

## THE VISCERAL METAPHOR



# THE VISCERAL METAPHOR

A contemplation on the invaded self.

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# ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements'.

*L. M. Miller*

.....  
Signed

8<sup>th</sup> November 2013

.....  
Date

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*L. M. Miller*

.....  
Signed

8<sup>th</sup> November 2013

.....  
Date



29/12/2011

On the 29th of December 2011, my home was broken into. Although it did not involve a violent attack and I was not there at the time, I was left invaded and violated; suspended in a state of shock and grief.

The experience was complicated by the previous loss of loved ones<sup>1</sup> and the totemic objects that held memories of them. These fragments, along with family heirlooms and photographic collections, not only furnished my home but also contained my identity. Everything that I treasured was gone. I was left with a room without contents and a home without a heart.

Upon my return after the invasion, the air lingered with the smell of others – forensics, intruders, all appearing as a similar shade of grey, the colour of mourning.

It is difficult to discern why I am drawn to contemplate an experience others might think is best left in the dark. But there is an intuitive voice and it seeks resolution.

<sup>1</sup> Allan Miller (Dad) 29th July 1994; Shoko and Reiko Kunimatsu, (Mother and Daughter) May 1994.



# ABSTRACT

This practice-led thesis explores the disruptive metaphor in relation to ideas of loss, irresolution and the photographic. It is centred around the researcher's experience of a home invasion. Through the process of grief, the body is considered for its expressive, visceral and morphological properties. In photographic prints and moving image sequences, enigmatic metaphors operate as an extension of the corporeal. In the spatio-temporal dimension of the work, images are constructed (and deconstructed) through a series of instantaneous moments: repeating, multiplying and becoming.



# INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

THE VISCERAL METAPHOR: A Contemplation on the Invaded Self.

This study is an autobiographical reflection upon my experience of a home invasion. It is a story of loss and longing, of the body voluntarily surrendering to the process of grief and mourning. It seeks an expression of emotions and memories, when heirlooms and artefacts are gone.

Becoming visible, becoming flesh and becoming tangible, images are formed out of the necessity to communicate and reach beyond the self. On the skin of the photographic image, the body in physical shock reassembles itself. Based on this concept the overarching idea in this thesis speaks of the body and photographic image becoming one, despite fundamental differences between subject matter and representation.

The project aims to dissolve the space between the flesh of the artist, the dimension of the artwork and the perceptions of the viewer. As such, it explores the potential of the photographic image for its affective exchange. The image seeks to speak where verbal language ends, and to reach into the viscosity of an invaded self.

In the first chapter of this exegesis, I describe my relationship to the thesis topic and to photography as a media form.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the methodology employed in explicating the research. A heuristic process enables my subjective experience of the home invasion to operate as an environment within which questioning and discovery can occur.

The third chapter presents a discussion of critical ideas in the form of three essays. Each essay also reviews contextual knowledge that operates as a lens through which my thesis practice can be considered.

The essay *Virtually Still* focuses on the paradoxical relationship between stillness and movement. Here, Barthes' (1980) concept of the static nature of the photographic image is considered in relation to Merleau-Ponty's (1962) and Bergson's (Bergson in Pearson & Mullarkey, 2002) notions of the mobility of lived experience.

*Objects of Mourning* questions the drive to bring the internal, outwards; to make visible that which cannot be seen. Through catharsis and Freud's (1917) notion of mourning and melancholia, the body is mimetically knitted into the flesh of the image.

The third essay, *Metaphorical Enigmas*, investigates the transformative role of the conceptual metaphor in relation to thoughts, bodily sensations, conceptual associations and their visual representation. Specifically, I discuss ideas of internal disruption through physical forces of taking and falling.

In conclusion, I outline the achievements of this thesis and briefly discuss future research potentially emanating from this study.



CHAPTER 1  
Positioning the Researcher

## BEGINNINGS

As I child I saw an alternative world as mental pictures. I followed the light as it traced my surroundings, day into shadowy night. My mind operated as a camera obscura, composing, cropping and orchestrating everything it saw. From fleeting scenes in the back of a Mark IV Cortina, to simple contemplations at the dinner table, I began to view objects ideally, unbound to materiality.

It wasn't until I left Oamaru to undertake formal training at the Dunedin School of Fine Arts, that I discovered a love for photography. Incrementally, I conquered my fear of a tool I had hitherto considered insincere. While the camera told a "truth" it often failed to see the world as I imagined it. I came to realise that my relationship with photography was not as much about delivering a copy of an object; rather, I was interested in its ability to represent subjective experiences as metaphors.

## THE DANGEROUSLY TRANSFIGURED

In *Hanging in the Bounds*, a series of photographs I completed between 1999 and 2000, I considered the body dangerously transfigured as it moved from flying to falling within a dream. Seductive in beauty and rupturing in terror, these works projected something of a hidden, waking, mind-scape. As large photographic prints they were suspended in a dark exhibition space and individually spot lit, in a nonlinear sequence. This increased spectator disorientation, and a sense of unstable immersion.



*Figure 1.1.* Miller, L. (2000). *Hanging in the Bounds*. Black and White Silver Gelatin Print. 1.5m x 1m.

## COMMERCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

Aware of the power and allure of the photographic image, and its ability to transport the viewer into another world, I began to pursue a career in fashion photography and advertising. I relocated to Milan, working as an animator for Skinkers Limited, a technology-based communications company. Later, I took up a freelance photographic assistant position for Ford Model Management.

Eventually, I returned home to be closer to my father who was ailing. I established a commercial studio in Dunedin and produced fashion advertising for designers and editorial portraits for ACP Media Publications. Concurrently, I began lecturing and writing photography programmes for the Dunedin School of Fine Arts.

In July 2004 my father passed away and I left for Auckland to further my practice as a freelance photographer. I took up a position as Head of Department in Photography at a private training establishment. As analogue transitioned into digital photography, I sought to diversify my scope by simultaneously interning as a visual researcher at The Sweet Shop production agency. In generating treatments for creative directors from around the globe, I realised the benefits of producing personal work and establishing my unique “fingerprint”.



Figure 1.2. Miller, L. (2004). Lee Jeans Advertorial. *Remix Magazine*, Issue 43.

## RECENT WORK

In a series I completed in 2011, *What's in a name?* the floral photographic works considered both Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* and the photograph's paradoxical life. Here, objects remained open to dual encounters, without a singular, definable meaning. With the gaze transfixed through the surface of the image, I found it possible to be seduced by the intoxicatingly beautiful *Rose* (Figure 1.3). So perfect and innocent was the image, that it could simultaneously conceal and reveal the darkness of being submerged and drowned in a vertiginous state.

I ruminated over each composition and titillated the object with light, meticulously exploring it from multiple angles until I experienced the object as a three-dimensional form. I walked through

the third dimension of the photograph, capturing two-dimensional simultaneous sequences of my perception. As such, I questioned this illusionary space and its stability.

