

# Stanley Street gallery

February 2019

## Louise Allerton

### Artist Statement

Originally from Sydney and studying painting and printmaking at undergraduate level at the National Art School in the late eighties, I subsequently moved to the Northern Territory in order to explore a non-mainstream existence. A strong interest in Indigenous arts led me to a remote Aboriginal Community in the Western Desert, Western Australia where I lived and worked in Aboriginal Arts for almost two decades. Immersion in a cross cultural environment indelibly altered my world view, and provided a new and deeper understanding of the Australian landscape and cosmology. My artwork is an extension of this altered world view in which I have come to examine the nature and fluidity of meaning, materialism and materiality.

During the course of my recent post graduate degree specialising in photo media, my work transformed in aesthetic and articulated further the context that underpins the work. Experiencing a lengthy cross cultural engagement continues to impact my work, and provides me with an alternate way to view the boundaries of materiality, immateriality and transformation. My work has become abstracted and metaphoric, informed by life experiences and philosophical theory to some extent.

I began my research topic began by exploring the nature of objects and materiality in the context of the loss of a family member. In bereavement we struggle with the disappearance of presence, and try to displace this loss by maintaining a connection to the material objects that once occupied the intimate spaces of the deceased. I examined our perception that objects embody memory, that objects have agency, that affect us emotionally and pragmatically. In contrast across the Western Desert anangu (Aboriginal people), remove all material items of the deceased including ephemera such as hair, footprints, photo and audio media. I saw this initially as a further expression of the desert practice of material minimalism, and a non-accumulative tradition based on a historically mobile culture. Surprisingly however, from a western standpoint, anangu divest themselves of material so that a potentially wayward spirit will not recognise its former material possessions, including relatives who cut their hair short in order to be unrecognisable.

To understand materiality and the nature of the object in a western context, it was necessary to refer to both historical and contemporary arguments regarding 'things', including Immanuel Kant's notion that objects are merely appearances that we perceive through space and time. Jacques Derrida extended this notion but argued that we understand objects through 'signification' and context. Derrida argued that things have varied meanings according to cultural constructs. Contemporary theorist Jane Bennett discusses things, objects and 'stuff' in terms of their number and sheer volume which is exceeding the life of the average human being, and in addition, as stuff having 'agency.' Bennet discusses the ecological implication of thing power<sup>1</sup> implying that we need to respect stuff, before it turns against us.

I have recently graduated from the National Art School again with a Master of Fine Arts, specializing in Photo media. My past work has been exhibited in many National photo media awards including the National Photographic Portraiture Award, Canberra; the Ulrick Schubert Award, Queensland and Olive Cotton Award, Tweed Gallery, and Head ON, NSW.

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<sup>1</sup> The Force of Things, Jane Bennet, 2004.

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## Bio

Louise Allerton is an Australian artist and arts worker who recently completed an MFA in Photo Media at the National Art School (NAS). Graduating from NAS (formerly East Sydney Technical College) in 1989 she majored in printmaking/minor in Painting.

A strong interest in cross cultural engagement led Louise to gain employment in the Great Victoria Desert, WA for 17 years where she managed the renowned Spinifex Arts Project. This remote Aboriginal Arts Project enabled desert artists to practice and exhibit large scale and culturally important dot paintings. Works were acquired by significant Australian Arts institutions such as the NGV and the British Museum in London.

Maintaining her own photographic practice alongside her working career Louise has been a finalist in numerous, prestigious photographic prizes such as the Ulrick Schubert Award (QLD), National Photographic Portrait Prize (ACT), Head On (NSW) and Olive Cotton Award (NSW).

## CV

### Education:

2017 - 2018 MFA, National Art School, Sydney

1987 - 1989 Higher Certificate (Painting major / Photography), National Art School, Sydney

1984 First year Photography Certificate, Sydney Technical College, NSW

### Professional Experience:

2017-2018 Technical Assistant, Bradfield Senior College, Department of Visual Arts, Sydney, NSW.

2015, 2016 Exhibition Install, Vancouver Arts Centre, Albany, WA.

2012-2015 Manager, Mungart Boodja Aboriginal Arts Centre, Albany, WA.

1997-2012 Arts Coordinator, Photographer, Archivist: Spinifex Arts Project, Tjuntjuntjara Aboriginal Community, Great Victoria Desert, WA

### Selected Exhibitions:

2018 Introducing, Stanley Street Gallery.

2017 Alice Prize, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs, Finalist.

STILL: Coffs harbour Regional Gallery, Still Life Award, Finalist

2016 Limit of Maps group exhibition; Louise Allerton, Julian Knowles, Mairi Ward, Sheffer Gallery, Sydney  
This Visceral Landscape (exhibition with Julian Knowles). Vancouver Arts Centre, Albany. Funded by Country Arts WA Project Fund

2015 Olive Cotton Award, Finalist, Tweed River Gallery NSW;

2013 Louise Allerton: New Works, Vancouver Arts Centre, Albany WA.

National Portrait Prize; Finalist, National Portrait Gallery, ACT.

2012 Ulrick Schubert Award, Finalist; Gold Coast City Art Gallery;

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- 2011 Ulrick Schubert Award, Finalist; Gold Coast City Art Gallery;  
Head On Portraits, Finalist, Sydney; Semi Finalist
- 2010 Head On Alternative Portraits, Finalist;  
Ulrick Schubert Award; Gold Coast City Art Gallery;  
Centennial Art Prize, Albany WA; Highly Commended
- 2009 Head On Alternative Portraits, Semi Finalist;  
CLIP Landscape Award, PCP, Perth; Finalist
- 2008 Ulrick Schubert Award, Finalist; Gold Coast City Art Gallery;  
Head On Alternative Portraits, Finalist; Australian Centre for Photography; Moran Photographic Prize,  
Finalist, NSW State Library;
- 2007 Head On Alternative Portraits, Semi Finalist; Australian Centre for Photography; Daylesford Biennale;  
Ulrick Schubert Award, Finalist, Gold Coast City Art Gallery;  
Kodak Salon, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne 2006;  
Iris Award, Finalist, Perth Centre for Photography;  
Olive Cotton Award, Finalist, Tweed River Gallery NSW;
- 2005 Citigroup Photographic Portraiture Prize, Finalist, Art Gallery of NSW;  
Olive Cotton Award, Finalist, Tweed River Gallery NSW;  
Photographic Exhibition accompanying Spinifex Painters, Rebecca Hossack Gallery London and  
Aboriginal Art Museum, Utrecht Holland
- 2004 Ulrick Schubert Award, Finalist; Gold Coast City Art Gallery;

## Residencies

- 2016 Tasmania School of Art, Inveresk University of Tasmania  
1994, 1995 Artist in Residence, Yintarri School, Coonana Aboriginal Community, WA.

## Grants

- 2016 Country Arts WA Project Fund: \$10 000  
Vancouver Arts Centre, WA, Residency Support, \$2000;