

Dark Matter 2023

Isabella Capezio, Rowena Crowe, Odette England,
Janhavi Salvi

In *Dark Matter 2023*, the darkroom emerges as a sanctuary—a space where artists can retreat to breathe life into emerging ideas embodied through the works of Rowena Crowe, Odette England, Isabella Capezio, and Janhavi Salvi. Over nine months, these artists have been experimenting with photographic processes in the PhotoAccess darkroom. Through distinct creative methodologies, they collectively explore themes of identity, memory, and perception.

Rowena Crowe's *Prepared Camera* draws inspiration from experimental music practices, mirroring the technique of altering conventional instruments to discover unconventional melodies. This concept is vividly reflected in her prints that feature curvilinear motifs against chaotic backgrounds, evoking thoughts of orbital paths or ancient glyphs. In others, ethereal aquatic landscapes emerge from serene cyan hues speckled and shadowed.

Crowe's abstract visuals are a product of her unconventional use of a 16mm hand-motion camera, a tool typically employed for its ability to infuse raw, organic quality into film through manual operation. Traditionally, operators use hand-cranking to advance the film, adjusting focus and aperture for desired shots. Often used in independent and experimental filmmaking, it can capture images more intimately and immediately.

Crowe takes this conventional use to a new level and 're-tunes' the standard image creation process by overlaying unexposed film with transparent acetate sheets dotted in Letraset, a dry-transfer lettering method. This innovative technique serves a dual purpose: it allows Crowe to intervene directly onto the film and distinguishes the film plane as a space to explore. Reflecting on the notion that photography's tools and methods—often unperceived—impart specific qualities to the final image, Crowe elaborates on her philosophy: "photography to me is looking through while looking at."

Supported by



In Salvi's, *Where are you from?* a narrative of identity and belonging unfolds. One poignant piece, *Do you miss home?*, showcases a sequence of envelopes that Salvi received while in Australia. Photographs of her life in India depicting everyday life and personal moments are cleverly printed onto these. Envelopes, being communication tools, evoke themes of distance and memory. By printing onto them the artist connects memories to an evolving self-identity.

Building on these themes, Salvi's *Would you like to stay here?* explores art as a dialogue between the artist and the viewer. The piece showcases five screen-printed mirrors depicting institutional forms like a medical referral and IELTS report printed in red ink. Confronted with their reflection, viewers become part of the artwork and implicated in the bureaucratic processes that have the power to permit or deny the Australian identity that Salvi seeks to create.

Together, the work of these artists reminds us of the versatility of artistic expression, urging viewers to engage deeply and find their own reflections within the artworks. As varied as their approaches might be, all artists underscore the continuous exploration and rediscovery inherent in their craft and shared human experiences. Amidst today's complexities, these artists emphasise the value of introspection and the profound connections forged through art.

Artist Bios

Isabella Capezio

Isabella Capezio is a photographer, artist and lecturer in Photography in the School of Art at RMIT. Isabella's research and artwork engage in themes of failure, queerness and landscape. As a PhD candidate, Isabella is experimenting with alternative ways to reflect on place, vision, 'nature' and colonial frameworks of power through landscape photography. Isabella's interest in modes of publication and the production of photo books has led them to the role of coordinator of the Asia-Pacific Photobook Archive, and within that role, has facilitated several workshops in the Asia-Pacific region. Isabella has also co-run a small photographic gallery and has curated educational materials for the photojournalism collective #Dysturb.

Rowena Crowe

Rowena Crowe is a time-based artist whose work involves analogue processes, creating films that often contain reflexive motives, juxtaposing found objects and gestural movement. She is currently undertaking a Doctor of Creative Arts researching the embodied nature of analogue filmmaking at the University of Wollongong. Her films have screened in competition internationally at film festivals such as International Film Festival Rotterdam, Edinburgh International Film Festival, Sydney Film Festival and DOK Leipzig. Her still photographic work was exhibited in competition at the Olive Cotton Portrait Prize in 2021.