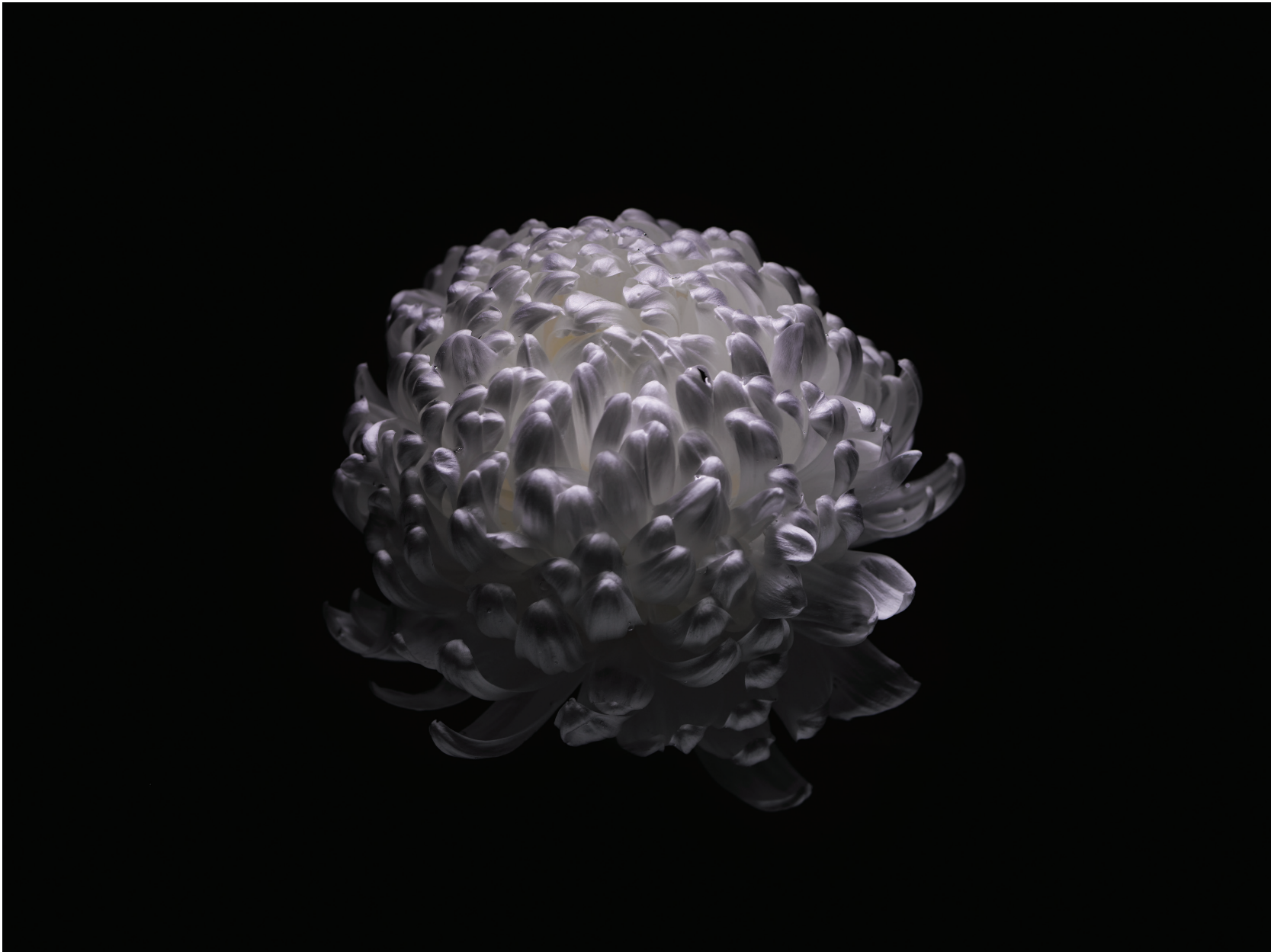
In a body of work titled *The Virtually Still*, completed in 2012, I fused filmic conventions of parallel montage with stereoscopic principles. In doing so, I destabilised the distinction between inactual (virtual) and actual experience. Within the architectural spaces that I photographed, I discovered that, through differences and repetitions of movement around a convergent point, the superimposition of frames could generate a degree of ambiguity. This increased the spatialisation of time and mobility for the spectator, as static structures shifted into transitional territories.

## AS A RESEARCHER ...

I am interested in exploring the potentials of photographic image by opening up new ways of perceiving space and time through instantaneous sequences. This is because, while the two-dimensional photographic image provides an illusion of depth, it often falls short of immersing the spectator or providing a sense of "being-there" (as we might experience an image in cinema). By exploring ideas with still and moving image theories and practice, it is possible to discover new ways of enhancing the photographic image in order to create an immersive environment.



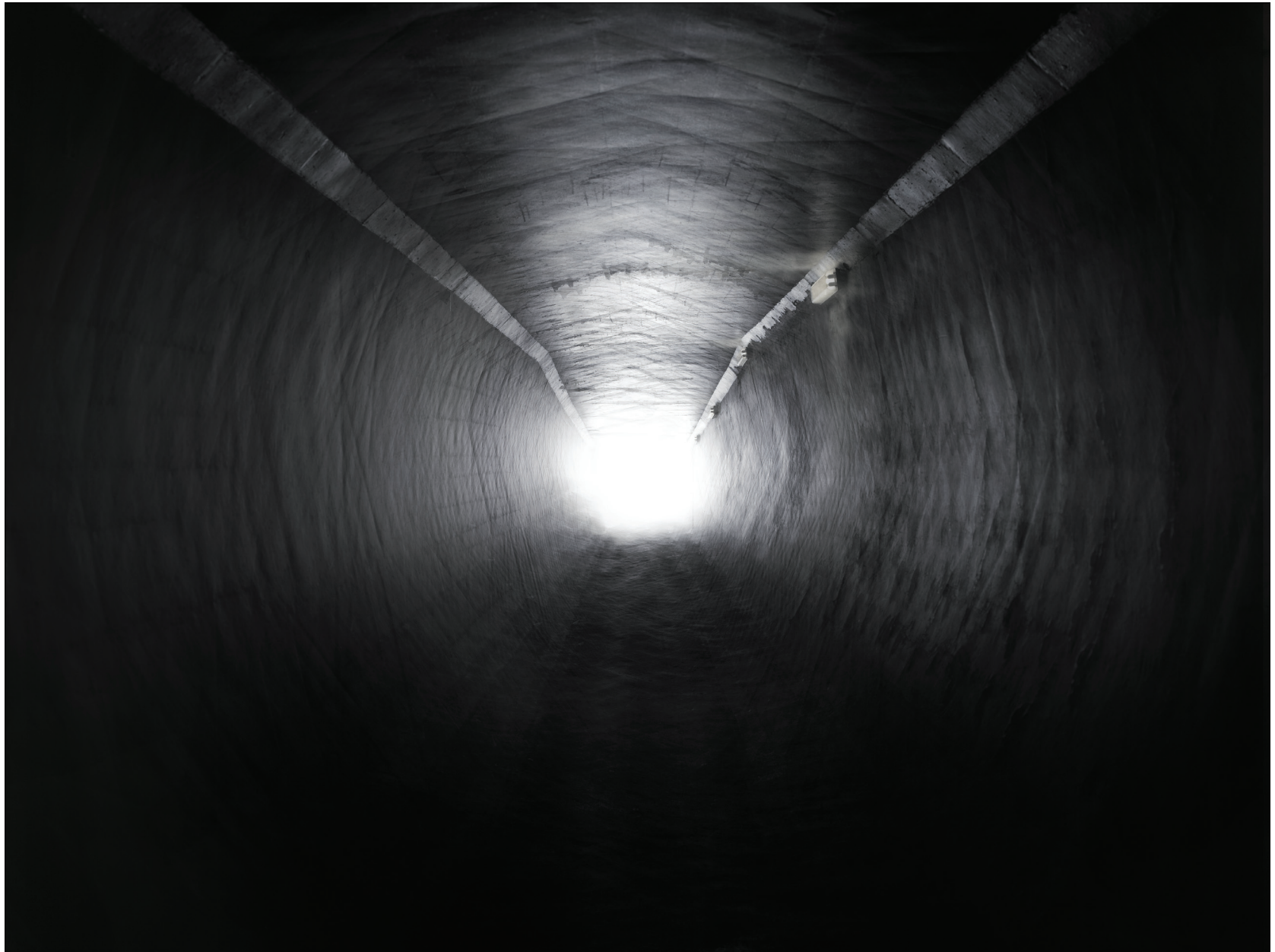
*Figure 1.3.* Miller, L. (2011). *Rose* from the series; *What's in a name?* Colour Print. 60cm x 50cm.



*Figure 1.4.* Miller, L. (2011). *Chrysie* from the series; *What's in a name?* Colour Print. 60cm x 50cm.



Figure 1.5. Miller, L. (2012). Still from Moving Image: *Northcote Bridge*. From the series; *The Virtually Still*. Projected Image. 5m x 4.2m.



