

**full  
spectrum**

Gregory Ackland / Joe Felber / Will Nolan

*...rigorous investigation of conceptual  
photography and a continued  
practicing of technique is vital for  
the development of new work.*

**Our thanks:**

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PHOTOGRAPHIC ART

*Full Spectrum* offers audiences a challenging and thoughtful view of photography today by presenting the image as both conceptual and cultural object; deconstructed, layered, distilled, practiced and valued. The artworks presented serve as reflections of each photographer's concerns, explorations and pursuits of our technical craft. We have asked; what does the image mean? What is implied? Does the image remain inert within its frame and/or its file type? What form can the image take? What role does the viewer play in the photograph?

Forming the core of the Photography Department at Adelaide College of the Arts, Ackland, Felber and Nolan believe that rigorous investigation of conceptual photography and continued practicing of technique are vital to the development of new work. Following the position that perception, intent and meaning are inherent in a contemporary photographic practice we would like to add the consideration of modes of viewing as important to the integrity of the image.

Will Nolan's work is forensic in nature, true to technical specificity, intensely singular but always presented in serial form; there is a kind of repetitious obsession for detail drawn out through a purist's methodological approach. His works are slippery things, where beauty in all things is obsessively presented, where scale is exaggerated and where time is stopped – so we might as viewers, wonder and remember the disposable.

Joe Felber, conversely, is lyrical, teasing and inherently Swiss in his approach to image-making. This of course is important, as it is his design sensibility that informs his conceptual deconstructions of the photographic image, and his dry sense of humour that imbue his layered images with a staccato rhythm; at once aesthetically pleasing and conceptually challenging. Disorienting and alluring, the artist plays with temporal and spatial instability suggesting contradiction and endless permutations of the truthfulness of the image recorded by the camera.

Gregory Ackland's images conjure emotional responses to the vastness of nature. They are about the awe and wonder found inside the viewer, the image a trigger for this. Hope is also important in his images, as he intimates through his thoughtful still lives. The image becomes a vehicle, engaged in metaphor and eerie silence. The emptiness of Ackland's pictures suggest an emotional void, the picture is rendered only as ink on paper, or emulsion on celluloid and it is the viewer's interaction with the picture that transforms it; as if the picture is a trap patiently awaiting its prey.

I encourage you to spend time with the pictures in this exhibition, explore the details, rhythms and colour palettes of each artist's work. A consistent thread found in all of the works is one of observance, all of these pictures resonate as evidence of a keen attention to detail and of a studied process of looking and seeing.

Country Arts SA will tour *Full Spectrum* to regional South Australian galleries through 2012-2013 as part of their touring program.

*Gregory Ackland, 2011*

## No-place: home

*“...the camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera.”*

Dorothea Lange, *Photographs of a Lifetime*, 1982, Aperture, New York.

I was unfamiliar with the photography of Gregory Ackland, Coordinator and Lecturer Photography & Media Arts at Adelaide College of the Arts, TafeSA, before he asked me to write this essay. I first met him earlier this year when he let me know about the visit of famous American photographer Gregory Crewdson whose lecture and masterclass in Adelaide Ackland and his friend Edward James dreamed up and engineered through the college. The two friends are also behind a collective called *Undercurrent*, formed in 2007 of nine South Australian photographers who have now shown their work together in Adelaide, Brisbane, Sydney and Launceston. Their purpose is to promote contemporary South Australian photo-media arts practice, the viewing of it, debates around it and indeed “to highlight its strength and diversity”. Clearly a productive response to the dominance of the Eastern states in cultural terms in Australia, the project raises interesting questions.

Is there such a thing as a South Australian art practice? Does such thinking involve new ideas about localism, also seen in the Renew Adelaide movement and expressed in the “think global – act local” slogan, in other words a contemporary world-wide resistance to thinking that elsewhere than where you are is the centre of the universe, and following on from that the realisation that many features of Adelaide are enviable in global terms? Certainly Ackland’s background of cultural entrepreneurialism and his passion for photography as a social act, an artform that people use to speak to each other, both in a particular place and in the world, informs his work with a social conscience and a global perspective.

The work of several photographers came to mind when Ackland showed me images from three of his bodies of work – *Lord of the Flies* 2008, *Lookout!* 2008 and *Slowed Breath* 2011 (only *Slowed Breath* is in *Full Spectrum*).

It is not that Ackland is imitating any of these photographers but that something of their concerns and aesthetic presence is echoed in his work. Cultural memory works like that – when we see one thing we are reminded of something we already know and this remembering enriches and enlarges both our viewing and our ability to exchange ideas. The mnemonic devices of the past were often songs, paintings or buildings. Today they are likely to be photographs or indeed films.

One of the photographers is New Zealander Ann Shelton whose series called *Public Places* comprises images of outdoor sites in New Zealand, America and Australia where things happened, bad things, violent things. Depopulated images of what seem to be extremely ordinary places they possess a sense of threat and foreboding. Shelton’s works were shown in mirror pairs creating a sense of displacement and pointing, in her words, to “a gap between perception and cognition”.

gregory  
ackland

There is something quietly forceful about the banality of evil embedded in these works. Ackland's photos of empty landscapes also seem to possess this underlying sense of threat. The sites he photographed for *Lookout!* and *Lord of the Flies* are recognisably South Australian though not in an iconic or picturesque way. There is a teasing ambiguity to them, they could be almost anywhere but if you know South Australia you will feel they are familiar places. They show typical mingled native and introduced trees and undergrowth, the tangle found in gullies and by the side of the road, places where no-one goes especially to be there but where things happen nevertheless. In the novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding the fragility of civilisation is seen in the regression of a group of British schoolboys to violence. In Ackland's images young men much older than the children in *Lord of the Flies* are lurking in the shadows, whether escaping or threatening it is hard to know. The *Lookout!* series employs terms from landscape painting techniques as titles and shows not the places where a road-sign of a camera tells you to take a photo but the no-places behind or near those publicly approved lookout sites. Through drawing attention to these sites Ackland is asking us to notice what is actually around us, what is real and to wake up and see where we actually are, whether it is amazing, absurd, scary or ordinary.

