

In camera and in public

Denis Beaubois
Luc Delahaye
Cherine Fahd
Percy Grainger
Bill Henson
Sonia Leber & David Chesworth
Walid Raad
Kohei Yoshiyuki
ASIO surveillance photographs

Curated by Naomi Cass

16 September – 23 October 2011

In camera and in public

To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them that they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed. Just as a camera is a sublimation of the gun, to photograph someone is a subliminal murder—a soft murder, appropriate to a sad, frightened time.

—
Susan Sontag *On Photography* 1977

In camera and in public is about the relationship between camera and subject when this is fraught in some way, in particular, where the subject is not aware of being photographed, where the contract between photographer and subject has been broken.

Candid photography has been critical in the development of art and evidential photography, in revealing aspects of our history and society which have been hidden, ignored, lied about or simply abandoned. Candid photography has delivered some of the most widely regarded, potent and treasured images.

However, the camera is merely a technical device and some would even say a dumb device, which can be, and is used for contradictory and malicious ends. Candid photography has also hurt, harmed and destroyed people. There are more images in the world than ever before, and image sharing technologies in the hands of those with subversive, destructive or immature desires. Paradoxically, on one hand there is greater access to unmediated information of all genres through the internet but also a counter move of public disquiet about candid photography. Many well-regarded, indeed renowned photographers will no longer photograph at the beach, by a public pool, at a junior sports match, on the street. The context for photography has changed.

This exhibition looks at the physical and moral proximity of camera to subject in both historical and contemporary work by Cherine Fahd, Bill Henson, Luc Delahaye, Sonia Leber and David Chesworth, Kohei Yoshiyuki, Denis Beaubois, Percy Grainger, Walid Raad and declassified ASIO images from the late 1940s to the 1980s.

In viewing *In camera...* it is sobering to consider where the photographer is positioned, to viscerally experience the proximity of camera to unsuspecting subject because, importantly, the exhibition moves from candid photography taken with the sole intention of making art (Henson, Fahd, Delahaye, Leber and Chesworth, Raad and Yoshiyuki) through to the intention of surveillance. Not surprisingly, on first view, even the declassified ASIO images are compelling and beautiful.

Of the artists, the viewer might well ask, have you obtained permission to photograph? But as we all know the unprepared body and face reveals quite a different story than the figure composed for the camera. It is the non-composed figure which is the lifeblood of much art and photography.

Surveillance is in part the subject of work by Denis Beaubois, Walid Raad and to some extent in Leber and Chesworth's multi-media work. Certainly Beaubois, Leber and Chesworth consider the role of architectural space and the all-seeing eye of the state and in the latter, the eye of god within the panopticon of the domed cathedral. Walid Raad puts the tedium of surveillance in perspective when his fictional operative repeatedly forgoes his designated work to relish the setting sun.

In camera and in public exploits the form of CCP's nautilus galleries and reflects the progress of the camera turned towards an unsuspecting subject until Gallery 4 where, in the hand of Percy Grainger, the camera is turned towards himself, in an astonishing series of vintage photographs, possibly created for display in the Grainger Museum. 'In camera' and in public, indeed. In 1941 Grainger wrote *Most museums, most cultural endeavours, suffer from being subjected to too much taste, too much elimination, too much selection, too much specialisation! What we want (in museums and cultural records) is all-sidedness, side lights, cross-references.*

We all love to stare, to linger, to see what we might have missed, and with advancing technologies, to see what is unavailable to the naked human eye, and here lies the problem. In looking at these images, are we implicated in an act of transgression?

—

Naomi Cass September 2011

Gallery One

Bill Henson

Born in Melbourne, 1955

Lives and works in Melbourne

www.roslynnoxley9.com.au/artists/18/Bill_Henson/profile/

Untitled 1980/82

13 gelatin silver chlorobromide prints

Untitled 1980/82 consists of 220 images in 26 groups and seven different shapes; this series was first exhibited at Pinacotheca, Melbourne in 1986. This is group 16 as originally configured by the artist.

Courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

You come to understand partly what the work is about though the making of it. Things, if you like, are revealed to you. And as nature is always a step ahead of culture, one is never fully in control even in a so-called 'controlled environment'. The gravity of a simple gesture remains unseen and unimaginable until it appears before your eyes—that is if you are disposed to see it at all.