*Figure 1.6.* Miller, L. (2012). *Tunnel*. From the series; *The Virtually Still*. Colour Print. 1.9m x 1.6m.



# CHAPTER 2

## Methodology



## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to provide the reader with a theoretical context in which to understand the visual imagery, in order to effectively facilitate an immersive experience. (Ellis, 1993; Ellis 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2006).

The methodology employed here may be described as an autobiographically positioned, heuristic inquiry. The heuristic approach refers to a process of investigation that involves “self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 11). In this form of inquiry, intuition and experimentation enable the researcher to heighten chances of discovery through a process of astute questioning. By locating myself within the thesis I adopt an autobiographical position (Ings, 2013; Moustakas, 1990), in order to generate images that process grief related to my personal experience of a home invasion. Furthermore, through this process I seek to offer a connection between an expression

of my lived experience and broader understandings of the sense of violation that accompanies such invasions. It is this wider, contextual consideration that lifts autobiographical inquiries above the solipsistic (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Ings, 2013).

While there is no prescribed, systematic formula for photographically exploring an individual’s lived experience, I draw on a process of “reflective attentiveness” (Husserl, 2001). Reflective attentiveness enables the seemingly intangible, inner cognitive processes to become accessible, legitimate and meaningful. This occurs through rigorous searching and questioning, where the problem or issue at hand is pursued through creatively synthesising and critiquing potential visual metaphors. These operate as vehicles for communicating an expression of violation that transcends limitations of the written word (see Chapter 3). The process enables me to move beyond

the literal, known and symbolic in order to “discover or find” new outcomes (Moustakas, 1990).

Douglass and Moustakas (1985) suggest that “heuristics offers an attitude with which to approach research, but does not prescribe a methodology” (p. 42). Thus, although a number of theorists and practitioners discuss approaches one might employ (Kleining & Witt, 2000; Lohmann, 1960; Douglass & Moustakas, 1985), a project is always open to the specific needs of the inquiry and the researcher.

Therefore, this research methodology is derived from an inner journey that incorporates several methods I will discuss as recollection, relation, creation, relational ethics, explication and external review.

## RECOLLECTION

Ramsay and Noorbergen's (1981) psychological recovery scheme	Emotional and Physical Sensation
<p>This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.</p>	<p>The Fall: Vertigo</p> <p>Taking: Ripping</p> <p>Despair and Fragmentation</p> <p>Churning: Stomach</p>

Figure 2.1. Miller, L. (2013). *Conceptual Development*. [Left] Ramsay and Noorbergen's (as cited in Dean, 1988, p. 157) analysis of grief. [Right], the physical sensations I experienced and the metaphors I selected for the project.

By recollection I refer to a process of accessing remembered objects, experiences, and the sensations that accompanied them.

Extracting information from the self involves a process that Moustakas (1990) describes as scratching the surface of a problem or question of intense interest. Sela-Smith (2001) describes this phase as being an “attention-getting circumstance, pointing to something that cannot yet be seen but has the intuitive smell of significance that draws any scientist into inquiry” (p. 58). In this phase, I recorded initial thoughts

in a journal. This enabled me to establish a way of tapping into and immersing myself within the phenomena of the home invasion experience. Here, focused and precise questioning of the self revealed qualitative data that could be utilised as the foundation of conceptual exploration.

This process necessitated a paradoxical approach, of consciously maintaining distance from the self, by looking outwards to contextual literature from theoretical texts while returning to the self for a response. Specifically, a reflexive relationship was

established by applying Ramsay and Noorbergen's (1981) (as cited in Dean, 1988) psychological recovery scheme to recollected corresponding emotional reactions.<sup>2</sup> This method of organising information acted as an interpretative tool that enabled a logical and systematic account to describe the seemingly chaotic system of trauma recollection. In this context, trauma recollection was impulsive, implicit and automatic.

<sup>2</sup> The relationship between the Ramsay and Noorbergen model and the emotional reactions appeared asymmetrical. Not all accounts were able to be directly aligned. Their model identifies common factors characteristic of grief, however they suggest that the level of distress felt is dependant on the degree of attachment to a person. In this instance the impact of grief felt appeared significant, as the loss of objects in the home invasion related to multiple people who had passed away. Therefore there is a sense of unresolve and non-closure.

## RELATION

Emotional and Physical Sensation	Metaphor
The Fall: Vertigo	Cave Waterfalls
Taking: Ripping	Carcass and Body
Despair and Fragmentation	Body and Swamp
Churning: Stomach	Eels

*Figure 2.2.* Miller, L. (2013). *Locating Metaphors*. In this phase the emotional and physical sensations were aligned with metaphorical environments and objects. Not all sensations pertained to a specific bodily attribute and therefore suggested that no singular metaphor existed. See Chapter 3, essay 3 for an elaboration on conceptualisation.

### **This refers to a process of application.**

Visually conceptualising retrospective feelings into metaphors involved a process of extracting semantic information from the contents/objects of thought that accompanied the grief process (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Kant (1998) argues that thought is not empty, but contains objects that appear in one's imagination as a retroactive response. These objects are not based on physical objects present in reality, but are a construction of internal objects

of thought, formed out of one's collective unconscious.<sup>3</sup> It is through these subjective objects that it possible to trace and isolate potential conceptual trajectories. This approach is underpinned by conceptual metaphor theory, which provides a framework for interpretation. In this theory, Lakoff (as cited in Ortony, 1993) suggests that by mapping conceptual ideas to a "target domain," information can be comprehended in "concepts like time, quantity, state, change, action, cause, purpose, means, modality ..." (1993, p. 212). However, my aim is not to separate out

the components of objects, but rather to represent the connections I share with them.

Thus the solution was to focus on commonalities, which I determined to be the unique relationship between analogical thinking, and the repetitious act of recollection. Kant (1998) and Moustakas (1990) reinforced this view by stating that the measure of an object of the imagination may reach its potential when realised in its totality, through an absolute comprehension of the successive parts.

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of the collective unconscious is based on Jung's definition that, refers to archetypal images that may be utilised for analysis of an individual.

## CREATION

The third phase may be broadly described as creative. While the preceding phases, involved recollection and application, this part of my research involved incremental experimentation through which I sought high levels of discovery and conceptual resolution.

### ***Move-testing & Frame-testing:***

The exploratory process of formulating layered feelings of grief into conceptual representations involved two levels of active experimentation, namely Schön's (1983) "move-testing experiments" and "frame-testing experiments."

Move-testing experiments<sup>4</sup> were produced quickly, to determine the scope of the project and to critically examine the potential power of the metaphor. Each experiment focused on the virtual object, allegorical

interpretation and sensation through a process of "photographic sketching." A "photographic sketch" is a term that I developed to describe a method of tracing visual manifestations directly from the imagination, while concurrently tapping into feelings that rupture up from within the body. While this notion corresponds with the Freudian inspired Surrealist principal of "free association,"<sup>5</sup> it prescribes a model of thought defined by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) as "the rhizome." The rhizome suggests that because thought is autonomous and comprised of incorporeal transformations, there is no predetermined way of articulating its content and expression, other than through a series of unravellings. Effectively, this approach enabled a reframing of the question at hand because it disestablished the ego and provided a new attitudinal approach towards problem solving.

The metaphorical photographic sketches moved my work away from the literal. In so doing, I was able to shift my thinking closer to visceral emotions. Having established a framework for unravelling my experience of invasion, I employed what Schön calls "frame-testing experiments." Schön (1983) states that it is "through the non-technical process of framing the problematic situation that we may organise and clarify both the ends to be achieved and the possible means to achieving them" (p. 41). In this process, "the practitioner ... takes the reframed problem and conducts an experiment to discover the consequences and implications that can be made to follow from it" (Schön, 1983, p. 131). Thus, in this project, each problem was unravelled through a series of investigations that consisted of cycles of analysis and reflection-in-action.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Move-testing experiments are described by Schön (1983) as "any deliberate action undertaken with an end in mind" (p. 146). They involve specific actions to create something intended. Schön believes that, if the experiment produces what was intended it is "affirmed". If it doesn't, the idea is "negated" (p. 71).

