

Huw Davies Gallery
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The Roots that Clutch

Lara Chamas, Caroline Garcia, Jess Miley, James Tylor, and Derek Sargent

Curated by Saskia Scott

The Roots that Clutch explores the role of the artist as (hi)story-teller.

Featuring photography and video work by Lara Chamas, Caroline Garcia, Jess Miley, James Tylor, and Derek Sargent, the exhibition highlights how our values, beliefs, and senses of identity are shaped by the stories we tell.

In this exhibition, the artists explore personal histories and challenge grand narratives. Their works fill in gaps and silences, and reinsert intimacy and nuance into our understanding of both the past and the present. Their work affirms the importance of remembering and telling our own histories. By presenting these artists in dialogue with each other *The Roots that Clutch* invites the audience to interrogate their own beliefs.



Derek Sargent and Jess Miley, *RIP Vaslav Nijinsky* (*Queer Expats of Paris Series*), 2019, Giclée print, 50 x 50 cm.

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About the Works

Lara Chamas

During an interview with a torture and trauma councillor who worked on Nauru, Chamas learnt many horrific things; a seemingly banal expression by a mother was "do you know how hard it is to mash a banana with a plastic fork? I just want to feed my baby", it stuck with me. This work includes her family history and sentiments of her mother's experience of war in Lebanon, the impulse to come to Australia, implicitly dated back to the act of feeding Chamas as a child, which is recreated in the video. This enacts a practice of care that is strong in many refugees and immigrant families, linking this to the treatment of asylum seekers in Australian and offshore detention centres. The banana mashing becomes surrogate violence in the form of a child eating banana filled with plastic. This evokes the authoritarian containment of bodies and the desperation of self-violence some are pushed to.

Lara Chamas is a second-generation Lebanese, Australian artist, based in Birraranga (Melbourne). Her practice investigates subtopics of post-colonial and migrant narratives, specifically within the context of her cultural identity, using both humorous and poetic notions. Currently completing her Masters by research in Fine Art at Monash University, through the use of narrative and experience documentation, storytelling, trans-generational trauma and memory, myth and tacit knowledge; her research intends to explore links and meeting points between narrative theory, cultural practice, current political and societal tensions, and the body as a political vessel.

James Tylor

This series highlights the contemporary absence of Aboriginal culture within the Australian landscape and how this phenomenon is a direct result of the impact of European colonisation.

The first European colonists forced the local Aboriginal people off their traditional lands and into small Christian missions and government reserves. This allowed the new European arrivals free access to clear the land for settlements, forestry and agriculture. This clearing of Aboriginal people from the landscape resulted in the removal of Indigenous cultural artifacts and identity from the Australian landscape.

Today the absence of Aboriginal culture within the Australian landscape is censored by this process of colonisation and has left much of the Australian landscape with the appearance that it was 'Untouched' before European arrival.

James Tylor is an Australian multi-disciplinary contemporary visual artist. His artistic practice specialises in experimental and historical photographic processes. He uses a hybrid of analogue and digital photographic techniques to create contemporary artworks that reference Australian society and history.

Derek Sargent and Jess Miley

The Grave Project is a durational collaboration where the artists research historic individuals who have had an impact on queer and non-normative culture. The project examines ways in which the queerness of these historical figures is used in the construction of their biographies and whether where they lived had a profound effect on their queer story. These biographies act as a framework to examine ideas around queer existence. This research culminates in a pilgrimage to their burial sites which is documented in photography, film and text to create an alternative historical archive.

Queer artists Derek Sargent and Jess Miley have been collaborating for over five years. They started as co-directors of the artist-run gallery FELTspace in Adelaide, Australia and over the last three years, they have been collaborating together on their research and photography project The Grave Project. Derek completed his BA in fine art at the University of South Australia and has also completed a Graduate Diploma in Fine Art at the Chelsea College of the Arts. He has won several awards including the Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship and the SALA Contemporary Art Prize with Jess for The Grave Project. Derek is currently based in Bergen, Norway where he is completing his Masters in Fine Art. Jess is the founding director of LoveFest an annual experimental arts festival and is also is the founder of ways.house, a queer feminist art residency in Eastern Hungary. She is currently based in Berlin.

Caroline Garcia

Imperial Reminiscence is a voyage of misguided desire that is explored through the history of 'whitewashing' in mainstream cinema. It archives instances of when white actors take on the role of non-white characters, often being transformed into cultural stereotypes through the use of make-up, costume and tightly choreographed gestures and manoeuvres.

