

**an archival truth.**

**an exploration of how printmaking can be used as a contemporary  
medium of parafiction to explore an Australian women's history.**

Amelia Mitchell  
z5062031  
Honours B  
Assessment Two  
Research Report

**Contents.**

Preface. . . . . 2

Introduction. . . . . 3

The Matrix: Concepts of the Archive in Contemporary Art. . . . . 4

The Print: The 'Truth' of Autographic Practice. . . . . 11

The Edition: Headlines of Futures Past. . . . . 19

Conclusion. . . . . 26

Bibliography. . . . . 27

Image List. . . . . 28

## **Preface .**

I entered into this project with a conceptual focus on Sydney's criminal history in the early 20th century. When researching alternate forms of celebrity, I started looking into infamous personalities and became intrigued by the image of the female gangster. In the 1920s and 30s, inner-Sydney's slums were home to many illegal enterprises including speakeasies and brothels. Expecting to encounter male personalities as the godfathers of the era, I was surprised to find two women as the dominant figures: Kate Leigh and Tilly Devine. Whilst their efforts to break the glass ceiling of organised crime were commendable, it was these women's performances of power and maintenance of societal expectations that I found most interesting. To assert their career dominance, both women engaged in stereotypical masculine behaviours of violence, cruelty and brutality, whilst still upholding their expected roles as women.

## **Introduction.**

Engagement in historical content in contemporary art practices inevitably encounters concepts of the archive as a method of research and exhibition of material. Archival methodologies in practice-led-research generate information through processes of collection and interpretation in order to re-present and re-establish lost histories. In addition to its function as a method of historical research and source for primary material, the archive manifests as a mode of installation and demonstration of iterative experimentation. The archive is activated by the artist's agenda in championing, exposing or challenging their chosen narrative.

This research report explores strategies to activate archival material in studio practice to expose forgotten women's histories, particularly through processes of printmaking. Manipulations of the archive in contemporary practice influenced the evolution of the genre of 'parafiction' as conceptualised by Carrie Lambert-Beatty.<sup>1</sup> Parafictions plays with tensions of fact and fiction to explore historical narratives by hybridising found and fabricated archival material. Through comparative discussions of photography and printmaking, I will evaluate strategies of parafiction used by female practitioners to investigate minority histories.

Working within the theoretical framework of the archive, parafiction and the role of the 'artist as historian',<sup>2</sup> I will navigate concepts of fact, fiction and truth in regards to both form and content. I will challenge the presumption of photography as a factual representation through a discussion of autographic practice and the visibility of the artist's hand. A comparative analysis of photography and printmaking questions the integrity of the archive and catalyses investigation into feminist approaches to history in contemporary art.

---

<sup>1</sup> C Lambert-Beatty, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility", in *October*, vol. 129, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> M Godfrey, "The Artist as Historian.". in *October*, 120, 2007.

## **The Matrix: Concepts of the Archive in Contemporary Art.**

The archive in contemporary art refers to both the collection and preservation of art objects, and an iterative methodology concerning historical content. When conducting research concerned with historical content, it is inevitable that one will encounter the archive in all its forms. In my practice, the archive functions as a source of information and reference material, as well as inspiration for install techniques.

My project explores Sydney's women's histories, specifically focusing on the decades of the 1920s and 1930s. Larry Writer's comprehensive account, *Razor* (2002), documented the chronology of the razor gang wars in Sydney, and introduced the dominant female characters of the era. Whilst the book provided a factual recount and a general understanding of events, it remained a detached retelling of history. The material found in the archives of the Sydney Living Museums, Historic Houses Trust, and State Archives of NSW, supplemented the gaps in Writer's text. Primary written records, such as arrest documents and court transcripts, supported the facts presented in *Razor*, and situated the narrative in the 'real world'. However, the photographic archives had the most impact on my practice and understanding of daily experience in the crime-riddled slums of Sydney's inner-eastern suburbs. Peter Watts, director of the Historic Houses Trust, established that the "power" of the photograph was their ability to "transcend their provenance in police investigation and crime-scene recording, to offer breathtaking historical revelation, and to come to life in their own right",<sup>3</sup> referring to the *City of Shadows* exhibition (2005-2006) at the Justice & Police Museum, Sydney. Watts identifies the capacity of the photographs to locate the history in time and space, and give presence to the narrative in the present.

---

<sup>3</sup> P Watts, "Foreword" in *City Of Shadows: Sydney Police Photographs 1912-1948*. P Doyle (ed), Sydney, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2005, p9.



**Figure 1:** Millie Mitchell, *Honours A Final Project*, 2018. Photographs, lithographs, archival documents, found objects, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist.

Engagement with the archive as part of my historical research prompted my engagement with it as a research led practice. Hal Foster’s *An Archival Impulse* (2004) discusses the inevitability of archival research producing an archive itself. Foster states that archival art is “as much preproduction as it is postproduction... since it not only draws on informal archives but produces them as well”.<sup>4</sup> The accumulation of historic material, and the act of disconnecting and reconnecting these resources, generates a new collection of narratives dictated by the archivist, or in this case, the artist. For example, my collection of reference images from forensic archives and reproductions of official records became the core archive used in my research and manifested as my final project in Honours A (Figure 1). I employed museological display techniques to curate my content and to activate the narrative of the archival resources. The use of plinths and partitions aided in navigating the exhibition space, engaging the physicality of the

<sup>4</sup> H Foster, "An Archival Impulse", in *October*, vol. 110, 2004, p5.

archive. The inclusion of a range of resources, including found forensic photographs, historic material, and my own photographs, sketches and prints, tested the dialogue between materials and the effectiveness of representational versus documentary forms. I became aware of the sensational and dramatic elements of my illustrations, which prohibited them from translating into an archival context. The comparison of lithographs and photographs questioned my interest in the composition of early 20th century forensic photography, and its relationship to my printmaking practice. The museological display succeeded in exhibiting the evolution of my own archival research, but failed to convey my voice as the artist. The installation failed to maintain the balance between artist and historian.