<sup>5</sup> Free Association is a Freudian psychoanalytic concept that underpinned the surrealist principal of automatism. Bollas (2008) suggests that through free association one can relate whatever comes into one's mind without censoring one's thoughts. In psychoanalysis the technique is intended to help a person "learn more about what he or she thinks and feels, in an atmosphere of nonjudgmental curiosity and acceptance" (p.21).

<sup>6</sup> The term "reflection-in-action" was coined by Schön in 1983. It describes a process that enables the practitioner to reshape what she is working on, while she is working on it. In this process, one does not use "trial-and-error". One's actions are much more reasoned and "self-conscious". Here "the practitioner allows himself [sic.] to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings, which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment, which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation". (Schön, 1983, p. 68).

The creative phase of my inquiry was one of incremental experimentation and refinement. This was developed through cycles of analysis and testing that enabled me to unravel experience and refine metaphoric expressions of the home invasion.<sup>7</sup> Within this process one can discern three influential principles:<sup>8</sup>

- The imagery is located in the “present tense”<sup>9</sup>
- The photographs exhibit the qualities of three-dimensional form
- The photograph must embody a sense of movement, through the still photograph and/or the “moving still”.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Schön, (1983), suggests that through “technical rationality” each of my experiments formed new knowledge because they pushed the boundaries of the known and questioned the physical properties/mechanics of combining two or three separate states into a seamless arrangement.

<sup>8</sup>These principles were applied to all three of the metaphors developed for the project.

<sup>9</sup> Pavon Cuellar (2010) states that although “recitation is centered on the ‘present tense’ ” (p. 101), one’s temporal experience of an object is timeless. Thus, with each experiment I tried to disconnect the metaphor from an association with any specific time and place.

<sup>10</sup> The term “Moving Still” is a definition that I have developed to describe the process of adding movement to a still photograph. A moving still does not appear in real time or with the same continuity it might contain in cinema. However, it is reminiscent of the filmic, “represented instance,” discussed by Metz (1974). By extending the temporality of the work to reveal subtle movement, the moving image maintains the visual impact of a photographic image.

## Photographic Explorations



*Figure 2.3.* Miller, L. (2013). *Eels*. Photographic Sketch 1. Photographic Print. In this initial photographic sketch the eels were considered too literal and recognisable. The image does not express the emotional and physical sensations felt within the stomach of the body. Therefore the need to abstract the image became apparent.



*Figure 2.4.* Miller, L. (2013). *Eels*. Photographic Sketch 2. Photographic Print. To abstract the composition, the eels were placed in a cylindrical glass tank and photographed through a series of long exposures. However the result did not reflect a sense of inner turmoil. This result suggested that the eels and water needed to be photographed separately.



*Figure 2.5.* Miller, L. (2013). *Water*. Photographic Print. Photographic still used as a background template for the final photographic image.



*Figure 2.6.* Miller, L (2013). *Eels*. Photographic Sketch 3. Photographic Print. Despite composing the water, into the round composition of the eels, the image appeared too symbolic and reduced the metaphorical impact. Through frame-testing experimentation I arrived at more successful variations where water filled the whole frame.



Figure 2.7. Miller, L (2013). *Eels*. Photographic Sketch 4. Photographic Print. (See Figure 3.5 for final photographic print).

## Moving Image Explorations



Figure 2.8. Miller, L. (2013). *Eels*. Still frame from stop motion animation experiment.

In this experiment multiple files were composited together in both linear and nonlinear sequences to analyse varying levels of ambiguity. However results indicated that the smooth fluid movement of the eels was critical in capturing a sense of emotional turmoil.



Figure 2.9. Miller, L. (2013). *Eels*. Still from Moving Image Test.

In this initial experiment the moving image footage was reduced from 30 frames per second to 1 frame per second. The slowing of time enhanced the viscosity of the image. However, unlike the still photographic image, the water needed to fill the frame.



Figure 2.10. Miller, L. (2013). *Eels*. Test on a Black Background. Still from Moving Image.

The eels were captured on a black background with minimal water. However extracting them away from the glass became problematic as the black background and the colour of the eels were too similar.



Figure 2.11. Miller, L. (2013). *Eels*. Test on a Green Screen. Still from Moving Image.

The eels were captured on a green screen, which made masking easier.



Figure 2.12. Miller, L (2013). *Water*. Still from Moving Image.

The moving image footage was composited with the eels in the round tank (Figure 2.9) to achieve the final “Moving Still”.



Figure 2.13. Miller, L. (2013), *Eels*. Still from Final Moving Image.

Capturing live eels proved challenging as I could not anticipate or control their movements in the water. The water needed to be oxygenated a week before each shoot so the eels would remain alive and active for a period of ten to twenty minutes. After each shoot, the eels were released back into the wild.

## RELATIONAL ETHICS

Certain experiments in this project involved other parties. Because of the nature of the images I employed a form of “relational autonomy”<sup>11</sup> (MacKenzie and Stoljar, 2000; MacDonald, 2002) when dealing with them.

“Relational autonomy” involves building network structures, “relationships and interdependencies” (MacDonald, 2002, p. 282), while one works. It requires the practitioner to think through ethical and moral issues, as core operational responsibilities, before approaching people who might become part of one’s research.

Relational autonomy requires one to enter into a dialogue that clearly explains background information, the rationale for what one is doing, and what will be done with the work produced. It also assumes a level of positive reciprocity. This is so all parties are respected and advantaged by their involvement. In this regard, I offered my professional photographic services, as a

means of expressing my appreciation for the support of participants in the project.

This approach can be demonstrated in my approach to working with Scott’s Home Kill Meats while I was gathering material for the photographic work *Carcass*. Before I began pursuing ideas for this work in any detail, I met with the butchers to discuss the project and to talk through any concerns they might have. I offered to produce work for them in reciprocation of their support.<sup>12</sup> We also discussed the logistics of photographing in the field so as to identify potential health and safety concerns and the parameters of working on private properties. While no formal contracts were necessary, ongoing contact was maintained via email. This correspondence confirmed our earlier verbal discussions in writing. Final photographs were also shown to the business owners, so that they were aware of the nature of the material I recorded and interpreted.

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<sup>11</sup> Relational autonomy offers an alternative concept of autonomy to overly individualistic notions. Christman (2011) says, “it stresses the ineliminable role that relatedness plays in both persons’ self-conceptions, relative to which autonomy must be defined” (3.3). He notes that relational autonomy “connects social support and recognition of the person’s status to her capacities for self-trust, self-esteem, and self-respect. The core argument in these approaches is that autonomy requires the ability to act effectively on one’s own values, either as an individual or member of a social group” (ibid.). Thus when working inside such a paradigm, one cannot assume one’s engagement with the research is value-neutral. One is part of broader issues like social justice, recognition, and social practice.

<sup>12</sup> Three commercial photographic shoots were conducted for Scott’s Home Kill Meats, including: environmental and studio portraits and architectural photographs of the butchery located in Helensville.



*Figure 2.14. Miller, L. (2013). Field documentation from the Home Kill 1. Kumeu, Auckland, 10th May, 2013.*



*Figure 2.15. Miller, L. (2013). Field Documentation from Home Kill 2. Muriwai, Auckland, 8th July, 2013.*

Several photographic shoots were conducted in collaboration with Scott's Home Kill Meats and occurred after assurances that the imagery was not being used as part of animal rights activism. Each photoshoot took four hours and within each environment a new set of challenges arose. Fluctuating light conditions, the ability to navigate the workspace, and variations in stock, meant that achieving technical and aesthetic consistency was problematic. While ideas were conceived early in the project, the actual production took several months.



Figure 2.16. Miller, L. (2013). *Field documentation (2) from the Home Kill 1*. Kumeu, 10th May, 2013.

