

MORGANNA MAGEE  
*Ego Eimai* series  
 2018  
 C-type prints



How does memory inform longing? And how do we claim identity to a place we cannot remember? In the retelling of my family history, secrets and mistruths have shaped my identity as a first generation Australian. This collection of photographs from the series *Ego Eimai* is about my family and the intergenerational effects of Diaspora.

Morganna Magee is an Australian social documentary photographer and educator based in Melbourne, Victoria. Morganna's work is focused around long term projects in which the relationship between photographer and subject challenge the traditional notion of the impartial gaze of the photographer. To date her personal work has explored the issues and complexities around disability, grief and womanhood. Her work has been nominated for the National Portrait Prize, Heaton Portrait Prize, Maggie Diaz prize in Australia and internationally Px3 Official Selection for 2011 Prix de la Photographie Paris, International Photography Awards (Lucies), Commendation Sony World Photography awards. Morganna lectures in Photography at Swinburne University of Technology. She is a founding member of Lumina Collective.

morgannamagee.com

ANDY MULLENS  
*Onus (break)*  
 2018  
 HD video



In the homes of my family there are altars to those who have left us. Ancestral worship is a significant part of Vietnamese culture, with shrines decorated with photographs, fruit, flowers, 'ghost money' and incense. In this exhibition I examine the idea of the mantle: the passing on of traditions, hopes and duties. I have been thinking about the 'role' of the children of migrants and how our parents sacrificed so much for a better life. These hopes and dreams for the next generation become amplified in the diaspora. How do I reconcile these elements and carry the mantle for my family? How do I live a life that is both authentic, and honouring of their journey? My struggle to resolve this really manifested itself as I struggled to make this work, finding the topic alarmingly (and frustratingly) unapproachable. I saw creating the work as a task in honour itself: revealing the true weight of the responsibility. I construct my own altar. Each piece is carefully placed, but the altar unravels, revealing the constructed set. In this work I question, but I don't find any answers.

Andy Mullens is a multidisciplinary artist, photographer and arts professional based in Canberra. Her practice is concerned with exploring identity: dissecting culture, language and gender through installation, photomedia, sculpture and video. Mullens was the recipient of the *In Focus* Residency Award (PhotoAccess) and the Yen Female Art Awards winner (Gaffa). She has also been a finalist in the Contemporary Art Awards, the Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery National Words on Paper Awards and the Inner North Art Prize.

andymullens.com

TALIA SMITH  
*This is the house my Grandfather built*, 2018  
 Silk and HD video



*This is the house my Grandfather built* is a collection of family archival material and photographs that I have taken myself. My grandfather had emigrated from Samoa to New Zealand and my Grandmother from the Cook Islands in the 1950s. They met in New Zealand, married and had seven children, one being my mother. In 1960 they moved between Auckland suburbs Ponsonby to avondale, my mother and her siblings were raised in this house, my brother lived there for a time and during a mental breakdown I stayed there to recover. Although the house looks different now and my Grandfather is no longer alive, the house remains in our family. This work explores familial histories and bonds and the everlasting legacy of a small house in Avondale.

Talia Smith is an artist and curator from New Zealand and now based in Sydney, Australia. Her visual arts practice explores notions of time, memory and ruin within the landscape and the physical and psychological traces we as humans leave behind. She has exhibited her work in Australia, New Zealand, Germany and USA with solo shows at Bus Projects Melbourne, PhotoAccess Canberra and Wellington Street Projects Sydney. She completed a residency at Bundanon Trust in 2017 and was included in Art Collectors '50 things you should know issue' for 2018 as a Tastemaker. She is currently competing her Masters of Fine Arts at UNSW Sydney.

talia-smith.com

FRONT COVER ART BY JANELLE LOW THE FAMILY MANTLE 2018, PHOTO PAPER

# THE FAMILY MANTLE

SOFI BASSEGGHI. KATAYOUN JAVAN. PIA JOHNSON.  
 JANELLE LOW. MORGANNA MAGEE. ANDY MULLENS.  
 TALIA SMITH. CURATED BY PIA JOHNSON.

22 September - 11 November 2018

Bundoora Homestead Art Centre  
 7 Prospect Hill Drive, Bundoora

# Curating the family archive

Taking family photographs is an inherited ritual in my family. My mother has and still demands a family group photograph to be taken at every occasion. We have numerous family photo albums at my parents' house. Every family member has a wall or mantelpiece laden with photographs of us on it: generations of family, growing older, through different times, houses and countries. This tradition has been passed down to me – I now too take photographs of my family.

Photography has been an integral part of how we understand family in the modern age. Family photography, the family album and archives are as much about documenting events and people, as they are about shaping our family narrative. They act like a talisman against the outside world, a story about what we believe our lives to be. Family photographs deliver us a connection to the present whilst only ever showing the past. In the details of these photographs we find the everyday, the particular, the sentimental, the aspirational.

