



Pigeon Auction

Pigeon Auction

LOOKING AT SUBURBAN SUBCULTURES

18 May – 30 June 2013

ARTISTS

STUART BAILEY
MATTHEW BRADLEY
BINDI COLE
SHOUFAY DERZ
TONY GARIFALAKIS
RAQUEL ORMELLA
GARRY TRINH

Curator Toni Bailey

Front Cover image: Shoufay Derz *I am death, destroyer of words* (detail) 2011, pigment print on cotton rag, custom-made cedar wood frame, stained natural indigo 104 x 111cm



01



02



03



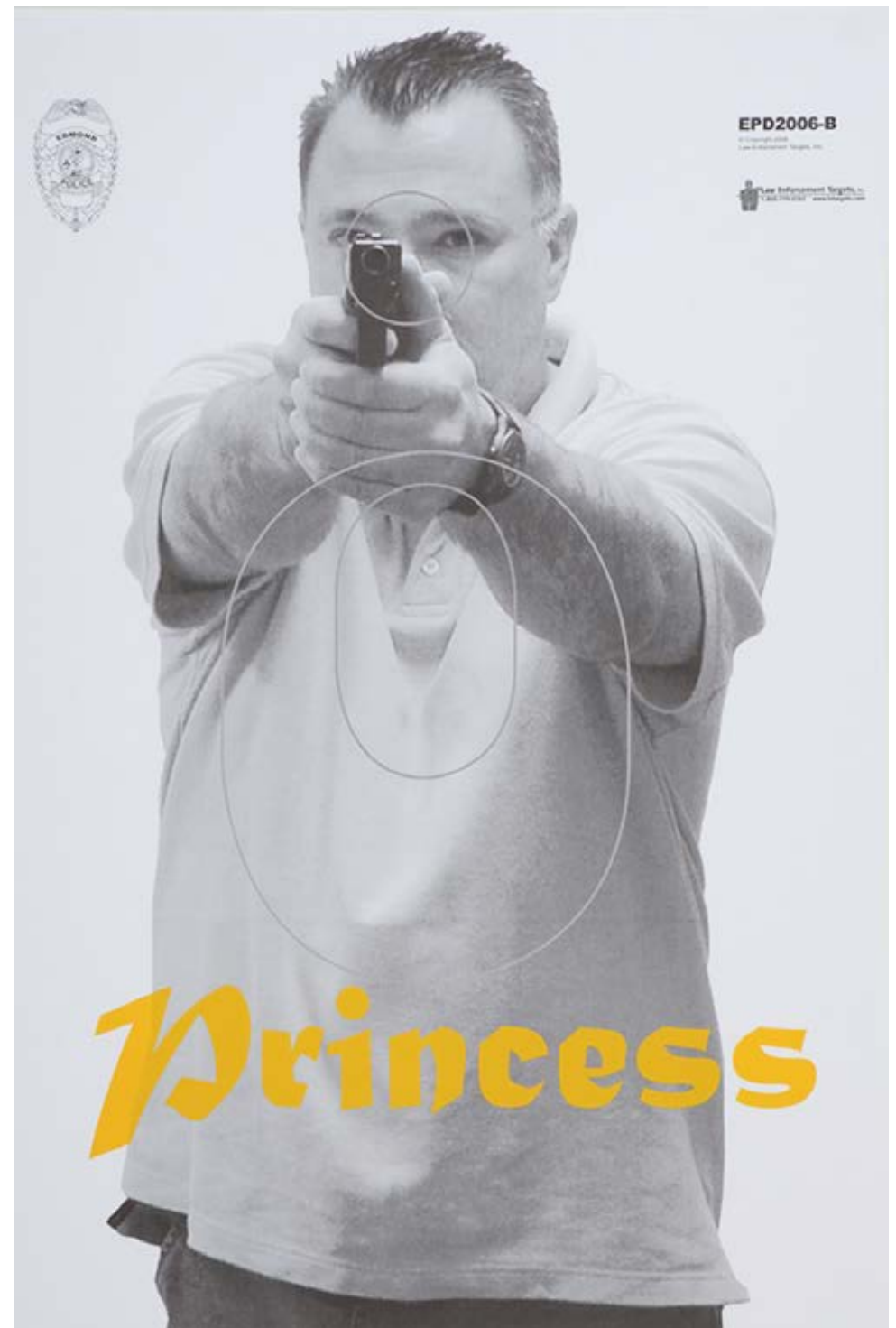