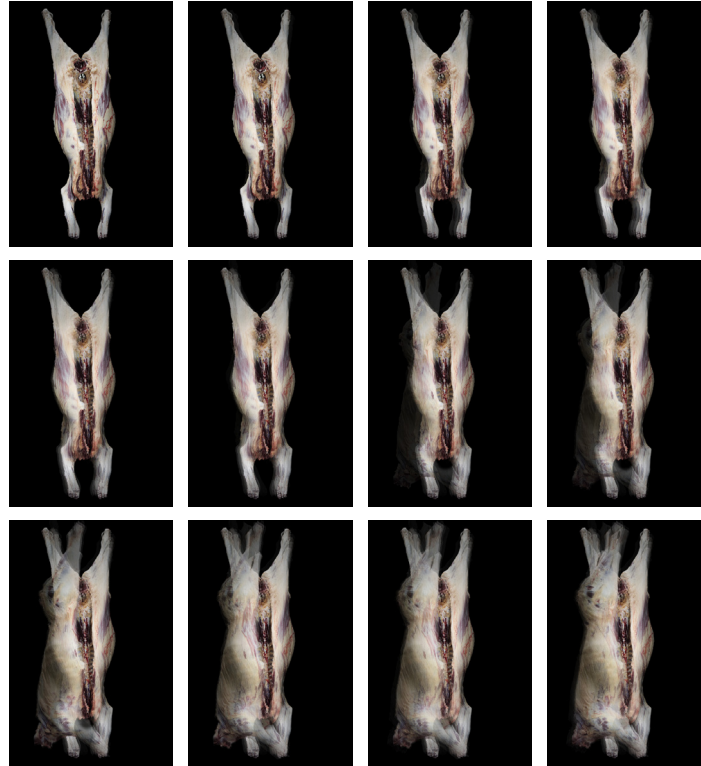


Figure 2:17. Miller, L. (2013). *Individual perspective shots of the cattle beast*. Photographic Sketches. After the cattle beast was killed, it was suspended at the rear of the truck. In the postproduction process, background details were removed from each of the twelve perspective shots taken and composited together.



*Figure 2.18.* Miller, L. (2013). *Carcass*. Photographic Sketch. The “cleaned up” images were then superimposed to form the substrate of the final photographic composition. (See Figure 3.6 for the final composite still).



*Figure 2.19.* Miller, L. (2013). *Nude Study*. Photographic Sketch. The nude originally composed as a horizontal portrait was rotated vertically so as to shift the center of gravity. Three nude portraits were integrated with the *Carcass* to form the final composition. The nudes were shot in the studio in both still and moving image formats.

## EXPLICATION

Critical reflection informs all phases of my work and becomes heightened when evaluating practical outcomes. In order to respond to each work I “return to the self,” (Moustakas. 1990. p, 13) to re-establish and reconnect with my experiences.

In this state, I assume the position of an observer and interpreter. I engage tacit knowledge<sup>13</sup> to extract information from “what the thinking self knows” (Polyani, 1966, p. 81). In this phase, Moustakas (1990) notes the heuristic process challenges one to rely on one’s own resources, and to

gather the full scope of one’s “observations, thoughts, feelings, senses and intuitions ...” (p. 13). This means that I needed to remain open and receptive to understanding and maintaining an awareness of my experiences. Within this experience a dichotomy is revealed, of an inverted portrait that is paradoxically familiar and foreign. Thus, in this phase of the inquiry, I am no longer looking into the self, but at the visual effect constructed by the image.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Polyani’s concept of “tacit knowledge” may be described as personal knowledge that exists intuitively and cannot be made explicit in language.

<sup>14</sup> Bochner (2001) and Denzin (1989) suggest that the concern with a hypothesis that deals with narrating the self, is not so much about truth itself, but about questioning what the narrative does, the consequences it carries and its ability to represent an experience.

## EXTERNAL REVIEW

In refining my research through presentation, publication and peer review I was able to gain external feedback on iterations of my work. External review occurred across multiple platforms and forums, including:

- The AUT Research Symposium: *Intense Cultures* 2013. Verbal and Visual Presentation (1 August, 2013) (Figure 2.20)
- AUSM: *Debate* magazine. Issue 18, Written article (August, 2013) (Figure 2.21)

- 2013: 7th Postgraduate Symposium (23 August, 2013) (Figure 2.22)
- Supervisory Meetings
- Informal peer feedback.

By engaging with external review I was able to evaluate the communicative clarity of my work, outside of my own interpretations. Critique and individual readings of my experiments became a measure for determining the potential force of the images. In most cases, feedback from others who had some

personal empathy with home invasion resulted in them sharing stories. Others who had not experienced a similar trauma were able to intuitively access the metaphor and deeper levels of meaning through analogical thinking. Significantly, I discovered through the process of speaking honestly and openly about my work, that others developed a genuine connection and interest in not only the nature of the inquiry but also in the process of its realisation.



Figure 2.20. (2013) *Intense Cultures*. Advertising Poster.



Figure 2.21. (2013) AUMS. *Debate* Magazine Cover.

Figure 2.20. A twenty-minute paper discussing both the research topic and its methodology was presented on August 1 at AUT University.

Figure 2.21. In this periodical published in August, I wrote an article that was accompanied by five photographic images presented across a two-page spread. The article discussed the historical context of my work.

Figure 2.22. This poster provided an overview of my research project, (including an abstract, and a discussion of methodology, contextual knowledge and the proposed research output). The poster was presented to delegates at the 7th Postgraduate Symposium. When engaging in conversation with others about the project, I discovered that people intuitively understood the metaphorical significance of the “eel photograph”. This stimulated conversation about contexts behind the research and indicated that metaphorical constructions could be used to successfully communicate experiences of a home invasion.



Figure 2.22. Miller, L. (2013). Postgraduate Symposium Poster Presentation.

## CONCLUSION

In discussing the research approach I have drawn on a number of ideas that are broadly associated with subjective positioning, self-search, and reflection. This is because *The Visceral Metaphor* was a demanding project that required a form of productive “self-consciousness” so it could move beyond the exercising of grief to become creatively productive. Although many of the ideas discussed in this chapter are concerned with a form of interiorisation, the project’s outcomes also relied on external processes. These enabled me to work ethically and productively with others, and to disseminate my work strategically. Peer review during the development of my thinking also enabled me to monitor both the communicative and internal/conceptual clarity of my work.



## CHAPTER 3

### Critical Ideas

This chapter contains three essays. They provide discrete but related lenses through which the thesis may be considered.

ESSAY 1

## Virtually Still

## VIRTUALLY STILL

To journey into the inner space of the mind, to where the body processes grief, one could argue is an act of survival. Here, the body necessarily retreats from the present and one's experience of the world can be divided into two: an internal, imagined realm and the external reality. Exteroceptive senses become dulled, physical objects dissolve and immaterial forms begin to take shape from within the imagination.

Little by little it comes into view like a condensing cloud; from the virtual state it passes into the actual; and as

its outlines become more distinct and its surface takes on colour, it tends to imitate perception. (Bergson as cited in Pearson & Mullarkey, 2002, p. 124)

Bergson's description of perception suggests that the phenomenon of the recollected-image might be made up of "closely-linked-images, which we call the material world" (Bergson as cited in Pearson & Mullarkey, 2002, p. 95). Like one's perception of "being-in-the-world," the images are not static or flat but appear as multidimensional forms that unfold one facet at a time (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 80). Whilst the

view is fractured and encompasses notions of our natural gaze, in essence we never see an object in full, but form a holistic simulation by processes of "conscious perception" and prior knowledge. Only in this dimension does the form appear distinctly different from reality and contain an uncanny sense of *déjà vu*.

While form exists in the imagination, Bergson suggests that recollection contains absent objects. An image is something that one can only ever come to know through its external qualities, "its external

crust, its superficial skin” (Bergson as cited in Pearson & Mullarkey, 2002, p. 123). Yet, what is missing from this observation is that the recollection operates as a container for thought and without it the object as Kant (as cited in Kearney, 1998) states would have no “formative centre” (p. 46). Thought would have no sense of self, no conscience, no reality; no heartbeat in a dimension where images of one’s experience are hinged on intimate memories of loved ones who have passed away. In this realm, the body in grief would be unable to progress or find meaning and time would inevitably stand still. For I suggest that it is within a singular meditated moment that these fragments of thought become bonded to each other and amplify into multiple forms, through which an image is constructed.

