australian Writing and Culture and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Production at the University of Melbourne, reading an Australian book a week. Deacon has purposefully avoided the hype around high-end digital media in preference for a relatively straightforward, low-tech and 'el cheapo' method. Her images are shot on Polaroid

then transferred to laser, bubble or light jet prints primarily to offer scope for shifts in scale. Polaroid lends immediacy to the work with instant results while the transfer process confers a dreamlike quality to the prints. The efficacy of Deacon's method also complements her practice of making work within relatively short time frames, often responding to curatorial themes.

Deacon's vast collection of Aboriginal souvenirs is used as props or encased in vitrines while her living room is a stage for theatrical arrangements. Deacon doesn't have a studio; instead her home in Melbourne becomes the place for her work, which is invariably an extension of her domestic life. The installation My living room, Brunswick 3056 (1996/2004) replicates aspects of Deacon's home in order to reveal the jumbled bric-a-brac of daily life that populates her images. An earlier version was presented at the 1996 Asia-Pacific Triennial, complete with fish tank, wall divider, assorted memorabilia and, of course, a 'telly' perched in front of a tired lounge suite. Tourist artefacts sit comfortably beside an Aboriginal flag all crammed below a billowing ceiling of fabric. This domestic configuration recalls Deacon's contribution to Virginia Fraser's installation Kitchen in the exhibition Kitch'n Koori at the Fringe Festival Gallery, Melbourne, in 1992. Replicating a kitchen in the Aboriginal colours of black, red and yellow,⁵ Fraser worked with Deacon and Sue Atkinson to relocate this suburban set-up within the gallery context. It's all home-made.

Deacon has frequently worked with willing (and sometimes reluctant) family and friends. Issues of complicity abound as participants partake in her versatile practice. Her cast often extends to collaborations with Fraser and Riley among others, and it is particularly evident in the film work.⁶ Moreover, Deacon's collaboration with Fiona Hall on a video for ABC TV's Artrage, How low can you go? (1996) includes Doreen Mellor (editor and writer) on vocals while Deacon's housemate, Lisa Bellear, (poet and radio host of Not Another Koori Show) stars in many photographs and videos.⁷ Deacon recalls the ongoing support she has received from Aboriginal women—Hetti Perkins, Avril Quail, Brenda L Croft—especially since her first group exhibition Pitcha Mi Koori with Maree Clarke, Kim Kruger and Lisa Bellear at the Fringe Festival in Melbourne in 1990. The accompanying poster announced, 'Maybe a little bit 2 soon time...BUT 4 urban Koori women wanted to take pitchas and SHOW 'EM'.⁸

Whether scripted or improvised, Deacon's moody stories skilfully elicit different emotions from inanimate objects—they appear disdainful, naughty, wicked, cheeky and deviant. Deacon professes to liking dolls, her surrogate subjects, 'coz they don't answer you back'.⁹ Remarkably, these lifeless dolls are invested with striking emotional qualities. While Marcia Langton notes that the dolls are 'central to Destiny's rewriting of black feminine subjectivity', they are also imbued with feelings.¹⁰ Dolls first appeared as part of Deacon's repertoire in the 1991 exhibition Kudjieris at Boomalli, Sydney, with Brenda L Croft and Lisa Bellear, curated by artist Fiona Foley.¹¹ Deacon exhibited Polaroids alongside slightly enlarged laser copies depicting forlorn dolls in Blak lik mi (1991/2003) and I seen myself (1991). 'I think blak dolls represent us as people', Destiny says. 'I don't think white Australia, or whatever you want to call it, sees us as people.'¹²

Dolls are essentially utilised as transitional objects, in other words, a soothing source of comfort during absences from parents. When we see a doll alone, it represents loss, suggesting that there is a child somewhere feeling bereft and distressed. Moreover, aspects of the child's self are projected onto it, as if it were an extension of her reality. Dolls are silent reminders of childhood, but Deacon gives voice to her dolls by communicating feelings.¹³ Instead of imagining a perfect future for young girls, these dolls are decapitated, amputated or contorted, thereby becoming animated and expressive characters in Deacon's psychodramas. In doing so, they confront prejudice and inequality in their inimitable way. Dolls also signify the Stolen Generation of Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their parents. Brown skin babies on the menu (1991) is a composite image of dolls lying prone on a piece of white bread on a barbeque grill and floating in a cocktail glass as if these vulnerable doll-like children are offered up for consumption. Exhibited in Kudjieris, this triptych was later reworked into a slightly different, single image, Adoption (2000), configuring tiny baby dolls in cup-cake holders on a tray with an Aboriginal dot pattern.

On different occasions, Deacon's dolls have visited suburban Glen Eira in Melbourne at night, resulting in the series Everyday (1998), and they have also been to Adelaide. Invoking infantilisation and childhood, the dolls have undertaken secret

journeys, mischievously appearing at different destinations. While most of Deacon's images are shot indoors, occasionally outdoor images recur depicting nature as imprisoned and tamed. For example, in [Reserved nature](#) (1998) a pig and cat mask photographed at close range are contrasted with a plastic buffalo carcass filled with raw meat at feeding time in a Singapore bird park. These 'fake' animals are fenced in and barricaded from their natural habitat: a strong and poetic metaphor for incarceration.

Not only do Deacon's dolls act out scenes of oppression but her titles, sometimes inspired from songs, 'pack a punch'. [Dance little lady](#) (1994/2000) is from a Tina Charles disco hit, [Blak 'n blue](#) (1994/2003) from a Fats Waller song while the title of this exhibition, [Walk & don't look blak](#), is from a Temptations song covered by the Rolling Stones. 'Back' has been cleverly replaced with 'blak'—a term adopted by Deacon herself in 1991 with the work [Blak lik me](#) and now in frequent circulation. The narrative series [Forced into images](#) (2001) is derived from Alice Walker: 'I see our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, captured and forced into images, doing hard time for all of us.'¹⁴ In the video component of this work made with Virginia Fraser, two children sit on chairs before the camera. The characters are Deacon's niece and nephew who came over to her sister's home when they were four years old. Deacon hoped they would dress up for the 'occasion'—making a video—but they arrived in casual attire. The footage is silent, but the exchange between these young relatives signals the way that people make assumptions about colour, and is further articulated by the masks that obscure their faces. Deacon's word play is like an astute game and a scathing indictment on racial stereotypes.

Long-time collaborator Virginia Fraser sources refuse and carefully selects props. Fraser ransacks shops such as Savers and Spotlight in Sydney Road, Brunswick, for fabric, searching for remnants to fabricate costumes. Deacon incorporates these elements while redeploing Koori artefacts constructed by white, popular culture. By configuring these objects Deacon's way in cabinets and vitrines, the results undermine the inherent racism of souvenir objects. These collected and coveted artefacts appear jumbled in cabinets: ashtrays, souvenir plates, beer holders, statuettes and mantelpieces are a sinister reminder of the prejudice inherent in these objects. They also point to

notions of danger, escape, loss and longing in an imaginative response to the politics of Deacon's surrounding environment. As a politically aware and engaged artist, Deacon's research involves collating extensive source material from reading daily newspapers, trawling through the library and the internet.¹⁵

Deacon made her first artwork [Koori rocks, Gub words](#) in 1990. Comprising a series of small black and white photographs of the Sisters Rocks outside Stawell in Western Victoria, these monumental rocks are covered in graffiti with names, slogans and personal messages.¹⁶ Brooding and mysterious, four images were exhibited in the [Aboriginal Women's Exhibition](#), curated by Hetti Perkins at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1991. A composite work of grided panels, we witness close-ups of graffiti scrawled on culturally significant rock formations. The weighty solidity of these boulders is contrasted with their defacement reminding us of Indigenous Land Rights and the ongoing struggle of ownership. Processed in Fraser's darkroom in her laundry, Deacon relays a spooky story of an apparition tapping her on the shoulder while she was in the darkroom. Deacon soon decided that she was fed up with 'lotions and potions at night in the darkroom' and resorted to Polaroid.

Deacon commenced working with a predella format: a compositional device showing different aspects of a story or as a means of juxtaposing images. Dolls, mannequins and souvenir toys start to appear in [Tax free kangaroos](#) (1992), comprising a shop window outside the now demolished Southern Cross Hotel in Melbourne's Bourke Street. Depicted in black and white, soft toy kangaroos and koalas peep out from a souvenir store with three smaller images of slain kangaroos below. Using Australiana in provocative ways, this image is a precursor to the golliwogs, blak dollies and piccaninnies that would soon take centre stage. First exhibited in [Kudjeris](#), it was subsequently presented in [My boomerang won't come back](#) at the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia in 1994. This exhibition also included [Dreaming in urban areas](#) (1993).¹⁷ Here Lisa Bellear appears ready for a ceremonial performance but is actually wearing a Blackmores face mask with exaggerated lipstick. Masks regularly appear in Deacon's work as a metaphor of disguise and hiding. Below, abstracted urban images of Melbourne from the Westgate Bridge appear as dreamy, nocturnal vistas.

Landscapes recur in Deacon's oeuvre, often revealing tales of urban discontent, but in [Postcards from Mummy](#) (1998) Deacon embarked on a journey to her mother's country.¹⁸ Although Deacon has announced that she is 'scared of the bush', in 1998 she travelled to far north Queensland, from Cooktown to Brisbane, over two weeks with Fraser. Combining photographs taken by Deacon on this journey as well as archival family shots arranged in a diaristic way, Deacon commemorates the loss of her mother through this poignant travelogue. As an ancestral tribute, she retraced her mother's early life with sensitivity and longing. Picturesque landscapes and seascapes, devoid of inhabitants, sit alongside gravestones, suburban houses and forests: an evocative heirloom.

Describing her mother as being like Elizabeth Taylor, with a vibrant life and various husbands, Deacon recalls Melbourne in the late 1950s as racist. Deacon's parents met on a train from the Cairns Show; her father was a waterside worker. Growing up in Housing Commission areas of Port Melbourne, populated predominantly by migrants, Deacon remembers being taunted along with her six siblings. Her mother, Eleanor Harding, has been an ongoing source of inspiration. Harding set up the first Aboriginal women's refuge in Melbourne; Deacon recalls accompanying her mother to various meetings as a child. In addition, Harding worked for many years with the Victorian Department of Community Services in youth welfare, principally accompanying young Indigenous people to court and visiting Indigenous prisoners in gaol. Deacon's family history is subtly embedded in her work, with [Postcards from Mummy](#) a tribute and testament to her mother.

The series [They shouted him a grave](#) (1994) is also commemorative, but cheeky, as one of Deacon's dolls goes on a journey to Derrimut's grave at Carlton Cemetery in Melbourne. Wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with an Aboriginal flag, this doll furtively peeps out from behind the gravestone accompanied by a pair of black boots and a frog in Aboriginal colours hopping onto the site. Derrimut was a renowned Aborigine in the early days of Port Phillip who befriended William Watkins, the young servant of John Pascoe Fawkner, known as the founder of the city of Melbourne.¹⁹ Derrimut is thought to have told Watkins of a plot of the Toungurong, Wathourung and Bunurong people against the white invaders. Deacon's title is a clever play on the word 'shout'

and its colloquial usage, to give someone something at no cost. Her sardonic humour undercuts this historical event.

Occasionally ghosts and spirit figures haunt Deacon's illusory world. Playing with notions of voodoo and magic—'spooky Indigenous stuff'—Deacon made a series of images for [Signs of Life: Melbourne International Biennial](#) in 1999. UFOs and flying saucers appear in [No need looking](#) (1999), while a collaborative video with performance artist, Erin Hefferon, was shot during a residency in Perth resulting in [No place like home](#) (1999). In both, a single female character is seemingly trapped or spellbound by her nocturnal surroundings. Deacon has undertaken research in the library about supernatural sightings, locating a book on UFOs and fabulous creatures such as the Loch Ness Monster, which resulted in the photograph [House pet](#) (2000/2003). Sometimes phantasmagoric apparitions inhabit Deacon's funny and unnerving compositions.

Portraiture is a prominent feature of Deacon's practice. For many Indigenous artists, including Michael Riley, Brenda L Croft, Darren Siwes, Tracey Moffatt and Fiona Foley, photography has increasingly become a preferred medium for its immediacy and capacity to convey political gestures. Like Deacon, these artists turn the anthropological gaze on itself, inverting the recording of Aboriginal people as ethnographic curios. Through portraiture, Deacon returns the colonial gaze. In doing so, she rejects the canons of Western art, refocusing her subjects to include the representation of Indigenous peoples. Deacon's capacious form of portraiture challenges art history. For her, there 'must be another way'. She overturns the racist depiction of Aborigines, simultaneously rescuing and salvaging Aboriginal kitsch from its lowly status.

Replaying the hallmarks of art museum paintings, Deacon casts her mostly Indigenous gang in a series of ongoing portraits. [Me and Virginia's doll](#) (1997) is a self-portrait that recalls the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. At once a tribute and a pastiche, Deacon holds a cigarette, sitting on a bench with Virginia Fraser's white doll, Carol. [Blak lik mi](#) (1991/2003) and [I seen myself](#) (1993/2003) are partly derived from a painted copy of an Axel Poignant photograph on black velvet. There is profound sorrow in these images with 'mi' and 'I' alluding to the artist herself. [Princess](#) (1994/2003) is a tribute to Catalan

artist Joan Miró: 'A 1920s stocking doll that's supposed to be Aboriginal. I felt sorry for her, then decided to base her on a Miró painting. Queen Sophia of Belgium or something. He used paint, but I used T-shirts, a towel and a blanket. I like the geometrics. I hope she represents me.'²⁰

Although dolls and people are interchangeable, forming part of an extensive line-up, portraiture inverts stereotyping in a potent way. Deacon inscribes an Indigenous presence onto Western canons, exposing the erasure of Indigenous representation in Western art. Portraits of activist Gary Foley and writer Peter Blazey are based on a William Dobell painting, [A Boy at the Basin](#) (1932). Foley stands in his pyjamas in an ordinary domestic kitchen with a kettle and a sink nearby, a poster of footballer Nicky Winmar behind him, exposing his brown skin in response to racial taunts. With acute attention to detail, Deacon irreverently appropriates Dobell but the result is derisive of art history.

[Portrait—Eva Johnson, writer](#) (1994) recalls JM Crossland's colonial painting, [Nannultera, a young cricketer of the Natives' Training Institution, Poonindie](#) (1854). In Deacon's version however, the subject's cricket bat has been replaced by an axe with Eva Johnson, writer and performer, staring menacingly. Deacon has said of this work: 'I felt sorry for Nannultera when I first saw him at the NGA... A few years later I was stumped for image/s as an exhibition opening loomed days away. I looked about. Eva was at my place. Virginia Fraser too... From begging Eva (to pose) and Virginia (to make the set), it took less than an hour to get the image right. Improvising in the laundry. A couple of months later, the NGA and the National Library (who own [Nannultera](#)) both bought Eva's portrait. Now Nannultera won't have to be alone; Eva Johnson, writer, will keep him company.'²¹

Like the restaging of portraiture conventions and Deacon's ongoing use of masks, the newest component for this exhibition also deploys notions of disguise. A collaboration between Deacon and Fraser, [D-coy](#) (2004) is a series of photographs accompanied by objects arranged in a wire cage as well as a video about the idea of camouflage. Sourcing fabric and manufactured objects in ersatz military camouflage designs, [D-coy](#) suggests ambush, masquerade and army regalia. Here are photographs of a baby wearing a garment made in camouflage fabric, while the funny and creepy installation

domesticates pertinent ideas about the current war on terror, cover-ups and military invasion. The presentation in an enclosure returns us to the souvenir window of [Tax free kangaroos](#). Now, we coyly peep into a magical world of hiding and concealment. Things are definitely not what they seem.

NATALIE KING, GUEST CURATOR

- ¹ All quotes by Destiny Deacon in this essay, unless otherwise attributed, are from conversations between the author and artist, 2003-2004; a lecture delivered at the Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, 2003; and a panel discussion at Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2004.
- ² A colloquial expression indicating a tendency to denigrate those who achieve.
- ³ Deacon has made a number of works based on [The Wizard of Oz](#) such as [Sad, Scared, Slow, Travelling](#) and [Oz series](#). In addition, the soundtrack of [No place like home](#) (Destiny Deacon and Erin Hefferon) consists of Judy Garland repeating the phrase of the title. Interestingly, Tracey Moffatt has also used this theme in [The Wizard of Oz](#) (1956) as well as dolls in [Doll Birth, 1972](#) both from the series [Scarred for Life](#) (1994).
- ⁴ For a discussion of humour in relation to Indigenous photography as a defence from oppression see Margo Neale and Timothy Morrell, 'Who's laughing?: Humour in Indigenous Australian Photography', [Photofile](#), No. 72, Spring 2004, pp. 54-57.
- ⁵ The Aboriginal flag was designed by Luritja/Wombai artist Harold Thomas in 1971 and was first raised by him at Victoria Square, Adelaide on National Aborigine's Day, 12 July 1971. It was flown at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra in 1972. The three colours of the flag—black, yellow and red—recur in Deacon's images.
- ⁶ Virginia Fraser has highlighted the sometimes fraught aspects of collaboration in 'Making Subjectivity', [2004 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Contemporary Photo-Media](#), Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2004, p. 10. In 1993, Fraser's byline was: 'Virginia is one of a number of people drawn, willingly and unwillingly, into Destiny's photo making.', 'Destiny's Dolls', [Photofile](#), No. 40, November 1993, p. 11.
- ⁷ Lisa Belleair appears in the photographs [Dreaming in urban areas](#), [Baby love](#) from [Forced into images](#) and the videos [I don't wanna be a bludger](#) and [Over d-fence](#).
- ⁸ Quoted in Virginia Fraser, 'Destiny's Dolls', [Photofile](#), op. cit., p. 7.
- ⁹ 'I only use dolls because I'm shy getting people to pose for me, and it's too much hard yakka (work). Growing up I never had any interest in dolls. They're not in my nature. I only started collecting them because—what can you say? I felt sorry for them.' Quoted in Fraser, 'Destiny's Dolls', op. cit., p. 11.
- ¹⁰ Marcia Langton, 'The Valley of the Dolls: Black humour and the art of Destiny Deacon', [Art & Australia](#), Vol. 35, No. 1, 1997, p. 104; Langton has also written about the experience of growing up with golliwogs and finally black dolls: 'Everywhere around were these white dolls, loaded with cultural meaning...

and eyes which only little white girls could look into... Imagine the power we black girls derived from, at last, having that experience with a little black doll', Langton [Well, I heard it on the radio, and I saw it on the television...](#), Australian Film Commission, Sydney, 1993.

- ¹¹ Based in Sydney, Boomalli is a visionary, membership-based Aboriginal Artists Co-operative that supports Aboriginal culture and independence through the visual arts as well as functioning as an information and resource centre. Promoting self-management and control, it was founded in 1987 by a group of ten artists including Brenda L Croft, Hetti Perkins, Tracey Moffatt and Michael Riley.
- ¹² Quoted in Fraser, 'Destiny's Dolls', op. cit, p. 9.
- ¹³ See Russell Meares, [The Metaphor of Play](#), Jason Aronson Inc., USA, 1993.
- ¹⁴ Alice Walker, from a 1981 unpublished letter to Jan Faulkner, an African-American psychiatric social worker and friend of Walker's who amassed a major collection of material featuring racist stereotypes. Printed in [Ethnic Notions: Black Images in the White Mind](#), the catalogue for two exhibitions of Faulkner's collection, Berkeley Art Center, Berkeley, first published 1982, updated and revised version 2000, pp. 11-12.
- ¹⁵ 'I always say that there's no excuse for ignorance. Read newspapers. Listen and watch the news and documentaries. Educate yourself with information. Why be a contemporary artist if you don't know or care about what's going on?', 'Interview: Destiny Deacon in conversation with David Broker', [Photofile](#), No. 72, Spring 2004, p. 20.
- ¹⁶ Images of rocks covered in graffiti recur in the commemorative travelogue [Postcards from Mummy](#) (1998).
- ¹⁷ Hetti Perkins has written about this work in [Australian Perspectives](#) 1993, exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1993, p. 26
- ¹⁸ [Postcards from Mummy](#) and the video [Forced into images](#) were exhibited at [Documenta 11](#), Kassel Germany, 2002. Deacon's work has appeared in numerous international exhibitions including the [Fifth Havana Biennial](#) 1994, [Johannesburg Biennale](#) 1995, [The Song of the Earth](#), Kassel, 2000, [Yokohama Triennale](#) 2001; what the artist affectionately refers to as the 'who's who in the zoo'.
- ¹⁹ The text on Derrimut's grave reads: 'This stone was erected by a few colonists to commemorate the noble act of the native chief Derrimut who by timely information given October 1835 to the first colonists Messrs Fawkner, Lancey, Evans, Henry Batman and their dependants: saved them from massacre, planned by some of the up-country tribes of Aborigines. Derrimut closed his mortal career in the benevolent asylum, May 28th 1864 aged about 54 years.'
- ²⁰ 'Not quite right, but interestingly queer: Virginia Fraser talks with Destiny Deacon', [Photofile](#), No. 61, December 2000, p. 26.
- ²¹ Quoted from the website for the National Gallery of Australia exhibition [Re-take: Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Photography](#), http://www.nga.gov.au/Retake/retake_art2/00000001.htm



[Koori rocks, Gub words](#) (detail) 1990, from [Aboriginal Women's Exhibition](#), Art Gallery of NSW 1991, curated by Hetti Perkins

Perhaps these rocks (the Sister Rocks near Stanwell, Victoria) define Koori female darkness, values, secret knowledge—yet the Gub works show graffiti of fear and disconnection.