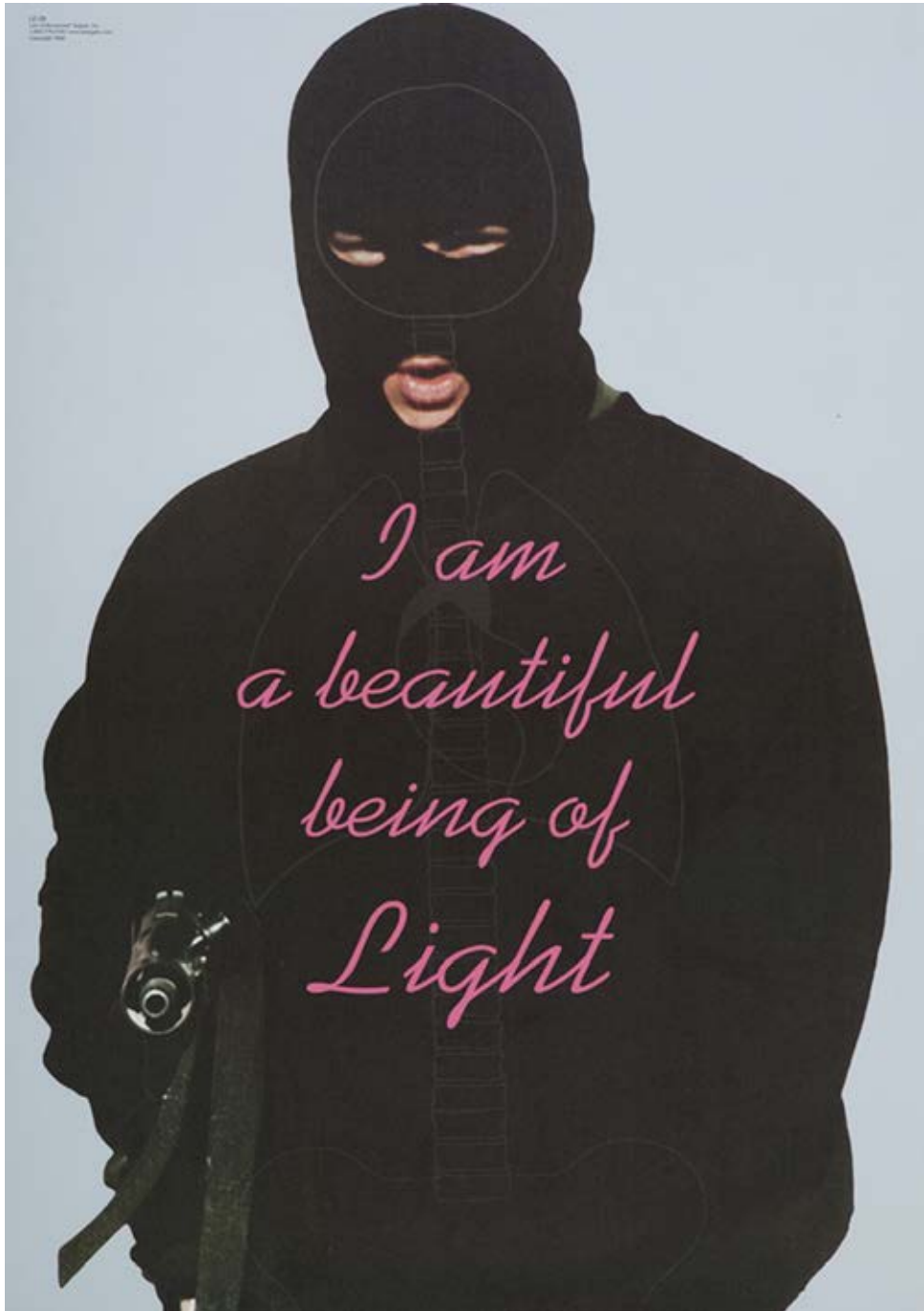
04



05











14



15

The complexity of living together

James Arvanatakis

In any high definition photograph, you will find hundreds of thousands of individual pixels. Each pixel represents the smallest element in a photograph – which is the smallest controllable element. Likewise, when a Realist painter presents us with an image of a face, there are thousands of brushstrokes.

