

**PHOTOGRAPHY MEETS FEMINISM:**  
Australian women photographers 1970s–80s

**Monash Gallery of Art**  
18 October–7 December 2014



**Large  
Print**

This exhibition explores the encounter between photography and feminist politics during the 1970s and into the 1980s.

Both photography and feminism thrived during this period. Feminist politics of the 1970s expanded on its earlier fight for equal rights by illuminating discrimination against women in various contexts. This included addressing domestic violence, inequality in the workplace, sexism in the media, and the economics of parenting. Alongside this expanded critique of patriarchy, feminist politics also celebrated 'sisterhood' by drawing attention to the undervalued achievements of women and by taking pride in distinctly female perspectives on the world.

Photographic practice also expanded its parameters during the 1970s. Together with other art forms such as painting and sculpture, photography became more experimental and irreverent. Most photographic artists rejected the tradition of highbrow fine art photography and invested the medium with personal sentiment and everyday content. The camera also became a useful tool for a generation of artists more interested in social engagement than aesthetic finesse.

Given the vitality of both feminist politics and art

photography during the 1970s, it is not surprising that they entered into a lively exchange that extended into the 1980s. On the one hand, feminists used the highly informative and accessible medium of photography to raise awareness of critical social issues. On the other hand, photographic artists embraced feminist themes as a way of making their practice less esoteric and more engaged with contemporary life. This productive intersection of feminism and photography fostered a range of technical innovations and critical frameworks that made a significant contribution to the direction of visual culture in Australia.

## **Micky ALLAN**

Micky Allan's two series Babies and Old age were shown in Melbourne and Sydney around 1976–77; their reception revealed much about the anxieties that informed photographic criticism and practice at the time, with critics dismissing the works as 'slight' and 'feminine photographs par excellence'. Across a series of exhibitions between 1976 and 1980, Allan challenged many of the established conventions of fine art photography, in both technique and subject. Allan overpainted the black-and-white print with watercolour, gouache and pencil to the extent of both acknowledging the under recognised history of women's photographic work – historically, women were employed by studios to hand-paint or tone photographic prints – and transgressing the smooth surface of photographic prints that was prized by traditional art photographers.

For Allan, overpainting rejected the technical sameness of modern photography and introduced an emotional warmth. Allan's hand-colouring also interrupted the myth of photographic transparency – the notion of the photograph as a 'disinterested' window onto the world. Overpainted, the photograph became subjective, contingent and fallible. The lightness of many of Allan's interventions enhances this sense of fallibility.

**Micky ALLAN**

born Australia 1944

**Baby** 1976

**Baby** 1976

**Baby** 1976

coloured pencil on gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection  
acquired with assistance from the Robert Salzer  
Foundation 2012

MGA 2012.107–109

**Micky ALLAN**

born Australia 1944

**Old age** 1976

**Old age** 1976

from the series Old Age 1976–78

coloured pencil on gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection  
donated by the artist

MGA 2012.110–111

**Micky ALLAN**

born Australia 1944

**Waterskiing – Wiseman’s Ferry, NSW 1980**

from the series Travelogue

watercolour, gouache and coloured pencil on gelatin  
silver print

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

acquired 2012

MGA 2012.106

**Micky ALLAN**

born Australia 1944

**Making camp – Wade’s mistake, NSW 1980**

from the series Travelogue

watercolour and gouache on gelatin silver print

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated through the Australian Government’s Cultural  
Gifts Program by Christine Godden 2012

MGA 2012.068

## **Ruth MADDISON**

These prints are quintessential examples of Maddison's celebration of the ordinary and overlooked aspects of everyday life, especially of women's lives. '41 Blanche Street' is from an archive of pictures that document the house that Maddison lived in between 1985–93. 'Elsie Warren' comes from a series of portraits that celebrate women over the age 60 and reflects Maddison's interest in giving increased visibility to the ageing process; an interest shared with her friends and mentors Micky Allan and Ponch Hawkes.

Exhibition poster courtesy of John Hawkes.

## **Ruth MADDISON**

born Australia 1945

**Elsie Warren** 1982

**41 Blanche Street (home)** 1985

hand-coloured gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection  
acquired 2014

MGA 2014.008–009

## **Julie RRAP**

These two photographs are from a series of nine works titled Persona and shadow. Julie Rrap produced this series after visiting a major survey of contemporary art in Berlin (Zeitgeist, 1982) which only included one woman among the 45 artists participating in the exhibition. Rrap responded to this curatorial sexism with a series of self-portraits in which she mimics stereotypical images of women painted by the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (1863–1944). Each pose refers to a female stereotype employed by Munch: the innocent girl, the mother, the whore, the Madonna, the sister, and so on.