Displaying a chameleonic ability to slip in and out of the sampled footage, Garcia edits herself into various dance scenes in which she appears to shift across different time zones, places, and cultures with an intention to reauthor and dismantle dominant Western narratives. In an attempt to reclaim these ethnographic images, Garcia subverts these fraudulent constructions, compositing herself in the picture and rewriting history, with the aim to reinterpret and reconstruct representations of non-Western culture. Here, Garcia's deliberate use of montage and a 'glitchy' editing technique allows the audience to see behind the green screened illusion. In *Imperial Reminiscence*, Garcia illustrates how historic and ongoing erasure is a shared experience of people of colour, and asks us to reconsider how we engage with non-inclusive cinematic representations of culture, as well as legacies of colonialism and imagery that disempowers, homogenises and fetishizes people and cultures outside of the hegemony of Hollywood and the broader industry.

Caroline Garcia is a culturally promiscuous, interdisciplinary artist currently based in New York City. She works across live performance and video through a hybridised aesthetic of cross-cultural dance, ritual practice, and new media. Her practice is concerned with reimagining forgotten choreographies and alternate ways of viewing images of the past that eschew classical myths, paying attention to diasporic privilege and problematic narratives of cultural representation.

About the Curator | Saskia Scott

Saskia Scott is a curator, artist, and arts writer. She is interested in generative modes of curatorial thought, and art that challenges hegemony and imagines better futures. Saskia is currently employed at the ANU School of Art & Design Gallery. Prior to this, she was Gallery Coordinator for the Women's and Children's Hospital Foundation delivering an exhibition and artist-in-residence program within the Women's and Children's Hospital, Adelaide.

List of Works

00.	Lara Chamas, <i>do you know how hard it is to mash a banana with a plastic fork?</i> , 2017, digital video, sound, duration: 00:07:57.		POA
1.	James Tylor, <i>Murlapaka Broad Shield</i> , 2019, timber & black paint, 75 x 25 x 5 cm.	1/1	\$1000
2.	James Tylor, <i>Midla Spearthrower</i> , 2019, timber & black paint, 50 x 3 x 5 cm.	1/1	\$1000
3.	James Tylor, <i>(Erased scenes) From an untouched landscape#1</i> , 2014, inkjet print on hahnemuhle paper with hole removed to a black velvet void , 50 x 50 cm.	4/5	\$2500
4.	James Tylor, <i>Wadnawirri Battle Axe</i> , 2019, timber & black paint, 60 x 20 x 4 cm.	1/1	\$1000
5.	James Tylor, <i>(Deleted scenes) From an untouched landscape#4</i> , 2013, inkjet print on hahnemuhle paper with hole removed to a black velvet void, 50 x 50 cm.	4/5	\$2500
6.	James Tylor, <i>Wakalti Parry Shield</i> , 2019, timber & black paint, 50 x 10 x 10 cm.	1/1	\$1000
7.	James Tylor, <i>(Erased scenes) From an untouched landscape#6</i> , 2014, inkjet print on hahnemuhle paper with hole removed to a black velvet void , 50 x 50 cm.	4/5	\$2500
8.	James Tylor, <i>Wirntawirri Barbed Club</i> , 2019, timber & black paint, 50 x 3 x 5 cm.	1/1	\$1000
9.	James Tylor, <i>(Erased scenes) From an untouched landscape#13</i> , 2014, inkjet print on hahnemuhle paper with hole removed to a black velvet void , 50 x 50 cm.	4/5	\$2500
10.	Derek Sargent and Jess Miley, <i>Bella Darvi</i> , 2019, Giclée print, 50 x 50 cm.		NFS
11.	Derek Sargent and Jess Miley, <i>Susan Sontag</i> , 2019, Giclée print, 50 x 50 cm.		NFS
12.	Derek Sargent and Jess Miley, <i>Gisele Freund</i> , 2019, Giclée print, 50 x 50 cm.		NFS
13.	Derek Sargent and Jess Miley, <i>Chantal Akerman</i> , 2019, Giclée print, 50 x 50 cm.		NFS
14.	Derek Sargent and Jess Miley, <i>Isadora Duncan</i> , 2019, Giclée print, 50 x 50 cm.		NFS
15.	Derek Sargent and Jess Miley, <i>Gertrude Stein</i> , 2019, Giclée print, 50 x 50 cm.		NFS
16.	Derek Sargent and Jess Miley, <i>Vaslav Nijinsky</i> , 2019, Giclée print, 50 x 50 cm.		NFS
17.	Derek Sargent and Jess Miley, <i>Toyen</i> , Giclée ,2019, print, 50 x 50 cm.		NFS
18.	Derek Sargent and Jess Miley, <i>Natalie Clifford Barney</i> , 2019, Giclée print, 50 x 50 cm.		NFS
19.	Derek Sargent and Jess Miley, <i>Renee Vivien</i> , 2019, Giclée print, 50 x 50 cm.		NFS
20.	Caroline Garcia, <i>Imperial Reminiscence</i> , 2018, digital video, colour, sound, duration: 00:10:15.		\$5000

More Online

Visit www.gallery.photoaccess.org.au to learn more about *The Roots that Clutch*, and see complementary digital works as part of the exhibition.