

Destiny Deacon

Walk + don't look blak.

RESOURCE KIT



Destiny Deacon
Oz Games – Under the spell of the tall poppies
1998/2003
Image courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9
Gallery, Sydney
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Director's Foreword

Destiny Deacon: Walk & don't look blak is the thirteenth exhibition in an ongoing series of solo projects by leading Australian artists on Level 4 of the MCA. It features photography, video and installation from the past decade of Deacon's prolific practice, as well as new work produced especially for the exhibition.

A considered look at Deacon's work is timely. Since the early 1990s, she has become one of Australia's most prominent artists, exhibiting widely both locally and internationally. *Walk & don't look blak* is, however, Deacon's first solo museum exhibition and publication, providing insight into the artist's incisive and humorous world-view. Utilising friends, family, and her vast collection of 'Aboriginalia', Deacon creates uncanny, beautiful, frightening and funny vignettes of contemporary Aboriginal life. Grounded in her long involvement in Indigenous and feminist politics, Deacon's work examines how language and representation can be both tools of oppression and ammunition for resistance.

The MCA has profiled in depth the work of a number of significant Australian artists since the Level 4 Galleries opened in 1999. These artists have included Guan Wei, Dale Frank, Mikala Dwyer, Kathleen Petyarre, Lyndal Jones, Hossein Valamanesh, Patricia Piccinini, Dorothy Napangardi, Maria Fernanda Cardoso, Susan Norrie, Callum Morton and Rodney Glick.

This kit is designed to complement the exhibition experience and the catalogue. It outlines the importance of providing greater access through the touring of the exhibition *Walk & don't look blak* nationally and abroad, for all audiences including Indigenous people of the Pacific regions. The kit offers a thought-provoking engagement with the work, providing insights and a deeper understanding of Destiny's artistic practice for people who are interested in finding out more about this important artist. We hope that it will be useful for future reference.

Many people have contributed to this exhibition. I would like to thank Destiny Deacon first of all for her commitment to the project, including the production of new work. We are grateful to the exhibition's guest curator, Natalie King, for her dedication and enthusiasm in bringing this project to fruition, as well as Destiny's long-time collaborator Virginia Fraser for her close involvement and support. Our thanks also go to the artist's representative, Roslyn Oxley, and her staff and to resource kit contributors Anita Heiss and Darryl French.

The Museum is very grateful for the longstanding assistance of American Express, and its sponsorship of this exhibition in particular, as part of its program of supporting projects featuring Indigenous Australian artists. The MCA is also grateful to the NSW Ministry for the Arts for Special Initiatives support towards its 2004 Indigenous Programs and to the MCA Ambassadors for their ongoing support for the Museum's Level 4 solo exhibition program.

Following the presentation at the MCA, the exhibition will travel to Adam Art Gallery, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand and to the Cultural Centre Tjibaou, Noumea, New Caledonia, and then continue on to further international venues. I would like to thank Sophie McIntyre, Director of the Adam Art Gallery and Emmanuel Kasarhérou, Director, and Henri Gama, Head of Visual Arts & Exhibitions Department, at the Cultural Centre Tjibaou for their early commitment to working on this project with us. We are grateful to the Victorian Government through the Arts Victoria International Program for their contribution towards the exhibition's international tour, as well as the French Consulate General, Sydney for assistance with the French catalogue translation.

Finally, thanks as always go to Telstra for enabling free admission to the MCA.

Elizabeth Ann Macgregor
Director
Museum of Contemporary Art

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Introduction

This resource kit has been produced by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia, as supporting interpretive material for the national and international tour of the exhibition *Destiny Deacon: Walk & don't look blak*. The exhibition was curated by Natalie King with curatorial advice provided by Virginia Fraser.

This kit aims to offer an insight into Deacon's engaging and challenging practice as an urban contemporary Indigenous artist. The complexity of her work is explored through a range of material, including an artist interview, two critical responses from an Indigenous perspective, an extensive glossary, and artwork analysis pages with discussion and activities for before, during and after the gallery visit.

This resource is written for use by teachers and students of school and tertiary groups of all levels, and as a general guide for those visiting the exhibition in mixed groups. This material will also be useful for museum education staff, Indigenous art and community audiences, as well as the general museum visitor.

Ways to use this kit

This kit can be used in a range of ways by education groups, and for individual study or research.

Use the images, activities and ideas to assist pre-visit preparation, as a guide during the gallery visit and to develop post-visit activities and assignments. Teachers are advised to adapt these activities to suit their students' needs or integrate sections of the kit into existing classroom units of study.

The material contained can be adapted to develop teaching and learning ideas for a range of subject areas including visual arts, photography, social history, Indigenous studies, English, and design, and as a general introduction to the exhibition across the curriculum.

The kit is specific to the exhibition visit to help students and teachers engage with the actual works of art, but is also intended to be used after the exhibition has closed—extending the life of the exhibition, and becoming a general classroom resource on the artist.

The four artwork analysis pages examine some of the key themes in Deacon's work, and analyse one artwork in depth in the context of the theme. These sections can be photocopied and distributed as student worksheets or study notes in preparation for the gallery excursion.

Words listed in **bold** are defined in the Glossary on page 24. Add to the Glossary as you discover words or themes in Deacon's exhibition.

Need more information? Email MCA Education on education@mca.com.au or see the Education page on www.mca.com.au



Destiny Deacon
My living room, Brunswick 3056 1996/2004
 Found objects, photographs, video, carpet, household furniture
 Image courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
 © 2004 Represented by Viscopy

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Destiny Deacon: *Walk & don't look blak* exhibition overview

"It's about (re)creating a world of my own outside my own world."¹

Destiny Deacon's wicked humour, potent politics and ongoing international exposure are distilled into this, her first major museum project here. Bringing together works spanning fifteen years, as well as new work created especially for the MCA, this exhibition combines different aspects of Deacon's practice—photography, video, installation and performance.

Deacon draws widely from suburban culture, and personal experience, inventively using what she describes as 'low-tech' and 'low-budget' tools and techniques. In several works she has used kitsch souvenirs, knick-knacks and black 'dollies' depicting Aboriginal people, the kind especially popular in Australia in the 1940s, 50s and 60s. Rather than rejecting these objects as offensive, Deacon delights in exposing their original meanings.

Deacon's work is fed by information gathered from readily accessible mass media—television, newspapers, the internet, DVDs, videos, and library books. In addition, pieces of **Koori kitsch**, dolls and other objects are given to her by obliging friends. As a 'domestic choreographer' with a **Polaroid** and video camera, she uses maimed dolls and props to star alongside statuettes and souvenirs. Family and friends also appear in unsettling **dioramas**. Moreover, Deacon's spooky, make-believe worlds are sometimes emblazoned with political slogans.

Walk & don't look blak includes over 50 works made since 1990 that draw out aspects of Deacon's practice, including humour, kitsch, portraiture and landscape themes. Key series include *Forced into Images* (2001) and *Postcards from Mummy* (1998), featured at *Documenta 11* in Kassel, Germany in 2002, as well as portraits of friends and colleagues.

New work created for the exhibition revolves around ersatz military camouflage—a funny and creepy installation exploring the ways kitsch functions to domesticate big issues, ideas and emotions. In addition, Deacon relocates a version of her living room—where she makes her work—including furniture, props, photos, souvenirs and memorabilia.