Appropriating the work of other artists is one of the strategies that characterises the work of so-called 'postmodern' artists active during the 1980s. The practice of borrowing, quoting and mimicking famous artworks was employed as a way of questioning notions of authenticity. Feminist artists tended to use appropriation to specifically question the authenticity of male representations of females. In more straightforward terms, Rrap reclaims Munch's clichéd images of women and makes them her own. Rrap ultimately becomes an imposter, stealing her way into these masterpieces of art history, but the remarkable thing about these works is the way that the artist foregrounds the process

of reappropriation itself. The procedure of restaging, collage, overpainting, and rephotographing becomes part of the final image, testifying to a do-it-herself politic.

**Julie RRAP**

born Australia 1950

**Madonna 1984**

**Puberty 1984**

from the series Persona and shadow

silver dye bleach prints, printed 1997

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

acquired 1997

MGA 1997.14–15

## **Janina GREEN**

Janina Green's large hand-coloured photographs explore the notion of a distinctly female sensibility. While the subject matter refers to Green's love of Dutch genre painting, they were also about the idea of home and 'a woman's place'. Because it was cheaper than colour processing, Green photographed each still life on 5 x 4 black-and-white film and coloured the print with inks bought from a woman who painted advertising slides for drive-in theatres. Aside from the economic imperative, Green liked the way hand-colouring converted the otherwise 'austere and formal' black-and-white photograph into something that was 'sensual and emotional'.

**Janina GREEN**

born Germany 1944

arrived Australia 1949

**Still life (pumpkin) 1988**

**Still life (tea cup and tray) 1988**

hand-coloured gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

acquired 1988

MGA 1988.39–40

**Janina GREEN**

born Germany 1944

arrived Australia 1949

**Still life (Kitty's shoes on couch) 1988**

**Still life (Klytie Pate lamp and pearls) 1988**

hand-coloured gelatin silver prints

collection of the artist

## **Robyn STACEY**

Robyn Stacey established a reputation for her hand-coloured prints in the late 1970s and early '80s.

Introduced to the process by Micky Allan, Stacey's early hand-coloured prints examined the life and culture of Australia, especially her native Queensland. Stacey hand-coloured her photographs so as to invest them with personal attributes: 'At the time I was interested in hand colouring [because it was] a technique associated with women's work and craft. This approach seemed a good way to visually re-enforce the personal and intimate quality of the prints.'

## **Robyn STACEY**

born Australia 1952

**Untitled** 1981

**Untitled** 1981

from the series Modified myths 1938–88

hand-coloured gelatin silver prints

collection of the artist

## **Robyn STACEY**

In the late 1980s, Stacey began to hand colour her transparencies rather than the print, thereby incorporating an aspect of reproducibility to the images. In this way the work shifted from the unique print, with its references to nostalgia and the careful rendering of places and times, to something resembling the glossy images found in 1980s' mass media, especially Hollywood cinema.

## **Robyn STACEY**

born Australia 1952

**Jet** 1989

**Ice** 1989

from the series Redline 7000

silver dye bleach prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection  
donated through the Australian Government's Cultural  
Gifts Program 2012  
MGA 2012.038–039

## **Robyn STACEY**

Among Stacey's most important contributions to the feminist tradition of hand colouring photographs are her pictures of Queensland architecture, taken during a road trip to western Queensland made with her mother. These images refer to an heroic subject in Australian culture – the stoicism of the outback and the people who populate it. But Stacey revises these myths, by presenting the images as intimate and personal.

## **Robyn STACEY**

born Australia 1952

### **Queensland out west 1982**

hand-coloured gelatin silver prints

collection of the artist

## **Merryle JOHNSON**

Johnson's photographic feminism sits alongside her contemporaries Micky Allan and Ruth Maddison. In the first instance, it is expressed in the autobiographical nature of her images, which often refer to her family history. And like Allan and Maddison, Johnson also used hand-colouring to reinvigorate documentary photography and to bring a decidedly female perspective to the medium. Johnson's contribution to feminist photography in Australia is also reflected in her use of photographic sequences – multiple images printed on the same sheet. In these works, the single, perfectly realised photographic image of Modernist photography was replaced with a series of images that draw attention to the fragmentary, contingent and inconclusive nature of photography. The serialisation of photographs also engages a more embodied, spatialised and assertive experience than single pictures alone.

