

Tace Stevens (b.1992, Noongar/Spinifex, Australia)

We Were Just Little Boys

2023 - ongoing

This work focuses on the Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Training Home (KBH). Built on the stolen land of the Dunghutti, KBH was established in Kempsey, New South Wales in 1924. The home was a state-run institution that housed hundreds of young Indigenous boys forcibly removed from their families. The forced removal of Indigenous children from their families was a practice sanctioned by government policies. Those Indigenous children who were forcibly removed under these policies are today known as the Stolen Generations. The purpose of these policies, and the KBH, was to assimilate Indigenous children into white society. This was an act of genocide. The KBH existed for over fifty years, closing in 1970.

Today, the survivor-led organisation Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation (KBHAC) is dedicated to improving the wellbeing of the Uncles who once lived in the home. To educate others and confront the abuse that occurred at the home, the Uncles engage in regular truth-telling sessions. The corporation hopes to establish a permanent museum and healing centre on the home's original site to address the violence that took place there.

In 2023, Stevens was commissioned by the Magnum Foundation and World Monuments Fund to document the KBH. During visits with the Uncles, some visiting for the first time since they left, Stevens recorded their stories and reflections, bringing to light the difficult histories which permeate the site. Her contemporary photographs feature alongside original archival materials, including press photographs and news coverage, and the Uncles' written recollections. Stevens illustrates the contrast between the public face of the home and the boys' lived experiences.

2024 marks 100 years' since the founding of the home. Stevens' photographs bring about greater awareness of this moment in Australia's history and the KBHAC, who see their ongoing work as 'unlocking our past to free our future'.

Content Warning - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visitors are advised that this exhibition may contain images, voices and videos of deceased persons.

'Kinchela Aboriginal Boys' Home', The Macleay Argus, 20 August 1943, courtesy of National Library of Australia
'Around the Aborigine Boys' Training School at Kinchela with the Chronicle Camera', The Macleay Chronicle, 2 November 1932, courtesy of the National Library of Australia

Archive photographs by W. Pederson, 1959, courtesy of the National Archives of Australia, NAA: A1200, L31997.

Archive photographs, c.1924-1960s © Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation

Broadcast footage, produced 1960 © The Footage Company / Nine Network Australia

Poem by Uncle Crow © Uncle Crow

Tace Steven's work was supported by the Magnum Foundation, World Monuments Fund and Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation.



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Tace Steven's accommodation is supported by Veriu Hotels.



Marta Bogdanska (b.1978, Poland)

SHIFTERS

2019 - ongoing

Of her work, Bogdańska has said 'I treat archives as a living tissue. Their democratisation and facilitated access to them, including this specific repository of the Internet, give us a chance to interpret and understand the past and ourselves, and to find threads which others have missed (intentionally or by accident). This is the power of the archives – they can be read in multiple ways.'

During her research on animal spies, Bogdańska began to collate a vast collection of images drawn from international archives. This work, which became *SHIFTERS*, illustrates a history of animal and human interactions within Western defence institutions from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s, including military and espionage activities. Bogdańska seeks to present this history through the animals' point of view, shifting away from a human-centred view of history.

This iteration of *SHIFTERS* focuses on two key concepts which Bogdańska explores through her work. Animal vision and understanding is considered through images of animals interacting with technologies, including cameras. This includes photographs produced by animals, specifically images taken by so-called 'pigeon photographers'. The concept, devised by Julius Neubronner in 1907, involved a small, time-delayed camera attached to pigeons. To take photographs, the shutter released intermittently during the pigeon's flight. Neubronner's invention was proposed for use in World War I (1914-1918). The imposition on animals to perform human roles is considered in a curated grouping depicting animals as mascots, often wearing human clothing, or posed to replicate human activities including flying planes or speaking on the telephone.

As part of this project, Bogdańska asks us to consider the future of animal and human relations in accordance with new, emerging and future technologies. These developments will provide a better understanding of animals' capabilities and understandings, which may open up greater avenues for exploitation.

