

Framing the figure— contemporary photography and moving image works from the collection

'All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt.'

—Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 1973

Framing the figure explores artists' use of the camera to capture human subjects in still and moving images. Freezing performative gestures, constructing narratives or zooming-in on specific body parts, the lens demands that artists look closely at their subjects to frame the figure with formal and conceptual precision.

This exhibition was conceived during Victoria's second Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, when, for many people, extended periods at home altered perceptions of time and space and amplified the repetitive nature of daily routines: a concept reinforced in Virginia Woolf's late-1920s novel *Orlando* when she wrote of the 'extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind.' This selection of works highlights the capacity of still photography to fix moments in time. Conversely, action, repetition, and filmic narrative underpin certain moving image works.

Andrew Hazewinkel traverses time through his use of a late-19th century glass plate negative transformed through the contemporary process of digital manipulation. Darren Siwes employs time-lapse photography to capture ghostly figures set against built structures to explore Indigenous Australian identity, duality, Country, history and politics. David Rosetzky relies on the unknown outcomes of double exposure, the aesthetic results of which underscore the artist's preoccupations with an unfixed and constantly evolving notion of self. Polixeni Papapetrou revisits historical events in both the public and personal realms.

Deborah Paauwe and Pat Brassington tightly crop the female figure, concealing the identities of their sitters and drawing our gaze to socially constructed ideas of female beauty, and the surrealistic potential of the human form. In his self-portrait, Christian Thompson conceals his eyes with the distinctively serrated leaves of the Banksia tree, defiantly refusing to return the viewer's gaze.

Charlie Sofo draws our eyes to a specific body part in a sequence of multiple pairs of feet rocking on uneven or unstable floorboards, tiles, pavers and footpaths. In doing so, he finds meaning in simple processes, materials and actions. In Gabriella Mangano and Silvana Mangano's film work, a series of choreographed and repetitive gestures mirror those seen in newspaper photographs at the time of the work's creation. And Anne Zahalka candidly captures visitors as they engage with works of art, framing the art gallery as a social space that can condition a feeling for the present and an understanding of the past.