Both are invisible to the naked eye and we find it difficult to comprehend that the holistic image before us is made up of individual elements. We see it, interpret it and appreciate it in its entirety – it is the whole that counts in such a context, not the singular parts.

We can understand our community in much the same way: as we walk through any neighbourhood, we can be excused for thinking that each street looks the same. Undoubtedly there are variations but we tend to think of one suburban street as being much like any other. In much the same way, when we fly over a city, we see what appear to be endless red coloured tiles on houses dotted across similar looking criss-crossing streets.

This is reflected in the way social, economic and political commentators tend to focus on high-level trends. In so doing, they look at macro measures and make generalisations about the health of our economy, the quality of our lives and the experiences of our society.

What such images hide, however, are the individual brushstrokes that make up the many and various communities. That is, within each society, there are countless communities that overlap, interact and combine to create its rich fibre. And if we dig deeper, we find the individuals who add a complexity and depth we may never appreciate.

It is this complexity and density of experiences that *Pigeon Auction* captures. Each artist shows us a number of individual pixels of the human experience by placing a microscope over a different community. There are groups and sub-groups, highlighting to us that the whole is meaningless without the interplay of the various parts. It is an exhibition that reflects the complex nature of modern life.

The exhibition could not come at a more important time.

In Australia, as in other western nations, many are claiming that ‘multiculturalism has failed’. Such a statement has been repeated from by the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel¹, to the controversial South Australian Senator, Cory Bernardi.²

The various arguments by those who take such positions tend to boil down to one recurring theme: that we can only ‘naturally’ form communities with those that we ‘recognise’ as being ‘like us’. This is a belief that those who are different cannot live together and that conflict is inevitable.

It is an idea that has a long tradition in western thought and revolves around the 18th century philosophy of Georg W.F. Hegel. It has been reiterated by many contemporary commentators.

This is a bleak view of humanity because ‘being like us’ can be taken to any extreme: it can be decided that ‘being like us’ can be about only those who only speak the same language, follow the same religion, share the same culture, are heterosexual or even have the same coloured skin or same shaped eyes. Forming communities with those who are ‘like us’ is about the power to exclude those we do not like or agree with; and what defines ‘like us’ can change from day to day or, week to week.

An alternative way of understanding the way we form communities is presented by contemporary philosophers such as Jeremy Brent and Rosalyn Diprose, and focuses on the idea of ‘alterity’ (or difference) and ‘desire’. The idea here is that we form communities based not simply with those we recognise, but are also drawn to our intrinsic differences.

People come together to form communities not by some natural process, but through a sense of desire. That is, we form communities with others because we want to. What drives this is our shared sense of humanity, not any single element of our lives such as religion, skin colour or our hobbies. This is a community where alterity is appreciated and celebrated.

It is this alterity that is captured in this exhibition as each artist highlights and celebrates the complexity of our social tapestry. Beneath the surface of societies that may appear uniform or even homogenous, we find the complex embroidery of experiences and life.

And here lies the power of the artist. In a time of global social, political and economic upheaval, many question the ‘value’ of the arts. But it is at moments like these we most need artists.

In *Camera Lucida*, philosopher Roland Barthes talks of the ‘punctum’, where the viewer establishes a direct relationship with the object or person within a photograph. Once we experience this, the viewer sees something in the photograph that may change her view of the world. Martin Heidegger, who describes the threshold moment as that experience that changes our view of the world, and makes us see it as if for the first time, discusses something similar.