**Merryle JOHNSON**

born Australia 1945

**Outside the big top: dwarf and dog 1978–80**

**Outside the big top 1979–80**

**Performers waiting: prancing horse 1979–80**

**The performance: sleeping lion 1979–80**

**The performance: tiger on floor 1979–80**

**The performance: Mrs Ashton and clowns 1979–80**

**The performance: flags 2 1979–80**

from the series Circus

hand-coloured gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated by Merryle Johnson 2014

MGA 2014.045–046; MGA 2014.048; MGA 2014.054;

MGA 2014.052; MGA 2014.060–061

## **Carol JERREMS**

Carol Jerrems was one of a number of Australian women whose work during the 1970s challenged the dominant ideas of what a photographer was and how they worked. She adopted a collaborative approach to making photographs, which often featured friends and associates, and sought a photographic practice that would bring about social change. For Jerrems, as for many of her contemporaries, the photograph was an agent of social change, a means of both bringing people together and creating active and engaged social relationships. As she stated:

I really like people ... I try to reveal something about people, because they are so separate, so isolated; maybe it's a way of bringing people together ... I care about [people], I'd like to help them if I could, through my photographs...

The iconic 'Vale Street' shows Jerrems's friend Catriona Brown standing in front of Mark Lean and Jon Bourke, teenage boys from Heidelberg Technical School where Jerrems was teaching at the time. The photograph was taken at a house in Vale Street, St Kilda. Although it is unclear if Jerrems conceived of this image as a feminist gesture, the subject's assertive, bare-chested pose and Venus symbol led to this photograph being interpreted as a statement of feminist power.

**Carol JERREMS**

Australia 1949–80

**Vale Street** 1975

gelatin silver print

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection  
donated through the Australian Government's Cultural  
Gifts Program by Susan Hesse 2012

MGA 2012.030

**Carol JERREMS**

Australia 1949–80

**Juliet holding 'Vale Street' at Murray Road** 1976

**Juliet 'Girl amongst leaves'** 1976

gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection  
acquired with assistance of the MGA Foundation 2012

MGA 2012.112–113

**Carol JERREMS**

Australia 1949–80

**Lynn Gailey 1976**

gelatin silver print

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection  
donated through the Australian Government's Cultural  
Gifts Program by William Donald Bowness 2013  
MGA 2013.116

## Sue FORD

These prints were made as preparation for Sue Ford's ambitious series The tide recedes, shown as part of Ford's first solo exhibition at the Hawthorn City Art Gallery in 1971. Throughout this body of work, images of naked women and of men and women embracing merge with a marine landscape. The series expresses Ford's concern that people were becoming too removed from nature, and allude to the idea that women share a particular biological and cultural affinity with nature. It also draws on a technique that was central to feminist photographic practice – montage, where two disparate fragments are brought together to produce new and often unexpected meanings. While this reflects Ford's work as a film maker, where montage is often used in storytelling, this strategy also embeds her pictures in the field of activist art. With montage, it is the viewer who ultimately makes sense of a work, as they find and see connections between disparate fragments.

While the prints presented in the 1971 exhibition were ambitious in scale and resolution, Ford preferred prints that were – in her terms – 'rough as guts'. Prints such as those shown here represented an explicit rejection of the maleness of both the camera as a technological instrument and the arcane knowledge of the darkroom.

**Sue FORD**

Australia 1943–2009

The tide recedes 1969–71

gelatin silver prints

collection of the Sue Ford Archive (Melbourne)

## Helen GRACE

Helen Grace was a member of the Sydney-based feminist collective Blatant Image (which also included Sandy Edwards), which formed around the Tin Sheds at Sydney University. The collective was interested in examining and reconfiguring the representation of women in popular culture, and also in developing alternative venues for socially conscious art and film. The photographs displayed here point to the two interconnected preoccupations of Grace's work at this time: the social and cultural construction of motherhood and femininity (and the way that each of these categories are produced by and through consumerism and popular culture), and the documentation of women's labour. An active member of Sydney's labour movement, Grace photographed women working in a range of workplaces (including factories and hospitals) for both the historical record and as promotional aids for activist organisations.