Ackland's practice has been influenced by the photography of UK-based Jem Southam whose working methodology is to select particular sites in the landscape and then record them repeatedly over many years, observing them closely and documenting their history, changes and the mnemonic forces that inhere in them. Actually Southam says that the sites choose him. Ackland's work also reflects the influence of German photographer Axel Hütte whose precise and lucid images of landscapes emphasise an objective approach, learned from the work of Bernd and Hilla Becher, but at the same time appear to be redolent with emotion. Maybe the emotion is not in the photographs but in us the viewers, maybe it is impossible to remove associations from photographs of landscape, maybe our feelings about it will always colour our viewing.

## *For his series *Slowed Breath* Ackland travelled to the Victorian Alps over two winters to select and photograph particular sites.*

For his series *Slowed Breath* Ackland travelled to the Victorian Alps over two winters to select and photograph particular sites. These are places that are blank but suggestive, where the strangeness of snow engenders a sense of the vast sublime which is at times undercut by evidence of human presence like rubbish, a telegraph pole, a fence, an apparently purposeless post. The work of Australian photographer Anne Ferran also comes to mind when looking at Ackland's landscapes, in particular her series *Lost to Worlds* that concentrated on spaces of incarceration and was made in response to two convict sites in Tasmania, the former Female Factories at Ross and at South Hobart. Her images centred on the invisibility of this history in large-scale black and white photographs of the earth in these places as it appears today, its grassy surface empty but for a few depressions or littered with stones. The blankness and the muteness of the women's history is given the faintest presence and suggestion of form in these images of almost no-thing, no-place. *Slowed Breath* similarly suggests a haunting by lives that have passed through these places.



*Slowed Breath – The Disrupt*  
Gregory Ackland, 2011  
Archival inkjet print, 67cm x 100cm





*Slowed Breath – Vacuum*  
Gregory Ackland, 2011  
Archival inkjet print, 67cm x 100cm

*Slowed Breath – Snowblind*  
Gregory Ackland, 2011  
Archival inkjet print, 67cm x 100cm





*Slowed Breath – The Brightening*  
Gregory Ackland, 2011  
Archival inkjet print, 67cm x 100cm



*Slowed Breath – The Solace*  
Gregory Ackland, 2011  
Archival inkjet print, 67cm x 100cm





Heaven, Man and Earth – Arrangement #1  
Gregory Ackland, 2011  
Digital c-print, 75cm x 50cm



Heaven, Man and Earth – Arrangement #2  
Gregory Ackland, 2011  
Digital c-print, 75cm x 50cm

Ackland's newest series *Heaven, Man and Earth* 2011, a title referring to one of the styles of ikebana – the Japanese art of flower arranging, is a thoughtful response to recent disasters in Japan, Victoria, Queensland and New Zealand as well as to being a father, one son is five and another is almost born. Combining flowers, a traditional symbol of mortality and the brief bright beauty of life, with pieces of material wreckage from human lives in ikebana-type arrangements Ackland considers what photography can present in such circumstances, how it can hold out hope and seek to define particular places for reflection. In retreating to the studio he enters a quiet meditative space in which he crafts careful, richly detailed responses to the recent disasters that have made so many people newly aware of the vast forces beyond our control that affect our lives and also of how compassion connects us to the pain of others.

By counterpointing beauty and ruin Ackland sets up a story about endurance and fragility that embraces the spirit of ikebana which is always practiced in silence to create space for contemplating nature and its relationship to human beings. The series is, the artist says, “about finding beauty even in tragedy, about picking yourself up, looking within to find the strength to go on and realising how your inner self is influenced by your actions, and by the actions of those around you”.



*Heaven, Man and Earth – Arrangement #3*  
Gregory Ackland, 2011  
Digital c-print, 75cm x 50cm



*Heaven, Man and Earth – Arrangement #4*  
Gregory Ackland, 2011  
Digital c-print, 75cm x 50cm

Individual elements in the arrangements, set against a deep darkness include in *Arrangement #2* a crane made of broken glass and twisted metal that references the well-known and poignant story of Sadako Sasaki, her premature death and acts of hope, she was exposed to radiation after the bombing of Hiroshima and her goal was to fold 1000 origami cranes to make her wishes come true while a statue in Hiroshima is referenced by the hanging flowers placed above the wrecked crane; in *Arrangement #4* the metal form refers to Mt Fuji, the green pond slime to the tundra of New Zealand and the wattle to Australia; in *Arrangement #5* the green pond slime symbolises seaweed caught in tree branches thus showing the height of the tsunami while the red wire refers to seismic wave forms.

Photographs work by reproducing the real whether staged or actual. Their intensity can create a charged presence that tells a story we can meditate on and in. Ackland's new works ask us to really think about where we are and about the way that our dialogue with others has enduring meaning.

*Stephanie Radok*  
Stephanie Radok is a writer and artist based in Adelaide



(top) *Lord of the Flies – Fire on the Mountain*  
Gregory Ackland, 2008  
Archival inkjet print, 82cm x 95cm

(middle) *Lord of the Flies – A View to a Death*  
Gregory Ackland, 2008  
Archival inkjet print, 82cm x 95cm

(bottom) *Lord of the Flies – Cry of the Hunters*  
Gregory Ackland, 2008  
Archival inkjet print, 82cm x 95cm

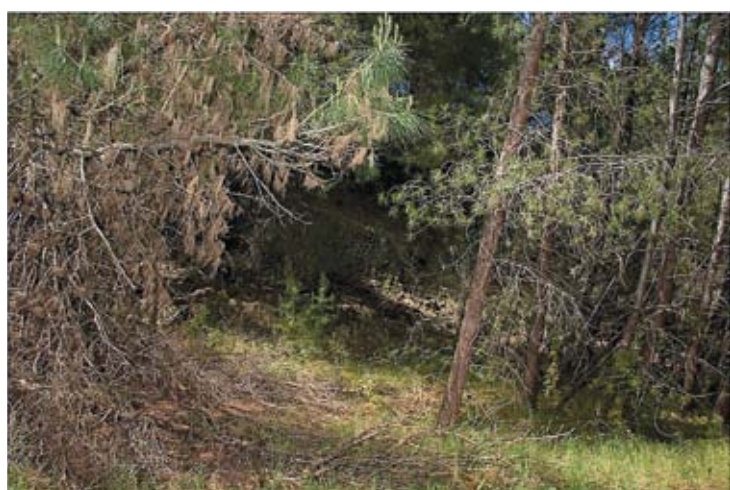


(top) *Lord of the Flies – Gift for the Darkness*  
Gregory Ackland, 2008  
Archival inkjet print, 82cm x 95cm