In order to recollect, the body remains still, suspended in a meditative sense. However, the mind is constantly in flux, as the act of recollection necessitates a multiplicity of memories. Here, the self is suspended between two states of being. I identify these as stillness and movement. This idea is adapted from the writing of Berton (2012) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987), who defined a study such as mine, as being “a semiotics of disruption in the function of the real” that involves

“two fundamental tropes”... “unimpeded automatism and intense focalisation” (Berton, 2012, pp. 48-53). Thus, one might posit that within the pathology of the mind, ideas of stillness and movement may be associated with the still photograph (stillness) and moving image (movement). This paradigm mirrors Bergsonian 1812 thought, where the photographic metaphor and cinematographic model are thought to coexist, without being dialectically opposed (Bergson in Pearson & Mullarkey, 2002).

*The Visceral Metaphor* is driven by my perception of space and time, within recollected images. In this process the camera dissolves into the flesh of the photographer and becomes an extension of her body; it inhabits one’s autonomy, flow, and subtle idiosyncrasies that often go unnoticed. In the process of image-capture, the still photographic camera and the moving image device become arguably indistinguishable. The structural boundaries that historically differentiate the two mediums now fold into one and wrap around the body in the thoughts and imaginings of grief. This occurs as the self seeks to find resolution through the process of image making. In this state, there is no singular way forward, no exact way to grieve, no map,

guide or book to follow, just a multitude of possibilities. With each new “line of flight,”<sup>16</sup> thoughts trace and lead into one another, in the hope of seeing the world anew.

While the photographic image presents a trace of an experience, (evidence of a moment in time), there is always an inevitable distance that remains between the virtuality of a personal lived experience, the stillness of the photographic and the viewer’s ability to slip into its temporal dimension. In shifting between these internal and external spaces, the imagined and the represented, I question the structure and function of the still and moving image as realms for immersion.

One of the central concerns in representing recollected-images within the photographic rests in the construction of time itself. According to Deleuze; “time has to split itself into two at each moment as past and present” and therefore it forges into “two heterogeneous directions” (Deleuze, 1989, p. 81). The past folds back on itself while the present looks to the future. This paradoxical equation is reiterated in Barthes’ text, *Camera Lucida* (1980), where he suggests that while a photograph represents a moment “that-has-been,” it “not only overthrows the usual categories of time” but also produces a new category of space-time;

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<sup>16</sup> Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) term “line of flight” refers to “lines of articulation and movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or the contrary, of acceleration and rupture ” (p. 3).

“an illogical conjunction of the here and the formerly” (Iverson, 2007, p.114). However, I suggest that (in line with Metz’s thinking) when we consider the moving image we are consciously suspended in the “here and now,” of the work. We focus less on the implied past or future that surrounds a still image.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, in order to extend the temporality of a photographic image, the artist might move beyond the static, singular still frame and embody a “cinematographic mechanism of thought,” (Bergson as cited in Pearson & Mullarkey, 2002), by incorporating moving image conventions and principles within the image-making process. The introspective gaze might be articulated in terms of the phenomena produced; its flow, viscosity and movement. In this dimension there is no systematic solution; the work evolves through a series of “becomings,” not simply seen but also felt. Within this, the temporal relationship between the self and the image might be considered.

While Muybridge’s (in Tietjen, 2011) chronophotographic experiments (1860 - 1894) were instrumental in bridging the gap between the still and moving image, his serial instantaneous photographs arguably achieved only a partial, two-dimensional view of three-dimensional form.<sup>18</sup> This is because while each image within his sequences reveals an illusion of movement and continuity as it appears in real time, the homogenous construction stands in opposition to an internal sense of spatialised time. Beyond the mechanical sequencing of Muybridge’s work, it is critical to understand that movement is not only conveyed within the frame, but in the space between each frame. In essence, both negative and positive matter contain a binding force, that one can only come to recognise by acknowledging the differences and repetitions that occur within the simultaneity of a subtle transition.<sup>19</sup>

### **Repetition**

The act of repetition is critical within the production of *The Visceral Metaphor*, as I

repeatedly look inwards, to recite and revive recollected-images. Here, sequences of instantaneous photographs flow within the duration of thought and reveal a succession of states (Bergson as cited in Pearson & Mullarkey, 2002. p. 28). Bergson claims that “no two moments are identical in a conscious being” (p. 164). Therefore, despite the continuity of one’s experience, difference remains apparent. Deleuze (in Patton, 1994), echoes this view but in contrast discusses the problem with transferring this concept to an artwork:

Representation fails to capture the affirmed world of difference. Representation has only one center, a unique and receding perspective, and in consequence a false depth. It ... mobilizes and moves nothing. Movement, for its part implies a plurality of centers, a superposition of perspectives, a tangle of points of view, a coexistence of moments ... (Deleuze, as cited in Patton, 1994, pp 55-56)

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<sup>17</sup> Although differences between one’s subjective experiences may appear minimal and are disputable due to the nature of viewership, I would suggest that the emphasis on temporality shifts dramatically between the still and the moving photograph.

<sup>18</sup> This is because in this regard, his work is used to consider how linear space and time might be deconstructed, to render a perspective similar to that of Cubist paintings and the photographic collages of David Hockney.

<sup>19</sup> This method of synthesis was initially proposed by Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*. Here he stated that in order to comprehend a concept, one must look beyond the familiar to how elements both “interlock” and “dislocate”. In essence “they introduce a disequilibrium into the dynamic process of construction, an instability, dissymmetry or gap of kind which disappears only in the overall effect” (Deleuze, 1968, as cited in Patton, 1994, p. 19).

If we consider this then perhaps each form within the recollected-image may be broken down into a series of planes of individual instances, based on one's feelings and memories. Through this we might experience Deleuze's coexistence of moments. Within the construction of an image I incorporate a diverse range of techniques. Specifically, I focus on the moving image loop, stereoscopic principles and parallel montage. These are used to suggest relationships with narrative and the nature of time.

### ***In relation to my work...***

With my photographic images, multiple frames are composited together and reference the moving image loop. However they simultaneously extend this structure by repeating and turning back on themselves. This looping occurs around a central frame within the sequence. In some instances this looping forms a nonlinear representation of time, mimicking the illogical nature of recollection. Consequently, the narrative feature closes in on itself and the narrative

of experience cannot be extended beyond the set of images encountered. While the images are not intended to tell a complete story, the aim is to leave the interpretation of the event open for contemplation in the same way as reading a photographic still.

Between the images, transparent, layered forms struggle to attain solidity, hinting at something more visceral. In *Carcass*, the substrate of the photograph is constructed by adapting Wheathouse's (in *Zone*, 2007) stereoscopic technique.<sup>20</sup> In this work I have created a hybrid effect by incorporating the filmic technique of "parallel montage"<sup>21</sup> (to convey a sense of simultaneity, by panning horizontally through space) and rotating around a central axis that enables us to experience multiple images. Deleuze (in Patton, 1994), discusses this technique in relation to representation, by noting:

Stereoscopic images form no more than an even flat opposition, but they depend upon something quite different: an arrangement of coexistent, tiered, mobile planes, a 'disparateness' within

an original depth. Everywhere, the depth of difference is primary. It is no use discovering depth as the third dimension unless it has already been installed at the beginning, enveloping the other two and enveloping itself as the third. (Deleuze, as cited in Patton, 1994, p. 51)

By juxtaposing and compositing photographs, to create an illusionary sense of depth, I call the natural construction of space into question. Compositional structures are purposefully misaligned to create a sense of cognitive dissonance.<sup>22</sup> Festinger (1957) describes this existence of dissonance as "something not being quite right" (p. 2). In my work it is inexorably linked to an experience of grief. This effect is heightened not only by the subject within the frame, but also by the intervals between each frame.