**Figure 2:** Millie Mitchell, *Queen of Sydney's Underbelly*, 2017. Lithograph on BFK Rives, 38 x 28 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

In order to locate my voice within my practice, I turned to feminist uses of the archive to explore women's histories. Mark Godfrey's concept of the 'artist as historian' is central to archival methodologies in contemporary art, and parallels Foster's generative archive theories. In dealing with historical content, artists first assume the role of historian, examining and questioning the purpose and credibility of each piece of material. Helen Reckitt expands upon Godfrey's writing in her text, *Opening a Closing Door: Feminist and Queer Artists as Historians* (2009), discussing historic representation in art through a feminist lens. Reckitt explores potential hazards of

historic representation, such as nostalgia and idealisation, problems which I encountered in analysis of my Honours A project and my printmaking practice. The composition and rendering of my lithographs, such as *The Queen of Sydney's Underbelly* (2017) and *Which one would you like?* (2017) (Figure 2 & 3), function solely as art objects and fail to engage with concepts of the archive. Although both lithographs exist within my collection of resources, they do not function as archival objects, even in the context of a museological display. The centralised composition, framing and pose of the subject in *Queen of Sydney's Underbelly*, idealises and immortalises the character of Kate Leigh but does not communicate any information other than offering a representation of her appearance. Similarly, the sensationalised murder scene in *Which one would you like?* depicting a mutilated female body in a disheveled bed, dramatises the event rather than serving as forensic evidence to the history, particularly through the use of red ink. Reckitt acknowledges a need to address and explore historical content, but to participate "without slavishly erecting heroines and heroes".<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 3:** Millie Mitchell, *Which one would you like?*, 2017. Lithograph on BFK Rives, 38 x 56 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

---

<sup>5</sup> H Reckitt, "Opening A Closing Door: Feminist and Queer Artists as Historians", in *Reading Room: Art Goes On*, 2009, p102.



Giovanna Zapperi's analysis of archival methodologies in a feminist context, offers techniques to activate archival material in order to combat issues of nostalgia and idealisation. In her essay *Woman's Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art - Feminist Perspectives* (2013), Zapperi examines ways in which female artists manipulate conventions of the archive to expose women's histories omitted from the mainstream historical record. Through her case studies of Zoe Leonard, Renee Green and Andrea Geyer's practices, Zapperi identifies the significance of narratives in representations and explorations of history. Narratives here refers to both factual recounts of history and engagement with elements of fiction. The artists each engage with the archive as a source and as a material, including both found and fabricated documents in their installations. The merging of fact and fiction in an archival context amplifies the role of the artist as historian, and their skeptical way of thinking. The historian constantly questions the credibility of the archive and bias of the presented history, whilst the artist's manipulation of fact, fiction and narrative, similarly critiques truth and objectivity.<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 4:** Zoe Leonard, *The Fae Richards Photo Archive*, 1993-1996. Gelatin silver prints and chromogenic prints, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the Whitney Museum.

<sup>6</sup> G Zapperi, "Women's Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art—Feminist Perspectives", in *Feminist Review*, vol. 105, 2013, p22.

In her discussion of fiction and the archive, Zapperi introduced the work of Zoe Leonard, specifically her photographic series *The Fae Richards Photo Archive* (1993-1996) (Figure 4). Leonard's particular use of fiction engages with the genre of 'parafiction', as established in Carrie Lambert-Beatty's text, *Make Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility* (2009). Parafiction refers to a fiction based in historical fact, and experienced as fact by its audience. In the case of Leonard's narrative, the character of Fae Richards was entirely fictitious but referenced the historical experience of African-American lesbian actresses in Hollywood from the 1920s to the 1970s. The *Archive* was developed as support material to Cheryl Dunye's 1996 feature film, *The Watermelon Woman*. The series served to legitimise the character of Fae Richards as a historical figure, and expose the omission of her and her contemporaries from the broader history of the American film industry. The *Archive* featured a series of staged black and white photographs displayed in a museological format, supposedly documenting moments from Richards' life. Lambert-Beatty recognises that in order for the deception of a parafiction to succeed, the fiction must be considered plausible by its audience, that it must exist in the "world as it is being lived".<sup>7</sup> The plausibility of Fae Richards is generated through the aesthetic content of the images and the authority of the museological display. The format of professional photos from Richards' career, and the candid snaps reminiscent of family albums are familiar to audiences, thus establishing the believability of the archive. Furthermore, the worn condition of the photographs suggested that they existed beyond the context of the archive, positioning them as "witnesses to past events".<sup>8</sup>

Manipulations of fiction within the archive successfully activate the historic material to generate a feminist reading, as demonstrated by Zapperi, Leonard and Lambert-Beatty. The deception of fiction in a historical context, prompts the audience to question the histories presented to them and the authority of the narrative. However, in order to appreciate the significance of the parafiction, the audience must be aware of its existence. Lambert-Beatty suggests that "sometimes the revelation of the parafiction is key to the operation".<sup>9</sup> It is this 'penny-drop' moment which prompts the audience to revisit the artwork and re-examine its content. For Leonard's archive, the revelation of Richards' false identity amplifies the absence of African-American lesbian actresses from historic documentation. Leonard suggests that the

---

<sup>7</sup> C Lambert-Beatty, p54.