The great beauty in the subject comes, for me, from the haunted space, that unbridgeable gap—which separates the profound intimacy and solitude of our interior world from the 'other' and in trying to show, in this case through envisioning the crowd, how an awesome, unassailable, even monumental, beauty and grace might attend the undulating, fluid mass of a wall of people as they move toward you.

It is the contradictory nature of life and the way in which this can be suggested in art which first drew me to photograph crowds—much as this underpins my interest in any art form.

From within the crowd our power seems magnified; we gain a super-human strength or rather a sense of this (think of crowds at the football) but this power is borrowed; it comes from the crowd, not from the individual. In actuality, individual autonomy is weakened.

We must remember the 'pack instinct' is older and lies further down, seemingly buried beneath the priority of individual experience, thought and action.

Where the public imagination and photography is concerned, our society has perhaps gone on some strange wander back into the dark ages. It can sometimes seem as if we have been re-hoodwinked into believing that the photograph is capable of stealing one's soul and that the nefarious use of it can lead to the loss of autonomous reasoning or independence of action. We hear this all the time in relation to images on the internet but I'm not so sure the problem doesn't lie equally with a culture of victimhood and our transformation increasingly into a society of rights, entitlements and complaint. I think this disposition weakens people and this brings with it a vulnerability and insecurity.

It needn't be this way.

The business of how a child's small hand appearing between two adults at a street crossing can suggest both a vulnerability, great tenderness, and yet also contain within it all of the power that beauty commands, is endlessly fascinating to me.

As for politics, which can usually be found on the lowest rung of art's 'ladder to heaven', and to matters of privacy and the so-called 'politics of the gaze' etc: when the difference between intimacy and mere familiarity is understood, and the recognition of this governs the relationship with one's subject, the potential for compromise and exploitation diminishes—dependent of course upon intent.

The distinctions which separate so-called documentary and staged photography also become less important the more absorbed we are with the image and as in any art form, the greater the work of art, the less aware we are or even care about these distinctions which are also essentially political in nature.

—

Bill Henson September 2011

from the series *Untitled 1980/82*



Gallery One

Cherine Fahd

Born in Sydney, 1974

Lives and works in Sydney

www.cherinefahd.com

20 lightjet prints

each 28.5 × 40.2 cm

edition of 3

courtesy the artist

In 2003 I began photographing people I didn't know in the streets of Paris, working in a conventional street photography style. I became a prowler searching for photographic opportunities in the faces and gestures of total strangers, fascinated with capturing private moments within the public realm.

In 2005 I was living on the sixth floor of an apartment in Kings Cross, Sydney, below was a park unadorned by play equipment or even a bench. From my window I could see homeless people asleep on the grass in the middle of the day. What struck me most were their bodies resting in dappled light and gesturing in ways usually saved for private moments. The drape of their clothes and the quality of light reminded me of so many paintings I had seen.

So *The Sleepers* began. I photographed people asleep in the park with my mini DV camera, which allowed me to zoom in and capture detail but also allowed for a grainy image reminiscent of surveillance footage. In the sleeping posture—curled up or lying flat—people generally covered their faces, ensuring their anonymity. I liked this aspect of the work. Although I was photographing them unawares, I wasn't really intruding if I couldn't see their faces.