Grace's 'Women seem to adapt to repetitive-type tasks' was widely shown in Sydney and Melbourne, including the exhibition The lovely motherhood show (1981). This work of seven panoramas depicting a string of nappies on a washing line at once points towards the inexorable tediousness of motherhood, and at the same time

attempts to demystify the romantic myths of motherhood found in contemporary advertising and popular culture.

**Helen GRACE**

born Australia 1949

**'Women seem to adapt to repetitive-type tasks' 1978**

gelatin silver prints

collection of the artist

## **Helen GRACE**

born Australia 1949

**Women at work, Newcastle** 1976

from the series Series 1

**Women at work, Newcastle** 1976

from the series Series 2

gelatin silver prints, printed 2014

collection of the artist

Helen Grace's photographs were widely used in posters produced by trade union and women's groups.

During the 1970s and 1980s screen printing was a cheap and effective way to incorporate photographic imagery into posters. Community groups also embraced screen printing because its aesthetic stood in opposition to commercial advertising, and the process lent itself to a do-it-yourself work ethic.

## Ponch HAWKES

Ponch Hawkes's best-known series Our mums and us documents a selection of the photographer's contemporaries standing with their mothers. The photographs were taken at each subject's family home and record generational shifts in personal style and domestic decor. Originally shown at Brummels Gallery of Photography in 1976, which was Hawkes's first solo exhibition, Our mums and us has become one of the most celebrated examples of feminist photography in Australia.

The use of pronouns in the title suggests the series was made by women, of women and for women; it is a defiant and celebratory feminist gesture, which foregrounds women as at once independent and connected to each other. Reflecting on the series, Hawkes explains that 'feminism helped me to understand that my mother was actually a woman too, and not just a mother, and Our mums and us came out of that realisation.'

**Ponch HAWKES**

born Australia 1946

**Ethel and Margot 1976**

**Margaret and Micky 1976**

**Ponch and Ida 1976**

**Margaret and [mum] 1976**

**Lorna and Mary 1976**

**Claire and Margot 1976**

**Bon and Robin 1976**

**Mimi and Dany 1976**

**Helen and Gwen 1976**

**Rosa and Ruth 1976**

**Helen and Joan 1976**

**Sheila and Janie 1976**

from the series Our mums and us

gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection  
donated through the Australian Government's Cultural  
Gifts Program by Ian Bracegirdle 2012

MGA 2012.093–094; MGA 2012.092; MGA 2012.091;  
MGA 2012.102; MGA 202.105; MGA 2012.096; MGA  
2012.100; MGA 2012.099; MGA 2012.095; MGA  
2012.097; MGA 2012.101

## **Sandy EDWARDS**

Sandy Edwards was a member of the Sydney-based feminist collective Blatant Image (active in the early 1980s), which was established to look at the representation of women in the media and create images of women that questioned and challenged prevailing stereotypes. Edwards's 'A narrative with sexual overtones' came out of her work with Blatant Image, and was produced for Virginia Coventry's groundbreaking collaborative project 'A critical distance' (1980–86). This project involved a series of exhibitions and a major publication that examined the relationship of photography, politics and writing in Australia. 'A narrative with sexual overtones' was first shown in an associated exhibition at Artspace, Sydney, and comprises 100 laminated photographic prints presented in a file index box. The prints reproduce images from the media and popular culture organised into a series of eight chapters. The images are placed above pieces of text incorporating three different voices: the italicised text is a male voice; capitalised text represents the parental voice; sentence-case text represents the voice of women. When originally exhibited, viewers were able to flip through the laminated prints.

While 'A narrative with sexual overtones' critically engages with the representation of women in media, it is also autobiographical. Throughout the 1970s, Edwards worked as a freelance photographer. She became aware that the images of women she had consumed in magazines and on film as a teenager had influenced the way she photographed women as an adult. The images found in 'A narrative with sexual overtones' come from magazines collected by Edwards as a teenager, and also screen shots taken from telecasts of Hollywood films. Typical of the approach of members of the Blatant Image collective, Edwards re-cycles these images to produce an active, tactile experience that simultaneously acknowledges the pleasure of looking at images in popular culture, and provides a critical framework for those images.

