

# *The Bees and the Ledger*

15 May - 14 June

**Kai Wasikowski**

Bees remember—not sentimentally but usefully. They recall flowers by shape, scent, and light. Their memory is not personal but precise. A ledger works in much the same way. It is a structure for returning to names, to dates, to figures. A hive of sorts. Each entry a cell. Each cell a placeholder for something that might otherwise escape memory.

Photography, too, behaves like this. By taking a photograph, a record is made. What is the photograph if not a ledger?

In *The Bees and the Ledger*, Kai Wasikowski proposes photography as a kind of slow family work—a record of light, love and labour. The work of seeing his grandmother is a labour of devotion, a study in familial recalibration: of history, memory, migration, and what gets recorded.

Kai's grandmother, Natalia Broadhurst, is the central figure. However, she does not present herself as a dominant subject. Born in Poland, she arrived in Australia via a cargo ship in the 1970s, qualified, experienced, and professionally fluent in the systems of global trade. Yet here, her knowledge becomes a burden. Too foreign, too female, too accent-marked to be legible in the bureaucracies of white Australia. Thus, she pivots. She studies law. She studies psychology. She builds a house. She raises bees.

The artist is not an interloper in this story. He is kin. The images carry this. They are intimate without being sentimental. They hold distance without

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disavowal. We see the remains of a European life half-abandoned, half-preserved. A ledger rendered obsolete by migration. A woman who responds to bureaucratic rejection with great imagination.

In documenting Natalia's domestic industry, her study, her bees, her past and her refusal to vanish into migrant obscurity, Kai remakes the family photograph. It is no longer just a site of personal memory or proof of relation but a form of testimony.

*The Bees and the Ledger* are two walls of photographs: one domestic, the other dispersed. One grid, one sequence. The former is an archive of the everyday—Kai's grandmother in protective gear is veiled and surrounded by objects that speak the language of home: a bee smoker, a notebook, a worn pair of gloves, a granny trolley. Each image provides information, and the series is insistent in its accumulation. The photographer's flash is factual. It records like a ledger.

The other wall offers a more vivid and atmospheric trail through Poland and Australia, glimpses of industrial landscapes, ports, and old facades. In these scenes, Kai moves with Natalia backward through time. He visits the shipping company where she once managed ledgers, tallied movements, and made sense of the world through numbers and schedules. The photographs resist embellishment and nostalgia. They record, as if in deference to her skill.

There are no heroic photographic gestures here. Just a woman who, refused by systems, made a world anyway. And a grandson who notices and photographs her. He studies the texture of her refusals, her pivots, her patience. He doesn't try to rescue her story but attunes to its quiet rigour.

In doing so, he begins to find a taxonomic form that respects the order she gave her life. The grid of images is documentary in the truest sense. A method of accounting. Each photograph is a careful entry into Natalia's

biography and the ways of her making. He turns to her story, which is also his own, without distortion.

*Text by Cherine Fahd*

Fahd is one of Australia's leading photographic artists. For over two decades, she has exhibited, written, and curated works that explore photography and video performance. Her projects often involve the public, her family, and friends, examining how the camera gathers people and makes them visible. Her research focuses on the everyday uses of photography—in families, on social media, and in settings that promote social inclusion. She holds a PhD from Monash University and is an Associate Professor in Visual Communication at the University of Technology Sydney.

## **Artist Bio**

Kai Wasikowski currently lives and works on Gadigal Land / Sydney, Australia. His practice encompasses photography, video and sculpture. Wasikowski's projects use photography to question western visual/ political systems of knowledge, and aim to spark feelings of curiosity and connectedness towards the powerful lives of images. Wasikowski received his BVA from the University of Sydney in 2016, and his MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 2023. His work has received notable awards including the Dr Harold Schenberg Art Fellowship from the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (2017); the AusArt Scholarship from the American Australian Association (2020); and the Marten Bequest Scholarship from Creative Australia (2021). He has participated in residencies at the Three Shadows Photography Centre, China (2019) and ran educational workshops at the Australian Centre for Photography, the Three Shadows Photography Art Centre; and 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney.

@kaiwasikowski

[kaiwasikowski.info](http://kaiwasikowski.info)

## Image list

1.

### **Kai Wasikowski**

*The Open Ledger*, 2025

Working studio space

2.

### **Kai Wasikowski**

*The Bees and the Ledger: N.B (items 1-47)*, 2024

Inkjet prints

dimensions variable, 1/2 AP

POA

*The Bees and the Ledger: N.B (bee suit)*, 2024

Inkjet print

102 x 102 cm, 1/2 AP

POA

3.

### **Kai Wasikowski**

*The Bees and the Ledger: N.B (scenes 1-27)*, 2024

Inkjet prints

38 x 38 cm, 1/2 AP

POA

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