<sup>8</sup> Zapperi, p22.

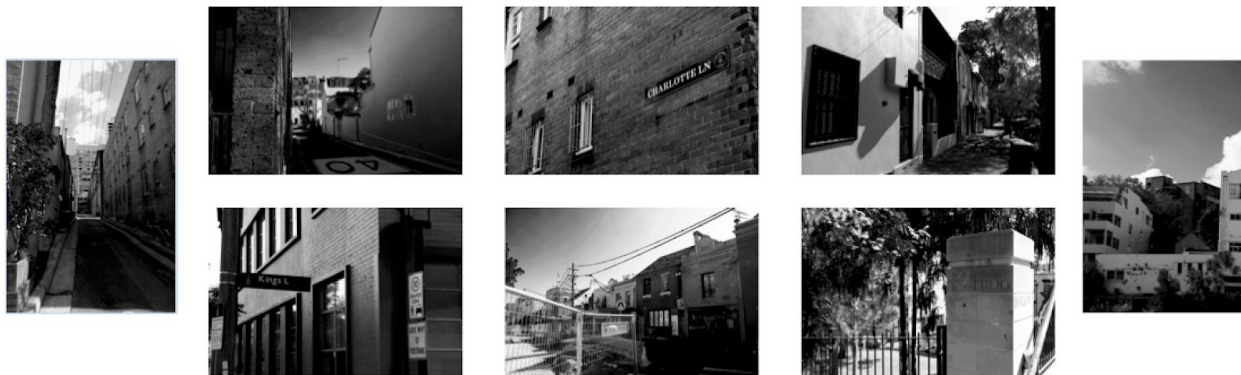
<sup>9</sup> Lambert-Beatty, p71.

legitimacy of Richards' identity is irrelevant as she is a representation of a group of women who were excluded from their history, implying that real or fictitious, she would have been omitted. The exposure of a parafiction can occur by cluing the audience in on the conspiracy, or through the audience's own knowledge of the subject.

Archival methodologies are an inevitable adoption into creative practice by artists concerned with historical content. The archive in my practice functions as a place of research and as a source for making materials. The archive is central to the practice of the 'artist as historian', but is rendered ineffective in activating the material due to an absence of artistic intention. Feminist reconstructions of the archive to expose oppressed histories, and manipulations of narrative and fiction, help to bring the archive into a more critical space. The genre of parafiction, as discussed in relation to Lambert-Beatty's research and Leonard's practice, offers potential techniques to generate affect from my own archive, something not achieved in my first iteration.

## The Print: The 'Truth' of Autographic Practice.

Analysis of archival methodologies triggers questions of materiality through critique of the historic document and the significance of medium choice in creative practice. Parafictional approaches to the archive manipulate tensions between fact and fiction, thus questioning notions of 'truth'. Both archival and parafictional artists primarily work within the forms of photography, film and text. Photography in particular commands an authority of credibility and authenticity through the assumption what is captured exists, or at least existed.<sup>10</sup> This ability to capture something 'real', or appear to, allows photography to plant plausibility in the mind of the audience when engaging with a parafiction.



**Figure 5:** Millie Mitchell, *Photography Experiment*, 2018. Digital prints on crystal archive paper, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist.

In response to Leonard's use of photography in *The Fae Richards Photo Archive*, I experimented with photography in relation to my own history. I walked through the contemporary geography of Razorhurst (Surry Hills, Darlinghurst, Kings Cross) with the intention to capture the preservation of the history in the architecture of the suburbs (Figure 5). I attempted to imitate the compositions of photographs from forensic archives, and referenced film noir aesthetics in post production through high contrast black and white editing. Similarly to my Honours A Archive, the photographs fail to function beyond the documentation of the modern landscape. Whilst the images experiment with candid compositions, as derived from Leonard's photo archive, the lack of consideration of staging undermines any parafictional intent. The photographs contribute to the archive in locating the history within a modern context, but fail to communicate any agenda.

<sup>10</sup> S Sontag, "In Plato's Cave" in *On Photography*, New York, Rosetta Books, 2005, p3.

Reflection on the influence of the photographer on the composition of photographs directed questioning towards the legitimacy of photography's authority as a documentary medium. I find the notion that photography captures something factual, or 'real', problematic as it overlooks the presence of the photographer's subjectivity and bias. I therefore question whether or not photography should be considered a 'truthful' medium. In her essay *In Plato's Cave* (2005), Susan Sontag suggests that "photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are",<sup>11</sup> acknowledging the photographer as a subjective rather than objective voice. Sontag strips photography of objective superiority, and repositions it as a representational medium.



**Figure 6:** Millie Mitchell, *Photography Experiment: Now & Then*, 2018. Digital print on crystal archive paper, 15 x 20 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

The repositioning of photography within a representational approach sparks the assessment of the role of photography in my own practice. While I position myself as artist or printmaker, photography still influences my practice as a reference point for my drawing development.