## **Sandy EDWARDS**

born New Zealand 1948

arrived Australia 1961

### **A narrative with sexual overtones 1983**

100 laminated gelatin silver prints, 14 laminated cards with typography, timber box

collection of the artist

## Virginia COVENTRY

'Miss World televised' is typical of Virginia Coventry's photographic work from this period, which tended to revolve around tightly organised sequences of pictures of the same subject (swimming pools in a Queensland town; the spaces between houses) or an event (a car moving through a carwash; a receding flood).

At the time, Coventry shared a house with Micky Allan. One night, while watching Allan's black-and-white television, she saw footage of the 1974 Miss World pageant on the news. Immediately taken by the way the poor reception distorted the bodies of the contestants, Coventry began to photograph the footage. Once she developed the film, she realised the visual 'disruption' caused by the incongruity of the telecast process and the camera's shutter speed obscured the figures and the beauty of the contestants, without necessarily deriding or critiquing the women themselves. As Coventry has written of the pictures: 'I remember discussions with other women at the time about the way that the distortions offered a protection to the integrity of the actual person in the photo-images. Because of the radical slippage between reportage and reception, the individual is no longer the subject. The title operates to focus attention on Miss World telecast as a quite

abstract construction – as do the black-and-white, grainy, prints.'

**Virginia COVENTRY**

born Australia 1942

**Miss World televised 1974**

gelatin silver prints

collection of the artist

## **Ruth MADDISON**

Dancing and entertainment were features of Ruth Maddison's work throughout the 1980s. These photographs reflected Maddison's own social life, which often revolved around Melbourne's pubs and nightclubs. But there was also a classical documentary function to her photographs of trade union dances and the annual women's dance at St Kilda Town Hall. These pictures reflected social spaces that had been important to activist communities, but which by the mid-1980s were in the process of passing away; as women's groups began to fragment, and as the membership of labour organisations changed. The photographs shown here of the Vehicle Builders' Union Ball at Collingwood Town Hall were part of a commission. Like many photographers in this exhibition (including Helen Grace, Sandy Edwards and Ponch Hawkes), political affiliation and professional practice often came together in commissioned projects for labour and social movements.

**Ruth MADDISON**

born Australia 1945

**Vehicle Builders Union Ball, Collingwood Town Hall,  
Melbourne 1979**

from the series Let's dance

gelatin silver prints, printed 2014 by Asko Ryhahen

collection of the artist

**A book about Australian women 1976**

Carol Jerrems and Virginia Fraser

**Generations: grandmothers, mothers and daughters**  
1988

Diane Bell and Ponch Hawkes

**Woman 1975 1975**

Young Women's Christian Association of Australia

**Lip 1976**

**Lip 1978/79**

Various photographs, posters and newspaper clippings  
from the archive of Ponch Hawkes

## **Christine GODDEN**

As well as presenting subjects that engaged a 'feminine' subject, Godden's photographs critically interrogate many of the claims for a distinctly 'feminine sensibility' being made by and for women artists at this time. The 'Untitled' prints on display here were originally exhibited in 1976 at George Paton Gallery, Melbourne and the Australian Centre for Photography in Sydney. These pictures were originally shown as part of a tightly organised sequence of 44 photographs intended to show 'how women see [and] how women think'. The tightly cropped glimpses of bodies and textures combine tenderness and formal rigour in a way that evokes a sense of visual poetry.

**Christine GODDEN**

born Australia 1947

**Untitled** 1976

gelatin silver print

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection  
donated by Gael Newton in honour of Noel Denton 2013  
MGA 2013.033

**Christine GODDEN**

born Australia 1947

**Untitled** c. 1976

**Untitled** c. 1976

**Untitled** c. 1976

**Untitled** c. 1976

**Untitled** c. 1976

**Untitled** c. 1976

gelatin silver prints

collection of the artist

## **Fiona HALL**

These photographs were taken during the mid-1980s at Jamberoo, New South Wales, when Hall was visiting the photographer and curator Christine Godden.

Two pictures depict the rainforest landscape around Jamberoo; another shows Ray Page, a childhood friend of Hall's who lived in the area. The remaining picture is a portrait of Christine Godden and Don Gazzard in their garden with their dog, Tucker.

