

Out
of the
Blue



Out of the Blue

Celebrating 175 years of the cyanotype

13 – 25 August 2017

Photospace Gallery

ANU School of Art & Design

The Australian National University

Curated by Ursula Frederick and Kerry Martin

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animations: LA landscapes*, 2016

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Slipping through my hands, 2017

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The Stuff of Knowing

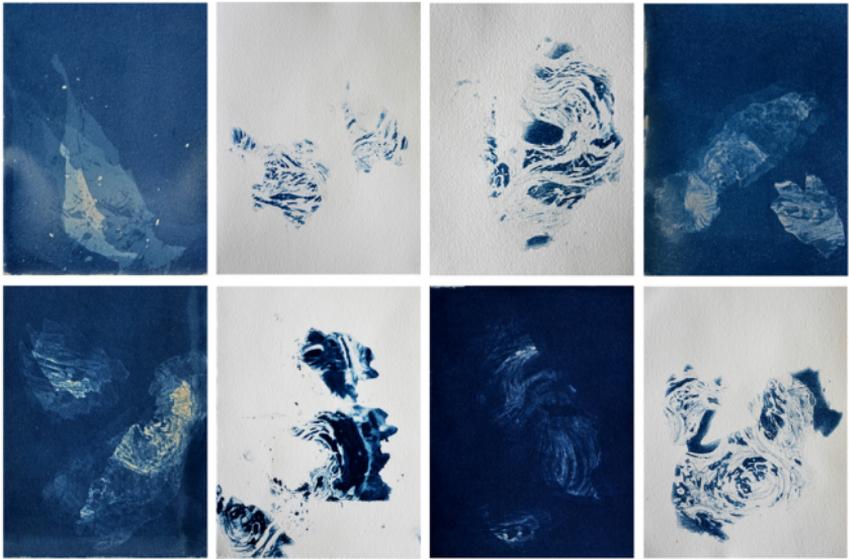
OK, the big two oh oh is usually the one you pop the champagne and let off the fire crackers for but, you've got to admit, a one hundred and seventy-fifth birthday isn't too bad either. It is one hundred and seventy five years ago that Sir John Herschel discovered the process we are celebrating in this exhibition. All you needed was ammonium ferric citrate, potassium ferricyanide, water and light. That was it! It was so simple, but oh, look at that blue. Blue, the most sublime the most pure of all the colours — the colour of the sky, the colour of the ocean when it was smiling, maybe the colour of Heaven, certainly, in its lighter version, the colour of the Virgin's cloak. A colour so pure and airy, but laid down in that chemical reaction with a ferric fist of iron. Herschel's amazing discovery of what, on 16 August 1842 he called, chemist that he was, the cyanotype (I would have called it the skyograph, but that may not have caught on) endured and endured. In the twentieth century it became the blueprint. Every steel-girded skyscraper, every streamlined jetliner, started out as cyanotyped lines on an engineer's diagram. The technical blueprint gave three-dimensional form, through physical construction, to our modernist aspirations. But earlier artists had already discovered that through the magic of light modulation the cyanotype also gave three-dimensional form to physical objects that were laid on the sensitive paper out under the sky. When Anna Atkins laid two specimens of *dictyota dichotoma*,

one in its young state the other in fruit, on cyanotype paper for her book *Photographs of British Algae: Cyanotype Impressions* she was the first of thousands to discover that the seaweed recorded itself in a magically volumetric way — floating in a virtual space of blueness. One hundred and seventy four years later the seaweed is still suspended there as though not a second has ticked past. How do I know it is dictyota dichotoma? Because Anna Atkins wrote a label, using all of her knowledge of biology, and placed that on the sensitive paper as well. Herschel's implacable reaction photogrammed Atkins' Linnaean knowledge and the seaweed's objective existence together into the same stuff of knowing.

So cut the cake. In a hundred and seventy five years' time people will still be knowing the world by making cyanotypes. Of that I have no doubt.

Martyn Jolly

16 August 2017



Mapping a Winters Garden, 2017, cyanotypes on BFK Rives paper

Elaine Camlin

Mapping a Winters Garden is an ongoing project, aiming to document the ephemeral nature of growth and the ever-present nature of decay in our natural environment. Using organic forms collected from familiar surroundings, my backyard, I have created a small-scale series of cyanotypes. The bare branches of dormant trees and disintegrating autumn leaves, scattered across the garden, are the last reminder of growth.