---

<sup>11</sup> Sontag, p4.

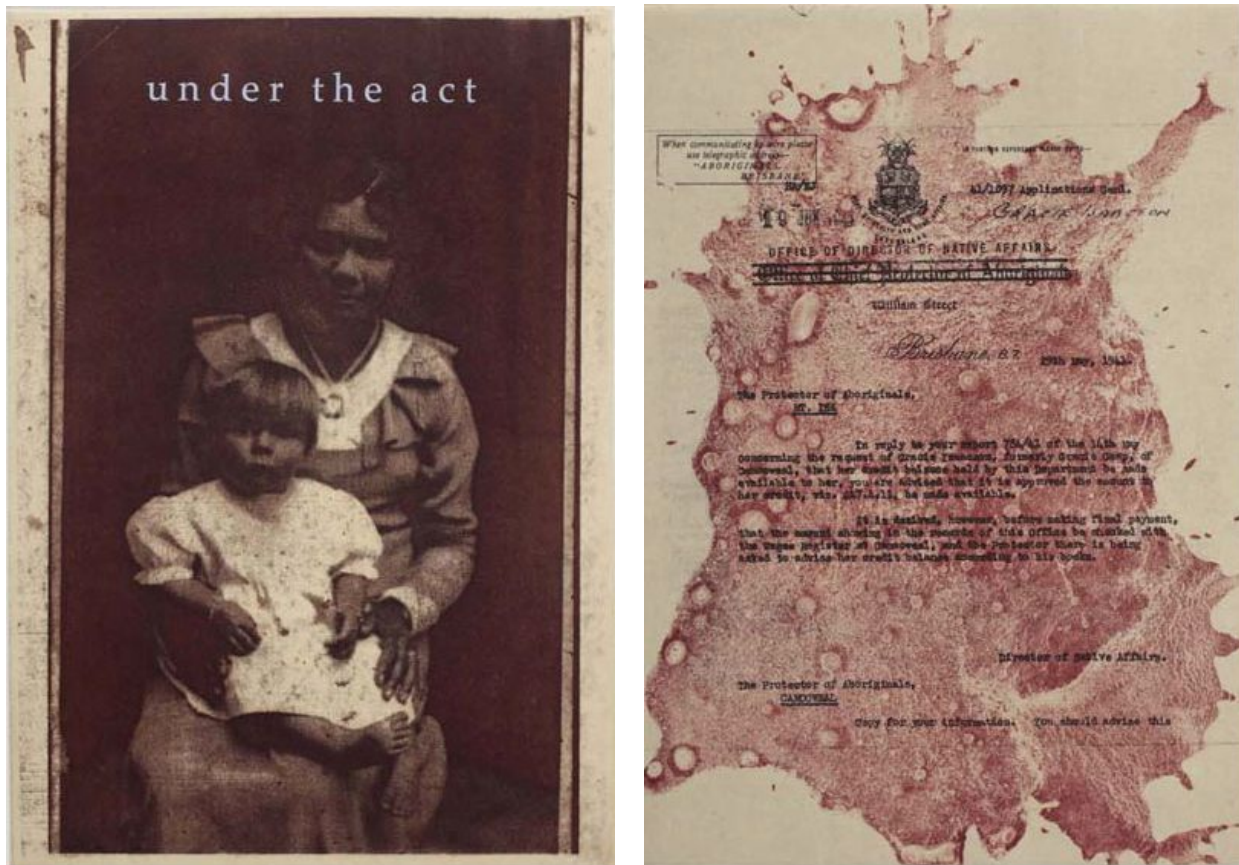
While the compositions are not successful as photographs, when translated as lithographs or linocuts, they offer the potential to capture more than just the physical appearance. The photograph (Figure 6) captures the modernity of the contemporary setting and highlights both the inescapability of modern buildings, and the preservation of historic architecture. In comparison, the lithograph, *Now & Then* (2018) (Figure 7), reduces the contrast of the built environment and flattens the composition into a single representation of time through the unity of mark making. The commitment of the image to stone through the process of lithography, returns the geographic setting to its history. Unlike the photograph, the print captures a sense of history and of being contemporary to the era in question.



**Figure 7:** Millie Mitchell, *Now & Then*, 2018. Lithograph on BFK Rives, 38 x 56 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

The comparison of photography and printmaking as representational mediums, mirrors my previous exploration of historic representation and parafiction. The establishment of photography as a 'real' representation reflects its success as a medium of parafiction. The

capacity for a photograph to “establish the direct relationship between time and event”<sup>12</sup> contributes to the believability of the parafiction for the audience through their recognition of something in existence. However, the object of a print does not convince the audience of an existing subject. I would argue that the place of printmaking as a medium of parafiction is found in its long-held status as a traditional, historic medium, and the processes of matrix development. The labourious autographic, or handmade, processes of printmaking allow the hand of the artist to be present within the final product.



**Figure 8:** Judy Watson, (detail) *under the act*, 2007. Twenty etchings with chine collé, 42 x 30.5 cm in folio, 43 x 32 cm (closed), 71.3 x 99.2 cm (open). Image courtesy of Grahame Galleries.