The exhibition title derives from a song by 1960s African-American soul group The Temptations, *Walk and don't look back*, made popular later by The Rolling Stones. Destiny has been using 'blak' as a term since 1991 with her work *Blak lik mi* (1991/2003).

Background to Destiny Deacon

Destiny Deacon was born in 1957, in Maryborough, Queensland, Australia, and raised in Melbourne. She is descended from KuKu (Far-North Queensland) and Erub/Mer (Torres Strait) peoples. Deacon holds a Bachelor of Arts (Politics) 1979, from University of Melbourne, and a Diploma of Education 1981, from La Trobe University. After gaining her education qualifications, Deacon commenced working as a History teacher. She has also worked as a university lecturer, public servant and broadcaster. She began taking photographs in 1990, and held her first exhibition in the same year.

Deacon is an artist/photographer, who also works with video, often with her long-term collaborator, Virginia Fraser. Deacon is also a writer and broadcaster (since 1987, *Not Another Koori Show*, Radio 3CR). She lives in Melbourne, where she works from her living room/studio.

¹ Destiny Deacon, quoted in Natalie King, 'Episodes: "A laugh and a tear in every photo"', *Destiny Deacon: Walk & don't look blak* exhibition catalogue, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2004, p. 18.

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Selected exhibition history

Destiny Deacon has a significant exhibition history, and has presented her photographs, installations and videos in Australia and internationally.

In Australia, she has presented numerous solo shows and group exhibitions. Her early exhibition history includes participating in *the Aboriginal Women's Exhibition* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney and *Kudjeris* at **Boomalli** Aboriginal Artists Co-operative, Sydney in 1991. She held her first solo exhibition, *Caste Offs*, at the Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney in 1993, and participated in *Can't See for Lookin' - Koori Women Educating* at the Access Gallery, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, and *Australian Perspecta 1993* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales that same year. She featured in the *Melbourne International Biennial* (1999); the *Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art* in 2000 and 2004, and the *2000 Biennale of Sydney*.

She has participated in the *Fifth Havana Biennial* (1994); the first *Johannesburg Biennale* (1995); the *Asia-Pacific Triennial* (1996); and the *Yokohama Triennale* (2001). She was the only Australian artist invited to participate in *Documenta 11*, Kassel, Germany (2002).

For a more extended exhibition history, a filmography and further biographical details, please see the *Destiny Deacon: Walk & don't look blak* exhibition catalogue or the references listed in this kit on page 28.



Destiny Deacon
Me and Virginia's Doll (Me and Carol) 1997
 Light jet print from Polaroid
 Image courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
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Interview with Destiny Deacon

NOT MUCH OF A SOUL TO BARE

Virginia Fraser is an artist, writer and film maker based in Melbourne. Since 1994 she has been working collaboratively with Destiny Deacon producing props, sets, costumes and characters for staged photographs, installations and videos. Their jointly produced videos include Crawl (2004), Matinee (2003), Forced into images (2001) and Jump (1999).

Virginia Fraser: Where did you first see 'art'?

Destiny Deacon: Probably in my early teens on a school excursion to the National Gallery of Victoria, which was no big deal, because the school was nearby in South Melbourne. The most exciting thing was getting away, a bus ride with naughty girls. We saw paintings of men shearing sheep, landscapes, portraits, and some pottery and sculpture, I think.

Which other artists interested you before you got into art yourself?

I was aware of our traditional Indigenous art, crafts and culture, but the contemporary visual art world was like another planet for someone from my background—all white middle-class privilege gone remote.

Urban and regional blaks were making inroads into dance, film, literature, music and theatre in the 1970s, but it wasn't until the **Boomalli Mob** in Sydney got rolling in the mid '80s busting into the contemporary visual arts scene, when I could say 'Hey I know those two photographers!'—Brenda L. Croft and Tracey Moffatt. All of those Boomalli pioneers have been moving and shaking ever since.

What educated you visually and aesthetically as a child?

Picture books, movies and television. The shops, the streets and lanes of Melbourne. But I thought I was more pathetic than aesthetic.

My family grew up on the waterfront. Our **commission home** was the hub of painters and dockers, criminals, unionists, Pacific and West Indian merchant seamen, the African-American navy and lots of Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders, Kanaks and Polynesians, etcetera. There was culture galore. We got the latest overseas comics, magazines, clothes, music and gadgets long before most people did. It gave you an idea of what the future might bring.

But as far as interior design went, growing up we had nothing much. No etchings, paintings or family photographs on the walls. In the early 1970s Mum won two paintings about bush fires in a pub raffle. They went somewhere in the hallway. Eventually, the mantelpiece in the lounge held my younger siblings' latest sporting trophies.

When did you first see the kind of kitsch that you now sometimes use in your work?

In second-hand shops during the 1970s, after I'd left home. I didn't see fancy blak ornaments or crockeries growing up. I don't know anyone who did. We just had the basics, plus plastic bowls, cups and plates.

I mainly got engaged with it because I felt sorry for the objects and wanted to rescue them, bring them up to another level. A lot of it's derogatory. It's expensive 'Australiana' now. There's a lot of junk around as well with today's Australian **'Aboriginalia'** tourist market knick-knacks and souvenir items being mostly functional and made overseas.

Were you always interested in the world around you or, as a child, did you prefer escapism?

The real world was enough escapism for me. Growing up poor in urban Melbourne probably messed up my mind—you create make-believe landscapes out of horrible situations, looking for some reality out of disappointments, and marvels in the images and issues that surround you.

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Before you decided to turn yourself into a photographer you'd done a lot—two tertiary qualifications, schools and university teaching, staff training in the Commonwealth public service, being one of Charlie Perkins' 'Charlie's Angels', community radio broadcasting, some video—but nothing obviously pointing to an art career, except perhaps a visual and performative way of relating to the world. What went through your mind when you decided to start showing pictures?

Expert white travellers still take and make the usual stereotypes. It irks me. Half the reason I got into photography was because I was sick of the sameness of their images—kids with snot pouring out of noses, and flies eating the crap out of eyes, empty beer bottles, or our children, naked and wet in watering holes. I'm sure in other situations the photographers would be arrested for paedophilia.

Sometimes these photographers like to bestow a 'nobility' on whoever they're lucky to meet and utilise—Indigenous sport stars, dignified 'elders', plus anything documentary that goes with the dirt of fauna and flora. I just gave it a go in 1990 for the Melbourne Fringe Festival.

Though you were brought up to political activism, you've said you'd had enough of meetings around 1990—about the time you started making art. Does making and showing pictures function as a kind of or substitute for political activity?

I want people to get ideas. That's the best you can hope for.

You'd been taking pictures for a while before including people in them. Do you think the fact that your first models were rocks, dead animals, toys and kitsch objects informed the way you now deal with human models?

Yes, one step at a time has been a learning method. I've never been the one out there for 'live action' shots. My worst task is always my next task, and I've got to rule the roost. It's no different dealing with inanimate objects or people, except

with nature I'm more terrified. Both always end up being difficult or upsetting. But in the end it's the Polaroid camera that dictates it, and I allow the subject matter—because it's a human being—to say what photo they think's better. I'm democratic in that way.

As a photographer, you're best known for staged pictures, but your first shots, *Koori rocks, Gub words* (1990), were framed in the landscape, rather than staged from an idea in your mind. Do you distinguish between these two ways of image making?