– Destiny Deacon

+ PAGE 25

Dreaming in urban areas 1993
laser copy from Polaroid
4 parts, dimensions variable
Image courtesy of the artist and
Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative,
Sydney

+ PAGE 26

Tax free kangaroos 1992/2004
black and white photographs
4 parts, dimensions variable
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 27

Koala and plane trees 1992
black and white photographs
4 parts, dimensions variable
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 28

Reserved nature (D) 1998/2004
light jet print from type C photograph
67 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 29

Reserved nature (B) 1998/2004
light jet print from type C photograph
67 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 30

No need looking (A) 1999/2004
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 31

Some day I'll fly away 1999
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

My boomerang did come back 2003

light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 32

I seen myself 1991/95
heat transfer on linen
56.5 x 90.2 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Blak lik mi 1991/2003

light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 214.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney









[My Boomerang Won't Come Back](#) 1994

What a song that is... It's so bad it's interesting... It's about not being a proper Aborigine. We can see the fun in that. It's like that song we used to have to sing in primary school:

How I wish that I could be
A little Aborigine.
A boomerang he learns to throw
That is all he needs to know...

I used to hate singing it. I'd think, what's the point?
I'm already one.

- Destiny Deacon



EPISODES

«DES RIRES ET DES LARMES DANS CHAQUE PHOTO»

NATALIE KING



EPISODES

«DES RIRES ET DES LARMES DANS CHAQUE PHOTO»

Walk & don't look blak, 2004, photo de l'artiste

Walk & don't look blak présente une série d'épisodes extrêmement dérangeants et désarmants composés par l'artiste indigène australienne Destiny Deacon. Teintées d'un humour acerbe, ses photographies performatives, ses vidéos et ses installations de kitsch aborigène sont mélodramatiques. Représentant quinze années de travail, **Walk & don't look blak** est une vue d'ensemble focalisée et sélective de l'œuvre vaste de Deacon d'où ressortent des thèmes récurrents: le paysage, le portrait, le narratif et la fantasmagorie. Fondé sur un genre unique de tragicomédie politique, l'important profil national et international de Deacon est distillé dans sa première grande exposition dans un musée. Ici, elle assume le rôle de metteur en scène, entourée d'une collection extraordinaire de boomerangs tachés de sang, de poupées se soulevant par lévitation et de kangourous mutilés qui sont mis en scène et chorégraphiés: «Il s'agit de (re)créer un monde à moi en dehors de mon propre monde». A certains moments, des histoires surgissent de ses scénarios domestiques pendant que les chroniques se déroulent avec des récits de dépossession, d'aliénation, d'incarcération et de violence.

Walk & don't look blak, 2004, photo de l'artiste

Le monde de Deacon est en partie fictif et en partie autobiographique: il est peuplé de poupées, de membres de famille et d'amis qui jouent des vignettes du style «feuilleton». En conséquence, le même groupe de figurants réapparaît lorsque des personnages sont reconfigurés dans différentes scènes. Deacon compose de façon dramatique des comédies et des tragédies humaines dans ses tableaux de télévision. A l'intérieur de dioramas inventés et fabriqués, son entourage est accompagné de masques, d'accessoires et de costumes révélant des faiblesses humaines. Prenons par exemple **Oz Games—Under the spell of the tall poppies** (1998): Dorothy gît inerte, peut-être délirante, dans le giron d'un lion, resplendissante dans un costume rouge avec des petits souliers étincelants et portant un ruban dans les cheveux. L'interprétation proposée par Deacon du film classique en technicolor de Judy Garland—**Le Magicien d'Oz** (1939)—remplace l'enchantement du pays éblouissant d'Oz avec l'homme en fer-blanc tenant une hache à côté de l'homme de paille ébouriffé. Il n'est pas question ici de la Cité d'Émeraude. Placé au-dessous d'une rangée de coquelicots (*poppies* en anglais), le titre de Deacon fait référence aux 'tall poppies'²

(expression indiquant le désir de couper les têtes qui dépassent), ainsi qu'à une version australienne de ce road movie célèbre. Ici, des traits de caractère sont exposés, des sentiments et des émotions mixtes sont découverts dans un décor parodique. Les personnages ont l'air de se conduire mal et de jouer la comédie.³

La télévision indigène était l'un des précurseurs des mini-feuilletons à la télévision en Australie et Deacon fut l'un des premiers écrivains et interprètes du genre. Dans la vidéo intitulée **I don't wanna be a bludger** (1999) Deacon offre à son cousin Harold (Michael Riley), qui est dans un fauteuil roulant, un livre sur des tours de magie emprunté à la bibliothèque municipale de Moreland pour son anniversaire. A la fête de Harold, il y a un banquet d'amuse-gueules bon marché et les invités portant des chapeaux de cotillon dansent et bourrent de la gelée verte dans la bouche tremblante de Harold. Le personnage incarné par Deacon, au nom de Dolores, apparaît dans une scène antérieure en tant que diseuse de bonne aventure gitane roumaine/koori. Bien que **I don't wanna be a bludger** ait été commandité pour l'exposition importante **Perspecta 1999** à la Galerie d'Art de la Nouvelle Galles du Sud, Deacon et Riley ont travaillé dans le genre distinctif du feuilleton, qui est beaucoup plus analogue à la télévision.

Welcome to my Koori world (1992) se déroule presque entièrement dans une cuisine; encore une fois, il s'agit d'une collaboration avec Michael Riley, pour **Blackout** sur la chaîne nationale de télévision australienne ABC. Ici, Dolores gave son bébé en plastique, Oris, de pop-corn, et l'étrangle par mégarde. Elle pleure la perte de son mari, représenté par un buste en plâtre placé sur le frigo, et qui a les cheveux en dreadlocks; il était sorti acheter du beurre il y a quelques années et n'est jamais revenu. Le drame continue avec une scène de jeu de cartes et une démonstration de recette pour la viande hachée. Deacon a également contribué à la série intitulée **The Masters** pour ICAM sur la chaîne SBS, et elle a inventé des histoires et des personnages indigènes hilarants pour la vidéo, le film et la télévision.

Il y a beaucoup de rires dans l'oeuvre de Deacon; ce sont des blagues méchantes qui sont à la fois divertissantes mais aussi quelquefois choquantes. L'humour est joué littéralement dans

Walk & don't look blak, 2004, photo de l'artiste

Last Laughs (1995) où trois femmes jouent pour la caméra. Flanquée de deux femmes aborigènes, la forme «blanche» centrale rejette sa tête en arrière, tombant entre ses amies. C'est une satire provocatrice et confiante, où une forme s'agrippe à une poupée noire devant une barrière en tôle ondulée bosselée. Amusée peut-être par une plaisanterie sinistre, qui rira le dernier ici? Deacon s'appelle «une artiste politique de la vieille école» et la comédie est à la base de la politique et du rire tragique de Deacon. En racontant des plaisanteries, Deacon expose des attributs vulnérables de manière irrévérencieuse. Pour elle, il y a «des rires et des larmes dans chaque photo».⁴

Artiste autodidacte, Deacon a annoncé être «devenue artiste tardivement. J'ai travaillé d'abord comme professeur de littérature et culture australiennes. Devenir artiste était le dernier bastion pour une fille incapable de travailler». Au départ, Deacon avait reçue une formation de professeur et travaillé dans ce domaine; elle est ensuite devenue fonctionnaire pour le Commonwealth, personnalité à la radio, actrice et activiste. Pendant un certain temps, elle a enseigné et donné des cours magistraux sur l'écriture et la culture australiennes, et sur la production culturelle des Aborigènes et des habitants des îles du détroit de Torres à l'Université de Melbourne, lisant un livre australien par semaine. Deacon a délibérément évité le battage médiatique associé aux médias numériques haut de gamme, préférant à la place une méthode relativement simple, rudimentaire et bon marché. Ses images sont prises sur polaroid, et ensuite transférées sur des tirages laser, ou à bulles d'encre ou lightjet, surtout en raison de la possibilité d'en modifier l'échelle. Le polaroid prête un sens d'immédiateté à l'œuvre, offrant des résultats instantanés, tandis que le processus de transfert confère une qualité onirique aux tirages. L'efficacité de la méthode de Deacon est très adaptée à la pratique de créer ses œuvres dans un laps de temps relativement court, souvent en réponse à des thèmes proposés par le conservateur.

La vaste collection amassée par Deacon d'objets souvenirs aborigènes est utilisée en tant qu'accessoires, ou souvent enfermée dans des vitrines; en même temps son salon sert de scène pour des adaptations théâtrales. Deacon n'a pas d'atelier; c'est plutôt sa maison à Melbourne qui est devenue son lieu de travail, ce travail qui est invariablement un prolongement

de sa vie domestique. L'installation intitulée **My living room, Brunswick 3056** (1996/2004) reproduit des aspects de la maison de Deacon afin de révéler le bric-à-brac confus de la vie quotidienne peuplant ses images. Une version antérieure a été présentée à la **Triennale d'Asie-Pacifique** de 1996, où figuraient un aquarium, un meuble utilisé comme cloison de séparation, divers bibelots et bien sûr, une télé perchée devant un vieux canapé fatigué. Des souvenirs touristiques s'associent harmonieusement au drapeau aborigène, le tout entassé sous un plafond ondulant de tissu. Cette configuration domestique rappelle la contribution de Destiny à l'installation de Virginia Fraser, **Kitchen**, dans l'exposition **Kitch'n Koori** à la Galerie du Fringe Festival à Melbourne en 1992. Reproduisant une cuisine dans les couleurs aborigènes noir, rouge et jaune,⁵ Fraser a travaillé avec Deacon et Sue Atkinson pour replacer ce décor de banlieue dans le contexte de la galerie. Le tout est fait maison.

Deacon a travaillé fréquemment avec des membres de sa famille et avec des amis qui participaient volontiers (et quelquefois à contrecoeur). Des questions de complicité abondent lorsque des participants prennent part à sa pratique aux talents variés. Parmi ses interprètes, elle collabore souvent avec Fraser et Riley, entre autres, et ceci est particulièrement évident dans son œuvre cinématographique.⁶ D'ailleurs, la collaboration de Deacon avec Fiona Hall sur une vidéo pour **Artrage** sur la chaîne de télévision ABC—**How low can you go?** (1996)-comprend Doreen Mellor (éditeur et écrivain) qui s'occupe des voix, et la colocataire de Destiny, Lisa Bellear (poète et présentatrice à la radio de **Not Another Koori Show**), qui est la vedette de nombreuses photos et vidéos.⁷ Deacon se rappelle le soutien continu qu'elle a obtenu de femmes aborigènes—Hetti Perkins, Avril Quaiil, Brenda L Croft—surtout depuis sa première exposition de groupe **Pitcha Mi Koori** avec Maree Clarke, Kim Kruger et Lisa Bellear au Fringe Festival à Melbourne en 1990. L'affiche accompagnant l'exposition a annoncé: «Maybe a little bit 2 soon time...BUT 4 urban Koori women wanted to take pitchas and SHOW 'EM (peut-être un peu trop tôt...MAIS 4 femmes kooris urbaines voulaient prendre des photos et les exposer)».⁸

Qu'elles suivent un script, ou qu'elles soient improvisées, les histoires sombres de Deacon suscitent avec habileté des émotions différentes à partir d'objets inanimés—ces derniers

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Décrivant sa mère comme étant à l’image d’Elizabeth Taylor, avec une vie animée et plusieurs maris, Deacon se rappelle qu’à la fin des années 1950, Melbourne était raciste. Les parents de Deacon se sont rencontrés dans un train revenant de l’exposition agricole de Cairns. Son père travaillait sur les docks. Quand elle grandissait dans les quartiers HLMs de Port Melbourne, dont les habitants étaient principalement des immigrés, Deacon se rappelle avoir été victime de railleries en compagnie de ses six frères et sœurs. Sa mère, Eleanor Harding, a été une source constante d’inspiration. Harding a établi le premier refuge pour femmes aborigènes à Melbourne; Deacon se rappelle avoir accompagné sa mère à différentes réunions quand elle était enfant. En plus, Harding a travaillé pendant de nombreuses années avec le Département des Services Communautaires de l’état du Victoria dans le domaine d’aide sociale aux jeunes; elle accompagnait surtout de jeunes aborigènes au tribunal et rendait visite aux détenus aborigènes en prison. L’histoire de famille de Deacon est gravée subtilement dans son œuvre; *Postcards from Mummy* est un hommage et un testament à sa mère.

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dos»—Deacon a réalisé une série d’images pour Signes de vie: *Biennale internationale de Melbourne* en 1999. Des OVNIs et des soucoupes volantes apparaissent dans *No need looking* (1999). Une vidéo collaborative avec une artiste de performance, Erin Hefferon, a été tournée pendant un séjour à Perth; ce séjour a eu comme résultat *No place like home* (1999). Dans les deux cas, un personnage féminin seul est apparemment emprisonné ou envoûté par son environnement nocturne. Deacon a entrepris des recherches à la bibliothèque sur des rapports d’apparitions surnaturelles; elle a trouvé un livre sur les OVNIs et sur des créatures fabuleuses telles le monstre du Loch Ness, qui a inspiré la photographie intitulée *House pet* (2000/2003). Quelquefois des apparitions fantasmagoriques habitent les compositions à la fois drôles et troublantes de Deacon.

Deacon en 2004.

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plein gré ou non, dans l'émergence de la photo de Destiny.», [Photofile](#), No. 40, novembre 1993, p. 11.

⁷ Lisa Bellec apparaît dans les photographies [Dreaming in urban areas](#); [Baby love](#) de [Forced into images](#) et dans les vidéos [I don't wanna be a bludger](#) et [Over d-fence](#).

⁸ Cité par Virginia Fraser, 'Destiny's Dolls', [Photofile](#), op. cit, p. 7.

⁹ «J'utilise des poupées uniquement parce que je suis timide quand il s'agit de demander aux gens de poser pour moi, et c'est trop de travail. Pendant mon enfance je ne me suis jamais intéressée aux poupées. Ce n'est pas dans ma nature. J'ai commencé à les collectionner uniquement parce que—qu'est-ce que je peux dire?—je les plaignais.» Cité dans Fraser, 'Destiny's Dolls', op. cit, p. 11.

¹⁰ Marcia Langton, 'The Valley of the Dolls: Black humour and the art of Destiny Deacon', [Art & Australia](#), Vol. 35, No. 1, 1997, p. 104; Langton a également écrit sur l'expérience de grandir avec des «golliwogs» et finalement avec des poupées noires: «Partout autour de moi il y avait ces poupées blanches, chargées de sens culturel... et des yeux dans lesquels seulement des petites filles blanches pouvaient regarder... Imaginez le pouvoir que nous, les filles noires, pouvions dériver du fait d'avoir enfin une petite poupée noire», Langton, [Well, I heard it on the radio, and I saw it on the television...](#), Australian Film Commission, Sydney, 1993.

¹¹ Basée à Sydney, Boomall est une coopérative visionnaire dont les membres sont des artistes aborigènes; cette coopérative soutient la culture et indépendance aborigènes à travers les arts visuels tout en fonctionnant comme centre d'informations et de ressources. Fondée en 1987 par un groupe de dix artistes comprenant Brenda L Croft, Hetti Perkins, Tracey Moffatt et Michael Riley, elle promeut l'autogestion et le contrôle par ses membres.

¹² Cité dans Fraser, 'Destiny's Dolls', op. cit, p. 9.

¹³ Voir Russell Meares, [The Metaphor of Play](#), Jason Aronson Inc., USA, 1993.

¹⁴ Alice Walker, extrait d'une lettre non publiée de 1981 à Jan Faulkner, une assistante sociale psychiatrique afro-américaine et une amie de Walker qui a amassé une importante collection de matériels présentant des stéréotypes racistes. Imprimé dans [Ethnic Notions: Black Images in the White Mind](#), catalogue pour deux expositions de la collection, Centre d'Art de Berkeley à Berkeley, publié pour la première fois en 1982, version mise à jour et révisée en 2000, pp. 11-12.

¹⁵ «Je dis toujours qu'il n'y a aucune excuse pour l'ignorance. Lisez des journaux. Ecoutez et regardez la télévision et des documentaires. Instruisez-vous en recherchant des informations. Pourquoi être une artiste contemporaine si vous n'avez aucune idée de ce qui se passe et si vous ne vous y intéressez pas?», 'Interview: Destiny Deacon in conversation with David Broker', [Photofile](#), No. 72, Printemps 2004, p. 20.

¹⁶ Des images de rochers couverts de graffiti apparaissent aussi dans le compte rendu de voyage commémoratif [Postcards from Mummy](#) (1998).

¹⁷ Hetti Perkins a écrit sur cette oeuvre dans [Australian Perspectives 1993](#), catalogue de l'exposition, Galerie d'Art de la Nouvelle Galles du Sud, Sydney, p. 26.

¹⁸ [Postcards from Mummy](#) et la vidéo [Forced into images](#) ont été exposés à [Documenta 11](#), à Kassel en Allemagne, 2002. L'oeuvre de Deacon a figuré dans plusieurs expositions internationales y compris la [Cinquième Biennale de la Havane](#) 1994, la [Biennale de Johannesburg](#) 1995, [The Song of the Earth](#)

(Le Chant de la Terre), Kassel, 2000, la [Triennale de Yokohama](#) 2001: ce que l'artiste appelle affectueusement «Qui est qui dans le zoo».

¹⁹ Le texte sur le tombeau de Derrimut est le suivant: «Cette pierre tombale a été élevée par un certain nombre de colons pour commémorer le noble acte du chef indigène Derrimut qui, par ses informations opportunes données en octobre 1835 aux premiers colons Messrs Fawkner, Lancey, Evans, Henry Batman et leurs dépendants, les a sauvés d'un massacre planifié par quelques tribus d'Aborigènes de l'arrière-pays. Derrimut a terminé sa carrière sur terre dans un asile le 28 mai 1864 âgé d'environ 54 ans.» ²⁰ Not quite right, but interestingly queer: Virginia Fraser talks with Destiny Deacon', [Photofile](#), No. 61, décembre 2000, p. 26.

²¹ Cité du site web pour l'exposition à la Galerie nationale d'Australie: [Re-take: Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Photography](#) http://www.nga.gov.au/Retake/tetake_art2/0000000f.htm

POSTCARDS FROM MUMMY: THE FIRST THIRD OF A LIFE, 1998

Eleanor Harding/Eleanor Deacon/Emma Adelaide Pitt/Nain June 24, 1934 to June 14, 1996

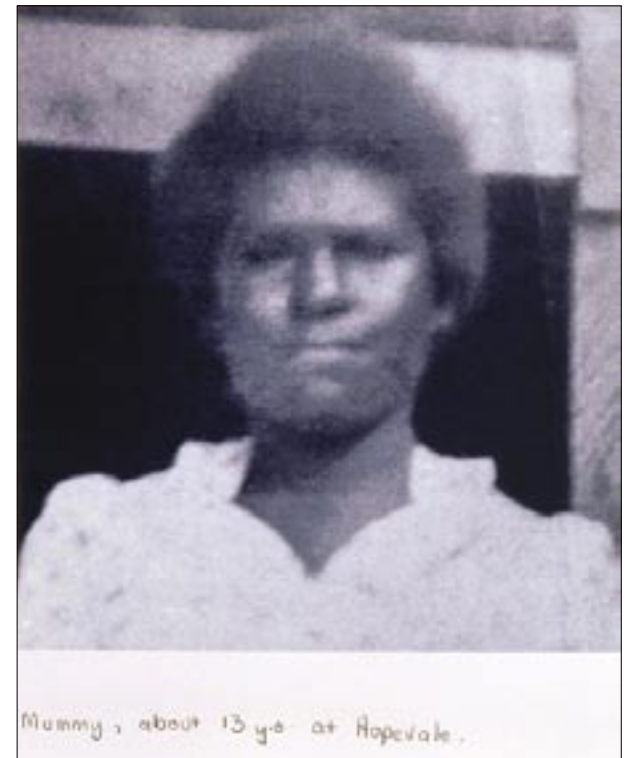
What can pictures say about a Mummy's life journey?

With this effort I come to terms with Mummy's beginnings—childhood to young adulthood in Queensland. Before three 'husbands' and seven spoilt children: Deborah Deacon, Kerry Deacon, Johnny Harding, Janina Harding, Clinton Peterson/ Nain, Tommy Peterson & me, born second. Life before us and her settling into Melbourne, 1959. Now that's another story!.

This is the first-third of a life that was action-packed... When World War 2 happened, Mummy was an orphan. She was evacuated from Darnley/Erub Island to her strict grandmother Anna Pitt (wife of deceased grandfather Edward Pitt, second son of the famous Douglas Pitt and Sophie from Lifu Island). Anna resented Mummy's father's 'Aboriginal-side', the Kuku tribe who inhabited the sand-dune regions from 'above Cooktown to the Daintree'. Anyway Mummy's life at Bloomfield river got her started-a tough life as a youngster, earning her own keep at thirteen as a kitchen-hand at the Lake Eacham Hotel (and we complained about study grants...).