As previously established in discussion of my Honours A Final Project, representational prints do not effectively explore historical content, even in an archival context. To combat this ineffectiveness, I instead considered the processes of printmaking as a method for understanding the historical narrative, rather than the print itself. For example, Judy Watson’s

<sup>12</sup> Zapperi, p22.

artist's book, *under the act* (2007), combines archival material with etching and lithographic processes to explore her family history (Figure 8). Watson sourced her grandmother's and great-grandmother's official records under the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of Sale of Opium Acts of 1897 from the Queensland State Archives,<sup>13</sup> as well as family photographs, and overlaid them with etchings and lithographs depicting blood imagery. The process of investigating her family history and trawling through official and personal archives allowed Watson to fully immerse herself in her narrative in a similar way to my research into Sydney's criminal history. The inclusion of state records extends her familial experience to the greater narrative of the oppression of Indigenous Australians, whilst her use of personal letters and photographs engages directly with the viewer through personal connection. Watson could have simply presented the records and momentos as her final work, but instead transposed blood-like images over the pages. These visceral textures activate the graphic and haunting content of the archival documents, emoting Watson's familial trauma. The printmaking elements of *under the act* locate Watson within the artist's book as a present figure, rather than a detached archivist, thus prioritising the role of artist rather than historian.

---

<sup>13</sup> "Judy Watson – under the act", in *Grahame Galleries*, unknown date, <<http://www.grahamegalleries.com.au/index.php/judy-watson-under-the-act>> [accessed 13 October 2018].





**Figure 9:** Millie Mitchell, *Untitled*, 2018. Lithograph, linocut and pen on paper, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of Anna Kucera.

Following Watson's hybridisation of archival material and printmaking practices to denote her presence within her familial history, I attempted to use drawing as a method to better understand my own archive. For my submission to the Tim Olsen Drawing Prize, *Untitled* (2018) (Figure 9), I re-evaluated my collection of forensic photographs and identified ones which interested me. I struggled to articulate the significance of these images, so used drawing as a method to better understand my own thought processes. In developing the matrixes for the lithographic images, I did not pre-plan the compositions, instead allowing the image to evolve. I also returned to relief printing through the conceptual links between the act of carving lino and the history of weaponising barbers razors. The mark making of carving imitates the slashing actions of razors across flesh. The process of relief cutting requires the artist to think in a reversal of tone, so rather than building up dark tonal ranges as in lithography, the marks are

created by removing the white lines. The inverse of black and white tone reflects the reversal of time in exploring history. The development of this body of work helped me to engage with archival material more critically, and find its place within my printmaking practice. The labourious processes of lithography and linocut encouraged disciplined study of my reference material, and provided a way to locate myself within the work through autographic practice.

Although the prints and drawings in *Untitled* do not operate as parafictional objects, they do engage with concepts of the archive and question notions of 'truth'. The use of drawing techniques and the processes of printmaking to work through and understand the archive provides a way to locate the artist in their history and give them voice. In Watson's practice, she employs layers of lithographic and etching plates that engage with the content of archival materials. Her motifs stamp her mark on the history, communicating her voice and interpretation of the narrative. Watson's approach to printmaking and the archive influenced the development of my own strategies to engage with the two parts of my practice. Autographic processes offered a method through which to interpret and understand archival photographs, and thus the history. Furthermore, the materiality of lithography and relief printing documents the hand of the artist, providing me with techniques to communicate my artist voice and fabricate my own 'truth'.

The establishment of printmaking as a 'truthful' medium through its foundation as an autographic practice questions its potential as a medium of parafiction. Unlike photography, printmaking cannot convince an audience that what the images depicts is 'real', thus challenging the formation of plausibility. However, the autographic processes of printmaking captures the hand of the artist in creative practice, offering a strategy to catalyse the revelation of the parafiction. As determined earlier, it is not the representational imagery of the print which functions as an archival or parafictional object, but the process of printmaking. For instance, where photography is a medium of archival documentation, printmaking is an archival medium in its own right.

The history of printmaking extends beyond the fine art tradition and the archive. The printing press was employed in commercial industries and influenced the development of digital printing technologies. Relief presses were used to produce law and medical journals, and variations on lithography processes editioned newspapers, including local publications such as Australia's

*Truth*. *Truth* was a Sunday tabloid with localised editions in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. The paper was established in Sydney in the early 1890s and was printed up until it was re-named the *Sunday Mirror* in 1958. *Truth* almost exclusively documented crime, sports and divorce, featuring regular columns such as 'Sheisms' discussing the silliness of women.<sup>14</sup>

The discovery of *Truth* newspaper offered a format for manipulation through printmaking. In the same way that Leonard's staged photographs imitated archival material, newspapers, articles and headlines can be fabricated and accepted as legitimate documents by audiences. The newspaper format acts as a platform to explore a women's history through parafictional manipulation. The aesthetics of the document can convince audience of the fiction's plausibility, while the materiality of autographic production offers a potential catalyst for the 'penny-drop' moment of revelation.

---

<sup>14</sup> V Lawson, "Biography - Ezra Norton", in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2000, <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/norton-ezra-11260>> [accessed 13 October 2018].

# The Edition: Headlines of Futures Past.

The history of printmaking as a commercial process and as an autographic medium legitimises it as a medium of parafiction. The form of the newspaper offers many possibilities for manipulations of fiction and to communicate feminist critique. With reference to the practices of Sharon Hayes and Leigh Clarke, I will explore the application of archival and parafictional methodologies to the development of my final project.