The biggest difference is that I don't like taking photos in public areas. I'm scared of the bush, so each picture is a bravery test, but being scared of the bush doesn't mean I can avoid it. I've always been enthralled by the fascinating 'other' nature travel stories and film documentaries.

Race and gender are not necessarily as much in the forefront for you as for some viewers of the work; for instance, several writers about the video *Forced into images* (2001) have focused on the different skin colours of the two subjects, drawing inferences about intent and meaning.

I never saw skin colour as a factor. I was pleased that one was a boy and one was a girl, because it's good to have a mixture, but they were my nephew and niece, and the most important thing about them was that they were four-year-olds and uncontrollable, and fitted into the idea of being forced into images. It amazes me that people see them as black and white.

That's just part of being Aborigine. We come in different shades. He's black as well. It's not an issue.

The humour in your work is sometimes pretty bleak, sometimes whimsical, often ironic. It seems to be mixed up in the idea rather than being applied afterwards. How calculated is it?

I've never thought about this before, but that's true. First I labour for an idea, one that usually ends up

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being sad or pathetic, and then during the agony process of getting the image done, somehow things take a turn towards the ironic. Humour cuts deep. I like to think that there's a laugh and a tear in each picture.

This is an edited version of Not much of a soul to bare, a conversation between Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser published in the exhibition catalogue pp. 108 -110.

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Critical Response Politics and Satire in Destiny Deacon's work

The use of humour to survive was her destiny

Dr Anita Heiss, *Social Commentator, Writer in Residence, Macquarie University*

The survival of us as Blackfellas is due, in large part, to our ability to laugh—not only at ourselves, but more so at the foibles of the whiteman to kill us off, their denial in recognising this failure, and their ongoing yet relentless misrepresentations of who we are. Our reactions to such behaviour is often demonstrated behind closed doors and not for public consumption, but Destiny Deacon has seized upon such reactions and, coupled with her sharp, edgy Black humour, has over the past fifteen years commented on the social, historical and political realities of not only her own life but also that of Indigenous Australia more generally.

Destiny's is a clever and biting portrayal of the world in which we live, and who we are within it. Her images in *Blak lik mi* (1991/2003) are very much about how we as Indigenous people perceive ourselves to be, who we see when we look in the mirror. More often than not, what we see in the mirror is in stark contrast to the way in which white Australia chooses to see and therefore defines its Indigenous population—a definition often limited to the Blackfella sitting on a rock in the desert with a spear in hand and speaking language, or the unemployed, drunken black, and more recently the **Redfern** rioter. These are imposed stereotypes, not self-defining ones. Destiny knows that and challenges the viewer to come to terms with the fact that the only *real* portrayal of who we are, is the self-portrayal, showcased by those representations done by such art masters (or mistresses) as Destiny Deacon.

Destiny uses the little black doll as a symbol of Indigenous Australia. It is a political statement, because even though we know Aboriginality is not about skin colour, and regardless of whether it's an urban Melbourne experience or a remote one, when a Blackfella looks in the mirror, they see a Blackfella, even if we don't fit the current media definition of who we should be.

Her images scream loudly that just like other members of society we do everyday things; we dance as seen in *Move Baby Move* (2004), we're domesticated as highlighted in *Hanging out too* (2003) and some of us are regal too, as shown in *Princess* (1994/2003). And whitefellas thought they were the only ones with royalty, well Destiny is here to say "Dream on!"

Destiny's use of the black doll in her work is a much needed smack in the face of some white Australians (and toy manufacturers) who may never have considered that kids of colour might want dolls that resemble themselves, they might want to read stories relevant to their lives, and that even as adults we want to be enriched by artistic commentary that actually speaks to us and the life experiences we've actually had—not the life experiences that white Australia imagines or would like us to have.

Destiny's use of the female Black character through the doll also reminds me of Romaine Moreton's poem *Ode To Barbie* where the Indigenous protagonist says:

I never ever had a Barbie doll complex,
simply because
I didn't look like her,
could never look like her,
but importantly,
now after years of trying
did no longer want to look like her.²

The narrator rattles off all the reasons white girls aspire to be like Barbie (I'm sure it was so they could get their hands on Ken!!!), and how a simple running of fingers through her 'thick dreaded masses' reminds her that she's Indigenous. For this

² Romaine Moreton, 'Ode to Barbie' in *Rimfire: poetry from Aboriginal Australia*, Magabala Books, Broome, 2000, p. 21.

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reason alone, Destiny's use of the black doll in her work deserves thanks and praise on many levels, especially for all of us, who never aspired to be like Barbie.

The use of black dolls in *Blak lik mi* (1991/2003), as with other works by Destiny, is also about saying "I am a woman! I bleed, I love, I have dates from hell". These are the experiences of women generally, regardless of race. So the black dolls are about saying we are women, therefore we are people, and yes, that means we are HUMANS too. To me, Destiny's work says that if the viewer can simply recognise the simple, yet surprisingly less than obvious fact that we are human too, then much of the socially debilitating race issues facing black/white Australia in the 21st century would be dealt with.



Destiny Deacon
Blak lik mi 1991/2003
Light jet print from Polaroid
Image courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
© 2004 Represented by Viscopy

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Critical Response

The personal, family and memory in Destiny Deacon's work

Destiny's child looking *Over the Fence*

Darryl French, Lecturer, Department of Indigenous Studies, Macquarie University

Destiny's image of *Over the Fence*, (2000) is a strong image of intrigue, when we look at such images what do we see? How do we interpret what we see? This image raises so many memories of a lot of black people's childhoods. Do we see things differently through black eyes and do non-Aboriginal people see the same things through white eyes and are we constantly accused of over-exaggeration? Why is this child looking over the fence and what is this child seeing? Is the child seeing rejection? Is the child feeling pain? Is the child feeling confusion?

When Destiny captured such an image it has the ability to rekindle so many of our mob's childhood experiences such as my own childhood in Moree. This image immediately took me back to moments of sadness of the 1965 **Freedom Ride**. There was always a lot of envy and confusion because as a child who doesn't really understand the negative politics of some adults, you get confused about why certain things happen or don't happen.

So many of the kids I was raised with and myself can remember very strongly the times we stood on boxes, climbed trees, pressed our little faces against the wire fence at the town baths with our little fingers protruding through the wire watching white kids playing and laughing while swimming in the pool. I didn't fully understand at the time why we were treated differently and didn't have the same privileges and I suppose such images reflected so much curiosity and envy in most cases.

As young people we would ask our parents, why can't we do the same things as the white kids? Have we done something wrong? These questions would draw responses that would reflect such an overwhelming expression of sadness and frustration from our parents. They would at times give the simple response, "that's the way it is" and would try to avoid answering us

because of the fear of hurting us. We would not fully understand and would repeatedly ask the same questions. Adults when viewing this powerful image need to remind themselves that our children are the innocent victims of the negative behaviour of people who are supposed to nurture them and play an important role in fostering all aspects of positivism and fairness.

I have observed Destiny's use of similar themes of the personal, family and aspects of memory in re-kindling mission life and childhood memories for me in *Over the Fence* with other work throughout the exhibition, for instance as seen in her series *Postcards from Mummy*, (1998). The retracing of her mother's younger years in North Queensland and aspects of personal identity that then connects and strengthens one's sense of being, with the viewer questioning the images in her series. Was this the house, the places, the roads, the areas, the pool at some point her mother had lived, been or visited? The importance of these things for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can not be underestimated as similar journeys have been travelled.