(bottom) *Lord of the Flies – The Sound of the Shell*  
Gregory Ackland, 2008  
Archival inkjet print, 82cm x 95cm







*Lookout! – Repoussoir*  
Gregory Ackland, 2008  
Archival inkjet print, 45cm x 130cm

*...a significant practice  
over a lifetime spent  
living and working in  
cities and major art  
centres in Europe and  
America.*

joe  
felber

**The fake, the take and the time of the artist**

It is a challenge to contemplate an artist's intentions and to know whether this is even relevant to the experience of encountering works of art. Perhaps then one could simply respond to a work of art from a personal, affective level: from a material and instinctual perspective. A work of art "performs" in certain ways for an audience, in ways that might not be intended despite best efforts to the contrary. In any case, in varying degrees, artists must surrender some control over materials, and over meanings because materials and processes dictate certain terms and audiences bring meanings with them.

Over time, each artist comes to understand something particular about his practice through this interactive mélange. Unless they follow over time, witnessing it repeatedly, audiences experience only a fragment of the processes and nuances of a particular artistic practice. While the work may involve chance, flux and intuition, it is also a set of ongoing tendencies, thought processes, evolving characteristics and refrains. Influential artist and writer from the 1960s, Robert Smithson writes of the time of the artist in this way.

[Significant] art... is not just produced through the spark of a rare, accidental encounter. This would be a dramatization that would not always ring true; that in fact risks a negation of the time of the art practice. Rather art, particularly as understood as a life practice, is also the result of experiments, throws of the dice to see what might be made.<sup>1</sup>

The art of Joe Felber has developed as a significant practice over a lifetime spent living and working in cities and major art centres in Europe and America. Here in Adelaide we see the benefits of this time-honored practice layered with the artist's longstanding concerns.

Referencing film and photographic processes, Felber deploys his photo imagery once removed through print media reproductions. This imagery is combined and hence reactivated through mixed media painting and printmaking. While we are mostly accustomed to the discussion about the veracity of the photographic image, as the true stilled moment, this work instead montages disjunctive moments, as fragments of equal importance as if to reanimate the world with the past re-layered into the present.

Looking back to the nineteenth century when film and photographs emerge, all kinds of viewing devices were in evidence many of which required a "private chamber"... for an enclosed and privatized subject'.<sup>2</sup> Sustaining the tenor of the carnival or fairground "attraction", sites such as the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, London functioned continuously from circa 1812 onwards to house such devices.<sup>3</sup>

French critic Roland Barthes termed "the reality effect", the tendency emerging at this time toward documentary, the "realistic" novel, the diary, news items, museum collections and the various techniques of display 'whose allure was simply their relative efficacy at providing an illusory reproduction or simulation of the real...'<sup>4</sup>

Among other devices in use, the panorama was also a popular way in which to simulate important real events. Panoramas were painted in major European cities throughout the entire nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> The panorama experience positioned the audience on a circular viewing platform surrounded on all sides by a painterly impression of a continuous narrative sequence. The Bourbaki Panorama was painted by Edouard Castres in 1881 and was ten metres high and one hundred and twelve metres in circumference. The painting depicts an episode from the Franco/ Prussian War (1870-1871) in which French soldiers surrendered to the Swiss whilst in retreat from the German army. A circular building houses this restored panorama, making it a contemporary tourist attraction in Lucerne Switzerland, which is, incidentally, Felber's birthplace.

Although the panorama immerses the audience, it also integrates a dark and therefore spatially ambiguous area between the viewing platform and the painting itself. Felber's work co-opts such visual lacunae either in the darkened spaces of his film/video installations or in his selection of disjunctive imagery. The viewing experience is therefore partial or involves only 'glimpses of an ever-elusive whole'.<sup>6</sup> Thus Felber's practice functions as exemplary counterpoint to the panorama's continuous perspective or reality effect, exposing as fake the simulation of a total view. Jonathan Crary summarises the panorama's effects.

Panorama painting... with both its cancellation of the vanishing point... and the reciprocal loss of a localizable point of view, heightened the disparity between a subjective visual field and the possibility of a conceptual and perceptual grasp of an external reality. It simulated a totality that was necessarily beyond the human subject. In one sense it became a degraded simulation of the sublime, available to anyone for the price of a ticket; but, at the same time, perception was transformed into the accumulation of information, of details, of visual fact that finally resisted synthesis into perceptual knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

In this body of work for Full Spectrum, Felber's *Reflex-orama* (2011) functions like a frieze with images end to end inviting the audience to walk by at close range to absorb the detail. Although one may anticipate a narrative sequence, the work is disjointed in content and style '[creating] an image-fabric, forming the horizon of perception' to borrow words from curator and writer Naomi Cass.<sup>8</sup> In this frieze, Felber also adopts the printmaking raster dot to further elide the smooth reading of the individual image or the construction of a sequence.<sup>9</sup> Appropriated and fragmented imagery of crowds, architecture and landscape adjoin as spatial and contextual anomalies but they are also temporally and historically disparate. The effect is reminiscent of patterns of brief thought; "a mind /reflex /camera /shutter" insight, or a film that moves the audience as the mind does from memory to moment, from here and now, to there and then and back.

