

**Kronenberg Wright Artists Projects**, (formerly William Wright Artist Projects) was established in 2011 by artist and former Assistant Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, William Wright AM and artist Hilarie Mais as a premier project space and gallery with an emphasis on curating experimental and innovative practices. Kronenberg Wright Artists Projects continues this legacy and philosophy with esteemed gallerist and curator, Director Simeon Kronenberg and artist Hilarie Mais, of an unparalleled reputation for exhibitions by artists working at the forefront of contemporary practice. With a strong representation of emerging, mid-career and established multidisciplinary artists, Kronenberg Wright Artists Projects exhibition program represents a cross-section of prominent contemporary Australian and international art and artists and is committed to encouraging curatorial projects and experimentation at the forefront of contemporary art practice.

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**Dr Donna West Brett** lectures in art history at the University of Sydney. She is author of *Photography and Place: Seeing and Not Seeing Germany After 1945* (Routledge 2016); 'Interventions in Seeing: GDR Surveillance, Camouflage & the Cold War Camera', in *Camouflage Cultures: the Art of Disappearance* (University of Sydney Press, 2015); 'Home and Homelessness: Ann Shelton's Aesthetics of Displacement' in *Ann Shelton: Dark Matter* (Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki Gallery, 2016) and 'Forgetting Ilse Bing', in Kris Belden-Adams, ed. *Photography and Failure: One Medium's Entanglement with Flops, Underdogs, and Disappointments* (Bloomsbury, 2017). Brett is an editorial member & reviews editor for the *Australian & NZ Journal of Art* and Research Leader for the Photographic Cultures Research Group.

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**Lynne Roberts-Goodwin** is an Australian-based artist, graduating from Fine Arts Degrees at the University of Sydney and National Art School/Alexander Mackie CAE/University of New South Wales and was awarded a Basil and Muriel Hooper Travelling Scholarship in 1979, gaining a postgraduate Master of Fine Art Degree from Medlock Fine Arts, Manchester University, UK in 1980. Confronting representations from different parts of the globe, Roberts-Goodwin's practice ranges across forms such as photographic imagery, sculptural objects and video, inviting us to engage with unfamiliar contexts and topographies of cultural and environmental tension—the human and animal body imaged and imagined within sites of impact. Roberts-Goodwin has exhibited extensively since the early 1980's which include major solo exhibitions at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art—*Remote-Half-Light* (1994), Art Gallery of New South Wales Contemporary Projects Space—*Blindfold* (1997), Australian Centre for Photography—*Azure* (2003), Sherman Galleries Goodhope—*Disappearing Acts* (2005), *Random Acts* (2007) and Biennale di Soncino Marco, Italy—*SWARM* (2013), in addition to prestigious group exhibitions, international artists' residencies, public and private art commissions. The artist's work is held in numerous private and public collections nationally and internationally, including The Museum of Contemporary Art, The Art Gallery of New South Wales, ARTBANK, Australian Opera Trust, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, National Gallery of Victoria, Goldman Sachs Group, Inc., Manchester City Gallery and private collections.

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Lynne Roberts-Goodwin  
closeup at a distance

# Lynne Roberts-Goodwin closeup at a distance

Donna West Brett, *Sydney*

*closeup at a distance* presents a dialectical spatial opposition that unfolds over photographic and video works and engages with the aftermath of human action on Earth's topography. In keeping with Roberts-Goodwin's interest in trade routes, colonisation, migration and cultural displacement, the works traverse geopolitically contested locations at two extreme points of elevation: the Dead Sea and the Himalayan Mountains.

The Dead Sea, at the lowest elevation point on Earth, is a salt lake made famous by its waters that are largely absent of life and are highly buoyant enabling tourists to float aimlessly. The feeling of stillness experienced by floating in the almost motionless water is condensed in the series *dead calm*, with their intensely flat and disorienting surfaces. The artist was drawn to this ever-changing landscape, as a contested site of desolation, sublime beauty and conflict, to work with a team of environmentalists. Roberts-Goodwin researched and photographed the landscape as akin to engaging with a ruin aesthetic, established in the western tradition as sites of contemplation on humankind's past achievements. Here, the images of stillness belie the ongoing environmental destruction and human conflict over settlement rights that continue along its banks that lie between Palestine and Jordan.