To My Family

How deprived we would have been if we had been willing
To let things stay as they were we would have survived
But not as a whole people we would never had known our place.³

³ Sally Morgan, *My Place*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1987.

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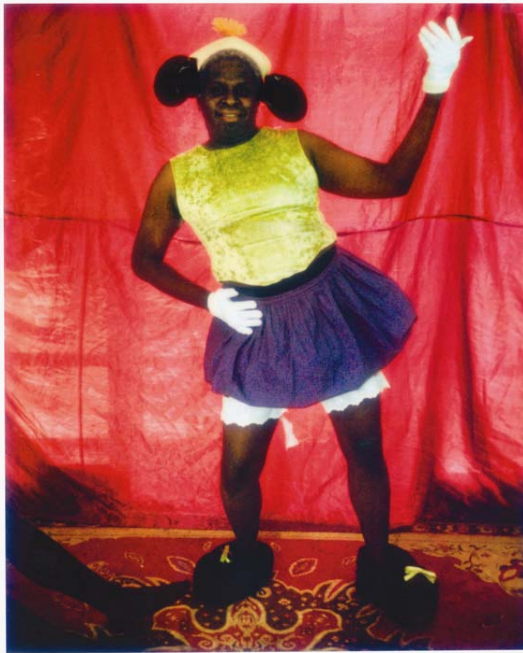


Destiny Deacon
Over the Fence 2000
Light jet print from Polaroid
Image courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9
Gallery, Sydney
© 2004 Represented by Viscopy

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THEME ANALYSIS: Politics and Satire Artwork: *Where's Mickey?* (2002)



Destiny Deacon
Where's Mickey? 2002
light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 80 cm, edition of 15
Image courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
© 2004 Represented by Viscopy

Politics and Satire

Satire is the use of humour, **irony** and ridicule to expose and criticise people or topical issues - especially in a political context. Satire has long been utilised by various people and groups who are often marginalised or politically dispossessed, such as women, gays, lesbians and other minority groups. Satire is an engaging and entertaining way of subverting and undermining the traditional power of a hierarchy, government or leader. By making us laugh at the object of the satire, it reduces its power, makes us question its validity and allows the satirist to present a political critique.

For Destiny Deacon, satire is a powerful tool. For her there is "a laugh and a tear in every photo"⁴.

Deacon adds "I always say that there's no excuse for ignorance. Read newspapers. Listen and watch the news and documentaries. Educate yourself with information..."⁵

Artwork Information

In *Where's Mickey?* (2002), Deacon analyses issues of race, gender norms and **stereotypes** through the use of satire, humour, and images we recognise from childhood. Deacon presents us with a bright, colourful image of a "mouseketeer". The Mouseketeers were the youthful fan club of the Disney cartoon characters Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse. These happy, smiling white children were broadcast across America and around the world on the television show *The Mickey Mouse Club*. This program was broadcast internationally in the late 1950s, a period in history that particularly interests Deacon as it pre-dates many changes to social, race and family relations.

Importantly for Deacon the Mouseketeers presented an idealised, sanitised version of what American children should be like. This artwork reminds us of the historical omission of non-white people in the media. By presenting a black Mouseketeer, Deacon corrects this historical discrimination.

Questioning identity, its construction and perceptions is integral to Deacon's work. Deacon creates a **parody** of a female Mouseketeer, (or is it Minnie Mouse herself?) by **appropriating** parts of the costume (such as the mouse ears hat, shoes and gloves), and by using other found items such as a 1950s style hat. In this photograph Deacon takes this sense of parody further by using a man as the model, further bending and subverting this cultural icon by disrupting our expectations.

⁴ Natalie King, op. cit., p. 17.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 23.

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The image suggests the childish game of dress-ups, with a serious undertone. The bright, flat colours are rather gaudy and cartoonish. The rumpled curtain, shallow stage-like space, and exaggerated pose suggest the theatrical, with the performing figure looking like it is part of a travelling troupe or a vaudeville play. The disembodied leg which can just be seen coming from outside the frame in the bottom left corner further accentuates the feeling of theatricality and artifice.

Discussion Points

Pre-visit:

- What is satire? Why is it such a useful tool to communicate political ideas? Look at and list some contemporary examples of satire in the media, such as television shows, advertisements and movies.
- Examine the way marginalised groups, such as minority ethnic groups, women and gay and lesbian groups have used satire for political purposes.

Gallery Visit:

- Analyse the use of political satire in Deacon's work. Trace her appropriation and parody of cultural icons, their recontextualisation and re-presentation. How does she construct her satires and what is the effect?
- Deacon calls herself an "old fashioned political artist", using humour as a way of making political points because "humour cuts deep". Does Deacon's work make you laugh? Why/why not? Discuss why laughter can be a good political tool.

Post-visit:

- Discuss the use of irony in Deacon's work. How much of the effect relies upon the viewers' awareness of what is being satirised? How would different audiences from different places react to this work?
- What cultural institution, person, or idea would you like to satirise using some of Deacon's strategies and techniques? Discuss how to

make artworks which use satire, parody and irony to express a positive political outcome.

Junior Activities:

Knowing About Art

- Is art a serious thing or can it also be funny? Discuss how serious points can be made with humour using examples from everyday life.
- Talk about the construction of this photograph. How has it been made? Analyse the composition - is it centred, where is the focal point? Look at the pose, the bright cartoonish colours and the composition.
- Does this image remind you of anything else you have seen? Characters in advertising and cartoons or on TV often have exaggerated features. Discuss examples of these and why and how certain features are made humorous.

Making Art

- Look at a cartoon or a comic strip. Find props and costumes from home and stage a photo shoot using yourself and friends that recreates the cartoon/comic strip.
- Look at political cartoons in newspapers and also at some examples of caricatures. Discuss the humorous effect of exaggerating certain features. Draw a self portrait as a caricature and then have a go drawing family and friends—but be nice!
- Write a story about this image that tells us what happens next. Draw a storyboard for your story.

Senior Activities

Knowing About Art

- Research the use of satire in the practice of Indigenous Australian artists such as Gordon Bennett, Gordon Hookey, and Tracey Moffatt. Analyse the political points these artists are trying to make and evaluate the success of their strategies. Compare their practice with international artists with the same concerns, such as Richard Prince, Martin Kippenberger or Barbara Kruger.
- Appropriation and recontextualisation are two important postmodern and contemporary art

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practices which often involve historical revision. Discuss the purpose of re-presenting and reinterpreting known cultural icons from our past and their effect in the present.

- In terms of post-colonialism, discuss the issues associated in art when one ethnic group depicts another (eg. depictions of Indigenous people by non-Indigenous Australians.) What problems occur? Talk about the construction of identity and stereotypes in the media and daily life.
- Examine Deacon's use of popular culture, everyday objects, the familiar/ domestic, as well as her exploration of cultural images and taboos, in terms of this image. Why do you think Deacon's drawing upon this vast cultural language is so effective?
- The titles of Deacon's works give important clues to her intention or concerns. What could be some of Deacon's answers to the question *Where's Mickey?* (2002), Who do you think Deacon could be 'taking the mickey' out of (teasing or ridiculing) in this work?