Academic Mette Sandbye suggests that family photography goes beyond individual importance, where the emotional, psychological and affective qualities of them can go further to enable a more

subtle understanding of cultural similarities and differences, which is much needed in a world where globalisation sometimes cements cultural differences rather than encouraging understanding.<sup>1</sup>

It is for this reason that I use family photography within my artistic practice. They are potent historical and personal markers that communicate more than my individual identity. The complexity of the family photograph is then curated within my own work; where the mapping and remapping of relationships, cultural identities and historical contexts can be investigated.

The artists within *The Family Mantle* are all female, and acknowledge a common contemporary mixed Australian experience of being inherently in-between, but infinitely connected. Individually or within a familial context they share a history of migration, cross-cultural difference and ever-shifting identities. Navigated through the medium of photography and video, the viewer can witness a range of perspectives and stories of these collective migration experiences.

Traversing archival and new photography is a common thread within the exhibition. Sofi Basseghi's collaboration with her father Bahram Basseghi for *In Parallel*, combines old scanned family photographs taken in Iran with new ones in Australia – the centerpiece, a beautiful chair that has migrated with her family. Charting the ebb and flow of two places, migration, and her family members and homes, a profound sense of duality is evident.

Using the symbol of the family home and familial bonds over generations, Talia Smith's *This is the house my Grandfather built* charts her family's cultural identity and migration from Samoa to New Zealand. Her collages on silk and abstract video work re-create a sense of time and memory – a blurred yet tangible journey of place and family.

Like Smith's works, the assemblage of photographs and documents of my work *From Nonna's House*, reference my Italian great grandparents migration to Australia. Using photographs of my great grandmother, my grandmother and her house, all taken in Australia, questions of maternal identity and their connection to place emerge.

Katayoun Javan's works in *Family Tree* speak directly to family history and narrative through the use of scanning, manipulating, collage and re-photographing family photos. Javan shifts her personal experience of loss and displacement in Iran by bringing humor and warmth to her new series of family photographs.

Janelle Low's *The Family Mantle* disrupts the expected family narrative. Her sprawling installation of torn up family photographs sees a brutal ripping of those intimate moments, people and places. The fragmented mass of Low's family photographs portrays a sea of faded memories, migration and diaspora that are disparate as much as they are distinct; that unequivocally cannot be glued together again.

In a similar vein in Andy Mullen's *Onus (break)*, we see the artist construct her own shrine – an important Vietnamese ancestral worship tradition – through a slow unfolding of items. In the final scene, the evidence of the artist's own struggle with this is revealed by her bite marks, the tearing of lemons, and the artifice of the photography setup; all signifiers to the split and divide of bearing family customs and traditions in this contemporary society.

Finally, Morganna Magee's evocative series *Ego Eimai* thinks through the retelling of family history, secrets and mistruths. Each image is a poetic space for memory and loss, and constructing a cultural identity from a place that she cannot remember.

The artists in *The Family Mantle* consider and broaden ideas of 'family' and 'family photography' as they relate to individuals, communities and nations. Through their artworks they create new perspectives; transgress social convention; disrupt narrative; interrogate photography, oral history and archival processes; and preserve stories of migration, displacement and trauma.

*The Family Mantle* gives pause to think not only about what family means and how ideas of family photography may shift and evolve in relationship to our sociopolitical context today, but how within an artistic context we may better understand the role family photography has in the construction of ourselves.

## Pia Johnson - curator and artist

1. Mette Sandbye (2014) Looking at the family photo album: a resumed theoretical discussion of why and how, *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 6:1, 25419, DOI: 10.3402/jac.v6.25419

## SOFI BASSEGGHI in collaboration with Bahram Basseghi In Parallel, 2018 Archival inkjet prints

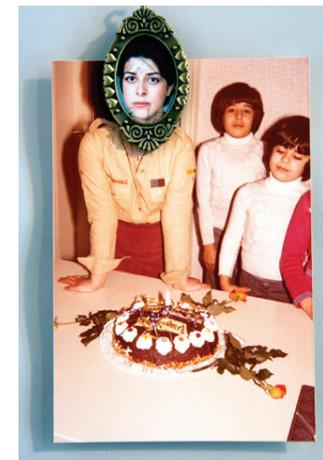


*In Parallel* is a set of photographs, which reveal the life of my parents and myself thirty years ago captured by my dad Bahram Basseghi in Iran, 1988 together with my partner, my son and I in Australia 2018 a generation later. My mum and I are exactly 34 years old in the photographs. We all sit on the same chair as new parents. My four-year-old self with my two-year-old son peer through my dad's camera with the same innocent and inquisitive gaze towards the world. These photographs are set in two homes, in the northern and southern hemisphere which continue to chart the ebb and flow of family members, highlighting the in between state, the feeling of duality arising from the turmoil in Iran and since our migration to Australia. The chair, having also travelled from Tehran to Melbourne however, is the common link as our presence will eventually fade. It will remain for generations to come and the unknown parallels of the future ahead.