*dead calm distance 100* and *101*, taken from elevated points on the opposing banks of the occupied territories and Jordan, are images not only of stillness but of endless time that is seemingly embedded into the very pigments of the prints. To look at these photographs is to look into the vast unknowable space of time and history recalling Walter Benjamin's musings on the decay of the aura. In illustrating his concept Benjamin turns to what he refers to as the aura of natural objects, "to follow with the eye—while resting on a summer afternoon—a mountain range on the horizon or a branch that casts its shadow on the beholder is to breathe the aura of those mountains, of that branch."<sup>1</sup> Aura's decay, according to Benjamin, rests on the increasing significance of the masses to get closer to things both spatially and humanly, and their desire to assimilate a thing's uniqueness as a reproduction such as a postcard or a magazine that one might find in the possession of an armchair traveller. Time and space seem to unravel in these photographs; and in one image a technology tower hovers on an islet in the bottom third of the picture and what appears to be frothy waves are indeed salt deposits formed over eons of endless time.

The Dead Sea research undertaken by Roberts-Goodwin also encompassed studying archival photographs from the Library of Congress Matson Collection in Washington, a rich historical source for images of the Middle East. The majority of the archive's 23,000 glass and

film negatives and photographic prints depict Palestine from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, many taken by the American Colony Photo Department. This photo studio serviced the large tourist trade documenting Middle Eastern Culture from the end of the Ottoman Empire to the Palestinian Exodus in 1948.<sup>2</sup> Roberts-Goodwin has selected a number of these images depicting the landscape from an oblique aerial view and etched the negative image into aluminium plates forming a reversal of sorts. Presented in a grid formation the photographs can be read across and through time, space and history with a myriad of narratives forming in the interstices between the images. Tales of migration, colonisation, tourism, industrialisation, erosion and archaeological finds flow across the surface of the grid as a woven historical map of human conquest and destruction.

*elevation* is conceptually positioned against the *dead calm* series and takes us to a high altitude located at the end of the Himalayan Mountains on the border of China and Vietnam. The video comprises two layers composited together, one being of the last river that flows from the mountains at Ha Giang, the other at the altitude of the last mountain range.

This conflation of image and place establishes a non-place that is interrupted by sounds of the water flowing, birds chirping and wind blowing all that one expects to hear and sense in such remote locations. Woven through these mesmerising aural treats are sounds of urban life, motorbikes, planes and cars that interject and create a sense of dislocation and disorder.

Through these works Roberts-Goodwin critically explores the conditions of human mobility and colonisation

of these extreme locations as sites of displacement, slippage and alienation. They disrupt and interrupt our understanding not just of time and history but what it is we see and what it is that photographs do. As fragments of lives lived and places encountered, photographs do. As fragments of lives lived and places encountered, photographs, much like their creators, traverse the globe and migrate into postcards, memoirs, archives and as reproductions in newspapers, magazines and on screens. Much like Benjamin's aura or Hito Steyerl's wretched screen photographs flow through time and space, like the Jordan River flowing into the Dead Sea or the rivers of the Himalayan Mountains, depositing their debris like cast-out memories along the shorelines of history.<sup>3</sup>

1. Walter Benjamin, *Work of Art in the Age of Reproducibility (Third Version)*, 1939, *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings*, volume 4 1938-1940, Edmund Jephcott et al eds. (Cambridge Mass. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 255.

2. Barbara Bair, 'The American Colony Photography Department: Western Consumption and "Insider" Commercial Photography', *Jerusalem Quarterly* 44 (2010): 28–38.

3. Hito Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg Press/e-flux journal, 2013).



*dead calm tower 21 closeup at a distance 2016 series*, 150 cm x 240 cm (unframed), Museo® Silver Rag archival photographic paper 300gsm



*dead calm distance 100 closeup at a distance 2016 series*, 113 cm x 180 cm (unframed), Museo® Silver Rag archival photographic paper 300gsm



*dead calm distance 101 closeup at a distance 2016 series*, 113 cm x 180 cm (unframed), Museo® Silver Rag archival photographic paper 300gsm



*dead calm distance 132 closeup at a distance 2016 series*, 150 cm x 240 cm (unframed), Museo® Silver Rag archival photographic paper 300gsm  
images courtesy the artist and Kronenberg Wright Artists Projects, Sydney