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<sup>20</sup> Traditionally a stereoscopic photograph is dependent on two photographic images taken side-by-side, simulating binocular vision, where the centre point converges (Zone, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> "Parallel Montage" (p. 95) is a filmic technique described by Metz as an early technique used to unify the coherent structure through the production of simultaneous shots. (Metz, 1974).

<sup>22</sup> Cognitive dissonance is a sensation that may become apparent within an artwork through "misconvergence". Misconvergence is generated within a scene through misalignment of the vanishing point. This technique became evident within Renaissance art and is visible in Uccello's (1447-48) painting *The Flood* and Giotto's painting of *Jesus before the Calf*, (1305) in which both images contain two vanishing points. (Tyler, C., & Kubovy, M. Retrieved September 1, 2012, from <http://www.webexhibits.org/sciartperspective/perspective1.html>).

## ***Conclusion***

I suggest that my experience of a home invasion can be communicated in the space between the still photographic print and the moving image. By creatively constructing and deconstructing the spatio-temporal dimension of the image it becomes possible for the work to suggest virtual images that appear in my imagination. The apparently paradoxical tension between what is still and what is moving can generate an experience of instability, unresolvedness and disquiet. It is alongside these ideas that related experiences of violation, loss and grief have been communicated in the thesis.



ESSAY 2  
Objects of Mourning

## OBJECTS OF MOURNING

The home invasion that so profoundly altered my understanding of relationships between photography, the self, and loss, was more than an event fixed in time. It may be understood as a catalysing of grief; a displacement and replacement. In developing a corpus (work) in response to a disruption of the corpus (the self), one is required to consider relationships between ideas of grief, preservation, and meaning.

Inherent in the photographic is our desire to preserve, to make permanent that which we can no longer see. Each material fragment

is linked to our sensibilities and opens up a pathway into our memories. These images provide evidence of our perceptions and presence of being in the world. Arguably, through them we attain a sense of wholeness, we reflect on our existence and relationships with our others.

The active force of “taking” a photograph “... implies the antithesis of trauma” (de Duve, 2007, p. 118). Trauma is not conveyed through documentation of a catastrophe but occurs in the moment of taking. Barthes (1980) says, “whether or not

the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe” (p. 96). Taking infers a sense of violence; of one being robbed, of a loved one being ripped away before their time, of one’s memories fading and of one attempting to grasp at an instant already gone. “It refers to death as the state of what has been: the fixity and defection of time, its absolute zero” (de Duve, 2007, p. 114). Yet, the photograph is an opposing force to death; it refuses to let go of the object, just as the body refuses to let go of an experience when in grief and mourning.

In my experience of death, the loved one who has passed away is consumed and engulfed, inducted into my body through the force of mourning and affection of the gaze. My loved ones no longer live outside of my body, but continue to live “in” me, and I in turn, live through them, seeking to keep their memory alive. This cannibalistic phase of devouring our loved ones, of “incorporating the object into itself” Freud (1917) refers to as, the ego refusing to let go of the “loved-object” (pp. 249-250). Whilst the body consumes the other as a form of temporary nourishment, this merging of the flesh into a singular entity, causes ego boundaries to become permeable and collapse. In this phase, the self faces an impending split and, as Kristeva (1989) suggests, the body “falls into pieces” and becomes fragmented (p. 18). One’s view of the world is no longer considered to be whole or balanced and as “painful” feelings persist, the body disintegrates into despair.

As a defensive reaction against the loss of another, the grieving body is forced to withdraw its attachment from the physical object by turning its affection towards “someone or something else”

(de Duve, 2007, p. 120). In recognising that the loved one is no longer within reach or available to return the gaze, the search for substitutive objects previously owned or gifted by the deceased become critical devices in the survival of the self. In Freudian theory, this process of transferring energy from one object to another is known as “cathexis”. Through it, he argues, we are able to physically prolong a loved one’s existence (Freud, 1917, p. 249). Therefore, by furnishing one’s environment with objects emblematic of a loved one, they function as shrines of remembrance, impregnated with memories. As the gaze fixes on them, it becomes possible to momentarily reverse death and imagine the subject is almost real. As such, we partake in a form of fictive hallucination. Freud argues that by focusing one’s perceptions on an object outside of the body, detachment can be accomplished and in doing so the oppressive cloud is lifted out of the self and the body is ritualistically cleansed (ibid).

However, this research is not simply bound to the loss of a loved one, but to multiple losses and the loss of associated “loved-objects.” The sense of loss is classifiably

complicated and the heaviness felt is substantial in comparison to the robbery itself. Hence, with each loved-object and loved one simultaneously disappearing, each is dissolved into the other and becomes, as Derrida suggests, “iterations of the one death that can never be identified ...” (2005, p. 17). Thus, in the deluge of loss at my home invasion, everything appeared the same, no-one less significant or more important than the other. As the body descended into mourning, a cathartic search began to replace the stolen objects with their replicas. However, in this process it was acknowledged that these “new” objects could never contain the soul of the deceased or be anything more than a temporary form of camouflage for one’s feelings of grief.

Yet, in the process of creating work in this thesis, the desire to make the absent present and the virtual into reality never leaves the body, even when mourning has ended. This persistence and sense of unending suggests that while mourning passes, melancholy persists, and that one is unable to move forward (Freud, 1917). Ruti (2005) believes that although the body continues to live in motion; “the melancholy subject remains

enmeshed in an alternate world – a world that it may in real life have given up. This world keeps resurfacing as a highly charged space of dreams, fantasies, and imaginary constructs” (p. 646). Thus, being immersed in melancholia does not suggest a complete sense of Freud’s immobility, but as Ruti (2005) suggests, it is a necessary shelter, a place to “pause before the leap, a moment of hesitation,” (p. 646) where one hovers on the brink of finding meaning. Kristiva (1989) suggests that finding meaning in this instance is a consequence of forgiveness, not of forgetting the crime, but of transforming one’s emotions into a positive and tangible outpouring, such as an artwork.

With the photographic, the desire is not to reclaim the loved one or the loved-object, but to represent the internal effects of trauma on the self and the experience of mourning. One seeks to make visible the virtual scenes that reside within. This may be understood as a kind of photographic portrait, “not in that it would reproduce the traits of a person, but in that it pulls and draws ... in that it extracts something, an intimacy, a force” (Derrida, 2005, p. 19).

Derrida says,

There is thus no metalanguage for the language in which a work of mourning is at work. This is also why one should not be able to say anything about the work of mourning, anything about this subject, since it cannot become theme, only another experience of mourning that comes to work over the one who intends to speak. (Derrida, Brault, & Naas, 1996, p. 172)

The representation may be argued as the final resting place of the artist’s cathartic energy and, in effect, partially brings mourning to an end. Derrida says, “Photography in this instance is a consoling object” (Derrida, Brault, & Naas, 1996, p. 120). He suggests that the substitutive form replaces that which is absent with the physical presence of another (ibid., p. 197). This other form seeks to repair the dissymmetry of the gaze, where it cannot be reciprocated because of the absence of the loved one. In doing so, it mimetically knits the artist into the flesh of the image.

Grosz (1994) suggests the photograph acts as a “phantom limb and agnosia indicate that our experiences are organized not by real objects and relations but by the expectations and meanings objects have for the body’s movements and capacities” (p. 89). The image anchors the body in the photographic object, “the body image is ... a way of stating that my body is in the world ... ” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. 100-102). Thus, the image serves as a testament to the experiences within the self and is representative of what remains.



ESSAY 3

## Metaphorical Enigmas

## METAPHORICAL ENIGMAS

### ***The Metaphor as Meaning***

The objects of my photographs are metaphors that represent my experience of grief in relation to a home invasion. In this essay I discuss the transformation between literal thoughts, their conceptual associations, and abstraction within visual representation. I suggest that it is within the contemplative space of the photographic image that objects bridge the gap between experienced emotions and their physical manifestation.