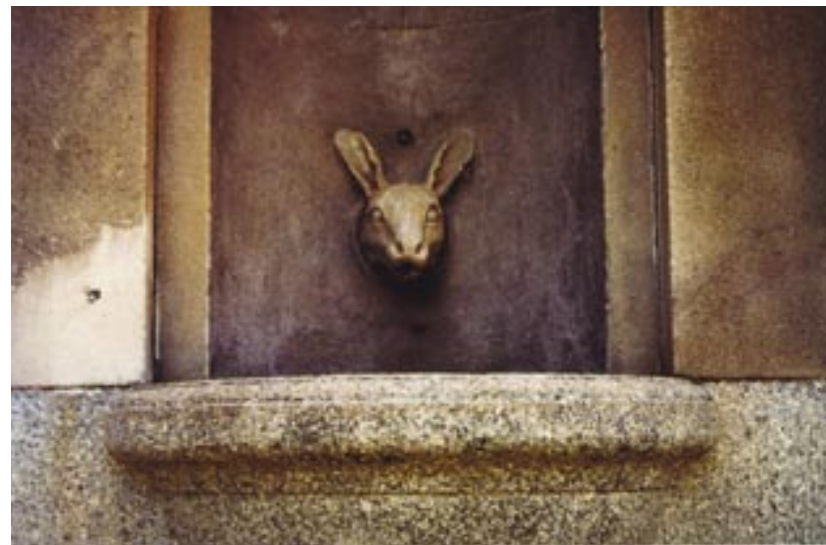
I wish I went with Mummy to these Queensland regions of her youth. When I finally took the journey, from 'Cooktown to Brisbane' to explore the placements in Mummy's early life, I got to see that everything she said about the Land she spent her early life in was true, and I found out something about why she became so strong and independent.

– Destiny Deacon





Postcard from Cooktown (4) 1999. *Blair*



Postcard from Cooktown (5) 1999. *Blair*



Postcard from Cooktown (3) 1999. *Blair*



Postcard from Ayrton (A) 1998. *Blair*



Postcard from Ayrton (C) 1998. *Blair*



Postcard from Ayrton (B) 1998. *Blair*



Postcard from Black Mountain (A) 1998 *cut*



Postcard from Mossman 1998 *cut*



Postcard from Black Mountain (B) 1998 *cut*



Postcard from Mossman 1998 *cut*



Postcard from Urangan (2) 1998 *SW*



Postcard from Urangan (1) 1998 *SW*



Postcard from Urangan (3) 1998 *SW*



Postcard from Urangan (4) 1998

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[Mummy, about 13 y.o. at Hopevale](#)
from [Postcards from Mummy](#) 1998
colour laser print from black and white photograph
42.2 x 29.8 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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[Postcard from Cooktown \(4\), \(5\), \(3\)](#)
from [Postcards from Mummy](#) 1998
colour laser prints from type C photographs
3 parts, 21 x 29.7 cm each
Images courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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[Postcard from Ayton \(A\), \(C\), \(B\)](#)
from [Postcards from Mummy](#) 1998
colour laser prints from type C photographs
3 parts, 21 x 29.7 cm each
Images courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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[Postcard from Black Mountain \(A\), \(B\)](#)
from [Postcards from Mummy](#) 1998
colour laser prints from type C photographs
2 parts, 21 x 29.7 cm each
Images courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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[Postcard from Mossman \(A\), \(B\)](#)
from [Postcards from Mummy](#) 1998
colour laser prints from type C photographs
29.7 x 42.2 cm
Images courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 46–47

[Postcard from Urangan \(2\), \(1\), \(3\), \(4\)](#)
from [Postcards from Mummy](#) 1998
colour laser prints from type C photographs
4 parts, 20.1 x 29.7 cm each
Images courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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[Early photograph by Destiny Deacon of her mother and siblings](#)
[From left: Eleanor Harding, Janina, Kerry, Deborah and Johnny](#) c. 1967
Photograph: Destiny Deacon
Image courtesy of Destiny Deacon

+ PAGE 57

[Destiny Deacon in Havana](#) 1995
Photograph: Djon Mundine
Image courtesy of Djon Mundine

A DATE WITH DESTINY RENDEZ-VOUS AVEC DESTINY

BRENDA L CROFT

DESTINY'S CHILDREN... LES ENFANTS DE DESTINY...

LISA REIHANA

OF LIKE POLITICAL MIND DE MÊME SENSIBILITÉ POLITIQUE

DJON MUNDINE

A DATE WITH DESTINY

How long since I commenced my date with Destiny?
As artists, our official starting date was back in late 1991, when our work was first exhibited together (with Lisa Bellecar) in [Kudjieris](#), curated by Fiona Foley for Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative in Sydney. However, we had hooked up a few years earlier, in January 1987 at the First Black Playwrights' Conference held at the Australian National University. I was taken on by Destiny and her mob as a younger sister, since I was a bit of a ratbag and we shared interests and involvement in community media, arts and politics, and a love of stirring and playing up.

We'd actually met much earlier—when I was too young and flippant to clearly recall—as Destiny and my father Joe worked together at the Aboriginal Development Commission, then part of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in the old-guard Australian Public Service in Canberra (Central Office), when my younger brothers and I would occasionally visit Dad at his office during our school holidays.

You see, when you are writing or talking about Destiny and her art, it is not possible to distinguish her creativity from her lifelong involvement in Indigenous affairs and all that entailed, particularly during the 1970s and 80s, in the inspirational days of the Aboriginal rights movements—when land rights and civil rights seemed a real probability, not an impossible dream; the culmination of ongoing struggles and fights by generations before us. Destiny and I were both heavily influenced by our parents—in her case, her mother Eleanor, and in my case, my dad—and their involvement in Indigenous affairs in Melbourne and Canberra.

Most people refer to Destiny's acerbic, yet satirical, take on the world—or rather, the multi-dimensional world of her creation—in her mocking, whimsical and always very funny tableaux, with her rumination on and reclamation of kitsch, particularly kitsch with an Indigenous flavour. However, she does not simply reflect on these reminders from her childhood; her images definitely have a touch of chilli mixed in with the salt and pepper, white and *blak*, of her imagery.

There is a seductive element to much of her work, which is hardly surprising given that Destiny is a seductress, using humour and satire as the veil to conceal, then reveal her

real intent—lifting the mask of bigotry and ignorance of non-Indigenous Australia. Charming and cajoling: *I'm just a bum photographer, I don't know what I'm doing* is her favourite catch-cry, delivered in her lilting sing-song manner. You almost want to believe her, until you remind yourself of the masterful eye she applies to her subjects; likewise charming and cajoling them to be her mirror-message to the outside world.

Much of Destiny's world seems to be of an interior, intimate staging, never venturing far from the safety of home, surrounded by her *blak* bric-a-brac, dollies and gollies, friends and family. But two of my favourite Destiny experiences involve travelling and journeys.

In early 1995 we travelled together to participate in [Africus](#), the inaugural Johannesburg Biennale, where we managed to survive a very scary kidnapping attempt, whereby Destiny in her inimitable manner turned it into a hilarious anecdote in which I was the cause and she was the saviour of our dilemma (boy, wait till I get the chance to tell the true tale of that adventure!). The following year we lost Eleanor and Joe to different illnesses and decided to hold a tribute exhibition for our beloveds.

Destiny's exhibition [Postcards from Mummy](#) documented her journey with Virginia Fraser to her mother's country in far north Queensland and the Torres Strait. I remember being struck by her poignant observations of landscape foreign to her in so many ways, having been shaped by Melbourne, far to the south. However, there was also an intrinsic revelation of connection to land via someone else's memories, retracing her mother's life, like rewinding a movie.

The Destiny I know is a contradiction: someone who professes, loudly and long, to hating the requisites of the 'art game' and being happiest at home ensconced on the couch, holding court. Yet she also embraces and envelops her friends—we fight, we make up, we love each other—and travels the world with her work. All the while her eye is roaming, assessing, taking in, reworking situations into her incomparable 'pictures', snapshots on *Blak times in Destiny's World*. I, for one, love being part of it, and can't wait for the next episode.

BRENDA L CROFT IS AN ARTIST AND SENIOR CURATOR OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART, NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA.



RENDEZ-VOUS AVEC DESTINY

La date de mon premier rendez-vous avec Destiny? En tant qu’artistes, nous avons officiellement commencé ensemble fin 1991, lors de la première exposition en commun de nos œuvres (avec Lisa Bellear). Il s’agissait de [Kudjieris](#), organisée par Fiona Foley pour la Coopérative des artistes aborigènes Boomalli à Sydney. Cependant, nous nous étions déjà rencontrées quelques années auparavant, en janvier 1987, lors du premier colloque de dramaturges noirs qui se déroulait à l’Université nationale d’Australie. J’avais été adoptée par Destiny et sa bande comme une petite sœur. En effet, j’étais un peu «peau de vache» sur les bords et nous avions des intérêts en commun: nous étions impliquées dans les médias, les arts et la politique de la communauté, et nous adorions chahuter et faire de la provoc.

En réalité nous nous étions rencontrées beaucoup plus tôt —quand j’étais trop jeune et trop désinvolte pour m’en souvenir clairement—parce que Destiny et mon père travaillaient ensemble à la Commission de développement aborigène qui, à l’époque, faisait partie du Département des affaires aborigènes; c’était la vieille école du service public australien, basé à Canberra (le bureau central). J’y allais quelquefois avec mes frères cadets pendant les vacances scolaires pour rendre visite à mon père dans son bureau.

Il faut comprendre que, lorsqu’on écrit ou qu’on parle de Destiny et de son art, il n’est pas possible de distinguer sa créativité de son engagement dans les affaires indigènes, avec tout ce que cela comportait, surtout dans les années 70 et 80, durant les jours très stimulants des mouvements pour les droits aborigènes. A cette époque, les droits de la terre et les droits civils semblaient être une vraie possibilité plutôt qu’un rêve impossible: ils étaient le point culminant des luttes et combats continus menés par les générations précédentes. Destiny et moi étions fortement influencées par nos parents—dans son cas, par sa mère Eleanor et dans le mien, par mon père—et par leur engagement dans les affaires indigènes à Melbourne et à Canberra.

La plupart des gens font référence à l’attitude acerbe, mais néanmoins satirique adoptée par Destiny face au monde—ou plutôt au monde aux dimensions multiples qu’elle a créé—dans ses tableaux moqueurs, fantaisistes et toujours très drôles, où elle médite sur et récupère le kitsch, surtout le kitsch au goût indigène. Pourtant, Destiny ne réfléchit pas seulement à ces

souvenirs de son enfance ; ses images comportent sans aucun doute un soupçon de piment mélangé au sel et au poivre, le blanc et le noir (*«blak»*), de son imagerie.

Il y a un élément de séduction dans la plupart de son œuvre, ce qui n’a rien de surprenant étant donné que Destiny est une séductrice, utilisant l’humour et la satire comme un voile qui cache, puis révèle sa véritable intention: lever le masque de fanatisme et d’ignorance de l’Australie non-indigène. Elle est charmante et enjôleuse, avec sa rengaine préférée: «Je ne suis qu’une photographe bonne à rien, je ne sais pas ce que je fais» prononcée de manière chantonnante et mélodieuse. On a presque envie de la croire, jusqu’à ce qu’on se rappelle l’oeil professionnel qu’elle applique à ses sujets; de la même manière, elle fait à ces derniers son numéro de charme et les cajole pour qu’ils deviennent son message miroir du monde extérieur.

Une partie considérable du monde de Destiny semble être une mise en scène intérieure et intime; elle ne s’aventure jamais très loin de la sécurité de sa maison, entourée de son bric-à-brac *«blak»*, de ses poupées blanches et aussi noires, de ses amis et de sa famille. Mais je voudrais parler de deux de mes expériences favorites avec Destiny: les voyages et les déplacements.

Au début de 1995 nous avons voyagé ensemble pour participer à [Africus](#), la première Biennale de Johannesburg, où nous avons réussi à survivre à une tentative d’enlèvement très effrayante. De sa manière inimitable, Destiny a ensuite transformé l’histoire en anecdote hilarante où moi j’étais la cause et elle était le sauveur de notre dilemme (attendez donc un peu que j’ai l’occasion de raconter la vraie histoire de cette aventure!). L’année suivante nous avons perdu Eleanor et Joe suite à des maladies différentes et nous avons décidé d’organiser une exposition d’hommage à nos bien-aimés.

L’exposition de Destiny, [Postcards from Mummy](#), a documenté son voyage avec Virginia Fraser au pays de sa mère dans le nord profond du Queensland et le détroit de Torres. J’ai le souvenir d’avoir été frappée par ses observations touchantes de paysages qui lui étaient étrangers de plusieurs façons; en effet, elle avait été élevée à Melbourne, très loin au sud. Cependant, il y avait également une révélation intrinsèque d’une connexion à

la terre par le biais des souvenirs d’une autre personne, en retraçant la vie de sa mère, comme on rembobine un film.

La Destiny que je connais est une contradiction: elle est quelqu’un qui crie haut et fort qu’elle déteste les exigences du «jeu de l’art» et qui se sent plus heureuse à la maison, blottie dans son sofa, entourée de sa cour. Et pourtant, elle embrasse et enveloppe ses amis—on se dispute, on se réconcilie, on s’aime—et elle parcourt le monde avec son travail. Et tout le temps, son oeil observe, évalue, assimile et retravaille des situations créant des images incomparables, photos instantanées de *Blak times in Destiny’s World*. En ce qui me concerne, j’adore faire partie de ce monde et je suis impatiente d’en voir le prochain épisode.

BRENDA L CROFT EST ARTISTE ET CONSERVATEUR PRINCIPAL D’ART ABORIGÈNE ET INDIGÈNE DU DÉTROIT DE TORRES À LA GALERIE NATIONALE D’AUSTRALIE À CANBERRA.

LES ENFANTS DE DESTINY...

Les enfants de Destiny...

... sont rembourrés, cassés, tricotés avec des têtes en laine. Ce sont des poupées, des oursons et des ronds de serviettes qui glissent continuellement entre les statuts de personnage et d’artefact. Ces images satiriques sont faites à partir de jouets sauvés d’un néant culturel. Elles ont souvent un visage noir et elles ont toujours une autre histoire à raconter. Les photographies de Destiny sont animées: ses personnages ont l’air de danser sur une mélodie que nous pouvons imaginer grâce à leur titres. Si vous connaissez le classique de disco *Dance little lady dance*, dont le ton est résolument gai, mais qui devient plus sinistre—*you know you only got one chance*» (Vous savez que vous n’avez qu’une seule chance)—et désespéré—*so come on Dance Dance Dance Dance*» (allez donc, dansez, dansez, dansez)—alors la femme dansante de Destiny est beaucoup plus qu’une poupée noire en plastique vêtue d’un t-shirt où figure le drapeau aborigène. J’imagine «le tournage»: Destiny encourage la poupée en la cajolant «vas-y, joue pour la caméra, bébé. Si tu ne dances pas, pas de salaire!». Dance little lady échappe à des interprétations fixes. La poupée exprime une expérience aborigène féminine, évoquant une cruauté cachée et le besoin de faire un numéro pour un public. Elle offre aussi le salut: danser signifie trouver son propre rythme et sa propre liberté. Destiny adore la musique.

Mon oeuvre préférée de Deacon a été conçue avec sa collaboratrice Virginia Fraser qui travaille beaucoup avec elle. Exhibé à la Biennale de Sydney en 2000, Cigarette Bear est un ourson classique, à part le fait que son ventre est ouvert et rembourré de centaines et de centaines de mégots. Idée diaboliquement méchante; c’est un jouet mignon transformé en quelque chose qui serait un cauchemar pour tout personnel soignant. Cigarette Bear pourrait très bien accompagner l’Homme de fer-blanc (Tin Man) à la recherche du Nirvana d’enfance le long de la route de pavés jaunes tachée de nicotine. Eh bien après tout, ce n’est pas un monde parfait ici, comme pourrait témoigner la génération volée. Et Destiny est une artiste travaillant dans un canon occidental où selon le décret, le musée d’art est une «zone non-fumeur». Comme dans le cas de Damien Hirst, cette reconfiguration fait entrer l’objet non-désiré dans la galerie. Avec Cigarette Bear elle les a fait entrer en douce pour ensuite les présenter effrontément sur une plinthe.

Je me suis repassée en tête toutes les années depuis que je connais Destiny et je me rends compte que tout comme son prénom l’indique, c’était un caprice du destin que nous sommes devenus amis. En fait, j’avais rencontré la famille de Destiny bien avant. C’était ma première visite à Melbourne et j’ai été invitée à une vente aux enchères de «choses» dans la maison de sa mère. J’ai passé un après-midi très agréable dans la cuisine avec ses tantes et son frère. J’ai acheté trois toutes petites poupées marron: une assise, une à quatre pattes et une autre en train d’accomplir un autre exploit de développement humain. Je suis sûre que ces poupées ont été les vedettes d’une photo ou d’une autre, faisant un commentaire lourd de sous-entendus sur les relations humaines.

J’ai entendu continuellement parler de Destiny à cause des similitudes entre mon film animé Wog Features et ce qui se passait dans son oeuvre : la stratégie de récupérer l’imagerie du kitsch et des souvenirs pour aborder le sujet des stéréotypes de sexe et de race. Destiny et moi, nous nous sommes finalement rencontrées en 1994 lorsque la galerie Artspace à Auckland a exposé My Boomerang Won’t Come Back. C’était un scoop que Dame Georgina Kirby a ouvert l’exposition, ce qui a fait très plaisir à Destiny. Elle a présenté un musée de sa vie, remplissant la galerie de souvenirs de sa maison. Les objets représentaient «la culture aborigène» telle que l’imaginent des personnes qui y sont étrangères: le ready-made de Duchamp porté à la puissance mille. Cette oeuvre résume peut-être la manière dont fonctionne l’oeuvre de Destiny: sa capacité à récrire l’histoire occidentale et de l’inscrire avec sa sensibilité de koori, avec de l’esprit, de l’humour et un brin de méchanceté.

LISA REIHANA EST UNE ARTISTE INSTALLÉE À AUCKLAND EN NOUVELLE ZÉLANDE.

DESTINY’S CHILDREN...

Destiny’s children...

... are stuffed, broken, ragged, knitted and woolly-headed. They are dollies, teddies and serviette holders who endlessly slip back and forth between the status of character and artefact. These satirical images are made using toys rescued from cultural oblivion. Often they’re in Blak face and always have another tale to tell. Destiny’s photographs are animated, her characters appearing to dance to a tune we imagine through their titles. If you know the disco standard with its insistently joyful tone, *‘Dance little lady dance’*, becoming something more sinister—*‘you know you only got one chance’*—and desperate—*‘so come on Dance Dance Dance Dance’*—then Destiny’s dancing lady is more than a doll that’s black, plastic and sporting a t-shirt of the Aboriginal flag. I imagine ‘the shoot’: Destiny cajoling the doll to ‘Give it up for the camera, Baby. Dance or no pay!’ Dance little lady eludes fixed readings. The doll acts out a female Aboriginal experience speaking of hidden cruelty, and the need to perform for an audience. It also offers salvation; to dance is to find your own beat and your own freedom. Destiny loves music.

My favourite Deacon work was made with frequent collaborator Virginia Fraser. Seen in the 2000 Sydney Biennale, Cigarette Bear is a classic teddy; the trouble is its insides are exposed and it is stuffed with hundreds and hundreds of smoked fag ends. Devilishly naughty, this is a cute toy turned health worker nightmare. Cigarette Bear could quite happily accompany Tin Man searching for childhood Nirvana down the nicotine-stained Yellow Brick Road. Well, after all this is an imperfect world, as the stolen generation would testify. And Destiny is an artist working within a Western canon which decrees the Art Museum as a ‘no-smoking zone’. Like Damien Hirst, this reconfiguration brings the discarded object into the gallery. With Cigarette Bear she snuck them in and then brazenly presented them on a plinth.

I’ve cast my mind back over the years I’ve known Destiny and realise that like her name, it was a quirk of fate that we should become friends. In fact I had met Destiny’s family well before that. It was my first time to Melbourne and I got invited to an auction of ‘stuff’ at her mother’s house. It was a great afternoon hanging out in the kitchen with her aunties and brother. I bought three tiny brown baby dolls: one seated, one crawling

and one doing some other feat of human development. I’m sure those dolls have starred in at least one photo or another, making a pointed commentary about human relationships.

I kept hearing about Destiny because of the similarities between my animated film Wog Features and what was happening in her work: the strategy of reclaiming kitsch and souvenir imagery to address gender politics and racial stereotyping. Destiny and I finally met in 1994 when Artspace Gallery in Auckland exhibited My Boomerang Won’t Come Back. The coup was having Dame Georgina Kirby open the show, a fact which delighted Destiny. She presented a museum of her life—filling the gallery with souvenirs from her house. The objects represent ‘Aboriginal culture’ as imagined by those outside it: this is the Duchampian readymade taken to the nth degree. Perhaps this work sums up how Destiny’s work operates: her ability to rewrite Western history and inscribe it with a Koori sensibility with wit, humour and just a little bit of wickedness.

LISA REIHANA IS AN ARTIST BASED IN AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND.