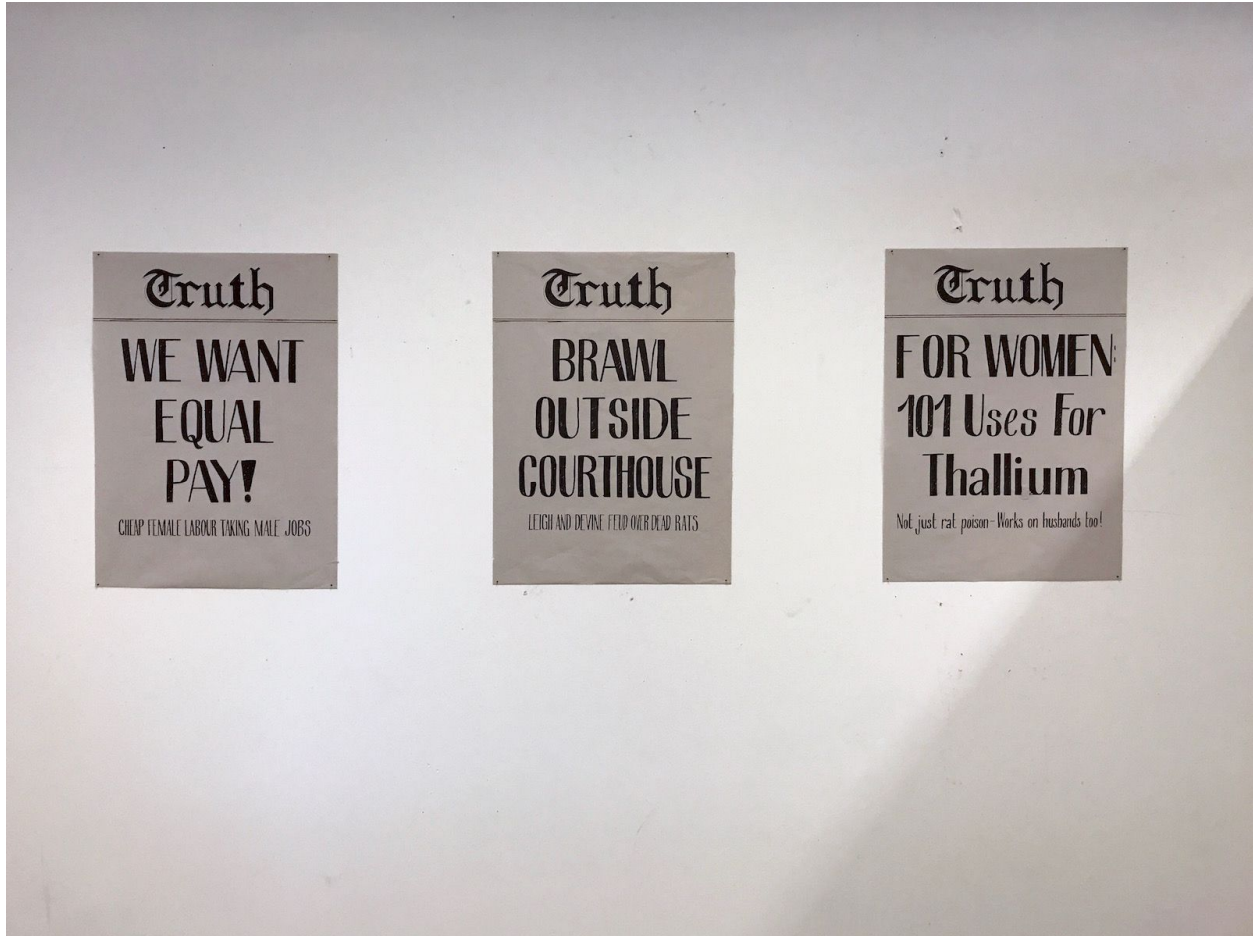


Figure 10: Millie Mitchell, *Newspaper Experiment*, 2018. Laserjet print on paper, 59.4 x 42 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

My first iteration of the newspaper format experimented with the front page layout of the *Truth* newspaper and the arrangement of articles to communicate a historical narrative. The front page (Figure 10) was developed and printed digitally in an A2 format, which highlighted the importance of imitating the materiality of newspapers, particularly when referencing an archival

document. The white bank paper and toner ink were too high in contrast and too modern to reflect the historic content. While the overall layout referenced the original newspaper's aesthetic, the use of lines also reflected the layout of contemporary newsletters. The articles and advertising used were a mix of found and fictionalised materials based on the events and social climate of the razor gang narrative. The 'Miss Brasso' advertisement and ANZAC biscuit recipe reference the women's sections from Sydney newspapers in the 1920s and 1930s, though these were never featured as front page stories. The installation of the newspaper as a wall-mounted poster encouraged the audience to focus on the headlines, rather than engaging with the more dense content. Too much information was being communicated for the front page layout to function as a poster, while the wall-mounted installation prohibited the intimate interaction required to digest the content of the articles. Although the execution and installation of the poster failed to engage the audience in the intended way, the work did succeed in imitating an archival document and prompted questions of fact versus fiction, particularly in reference to the paper's title, *Truth*. The contemporary climate of post-truth theory and the fake-news phenomena generates speculation surrounding concepts of 'truth' in relation to news media, a skepticism which activates and challenges the genre of parafiction.