While Barthes was talking of photography and Heidegger of ‘classical’ arts such as poetry and music, the message is broader: artists can present us with a different view of the world, and make us appreciate it in ways we never realised or thought possible.

In *Pigeon Auction*, the artists are encouraging us to celebrate the diversity of Australian society. This is not simply a cultural diversity. It is one that highlights that society is layered and complex in many ways, and we should use this to find strength and rejoice in its beauty. This is because the one thing we all have in common is our differences, and of course, our shared humanity.

Professor James Arvanitakis

*Institute for Culture and Society,
University of Western Sydney*

March 2013

Works cited

Barthes, R., 1981. *Camera Lucida*, New York: Hill and Wang.

Brent, J., 2004, ‘The desire for community: Illusion, confusion and paradox’, *Community Development Journal* 39: 213-23.

Diprose, R. 2003. ‘Communities written in blood’. *Cultural Studies Review*. 9, no. 1: 35-50.

Hegel, GWF, 1977, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A. V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Heidegger, M., 1927, *Being and Time*. Macquarrie, J. and Robinson, E. trans. 1967. New York: Harper and Row.

1 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/17/angela-merkel-german-multiculturalism-failed>

2 <http://www.menzieshouse.com.au/2011/02/the-failure-of-multiculturalism.html>

List of works

01 **Stuart Bailey** *Minor Threat* 2007
wood, nails, bottle caps, rubber stoppers, acrylic and digital video
dimensions variable

02 **Stuart Bailey** *Minor Threat* 2007
Still from digital video 2:25mins

03 **Matthew Bradley** *Contact* 2011
mdf with steel table
204 x 164 x 252cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Greenaway Art Gallery, SA

04 **Matthew Bradley** *Chicken Observatory*
from 'Space Chickens Help Me Make Apple Pie' 2012
assorted found timber, telescope and lights
210 x 125 x 150cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Greenaway Art Gallery, SA

05 **Matthew Bradley** *Chicken Observatory*
from 'Space Chickens Help Me Make Apple Pie' 2012
assorted found timber, telescope and lights
210 x 125 x 150cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Greenaway Art Gallery, SA

06 **Bindi Cole** *Warre Beal Yallock* 2008
pigment print on cotton rag paper 130 x 94cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Nellie Castan Gallery, VIC

07 **Bindi Cole** *Wathaurung Mob* 2008
pigment print on cotton rag paper
94 x 130cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Nellie Castan Gallery, VIC

08 **Shoufay Derz** *in widening circles (after Rilke)* 2011
C-Type print, custom-made cedar wood frame,
stained natural indigo
41 x 56cm

09 **Shoufay Derz** *I am death, destroyer of words* 2011
pigment print on cotton rag, custom-made cedar wood frame, stained natural indigo
104 x 111cm

10 **Tony Garifalakis** *Light* 2012
adhesive vinyl on paper shooting target
85 x 61cm

11 **Tony Garifalakis** *Princess* 2012
adhesive vinyl on paper shooting target
89 x 59cm

12 **Raquel Ormella** *Here we are* 2012
3 channel digital video with sound 9:00mins

13 **Raquel Ormella** *Varied noisy* (detail) 2008-2013
mixed media
artists multiples, parallel groove record, edition of 150
dimensions variable

14 **Garry Trinh** from the series *OUR SPOT* 2008
digital C type print
65 x 47cm

15 **Garry Trinh** from the series *PhotoGraff* 2008 – present
inkjet print
dimensions variable

Pigeon Auction

LOOKING AT SUBURBAN SUBCULTURES

18 May – 30 June 2013

PROJECT TEAM

Director **Kiersten Fishburn**

Curator **Toni Bailey**

Marketing officer **Jacqueline Hornjik**

Registrar **Semi Ozacardi**

Public Program and
Education Manager **Nisa Mackie**

Public Program and Education Officer **Vi Girgis**

Catalogue design **alphabet**

Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre

1 Powerhouse Road, Casula 2170

02 9824 1121

casulapowerhouse.com

Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre is a cultural
facility of Liverpool City Council