OF LIKE POLITICAL MIND

I first met Destiny Deacon in 1991 at the [Kudjeris](#) exhibition at Boomalli in Sydney, but really came to know her while working on the [Tyerabarrbowaryaou II](#) exhibition that went to Cuba for the 1994 [Havana Bienal](#). The Bienal had the working title of [Art, Society, and Reflection](#), and a set of secondary subjects was extrapolated from this: Third World Human and Physical Environments, Migrations and Art, Marginalisations, Media, Consumerism and Art, Utopia and Art, and Folk Soul in Art. This was the fifth such occasion for this event.

This was in fact Destiny's first trip overseas. Cuba was a seemingly poverty-stricken country, but full of beauty, vitality, optimism and the most beautiful people on earth.

'We saw people queuing up for soap and food—we were told to bring writing paper and pens for gifts because of a shortage due to the USA trade sanctions. I saw lots of poor kids on the streets and this image stayed with me. I remember all the other countries represented and the other artists: African artists, Mexican artists, Asian artists. How the art was so directly political and unapologetic about it. We never saw that kind of work in Australia much.'¹

One hundred and seventy artists representing over fifty countries with around eight hundred art works took part in the 1994 event, with only one truck and no forklift that I could see to move them about to venues. Many artists worked on installation pieces using locally-found material. These included many artists living abroad from their native countries (for both forced and voluntary reasons), a contingent of Black British artists, and, despite their government's policy, artists from the United States. Over ten percent of the representation consisted of local Cuban artists, many of whose works were installed in the Cuban National Museum of Contemporary Art. Indonesian artist Dadang Christanto, familiar to Australian audiences for his performance pieces at the 1993 [Asia-Pacific Triennial](#), travelled even further than we did (to Paris and then Cuba) to take part.

A number of South African practitioners travelled to Havana, thereby missing the momentous events happening back in their home country, news of which provided a warm, happy backdrop to the Bienal, with Cuba's President Fidel Castro flying off to attend the South African festivities. Most of this

group had appeared in the [Resistance Art: 87 Artists against Apartheid](#) survey exhibition in Johannesburg, curated by artist Sue Williamson in 1988. For Williamson and a number of others this was a return participation, with artists such as Sunil Gupta, Keith Piper, Betye Saar, Gavin Jantes and Rasheed Araeen being familiar to contemporary European and New York art circles, while Araeen's [Third Text](#) co-editor Jean Fisher also came to cover the Bienal for the journal.

Meeting these artists and seeing their work had a strong impact on Destiny. She became good friends with Black Scottish artist Maud Sulter and British painter Lubaina Himid. In such an atmosphere of like political minds, it reaffirmed her own point of view and the sociopolitical perspective that runs through her art. It would seem that the [Havana Bienal](#) is practically expected to have this political content; it's interesting that when the 2002 [Documenta](#) exhibition (which Destiny participated in) was reviewed, its political content was questioned, commented on and argued against as too much politics and not enough art.

Destiny's own work for the Bienal consisted of sets of laser prints enlarged from Polaroids ('Some are still here in my room right now', she tells me). They were hung in the International Press Centre at one end of the city. Destiny has used dolls of all kinds in a number of her compositions, and the works for Havana were no different. [Brown skin babies on the menu](#) was an image of little dark baby dolls in paper cupcake cups, relating to the practice of some non-Indigenous couples 'shopping' or 'snacking' at orphanages for coloured children. [Waiting for Goddess](#) gambits that God, who is often thought of as white and male, is a black Goddess who comes down, checks out earth and decides to leave again.

The image in our Havana catalogue, [Meet Us Outside](#), with its black doll reaching through white bars (really a white plastic washing basket), is full of ambiguity, a universal idea of escape—domestic servitude perhaps? Surely the strongest image was [Abracadabra](#), a brutal contrast between white kewpie dolls dressed like magician's assistants and a decapitated black female doll—the white angel goddess and the worthless black woman.

Cuba is an amazing place; neither the complete socialist dream nor the corrupt pornographic playground of yesterday.

Although Destiny took home a box of cigars, her favourite souvenir was a black doll with big thighs and bum called Rumbarita, the antithesis of the skinny white blonde Barbie doll.

The next time I met Destiny internationally was ten years on, in Austria in 2004. Her artwork was being shown at the Salzburg Kunstverein, and in a group exhibition of Aboriginal art, [Spirit and Vision](#) at Sammlung Essl in Klosterneuburg on the outskirts of Vienna. In Cuba she'd suffered the jet lag of first travel. By 2004 she had travelled considerably to Berlin, Milan, Tokyo and other places, and easily handled the somewhat formal dinner we had at the Australian Embassy with a new panache. She had certainly arrived as an international artist.

DJON MUNDINE IS SENIOR CONSULTANT CURATOR, INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN ART AT QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY, BRISBANE

¹ Destiny Deacon, conversation with the author, 1 September 2004.



DE MÊME SENSIBILITÉ POLITIQUE

J'ai rencontré Destiny Deacon pour la première fois en 1991 à l'exposition [Kudjeris](#) à Boomalli à Sydney, mais j'ai vraiment appris à la connaître pendant la préparation de l'exposition [Tyerabarrbowaryaou II](#) qui a été présentée à Cuba pour la [Biennale de La Havane](#) en 1994. La Biennale avait comme titre provisoire [Art, Société et Réflexion](#), avec une série de sujets secondaires qui en découlaient: les environnements humains et physiques du tiers monde, les migrations et les arts, les marginalisations, les médias, la société de consommation et l'art, l'utopie et l'art et l'âme folklorique en art. Cet événement avait lieu pour la cinquième fois.

Ceci constituait le premier voyage que Destiny effectuait à l'étranger. Cuba était un pays apparemment dénué de tout, mais plein de beauté, de vitalité, d'optimisme et de personnes parmi les plus belles sur terre.

«Nous avons vu des gens faire la queue pour acheter du savon et de la nourriture. On nous avait dit d'apporter du papier à lettres et des stylos à offrir comme cadeaux à cause de la pénurie provoquée par les sanctions commerciales imposées par les Etats-Unis. J'ai vu beaucoup d'enfants pauvres dans les rues et cette image est restée dans ma tête. Je me rappelle tous les autres pays représentés et les autres artistes: des artistes africains, mexicains, asiatiques. J'ai vu combien l'art fait de la politique sans aucun remords. Nous n'avons jamais vraiment beaucoup vu ce genre de travail en Australie.»¹

Cent soixante-dix artistes représentant plus de cinquante pays avec environ huit cents oeuvres d'art ont participé à l'événement de 1994; il n'y avait qu'un seul camion et je n'ai vu aucun chariot élévateur à fourche pour transporter les oeuvres jusqu'aux lieux d'exposition. Beaucoup d'artistes ont travaillé sur des installations utilisant du matériel qu'ils ont trouvé localement. Ces artistes dénombrèrent plusieurs personnes vivant loin de leur pays d'origine (pour des raisons obligatoires aussi bien que volontaires), un contingent d'artistes britanniques noirs et des artistes des Etats-Unis, malgré la politique de leur gouvernement. Plus de dix pour cent des artistes venaient de Cuba même, la plupart ayant des oeuvres exposées dans le musée national d'art contemporain de Cuba. L'artiste indonésien Dadang Christanto, connu du public australien pour ses performances à la [Triennale d'Asie-Pacifique](#) en 1993, a voyagé

encore plus loin que nous (à Paris et puis à Cuba) pour y participer.

Un certain nombre de plasticiens praticiens sud-africains avaient voyagé à La Havane, manquant ainsi les événements de grande importance qui se déroulaient dans leur pays et dont les nouvelles ont fourni une toile de fond forte et heureuse à la Biennale; le président de Cuba, Fidel Castro, était d'ailleurs parti assister aux festivités sud-africaines. La plupart des membres de ce groupe avait participé à l'exposition commune intitulée [Art de la Résistance: 87 artistes contre l'apartheid](#) à Johannesburg, organisée par l'artiste Sue Williamson en 1988. Pour Williamson et d'autres, ceci constituait un retour au pays, avec des artistes comme Sunil Gupta, Keith Piper, Betye Saar, Gavin Jantes et Rasheed Araeen qui connaissaient les cercles d'art contemporains en Europe et à New York. Jean Fisher, co-éditeur de [Third Text](#) d'Araeen est également venue couvrir la Biennale pour le journal.

Le fait de rencontrer ces artistes et de voir leurs oeuvres a fait une forte impression sur Destiny. Elle est devenue très amie avec l'artiste écossaise noire Maud Sulter et le peintre britannique Lubaina Himid. Dans une telle ambiance d'esprits politiques semblables, elle a réaffirmé son propre point de vue ainsi que la perspective sociopolitique qui traverse son art. Il semblerait qu'un contenu politique soit pratiquement de rigueur à la [Biennale de La Havane](#); il est donc intéressant de noter que, dans les critiques de l'exposition [Documenta](#) en 2002 (à laquelle Destiny a participé), son contenu politique a fait l'objet de commentaires, et a été remis en question dans le sens qu'il y avait trop de politique et pas assez d'art.

L'oeuvre de Destiny pour la Biennale consistait d'un ensemble de tirages au laser agrandis à partir de Polaroids («Quelques-uns se trouvent toujours dans ma chambre en ce moment», me dit-elle). Ils étaient exposés dans le centre des médias internationaux à un bout de la ville. Destiny a utilisé des poupées de toutes sortes dans un certain nombre de ses compositions, et les oeuvres pour La Havane n'ont pas fait exception à la règle. [Brown skin babies on the menu](#) est une image de petites poupées dans des papiers de petits gâteaux, liée à la pratique de certains couples non-indigènes qui vont 'acheter' ou 'grignoter' des enfants de couleur dans des orphelinats. [Waiting for Goddess](#) postule que

Dieu, que l'on envisage souvent sous les traits d'un homme blanc, est une Déesse noire qui descend, jette un coup d'œil à la Terre et décide de repartir.

L'image dans notre catalogue de la Havane, [Meet Us Outside](#), où une poupée noire tend la main à travers des barreaux blancs (en réalité un panier à linge en plastique blanc), est pleine d'ambiguïté: idée universelle d'évasion et peut-être servitude domestique? L'image la plus forte était sans aucun doute [Abracadabra](#), contraste brutal entre des poupées kewpie (aux caractéristiques exagérées) blanches, habillées comme des assistantes de magicien et une poupée noire de sexe féminin et décapitée: la déesse angélique blanche et la femme noire sans valeur.

Cuba est un lieu incroyable: il n'est ni le rêve socialiste complet ni la cour de récréation pornographique et corrompue d'autrefois. Bien que Destiny ait ramené une boîte de cigares à la maison, son souvenir préféré était une poupée noire aux fortes cuisses et aux grosses fesses, s'appelant Rumbarita, antithèse de la poupée Barbie blanche et maigre.

J'ai de nouveau rencontré Destiny sur le plan international, dix ans plus tard en Autriche en 2004. Ses oeuvres étaient exposées au Salzburg Kunstverein, ainsi que dans une exposition de groupe d'art aborigène, [Esprit et Vision](#), à Sammlung Essl à Klosterneuburg dans la banlieue de Vienne. A Cuba Destiny avait souffert du décalage horaire de ce premier voyage. Au cours de ces dix ans, elle avait fait de nombreux voyages à Berlin, Milan et Tokyo et dans d'autres endroits; ces expériences lui ont permis de se comporter au dîner plutôt formel organisé par l'Ambassade d'Australie avec un nouveau panache. Elle avait certainement atteint le statut d'artiste internationale.

DJON MUNDINE EST CURATEUR CONSULTANT PRINCIPAL D'ART AUSTRALIEN INDIGÈNE À LA GALERIE D'ART DU QUEENSLAND À BRISBANE.

^[1] Destiny Deacon, conversation avec l'auteur, 1 septembre 2004.

+ PAGE 61

Adoption 1993/2000
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 62–63

Fantales 2003
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 64

Dance Little Lady (A), (B), (C), (D) 1994/2000
type C photographs
56 x 70 cm each
Images courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 65

Waiting For Goddess (A), (B), (C), (D) 1993/2003
light jet prints from Polaroid
60 x 48 cm each
Images courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 66

Travelling
From Oz Series 1998/2003
light jet print from Polaroid
200 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Slow

From Oz Series 1998/2003
light jet print from Polaroid
200 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Sad

From Oz Series 1998/2003
light jet print from Polaroid
200 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Scared

From Oz Series 1998/2003
light jet print from Polaroid
200 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 67

Oz Games—Under the spell of the tall poppies 1998/2003
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 68

Axed 1994/2003
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 75

An Australian Song (D) 1998
laser print from black and white photograph
72.5 x 77 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney









travelling

slow



sad

scared





THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS:
BLACK HUMOUR IN THE ART OF DESTINY DEACON

MARCIA LANGTON

THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS: BLACK HUMOUR IN THE ART OF DESTINY DEACON

Early Whoopi Goldberg off-off-Broadway comedy was searing female African-American social portraiture and satire, undermining the comfort and vision of post-Malcolm X race politics in the United States. In one piece, Whoopi played a typical big-city junkie on a tour of the Anne Frank House and conjured up the truly grotesque in a Kafkaesque critique of the dislocation of modern American black culture. Arthouse comedy attracts an audience that is forever minuscule, however, and it is not a lucrative career option unless it leads to the big breakthrough. Whoopi now plays to millions of people, having become part of the mainstream ‘Hollywood’ cinematic industry. Her early style of arthouse satire has become the speciality of David Lynch ([Blue Velvet](#), [Twin Peaks](#), [Lost Highway](#)), Jim Jarmusch ([Night on Earth](#) and so on) and other refugees from the suburbs of Babylon.

I raise the issue of the artistic cooption of Whoopi by the big end of the entertainment industry—arguably the best outcome for us black and brown girls—because the story of her career is relevant to understanding Destiny Deacon and her *œuvres*. Deacon has remained a Kafkaesque artist, her mutilated dolls still portraying ‘subcultural’ gender and hybridity critiques. She remains the committed satirist, alerting us to the messages of contempt and derision for Indigenous men, women and children in Australia’s colonial and postcolonial iconography.

To really understand Destiny and her work, it is almost essential to have been in a share household, probably a squat, with a group of Aboriginal single mothers and/or black separatists—whether inspired by Sappho or Malcolm X or both—but more relevant, perhaps, to have been poor, very poor, to have a big intellectual take on the world, and to have been marginalised from the discourses of power. Or at least this is the impression Destiny gives and likes to give to the wider audience, one which can hardly read acrylic Western Desert art and is not likely to tune into Deacon’s deconstructionist reading of urban Australian Aboriginal survivors of the colonial wars now exiled in the housing commission ‘burbs.

Destiny tells stories from this milieu in her ‘photographs’, installations and comedy routines. One of her routines, which I watched on ABC Television’s now-defunct [Blackout](#), had her as the cleaner at an Aboriginal organisation with an

improbable Aboriginal-sounding name. ‘Welcome to my Koori Kitchen’, she says, and so conjures up the ridiculous sight of her character presenting a ‘live’ cooking show from a Melbourne Koori-alternative-lifestyle house. She shares with us her secret ingredient, common-brand-name breadcrumbs, which she kneads in copious amounts into a bowl of minced meat, showing just how far the meat can go if you follow her unbelievably gross example. Her brother and other relations and friends can be heard from the lounge room behind her, and when they suggest telephoning for a pizza delivery she promptly agrees. Koori nutrition practices were never so charming ethnologised for the television audience. While we are waiting for the pizza to arrive, she introduces us to a plaster of Paris bust of an Aboriginal man wearing the red, black and yellow head-gear and scarf of the ‘brother’, or ‘bruzz’, of inner city habitats. This is a representation of her last *mulega* (man), who went out to the shop several years ago and has not been seen since. ‘Why couldn’t you be like Charlie, Kevin?’ she wails, passionately kissing a mounted photograph of Charlie Perkins. Charles plays sport, doesn’t drink and is reputedly a very reliable representative of his race. Oh, the dilemmas of the black woman! She plays hard-ball with gender and hybridity stereotypes or tropes and translates them through, for instance, kitsch busts, dolls, performance pieces and installations. She exhibited her Koori Kitchen ([Kitch’en Koori](#)) and posters, telling tales of escape from urban oppression at the [Second Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art](#) at Queensland Art Gallery in Brisbane, from September 1996 to January 1997.

This television vignette shot in a Melbourne kitchen, abounding with Koori interior design, is the critical corrective to the romanticisation of ‘Aboriginal woman’. ‘Aboriginal woman’ is that earth-mother phantasm of Koori reggae rock lyrics who shot to subculture-restricted fame with the release of the song of the same name by No Fixed Address. She personified, for Aboriginal men rather than women, the urban Aboriginal nostalgia for the fantasy traditionalism of a long-gone Aboriginal society, a traditionalism also much loved for quite different reasons by the white intellectual liberal imagination. It is quite impossible to believe in this apparition after watching Ms Deacon’s performance. She demolishes the utopian possibilities, not so much of the liberal imagination but of the Koori kind

Destiny’s exhibition at Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi during the 1997 Melbourne Fashion Festival took aim again at the Aboriginal male representation of ‘Aboriginal woman’. She entitled the show ‘No Fixed Dress’, again subverting impossibly straight gender images invented by testosterone-driven young Aboriginal men with whining guitars to fill up emotional gaps in their colonially-erased cultural memories.

‘Usually I dress like someone who walks greyhounds’, she told Virginia Fraser, who wrote the catalogue essay. ‘People I know dress as slogans, basically letting people know who we are and what we stand for. I’m the antithesis of fashion, so I thought doing this exhibition would be an interesting challenge’.¹ Fraser describes the results:

*heads on sticks (one clapstick, a carved wooden snake and the tube from a roll of fax paper) cavorting in garments improvised from materials found on the floor—part of that day’s newspaper, some plastic bubble wrap, leftover Xmas ribbon, a cloth bag with an Aboriginal flag design, and Destiny’s baby nephew lying in a newspaper-lined suitcase under a newspaper rug, surrounded by printed luggage, including clothes made from the classifieds and a news magazine with Pauline Hanson’s mug on the cover.*²

In the [No Fixed Dress](#) exhibition, ‘Two borrowed dolls—one decapitated a couple of years ago for another picture, the other already fractured by use and abuse (and also decapitated and amputated by the end of the shoot)—wear each other’s heads as accessories’.³ They invoked a Sapphist inversion of Frantz Fanon’s black skins, white masks, the understanding of how much the coloniser needs the colonised, especially in sexual relations, to play out domination and subjection in everyday domestic life. Destiny’s ‘fashion’ bore all the marks of the brutality of those relationships based on unexamined power relations. Two ‘small black dolls with pinched features, bogusly dressed as “Aborigines” when they arrived in a cardboard box from an Adelaide fête, have been redressed, recoiffed and recast in a tableau from a surrealist painting’.⁴ But isn’t that exactly how it feels, sometimes, for us black girls trying to dress up to ‘look right’? Do we ever get it right?

But take a closer look. In [Me and Virginia’s doll](#) (1997) Destiny

appears as Frida Kahlo holding a cigarette in her hand and seated on a wooden bench next to a 1940s white porcelain doll. The doll is more than a prop for a performance; it is a character in a psychodrama. What is Destiny getting at then? Fraser suggests that the ‘pretty, empty-headed, uncritical doll has a role as domestic and sexual amusement’ and, citing performance artist Coco Fusco, that she serves as ‘light but exotic entertainment for the dominant culture’.⁵ I can’t agree entirely. I perceive the dolls as much more central to Destiny’s rewriting of a black feminine subjectivity. ‘They have to look how I say’, she reported to Fraser. But perhaps Fraser has missed the *double entendre*: Destiny is the *artiste*, shaping, moulding, beheading, clothing and arranging her little subjects, but she is also quoting ‘the child within’, as the American pop psychologists put it, the little girl who is playing with her destiny through playing with her dolls, imagining the future by playhousing all the signs of womanhood around her. It cannot be overlooked in Destiny’s mimesis of Kahlo that this artist was driven by pain and disability caused by a bus accident in which she was impaled by a wooden stake. The pain hinted at in Destiny’s self-portrait is thinly disguised by her irreverent black humour and trash archaeology.

It is clear to me, too, that Destiny is interrogating the past, as Fraser acknowledges in citing, again, Coco Fusco: ‘Those stereotypes that have grown ingrained over time cannot be easily dismissed as ridiculous and then simply cast off... (They are a reminder of) a painful history of bigotry and disempowerment’ and thus enable us to understand that past.⁶ [Welcome to Never Never](#) (1995) is just such a case of her reading of Australian history. This installation consists of a museum glass display cabinet containing a collection of ‘white Australian Aboriginal artefacts’. The trash and kitsch stand in for—nevertheless, they shock the senses quite directly—the degrading history of white representations of Aboriginal people, particularly women and children, or, in the language of the settlers, ‘lubras’ and ‘piccaninnies’.

