

## INTIMATE SPACES REVEALED

CAITLIN FRANZMANN / CAROL MCGREGOR / LEENA RIETHMULLER

Intimacy (a state of being), memory (a mental capacity), and trace (evidence of a former presence), are often not easily deciphered. Intimacy conjures up the bonds between one's physical being to another; the closeness one feels sexually, emotionally and through the comfort and bonds of the familiar. Intimacy resides in the secret conversations that transpire as the basis to connect one person to another. Intimacy can be illusive - inexplicable; how does one encounter intimacy, is there a signal?

Intimacy: the feeling of a close personal association of the deepest nature; a sense of belonging. Intimacy can also describe the personal relationship that centres on emotion, passion, love, and immediately summons the senses and the closeness to the living and the dying. And then of course there are the intimate associations that occur with no warning - the discovery of one's past, the discovery of one's own or another's body, and the awareness of the secrets of the self.

Intimacy can be very evocative, for it sits outside one's definitions of emotional control. One doesn't plan intimacy, it just happens without logical understanding and transcends the forms of love. Love affairs beyond our perceptions, like the love affair the rock has with air. Matter, mind and gravity itself, are all suspended in the perplexing interruption of intimacy.

The unexpected occurrences that somehow validate that intimacy exists next to memory are often intangible, perhaps even ghostly - the aroma that drifts up when opening a box of chocolates, unexpected music heard on the radio, or crawling between the bed sheets... Susan Sontag's words from her novel *The Volcano Lover* come to mind,

An odor. A taste. A touch. Impossible to describe.

To lower yourself into your own feelings. There to find mists and vapours.

The exhibition *Intimate spaces revealed* is aligned to the awareness and noticeable shift in the approaches and methods that artists are currently addressing of the personal and the profound. Here the artists, Caitlin Franzmann, Carol McGregor and Leena Riethmuller are conscious of creating mechanisms that assist in evoking wider interpretations of what the intimate can conjure up or even can be.

The three Brisbane artists confront intimacy, memory and the space these occupy differently, but all gravitate around the importance that lies in the unexpected experiences and responses that the audience may have when they are asked by the art to 'slow-down' and involve themselves with visual or sensorial work that occupies space that may surround or effect one in more quiet forms and methods. The *space between or the space occupied* becomes important, particularly when the space may be one's own body. The space becomes occupied in memory and intimacy.

Caitlin Franzmann's sound-installation *Dissolve* is comprised of 6 white space-like helmets in which recorded audio compositions of collaged and found material surround the listener. As Joel Stern states,

In audio terminology, a 'dissolve' is a gradual transition or cross-fade between two sounds. More specifically, it is the inbetween moment in which prior and successive states are simultaneously present.

The key for the audience - trust yourself - put the helmet on, listen, experience, and let your mind wander and meander, occupying and dissolving into the visible and invisible space inside and outside the helmet.

Touching Carol McGregor's *invisible (cloak)* I feel a goosebump sensation, beauty and serenity. Yet when Carol drapes the possum skin cloak over her,

she is in union with her family, past and present. Individual recollections are altered when memories and traces of specific events in her history become linked to each other. *invisible (cloak)* is constructed with 60 possum skins, cotton, ochre, charcoal and tree gum, and described eloquently by Carol:

Traditional possum skin cloaks were personal - inscribed with images or patterns to signify where you are from, your place, tribal stories and your identity. Although separated by time and country, each generation touches another to pass on not only their DNA but also their knowledge. *invisible (cloak)* is a testimony to personal oral histories, cultural stories and family journeys.

The personal and private intimate associations an individual has with their body conjures up numerous images of saliva, tears and urine. In her six-week project *More Human*, Leena Riethmuller asked 5 participants to engage with their bodily experiences. The participants discussed their own and other group member's responses to the task, promoting a pragmatic approach to bodily exploration and encouraged personal, social, political and phenomenological discussion.

In her new works, Leena intertwines with her own body in *Fitting into yourself*, while the participants in *Neti performance [I]* commune with their bodies via the 'neti' pot. The clearing of mind, body and soul are performed in both video works, and the 'neti' pot has become more than a performance device, now assisting some in their basic connection to the body's renewal.

These artists are addressing the vast associations and spaces that encompass the intimate. The body and memory become key facilitators in the strange connections of the visible and the invisible in revealing the spaces of intimacy, the moments when anything seems possible. Or as Sontag wrote,

Moments of slippage, when anything seems possible and not everything makes sense.

Notes:

Sontag, Susan, *The Volcano Lover*, Picador, NY, 1992.

Stern, Joel, *Focus Until You Find You Are Beginning to Lose Focus*, Caitlin Franzmann *Dissolve* catalogue essay; IMA, Brisbane, 2013.

Debra Porch, Curator  
June 2014