During the exposure time, leaves float across the paper, creating soft transient imagery, which captures subtle movement and tonal variations. In response to these initial cyanotypes, I create intuitive watercolour washes on acetate sheets, which when cut into organic forms, were exposed in a similar manner to the floating leaves.

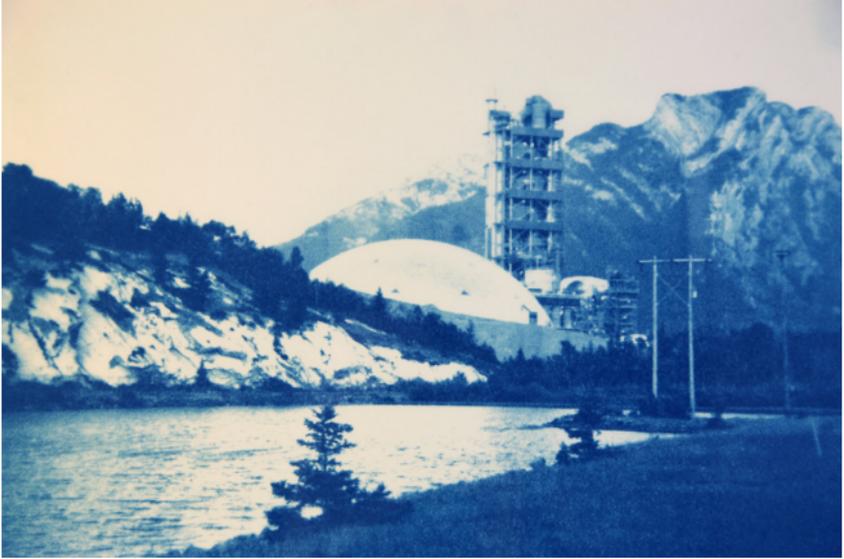


Untitled, 2016, series of three cyanotypes on watercolour paper

Esther Carlin

I am searching at the edge of that which I can grasp. It's containment over and over again; of myself, of my body in water, and of my body perforated by the outside world, of the chairs wrapped in pink, of the force of the water propelled upwards towards the sky.

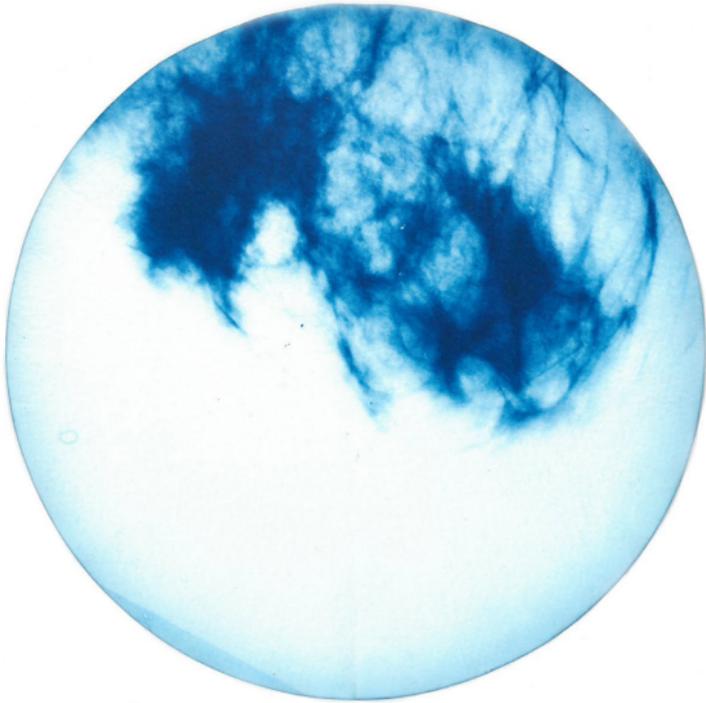
Take a piece of fruit, wrap it up, keep it small, contained.