This temporal and spatial instability is also at work in other installations such as *Stopping Motion* (1996–2011) and *Fast Forward* (1992–2011). Both works are based on the experience of a spinning object observed in an art museum. Felber fragments close-up stop motion images and in the former work combines the image segments with words arranged in the manner of concrete poetry. The texts are excerpts from Ad Reinhardt's famous art statements *25 lines...* that read "space halved, triparted, quartered..." and so on.<sup>10</sup> The work is installed on a plinth perhaps in a similar way to the initial moving object. Unexpectedly, this composite documentary of the force of a spinning object appears printed on the contrastingly soft and yielding surfaces of silk fabric pieces. Both *Stopping Motion* and *Fast Forward* confound the viewer's access to the experience of motion and instead reveal the intermittent stopping moment. Here it is only the artist's say-so that attests to motion, inciting the audiences' imagination, and summoning a virtual space and time. Perhaps it is the "life movements" of the audience that are at issue here as well where the angle of parallax invites a very relative reading of things in space.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Smithson, *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, edited by J. Flan, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1996), 147

<sup>2</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin in Jonathan Crary, 'Géricault, the Panorama and Sites of Reality in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Grey Room*, 9, Autumn 2002, 9, Accessed 8/09/11 [www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/grey/-/9](http://www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/grey/-/9)

<sup>3</sup> Crary, *ibid*, 10

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, 11

<sup>5</sup> Later the panorama was no longer considered the likely future direction of painting, although many prominent painters of the time expected to pursue this format at some stage.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Zurbrugg, '*Lineareading*', *photofile* 43, 1994, 42

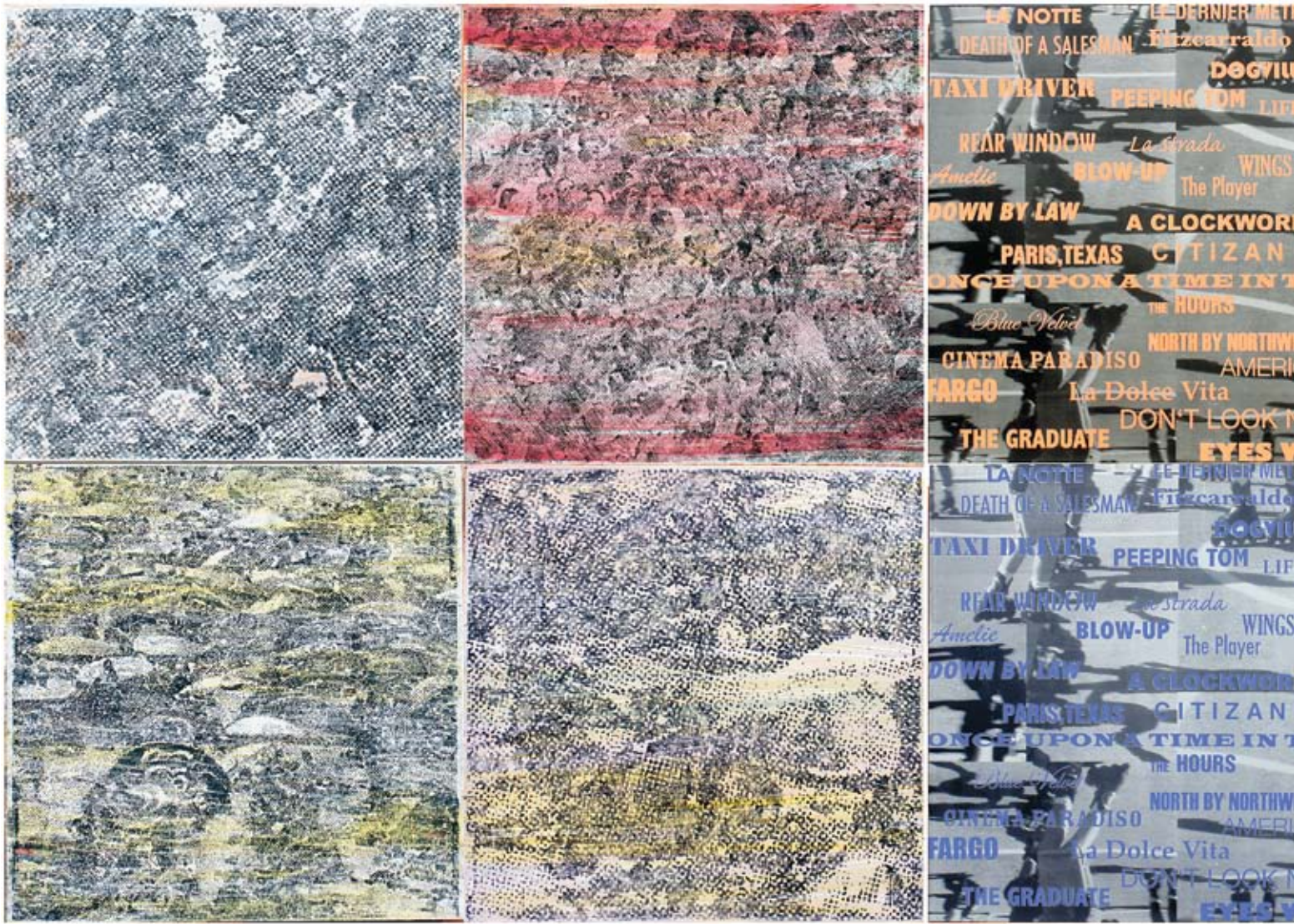
<sup>7</sup> Crary, *ibid*, 22

<sup>8</sup> Naomi Cass, Introduction to Joe Felber, *ASSUME*, Deutscher, Brunswick Street, Melbourne, May-June 1991

<sup>9</sup> Rasters have of course also formed the basis for contemporary graphic computer programs

<sup>10</sup> Barbara Rose, Ed. *Art-as-Art: The Selected Writings of Ad Reinhardt*, (New York: Viking, 1975), 203-207