Destiny’s target includes constructions of Australian national identity through this demotic pictorial degradation of the Aboriginal subject. In the Australian craft movements and in the kitsch of popular culture, appropriation of Aboriginal imagery as a marker of Australian identity has remained a consistent

theme. In the 1950s, as ethnographers collected bark paintings for museums, Australian popular culture was marked by an enthusiastic appropriation of Aboriginal motifs. Richard White has noted the effect of social change in postwar Australia on the use of Aboriginal imagery:

*There was tension between the sophistication and skill of craftspeople, their numbers boosted by migration from Europe, and the amateurism and commercialism of the souvenir trade. Both extremes ransacked Aboriginal cultures for motifs: elite culture in works such as John Antill's ballet Corroboree, popular culture in tea towels and garden ornaments.*⁷

The tea towels and garden ornaments depicting the vanquished native were emblems of suburban security, as a million migrants poured into Australia from war-torn Europe, and 'open land gave way to suburban streets'.⁸ Destiny owns an enviable collection of ashtrays and other paraphernalia produced by the amateur plate painters of this period who depicted lubras and piccaninnies in the browns, blacks and whites of the 'Aboriginalist' style. Destiny evokes this emblematic infantilisation of Aboriginal people in her Teatowel—Dancing dollys (1993–95), a laser transfer on linen, which presents two dancing black dolls in Aboriginal flag vestments. This image postdates her Blak lik mi triptych (1991–95) which closes in on a lubra image on a white Australian artefact plate mounted on the lounge-room mantelpiece. This work has fascinated me since I first saw it in Glebe because, despite the meretricious object of its origin, the close-ups of the woman are transported into images of subtle beauty.

Two of Destiny's portraits of real black women resurrect the background of the corrugated iron humpy, the image at the heart of the fringe-dweller trope in newspaper cartoons and liberal novels (such as Nene Gare's The Fringe Dwellers, adapted to film in the 1980s). In Welcome to My Island (1993), a 'hybrid' Aboriginal/ Torres Strait Island woman of womanly proportions poses Dorothy Lamour-like in front of a humpy (or suburban backyard shed structure adapted for the purpose) in a red, black and yellow grass skirt and Triumph full-figure bra. She is adorned with shell necklaces and holding a coconut. On the ground at her feet are a shell and scattered oranges, while one foot rests on a black, chunky telephone handset. The theme of humpy and exotic native woman is revisited in her image

Last laughs (1995), in which three women, backgrounded by a corrugated iron wall, cavort in revealing lingerie, leopard skin, denim and pearls. One holds a dolly star of Teatowel—Dancing dollys.

I grew up in a humpy and—without wishing to give the impression of unexamined nostalgia—I can say that it was heaven for me, if not for my beleaguered, long-suffering elders. On the down side, I was reviled by the pastoralists' kids at school for being 'one of those boongs from the blacks' camp down at the river'. Corrugated iron has a special sweet and sour resonance for us fringe dwellers and Destiny has pushed the right buttons in this image to kickstart the memories, smells and emotions. Destiny loves to resurrect the imagery of our oppression, position her favourite dolls or people in her stage sets, and eke out the discomfort. I have often wondered if her work irritates whites in the same ways as it irritates me. Or is it different for them?

To answer that question, it might be useful to traverse the historical baggage that a white Australian might cart along to Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi in Melbourne to see the Deacon exhibition No Fixed Dress.⁹

The 1947 census showed a higher proportion of the white Australian population being born in Australia than ever before or since. Migration had been a norm in Australia from 1788 to the 1920s, but migration had fallen dramatically in the 1930s and 1940s. By the 1950s, with the arrival of a million people, Australians, for the first time, began to talk about an 'Australian way of life'—to which the new arrivals should assimilate. Richard White notes, 'This "way of life" was never satisfactorily defined, but lack of definition was made up for by saying it loudly and often'.¹⁰

Critical to getting a grip on a situation culturally out of control was not the denigration of continental Europeans as 'wogs', but the attempts to normalise Aboriginal people with a combination of cosmetic propaganda about 'their place in the civilised world' and the intensified administration and institutionalisation.

During 1956 the Australian National Travel Association, which marketed Australia as an attractive migrant and tourist destination, commissioned leading artists and designers to produce posters for its publicity campaigns. These were in use for a full decade, and underlined, in juxtaposition with

the industrialised cities of Europe, the natural attractions of Australia: its climate, its 'outdoors', its plenty and its opportunities for people to settle in a more or less British atmosphere and way of life. Later in the decade, the emphasis shifted towards representing Australia's unique fauna, flora and scenery, and its ancient heartland and Aboriginal heritage as a way of appealing to the growing international tourist market.¹¹

Eileen Mayo's suite of designs included one titled Discover Australia, which uses traditional Aboriginal art designs. Gert Sellheim's boomerang poster for the Australian National Travel Association, published in the 1957 edition of the prestigious international annual of advertising art, Modern Publicity, is dense with Australian symbols. While the poster includes the Southern Cross, a surfboard, the figure of a female swimmer, palm trees and a ram, it also incorporates animal and fish totems of the Aboriginal people and the boomerang. The most notable of Sellheim's designs, however, is the flying kangaroo symbol, produced in the late 1940s, that Qantas has carried to all parts of the world.¹²

In 1952 the Australian Trade Commission's display shop in the Rockefeller Building in New York mounted an exhibition entitled Australian Aboriginal Art. Alongside the bark paintings and artefact were high-culture representations of white Australian interior decoration and cultural production: textiles by Annan Fabrics of Sydney; designs for textiles by Maurice Holloway of Melbourne and Dahl Collings; ceramics from Martin Boyd Pottery in Sydney; and monotypes by Margaret Preston. The real marker of authenticity in this exhibition, however, was not the paintings and artefacts, but a map of Australia showing the areas inhabited by Aboriginal people and the numbers surviving.¹³

Designers such as Sellheim, Beck, Annan and others continued throughout the 1950s to appropriate Aboriginal art designs for the covers of the literary magazine Meanjin, Qantas's in-flight magazine Airways and Oswald Ziegler's book This is Australia.¹⁴ The adaptation of Aboriginal art to commercial design became characteristic of postwar modernism in Australia, though it had been vigorously promoted decades earlier by Margaret Preston. Coins, stamp designs and the imagery created to give the impression of a distinctive Australian way of life incorporated

Aboriginal images along with the faunal oddities—the kangaroo, the koala, the platypus and so on—in an imperial signification of the dominion of civilisation over nature. It can be seen, too, that there was, and remains, the motivation of an insecure colonial population to create a mythology that allowed its participants to assume innocence in the colonial process. The association of Aboriginal images with Australian fauna had less to do, in this period at least, with the still-virulent eugenicist and social Darwinist notions than with the need to associate images of the victims of genocide with the more pleasant and distracting images of cuddly, furry creatures. All—kangaroos, koalas and Aborigines alike—were evolutionary oddities, but they were nice evolutionary oddities: harmless and entertaining. Images of primitivism marketed overseas summoned up the sentiment that these beings were untouched by the spread of Empire.

The tension between assimilating Aboriginal people by extraordinarily brutal means in reality and yet at the same time depicting them as fascinating primitives reflected the need of the older colonists for security and for emblems of cultural uniqueness and difference from Europe. The meaning at the heart of these depictions of quaint natives was the British conquest and genocide best forgotten. The colonists' security depended on a belief in outright conquest, and thousands of resentful coloured people destabilised that dream. Once the natives were safely at a distance in faraway reserves or normalised as, say, opera singers, as in the case of Harold Blair, or watercolourists, such as Albert Namatjira, suburbia as conquest was a believable dream.

Cecelia Cmielewski, reviewing My Boomerang Won't Come Back, Destiny's exhibition at the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia in 1994, acutely observed: 'In her work cultural collision isn't simply mimicry or ridicule, her nexus is complicity'.¹⁵ It is gratifying that it is not just embittered post-feminist culture hags like myself who choke laughing at Destiny's events; that women from most backgrounds can feel the 'soft electricity'.

'Lisa and I might have been born whiter, but our mums outran the missionaries', Destiny announced at the Tudawali Award during Artists' Week in Adelaide in 1994. Cmielewski, who was in the audience, put this spin on the Destiny effect:

It is this successful sliding between urban/mythical Aboriginal life and the one that energises on a day-to-day basis that enfolds the viewer in a sharp cocoon, like something made out of raw fibreglass.

It is colonial Australian culture which is being looked at. Our culture is described for us in a way that is palpable and tangible. The boundaries are being crossed in such a way as to intimate that while colonial Australia still exists, there is also the possibility for an anti-colonial stance whereby the very kinds of relationships Aboriginal people have with each other elide the precondition for colonial mentality.¹⁶

This comprehension resounds as well in 'Colonial quotations', an article by Joan Kerr:

Destiny Deacon's cibachrome Eva Johnson (1994) quotes JM Crossland's oil Nannultera, a young cricketer of the Natives' Training Institution, Poonindie (1854) even more equivocally; whereas the historic boy holds a bat, the contemporary writer wields an axe. Nevertheless, both images in the National Gallery of Australia are historically complementary... they could aptly be opposed—the upholder and destroyer of colonial mission values—were this or any public gallery ever to become less obsessed with European-style chronological hangs.¹⁷

Destiny positions herself sharply as a public intellectual, pouring out images and performances from the heart of the hybrid native woman, teetering on the edge of any classification, lacerating the easy, hip images thrown up by New Ageists, Aboriginal people themselves and the colonial cultural machine. Her work serves as a barometer of postcolonial anxiety, as a window of understanding for new generations of Australians turning away from the psychosis of the colonial relationship, but seeking to establish a considered and meaningful grammar of images in an environment full of colonial memories.

PROFESSOR MARCIA LANGTON IS PROFESSOR OF AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE.

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¹ Virginia Fraser, 'Fashioned' in [No Fixed Dress: Destiny Deacon at Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi](#), catalogue, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, 1997, p. 6.

² *ibid.*, p. 7.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Virginia Fraser, 'Destiny's dollys' [Photofile](#), no. 40, November 1993, pp. 10-11.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷ Richard White, 'The shock of affluence', in Judith O'Callaghan (ed.), [The Australian Dream: Design of the Fifties](#), Powerhouse Publishing, Sydney, 1993, p. 23.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁹ I originally presented these arguments in 'Art, Wilderness and Terra Nullius' at the Ecopolitics IX Conference at the Northern Territory University in Darwin, 1 September 1995. See [Ecopolitics IX: Perspectives on Indigenous Peoples' Management of Environment Resources](#), Conference Papers and Resolutions, Northern Land Council, 1996, pp. 11-24.

¹⁰ White, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹¹ Anne-Marie Van de Ven, 'Design and Advertising' in O'Callaghan, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 39.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Cecelia Cmielewski, 'My boomerang won't come back', [Photofile](#), no. 42, June 1994, p. 42.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Joan Kerr, 'Colonial quotations', [Art & Australia](#), vol. 33 no. 3, Autumn 1996, p. 386.



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Portrait—Eva Johnson, writer 1994/2004

light jet print from Polaroid

100 x 80 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and

Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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Where's Mickey? 2002

light jet print from Polaroid

100 x 80 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and

Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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Welcome to my island (detail) 1993/2004

light jet print from Polaroid

4 parts, dimensions variable

Image courtesy of the artist and

Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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Last Laughs 1995/2004

light jet print from Polaroid

80 x 100 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and

Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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Moomba princeling 2004

light jet print from Polaroid

100 x 80 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and

Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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Moomba princess in waiting 2004

light jet print from Polaroid

100 x 80 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and

Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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Portrait—Peter Blazey, writer 1996/2004

light jet print from Polaroid

100 x 80 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and

Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney











LA VALÉE DES POUPÉES:
HUMOUR NOIR DANS L'ART DE DESTINY DEACON

MARCIA LANGTON

LE VALLÉE DES POUPÉES: HUMOUR NOIR DANS L’ART DE DESTINY DEACON

Le premier sketch comique de Whoopi Goldberg «off off Broadway» présentait des portraits et une satire sociale afro-américaine brûlante qui ébranlait le confort et la vision de la politique raciale après-Malcolm X aux Etats-Unis. Dans un sketch, Whoopi a incarné une toxicomane typique des grandes villes qui visite la maison d’Anne Frank et qui évoque le vrai grotesque dans une critique kafkaïenne du bouleversement de la culture noire américaine moderne. Cependant, la comédie d’art et d’essai attire toujours un public moindre et ce n’est pas une solution lucrative pour une carrière, à moins de réussir à percer. Whoopi joue maintenant devant des millions de personnes, étant devenue une partie de l’industrie cinématographique conventionnelle de Hollywood. Son style initial de satire d’art et d’essai est devenu la spécialité de David Lynch (*Blue Velvet*, *Twin Peaks*, *Lost Highway*), de Jim Jarmusch (*Night on Earth* et ainsi de suite) et d’autres réfugiés des faubourgs de Babylon.

Whoopi évoque le sujet de la cooptation artistique de Whoopi par la cellule qui représente ceux qui ont leur mot à dire dans l’industrie du spectacle—sans doute le meilleur résultat pour nous, les filles noires et marron—parce que l’histoire de sa carrière est pertinente pour la compréhension de Destiny Deacon et de son œuvre. Deacon est restée une artiste kafkaïenne; ses poupées mutilées incarnent toujours des critiques de sexe et d’hybridité «sous-culturelles». Elle reste une artiste satirique engagée, attirant notre attention sur les messages exprimant le mépris et la dérision pour les hommes, femmes et enfants indigènes dans l’iconographie australienne coloniale et postcoloniale.

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Afin de bien comprendre Destiny et son œuvre, il est presque essentiel d’avoir partagé un logement, probablement un squat, avec un groupe de mères célibataires indigènes et/ou de séparatistes noirs—inspirées de Sappho ou de Malcolm X ou des deux—mais plus pertinent encore, il faut avoir été pauvre, très pauvre, regarder le monde d’un point de vue extrêmement intellectuel, et avoir été marginalisé des discours du pouvoir. Du moins, c’est cette impression que donne Destiny et qu’elle aime donner au public plus large, ce public qui n’arrive guère à lire l’art acrylique du désert occidental et qui ne va sans doute pas saisir l’interprétation déconstructioniste formulée par Deacon des survivants aborigènes australiens urbains

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Destiny raconte des histoires venant de ce milieu dans ses «photographies», ses installations et ses numéros comiques. Dans un de ses numéros, que j’ai vu à la télévision sur la chaîne ABC dans l’émission *Blackout* qui n’existe plus, elle incarnait une femme de ménage dans une organisation aborigène qui portait un nom invraisemblable à consonance aborigène. «Bienvenue dans ma cuisine koori», dit-elle, évoquant ainsi l’image ridicule de son personnage qui présente une émission de cuisine «en direct» d’une maison où l’on mène un mode de vie alternatif koori à Melbourne. Elle partage avec nous son ingrédient secret, la chapelure de marque quelconque; elle en rajoute une quantité énorme à la viande hachée dans un bol et elle travaille le tout pour montrer jusqu’à quel point on peut aller avec cette quantité de viande si on suit son exemple grossièrement exagéré. On peut entendre son frère et d’autres membres de sa famille et ses amis qui parlent dans le salon derrière, et lorsqu’il suggèrent de téléphoner pour commander une pizza elle est tout de suite d’accord. Les habitudes alimentaires des Kooris n’ont jamais été ethnologuées de manière aussi charmante pour le public de la télévision. En attendant l’arrivée de la pizza, elle nous présente un buste en plâtre à mouler d’un homme aborigène portant le couvre-chef et le foulard rouge, noir et jaune du «frère» ou «frero» dans le parler local des habitants du centre ville. Il s’agit d’une représentation de son dernier *mulega* (homme), qui est sorti faire des courses il y a quelques années et que l’on n’a pas vu depuis. «Mais Kevin, pourquoi tu ne pouvais pas être comme Charlie?», lamente-t-elle, en embrassant passionnément une photographie montée de Charlie Perkins. Charles fait du sport, ne boit pas et a la réputation d’être un représentant très fiable de sa race. Ah les dilemmes de la femme noire! Elle emploie la manière forte avec des stéréotypes ou des tropes de sexe et d’hybridité et les traduit par des bustes kitsch, des poupées, des performances et des installations, entre autres. Elle a exposé sa cuisine koori (*Kitch’en Koori*) et des affiches racontant des récits d’évasion de l’oppression urbaine à la *deuxième Triennale d’Asie-Pacifique d’art contemporaine* à Galerie d’art du Queensland à Brisbane de septembre 1996 à janvier 1997.

Cette vignette de télévision filmée dans une cuisine à Melbourne

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regorgeant de l’architecture d’intérieur koori est le correctif critique à la notion romancée de la «femme aborigène». La «femme aborigène» est le fantasme de la mère nourricière des paroles de rock reggae koori qui a acquis une célébrité instantanée mais limitée à la sous-culture lors du lancement de la chanson du même nom par le groupe No Fixed Address. Elle personnifiait pour les hommes aborigènes plutôt que pour les femmes, la nostalgie aborigène urbaine pour le traditionalisme fantaisiste d’une société aborigène disparue, traditionalisme bien aimé aussi de l’imagination libérale intellectuelle blanche mais pour des raisons très différentes. Il est tout à fait impossible de croire à cette apparition après avoir regardé l’interprétation de Mme Deacon. Elle démolit les possibilités utopiques, mais pas vraiment celles de l’imagination libérale: plutôt celles de la mentalité koori.

L’exposition de Destiny à la galerie Gabrielle Pizzi au cours du Festival de la Mode à Melbourne en 1997 a encore visé la représentation masculine aborigène de la «femme aborigène». Elle a donné le titre de «No Fixed Dress» à l’exposition, bouleversant encore les images de sexe incroyablement traditionalistes inventés par des jeunes hommes aborigènes poussés par la testostérone et utilisant les gémissments des guitares pour combler les lacunes émotionnelles dans leurs souvenirs culturels effacés par le colonialisme.

«D’habitude je m’habille comme quelqu’un qui promène les lévriers», a-t-elle dit à Virginia Fraser, qui a écrit l’essai de catalogue. «Les gens que je connais s’habillent comme des slogans, au fond pour dire aux gens qui nous sommes et ce que nous représentons. Je suis l’antiithèse de la mode; j’ai donc pensé que faire cette exposition serait un défi intéressant pour moi».¹ Fraser décrit les résultats de la manière suivante:

des têtes sur des bâtons (un «clapstick», un serpent taillé en bois et le tube d’un rouleau de papier de fax) s’ébattant dans des habits improvisés à partir de matériels trouvés par terre—une partie du journal du jour, un peu d’emballage à bulles, un reste de ruban de Noël, un sac en toile portant le motif du drapeau aborigène, et le petit neveu de Destiny couché dans une valise doublée de papier journal, sous une couverture de papier journal, entouré de valises imprimées y compris des habits faits à partir de la rubrique des petites annonces

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Dans l’exposition *No Fixed Dress*, «Deux poupées empruntées, dont une a été décapitée il y a quelques années pour une autre image, et l’autre a déjà été cassée par des années d’usure et d’abus (et qui a été aussi décapitée et amputée avant la fin du tournage) portent chacune la tête de l’autre comme accessoires».³ Elles évoquaient une inversion sapphiste des peaux noires et des masques blancs de Frantz Fanon: la compréhension de jusqu’à quel point le colonisateur a besoin du colonisé, surtout dans les relations sexuelles, pour jouer la domination et la soumission dans la vie domestique quotidienne. La «mode» de Destiny portait toutes les traces de la brutalité de ces relations basées sur des rapports de pouvoir non examinés. Deux «petites poupées noires aux traits tirés, faussement habillées en «aborigènes» lorsqu’elles sont arrivées dans une boîte en carton d’une foire d’Adélaïde, ont été rhabillées, recoiffées et redistribuées dans un tableau d’une peinture surréaliste».⁴ Mais n’est-ce pas exactement comme cela, quelquefois, pour nous, les filles noires, quand nous essayons de nous habiller pour être «comme il faut»? Y parvenons-nous jamais?