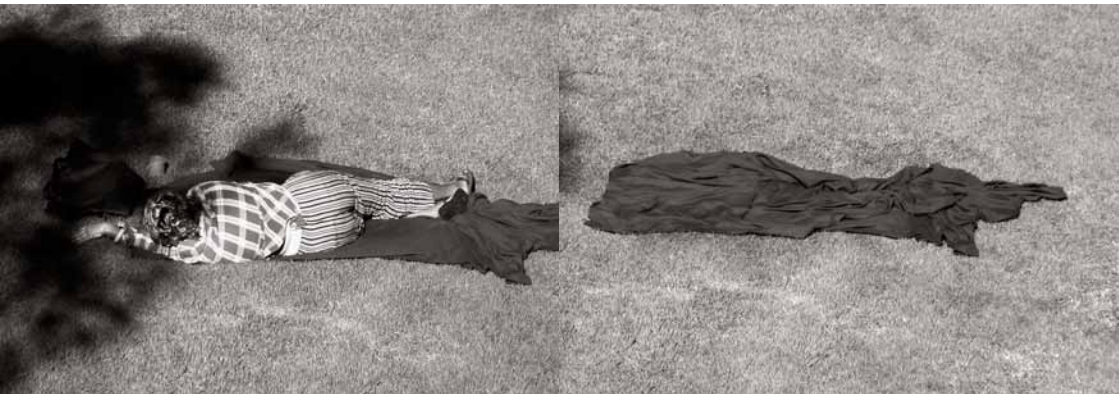
Oddly, I have stopped working in this candid way. I wasn't sure why at the time. In retrospect I understand that it became too difficult because audiences became obsessed with whether I had permission to photograph people. I never considered asking anyone if I could take their photo. It would have defeated the whole point. People change when they know there is a camera present, better to let them be.

The moral dilemmas engulfing candid photography are not something I am interested in addressing in my work. I would much rather ponder whether their faces, or their bodies, or their gestures are cues to something more mysterious, spiritual and human.

—

Cherine Fahd 2011





Untitled from the series *The Sleepers* 2005–2008

Gallery One

Luc Delahaye

Born in Tours, France, 1962

Lives and works in Paris

L'Autre, Phaidon Press, London, 1999

4 books



I stole these photographs between '95 and '97 in the Paris metro. 'Stole' because it is against the law to take them, it's forbidden. The law states that everyone owns their own image. But our image, this worthless alias of ourselves, is everywhere without us knowing it. How and why can it be said to belong to us? But more importantly, there's another rule, that non-aggression pact we all subscribe to: the prohibition against looking at others. Apart from the odd illicit glance, you keep staring at the wall. We are very much alone in these public places and there's violence in this calm acceptance of a closed world.

I am sitting in front of someone to record his image, the form of evidence, but just like him I too stare into the distance and feign absence. I try to be like him. It's all a sham, a necessary lie lasting long enough to take a picture. If to look is to be free, the same holds true for photographing: I hold my breath and let the shutter go.

—

Luc Delahaye, from *L'Autre*, Phaidon Press, London, 1999

Gallery Two

Persons Of Interest—ASIO surveillance 1949–1980

Curated by Haydn Keenan

Selected surveillance images from a forthcoming documentary series from Smart Street Films

<http://www.smartstreetfilms.com.au/>

I discovered these images as part of my research for our documentary series *Persons Of Interest* which will be screened on SBS early next year. They are part of a massive archive of pictures secretly recorded by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) from 1949 onwards.

These images are not art. Unlike art these pictures have the power to alter lives dramatically. Be photographed at the wrong place and you'll find it hard to get a job, when you do you'll get the sack soon after. Appear in these images and your career will go nowhere without explanation. The eye of the beholder will cast a shadow you will not see until thirty years later when you get access to your file.

The photos create a strange world of frozen youth, high hopes and issues that were seen as subversive then but are now so integrated into the mainstream that they need explanation for Gen Y.

ASIO was created to hunt down and eliminate a Soviet spy ring operating in Canberra in the late 1940s. Most of the members of the spy ring were connected with or were members of the Communist Party of Australia. For the next forty years ASIO followed everything the Party did.

The purpose of photographic surveillance is to identify Persons Of Interest in a definitive manner and to record their associations and contacts thereby building a network. Surveillance would occur during demonstrations, May Day marches and at political meetings. It would also occur at specific locations and everyone entering or leaving the location would be recorded. Each person in a photograph with an ASIO file would have an identifying number marked on the image next to them.

I have thousands of these images and what I have noticed is that one builds up a mental image of the changing face of what the State saw as a threat. What starts as the hunt for Communist spies gradually evolves into suspicion about social issues like Aboriginal land rights, youth culture, Women's Liberation, anti Vietnam, Apartheid— even amateur actors at New Theatre were thoroughly photographed. There's even a file on the Mother's Club at Gardenvale Primary School. The absurdity is evident in hindsight.