Sofi Basseghi is an Iranian born multi-racial visual artist based in Melbourne, Australia. Her award winning films, photographs and video work have been exhibited at internationally acclaimed venues and galleries including West Space, The Substation, Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art and the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome. She is currently a finalist in the 2018 Bowness Photography Prize at Monash Gallery of Art. Her work is based predominantly on fictitious and actual stories born of experiences arising from the complexities of the cultural, religious and social climate people find themselves in. She is currently a PhD (Art) candidate at RMIT University.

sofibasseggi.com

## KATAYOUN JAVAN Family Tree series 2018 Pigment injet print



These photos are about the history of my family and the effect their story has had on me as an Iranian artist and as an individual. Through re-photography, scanning, manipulating and staging my family photos I make narratives. My father was executed during the Iranian revolution of 1979 because of his involvement with the Shah's regime, which made a permanent change on my family. I was born after the revolution during the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, in the midst of chaos. My growing up included looking at many family albums, which contained the images of glory time of my family. Looking at the family albums for me was a magical and other worldly experience, a window to the great times I missed out on. Today being an immigrant in Australia yearning for the warmth and support of my family has impacted my thought process creating these photographs.

Katayoun Javan is an Iranian photographic artist based in Melbourne. She studied photography at Tehran Azad University and completed a MFA at Deakin University in 2013. Through documentary photography, portraiture and use of found photos she draws on personal stories to explore notions of memory, home and displacement. She was the recipient of a Creative Fellowship at the State Library of Victoria in 2016 and the result of her research, a series of photographic portraits of Iranian immigrants in Melbourne, was exhibited and purchased by the State Library in 2017. She will be an artist in residence at Yarra City of Council's Room to Create program in November 2018. Her long term photographic project 'The Man with 1000 Faces' about her father will be exhibited in two parts at Seventh Gallery (2018) & BLINDSIDE (2019).

katayounjavan.com

## PIA JOHNSON From Nonna's House 2018 Archival inkjet prints



I come from a family with strong maternal figures: my Nonna is one of them. Her parents were migrants from Italy after the First World War – they travelled by boat, third class, with a 2-month-old baby. Researching my family history, I came across the original documents of their ship's log and my great grandmother's naturalisation papers. Nonna lives in a Victorian terrace in Fitzroy, given to her by her mother. I cannot think of Nonna without thinking of her house. It is part of her, part of my family, part of me. Like Nonna, it is strong, familiar and steadfast. *From Nonna's House* sits within a wider investigation of my cross-cultural identity of Chinese Italian Australian heritage. It is a complimentary series to *Por Por's House* (2014), which presents a series of photographs of my maternal grandmother's house in Chadstone.

Pia Johnson is a photographer and visual artist, whose practice seeks to investigate issues about cultural difference, diaspora and identity. She also has a strong practice in portrait and performance photography, working with major and independent arts organisations in Australia. Pia has exhibited throughout Australia, the USA, Japan and Mexico. She has been a finalist in many photography awards, and is regularly invited as a guest speaker and artistic advisor for a range of organisations. Her work is collected in private and public collections including the National Gallery of Victoria. Pia holds a Bachelor of Creative Arts (Visual arts) and Diploma of Modern Languages (Mandarin) from the University of Melbourne, and is currently a PhD (Art) candidate at RMIT University.

piajohnson.com

## JANELLE LOW The Family Mantle 2018 Photography paper



Janelle Low was the first in her family to be born outside of Asia. Utilizing photography as her primary medium, Janelle's practice explores the internal and external conflicts that arise from growing up in multicultural Australia and navigating its evolving cultural landscape. Her work looks into the sense of displacement and 'otherness' felt between both her heritage and cultural upbringing, questioning notions of identity and acceptance. In her work *The Family Mantle* Janelle presents a chaotic, fragmented mass of memories, people and places torn from her family albums. Linking her installation to ideas around migration and diaspora, the photographs become disconnected, where memory, trauma, and a sense of loss emerges as precious family moments and important markers of cultural identity are broken apart and decontextualized.

In 2013 Janelle became the second female, and youngest winner of the National Photographic Portrait Prize presented by the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra. Janelle was selected as a finalist in the prestigious William and Winifred Bowness Photography Prize for 2017, and was recently invited to collaborate with MECCA on their 'The Many Faces of Mecca' campaign launched in the Bourke Street MYER windows, as well as exhibiting work in the group show 'Disobedient Daughters' at Metro Arts Gallery in Brisbane. Janelle has exhibited nationally and internationally with her work held in public and private collections. Janelle is represented by THIS IS NO FANTASY + dianne tanzer gallery.

janellelow.com