Making Art

- Look through magazines and newspapers to find images of famous places and products. Use a photograph of yourself to create a humorous collage which creates new meanings through the use of **pastiche**.
- Choose a serious contemporary social or political issue - such as racism, homophobia, or international conflicts and create a political artwork that uses humour to make a serious point. Consider staging photos for this exercise. Look at Yasumasa Morimura, Cindy Sherman and Yinka Shonibare for inspiration.
- Create a series of tea towels composed of text and found images that identifies, explores and challenges stereotypes of a particular group in our society that we don't usually think about. (eg. teenage boys, homeless people, people who feed pigeons in the park.)

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THEME ANALYSIS: Kitsch and dollies Artwork: *Adoption* (1993/2000)



Destiny Deacon
Adoption 1993/2000
Light jet print from Polaroid
100 x 100cm, edition of 15
Image courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
© 2004 Represented by Viscopy

Kitsch

'Kitsch' derives from a German word, and is defined as any form of cultural expression considered to be in bad taste. The definitions of what is and isn't kitsch change according to the audience, the times and fashion.

Many artists use kitsch in their work to examine issues of power in society. When one group in society defines something belonging to another group as 'kitsch' this is a way of exercising power over that group. Judgements of this kind place objects or customs in a hierarchy of taste and importance. Destiny Deacon subverts this power relationship by using the kitsch objects herself although she is a member of the group in society identified with the objects. As well as using these objects in her artworks, Deacon personally collects **Aboriginalia**, kitsch images of Aborigines in the form of dollies, ceramics and other artefacts.

Using what she calls 'blak' humour Deacon re-invents kitsch images from the 1950s and 60s into a biting commentary on today's political landscape. In Deacon's hands kitsch is not a sentimental appeal to a lost time of innocence or naivety, when such imagery was considered tasteful, but represents instead a way of commenting on contemporary politics.

Artwork Information

Deacon's photograph *Adoption* (1993/2000) presents the viewer with a tray of black plastic toy babies dropped into paper patties like an offering of **chocolate crackles** at a children's party. The cute 'sweetie-pie' plastic dollies, the pattern on the tray which looks like Aboriginal 'dot' painting, and even the nostalgic colouring of this photograph are undeniably kitsch.

This image makes an obvious reference to the Stolen Generation—a term coined by Aboriginal people to refer to a policy which led government agencies taking (often forcibly) Aboriginal children from their families and offering them up to white families for adoption. The aim of this policy was the assimilation of Aboriginal people into white culture and society. Through the kitsch dollies Deacon exposes the patronising and condescending ideas about Aboriginal people which underpinned such a policy by 'offering up' a tray of babies to the viewer.

The image also relates to the practice of some non-Indigenous couples 'shopping' or 'snacking' at orphanages for coloured children, as Indigenous curator Djon Mundine examines in his exhibition catalogue essay. What we see is not an image of a real baby but a banal, standardised artefact which highlights the correlation between how Aboriginal people are represented and how they are treated. As Deacon explains "Blak dolls represent us as people. I don't think white Australia, or whatever you want to call it, sees us as people."

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Discussion Points

Pre-Visit:

- What is kitsch? Who determines what is considered kitsch and what tasteful?
- What are some examples of kitsch in popular culture? Were things we now call kitsch considered kitsch at the time they were made?
- The tray in this artwork is reminiscent of Aboriginal Western Desert painting, a type of art practice widely identified as Aboriginal but one which many contemporary urban Indigenous artists such as Deacon do not engage with. Why do you think this is?

Gallery Visit:

- What are the political issues Deacon is raising in this work? Is the Stolen Generation a historical issue or is it still part of contemporary Australian politics?
- How is kitsch open to political interventions by artists?

Post-Visit:

- How would different audiences (older people, mothers, adopted children, Aboriginal people, non-Indigenous people, migrants) receive and understand this work? Students could show this work to other people, such as family, teachers, friends and record their responses.
- What might become the new kitsch?

Junior Activities:

Knowing about Art:

- Dolls and other toys are a reminder of childhood. Deacon chooses toys which explain issues particular to her culture. Brainstorm associations which toys/dollies can convey about other cultures.
- Look through parents' and grandparents' collections of objects – do you define these objects as kitsch? Hold an exhibition of a range of objects at school, and categorise them according to whether the class thinks they are kitsch or not, then discuss the range of responses to the objects.

- Discuss the concept and value of found objects in art. Do artists need to make things themselves? Talk about how the things around us can be made into art.

Making art:

- Construct a timeline from early childhood to the present and mark on it significant events such as moving house/country or starting school. In each phase describe which toys you played with and how over time they changed. Imagine into the future what things you would collect as an adult.
- This work is so striking because the dolls are taken out of context, and placed in a setting which makes associations with issues important to Deacon. Experiment with placing objects out of context and seeing the effect; how are narratives formed through contrasting objects?

Senior Activities:

Knowing about art:

- Looking at this work, do you think the recontextualisation of kitsch is an effective tool for the artist in communicating her message?
- In what ways do you think Deacon is parodying museum displays through this image?

Making art:

- Look at examples of popular culture and find a kitsch image that you feel could communicate something about today's world. Combine a photocopy of this image with your own drawings to make your own appropriation of kitsch imagery and describe what you are trying to communicate.
- Think about how Deacon uses humour and satire in her work. Work with text and found images to make a humorous or satirical collage which communicates your feelings about powerful people or institutions.

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THEME ANALYSIS: Portraiture – family and the self Artwork: *Mummy, about 13 y.o. at Hopevale* (1998)



Destiny Deacon
Mummy, about 13 y.o. at Hopevale 1998
From the series *Postcards from Mummy*
Image courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
© 2004 Represented by Viscopy

Artwork Information

This artwork is a **Polaroid** photograph from the 1998 series *Postcards from Mummy*. Destiny Deacon made this artwork after her mother's death to commemorate her life. In the *Postcards from Mummy*, Deacon combines photographs taken on a trip to her mother's **country**, with family snapshots to retrace her mother's early history. The journey to Far North Queensland, Australia, taken in 1998 with Virginia Fraser, was as much a journey of discovery for Deacon (who always said she was "scared of the bush") as a journey through a particular landscape.

Her mother was politically active throughout her life and worked in the Victorian Department of Community Services. *Mummy, about 13 y.o. at Hopevale* (1998) was taken in the community of the same name, located 46 km north of Cooktown in Far North Queensland. Hopevale, established as a Lutheran Mission in 1949, is home to various Aboriginal clan groups who speak Guugu Yimithirr and other languages. Deacon's common themes of travel, landscape, memory, identity and family portraiture combine in this one series to become a personal diary or travelogue.

Discussion Points

Pre – Visit:

- What is portraiture? Why do we take photos of people? Discuss different types of portraiture by studying examples of artists who work with photographic images of people, eg. Christian Boltanski, Tracey Moffatt or Leah King-Smith.
- Discuss the concept of location in helping to unpack a photograph's meaning. If we look at this image we cannot see a landscape or get a sense of place from the background. We have to build a sense of place from what Deacon has told us about the town of Hopevale. How would the image's meaning change if the location was changed to another place?
- Discuss as a group the concept of 'the gaze' in photography. This refers to the viewpoint of the person who looks at the photograph and how the viewer has power over the subject of the photograph. It refers to the relationship between the viewer and the viewed. Deacon has said that this is a detail from a group photo, but she does not know who took the image. Discuss how a reading of this photograph changes if it was taken by a representative of an institution, or a family member, or an official photographer? What strategies has Deacon used to reclaim this photograph for her own gaze?