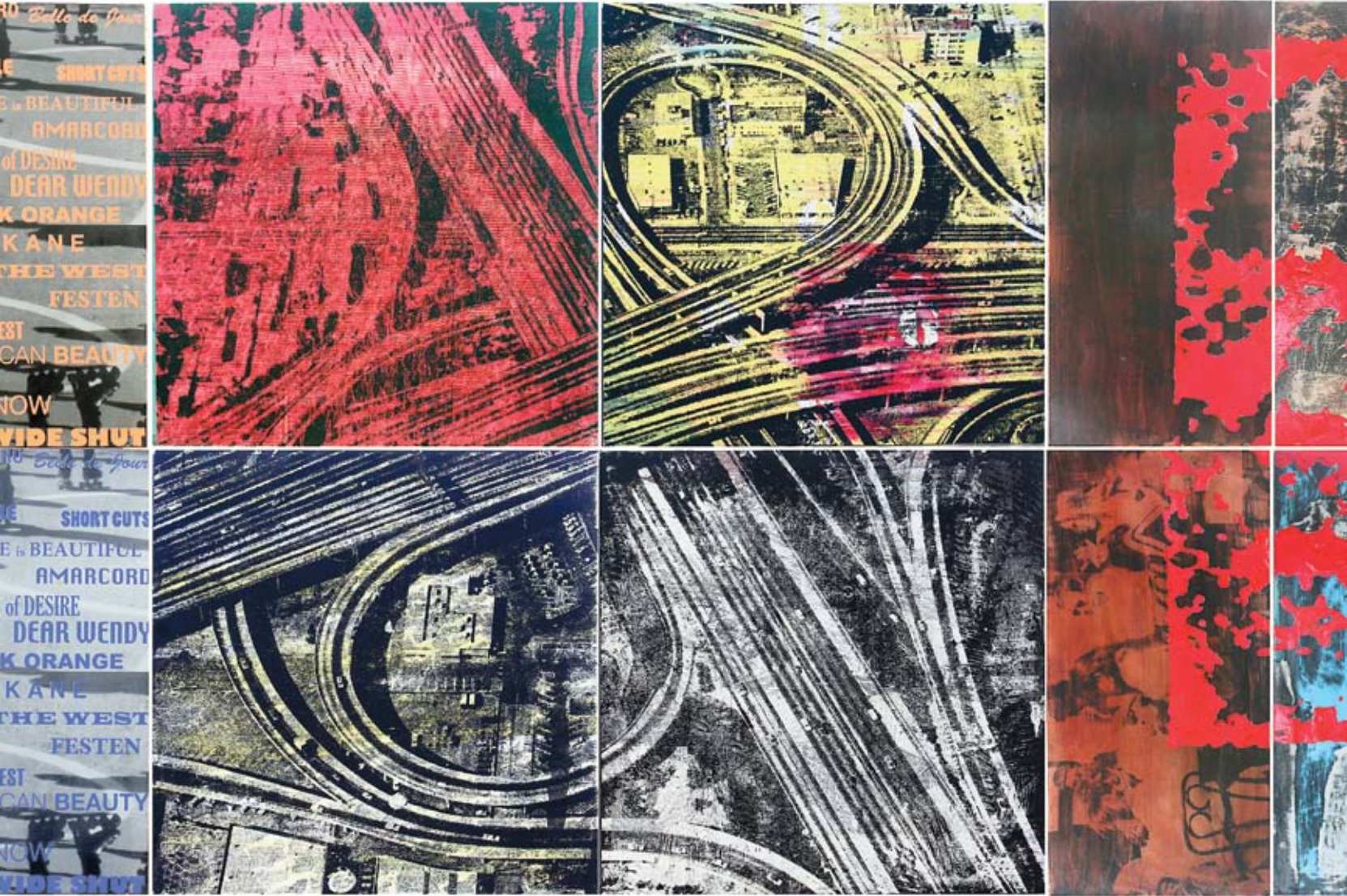
*Reflexorama*  
Joe Felber, 2004 – 2011  
Drawing, graphite on plywood, photographic etching and screen printing on stainless steel, oil painting on plywood and screen-printing, liquid light photography and enamel on copper, B/W photography collage, oil and graphite on plywood, digital photography on metallic paper, 122cm x 720cm

In *Full Spectrum* some work focuses more directly on this notion. *Natural History Museum 20 seconds* (2005–2011) for example morphs photographic images of queuing crowds into painterly streaks. While some people in the images become partial dashes of colour, fluid in the extended moment of human movement, others remain solidly contoured and resolutely still, defined by the 20 second take.

In a large-scale etching on composite metal panels, the recurring tendency to counter-pose text and image fragments draws attention to another key element of Felber's ongoing practice. Titled *Running Catching Steps for 18 Musicians* (1996–2011), it references rhythm and Minimalist music and sound composition.<sup>11</sup> Multiple images of figures move through the picture plane emerging from a dark ground, and text and image reflect and double back on each other to produce a profoundly visual and musical “instrumentation”.

Audio elements, with sampled music and sound composition have also comprised many of Felber's past installations. From the multifaceted *Lineareading* (1994) at Queensland Art Gallery to the most recent work featured in *New New* (2010), the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia's survey of Adelaide contemporary art. The latter installation, *JUMPINJERKINFLESH* (2010) works video footage of the artist's frenetic on-the-spot movement and equally frenetic and varied sound samples against the slow ponderous rhythm of multiple swinging pendulums. The pendulums appear to spot light the darkened floor in search of potential ground. Within his simple repetitive movements, and the timing of other elements that surround him, this desperate, solitary figure seems to contract into the ridiculous and the futile in the time of his life.





Joe Felber's *Full Spectrum* installations involve his artistic audience in an experience of nomadicism around which meanings constellate. We find his work meaningful and moving in the extended and repeated contradictory gesture. Its significance emerges from between disparate imagery, in the modulations of sound and rhythm, in the sense of proximity and distance and the ever-roving processes of open artistic exploration over time and space and over time... again differently.<sup>12</sup>

Julie Henderson, September 2011

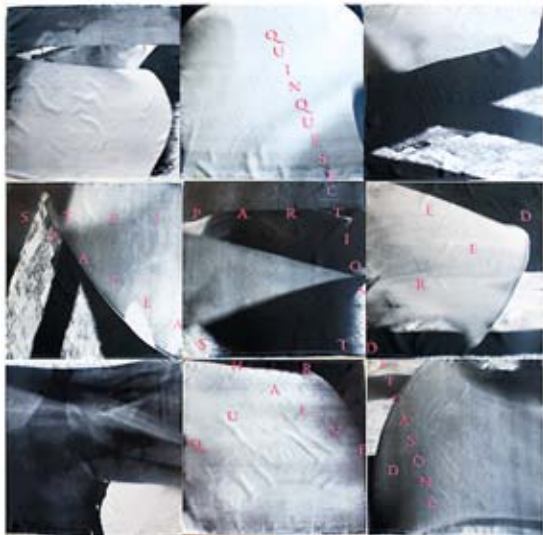
<sup>11</sup>This is evident in the partial appropriation of Steve Reich's title *Music for 18 Musicians* (1974-1976)

<sup>12</sup>Bernice Murphy wrote:

The effect is therefore not of a tightly worked series or linear progression within the works... but of a kind of constellation with an open network movement of radial relations incorporating contrasting possibilities simultaneously.