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Omar Victor Diop (b. 1980, Senegal, lives in France and Senegal)

Diaspora

2014- 2015

Project Diaspora features eighteen photographs which restage and transform historical depictions of African people. Through this work, Diop speaks to Africa's relationship with the world and seeks to challenge preconceived notions of historical black figures and the African diaspora.

The series, shown here in full, features staged portraits of Diop embodying African individuals as portrayed throughout art history. This includes a 17th-century statue of the first African saint to be canonised, Saint Bénédicte de Palerme (1524-89), to photographs of the abolitionist Frederick Douglass (1818-95) in the 1850s. Diaspora marks the first time Diop utilised his self and body in his art. He becomes both narrator and character, framed against colourful and patterned backdrops.

In reference to contemporary visions of African identities, who commonly dominate in fields of sport, each portrait includes a prop drawn from soccer, including a whistle, a red card and a ball. In this space, African athletes are praised for their skill, while at the same time facing discrimination. As Diop comments: 'When you look at the way that the African soccer royalty is perceived in Europe, there is a very interesting blend of glory, hero-worship and exclusion. Every so often, you get racist chants or banana skins thrown on the pitch and the whole illusion of integration is shattered in the most brutal way. It's that kind of paradox I am investigating in the work.'

Through this work, Diop asks us to consider our preconceptions of history and how this frames our current thinking, an action which may inspire change. Diop states, 'I wanted to bring these rich historical characters into the current conversation about the African diaspora and contemporary issues around immigration, integration and acceptance.'

Omar Victor Diop's exhibition Diaspora is supported by the Institut Français and the Embassy of France in Australia.



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Stephanie Syjuco (b.1974, Philippines, lives in USA)

Block Out the Sun

2019

Site specific installation, photographs and media work

While on residency in St. Louis, Missouri in 2019, Syjuco researched local archives to source photographic materials relating to the faux Filipino village created for the 1904 World's Fair. At this fair, over one thousand Filipino individuals were exhibited in the living 'human zoo' in St. Louis. Human displays were common in the nineteenth century, and the practice continued into the early twentieth century. The Philippines was then a newly acquired colony of the United States, and the display served to both highlight colonial victories and justify racial hierarchies.

Syjuco noted that the photographs, while historical, perpetuated the racist stereotypes of their time. On this basis, Syjuco sought to physically block the images of Filipino individuals with her hands. Her intervention in the archive questions the viewing and consumption of such images. As Syjuco notes: 'Over a century after the original photos of the Filipino Village were taken, my own body, sitting in the archives, becomes both a temporary shield and a marker of defiance, while at the same time acknowledging that the images still remain.'

Block Out the Sun confronts the framing and omissions that exist in historical and institutional archives which will dictate the research and narratives told in the future. The work also questions the power of photography: a moment captured within a fraction of a second, with the click of a shutter, may have long-lasting impacts on the telling of history.

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Stephanie Syjuco (b.1974, Philippines, lives in USA)

Fragment: Military Officer (from Alexander Schadenberg photographs of the Philippines, circa 1881-1896, National Anthropology Archives, NAA.PhotoLot.15)

2021

Nationalities: Eleven Filipino women in native dress (from the American Counterpoint project, Alexander Alland, Sr., Photoprints, circa 1940, National Museum of American History, Archives Center, NMAH.AC.0204)

2021

Better America (Poverty Lecture, Hillis Better America Lecture Service Lantern Slides, circa 1920s, Division of Cultural History Lantern Slides and Stereographs, National Museum of American History, Archives Center, NMAH.AC.0945)

2022

Professional Rejects (film box from the studio of H.C. Anderson, circa 1970, National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2007.1.30.6)

2022

In this body of work, Syjuco explores the means by which the American empire and culture is preserved and presented through its archives, drawing on her research at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, Washington D.C.

Syjuco printed low-resolution images of objects drawn from the museum's digital catalogue and her own reference photographs. These she enlarged, and printed in parts on standard office paper. She taped together the paper sheets to reconstruct the original image, which she then photographed. Among those objects which she focused on is an image of a badly damaged slide from an American lecture series, and a photograph of a military officer, the missing emulsion obscuring his face. Other works depict the Kodak 'Reject' box of Black photographer Henry Clay Anderson, who documented segregated life in Greenville, South Carolina, and a photograph of Filipino women from Alexander Alland's *American Counterpoint* project which sought to record ethnic and racial groups in America.

