



‘Bringing the nation alive’: Gender, Embodiment and Visual Sovereignty in the Work of Ngarrindjeri Photographers from the Mid-Twentieth Century

Lunchtime Seminar

Dr Karen Hughes

9th November, 1.10—2.00pm

205 Napier Building

ALL WELCOME

ABSTRACT

When accessible Box Brownie and instamatic cameras became widely available in Australia in the mid-twentieth century, many Ngarrindjeri people actively seized the medium of personal photography to express their values, worldviews, and identities; challenging prevailing settler-colonial stereotypes. Via the Ngarrindjeri gaze, the camera became a powerful tool of resistance through which pioneering photographers—many of them skilful women—framed complex alternative histories of resilience, cross-cultural engagement, mobility, entrepreneurship and connectivity; experimenting with new aesthetic forms that extend visual sovereignty. Drawing on collaborative research with the Ngarrindjeri elder Aunty Ellen Trevorrow, this paper explores notions of gender, embodiment and sovereignty expressed in these treasured mid-century photos and the recuperative power they hold for Ngarrindjeri people today.

BIO

Dr Karen Hughes is a visiting research scholar with the Fay Gale Centre for Research on Gender. Karen has just come from a fellowship at New York University and is a senior lecturer in Indigenous Studies from the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, and is well known for her work on Indigenous histories. Amongst many activities, she is a CI on the ARC ‘Children Born of War’ project and is looking at Native American and Australian Indigenous photographers taking photographs (with box brownies and Kodak instamatics) in the mid 20th century.

The Fay Gale Centre would like to thank the Art Gallery of South Australia for permission to use the image in the banner.

Detail: Dorrit Black, Australia, 1891 - 1951 Music, 1927-28, Paris, colour linocut on paper, 24.1 x 21.2 cm (image)

Elder Bequest Fund 1976, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide



Isabelle Koolmatrie, Irene Richards and Joe Walker Jnr, at the One Mile Coorong Fringe Camp, near Meningie, South Australia. Photograph by Charlotte Richards, collection of Tom and Ellen Trevorrow.