## **Fiona HALL**

born Australia 1953

**Untitled** [Ray Page] c. 1980s

**Untitled** [Christine Godden and Don Gazzard] c. 1980s

**Untitled** c. 1980s

**Untitled** c. 1980s

gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection  
donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts  
Program by Christine Godden 2011 MGA 2011.108–111

## **Fiona HALL**

Although she trained as a painter, and has ultimately become a celebrated sculptor, Fiona Hall worked as a photographer in the decade following her graduation from art school in 1975. From the start, Hall's photographic practice was informed by a fascination with decoration and style that was informed by a critical interest in the premise of a 'feminine' sensibility. Her photographs confuse relationships of figure and ground, flattening out the world (whether a landscape or a domestic space) and rendering it as a series of ambiguous, decorative surfaces.

## **Fiona HALL**

born Australia 1953

**Untitled** 1985

**Untitled** 1985

gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

acquired 1985

MGA 1985.32–33

## **Christine GODDEN**

Christine Godden's Family series comprises a large number of images detailing the domestic environment and experience of young families living in the American west. Godden was at this time a student at the San Francisco Art Institute and was very active in feminist networks, including the Advocates for Women organisation, for whom she photographed events and actions. Godden's Family series documents her experience of the counter-cultural families of America's west coast, who provided and celebrated a new model of family life and women's work.

**Christine GODDEN**

born Australia 1947

**Dianna pregnant in the hammock** 1974

from the series Family

gelatin silver print, printed c. 2001

collection of the artist

**Christine GODDEN**

born Australia 1947

**Untitled** c. 1973

from the series Family

gelatin silver print, printed c. 2002

collection of the artist

**Christine GODDEN**

born Australia 1947

**Leigh sewing 1** c. 1973

from the series Family

gelatin silver print

collection of the artist

**Christine GODDEN**

born Australia 1947

**Lynny dancing** 1973

from the series Family

gelatin silver print

collection of the artist

**Christine GODDEN**

born Australia 1947

**Joanie pregnant** 1972

from the series Family

gelatin silver print

collection of the artist

**Christine GODDEN**

born Australia 1947

**Joanie, Raven and doll** c. 1973

from the series Family

gelatin silver print, printed c. 2002

collection of the artist

**Christine GODDEN**

born Australia 1947

**Lynny and Raven laughing** c. 1973

from the series Family

gelatin silver print

collection of the artist

**Christine GODDEN**

born Australia 1947

**Joanie and baby Jade, Larkspur** 1973

from the series Family

gelatin silver print

collection of the artist

**Christine GODDEN**

born Australia 1947

**Joanie, Lynny and baby** c. 1973

from the series Family

gelatin silver print, printed c. 2001

collection of the artist

**Christine GODDEN**

born Australia 1947

**Lynny, Raven and baby Jade** c. 1973

from the series Family

gelatin silver print

collection of the artist

## **Pat BRASSINGTON**

Pat Brassington's photographs have often made use of the artist's home and family life as subject matter. The photographs included in this exhibition were taken during the early 1980s and, with their tight cropping and diagonal obliques, suggest that family life is an anxious and ambivalent place. Erotically charged body parts – whether partner's or offspring – are left to hang, like fetish objects drifting through a dream. Brassington is consciously mining the clichés of psychoanalysis, with her focus on shoes, panties and an ominous father figure, but she reworks this symbolism with a comical lightness that is closer to a teen horror film than the analyst's couch.

**Pat BRASSINGTON**

born Australia 1942

**Untitled I–IX** 1980–2002

from the series Untitled

pigment ink-jet prints, printed 2010

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

acquired 2010 MGA 2010.028–029

donated through the Australian Government's Cultural  
Gifts Program by Pat Brassington 2011

MGA 2011.005–011

**Pat BRASSINGTON**

born Australia 1942

**Untitled** 1984

**Untitled** 1984

**Untitled** 1984

from the series 1 + 1 = 3

gelatin silver prints, printed 2010

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

acquired 2010 MGA 2010.030–032

**Ruth MADDISON**

born Australia 1945

**Women's dance, St Kilda Town Hall, Melbourne 1985**

gelatin silver prints, printed 2014 by Asko Ryhahen

collection of the artist

## Anne FERRAN

Anne Ferran's series Scenes of death of nature presents five tableau-like scenes showing the artist's daughter and her friends in classical dress. When they were first exhibited, commentators noted the enigmatic quality of the images, and how they resisted clear meaning, narrative and any attribute of personal style. To many, they represented a significant shift away from documentary photography. This might well be the 'death' to which the titles refer. For the critic Adrian Martin, the pictures appeared to evoke myth, while also being ambivalent about a photograph's capacity to point to or allude to anything outside of itself; in this way, they can be seen to exemplify a certain post-modern approach to photography.