Bernice Murphy, Director of the Power Museum, (currently the MCA), Sydney, unpublished essay, 1988





*Stopping Motion* (installation),  
Joe Felber, 1996 – 2011  
Photographic screen print on silk  
fabric, 9 panels (74cm x 74m),  
overall 222cm x 222cm, edition 3



*Hear through the fear*,  
Joe Felber, 2000  
Photographic etching and screen printing on stainless steel, 45cm x 80cm,  
edition 7, exhibited and published at radicalgallery, Zug, Switzerland, 2007  
and Harison Gallery, Sydney 2007 Published in Catalogue radicalgallery, Zug

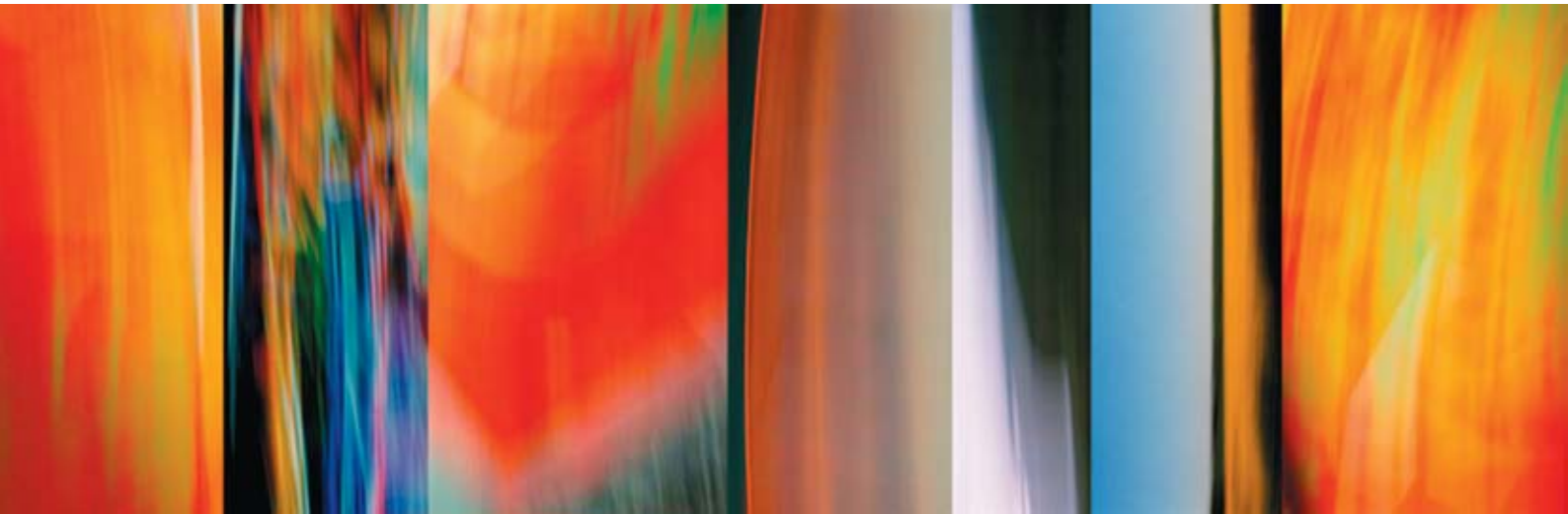




Reflexorama (continued from previous page)



(right) *Spiegel im Spiegel*  
Joe Felber, 2008  
Graphite on plywood,  
352cm x 182cm. Exhibited and  
published in 2008 at SASA Gallery,  
UniSA, 'After the Goldrush' with  
Lisa Harms and Sasha Grbich



*Abstract Australian Landscape*  
Joe Felber, 2003 – 2011  
Analogue photograph, digital print  
on metallic paper, 140cm x 45cm,  
edition 3



*Abstract Australian Landscape*  
Joe Felber, 2004 – 2006  
Digital print in light box,  
105cm x 314cm, private commission  
Lucerne, Switzerland







*LINEAREADING* (Installation)  
Joe Felber, 1994  
Audio and slides installation,  
variable dimensions, exhibited in  
1994 at Gallery 14 Queensland Art  
Gallery, Brisbane



*JUMPINJERKINGFLESH* (Installation)  
Joe Felber, 2010  
Audio and video installation,  
variable dimensions. Exhibited in 2010  
at Contemporary Art Centre of  
South Australia, 'The New New 2010'

*Natural History Museum 20 seconds*  
Joe Felber, 2005 - 2011  
Analogue photograph, digital print  
on metallic paper, 35cm x 140cm,  
edition 3





*Die Klavierspielerin*  
Joe Felber, 2007  
Hand painted (gouache) silver gelatine photographic prints,  
6 panels (60cm x 60cm), overall 183cm x 122cm



“...we say to  
every moment  
‘verweile doch,  
du bist du  
schön’”  
(stay, you are  
so beautiful).

Possession, A S Byatt

The most beautiful thing...

Will Nolan's photographic images are slippery things. Initially they seem so innocently transparent, so easy to get along with, their pop bright colours and familiar forms calling out immediate sensuous responses and affording pleasure. But these are shifting things that seem to move in time and space and utilise formal techniques with a gentle rigour to create their poignant beauty and elusiveness.

Here time and beauty are intimately and inextricably intertwined and while beauty is always present, for these are in the truest sense lovely things, it is at the same time a deliberate strategy that creates other more profound effects and meanings.

Time's markings flow through these images; the occluded traces of graffiti on a vividly coloured wall, the battered and crushed but luminous plastic bottle tops, the liquiscent sweetness of a melting ice block. Yet these things are not simply or superficially marked by time but actively constructed in and through time's unavoidable transformation. A melted ice block is an ice block no longer. The movement of a shimmering black plastic bag through its endlessly subtle permutations and the landscapes made of shadows and angles are essentially temporal constructions.

Photography's inherent pastness (that we ask it to show us what is and it can only show us what was) intrigues Nolan and the tension between its capacity to recuperate the lost, capture the disregarded and simultaneously consign it to the past is the nexus around which these images and Nolan's work revolves.

For photography brings these things, these ignored, disregarded objects into sight and knowledge and yet the atomistic time of the camera, that it shears one moment away from the previous and the next removes that moment from time's flow and almost out of knowledge.