Yet what ASIO didn't realise is that they were constructing an invaluable social history of Australian dissent as they gradually confused subversion with dissent.

They recorded many people, especially in the 1960s filled with youthful exuberance, high in hope and action. These people were questioning the central values of a society their parents had created. Here they are frozen in the malevolent eye of the security services. Whilst it's invasive, seedy and incompetent, even they can't diminish sunlit youth.

—

Haydn Keenan 2011



Gallery Three

Sonia Leber

Born in Melbourne, 1959

David Chesworth

Born in Stoke, United Kingdom, 1958

Sonia Leber and David Chesworth live and work in Melbourne
www.waxsm.com.au

Now and Forever 2009

single channel digital video, stereo audio, wood, acrylic, polypropylene
video loop 1 min 30 secs; audio loop 12 mins 10 secs
dimensions variable

voices: Royal Melbourne Philharmonic Choir

originally commissioned by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art
courtesy the artists



The oculus is normally encountered from below as a small circular opening located high in the domed ceiling of a sacred space. The eye of the oculus admits a thin shaft of light, which, in the staging of sacred architecture, represents the permanent gaze of an all-seeing deity.

In *Now and Forever* you gaze down through an oculus from the position of a solitary observer, high above a heavenly dome. You witness aspects of the profane as well as the sacred. You hear choral singing, in which ordinary voices resonate in the vast chamber below taking on 'sacred effects'. You also hear sounds of struggle and pain. There is a strict geometry to the floor space, which creates formal social arrangements within the space.

We have an abiding fascination and belief that certain architectural forms have the capacity to act on us in ineffable ways, stimulating our senses and changing the nature of our behaviour as individuals. These architectural forms (the cave, the tunnel, the temple, the hut, the stairwell, the turret, amongst others) are effective in that they have the capacity to make certain spiritual and secular 'fictions' manifest. We have made several works which focus on the architecture of permanent observation as a means of social control, particularly as a reforming influence, to make us want to 'improve' ourselves.

—

Sonia Leber and David Chesworth 2011

Gallery Three

Denis Beaubois

Born in Mauritius, 1970

Lives and works in Sydney

www.denisbeaubois.com

In the event of Amnesia the city will recall... 1996–1997

DVD 9 mins 30 secs

courtesy the artist



This work explores the relationship between the individual and the metropolis. Twelve sites were selected around the city of Sydney where surveillance cameras are prominently placed, the locations were mapped out and the stage for this work was created. A daily pilgrimage was made to the sites for a period of three days. No permission was sought for the use of these sites. The performer arrived unannounced and carried out his actions. Upon arrival the performer attempted to engage with the electronic eye. The performer's actions were directed to the camera, which adopted the role of audience.

The primary audience was the surveillance camera (or those who monitor them). Their willingness to observe is not based upon the longing for entertainment. It stems from a necessity to assess and monitor designated terrain. Imbued with a watchdog consciousness, the primary audience scans the field for suspects, clues and leads. Like many audiences, it assesses the scene and attempts to pre-empt the plot. However this audience is extremely discerning and, ultimately, by assessing and reacting to the event it also adopts the role of performer.

Within this metropolis the walls do not have ears but are equipped with eyes. The city must understand the movements of those who dwell within its domain. To successfully achieve this it must be capable of reading its inhabitants. What can be read can be controlled in theory. Yet the city's eyes are not content following the narrative provided by its inhabitants. The city weaves its own text within the surface narrative. A paranoid fiction based on foresight.

—

Denis Beaubois 1997

In the event of Amnesia the city will recall...1996–1997 (still)

Gallery Three

Kohei Yoshiyuki

Born 1946, Hiroshima Prefecture, Japan

Lives and works in Japan

www.yossimilo.com/artists/kohe_yosh

from the series *The Park*

Untitled 1971, 1972, 1973, 1979

edition various of 10

25 gelatin silver prints, 40.64 × 50.8 cm

courtesy the artist and Yossi Milo Gallery, New York

Kohei Yoshiyuki: *The Park* is presented in association with the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane

Kohei Yoshiyuki's now infamous documentation of voyeurism features confronting photographs of public space clandestinely used as private space at night: Japanese parks where, in the absence of privacy, young people perform intimate acts while being watched by onlookers.