Further studio experimentation focused on accurately replicating the newspaper with the intention of creating a believable parafiction. Analysis of the front page layout and consideration of the act of reading a newspaper prompted questions of audience interaction. In what ways could the audience be encouraged to engage with the articles, rather than the headlines? However, the amount of writing required to produce an entire newspaper was overwhelming to make as the artist, let alone expecting the audience to read it. This obstacle stunted making, but redirected my studio considerations to the construction of my message and the aesthetics of the archival document.



**Figure 11:** Millie Mitchell, *Headline Poster Experiment*, 2018. Permanent marker on newsprint, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist.

One of the primary concerns in recreating historic documents is maintaining the aesthetic authenticity of the original publication. My front page experiment did not explicitly copy the layout of the original newspaper, nor did it replicate its materiality, thus prohibiting it from existing as an archival object. Instead of attempting another full front page, I simplified the format to headline advertisement posters. I developed a series of drawings (Figure 11) to test the form and content of the poster before committing it to print. To combat the inaccuracies of the front page experiment, I analysed the process of Leigh Clarke in constructing his *Good News Out of Bad News* posters (2008) (Figure 12). Clarke took excessively negative headlines from his local newspaper, the *Hackney Gazette*, and rewrote them as positive depictions of humanity. Headlines such as 'PAEDO PERVERT DIES IN PRISON' were replaced with 'HAPPY PEOPLE CUDDLE IN PUB' or 'BABY LAUGHS AT FUNNY NOISE'. Clarke adopted the font used by the *Hackney Gazette* to construct his posters, however his method for generating the text was

significant to his concept. Rather than replicating the exact typeface of the headlines, Clarke created the lettering from the original worn posters so that each letter was representative of a specific word. For example, in 'HAPPY PEOPLE CUDDLE IN PUB', the 'H' comes from 'horror', 'A' from 'arson', 'P' from 'paedo', and so on.<sup>15</sup> Clarke's appropriation of the newspaper's font tricks the public into believing they are real headlines, while the knowledge of his selection process amplifies the negativity of the daily slogans.



Figure 12: Leigh Clarke, *Good News Out of Bad News*, 2008. Serigraph on paper, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist.

In developing my own newspaper headlines, I gave careful consideration to the typeface used. Rather than generating my own logo for *Truth*, I appropriated the post-1930 version of the paper's name as it was released in the middle of my date bracket and is reminiscent of current newspaper title fonts, specifically the *Sydney Morning Herald*. I also experimented with the font and composition of the headlines to best replicate a poster 'of the time'. The first poster featured a bold sans serif typography, similar to that of the *Hackney Gazette*. The block lettering

<sup>15</sup> L Clarke, "Interview with an Artist: Leigh Clarke", in *the only good one is a dead one*, , 2008, <<https://annartist.wordpress.com/2008/08/12/interview-with-an-artist-leigh-clarke/>> [accessed 13 October 2018].

appeared too modern to replicate an early 20th century document. The adoption of a serif font, however, gave the poster a more historic aesthetic.



**Figure 13:** Sharon Hayes, *In the Near Future* (installation), 2009. Multiple-slide-projection installation: 13 actions, 13 projections, 1,053 slides, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of Guggenheim, New York.

The format of a newspaper headline poster is reminiscent of text-based feminist protest art, particularly when used to explore a women's history. I looked to the work of Sharon Hayes, specifically her performance and installation *In the Near Future* (2005-2009) (Figure 13), for inspiration for constructing headlines to communicate a feminist agenda. For the purpose of this report, I will focus on her original iteration of the performance in New York City. Hayes created signs using appropriated slogans from significant protests in American history, and recontextualised them in political New York sites, such as City Hall and Wall Street. The 'I AM A MAN' action (Figure 14) was derived from 1968 protests from African-American sanitation workers in Memphis.<sup>16</sup> The idea that an African-American man and a white women can protest discrimination using the same slogan connects two minority's histories. The installation of *In*

---

<sup>16</sup> C Barliant, "In the Near Future", in *Guggenheim*, 2018, <<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/26692>> [accessed 13 October 2018].



*the Near Future* consisted of slide projectors displaying photographic documentation of the performance on the gallery walls. The images were captured by witnesses to the performance, and later collected to form an archive of the event.



**Figure 14:** Sharon Hayes, (detail) *In the Near Future*, 2005. Multiple-slide-projection installation: 13 actions, 13 projections, 1,053 slides, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of Tate Modern.

My experimentation in developing relevant headlines took inspiration from the practice of both Clarke and Hayes. I created three headlines using three different methodologies. 'WE WANT EQUAL PAY!' was derived from a front page article from a 1930 edition of the *Sydney Morning Herald* explaining how pay inequality resulted in women taking male jobs because they were cheaper labour. Similarly to Hayes' slogans, the appropriation of the headline connects political narratives of now and then. The idea of pay inequality is a historical debate, but also one which is still present today. 'BRAWL OUTSIDE COURTHOUSE' is a fabricated headline referring to a real event. The word 'brawl' conjures masculine imagery, when in actuality the fight was between two women: Kate Leigh and Tilly Devine. The headline comments on gendered assumptions and stereotypes, but does not activate the content enough to communicate the bias of the statement to the audience. Lastly, 'FOR WOMEN: 101 Uses For Thallium' was a generalised and entirely fictitious statement. The 'FOR WOMEN' tagline was an experiment in rebranding the women's interest pages as headline stories, whilst the subheading 'Not just rat poison ~ Works

on husbands too!' employed humour to reference a female dominated crime. Each strategy communicates a slightly different feminist message, resulting in questions of effectiveness and purpose. The didactic text and poster structure function as parafictional forms through the aesthetics of history and consumable content.