Everything is Melting – Shanghai  
Will Nolan, 2010  
Giclee print on German Etching  
paper, 110cm x 110cm, edition 5

We neither experience time as atomised and we do not come to know in a moment but in time, from one moment to the next in the continuous interplay and infiltration between present, past and future in our consciousness. The idea of time as variable, as lived duration is the core of philosopher Henri Bergson's work and he writes; *'the duration lived by our consciousness is a duration with it's own determined rhythm, a duration very different from the (clock) time of the physicist'*. It is in this elastic durational time of our consciousness and in times inevitable flow that we come to knowledge.

This seems like difficult theoretical territory yet Nolan's work traverses this ground very delicately. Deftly, his images undo the atomised time and fixity of the still image bringing the viewer into an expanded durational time to be entranced, to wonder and to dwell with the most beautiful things in and of time itself.

Hooking into our knowledge of each objects past and future, what they were and what they'll become, every image of walls, bottle tops, iceblocks, landscapes and garbage bags is accompanied, haunted by its own ghosts. Time is reactivated and 'thickened' as every moment is connected to every other moment and is co present in a fattened<sup>1</sup> moment of time that expands to hold past, present and future simultaneously.

Seen in series these forms are repeated yet different. As the eye searches for patterns, each repetition creates a connection to the previous and anticipation of the next, every variation a visual counterpoint to this. In this movement, visual and spatial rhythms of image and space, absence and presence, action and rest emerge.

In these rhythmic patternings, the images begin to shift and move and to merge into a temporal flow. With the eye free to roam back and forth, past, present and future are connected each to the other in a branching, a rhizomatic<sup>11</sup> time that extends in every direction expanding atomised time beyond the single frame into the elastic time of lived experience where we come to see and know.

will  
nolan

<sup>1</sup> This apt description of the expanded time moment is borrowed from film critic Jacqueline Furby's 'Rhizomatic Time and Temporal Politics in American Beauty', Film Studies, Winter 2006

<sup>11</sup> Ibid



In this dually present time, branching and fattened, time is recuperated as an active force and moves again through these images. In durational time these image objects reassert their presence in a present where we are connected to the past through memory and the future through anticipation and desire and are connected to our seeing and knowing selves.

*“you want to see the most beautiful thing?”* American Beauty

While Nolan's work operates in sophisticated ways, formal attributes and tactics are always in the service of the beauty that distinguishes and impels his image making.

Framing shabby walls into formally elegant compositions of colour on the edge of abstraction, hovering these humble objects above pristine white or deep black, it is their beauty that we respond to sensuously and that pull us into them.

Carefully collected, vastly over scale and lovingly photographed as portraits these images commend us to look with the same attention and curiosity as we would a human face. Their proliferating detail, the tracery of folds and metallic reflections in the garbage bag, the glyph like markings on the bottle tops, the melting colours of the ice blocks and the deep mystery of angled shadows draw us into and hold us in this time of prolonged contemplation.

Beauty takes us as wonder and in wonder we give these things a heightened attention where the image begins to live and resonate in time. Connected to past, present and future through beauty, wonder and time's reactivation, possibilities abound as other ways of seeing and knowing are revealed.

In perhaps the most affecting moment of *American Beauty*, Ricky asks Janey, “do you want to see the most beautiful thing?” This most beautiful thing is his video of a plastic shopping bag arcing and dancing through space and caught in time. Hypnotic and achingly beautiful, the bag becomes a coda for the waste of the characters lives, for the beauty, meaning and richness that they simply do not see and suggests that this heightened awareness, this revelatory ‘seeing’ is available through the camera's gaze.

In the same way, Nolan uses the camera to recover these lost objects, to bring them back into our sight and knowledge. For these are deliberate acts of seeing born

of a compassionate desire to care for all the world's unrecovered beauty. He brings them before us and asks us to really see these things, to look with a sustained attentiveness in the revelation of their beauty and recognise their presence in the world.

Beauty too alerts us to the heightened sensitivity in Nolan's images, a sense of incompleteness, an unhealed wound, covered over but always present that suffuses the work with loss and longing.

Titles are a clue to this; *To Be of Use, You're Not Worth a Thing, Trace Elements, Everything is Melting* intimate this pervasive sense of loss and the tenuousness of existence. As if everything teeters on the edge of disappearance and dissolution. Lost, recovered and lost again.

His work is founded in a deep care and regard for the craft of image making, for these objects so gently presented to us and through them for the variety, multiplicity and richness of the world. It is the image's capture with a 4x5 camera that gives us the rich detail that holds the viewer enthralled and it is his care for the discarded and ignored that calls out our own compassion.

These things, lost and found, matter because everything matters. These acts of recovery, of recognition and time's recuperation through image making matter because attention must be paid to the small as well as to the great.

In an archaic usage, *to compassionate* means to suffer with, to feel with another. Not to feel for but to experience their feeling and it is this that these works ask of us.

For it is through this expanded attentiveness and willingness to see, to recognise, to compassionate, to be in and of the world with its grief's, its precarious, infinite, precious beauty that we move towards completeness.

It is beauty that punctures us and compassion that expands our selves into the world. Witness, collector and care-taker, Nolan brings the unregarded beauty of the world to us to enable us to see.