Ecodome with Water, 2016, cyanotype on cotton rag watercolour paper

Jacqueline Drinkall

Ecodome with Water is from a series of cyanotypes exploring the Lafarge Exshaw cement works made whilst I participated in Banff Research in Culture “On Energy” residency at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in 2016 with two scholarships from the Banff Centre. The work continues my exploration of energy, radio and telepathy wave aesthetics of Buckminster Fuller architectonics and cybernetic ecology of mind. Lafarge Exshaw has its own energy grid in order to transform the Rocky Mountains into cement powder using heat that is hotter than the sun. This cyanotype documents the architecture and foliage of the site, and uses the softer alchemy of solar energy power in its production.



Untitled, 2015, series of nine cyanotypes on paper

Denise Ferris

I have been making cyanotypes and UV printing other emulsions since I was a student, thirty years ago. My first exhibited cyanotypes were rinsed in my bathroom and keen to exhibit in non-gallery venues, these were exhibited at the Australian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society, Melbourne. These recent cyanotypes were printed during a teaching session at Penland School in North Carolina, USA. Non-silver contact printing (I dislike the term alternative printing as UV emulsions are a core photographic process) enables access to the world through direct process. Here I use mammogram films to imagine constellations, as inscrutable as our living tissue.



#togethforeva (detail), 2017, cyanotype (from letterpressed cling wrap) on Hosho paper

Caren Florance

#togethforeva continues my investigation into the contemporary possibilities of the hand-set letterpress process. Often this involves combining analogue and digital processes, but with cyanotype, analogue meets analogue in a gorgeous wash of blue. The original texts were harvested by entering *#forever* into the twitterverse. Four of the most common 'love' tweets were printed onto cling wrap as a comment upon the ephemeral nature of online communication, but here they morph into a metaphor for our signal-crackling, data-filled ether. I'd like to thank UK Frederick for the original 'Hopeless Romantics' concept, and for collaborating with me to create this unique print.



Slipping through my hands (process detail), 2017, cyanotypes on watercolour paper, plastic sleeves, steel armature

UK Frederick

Someone once told me that all art is about sex and death. At the time I didn't really get what that meant. But those words came back to me recently when I watched an art library of some 100,000 slides quickly dissipate. It was through books and slides that I learnt about art, love and life, in the age before the internet, so it felt strange that this history of the world was soon to end up at the tip. Longing, heartbreak, desire, disappointment.

How do you choose what to keep and what to let go, what to remember and what to forget?



Untitled, 2016, cyanotype on watercolour paper

Rory Gillen

An excerpt from a larger series, this work treats the practice of cyanotyping playfully by presenting the detritus of a condom in a similar way to the medium's traditional capturing of delicately beautiful objects. Further emphasised by the manic application of the cyanotype onto the paper, *Untitled* places a discarded and informal object into focus.



In Mum's garden (detail), 2016, cyanotype on watercolour paper

Anita Grewal

Every time I visit my parents in India, my mother asks me to photograph her flowers. Her garden is a labour of love; an oasis of colourful life whatever the season. These flowers are my favourites; crowding each other out as if shouting for attention, they exude a cheekiness that fills me with energy and joy. I wanted to recreate that memory of being in mum's garden on a sunny day, her standing next to me as she names the flowers (which I promptly forget) and the tactile process of making a cyanotype did that for me.



The Shape of Light, 2013, series of three cyanotypes on Hosho paper

Nicci Haynes

These cyanotypes resulted from the 2014 GLINT residency between Megalo Print Studio and The Canberra Glassworks. My interest was in the optical properties of glass rather than glass objects per se, glass being one of the few solids that transmit light. These images were made using sunlight transmitted through blown glass forms. It was the most imperfect, inexpertly blown forms that created the richest images, which was a stroke of luck since those were the ones I made best.