Mais regardez de plus près. Dans *Me and Virginia’s Doll* (1997) Destiny apparaît comme Frida Kahlo portant une cigarette à la main et assise sur un banc en bois à côté d’une poupée en porcelaine blanche des années 40s. La poupée est plus qu’un accessoire pour une performance; c’est un personnage de psychodrame. Alors qu’est-ce qu’elle essaie de dire, Destiny? Fraser suggère que «la jolie poupée à tête vide et peu critique a un rôle de divertissement domestique et sexuel», et citant le performeur Coco Fusco, qu’elle sert de «divertissement léger mais exotique pour la culture dominante».⁵ Je ne suis pas tout à fait de cet avis. Je perçois les poupées comme étant beaucoup plus essentielles à la réécriture de Destiny d’une subjectivité féminine noire. «Elles doivent paraître comme je le dis», a-t-elle raconté à Fraser. Mais il se peut que Fraser ne se soit pas aperçue de l’ambiguïté: Destiny est l’artiste, formant, moulant, décapitant et disposant ses petits sujets, mais elle est cite aussi d’enfant qui est à l’intérieur», comme disent les psychologues populaires américains. C’est la petite fille qui joue avec son destin en jouant avec ses poupées, imaginant le futur en explorant à travers la maison de poupées tous les signes de

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[Whitey's watching](#) 1994/2004
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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[Being there](#) 1998
light jet print from type C photograph
67 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

[Regal Eagles](#) 1994/2004
light jet print from Polaroid
2 parts, each 100 x 80 cm
Images courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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[Over the fence](#) 2000
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

[Hanging out too](#) 2003
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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[Meloncholy](#) 2000
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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[If I had a hammer](#) 2003
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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[Princess](#) 1994/2003
light jet print from Polaroid
60 x 75 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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[D-coy 2](#) 2004
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm
Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

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[Destiny Deacon with \(from left\): Fred Smith,
Bindi Williams and Ambrose Golden-Brown](#) c. 1974
Photographer: Unknown
Image courtesy of Destiny Deacon

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[Destiny Deacon graduating from
University of Melbourne](#) 1983
Photographer: Unknown
Image courtesy of Destiny Deacon











DOLLED UP
«DOLLED UP»

RICHARD BELL

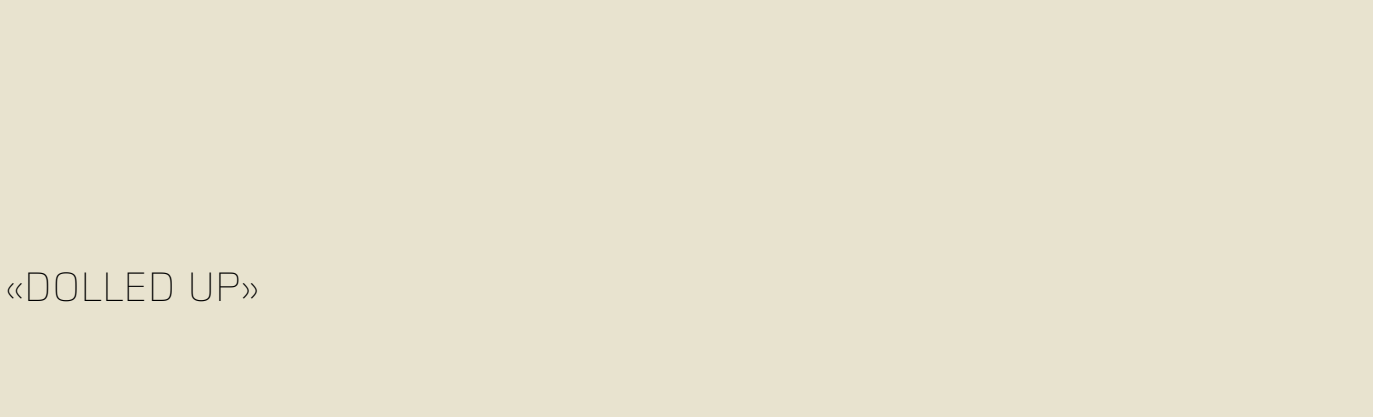
DOLLYWOOD:

DESTINY DEACON'S DOLLIES

«DOLLYWOOD»:

LES POUPÉES DE DESTINY DEACON

HETTI PERKINS

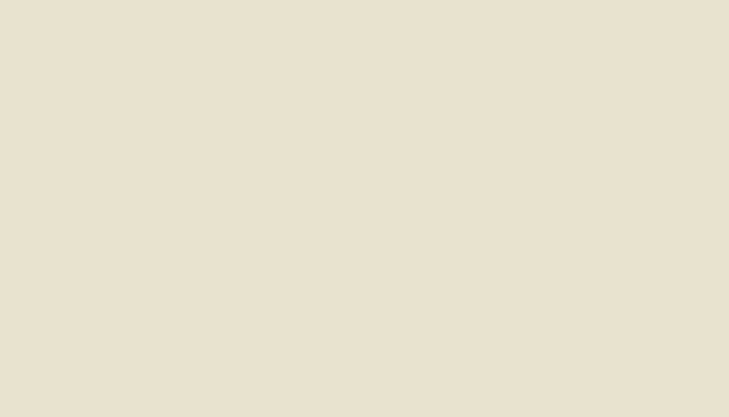


Destiny Deacon... j'ai beaucoup à dire mais peu à écrire sur elle. Destiny Deacon. Hmm. Quel *nom*! Quel nom *génial*! Destiny Deacon... Destiny Deacon! Je parie qu'elle est gentille... relax... vraiment intelligente (dans le style «nana baba cool»)... un sourire aussi large que l'embouchure du port de Sydney... avec beaucoup beaucoup de talent (comme dans le monde du spectacle, comme une comique qui se produit en solo). ET! Super super super canon!!!

Ca c'est *l'image* de Destiny évoqué dans mon esprit la première fois que j'ai entendu son nom. Ca sonne comme quelque chose de magique, de mystique. Vous ne trouvez pas? Il est *évoicateur*! *O-Only you*: spontanément je chante la chanson des Platters. Eh bien, de toute façon, *moi* j'ai été ébloui par l'évocation. Je voulais la rencontrer. Bon sang, je voulais l'épouser. Destiny Deacon—tu me fais flipper, tu me fais chercher, tu m'empêches de déconner... Quand nous nous sommes enfin rencontrés, TOUT ce que j'avais imaginé de Destiny était vrai! Elle est gentille, très intelligente, elle a un grand sourire, elle a beaucoup beaucoup de talent et elle est vraiment belle.

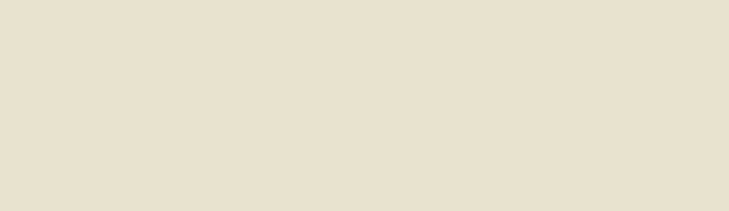
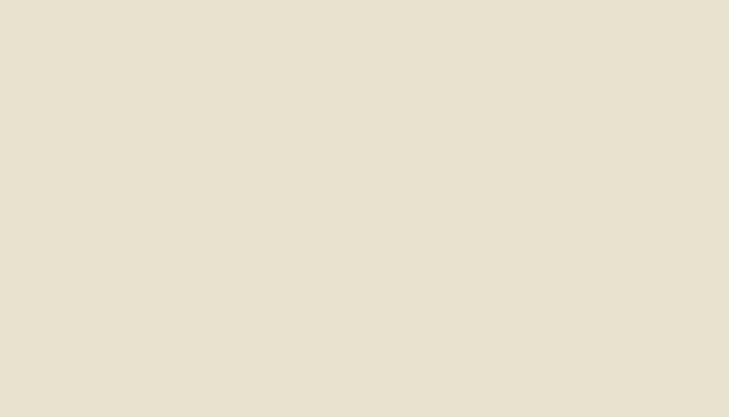
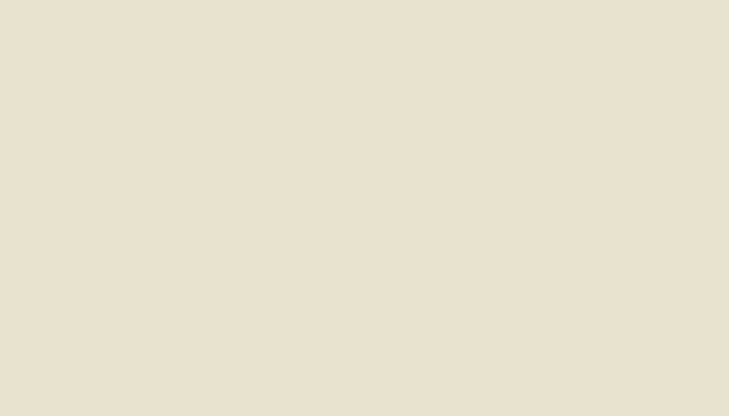
OK. Elle n'est pas toujours relax. Quelquefois elle est anxieuse. Je ne suis pas sûr de *la*/des cause(s) de son anxiété, mais ça ne peut pas être le fait que personne ne l'aime. Ca ne peut pas être le fait qu'elle n'a pas de succès. Ca ne peut pas être parce qu'elle n'est pas belle, à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur. Ca ne peut pas être... ah, je suppose qu'il faut tenir compte du fait que Destiny, la princesse, s'inquiète toujours pour nous, ses sujets... *Moi*, j'essaie de la réconforter et de la consoler et de la rassurer que nous sommes tous des grandes personnes maintenant et que ça va si on est dans le pétrin de temps en temps. Mais comme c'est une grande princesse, Destiny pense toujours à nous. Je suis sûr que sa prévenance l'aide à créer son propre style d'humour qui ressort si vivement de son oeuvre. C'est un humour compliqué et complexe provoquant des émotions comme la joie, la tristesse, la fierté, la honte...

Destiny est tout ça. Après tout, elle était une des «Drôles de Dames». Vous savez. Elle était une des belles femmes noires dont le Dr. Charles Perkins s'est entouré pendant les années 70 et 80. Destiny est en bonne compagnie puisqu'elle est venue à l'art de l'activisme politique et qu'elle a ensuite réalisé des exploits remarquables dans le domaine de l'Art. Je n'ai aucun doute que les occasions fournies à Destiny de rencontrer et de parler avec

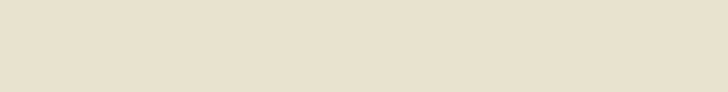


DD. Vas-y ma fille! Tu es la meilleure.

RICHARD BELL EST UN ARTISTE VIVANT À BRISBANE



DOLLED UP



Destiny Deacon... I have lots to say but little to write about her. Destiny Deacon. Hmm. What a *name*! What a *cool* name! Destiny Deacon... Destiny Deacon! I bet she's sweet... laid back... really smart (like in a hippy chick kinda way)... really intelligent (like in a genius artist kinda way)... a smile as wide as the Sydney Heads... really really talented (like in a showbiz, stand-up comedienne kinda way). AND! Really really really good looking!!!

That's the *image* of Destiny that was conjured up in my mind when I first heard her name. It has a magikal, mystikal ring about it. Don't you think? It *conjures*! *O-Only you*, the song by The Platters, I sing involuntarily. Well, anyway, *I* was conjured. I wanted to meet her. Damn, I wanted to marry her. Destiny Deacon—you get me freakin'; you got me seekin'; you stop me wreckin'... When we finally met, EVERYTHING I imagined about Destiny was true! She's sweet, really smart, really intelligent, has a huge smile, really really talented and truly beautiful.

OK. She's not always laid back. She's sometimes anxious. I'm not sure about the cause(s) of her anxiety, but it can't be that nobody loves her. It can't be that she is not successful. It can't be that she's not beautiful, inside and out. It can't be... oh, I suppose we have to take into account that Destiny, the Princess, worries incessantly about, we, her subjects... *I* try to comfort and console her and assure her that we are all grown ups now and it's all right for us to get into trouble occasionally. But, great Princess that she is, Destiny is always thinking of us. I am sure that thoughtfulness helps her in creating her own brand of humour that jumps out at us from her work. A complicated, complex humour that elicits emotions like happy, like sad, like pride, like shame...

Destiny *is* all that. After all, she was one of Charlie's Angels. Ya know. She was one of the beautiful black women that Dr Charles Perkins surrounded himself with during the 1970s and 1980s. Destiny is in elite company in that she came to art from political activism and has gone on to many remarkable achievements in the field of Art. I have no doubt that Destiny's opportunities to meet and speak with many of Black Australia's leading thinkers over an extended period of time has greatly affected her art practice and consequent successes.

DD. You go girl! You rock.

RICHARD BELL IS AN ARTIST BASED IN BRISBANE

«DOLLYWOOD»:

LES POUPÉES DE DESTINY DEACON

Destiny Deacon, 2004

Destiny Deacon est un trésor national, reine de la principauté koori de Brunswick à Melbourne et une des «Drôles de Dames» originales! Le «théâtre de l’absurde»¹ de Destiny dans le style de Mommie Dearest, dont les vedettes sont sa collection de poupées noires. α été exposé sous différentes formes et dans des forums à travers le monde, depuis ses débuts à Sydney à la Coopérative d’artistes aborigènes de Boomalli (1991) à la Biennale de Johannesburg (1995) et Documenta 11 (2002).

D-coy, 2004

Le titre d’une exposition récente, D-coy, constituait une description très appropriée du modus operandi artistique de Destiny: la manipulation brillante et machiavélique de stéréotypes racistes tempérée par son humour noir et son esthétisme inné.² D-coy a été présenté avec Nice Coloured Dolls, exposition par Gary Lee et Maurice O’Riordan, artistes de Larrakia, qui faisait référence au film tranchant et satirique de Tracey Moffatt, Nice Coloured Girls, où la situation de l’exploitation sexuelle de femmes indigènes est renversée. C’est un thème que Destiny et ses confrères et consoeurs, y compris Moffatt, Lee, Brenda L Croft, Fiona Foley, Michael Riley et Rea ont exploré à travers leurs carrières.

D-coy, 2004

Le thème de politique sexuelle α suscité l’attention à un niveau national de manière sensationnelle par les actions du prop-agandiste et artiste Richard Bell à l’ouverture du prix national de Telstra pour l’art aborigène et du détroit de Torres en 2003. Il est apparu vêtu d’un t-shirt où s’affichaient les mots: «les filles blanches ne savent pas baiser»; cette année il α enchaîné avec une oeuvre qu’il α soumise pour le prix artistique et qui encore une fois retourne la situation au dépens de l’exploitation des noirs, cette fois, des hommes.

D-coy, 2004

Cependant, les objets de désir de Destiny sont des poupées, prises entre le double sens de la poupée et de l’idole. Ces poupées ne sont pas de jolies jouets frivoles; leur marionnettiste artiste leur α donné une intention. Elles sont des objets d’esprit et de fantaisie, des reliques de kitsch aborigène, et elles dégagent une familiarité qui nous implique. Ce sont des pierres de touche de nos rêves et aspirations d’enfance. Entre les mains de Destiny, ce ne sont pas seulement les laissées pour compte de nos fantaisies d’enfance. Pour beaucoup de personnes, elles représentent un antidote aux outils précoces d’apprentissage

D-coy, 2004

de stéréotypes; les petites poupées aux cheveux blonds et aux yeux bleus qui se transforment en top model Barbie, offrant ainsi aux enfants noirs un idéal irréalisable et en fin de compte peu enviable.

D-coy, 2004

Le regard innocent de ces poupées est construit dans un système complexe de politiques frontalières, parmi la trame de conquêtes sexuelles, culturelles et territoriales.

D-coy, 2004

HETTI PERKINS CONSERVATEUR D’ART ABORIGÈNE ET DU DÉTROIT DE TORRES, GALERIE D’ART DE LA NOUVELLE GALLES DU SUD À SYDNEY

^[1] Extrait du discours prononcé au vernissage de Nice Coloured Dolls (organisé par Gary Lee et Maurice O’Riordan) et de D-coy (Destiny Deacon et Virginia Fraser), Centre d’art contemporain du Territoire du Nord 24HR à Darwin, samedi 14 août 2004

^[2] Destiny Deacon et Virginia Fraser, D-coy, Centre d’art contemporain du Territoire du Nord 24HR à Darwin, du 14 août au 11 septembre 2004

DOLLYWOOD

DESTINY DEACON’S DOLLIES

D-coy, 2004

Destiny Deacon is a national treasure, queen of Melbourne’s Koori principality of Brunswick and one of the original ‘Charlie’s Angels’! Destiny’s Mommie Dearest-like ‘theatre of the absurd’¹, starring her collection of blak dollies, has been exhibited in various guises and forums throughout the world; from her Sydney debut at Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative (1991) to the Johannesburg Biennale (1995) and Documenta 11 (2002).

D-coy, 2004

The title of a recent exhibition, D-coy, was a most apt description of Destiny’s artistic modus operandi: the brilliant, machiavellian manipulation of racist stereotypes, tempered by her blak humour and innate aestheticism.² D-coy was shown with Nice Coloured Dolls, an exhibition by Larrakia artists Gary Lee and Maurice O’Riordan, which referenced Tracey Moffatt’s cuttingly satirical film Nice Coloured Girls; turning the sexual exploitation of Indigenous women on its head. It’s a theme that Destiny and her peers, including Moffatt, Lee, Brenda L Croft, Fiona Foley, Michael Riley and Rea have explored throughout their careers.

D-coy, 2004

More recently the theme of sexual politics was sensationally brought to national attention by propagandist and artist Richard Bell at the opening of the 2003 Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award. His appearance in α T-shirt emblazoned with the words ‘white girls can’t hump’ was followed up with an entry in this year’s Art Award that again turns the tables on blaxploitation—this time, of men.

D-coy, 2004

Destiny’s objects of desire, however, are dolls, caught between the *double entendre* of the doll and the idol. These dolls are not pretty empty-headed playthings; they are invested with the intent of their artist puppet-master, are objects of wit and whimsy, relics of Aboriginal kitsch, and radiate a familiarity that we all engage with: touchstones of our childhood dreams and aspirations. In Destiny’s hands they are not merely the cast-offs of childhood fantasies. For many they represent an antidote to the early learning tools of stereotyping; the blonde-haired, blue-eyed baby dolls that grow into supermodel Barbies, offering black kids an unachievable and, in retrospect, unenviable ideal.

D-coy, 2004

The innocent gaze of these dollies is cast in α complex web of frontier politics, amidst the warp and weft of sexual, cultural and territorial conquests.

D-coy, 2004

HETTI PERKINS, CURATOR, ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART, ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES, SYDNEY

^[1] From the opening speech of Nice Coloured Dolls (curated by Gary Lee and Maurice O’Riordan) and D-coy (Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser), 24HR NT Centre for Contemporary Art, Darwin, Saturday August 14, 2004

^[2] Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser, D-coy, 24HR Art, NT Centre for Contemporary Art, Darwin, August 14–September 11 2004

DESTINY DEACON

FROM CASTE-OFFS, BOOMALLI ABORIGINAL ARTISTS
CO-OPERATIVE AT THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR
PHOTOGRAPHY, SYDNEY 1993

CASTE-OFFS

To let go from artificial division that bring privilege or disabilities.
Something like that.

PHOTOS & KOORIS

It's exciting, opening that fat envelope of moments caught.
Snaps of history. Documents proving: 'I was there!'. Kooris
will spend their last cracker getting photos developed by
the Chemist.

PHOTOGRAPHY?

Photography is white peoples invention. Lots of things seem
really technical, for example, the camera and the darkroom.
Plus it's expensive. Plus I think it's not fair that only white people
with money should be the only ones who can do 'photography'.

I've started taking the sort of pictures I do because I can't paint...
and then I discovered it was a good way of expressing some
feelings that lurk inside. Taking pictures is hard yakka for me.

SUBJECT MATTERS

I call myself a 'shy photographer'. Taking pictures of real people
makes me nervous. They always want me to explain details to
them and start growling if I seem vague. Who can be bothered
when you're trying to think things out for yourself anyway?

I prefer icons/objects of imagery. I want my pictures to tell a
story. Stories of Blak/Koori identity. Racism and Sexism. Plus the
truth as I know it.

CASTE-OFFS

From a bucket of polaroids. Pulled out of the shadows. Biting not
sucking. I hate the new styles of assimilation being packed for
us in the 90s by this 'clever' country. The pictures are a way to
explain those things I hope you already know.

FROM GOOD TASTE: FOOD, CONSUMPTION & PLEASURE,
GUEST EDITOR: HANNAH FINK, ARTLINK, VOLUME 19, NO. 4,
DECEMBER 1999, P.69

RECIPE: 3 BOILED BUNS

A meal to make and eat alone

Put a cup of plain flour with a pinch of salt into a bowl.
Mix in some water until a dough forms.
Knead into 3 even sized balls.
Chuck balls into boiling water, with a drop of oil.
Simmer, with occasional stirs for about 30 minutes.
Drain balls.
Serve hot on plate. Cut in half and spread butter.
Eat and cry your heart out.

NOT MUCH OF A SOUL TO BARE PAS BEAUCOUP DE CHOSES A DEVOILER

INTERVIEW WITH VIRGINIA FRASER

INTERVIEW AVEC VIRGINIA FRASER

NOT MUCH OF A SOUL TO BARE

VIRGINIA FRASER

Where did you first see 'art'?

DESTINY DEACON

Probably in my early teens on a school excursion to the National Gallery of Victoria, which was no big deal, because the school was nearby in South Melbourne. The most exciting thing was getting away, a bus ride with naughty girls. We saw paintings of men shearing sheep, landscapes, portraits, and some pottery and sculpture, I think.

VF—You’ve mentioned an Edward Hopper exhibition at the Art Gallery of South Australia in 1982 as the first to really appeal to you.

DD—It’s clever painting and sad at the same time. I liked his lonely stories.

VF—Which other artists interested you before you got into art yourself?

DD—I was aware of our traditional Indigenous art, crafts and culture, but the contemporary visual art world was like another planet for someone from my background—all white middle-class privilege gone remote.

Urban and regional blaks were making inroads into dance, film, literature, music and theatre in the 1970s, but it wasn’t until the Boomalli Mob in Sydney got rolling in the mid ’80s busting into the contemporary visual arts scene, when I could say ‘Hey I know those two photographers!’—Brenda L Croft and Tracey Moffatt. All of those Boomalli pioneers have been moving and shaking ever since.

VF—What educated you visually and aesthetically as a child?

DD—Picture books, movies and television. The shops, the streets and lanes of Melbourne. But I thought I was more pathetic than aesthetic. My family grew up on the waterfront. Our commission home was the hub of painters and dockers, criminals, unionists, Pacific and West Indian merchant seamen, the African American navy and lots of Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders,

Kanakas and Polynesians, etcetera. There was culture galore. We got the latest overseas comics, magazines, clothes, music and gadgets long before most people did. It gave you an idea of what the future might bring.