**Biography**

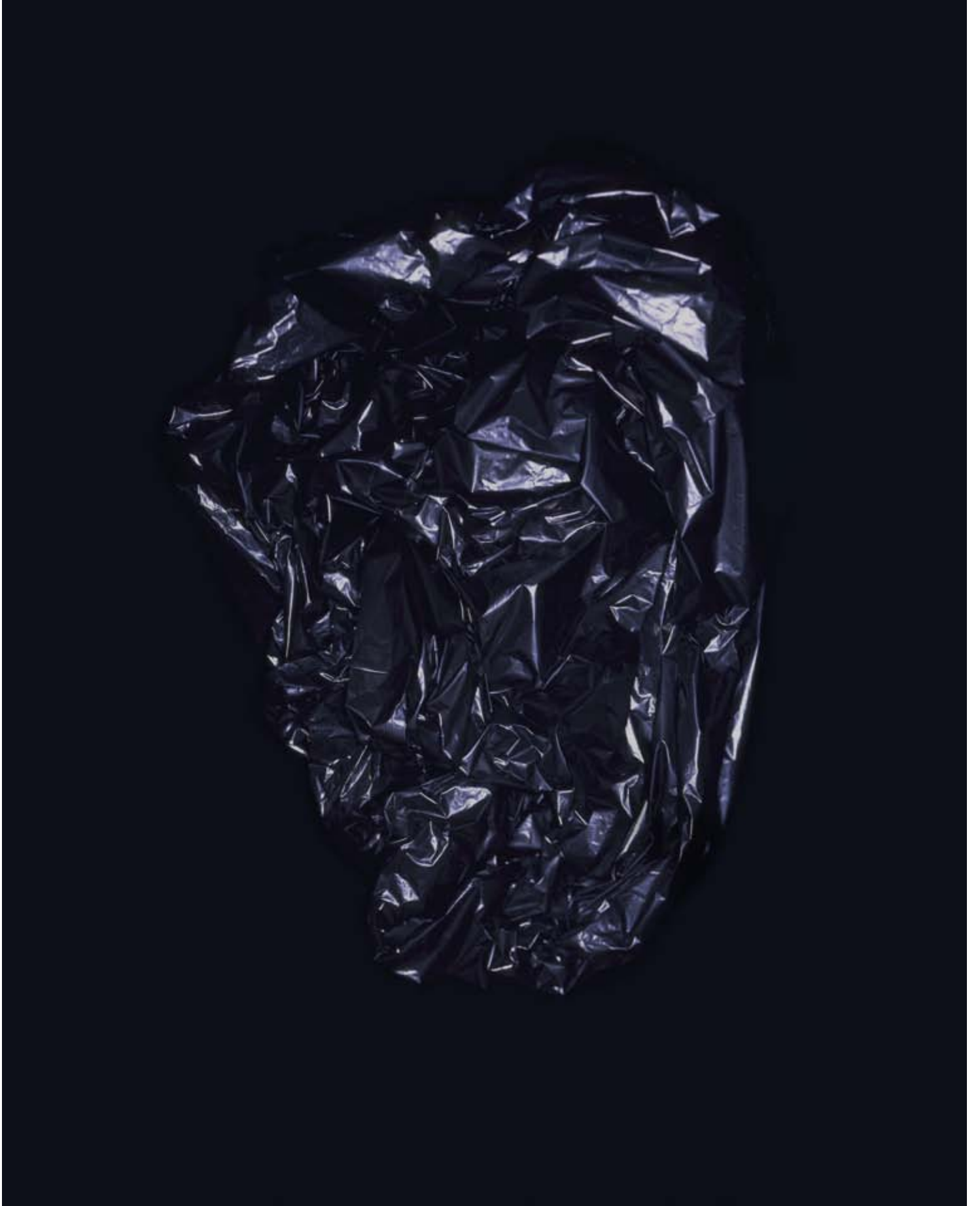
Will Nolan graduated with Honours from the South Australian School of Art in 2008 and has exhibited widely since. He has held two successful solo exhibitions at Adelaide's Gallery 139 and at Helen Gory Galerie Melbourne. His work has also been shown at Sawtooth ARI, Queensland Centre of Photography, the Cross Cultural Art Exchange and featured in the *Off the Wall* exhibition at the Melbourne Affordable Art Fair in 2009.

Many of Nolan's images have been acquired by Artbank and are also held and loved in numerous private collections.

*Jemima Kemp*

*“Don't turn away, keep looking at the bandaged place, that is how the light enters you...”* Rumi





*You're Not Worth a Thing – Untitled #1*  
Will Nolan, 2011  
Archival inkjet print, 100cm x 80cm



(above) *You're Not Worth a Thing – Untitled #2*  
Will Nolan, 2011  
Archival inkjet print, 100cm x 80cm



(top) *You're Not Worth a Thing – Untitled #3*  
Will Nolan, 2011  
Archival inkjet print, 100cm x 80cm

(bottom) *You're Not Worth a Thing – Untitled #5*  
Will Nolan, 2011  
Archival inkjet print, 100cm x 80cm

(top) *You're Not Worth a Thing – Untitled #4*  
Will Nolan, 2011  
Archival inkjet print, 100cm x 80cm

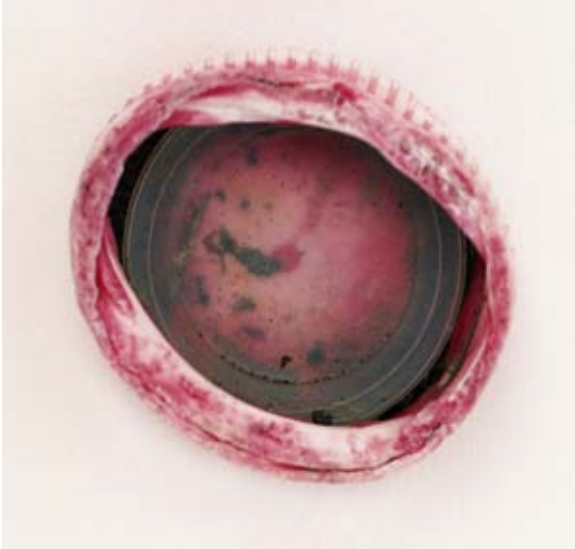
(bottom) *You're Not Worth a Thing – Untitled #6*  
Will Nolan, 2011  
Archival inkjet print, 100cm x 80cm



*What Lies Within – Untitled #1*  
Will Nolan, 2011  
Archival inkjet print, 100cm x 150cm







*To Be of Use – Bottle Top #7*  
Will Nolan, 2008  
Giclee print on German Etching paper, 100cm x 100cm, edition 5



*Trace Elements – Trace Elements #5*  
Will Nolan, 2008  
Giclee print on German Etching paper, 100cm x 100cm, edition 2

*Trace Elements – Trace Elements #16*  
Will Nolan, 2008  
Giclee print on German Etching paper, 100cm x 100cm, edition 2

*Trace Elements – Trace Elements #29*  
Will Nolan, 2008  
Giclee print on German Etching paper, 100cm x 100cm, edition 2



*To Be of Use – Bottle Top #4*  
Will Nolan, 2008  
Giclee print on German Etching paper, 100cm x 100cm, edition 5



*To Be of Use – Bottle Top #1*  
Will Nolan, 2008  
Giclee print on German Etching paper, 100cm x 100cm, edition 5



*Trace Elements – Trace Elements #20*  
Will Nolan, 2008  
Giclee print on German Etching paper, 100cm x 100cm, edition 2