Lotus Pond (detail), 2016, cyanotype on paper, thread

Annette Liu

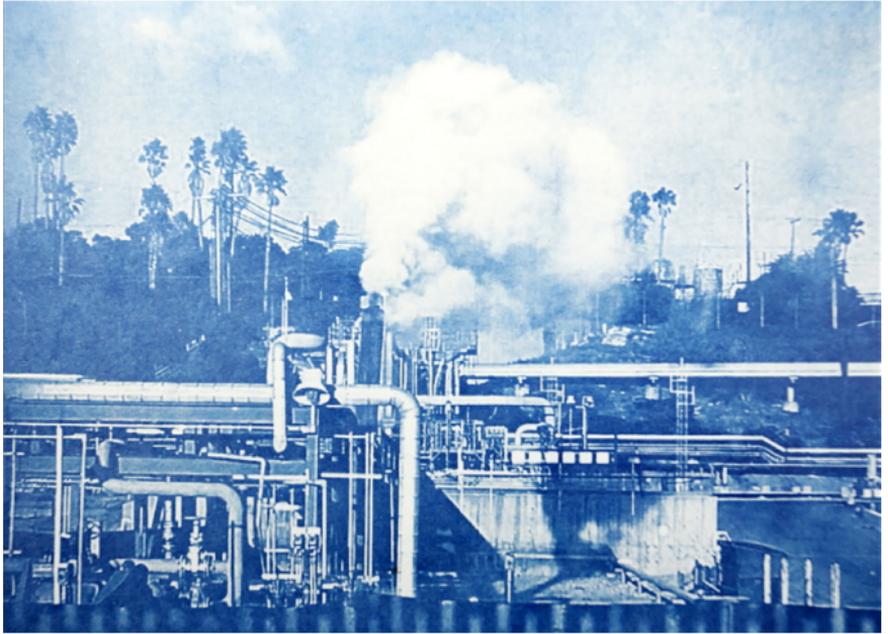
Lotus Pond is part of an installation piece called 出於泥而不染 (2016). Lotuses are ubiquitous in Chinese culture, being depicted in art, poetry and architecture. They are a noble symbol of honor, representing purity, as they grow tall and unstained from the mud. Lotuses are also highlighted in Buddhism, as the holy seat of Buddha. The complete work consists of three different Mi Le Fo-s (“Happy Buddhas”) in cyanotype and turmeric, a spice that also holds cultural and religious significance for fertility, luck and virtue.



Painted Cyanotype 2 (detail), 2016, cyanotype on paper

Rowan McGinniss

Painted Cyanotype 2 was created with the aim of exploring different kinds of technology to create paintings. Instead of printing a black and white inverted image onto the plastic sheet, I painted the image. I purposely made sure that the painterly gesture would be visible in hope that the audience receives an experience similar to looking at a painting.



Cyanotype animations: LA landscapes (double-channel) (detail), 2016, animated cyanotypes, 15 sec loop

Anna Madeleine

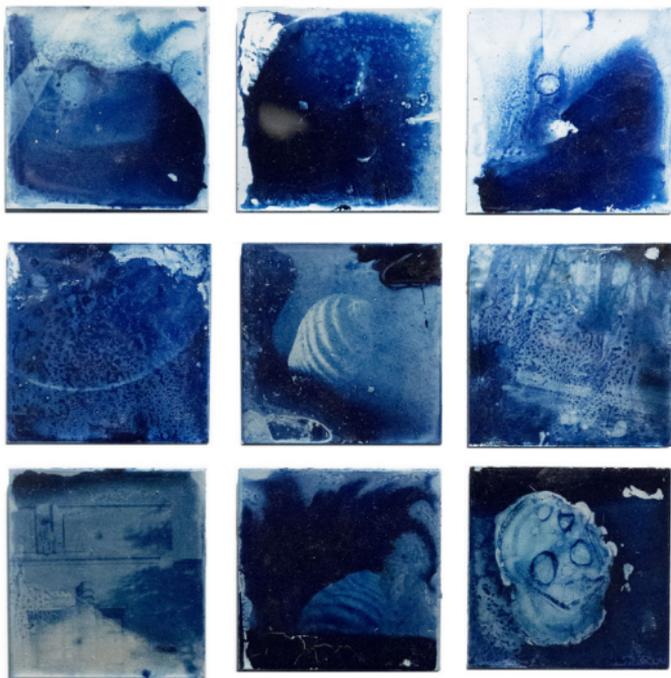
These animations were made during a residency at the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, in 2016. Depicting oil rigs, wind turbines, steam pumping out of a factory, and a bird circling in the sky, they present common yet ominous aspects of the Californian landscape indicative of issues surrounding energy consumption, mining and sustainability. Made by exposing a series of still frames as cyanotypes then compiling them back into an image sequence, this process reflects a dialogue between humans and the environment – in this case, to produce short loops of motion that endlessly repeat.