During the 1970s, young commercial photographer Kohei Yoshiyuki (a pseudonym; his real name remains unknown) frequented Tokyo's Shinjuku, Yoyogi and Aoyama parks at night with a 35mm camera, infrared film and a flash. Photographed over a decade, the series was exhibited at the Komai Gallery in Tokyo in 1979 where the images were printed life-size and exhibited in the dark while visitors used hand held torches to view the photographs. These prints were subsequently destroyed.¹

1. Amelia Groom, 'Seeing Darkness', in *Kohei Yoshiyuki: The Park* exhibition catalogue, IMA, Brisbane, July 2011.

2. Shihoko Iida, 'Gaze without subjectivity', *Artlink: Art and Surveillance*, 31: 3, 2011, p.28.

Images from *The Park* were first published in 1972 in the popular 'secret camera' genre magazine *Shukan Shincho* and were not initially considered as art photography.² However, Yoshiyuki's series also sits within a broad tradition of voyeurism in Japanese art, including eighteenth and nineteenth-century erotic ukiyo-e prints and in cinema.

In 1980 Yoshiyuki published a further selection and, in 1989, he wrote about the process of getting to know the park voyeurs. In 2006 Yoshiyuki was included in Martin Parr's publication *The Photobook: A History: Volume 2* as an unknown innovator, prompting Yossi Milo Gallery to track down the reclusive artist and convince him to reprint the remaining negatives for what became a highly successful exhibition in 2007.

Of the relationship between couples and voyeur Yoshiyuki wrote: 'The couples were not aware of the voyeurs in most cases. The voyeurs try to look at the couple from a distance ... then slowly approach toward the couple behind the bushes, and from the blind spots of the couple they try to come as close as possible, and finally peep from a very close distance. But sometimes there are the voyeurs who try to touch ... and gradually escalating — then trouble would happen.'³

3. Philip Geffer, 'Sex in the Park, and its Sneaky Spectators', *The New York Times*, 23 Sept 2007.

—

Naomi Cass



Untitled 1971, 1973, 1971
from the series *The Park*



Gallery Four

Percy Grainger

Born in Brighton, Victoria, 1882

Lived and worked in Germany, Britain and the United States

Died in New York, 1961

www.grainger.unimelb.edu.au

from the series *Lust Branch*

Springfield Photos 1–8: Daylight 9–10 am 1942

8 gelatin silver prints each 13.5 × 14 cm

Photo-skills Guide 1941–1942

gelatin silver prints in handmade cardboard album

19.5 × 29.7 cm

Kansas City VIII 1933

Kansas City III Selfbeaten Feb 9 1933

Kansas City IX Selfbeaten Feb 9 1933

Kansas City XX Selfbeaten Feb 9 1933

Kansas City XIX 1933

Kansas City VI 1933

Kansas City X 1933

*Kansas City XXIII Outlook from room where selfbeating
took place Feb 9 1933*

Kansas City XVII 1933

Kansas City IV 1933

Kansas City XVI 1933

11 gelatin silver prints

dimensions variable

*Private Matters: Do not open until 10 (ten) years after
my death 1955–1956 envelope 25.1 × 32 cm*

Courtesy the Grainger Museum, The University of Melbourne

Internationally renowned Australian pianist and composer Percy Grainger (1882–1961) built new sounds by modifying old instruments. He built electronic instruments from recycled materials; he built new words, new types of garments and previously unforged links between folk and classical music. He also built the *Past-Horde-House*, his term for museum, in which he curated his life.

In these photographs, hand printed between 1933 and 1942, Percy Grainger turns the camera on himself (and to a lesser degree his wife Ella) to document his sexual practices, which he believed were intrinsic to his being and his creativity. These works form part of what Grainger called the 'lust branch' of his Museum.