But as far as interior design went, growing up we had nothing much. No etchings, paintings or family photographs on the walls. In the early 1970s Mum won two paintings about bushfires in a pub raffle. They went somewhere in the hallway. Eventually, the mantelpiece in the lounge held my younger siblings’ latest sporting trophies.

VF—When did you first see the kind of kitsch that you now sometimes use in your work?

DD—In second-hand shops during the 1970s, after I’d left home. I didn’t see fancy blak ornaments or crockeries growing up. I don’t know anyone who did. We just had the basics, plus plastic bowls, cups and plates.

I mainly got engaged with it because I felt sorry for the objects and wanted to rescue them, bring them up to another level. A lot of it’s derogatory. It’s expensive ‘Australiana’ now. There’s a lot of junk around as well with today’s Australian ‘Aboriginalia’ tourist market knick-knacks and souvenir items being mostly functional and made overseas.

VF—You read a lot now. What did you read as a child?

DD—The Brunswick Children’s Library was in the old Mechanics Institute building. I could walk there on the way home from primary school. But I never joined. I can’t remember why. I had to read the books there and then. I couldn’t stay long, because I had to rush home to help Mum mind the babies. I’d get a whack if I was home late, especially if she was going out. My favourites were Babar the Elephant, Madeleine and a series of books on the world’s major cities with drawings—for example, This is Paris. These books were about the same size and quality as Babar and Madeleine. They were deep compared to our Victorian state school readers.

VF—Were you always interested in the world around you or, as a child, did you prefer escapism?

DD—The real world was enough escapism for me. Growing up poor in urban Melbourne probably messed up my mind—you create make-believe landscapes out of horrible situations, looking for some reality out of disappointments, and marvels in the images and issues that surround you.

VF—Now you spend a lot of time on the internet, reading and watching webcasts of political events. For instance, you get plenty of fun out of the House of Representatives question time.

DD—It’s required afternoon viewing for me, real Australian nature study, the best soap opera in town—the drama, the dubiousness, the public relations.

VF—Before you decided to turn yourself into a photographer you’d done a lot—two tertiary qualifications, schools and university teaching, staff training in the Commonwealth public service, being one of Charlie Perkins’ ‘Charlie’s Angels’, community radio broadcasting, some video—but nothing obviously pointing to an art career, except perhaps a visual and performative way of relating to the world. What went through your mind when you decided to start showing pictures?

DD—Expert white travellers still take and make the usual stereotypes. It irks me. Half the reason I got into photography was because I was sick of the sameness of their images—kids with snot pouring out of noses, and flies eating the crap out of eyes, empty beer bottles, or our children, naked and wet in watering holes. I’m sure in other situations the photographers would be arrested for paedophilia.

Sometimes these photographers like to bestow a ‘nobility’ on whoever they’re lucky to meet and utilise—Indigenous sport stars, dignified ‘elders’, plus anything documentary that goes with the dirt of fauna and flora. I just gave it a go in 1990 for the Melbourne Fringe Festival.

VF—Though you were brought up to political activism, you’ve said you’d had enough of meetings around 1990—about

the time you started making art. Does making and showing pictures function as a kind of or substitute for political activity?

DD—I want people to get ideas. That’s the best you can hope for.

VF—You’d been taking pictures for a while before including people in them. Do you think the fact that your first models were rocks, dead animals, toys and kitsch objects informed the way you now deal with human models?

DD—Yes, one step at a time has been a learning method. I’ve never been the one out there for ‘live action’ shots. My worst task is always my next task, and I’ve got to rule the roost. It’s no different dealing with inanimate objects or people, except with nature I’m more terrified. Both always end up being difficult or upsetting. But in the end it’s the Polaroid camera that dictates it, and I allow the subject matter—because it’s a human being—to say what photo they think’s better. I’m democratic in that way.

DD—As a photographer, you’re best known for staged pictures, but your first shots, Koori rocks, Gub words (1990), were framed in the landscape, rather than staged from an idea in your mind. Do you distinguish between these two ways of image making?

DD—The biggest difference is that I don’t like taking photos in public areas. I’m scared of the bush, so each picture is a bravery test, but being scared of the bush doesn’t mean I can avoid it. I’ve always been enthralled by the fascinating ‘other’ nature travel stories and film documentaries.

VF—Race and gender are not necessarily as much in the forefront for you as for some viewers of the work; for instance, several writers about the video Forced into images (2001) have focused on the different skin colours of the two subjects, drawing inferences about intent and meaning.

DD—I never saw skin colour as a factor. I was pleased that one was a boy and one was a girl, because it’s good to have a mixture, but they were my nephew and niece, and the most important thing about them was that they were four-year-olds and uncontrollable, and fitted into the idea of being forced into

images. It amazes me that people see them as black and white. That's just part of being Aborigine. We come in different shades. He's black as well. It's not an issue.

VF—In Over the fence two black dolls face each other across the top of a white-painted paling fence. Does a reading emphasising race and gender narrow or expand the meaning of that picture for you?

DD—The dolls were sad and pathetic ones, I felt sorry for them. One of them had a wonderful pink frock that photographed well. But it's also setting up a scenario of escape that's been part of Indigenous life since whenever.

VF—The humour in your work is sometimes pretty bleak, sometimes whimsical, often ironic. It seems to be mixed up in the idea rather than being applied afterwards. How calculated is it?

DD—I've never thought about this before, but that's true. First I labour for an idea, one that usually ends up being sad or pathetic, and then during the agony process of getting the image done, somehow things take a turn towards the ironic. Humour cuts deep. I like to think that there's a laugh and a tear in each picture.

VF—Quite a lot's been written that's helped to form a public picture of you as a personality. Do you think the viewer needs to know about an artist to appreciate the work?

DD—Perhaps getting to know the artist does help to know where they're coming from work-wise. Over the years some very good art writers have given their interpretations and helped explain concepts of me and the works. They seem to build upon certain aspects that interest their theories. But if you got to know me it probably wouldn't help you. I'm not really like the work. People might think I'm sort of aggressive and spooky but I'm not. I don't have much of a soul to bare, as you know.

VIRGINIA FRASER IS AN ARTIST, WRITER AND FILMMAKER BASED IN MELBOURNE. SINCE 1994, SHE HAS BEEN WORKING COLLABORATIVELY WITH DESTINY DEACON.



kitsch a informé la façon dont vous abordez maintenant des sujets humains?

DD—Oui, avancer pas à pas a été un moyen d'apprentissage. Je n'ai jamais été quelqu'un qui voulait des photos «d'action en direct». La pire tâche pour moi est toujours la prochaine tâche, et il faut que je sois celle qui fasse la loi. Il n'y a pas de différence entre travailler avec des objets inanimés ou des personnes, sauf qu'avec la nature je suis plus terrorisée. Dans les deux cas, pour finir c'est toujours difficile ou énervant. Mais à la fin, c'est l'appareil Polaroid qui dicte tout, et parce qu'il s'agit d'un être humain, je laisse le sujet dire quelle photo il/elle trouve meilleure. De ce côté-là, je suis démocratique.

VF—En tant que photographe vous êtes surtout connue pour des images montées, mais vos premières photos, Koori rocks, Gub words (1990), étaient encadrées dans le paysage, plutôt que montées suivant une idée que vous aviez en tête. Faites vous une distinction entre ces deux moyens de faire des images?

DD—La plus grande différence est que je n'aime pas prendre des photos dans des endroits publics. J'ai peur de la brousse, et chaque photo est donc un test de courage, mais le fait d'avoir peur de la brousse ne veut pas dire que je peux l'éviter. J'ai toujours été captivée par les histoires de voyage et par des films documentaires fascinants dans l'«autre» nature.

VF—La race et le sexe ne sont pas forcément pour vous au premier plan de l'oeuvre autant que pour le public; plusieurs de ceux qui ont écrit sur la vidéo Forced into images (2001) par exemple, ont attiré l'attention sur les couleurs de peaux différentes des deux sujets, tirant des conclusions sur l'intention et le sens.

DD—Je n'ai jamais vu la couleur de la peau comme étant un élément. J'étais contente qu'un des sujets était un garçon et l'autre une fille, parce que c'est bien d'avoir un mélange, mais c'était mon neveu et ma nièce, et la chose la plus importante à leur égard était qu'ils avaient quatre ans et qu'ils étaient incontrôlables; ils convenaient bien à l'idée d'être forcés dans des images. Je suis étonnée que les gens les voient comme noirs et blancs.

Cela fait tout simplement partie du fait d'être aborigène. Nous avons des teints différents. Il est noir aussi. Ce n'est pas une question.

VF—Dans Over the fence deux poupées noires sont face-à-face au dessus d'une palissandre peinte en blanc. Est-ce qu'une interprétation soulignant la race ou le sexe rétrécit ou élargit le sens de l'image pour vous?

DD—Les poupées étaient tristes et pathétiques. J'en avais pitié. Une portait une super robe rose qui donnait bien en photo. Mais il s'agit aussi de monter un scénario d'évasion qui fait partie de la vie indigène depuis toujours.

VF—Dans votre oeuvre l'humour est quelquefois assez morne, quelquefois fantaisiste, souvent ironique. Il paraît être imbriqué dans l'idée plutôt qu'appliqué ultérieurement. Dans quelle mesure est-il calculé?

DD—Je n'y ai jamais pensé avant, mais c'est vrai. D'abord je peine pour trouver une idée qui finit d'habitude par être triste ou pathétique, et puis durant le procédé agonisant de la réalisation de l'image, d'une façon ou d'une autre les choses prennent la direction de l'ironie. L'humour tranche profondément. J'aime penser que chaque image fait rire et fait pleurer.

VF—On a beaucoup écrit sur vous, ce qui a aidé à former une image publique de vous en tant que personnalité. Pensez-vous que le public ait besoin d'être informé sur l'artiste pour apprécier l'oeuvre?

DD—Connaître l'artiste aide peut-être à savoir ce qu'il/elle veut exprimer par rapport à ses oeuvres. Au cours des années, de très bons critiques d'art ont donnée leurs interprétations et ont aidé à expliquer des concepts par rapport à moi et mes oeuvres. Ils ont l'air de développer certains aspects qui sont intéressants pour leurs théories. Mais si on devait faire ma connaissance, cela ne servirait probablement à rien. Je ne ressemble pas vraiment à mes oeuvres. Les gens peuvent penser que je suis agressive et sinistre, mais ce n'est pas vrai. Comme vous le savez, je n'ai pas beaucoup de choses à dévoiler.

VIRGINIA FRASER EST ARTISTE, AUTEUR ET RÉALISATEUR DE FILMS. ELLE EST INSTALLÉE À MELBOURNE. DEPUIS 1994, ELLE TRAVAILLE EN COLLABORATION AVEC DESTINY DEACON.



+ PAGE 117

Freefall

from Forced into images 2001

light jet print from Polaroid

77 x 95 cm

Image courtesy of the artists and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 118

Where's Mummy?

from Forced into images 2001

light jet print from Polaroid

95 x 77 cm

Image courtesy of the artists and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 119

Girl alone

from Forced into images 2001

light jet print from Polaroid

95 x 77 cm

Image courtesy of the artists and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 120

Trustee

from Forced into images 2001

light jet print from Polaroid

95 x 77 cm

Image courtesy of the artists and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 121

Waiting for work

from Forced into images 2001

light jet print from Polaroid

95 x 77 cm

Image courtesy of the artists and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 122-123

Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser

Forced into images (still) 2001

Super 8 transferred to DVD

Cast: Inyaka Harding and Elia Shugg

9 minutes, silent

Image courtesy of the artists and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

+ PAGE 124

Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser

Matinee (still/detail) 2003

DVD

Cast: David Captain and Hennie Verlaan

Duration: 7:30 minutes, silent

Image courtesy of the artists and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney











LIST OF WORKS
LIST DES ŒUVRES

BIOGRAPHIES
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All works are by Destiny Deacon unless otherwise specified. All dimensions are image size, height x width.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Koori rocks, Gub words 1990
black & white photographs
9 parts, dimensions variable

Blak lik mi 1991/2003
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 214.5 cm

Brown skin babies on the menu 1991
light jet prints from Polaroid
3 parts, dimensions variable

Dark times with Otis and Alias 1991
laser prints from Polaroid
3 parts, dimensions variable

Tax free kangaroos 1992/2004
light jet prints from black and white photographs
4 parts, dimensions variable

Adoption 1993/2000
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 100 cm

Dreaming in urban areas 1993
laser prints from Polaroid
4 parts, dimensions variable

I seen myself 1993/2003
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 139.5 cm

Welcome to my island 1993/2004
light jet print from Polaroid
4 parts, dimensions variable

Abracadabra 1994/2004
laser prints from Polaroid
3 parts, dimensions variable

Portrait-Eva Johnson, writer 1994/2004
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

Princess 1994/2003
light jet print from Polaroid
60 x 75 cm

Regal eagles 1994/2004
Light jet prints from Polaroid
2 parts, each 100 x 80 cm

They shouted him a grave 1994
laser prints from Polaroid
5 parts, dimensions variable

Whitey's watching 1994/2004
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm

Last laughs 1995/2004
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm

Portrait - Gary Foley, Cosmic Avenger 1995/2004
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

Three wishes 1995/2004
light jet prints from Polaroid
3 parts, dimensions variable

Portrait-Peter Blazey, writer 1996/2004
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

Indigene 1997
bubble jet print from collage
51 x 41cm

Me and Virginia's doll (Me and Carol) 1997/2004
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

Some night muzak 1997/2004
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

An Australian song 1998
laser prints from black and white originals
5 parts, dimensions variable

Being there 1998
light jet print from type C photograph
67 x 100 cm

It won't rub off, baby 1998/2004
light jet prints from Polaroid
6 parts, dimensions variable

Oz Games-Under the spell of the tall poppies 1998/2003
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

Postcards from Mummy 1998
colour laser prints from type C photographs and black and white photographs
multiple parts, dimensions variable

Reserved nature (A), (B), (C), (D) 1998/2004
light jet prints from type C photographs
4 parts, each 67 x 100 cm

No need looking (A) 1999/2004
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

No need looking (B) 1999/2004
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

Some day I'll fly away 1999
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm

House pet 2000/2003
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm

Melancholy 2000
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm

Over the fence 2000
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm

Freefall
from Forced into images 2001
light jet print from Polaroid
77 x 95 cm

Babylove
from Forced into images 2001
light jet print from Polaroid
95 x 77 cm

Where's Mummy?
from Forced into images 2001
light jet print from Polaroid
95 x 77 cm

Girl alone
from Forced into images 2001
light jet print from Polaroid
95 x 77 cm

Happy, happy institution
from Forced into images 2001
light jet print from Polaroid
77 x 95 cm

Trustee
from Forced into images 2001
light jet print
95 x 77 cm

Protecting paradise
from Forced into images 2001
light jet print from Polaroid
95 x 77 cm

Home truths
from Forced into images 2001
light jet print from Polaroid
77 x 95 cm

Waiting for work
from Forced into images 2001
light jet print from Polaroid
95 x 77 cm

Escape
from Forced into images 2001
light jet print from Polaroid
77 x 95 cm

Where's Mickey? 2002
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

Fantales 2003
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm

Hanging out too 2003
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm

If I had a hammer 2003
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

My boomerang did come back 2003
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

D-coy 1 2004
light jet print from Polaroid
80 x 100 cm

D-coy 2 2004
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

Moomba princess in waiting 2004
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

Moomba princeling 2004
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

Portrait-Fiona Hall, artist 2004
light jet print from type C photograph
100 x 67 cm

Portrait-Richard Bell, artist 2004
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

VIDEOS

Destiny Deacon, Lisa Bellear and Tommy Petersen
Home Video 1987
video transferred to DVD
16 minutes, sound

Destiny Deacon and Michael Riley
Welcome to My Koori World 1992
video transferred to DVD
10 minutes, sound
Courtesy of ABC Television

My boomerang did come back 2003
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm

Destiny Deacon (scriptwriter)
The Masters 1995–1996
2 episodes
video transferred to DVD
6 minutes approx., sound
Courtesy of SBS TV,
Indigenous Media Unit

Destiny Deacon and Fiona Hall
How low can you go? 1996
video transferred to DVD
4 minutes, sound
Courtesy of Artrage/ABC Television

Destiny Deacon and Michael Riley
I don't wanna be a bludger 1999
digital beta transferred to DVD
48 minutes, sound
Courtesy of the artists, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney and Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, Sydney

Destiny Deacon and Erin Hefferon
No place like home 1999
video transferred to DVD
3:20 minutes, sound

Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser
Forced into images 2001
Super 8 transferred to digital video
9 minutes, silent

Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser
Matinee 2003
DVD
7:30 minutes, silent

Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser
Crawl 2004
digital video
conyinuous loop, silent

Let's look at Moomba 2004
Editor: Virginia Fraser
DVD
5:19 minutes., silent

Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser
Move baby move 2004
DVD
continuous loop, silent

Over d-fence 2004
Editor: Virginia Fraser
DVD
9 minutes, sound

MIXED MEDIA WORKS

My living room, Brunswick 3056 1996/2004
found objects, photographs, video, carpet, household furniture
dimensions variable

Teatowels 2003–2004
screen prints on linen and cotton
multiple parts, dimensions variable

Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser
Camouflage cage 2004
soft toys, fabric and consumer goods
dimensions variable

White Australia's Aboriginal artefacts 2004
found objects
dimensions variable

All works are courtesy of the artist/s and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney unless otherwise specified

DESTINY DEACON

BIOGRAPHY / BIOGRAPHIE

DESTINY DEACON

b.1957 in Maryborough, Queensland of KuKu (Far-North Queensland) and Erub/Mer (Torres Strait) peoples. Lives and works in Melbourne. Artist/photographer, plus performer, video-maker, writer and broadcaster (since 1987, [Not Another Koori Show](#), 3CR). Bachelor of Arts (politics) 1979, University of Melbourne. Diploma of Education 1981, La Trobe University.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2004** [d-coy](#), 24hr Art, Darwin (with [d-coy](#) video and installation in collaboration with Virginia Fraser)
[Destiny Deacon/Lisl Ponger](#), Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, Austria
- 2003** [d-tour](#), Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
[Destiny Deacon](#), Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan, Italy
[Postcards from Mummy](#), Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
- 2001** [Forced into Images](#), Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney (with [Forced into Images](#) video in collaboration with Virginia Fraser)
- 2000** [Groundup](#), Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne
- 1998** [Postcards from Mummy](#) (concurrent with Brenda L Croff's [In My Father's House](#)), Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, and touring nationally
[It Won't Rub Off, Baby](#), Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne
- 1997** [No Fixed Dress](#), Melbourne International Fashion Festival, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne
[Inya Dreams](#), Festival of the Dreaming, Olympic Arts Festival, with children from Redfern Public School, Performance Space, Sydney
- 1996** [Beauty's Back on Duty](#), Hogarth Galleries, Sydney
- 1995** [Welcome to Never-Never](#), Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne
[Destiny Deacon](#), Rebecca Hossack Gallery, London, UK
- 1994** [My Boomerang Won't Come Back](#), Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide; Artspace, Auckland, New Zealand; CSA Gallery, Christchurch, New Zealand
[Smiling Dangerously](#), Hogarth Galleries, Sydney
- 1993** [Caste Offs](#) (concurrent with show by Brenda L Croff), Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2004** [Blak Insights](#), Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
[I thought I knew but I was wrong: new video art from Australia](#), Australian Centre for the Moving Image/Asialink touring exhibition to Bangkok, Singapore, and Seoul
[Blackspot](#), Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne
[2004: Australian Culture Now](#), National Gallery of Victoria and Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne
[2004 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art](#), Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
[Spirit & Vision: Aboriginal Art](#), Sammlung Essl, Klosterneuburg, Austria
[This is not America](#), Queensland College of Art Gallery, Griffith University, Queensland
[If You Only Knew](#), City Gallery, Melbourne
- 2003** [One Square Mile: Brisbane Boundaries](#), Museum of Brisbane, Brisbane
[The Year in Art](#), SH Ervin Gallery, Sydney
[Art Australia: Zeitgenössische Kunst](#), Galerie Seippel, Köln and touring Germany
[Home & Away: Place and identity in recent Australian art](#), Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, and touring nationally
[Traffic: Crossing Currents in Indigenous Photomedia](#), Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney
[This is not America](#), Bei Horst Schuler, Düsseldorf, Germany
[New View: Indigenous Photographic Perspectives](#), Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne, and touring nationally
- 2002-03** [It's hard to be human](#), The Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne
- 2002** [2nd Sight: Australian Photography in the National Gallery of Victoria](#), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
[High Tide: Contemporary Indigenous Photography](#), Linden: St Kilda Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne
[Disturbance/Perturbamento](#), Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan, Italy
[Documenta 11](#), Kassel, Germany
[Exposed!](#) (part of the [Message Sticks](#) program), Sydney Opera House, Sydney
[Screen Life: Videos from Australia](#), Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain; Govett Brewster Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand; Gus Fisher Gallery, University of Auckland, New Zealand; 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
- 2001** [Fallout](#), VCA Gallery, Melbourne ([Transmission](#) in collaboration with Virginia Fraser)
[Yokohama Triennale of Contemporary Art](#), Yokohama, Japan