## **Conclusion.**

The intention of this project was to investigate how archival methodologies and printmaking processes could be used to explore an Australian women's history. The archive functioned as a resource for historical research and as a methodology to experiment with notions of 'truth' and challenge the role of 'artist as historian'. Parafiction offered strategies to challenge the integrity of the archive and reject the authority of photography as a documentary medium. The exploration of printmaking as an autographic practice established effective techniques to use representational imagery and handmade aesthetics to communicate a parafiction.

Key studio concerns that emerged from practice-led-research were the communication of the artist voice and the activation of archival material to catalyse audience engagement with historical content. Whilst representational drawing techniques operated as a strategy to work through complex narratives, the pictorial print failed as an archival object and in projecting a parafiction. Instead, text-based forms of printmaking, such as a newspaper or poster, offered the potential for establishing the plausibility of a parafictional narrative by imitating an archival document. Furthermore, the simplified structure of a headline poster, with reference to feminist protest art, functions as a didactic communication of a feminist narrative relating to an existing women's history.

## Bibliography .

- Barliant, C, "In the Near Future.". in *Guggenheim*, 2018, <<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/26692>> [accessed 13 October 2018].
- Foster, H, "An Archival Impulse.". in *October*, 110, 2004, 3-22.
- Godfrey, M, "The Artist as Historian.". in *October*, 120, 2007, 140-172.
- Lambert-Beatty, C, "Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility.". in *October*, 129, 2009, 51-84.
- Lawson, V, "Biography - Ezra Norton.". in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, , 2000, <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/norton-ezra-11260>> [accessed 13 October 2018].
- Reckitt, H, "Opening A Closing Door: Feminist and Queer Artists as Historians.". in *Reading Room: Art Goes On*, 2009, 88-103.
- Sontag, S, "In Plato's Cave" in *On Photography*. New York, Rosetta Books, 2005, pp. 1-19.
- Unknown, "Interview with an Artist: Leigh Clarke.". in *the only good one is a dead one*, 2008, <<https://annartist.wordpress.com/2008/08/12/interview-with-an-artist-leigh-clarke/>> [accessed 13 October 2018].
- Unknown, "Judy Watson – under the act", in *Grahame Galleries*, unknown date, <<http://www.grahamegalleries.com.au/index.php/judy-watson-under-the-act>> [accessed 13 October 2018].
- Watts, P, "Foreword" in *City Of Shadows: Sydney Police Photographs 1912-1948*. P Doyle (ed), Sydney, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2005, pp. 9.
- Writer, L, *Razor*. Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 2002.
- Zapperi, G, "Women's Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art—Feminist Perspectives.". in *Feminist Review*, 105, 2013, 21-47.

## Image List (in order of appearance) .

Figure 1: Millie Mitchell, *Honours A Final Project*, 2018. Photographs, lithographs, archival documents, found objects, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 2: Millie Mitchell, *Queen of Sydney's Underbelly*, 2017. Lithograph on BFK Rives, 38 x 28 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 3: Millie Mitchell, *Which one would you like?*, 2017. Lithograph on BFK Rives, 38 x 56 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 4: Zoe Leonard, *The Fae Richards Photo Archive*, 1993-1996. Gelatin silver prints and chromogenic prints, dimensions variable.

<<http://whitneymuseum.tumblr.com/tagged/The-Fae-Richards-Photo-Archive>> [accessed 14 October 2018].

Figure 5: Millie Mitchell, *Photography Experiment*, 2018. Digital prints on crystal archive paper, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 6: Millie Mitchell, *Photography Experiment: Now & Then*, 2018. Digital print on crystal archive paper, 15 x 20 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 7: Millie Mitchell, *Now & Then*, 2018. Lithograph on BFK Rives, 38 x 56 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 8: Judy Watson, (detail) *under the act*, 2007. Twenty etchings with chine collé, 42 x 30.5 cm in folio, 43 x 32 cm (closed), 71.3 x 99.2 cm (open).

<<http://www.grahamegalleries.com.au/index.php/judy-watson-under-the-act>> [accessed 14 October 2018].

Figure 9: Millie Mitchell, *Untitled*, 2018. Lithograph, linocut and pen on paper, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of Anna Kucera.

Figure 10: Millie Mitchell, *Newspaper Experiment*, 2018. Laserjet print on paper, 59.4 x 42 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 11: Millie Mitchell, *Headline Poster Experiment*, 2018. Permanent marker on newsprint, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 12: Leigh Clarke, *Good News Out of Bad News*, 2008. Serigraph on paper, dimensions variable. <<https://www.leighclarkeworks.com/Good-News-Out-of-Bad-News-2008>> [accessed 14 October 2018].

Figure 13: Sharon Hayes, *In the Near Future* (installation), 2009. Multiple-slide-projection installation: 13 actions, 13 projections, 1,053 slides, dimensions variable. <<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/26692>> [accessed 14 October 2018].

Figure 14: Sharon Hayes, (detail) *In the Near Future*, 2005. Multiple-slide-projection installation: 13 actions, 13 projections, 1,053 slides, dimensions variable.

<<https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/level-2-gallery-media-burn/level-2-gallery-media-burn-sharon-hayes>> [accessed 14 October 2018].