Gallery Visit:

- Why do you think Deacon has used images of her family and friends throughout her work?
- Deacon uses suburban culture and her own personal experience as inspiration to make her work. She has said "The pictures explain me". Choose one of her works which is not a self-portrait and discuss how the work may be seen as a self-portrait.

Post – Visit:

- What is different and similar Destiny's photography compared to photos in your family album?
- Write about the photograph that you found most interesting in the exhibition. Describe it and explain how it uses the devices and

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conventions of portraiture, memory, journey, and humour.

Junior Activities:

Knowing about art:

- Deacon says "I've started taking the sort of pictures I do because I can't paint...and then I discovered it was a good way of expressing some feelings that lurk inside. Taking pictures is **hard yakka** for me." Using this quotation as a starting point, brainstorm as a group why you think Deacon uses photographs rather than drawing her subjects.
- Make a list of advantages and disadvantages of using photography in art (eg. advantage: quick and realistic image; disadvantage: relying on a technical process). When you discuss the issue of cost, remember Deacon always focuses on the cheapness and availability of her techniques, compared to many other photographic artists.
- Why do we send postcards? What pictures do you usually see on postcards? Collect some postcards from tourist shops. Ask your family if they have any older postcards you might use.

Making art:

- Collect three to eight images of people from newspapers or magazines and write a story about them as though they are a family or group of friends. Under each photograph write a caption explaining who the person is and when or where the photo was taken. Surround the image with a white frame so it looks like the Polaroid format.
- Design a postcard combining images of your favorite things. How does this postcard act as a portrait of you? You could add text as well.
- Write a story about *Mummy, about 13 y.o. at Hopevale*. Begin the story using the title that is written under the image as the first sentence.

Senior Activities:

Knowing about art:

- Portraiture may be seen as a traditional and important art form—often presented as large-scale realistic oil paintings of powerful people, surrounded by a gold frame. How do you think Deacon subverts portraiture?
- Memory is a key theme underlying Deacon's use of portraits and images of family. Select another Australian photomedia artist who deals with the theme of memory, for instance Brenda L. Croft, Anne Ferran or Darren Sives, and compare and contrast one work produced by the artist and Deacon.
- Discuss how text in Deacon's artwork contributes to its meaning. The text is often hand-written and not the typical 'slick' text used in photography – how does this give us further insight into the theme of personal memory and history in this artwork?

Making art:

- *Postcards from Mummy* is like a personal diary of Deacon's journey. Collect images and objects from your childhood and arrange them to form a collage/mixed media installation to become a self-portrait or a diary page.
- Take photographs of, and find objects from, a landscape in your local environment. Design a memorial to be placed in this landscape. Consider the subject of your memorial, materials, and placement. Draw an image of your proposed memorial and write a few sentences explaining what you are commemorating.

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THEME ANALYSIS: Videos and photographic work—approaches and techniques

Artwork: *Forced into images* (2001)



Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser
Forced into images (still) 2001
 Super 8 transferred to digital video
 [cast: Inyaka Harding and Elia Shugg]
 9 minutes
 Image courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
 © 2004 Represented by Viscopy

Videos:

- For her video pieces Destiny Deacon works in collaboration with other artists including Virginia Fraser, Michael Riley and Fiona Hall.
- Deacon was an early writer and performer in Australian Indigenous television, especially mini-television soap operas. *Welcome to my Koori world* (1992) and *How low can you go?* (1996) were created for ABC Television. Deacon cites picture books, movies and television as important influences on her practice.
- Other video works produced by Deacon for exhibition have continued to operate in the genre of urban narrative dramas. The soap opera genre offers a rich range of artistic conventions for use, including vivid expression of emotion, conflict and resolution, stereotypes of good and bad characters and lurid storylines. Referencing this genre permits Deacon to create domestic scenarios where narratives unfold with tales of dispossession, alienation, incarceration and violence.

Photographic Techniques

- Deacon has purposefully avoided the tendency toward sophisticated and complex digital media in recent art in preference for a relatively straightforward, low-tech and “el cheapo” method. Her images are shot on **Polaroid** then scanned into the computer and printed as **laser, bubble or light jet prints**. She has even created inkjet prints on tea towels.
- Deacon decided that she was fed up with “lotions and potions at night in the darkroom” and resorted to Polaroid. Polaroid allows for shifts in scale and lends immediacy to the work with instant results while the transfer process confers a dreamlike quality to the prints. The efficacy of Deacon’s methods also complements her practice of making work within relatively short time frames, often in response to particular curatorial themes for an exhibition.
- Instead of single images Deacon uses a serial format to create her narrative sequences, and relies on both found images, often of family and friends, and images which she has staged with props and backgrounds. Her photography and video work is not documentary or reportage but touches on similar themes explored in social documentary including personal identity, racial stereotypes and gender issues.

Artwork information

This image is a still taken from the video component of *Forced into images* (2001), a body of work that incorporates video and photography. The video was made in collaboration with Virginia Fraser. Like much of Deacon's work the subjects of this video are family and domestic settings. It is set in Deacon's home and features two four-year-olds, her niece and nephew. The children's faces are obscured by masks, a recent theme in Deacon's work, making the image look both creepy and cute. The fact that Deacon has cast two Aboriginal people, of different skin tones, challenges the way people make assumptions about what race someone is based on their appearance.

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The title of the work comes from an unpublished letter by contemporary African-American writer Alice Walker, which contains the line "I see our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, captured and forced into images, doing hard time for all of us". This poem refers to the way Western art has 'used' non-Western European people in art, depicting them in stereotypical ways.

When Deacon's niece and nephew arrived for the photo-shoot she was surprised they had come in casual clothes, hoping they might have dressed up. Unlike much of Deacon's other work this video is not staged or choreographed. What appealed to Deacon about her subjects is that they were uncontrollable, and could not so easily be 'forced into images'.

Discussion Points

Pre – Visit:

- Many of Deacon's films are influenced by the tele-visual and use a soap opera style genre. What attracts Deacon to this genre? What would be the effect on her work if she utilised other genres of film and video?
- What other artists do you know working in video? Research some Australian and international artists like Deacon who incorporate video with other media like photography and sculpture to explore a range of themes, for instance Mona Hatoum, Bruce Nauman, Susan Norrie, Tony Oursler and Ugo Rondinone. Why do you think these artists work across a variety of media? How does this change how audiences respond to the work?

During Visit:

- Look at the quality (or grain as it is called in photography) of Deacon's photographic images. Are they sharp and detailed or grainy and blurred? Why has Deacon chosen this image quality and how does it add meaning to the work?
- Choose one of Deacon's video works. What has she chosen as the setting for the video and why? What does the location of the video add to its meaning? What would happen if another

setting was chosen, for instance a cityscape or an anonymous space like a hospital waiting room?

- Many of Deacon's photographic and video works develop narratives through their placement or structure – the narrative arises through these factors rather than through a script. Choose one of the video pieces and analyse what is happening.