All the same, it is possible to see these important pictures as signposts for another kind of death. The photographs allude to some of the ways that the subject of girl/woman has been produced through visual culture, whether the monumental friezes of classical or Victorian architecture, or Pre-Raphaelite tableaux. In this way, they evoke the ideal of 'femininity', as both a subject and a style. However, they deflect the proposition of the 'feminine' as a source of meaning. Rather than rejoicing in, resisting or critiquing 'femininity' as earlier feminist

photographers might have done, Ferran's pictures remain steadfastly, even 'passively' ambivalent. As the artist wrote at the time, the works reveal 'very little of a personal vision or private sensibility.'

**Anne FERRAN**

born Australia 1949

**Scenes on the death of nature, scene I 1980–86**

**Scenes on the death of nature, scene II 1980–86**

gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

acquired 2000 MGA 2000.59

## Exhibiting artist's biographies

**Micky Allan** (b. Australia 1944) studied Fine Art at the University of Melbourne, and painting at the National Gallery School in the 1960s. Allan began taking photographs in 1974 after joining the loosely formed feminist collective at Melbourne's experimental arts and theatre space the Pram Factory. During this time Allan was part of a vibrant community of feminist artists that included Virginia Coventry, who taught her how to take and print photographs. Allan returned to painting as her primary medium in the early 1980s.

**Pat Brassington** (b. Australia 1942) is a Hobart-based artist who studied printmaking and photography at the Tasmanian School of Art, graduating with a Master of Fine Arts in 1985. Brassington draws on a personal archive of visual material to compose her images. This archive includes both photographic and non-photographic material, which has either been found or produced by Brassington. Her work takes inspiration from surrealist photography, with its recurring interest in fetish objects and uncanny domestic scenes. Brassington typically employs digital collage to manufacture disjointed compositions, and she exhibits her work in elliptical series that suggest dream-like narratives.

**Virginia Coventry** (b. Australia 1942) studied painting at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology during the

early 1960s, before undertaking postgraduate studies at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College, London. While painting and drawing have been constant features of Coventry's practice, she started taking photographs during the mid-1960s and developed a significant reputation for her photo-based work during the 1970s. Her photographic work typically engages with socio-political issues and often incorporates textual elements that give it a discursive form.

**Sandy Edwards** (b. New Zealand 1948 arr. Australia 1961) has been an important figure in Australian photography as both a maker and advocate since the 1970s. Edwards's practice has paid particular attention to women and their relationship with the media of photography and film. Most of her work is documentary in nature but her photographic prints are often presented in sequences that elaborate conceptual points. Edwards has also been a prolific curator of exhibitions promoting the work of contemporary photographers, especially in Sydney.

**Anne Ferran** (b. Australia 1949) is a Sydney-based photographer and academic. She studied humanities and teaching before training in photography at Sydney College of the Arts. She began exhibiting her work in the mid-1980s and has become one of Australia's most critically acclaimed photographers. Ferran's practice is largely concerned with using photography to reclaim forgotten pasts, with a specific interest in the histories of women and children in colonial

Australia. In pursuing this interest, Ferran often develops her projects through archival research and fieldwork.

**Sue Ford** (Australia 1943–2009) studied photography at RMIT and was the first Australian photographer to be given a solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1974. Over the course of her artistic career Ford worked with still photography and moving images, beginning with traditional analogue film and then embracing the possibilities offered by photomedia and digital technologies. In this respect, Ford is a key figure in the history of avant-garde photographic experimentation. Ford's artworks are also remarkable for their critical engagement with contemporary social issues, while also expressing deeply personal perspectives on the world.

**Christine Godden** (b. Australia 1947) has played a significant role in Australian photography as a maker, curator and advocate. After studying in Melbourne, Godden completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the San Francisco Art Institute in 1975 and a Master of Fine Arts at the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, New York in 1980. On her return to Australia, she became director of the Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, and was consequently a prominent spokesperson for Australian photography during the 1980s. Her own photography is couched in a highly personal and poetic form of documentary practice.