[Lightness of Being: Contemporary Photographic Art from Australia](#), Monash University Gallery, Melbourne
[What's Love Got To Do With It](#), RMIT Gallery, Melbourne
[Queer Family, Midsumma 2001](#), Span Galleries, Melbourne

- 2000** [L'art dans le monde](#), Paris Musées, Pont Alexandre III, Paris
[Zeitgenössische Fotokunst Aus Australien](#), Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin and touring Germany
[Das Lied von der Erde, Museum Fridericianum](#), Kassel, Germany
[Biennale of Sydney 2000](#), Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
[2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Beyond the Pale—Contemporary Indigenous Art](#), Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
[State of My Country](#), Hogarth Galleries, Sydney
[Some time at the VCA](#), Victorian College of the Arts Gallery, Melbourne
[Talking Together](#), University Gallery, Launceston
- 1999** [ARX5](#), The Exposition Centre, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong, China
[Perspecta 1999: Living Here Now](#), Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney ([I don't wanna be a bludger](#), video collaboration with Michael Riley)
[ARX5](#), Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth
[Signs of Life: Melbourne International Biennial](#), Melbourne
[Beyond Myth: Otre il Mito](#), Private Garden Palazzo Papadopoli, Venice
[Oldies but Goodies](#), Port Phillip Arts Festival, Linden Gallery, Melbourne
[Crossing the Line](#), Gabriel Gallery, Footscray Community Arts Centre, Melbourne (collaboration with Virginia Fraser)
[The Thin Line](#), Midsumma Festival, Platform Space, Spencer Street Station Subway, Melbourne (collaboration with Virginia Fraser)
- 1998** [Luna Park and the Art of Mass Delirium](#), Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Melbourne
[Re-Take: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Photography](#), National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, and touring nationally
[Close Quarters: Art from Australia and New Zealand](#), Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, and touring Australia and New Zealand
[ARX5 Processes](#), Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
[Everyday](#), Glen Eira Gallery, Melbourne
[City Provoked](#), RMIT Gallery, Melbourne
[Verve](#), Sydney Writer's Festival, SH Ervin, Sydney
[Ceremony, Identity and Community](#), Adelaide Arts Festival, Flinders Art Museum, Adelaide
[Facing It](#), Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand

[Blackroots](#), Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival, Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, Sydney

- 1997** [Lawyers, Guns and Money](#), Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide
[A Face in the Crowd](#), National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
- 1996** [We Iri – We Homeborn](#), NAIDOC exhibition (concurrent with shows by Lisa Bellar and Ellen Jose), Linden Gallery, Melbourne
[The Second Asia-Pacific Triennial](#), Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
[Photography is Dead! Long Live Photography!](#), Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
[Abstracts, New Aboriginalities](#), Watershed Media Centre, Bristol, and Cambridge Darkroom and MAC Birmingham, UK
[Inheritance](#), Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney
- 1995** [Mistaken Identities: Africa – the 1st Johannesburg Biennale](#), Museum Africa, Johannesburg
[In the Picture – Creative Australians from the National Library's Portrait Collection](#), National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
[National Women's Art Exhibition](#), Hogarth Galleries, Sydney
- 1994** [Tyerabarrbowaryaou 2](#), The 5th Havana Bienial, Havana, Cuba; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
[Bad Toys](#), Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne
[Life Works: Aboriginal Women Photographed in Action and At Work by Aboriginal Women Photographers](#), Tandanya, Adelaide
[An Eccentric Orbit: Electronic Media Art from Australia](#), Museum of Modern Art, New York
[Urban Focus: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art from the Urban Areas of Australia](#), National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
[Blakness—Blak City Culture!](#), Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne and touring nationally
[Knowing the Sensorium](#), Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
[Descriptions](#), Next Wave Festival, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
[True Colours: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists Raise the Flag](#), Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool; South London Gallery, London; City Gallery, Leicester and touring Australia 1995
[Lookin' Good: Koori Gay and Lesbian Artists](#), Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival, Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, Sydney
- 1993** [Australian Perspecta](#), Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
[Flowers, Herbs, Human Sweat and Animal Breath](#), Long Gallery, Wollongong

[Can't See for Looking: Koori Women Artists Educating](#), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
[Yanada: New Moon](#), Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney

1992 [Kitch'n Koori](#), Melbourne Fringe Festival, Fringe Festival Gallery, Melbourne

1991 [Aboriginal Women's Exhibition](#), Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, and touring nationally
[Kudjieris](#) (with Lisa Bellear and Brenda L Croft), Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, Sydney

1990 [Pitcha Mi Koori](#), Melbourne Fringe Festival, Friends of the Earth Gallery, Melbourne

FILMOGRAPHY

2004 Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser, [Crawl](#), Digital video, continuous loop, sound
 Destiny Deacon, [Over a-fence](#), Editor: Virginia Fraser.
 Cast: Lisa Bellear, Sofii Belling, Janina Harding, John Harding, Inyaka Saunders, Elia Shugg, Digital video, 9 minutes, sound
 Destiny Deacon, [Let's look at Moomba](#), Editor: Virginia Fraser.
 Cast: Sofii Belling, Inyaka Saunders, Elia Shugg, Digital video, 5 minutes approx., silent

2003 Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser, [Matinee](#), Cast: David Captain and Hennie Verlaan. DVD, 7:30 minutes, silent

2001 Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser, [Forced into images](#), Cast: Inyaka Harding and Elia Shugg, Super 8 edited on digital video, 9 minutes, silent

1999 Destiny Deacon and Michael Riley, [I don't wanna be a bludger](#), Cast: Destiny Deacon, Lisa Bellear, Thomas Dale, Virginia Fraser, Kylie Belling, Janina Harding, Michael Riley, Jim Shugg, Daniel King, Michelle Hickey, Sofii Belling, Elia Shugg, Savanna Kruger, Kim Kruger, Digital beta, 48 minutes, sound
 Destiny Deacon and Erin Hefferon, [No place like home](#), Cast: Erin Hefferon, Hi-8 video, 3:20 minutes, sound
 Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser, [Jump](#), Cast: Sofii Belling and Carly Donovan-Hickey, Super 8 edited on video, 7 minutes approx., silent
 Destiny Deacon, [Some time in Hong Kong](#), Hi-8 video, edited on VHS, 20 minutes approx., sound

1998 Destiny Deacon, [Postcards from Mummy](#), Hi-8 video, edited on VHS, 27:43 minutes, sound

1997 Destiny Deacon and children from Redfern Public School, [Inya dreams](#), Video, 10 minutes approx., sound

1996 Destiny Deacon and Fiona Hall, [How low can you go?](#), Artrage, ABC TV, Video, 4 minutes, sound

1995-96 [The Masters](#), ICAM, SBS, Video, 2 episodes, each 3-4 minutes approx., sound

1992 Destiny Deacon and Michael Riley, [Welcome to my Koori world](#), Blackout series, ABC, Video, 5 episodes, each 2 minutes approx., sound

1987 Destiny Deacon, Lisa Bellear and Tommy Petersen, [Home video](#), Video, 16 minutes, sound

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

2004 'Interview: Destiny Deacon in conversation with David Broker', [Photofile](#), No. 72, Spring
 Margo Neale and Timothy Morrell, 'Humour in indigenous Australian photography', [Photofile](#), No. 72, Spring
 Betsey Brennan, 'Generation X-port', [Vogue Living Australia](#), May/June
 Alison Kubler, 'Brisvegas: Little city, big history—One Square Mile: Brisbane Boundaries at the Museum of Brisbane', [Art Monthly](#), No. 169, May
 'Frauenblick', [Salzburger Nachrichten](#), 1 April
 'Szenario: Wächlist—Salzburg', [Der Standard](#), 1 April
 'Destiny Deacon und Lisl Ponger: Künstlerinnen stellen postkoloniale Fragen', OE1.ORFat, WebRadio, http://webwatch.at/Extrane/mailforms/viewurl_unten.asp?K
 'Ausstellung II: Deacon/Ponger', Profil, [Perchtoldsdorf](#), 5 April
 'Sehen Andere Anderes?', [StadtLeben](#), April
 'Doppelausstellung', [Salzburger Nachrichten](#), 9 April
 Ulricke Guggenburger, 'Alles kommt in jeden Fall zu dir zurück', [Salzburger Nachrichten](#), 17 April
 Ernst P Strobl, 'Künstlerhaus: Gemeinschaftsausstellung Lisl Ponger und Destiny Deacon, Ethnologie und Ironie', [SVZ Salzburger Volszeitung](#), 28 April
 Michael Fitzgerald, 'Not Dying, Changing', [TIME](#), 22 March
 Virginia Fraser, 'Making subjectivity', [2004 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Contemporary Photo-Media](#), exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

2003 Belinda Grace Gardiner, 'Berlin: Australien im Blickpunkt', [Kunsteitung](#), No. 86, October

Milovan Farronato, 'Destiny Deacon: Galleria Raffaella Cortese', [Tema Celeste](#) No. 99, September–October
 Anke Brankamp, 'Destiny Deacon', [Art Australia: Zeitgenössische Kunst](#), exhibition catalogue, Seipfel Verlag, Autoren und Künstler, Germany
 Elisa Fulco, 'Destiny Deacon', [Flash Art](#), August–September
 'Destiny Deacon: Galleria Raffaella Cortese', [Milano #21](#), 18 June
 Luigi Camporelli, 'Destiny Deacon, aborigeno che fugge dall'arte tribale', [La Stampa](#), 17 June
 Bertrand Delux, 'Destiny Deacon', [Zero2](#), June
 Hannah Fink, 'Destiny Deacon', [See Here Now: Vizard Foundation Art Collection of the 1990s](#), editors Chris McAuliffe and Sue Harvey, Ian Potter Museum of Art, Thames and Hudson, Melbourne
 Emma Matthews, 'New View: Indigenous Photographic Perspectives', [Artlink](#), Vol. 23 No. 3
 Daniel Palmer, 'Destiny Deacon: 50 Most Collectable Artists', [Australian Art Collector](#), Issue 23, January–March
 Peter Conrad, [At Home in Australia](#), Thames and Hudson, London

2002 [2nd sight Australian Photography in the National Gallery of Victoria](#), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2002
[Documenta 11 Platform 5: Exhibition Venues](#), Hatje Cantz Verlag, Germany
 'Destiny Deacon', [Documenta 11](#), exhibition catalogue, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Germany
 Edward Scheer, 'Destiny Deacon', [Documenta 11 Platform 5: Exhibition Short Guide](#), Hatje Cantz Verlag, Germany
 Manray Hsu, 'In the wake of empire', [Tema Celeste](#), No. 92, July–August
 Brenda L Croft, 'No need looking', [Photofile](#), No. 66, September
 'Australia's 50 most collectable artists', [Australian Art Collector](#), Issue 19, Jan–Mar

2001 Akira Tatehata, 'Destiny Deacon', [Yokohama Triennale of Contemporary Art 2001](#), exhibition catalogue, Yokohama
 Christian Thompson, 'This Ain't Easy Listening', [What's Love Got to Do With It?](#), exhibition catalogue, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne
 Helen McDonald, [Erotic Ambiguities, The Female Nude in Art](#), Routledge & Kegan Paul, London
 Brook Andrew: 'Remembering Jesus', [Artlink](#), Vol. 21 No. 2
 Natalie King, 'Wherever Destiny Takes You', [Australian Style](#), Number 49, March

2000 'Not quite right, but interestingly queer: Virginia Fraser talks with Destiny Deacon' and Portfolio, [Photofile](#), No. 61, December

Virginia Fraser, 'Destiny Deacon', [The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture](#), Eds. Sylvia Kleinart and Margot Neale, Oxford University Press
 Lola Greeno, 'Talking Together', [Talking Together](#), exhibition catalogue, University of Tasmania
 Marcia Langton, 'Destiny Deacon', [Biennale of Sydney 2000](#), exhibition catalogue, Sydney
 Linda Michael, 'Destiny Deacon', [Das Lied Von Der Erde](#), exhibition catalogue, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany
 Nikos Papastergiadis, 'Destiny Deacon', [Beyond the Pale: 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art](#), exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

1999 Virginia Fraser, 'Force-fed: Food in the Art of Destiny Deacon', [Artlink](#), Vol. 19, No. 4
 Clare Williamson, 'Mirrors and Windows', [Art Monthly Australia](#), October
 Destiny Deacon, [ARX5 – Perth](#), exhibition catalogue, July
 Hannah Fink, [Beyond Myth—Oltre Il Mito](#), exhibition catalogue, Venice
 Juliana Engberg, 'Destiny Deacon', [Signs of Life, Melbourne International Biennial 1999](#), exhibition catalogue, City of Melbourne
 Virginia Fraser, 'Destiny's Dollys', [Photo Files: An Australian Photography Reader](#), editor Blair French, Power Publications/Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney

1998 Howard Morphy, [Aboriginal Art](#), Phaidon Press Ltd, London
 Christina Barton, Zara Stanhope, and Clare Williamson, 'Speaking of Strange Bedfellows', [Close Quarters: Contemporary Art from Australia and New Zealand](#), exhibition catalogue, Monash University Gallery/Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne
 Destiny Deacon, [Processes ARX5](#), exhibition catalogue, Singapore Art Museum
 Paula Abood, 'Landscapes of Loss and Memory', [Periphery](#), No. 36, Spring
 Kelly Gellatly, 'Photography and family', [Art Monthly](#), September
 Destiny Deacon, artist's statement, [Postcards from Mummy](#), exhibition catalogue, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney
 Dianne Quillaen, 'Verve and After the Masters', [Art Monthly](#), No. 110, June
 Destiny Deacon, artist's statement, [City Provoked](#), exhibition catalogue, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne
 Benjamin Genocchio, 'Dreaming in Urban Areas: Activism and Audience in Urban Aboriginal Art', [Eyeline](#), No. 35

- Dina Ross, 'Disappearance and death, with humour', [The Age](#), 18 March
- Doreen Mellor, [Ceremony, Identity and Community](#), exhibition catalogue, Flinders Art Museum, South Australia
- Destiny Deacon, 'Soapbox: Cool and Naughty', [Lip](#), March
- 1997** John Harding, [Inva Dreams by Destiny Deacon](#), exhibition catalogue, Performance Space, Sydney, September
- Hetti Perkins, 'Dreams of the city', [The Australian's Review of Books](#), September
- Marcia Langton, 'The Valley of the Dolls: Black humour and the art of Destiny Deacon', [Art and Australia](#), Vol. 35, No. 1
- Phil Murray, [Milk](#) magazine, July–August
- Antonia Carver, 'It's about time: Brenda L Croft and Destiny Deacon', [Make, the magazine of women's art](#), No. 70, June–July
- Stephanie Holt, 'Just for Fun: Images of Luna Park and St Kilda', [Art and Australia](#), Vol. 34, No. 4
- Jane Greville, 'Brenda L Croft and Destiny Deacon', [Creative Camera](#), No. 345, Apr–May
- Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser, 'Fashioned', [No fixed dress](#), exhibition catalogue, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne
- 1996** Clare Williamson, 'Destiny Deacon', [The Second Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art](#), exhibition catalogue, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
- Joan Kerr, 'Colonial Quotations', [Art and Australia](#), Vol. 33, No. 3
- Andrew Dewdney, 'Deliberate acts of cultural translation: Strange Fruit; Welcome to Never Never', [Third Text](#), No. 35, Summer
- Hetti Perkins, [Abstracts: New Aboriginalities](#), exhibition catalogue, SWAPP, United Kingdom
- Destiny Deacon, artist's statement, [Photography is Dead! Long Live Photography!](#), exhibition catalogue, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
- 1995** Destiny Deacon, plates and captions, [Artlink](#), Vol. 15, No. 2–3, Winter–Spring
- Cate Jones, 'In her eyes', [Artlink](#), Vol. 15, No. 1, Autumn
- Destiny Deacon, plates, [Art and Australia](#), Vol. 32, No. 3, Autumn
- Jo Holder, 'Destiny Deacon', [Artlink](#), Vol. 15, No. 4, Summer
- Destiny Deacon, plate and article, [Black & White Magazine](#), February
- Djon Mundine, 'La quinta bienal de la Habana', [Art Asia Pacific](#), Vol. 2, No. 1, January
- 1994** Natalie King, [Bad Toys](#), exhibition catalogue, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne

Cecelia Cmielewski, 'My boomerang won't come back', [Photofile](#), No. 42

Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser, [My boomerang won't come back](#), exhibition catalogue, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide

Catriona Moore, 'Museum Hygiene', [Photofile](#), No. 41

Destiny Deacon, artist's statement, [True Colours: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists raise the flag](#), exhibition catalogue, Boomallii Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, Sydney

- 1993** Virginia Fraser, 'Destiny's Dolls', [Photofile](#), No. 40, November
- Ann Stephen, Hetti Perkins and Avenel Mitchell, 'Repatriation, Race, Representation', [Photofile](#), No. 40, November
- Brenda L Croft, 'Blak lik mi', [Art and Australia](#), Vol. 31, No. 1, Spring
- Catherine De Lorenzo, 'Delayed Exposure: Contemporary Aboriginal Photography', [Art and Australia](#), Vol. 31, No. 1, Spring
- Destiny Deacon, artist's statement, [Flowers, Herbs, Human Sweat & Animal Breath](#), exhibition catalogue, School of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, New South Wales
- Marcia Langton, [Well I heard it on the radio, and I saw it on the television...](#), Australian Film Commission
- Victoria Lynn and Hetti Perkins, [Australian Perspectives 1993](#), exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- Hetti Perkins and Doreen Mellor, [Yamada—New Moon](#), exhibition catalogue, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney

- 1991** Hetti Perkins, [Kudjeris](#), exhibition catalogue, Boomallii Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, Sydney
- Hetti Perkins, [Aboriginal Women's Exhibition](#), exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Destiny Deacon is represented by Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney and Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan.

VIRGINIA FRASER

BIOGRAPHY / BIOGRAPHIE

Virginia Fraser is an artist, writer and filmmaker based in Melbourne. Her involvement with experimental and art film, first as a viewer, writer, curator, and then as a maker (using super-8) began in the late 1970s. Her films from the 1980s include [An Ordinary Day](#) and [What is Success?](#) (both with Dianne Duncombe). Her 1987 16mm scratch animation and soundtrack, [From Scratch](#), toured Europe in 2000, part of a program, [Australian Experimental Films](#), curated by Marcus Bergner.

Originally, Virginia Fraser trained as a journalist on [The Australian](#) newspaper. Subsequently, she received a BA (Media Arts) from Phillip Institute of Technology, a Certificate in Motion Picture Projection from RMIT, and a Master of Fine Arts (by research) from the Victorian College of the Arts. Since the early 1980s she has led parallel existences—one working mainly with words as a journalist, researcher, editor, writer and radio producer, the other working with visual images as an artist, film and video maker, cinema projectionist and film curator.


Since 1994, Fraser has been working collaboratively with Destiny Deacon producing props, sets, costumes and characters for staged photographs, installations and videos. Their jointly produced videos include [Crawl](#) (2004), [Matinee](#) (2003), [Forced into images](#) (2001) and [Jump](#) (1999). [Forced into images](#) has been presented internationally including in [I thought I knew but I was wrong: new video art from Australia](#) touring to Thailand, Singapore and Korea 2004–2005; [Documenta 11](#), Kassel, Germany, 2002; [Screen Life: Videos from Australia](#), Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain, 2002 and the [Yokohama Triennale of Contemporary Art](#), Japan, 2001.

She has participated in numerous collaborative and group exhibitions in Australia and internationally including recently, [a-coy](#) (with Destiny Deacon), [24 Hour Art](#), Darwin, 2004, and [Nothing left to steal](#) (with Corinne Gwyther and Lorraine Austin), [Conical](#), Melbourne in 2003. Her solo installation, [Room 7](#), 2002 altered a room in the Metropole Hotel, Fitzroy with light and objects.


She edited [Screw Loose: Uncalled for Memoirs](#) by Peter Blazey, 1997, provided the interviews for [A Book About Australian Women](#), 1974 with photographs by Carol Jerrems, and has written articles and essays about art for various publications.

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■ MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART ■

140 George St. The Rocks
Sydney, Australia
PO Box R1286
Royal Exchange NSW 1223 Australia
Phone 61 2 9252 4033
Fax 61 2 9252 4361
www.mca.com.au



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Sometimes it seems I take a few steps towards the wall and then a few steps backwards to the door. Here are some of the mob who have helped out: Special thanks to Virginia Fraser, for her collaborations, energy, creativity and wisdom in making the art journey happen. A big thanks to family and friends, who took the time to act and pose for me, without knowing what they were getting themselves into: Richard Bell, Lisa Belleair, Kylie Belling, Sofii Belling, Peter Blazey, Janet Burchill, David Captain, Luke Captain, James Dale, Thomas Dale, Gary Foley, Emily Gillespie, Fiona Hall, Eleanor Harding, Jamina Harding, John Harding, Erin Hefferon, Eva Johnson, Kim Kruger, Savanna Kruger, David Lord, Jennifer McCamley, Rebecca McLean, Sumai McLean, Clinton Nain, Tommy Petersen, Ella Pitt, Michael Riley, Atticus Sam, Inyka Saunders, Elia Shugg, Dale Spender, Hennie Verlaan. Also dearest thanks to curator, Natalie King, for believing in me and thinking we could put a show on. This project has been assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

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