Post – Visit:

- Deacon's work refers to the domestic setting and scale. Why do you think the scale of Deacon's photographs, and the display of her videos, vary from one series to the next? What factors could influence Deacon's decision to print at a particular size? Think of the way we read images of a particular scale (eg. large scale for historical images, small scale for domestic images), and how we tend to relate to scale – do you come up close to small images, and stand back from larger ones?
- What relationships are there between Destiny's photographic and video work in *Forced into images*? Why would one idea become a video and another a photograph or are the same ideas explored through both photography and video?

Junior Activities:

Knowing about art:

- Deacon has worked as a teacher, performer, broadcaster and written for television. Make a list of the characteristics in Deacon's work that you think could have been influenced by her background.
- Masks are often used in Deacon's work. Why does Deacon use masks and what meaning do they carry for her? Collect a range of masks and mask images to help illustrate your point.

Making art:

- Create a storyboard for a film you would like to make. You will need to think about plot (what happens), characterisation (the people) and location (where you set the film).

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- Using a photograph you already have, choose a small detail and enlarge it using a photocopier to create a new work. Aim for about five to eight enlargements so that each time you are not enlarging from the original but from the last photocopy. You will notice that the image quality will begin to deteriorate, so choose a detail you think would suit this process. As an extension, you could experiment with transferring the carbon copy onto a surface, like a teatowel, using the turpentine release method (make sure the room is well ventilated when you use chemicals such as turps).

classmates, experiment with photo-narratives using the same overall theme but produce one series working from a script and one resulting from improvisation. Compare and contrast the final result and discuss how the method of acting influences the images and the way they are 'read' by an audience.

Senior Activities:

Knowing about art:

- The sequential way in which Deacon arranges her photographs has been described as **predella format**. Research the history of this word and compare how she uses this technique in a contemporary context as opposed to how it was used traditionally.
- The words 'forced into images' were appropriated for the title of Deacon's video from an Alice Walker poem. Research Alice Walker and her work on the internet. What do you think the title means in the context of Deacon's video?

Making art:

- Using a disposable camera create your own narrative sequence. Like Deacon you may choose a domestic setting with props you can find around the house. Remember to pay attention to how the images are arranged together—are they all the same size, are they portrait or landscape orientation (or both)? How do your decisions why one image sits next to another change the way an audience reads the work? Another consideration is whether your narrative will be easy to read by your audience or if you would prefer to keep them guessing.
- Deacon does not use a cast who are professional actors but friends and family. Sometimes they work to a script, and sometimes Deacon records spontaneous responses. Using members of your family, or

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Glossary of Terms

This glossary explains the words listed in bold in this kit, and gives definitions for general art concepts, photographic and film technical terminology, and Indigenous art language which are useful to know in the study of Destiny Deacon's practice.

Aboriginalia: items, artwork or souvenirs designed and decorated with Aboriginal motifs and cultural representations targeted to the tourist market.

Ambiguity: open to more than one interpretation, having a double meaning; unclear or inexact because a choice between alternatives has not been made.

Appropriate: to borrow an image and by placing it in a context different to its original context, generating new meanings.

Assemblage: combining a collection of found objects and elements to make a three-dimensional composition.

Australiana: Australian souvenirs, ornaments, toys and functional household items depicting clichéd Australian scenes, flora and fauna and Aborigines.

Blackfellas: a slang term used by Aboriginal people instead of pronouncing the words 'black fellows' in Queen's English.

Blak: a term used by some Aboriginal people to reclaim historical, representational, symbolical, stereotypical and romanticised notions of Black or Blackness. Often used as ammunition or inspiration. This type of spelling may have been appropriated from American hip-hop or rap music.

Boomalli: an Aboriginal Artists' Cooperative set up by ten Aboriginal artists based in Sydney in 1987. The word Boomalli means 'to strike, to make a mark' in at least three Aboriginal languages - the Kamilaroi, Wiradjuri and Bundjalung from the region now known as New

South Wales and, in terms of Kamilaroi and Bundjalung traditional borders, parts of southern Queensland. A choice deliberately considered by the founding artists who wished to make a mark by exhibiting their work on their terms.

Bric-a-brac: miscellaneous household objects and ornaments of little value; knick-knacks; bits and bobs.

the Bush: a term used to describe the Australian countryside or areas of land not developed; undeveloped land.

Charlie's Angels: refers to a group of women, including Deacon, who worked with Aboriginal activist Charles Perkins at the Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal Affairs in Canberra in the 1980s. This nickname refers to the well known 1970s popular American TV show later adapted, quite recently, to the movie screen. In the TV program, the Angels were three very attractive police officers who followed instructions from a mysterious male boss, Charlie.

Chocolate crackles: a classic Australian and New Zealand party treat which combines a puffed rice breakfast cereal with cocoa, and is presented in paper patties.

Colonialism: the policy or practice of taking political control over another country, occupying it with settlers and exploiting the land and people economically.

Commission home: a government owned house or apartment for people on low incomes.

Country: used by Aboriginal people as a term that specifically references their direct descentence, bloodline or lineage to a particular area of land associated with their tribal group.

D-coy: a play on the word *decoy*—bird or mammal or imitation of one used by hunters to lure other animals.

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Destiny: the events that will happen to a particular person or thing in the future. Can sometimes have a sense of instability or foreboding.

Diorama: a model representing a scene with three-dimensional figures, either in miniature or as a large scale museum exhibit; a scenic painting, viewed through a peephole; a miniature filmset used for special effects or animation.

Docker: any person who is employed as harbour dock workers on wharfs.

Freedom Ride: inspired by the US Freedom Rides, Charles Perkins, Aboriginal activist, organised this bus trip in February 1965 through country towns of New South Wales, protesting against the racial discrimination that was rife in these insular communities.

Feminism: concern for women's rights, equality of the sexes.

Gingham: plain woven cotton cloth, typically checked in white and a bold colour; inexpensive 1950s household fabric.

Gollies: gollywog—a soft doll with bright clothes, a black face and fuzzy hair. This term is no longer appropriate as these toys are racially insulting and demeaning, but used ironically by Deacon.

Grain: a term describing the quality of a photograph; refers to the size and density of silver compounds on film and the visibility of these compounds in the final print.

Gub or Gubba: A colloquial term used by the people of the Eora and Durug nations, the first people affected by British invasion. Used to reference the Governor of the time, the word was pronounced by local Aborigines as 'Gubenor'. This was later shortened to 'Gubba' or 'Gub' to describe European settlers and people of Anglo Saxon origin by Aboriginal people.

Hard yakka: slang Australian term meaning extremely hard work.

Indigenous: originating from or occurring naturally in a particular place; native.

Inkjet and Bubble Jet Print: prints produced by machines using pigmented inks that run through a cartridge. The printer is connected to a computer where the image file is stored. The advantage of these prints is they can print onto a variety of different materials such as paper, canvas and vinyl. The difference between inkjet and bubble jet is a matter of quality, an inkjet print has a more professional finish.

Installation: three-dimensional art which responds to a specific location and which by drawing on the traditions of both sculpture and performance can result in viewers having a heightened perception of their own bodies in relation to the work.

Irony: the expression of meaning using verbal, written or visual language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect.

Kewpie Doll: a type of doll characterised by a large head, big eyes, chubby cheeks and a curl or topknot on top of its head.

