



Back to Back Theatre—Portrait

A Geelong Gallery and Back to Back Theatre exhibition
Saturday 18 March to Sunday 16 July 2023



Tamara Searle and Gemma-Rose Turnbull
Charlotte, Portrait 2021
colour photograph
Courtesy of Back to Back Theatre
© Tamara Searle, Gemma-Rose Turnbull and
Charlotte

Opening at Geelong Gallery on Saturday 18 March 2023, Back to Back Theatre's *Portrait* is a participatory photographic exhibition with works facilitated by Tamara Searle and photographer Gemma-Rose Turnbull with students from Geelong's own Nelson Park and Barwon Valley schools.

This long-term project was created with a foundation of self-determination, in which existing photographic representations of disability, age, gender, and sexuality were challenged, allowing each of the students to reflect on and express their unique identities.

Searle and Turnbull (and their collaborators) offered a safe space where young women from both schools could openly, authentically question their diverse identities and analyse photographic forms of representation. These formative discussions, and the preferences and personalities of the young women, informed the processes and outcomes for each of the 17 portraits on display. The photographs are presented in collaboration with the participants, who share a strong belief in the necessity and powerfulness of self-representation by teenage women living with disability.

Geelong Gallery Director & CEO **Jason Smith** says 'We are proud to present *Portrait* which liberates thinking, discussion, and creative tasks and practices focussed on identity and self-determination in the participating young women's representation. The exhibition is scheduled to coincide with Geelong Gallery's 2023 drawcard, ticketed exhibition *Clarice Beckett—Atmosphere* which will ensure a wide-ranging and extensive audience for this important project.'

Project creator **Tamara Searle** comments 'The project was designed specifically for girls and female identifying students to avoid, in this instance, some of the gendered and sexual complexities in high schools to ensure a safe space where young women could openly, authentically question their gender, sexuality, and representation without feeling any influence of the male gaze or comparison.'

Project participant **Charlotte** says of her portrait (pictured left) and the production process 'It's (a portrait) a photo of a person and they can, be doing something... and then we kind of got to design our art further of what we wanted to create... what we wanted to see in the photo.'

A series of public programs will be promoted to coincide with this exhibition. Visit our website for more information.

Exhibition partners

Jan & Barry Fagg



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Back to Back program partners

Back to Back Theatre is supported by the Anthony Costa Foundation, Cassandra Gantner Foundation, Besen Family Foundation, Thyne Reid Foundation, Give Where You Live, the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), Percy Baxter Charitable Trust, John T Reid Charitable Trust and John and Winifred Baxter Trust.

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Tamara Searle and Gemma-Rose Turnbull
Claudia, Portrait 2021
colour photograph
Courtesy of Back to Back Theatre
© Tamara Searle, Gemma-Rose Turnbull and
Claudia