Grainger was a sadomasochist and wrote to his partners and friends quite openly about his thoughts on sex, including what he called 'self beating'. However when in 1956 Sir Eugene Goossens, British composer and Sydney Symphony Orchestra conductor was detained for bringing pornography into the country, and was subsequently destroyed by the scandal, Grainger, like a number of prominent Australian artists, either left the country or outwardly restrained their behaviour. Consequently, Grainger sealed his 'lust branch' of the Museum, a selection of books, whips and photographs related to sadomasochistic behaviour in a travelling trunk, and left the instruction: 'Not to be opened until 10 (ten) years after my death' (exhibited). Contained within the accompanying envelope is a kind of manifesto in the form of a letter, the pages of which are carefully bound together by hand, in which he writes, 'The photographs of myself whipped by myself in Kansas City and the various photographs of my wife whipped by me show that my flagellatism was not make-believe or puerility, but had the element of drasticness in it. Nevertheless my flagellatism was never inhuman or uncontrolled.'

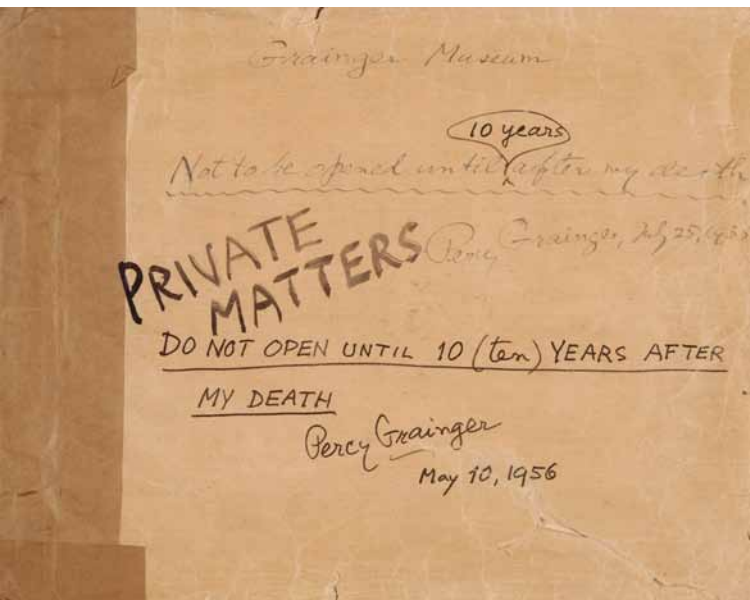
While Grainger was the subject of intense, international media scrutiny, marketing and photography, to document their sadomasochistic practices Grainger had to teach himself photography. The archive he left has the quality of forensic records, consistent with the quasi scientific method he practiced in other aspects of his life. Exhibited is Grainger's self-printed, hand-made album, *Photo-skills Guide* in which he makes technical observations, similarly evident in and on other 'lust branch' photographs.

Grainger considered his sexual expression integral to all aspects of his life, indeed for Grainger sexuality was inseparable from his renowned life as a pianist and composer. It is probable that the 'lust branch' images were designed for display in the Museum, in a more enlightened period.

In 1941 Grainger wrote, 'I have a bottomless hunger for truth ... life is innocent, yet full of meaning. Destroy nothing, forget nothing ... say all. Trust life, trust mankind. As long as the picture of truth is placed in the right frame (art, science, history) it will offend none.'

—

Naomi Cass



Private Matters: Do not open until 10 (ten) years after my death 1955–1956



Kansas City VIII 1933



from *Photo-skills Guide* 1941–1942

Night Projection Window

Walid Raad

Born in Chbanieh, Lebanon, 1967

Lives and works in New York

www.theatlasgroup.org

I Only Wish that I Could Weep 2002/1

single channel digital video

7 mins 40 secs

edition of 7 + 1AP

courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

This document is attributed to Operator #17, a Lebanese Army intelligence officer who was assigned to monitor the Corniche, a seaside boardwalk in Beirut. From 1997 on, the officer decided to videotape the sunset instead of his assigned target. The videotape recounts the operator's story and concentrates on the footage he was permitted to keep after his dismissal.

I Only Wish that I Could Weep 2002/1 (stills)



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To the unknowing subjects, I also extend my heartfelt gratitude.

—

Naomi Cass

Principal Partner

MELBOURNE FESTIVAL

Kohei Yoshiyuki: *The Park* is presented in association with
the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane

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Curated by Naomi Cass

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