Kitsch: cultural objects or practices considered to be in bad taste because of excessive garishness or sentimentality, but sometimes appreciated in an ironic way or as collectables.

Koori: a term used by Aboriginal people to reference their identity in a broader context from their language group. Aboriginal people who identify as 'Koori' are geographically from areas now known as New South Wales and the state of Victoria. Similarly, people from Tasmania identify as 'Palawa'. People from north coast New South Wales identify as 'Goori'. Aboriginal people from areas of Queensland and north west New South Wales identify as 'Murri', south west Western Australia 'Noongar', southern areas of South Australia 'Nunga' and to the north the people from Melville and Bathurst Island identify as 'Tiwi'

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and people from north east Arnhem Land 'Yolngu'.

Laser Print: a print produced from a printer linked to a computer producing good quality printed material using a laser to form a pattern of

electrostatically charged dots on a light-sensitive drum, which attract toner (or dry ink powder). The toner is transferred to a piece of paper and fixed by a heating process.

LightJet Print and Lambda Print: a laser exposure print onto photographic paper. The names of these prints are taken from the brand name of the printing machine. The main difference between them is in the way the laser moves.

Mob: is a term used to reference an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander group, large or small; or similarly, that indicates identity to place—the area or tribal group one is descended from.

Narrative: a spoken or written account of connected events; a story; the practice or art of narration.

Other: a philosophical term used to phrase or describe something or someone as not part of the mainstream or accepted norms of society.

Parody: an imitation of the style of a particular writer, artist or genre with deliberate exaggeration for comic effect.

Pastiche: an artistic work which imitates the style of another work, artist or period, often treating the original subject matter in a negative way.

Phantasmagoria: a sequence of real or imaginary images like that seen in a dream.

Polaroid: photograph taken with a 'Polaroid' camera which has an internal processing mechanism that produces a print rapidly after each exposure. 'Polaroid' is the brand name of the camera.

Portraiture: graphic or detailed description, especially of a person; the art of making a representation of someone.

Post-Colonialism: refers to a set of philosophical theories dealing with the legacy of 19th century European colonial rule, especially with the dilemmas of developing a national identity in the wake of colonial rule.

Post-Modernism: late 20th century style and ideas in the arts, architecture and criticism which represents a departure from Modernism and has at its heart a general distrust of unifying theories and ideologies as well as a problematical relationship with what 'art' is.

Practice: an artist's method of working, their body of work or career development.

Predella format: this is used as a compositional device showing different aspects of a story or as a means of juxtaposing images. Historically it is an Italian term for a painted panel, usually small, belonging to a series of panels at the bottom of an 13th – 16th century altarpiece. Often added as a 'footnote' to the main theme of an altarpiece, predella panels generally consist of narrative scenes, e.g. the Passion of Christ or the lives of the saints.

Psychodrama: a form of psychotherapy in which patients act out events from their past; a play, film or novel in which psychological elements are the main interest.

Psychological: affecting or arising in the mind; relating to the mental or emotional state of a person; having a mental rather than physical cause.

Redfern: an inner-city suburb of Sydney, housing a large Aboriginal population.

Retrospective: an exhibition curated to give an overview of an artist's career.

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Satire: the use of humour, irony, exaggeration or ridicule to expose and criticise someone's foibles and vices particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues.

Stereotype: a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.

Storyboard: a storyboard is a set of sketches placed in order from beginning to end outlining the scenes that will make up something to be filmed.

Super-8: a type of negative film which is 8mm in width; original cellular film; not a digital film.

Survey: an exhibition curated around one theme or aspect of an artist's work.

Tableaux: (plural; Tableau: singular) a group of models or motionless figures representing a scene from a story or history; picturesque description.

Tall Poppies: Australian slang for exceptionally high achievers who are often put down or cut down by jealous people.

Type C Photograph: a photograph printed from a negative (the developed film that contains a reversed tone image of the original scene).

Unionist: a person or group belonging to the Trade Union movement.

Vitrine: a glass display case often used in museums; from the French word *vitre* meaning glass pane.

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References

The resources listed below provide opportunities for further study on the artist. As well as references directly relevant to Deacon's practice, we cite here some further reading covering more general concerns of contemporary Australian art and contemporary photographic practice, all widely available for Australian and international audiences. Education groups can add to this resource list when new reference material is located.

Exhibition catalogue

Destiny Deacon: Walk & don't look blak, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004

Exhibition catalogue contributors: Natalie King, Brenda L Croft, Lisa Reihana, Djon Mundine, Marcia Langton, Richard Bell, Hetti Perkins, Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser.

Selected further reading

Interview: Destiny Deacon in conversation with David Broker, Photofile, No 72. Spring 2004

Juliana Engberg, *Destiny Deacon*, Signs of Life, Melbourne International Biennial 1998, exhibition catalogue, City of Melbourne, 1999

Virginia Fraser, *Destiny's Dolls*, Photofile, No. 40, Nov. 1993 (also reprinted in Photo Files, An Australian Photography Reader, Power Publication, ACP, Sydney, 1999)

Virginia Fraser, *Making Subjectivity*, 2004 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Contemporary Photo-Media, exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide 2004.

Not quite right but interestingly queer: Virginia Fraser talks with Destiny Deacon/Portfolio, Photofile, No. 61. December 2000

Marcia Langton, *Destiny Deacon*, Biennale of Sydney 2000 exhibition catalogue, Sydney 2000.

Marcia Langton, *Valley of the Dolls: Black humour and the art of Destiny Deacon*, Art and Australia, Vol 35, No.1, 1997.

Howard Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, Phaidon Press Ltd., London 1998.

Clare Williamson, *Destiny Deacon*, The Second Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, exhibition catalogue, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2000.

Internet Resources

Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice
http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/>

Boomalli Aboriginal Arts Cooperative
<http://www.boomalli.org.au/>

Destiny Deacon artist and exhibition information
<http://www.eaf.asn.au/deacon.html>
<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-July-1999/fink.html>
<http://www.nga.gov.au/Retake/artists/00000003.htm>
<http://www.roslynnoxley9.com.au/artists?aid=2&profile=1>

Freedom Rides
<http://www.abc.net.au/messageclub/duknow/stories/s888118.htm>

Hopevale Community
<http://www.accq.org.au/comm/hopevale.htm>
<http://cwpp.slq.qld.gov.au/hopevale/>

Land and Sea Rights
http://www.nlc.org.au/html/land_menu.html

Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
<http://www.mca.com.au>

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National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
Legal Services Secretariat
<http://homepage.powerup.com.au/~nailss/>

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health
Organisation
<http://www.naccho.org.au>

New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council
<http://www.alc.org.au/>

Polaroid Photography
<http://www.polaroid.com>

Predella Format information
<http://www.bartleby.com/65/pr/predella.html>

Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children
from Their Families
Bringing Them Home Report - Reconciliation and
Social Justice Library
<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/stolen/>

Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths In
Custody
Indigenous Law Resources - Reconciliation and
Social Justice Library
<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/rciadic/>

Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander
Child Care
<http://www.snaicc.asn.au/>

Torres Strait Regional Authority
<http://www.tsra.gov.au/www/index.cfm>

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Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand
25 February – 9 May 2005

Cultural Centre Tjibaou, Noumea, New Caledonia
1 June - 28 August 2005

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