Syjuco's photographs reference the constructed nature of archival material, and the 'piecing together' of the archive. Syjuco describes the archive as an 'imperfect carrier of information', referring to its deterioration and omissions, as well as the losses which come from the archive's reproduction across time and place, varying from the object's original context.

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Nikki Lam (b.1988, Hong Kong, lives in Australia)

the unshakable destiny_2101

2021

16mm film transferred to 2K digital with sound

Reprise/Release 迴/捨

2023

Two-channel 4K video with sound

Now, Hong Kong people are to run Hong Kong. That is a promise. And that is the unshakable destiny.'

— Chris Patten, Last Governor of Hong Kong

Hong Kong had been a British colony for over a century, before its sovereignty was handed back to China in 1997. A new Special Administrative Region was formed, alongside a 'One Country, Two Systems' constitutional principle for a minimum of fifty years. As Hongkongers collectively grappled with their civic identity following the end of colonial rule, many have migrated elsewhere to start new lives. The Hong Kong diaspora continues to grow as it reckons with an evolving collective identity.

This installation features two parts of Nikki Lam's modular trilogy *The Unshakable Destiny* (2021 - ongoing). The trilogy considers the personal and political histories of Lam's birth country and reflects on and transforms symbols of memory, protest, and cinema, with specific reference to Asian-Futurism and the films of Hong Kong film director Wong Kar-wai. The project challenges the colonial nostalgia of Hong Kong cinema, and considers memories and events where the personal meets the collective.

In *the unshakeable destiny_2101*, we view a woman anxiously inhabiting a space which recalls the sets of Wong's films. As viewers, the visual memory of Wong's films offers a sense of familiar nostalgia, but this sense of recognition is for a past that does not exist, and instead was constructed for film. The second chapter of the trilogy, *Reprise/Release* is a two-channel film which explores sites of grief and trauma from afar. The film features dream-like sequences, showing fragments of a disjointed narrative in an expansive and speculative world.

Through the trilogy, Lam questions the external forces which shape identity and what happens to the self and body when forced to move. She describes how the films capture 'a journey to its past, returning to a homeland that no longer exists, a memory now reserved only for cinema.' Through her films, Lam speculates a different future for Hong Kong through her personal perspective.

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Nikki Lam (b.1988, Hong Kong, lives in Australia)

the unshakable destiny _2101

2021

Director/Writer/Editor/Producer: Nikki Lam

Cast: Ching Ching Ho

Cinematography: Bonita Carzino

Production Design: Scott Heinrich

Costume Design: Al Chan

Sound Design: Ben Harb

Colourist: Abe Wynen

Camera Assistant: Drew Collins

Lighting/Gaffer: Francis Healy Wood

Art Department: Andrew Huynh, Jaime Powell, Cheralyn Lim, Kelly Chan

This project was commissioned by TarraWarra Museum of Art for Victoria Together and is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria and The SUBSTATION.

Reprise/Release 迴/捨

2023

Two-channel 4K video with sound

Release:

Writer / Director / Editor / Producer: Nikki Lam

Animation (Release): Henry Lai-Pyne

Colourist (Release)): Abe Wynen

Reprise:

Writer / Director / Editor: Nikki Lam

Producers: Nikki Lam, Faith Guoga

Cast: Sasha Leong, Rebekah Lin

Cinematography: Bonita Carzino

Gaffer: Corey Clement

Colourist (Reprise): Sam McCarthy at Crayon

Production Design: Scott Heinrich

Costumes/MUA: Al Chan

Food Styling: Nikki Lam

Sound Design: Ben Harb

Exhibition Mix: Jon Tjhia

Sound Recordist: Josh Peters

Still Photography: Leah Jing McIntosh, Abdul Yusuf

Production Assistants: Xen Nhà, Yasbelle Kerkow, Ari Tampubolon and Matthew Harkins

Stand-in: Kelly Chan

Special thanks: Marnie Badham, Phuong Ngo and Jaime Powell