Awakening, 2016, cyanotype on Hosho paper

Kerry Martin

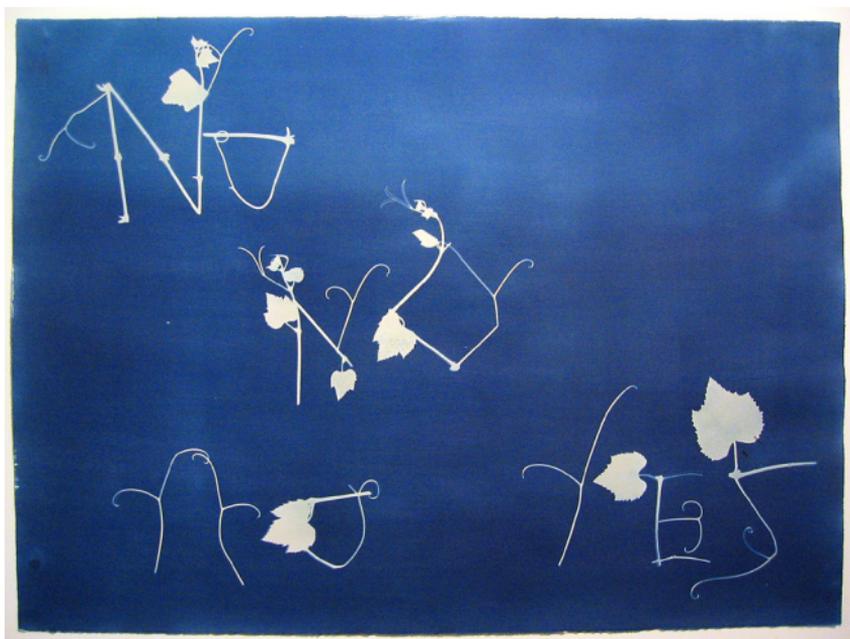
Awakening is part of a larger body of work titled *One Wild and Precious Life*: a series of cyanotypes that map the phases of a female life from birth to death. Using items of clothing to represent each phase, this work also builds on an earlier series of C-type photographs of clothing signifying the absent body. Words are often a key element of the artist's work. The phrase "tell me what it is you plan to do with your one wild and precious life" is hand written on the piece and is taken from the Mary Oliver poem *The Summer Day*.



A Series of Experiments, 2001, cyanotypes on anodised aluminium

Jason O'Brien

In these works, I aim to continue the engagement between material, substrate and image first undertaken by early researchers in photographic technologies. These works express the spirit of the experimental inventor and the visual intersection of materials that fail to achieve perfection. By using anodised aluminium, a process not commercially understood until 1927, close to a hundred years after Herschel formally published his working cyanotype recipes in 1842, I am merging two technologies that will never interact perfectly but reflects the millions of failed experiments that never led to commercial or artistic success, but have an engagement all of their own.



No no no yes from *Small Fires*, 2004, cyanotype

Bronwyn Rennex

In *Small Fires*, I use one of the oldest photographic techniques to give voice to contemporary concerns. Ordinary elements become extraordinary suggestions. The literal shadow, captured in the cyanotype, is turned into a figurative shadow - a suggestion of the unconscious and unspoken.

Difficulties and confusions are made explicit. Gentle tendrils of grapevine speak out “no no no yes”. The words are plaintive, confusing and fallible. There is a tension in the works, as the title of the series suggests, small fires can become big fires or they can go out. They are small and intense – dangerous yet fragile.



Body Stance, c 1981, cyanotype on cloth

Mazie Karen Turner

Mazie Karen Turner began making large-scale blueprints on cloth in Adelaide in 1979 during pregnancy with her first child, in a series titled *Cradled in the Body*. The exhibited work *Body Stance* is double-sided, expressing both vitality and feminine strength. As she wrote at the time: "Making blueprints in the sun is an exacting, spontaneous, exhausting process relying on weather conditions and many other factors that will affect the print. The concept one begins with takes another shape in those moments in the sun exposing. It is interesting to note whilst investigating the type of chemicals used I found that the blue produced is called Turner's Blue."



Rufous Bettong (Aepyprymnus rufescens) (detail), 2017, cyanotype on cotton rag

Carolyn Young

These cyanotypes form a study into small to medium sized mammals that were once abundant, and then made locally extinct to the ACT. During the 19th century the bettongs were likened to the European rabbit in both their size and tenacity to adapt to modified habitats. The animal shapes used in the cyanotypes are based on illustrations in John Gould's book, *The Mammals of Australia* (1863), and incorporated into the shapes are aspects of the animal's biology or habitat. The Eastern Bettong and Eastern Quoll have now been reintroduced to the fenced Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary in the ACT.