The narrative shifts from the abstract to the documentary in Isabella Capezio's *After North*. Capezio's hand-printed colour photographs consider collective memory as a method to forge and maintain connections with place. Capezio's body of work is in homage to Ian North's *Canberra Suite*, an iconic set of landscape images from the 1980s. Uninterested in landmarks, North photographed suburban streets and homes, pioneering large-format colour photography in Australia.

Decades later, Capezio found deep resonance in North's images, identifying not just locations but also the feeling of Canberra in the subtleties: foliage colours, gutter slopes, and road curves. Capezio says, "analysing North's images became a regular talking point at the dinner table. I used his pictures as a stepping-off point, not to create a derivative 'spot the difference' time capsule but to engage others in place-making."

To any long-term resident of Canberra, Capezio's prints will likely resonate. The works' muted, earthy colour palette evokes an immediate familiarity with the Canberran landscape and climate, bringing forth memory and emotion from those who view it. After North beautifully illustrates how landscape intertwines with personal memory, speaking to the subjective nature of place and the body as a living memory archive.

While Capezio explores public landscapes, Odette England delves into the personal and introspective in *To Be Developed, To Be Continued*. Exploring her individual story as part of a broader shared experience, England intimately captures the relationship between mother and daughter, juxtaposed against social expectation and shared vulnerability.

Each work features a gelatin silver photograph, with subjects ranging from intimate profiles of England's daughter to natural motifs. These visual narratives are intersected and obscured by an array of organic and weathered items — from rusted metal to wood fragments. The interplay between monochromatic photographs and tactile found objects creates a poignant duality of memory and materiality.

England's compositions capture her daughter's blossoming maturity and spirit while also reflecting a mother's sense of invisibility in a world that idolises youth. One work offers a haunting portrayal of the girl's face, eyes veiled by a slender wooden slat. In another, her profile is captured in a hazy, dreamlike atmosphere with illuminated wisps of hair. Her face again partially obscured by a worn, tarnished metal sheet. The choice of materials and layering evokes themes of memory, impermanence, and the tension between fragility and resilience.

Also compellingly weaving personal history into broader contexts, Janhavi Salvi muses on her cultural identity at a distinctly different scale of human experience. Salvi has transformed the last gallery space by employing installation, photography and printmaking to juxtapose her life in India with her evolving identity in Australia.

Odette England

Odette England is an Anglo-Australian visual artist and writer. She is a 2022 Guggenheim Foundation Fellow and has received awards from the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, Puffin Foundation, and Anonymous Was a Woman, among many others. She has published three award-winning photobooks and has another three coming out before fall 2024, having won this year's Tall Poppy Press Award and a Polycopies Publishing Grant. England graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2012 and received her Ph.D. in Art and Art History in 2018.

Janhavi Salvi

Janhavi Salvi is an Indian Artist working within the Visual and Media Arts, based in Canberra, Australia. Janhavi loves accomplishing this by crafting experiences that change the viewer's status from being the classic mute spectator to a participant. She aims to bring about communication between the viewer and the work – to make them co-authors of the work – she happily welcomes even the most basic response of emotion, even that of a chuckle. Her practice is driven by the aim to make pieces of work that move away from the 'please do not touch' conditioning to a more liberal form of engagement that encourages touching and tampering with the work.

Image list

1	Rowena Crowe, Prepared Camera, 2023, silver gelatin & c-type photographs, multiple dimensions	1/1	POA
2	Isabella Capezio, After North, 2023, c-type photographs, 20 x 25 cm	1/1	\$480 unframed \$660 framed
3	Odette England, To Be Developed, To Be Continued, 2023, silver gelatin photographs & found materials, multile dimensions	1/1	\$2,900
4	Janhavi Salvi, Would you like to stay here?, 2023, screenprint on mirrors, 30 x 21 cm		NFS
5	Janhavi Salvi, Do you miss home?, 2023, inkjet print on envelopes, 23.5 x 12 cm	1/1	\$250
6	Janhavi Salvi, im/Migrant, 2023, projection on screen, 112 x 26 cm		NFS