**Helen Grace** (b. Australia 1949) is a self-taught artist who began making work as an active member of feminist and labour organisations in Sydney during the mid-1970s. Often straight-forwardly documentary in style, Grace's approach to photography is closely aligned with political consciousness raising. Her work for the labour and women's movements was widely circulated around the time of its production, both in the pages of publications and in posters produced by trade unions and women's groups. Grace's writing on photography and film, history and politics have also made a significant contribution to the critical discussion that surrounds feminist practice in Australia.

**Janina Green** (b. Germany 1944 arr. Australia 1949) studied Fine Arts at Melbourne University and Victoria College before training as a printmaker at RMIT. In the 1980s she taught herself photography and subsequently specialised in this medium. Green held her first solo exhibition of photography in 1986 and has exhibited regularly since then, participating in over 30 group exhibitions and producing over 20 solo shows. Green's photographs are distinguished by their sophisticated and often sensuous surfaces, which testify to her early training in printmaking. In her role as a teacher in the photography department at the Victorian College of the Arts, Green has also played a significant role as a mentor for younger photographers.

**Fiona Hall** (b. Australia 1953) initially trained as a painter, and has ultimately become a celebrated sculptor, but photography was her primary medium in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Hall developed an interest in photography at art school and worked as an assistant to the well-known landscape photographer Fay Godwin while she lived in London between 1977–78. Hall subsequently studied photography at the Visual Studies Workshop in New York during 1982. Hall's photographic practice demonstrates a fascination with decoration and style, which is informed by a critical interest in the premise of a 'feminine' sensibility.

**Ponch Hawkes** (b. Australia 1946) took up photography in 1972 while working as a journalist for the counter-cultural magazines Digger and Rolling Stone. Her early photography was informed by her role as a commentator on alternative social issues, and she has often used her images to engage with contemporary critical debates. During the 1970s Hawkes was part of a loosely formed feminist collective based at Melbourne's experimental arts and theatre space the Pram Factory. Since that time she has continued to work closely with community groups around Australia and remains a key figure in contemporary photographic practice.

**Carol Jerrems** (Australia 1949–80) was born in Melbourne and studied photography at Prahran Technical College under Paul Cox and Athol Shmith between 1967 and 1970. Although she practised as an artist for only a decade,

Jerrems has acquired a celebrated place in the annals of Australian photography. Her reputation is based on her compassionate, formally striking pictures, her intimate connection with the people involved in social movements of the day, and her role in the promotion of 'art photography' in this country.

**Merryle Johnson** (b. Australia 1949) graduated from Bendigo College of Advanced Education in 1969 with a major in painting. She took up photography in 1970 and it subsequently became central to her professional life, both as an arts educator and an exhibiting artist. Johnson's approach to photography is informed by her broader training as an artist. This is particularly evident in her use of hand-colouring and sequencing. While the subject matter of her images is largely drawn from everyday life, she employs artistic devices to bring a sense of drama and fantasy to documentary photography.

**Ruth Maddison** (b. Australia 1945) is a self-taught photographer and artist. Maddison began working as a professional photographer in 1976, and she has been regularly exhibiting her work since 1979. Photography has been her primary medium, but in later years her artistic practice has expanded to include moving-image, textiles and sculpture. An interest in personal biography and the celebration of everyday existence informs her artistic practice. She is most well-known for her hand-coloured

photographs of domestic life. In 1996 Maddison relocated from Melbourne to Eden, on the south coast of NSW.

**Julie Rrap** (b. Australia 1950) studied humanities at the University of Queensland (1969–71) before establishing her career as an exhibiting artist in Sydney during the 1980s. Rrap's involvement with performance art and avant-garde politics during the 1970s laid the foundations for her later work in photography, painting, sculpture and video, which is largely concerned with the representation and experience of women's bodies. The photographic objectification of female bodies is a persistent theme in Rrap's work, but her highly expressive self-portraits invest the medium with a subjective intensity that affronts the clinical quality of voyeurism.

**Robyn Stacey** (b. Australia 1952) is a Sydney-based photographer who has been exhibiting since the mid-1980s. During the 1980s Stacey produced staged or 'directorial' photographs that drew on the visual language of cinema and television. Through the 1990s Stacey engaged in further training and study, and experimented extensively with new media including digital photography and lenticular prints. In 2000 Stacey began working with natural history collections in Australia and overseas, using photography to bring the contents of these archives to life. Throughout her career, Stacey has been interested in photography as an expressive medium that can be used to reiterate, remix and reanimate visual information.