Artist Biographies

Elaine Camlin graduated from the ANU School of Art in 2011 with a Bachelor of Arts (Visual) and graduated from Charles Sturt University with a Bachelor of Arts (Visual and Performing) (Honours) in 2013. Since graduating Elaine has regularly exhibited in solo and group shows in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and Regional NSW. Elaine is based in Wagga Wagga, NSW.

Esther Carlin is an art and anthropology student living in Canberra. She writes and makes image and object based work. Her work has previously been published in Bossy magazine and Demos journal (demosproject.net).

Jacqueline Drinkall holds a BA (VA) H1 and University Medal, Masters by Research (VA) and PhD in Art History and Theory. She is currently on residency at Phasmid studios in Berlin to accept a Saas-fee Summer Institute of Art full tuition scholarship with a Create NSW Artist Support Grant.

Denise Ferris is an educator, art practitioner and Head of the ANU School of Art & Design. Her art practice and research generates from intimate experience and examines broader social politics. She is interested in photography's indexical but also imaginative capacity and how photographic representation can convey emotional affect.

Caren Florance works with paper, print and the book, using a range of technologies including handset letterpress. Her special interests are poetry, collaboration and the artist book, and this is the focus of her PhD research with the University of Canberra. She is collected nationally and internationally, mostly by libraries.

UK Frederick is an artist and ARC Postdoctoral Fellow at the ANU. Her recent art practice and research explores themes of memorialisation, discard, and practices of value creation. She has a particular interest in how people make meaning of and in the world. Her photography

embraces experimentation through lens-based, camera-less and digital techniques.

Rory Gillen is an emerging photographer based in Canberra and working nationally. Currently in his third and final year of undergraduate study at the ANU School of Art & Design, his work utilises multiple formats of both film and digital photography alongside more experimental processes such as Ultra-Large Format and the Cyanotype.

Anita Grewal is a visual artist whose practice revolves around photomedia, using both digital and analogue mediums. She is interested in exploring light falling on and through surfaces where the resulting shadows and reflections create new forms in space.

Nicci Haynes has a Bachelor of Science (Hons) from University College Cardiff, and a Bachelor Fine Arts (Hons) from the Australian National University. She currently works in the Printmedia and Drawing workshop at the Australian National University.

Annette Liu is a Taiwanese photo-media artist currently completing a Bachelor of Arts (International Communications and Anthropology) and a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Photography & Media Arts) at ANU. Fascinated with the inherently documentary nature of photography, she creates and uses images to reconsider social narratives that explore tradition, culture and identity.

Rowan McGinness is in her third year of a Bachelor of Visual Arts majoring in painting at the ANU and plans to do Honours next year. She finds that she is engrossed in the materiality of painting and exploring how to employ it in as many ways as she can imagine.

Anna Madeleine works with mixed media, installation and experimental animation to explore intersections between art and science. She completed a PhD in Media Arts at UNSW Art & Design in 2014, and a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) at ANU School of Art & Design in 2007.

Kerry Martin is currently completing a Bachelor of Visual Arts at the ANU School of Art and Design. She is majoring in photomedia and has an interest in merging photographic and textile art. She works primarily with the themes of ageing and memory.

Jason O'Brien began his career training as a commercial photographer in the 1980's and worked with photographic archives as a dark-room technician archiving photographic materials spanning the last two centuries. He began with modifying historic techniques during his time at art school in the 1990's and continues to experiment with user-made emulsions.

Bronwyn Rennex has worked with photography as an artist, teacher, curator and gallerist for over 25 years. She was Director of Stills Gallery in Sydney from 2005 until 2017.

Mazie Karen Turner (1954-2014) was born in Sydney and studied fine art in Adelaide, majoring in printing and photography. She completed a masters degree and a doctorate in later years. A retrospective exhibition *Mazie Turner: between dream and earth* will be held at Newcastle Art Gallery in 2017.

Carolyn Young is a visual artist who lives in Wamboin NSW. She uses photography to re-think, re-imagine the human place in nature. An actively exhibiting artist, Carolyn has been the recipient of grants, art commissions, fellowships and prizes. Her photographs are held in public and private collections.