Metaphors are employed because they have the “potential to further our understanding of the meaning of experience ... they urge us to look beyond the literal, to generate associations and to tap new, different or deeper levels of meaning” (Feinstein, 1982).

Thus my photographic images are not literal representations of the physical site of the home invasion. Instead, they seek through metaphor to capture the effects of trauma and disruption of the self. Although we encounter the body in some images, it is not my body, but the body; the metaphorical corpus. This body is never complete; it is caught in an enigmatic suspension that recycles, unable to reach resolve and unable to grasp meaning.

### ***The Experiential Metaphor***

The metaphor is experiential because through it I tap into the phenomenon of the home invasion. In this thesis it functions as an extension of the body. The freshly slaughtered carcass and eels churning through fluid reflect the way in which I

“conceptualise the world” (Leezenberg, 2001, p. 136), and are symbolic of my experiences, a literal churning of my stomach (Satre, 1972).<sup>23</sup> However, the objects do not merely operate as symbols but also contain sensations. Bergson (as cited in Pearson & Mullarkey, 2002) and Straus (1963) argue that symbols and sensations occur simultaneously within one’s experience. Thus, each object contains a symbol and its sensation; it has a distinct look, a certain feel, and it embodies the unspeakable nature of grief.

These images appear “like flashes from the unconscious, which periodically and unpredictably punctuate conscious life, these moments are neither intentional or uncontrollable” (Miller, 2010, p. 204). By contemplating the object that appears within

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<sup>23</sup> Satre (1972) states that the image of thought contains an object, which is intentionally selected as it contains certain qualities which are symbolic of how a person judges and feels an occurrence (p. 110).

my imagination, it becomes possible to visually describe the image in detail and to animate it. Despite the object coming into existence before language and being largely inaccessible in words, it must contain a conceptual structure that is communicable if one's experience is to become meaningful and tangible to others. In this regard, I have adopted Lakoff's view of metaphorical thought as being, "not a figure of speech, but a mode of thought, defined by a systematic mapping from target source to domain" (as cited in Ortony, 1993, p. 210). By utilising this model I have mapped objects that appeared within my imagination on to their emotive sensation and physical force.

### ***The Enigmatic Metaphor***

The metaphors used in this project are constructed as enigmas. This is because they contain thoughts in flux. They are not fixed, and nor is my sense of what happened fixed. Meaning resides in a mutable space. An enigma is an inexplicable, unresolved question. It does not address us as a didactic statement. It is not resolute. Its tenuous nature can be used to speak for the miasmatic experience of living wounds. This is because the enigmatic metaphor can reach beyond the explicit surface of things to touch the nebulous experience of loss.

In the dark morphological space of the imagination, objects cling to thoughts that recycle through the invasion and anxieties associated with it. Forms oscillate between stills and multiplicities. While these sensations and their movements are variable, they are understood in terms of "intensity and stimuli" (Ravoka, 2003, p. 64); they envelop the body and permeate the creative process.

Metaphorical objects do not contain a singular, monolithic identity (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). Instead they may be seen as a chain of complex associations where one thing can represent another; meaning is always in a state of becoming but never complete. This is because one's experience is unresolved and therefore the metaphors one uses to express it cannot be contained or closed.

### ***Locating the Metaphor***

In my practical exploration I sought metaphors located outside of the physical realm of the event. This is because my experience and processing of the incident took place within my body and the imagination.

When looking into my experience I initially considered two ideas: taking and falling.

### ***Taking***

Taking involves an external experience, one that exists as an action outside of the victim's body. Yet it was difficult for me to understand how the physical objects that were taken were something other than me because, as Lakoff and Johnson (1999) note, the contents of one's home comprise an integral part of one's identity. At the beginning of the project I began by considering mythological metaphors that suggested morphological and transformative properties. Although the photograph *Nepenthes*, (Figure 3.1) was symbolic of my experience, it did not embody an interior narrative or the emotive qualities of the grief.

This metaphor dealt with fusions; impossible combinations that suggested threat. The reference to pitcher plants and their toxic predatory nature was explicit. However, on reflection, I realised that it was more of a contemplation on the external process of taking. It was not located in the self. Instead it was the self, trying to understand a travesty enacted upon it. While this was interesting I wanted the research to reach into more nebulous realms. I wanted, photographically, to touch the visceral nature of loss and violation and grief.



Figure 3.1. Miller, L. (2013). *Nepenthes*. Photographic Print.

## ***Falling***

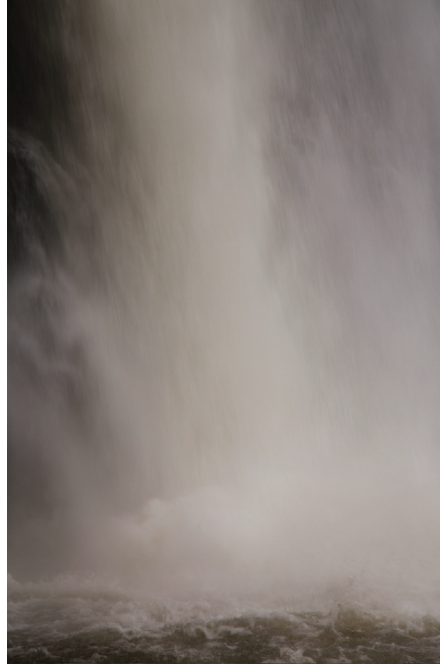
Gradually, in my search for more internally expressive metaphors I began to consider the vertiginous experience of falling. I sensed that in order to generate an experience of my experience, the viewer needed to fall into the inner dimension of my body. Without this, someone viewing the photograph would be experiencing a superficial gaze; a preoccupation with an object rather than its connection to sensations of momentum and invasion.

In my initial inquiries I was concerned with the sensation of vertigo; its various intensities and flows. Accordingly, I

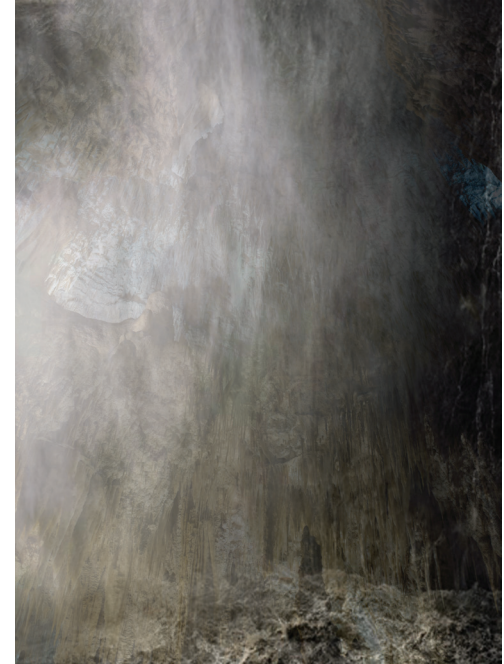
considered the potentials of falling water (Figures 3.2 and 3.4). Although these inquiries moved increasingly toward abstraction, I was concerned that we were seeing the cascading of water rather than experiencing the intensity of vertigo. In this case, the metaphor of falling water, perhaps because of its historical associations with grace and beauty, failed to express the emotive and physical force of grief; of the body falling, churning and fragmenting.



*Figure 3.2.* Miller, L. (2013). *Cave*. Photographic Print.



*Figure 3.3.* Miller, L. (2013). *Waterfall*. Photographic Print.



*Figure 3.4.* Miller, L. (2013). *The Fall*. Photographic Print.

All of these metaphors were composited from multiple images, to suggest a sense of unending. While the experiments were developed through composites, they failed to suggest the sensation of an emotional collapse through space.



*Figure 3.5. Miller, L. (2013). Eels. Photographic Print.*

### ***Internal disruption***

Because these experiments failed to adequately express the nature of my experience, I began to reframe my thinking. In doing this I contemplated the idea that a home invasion is concurrently corporeal and incorporeal. The self (physically and emotionally) aches: one feels torn and invaded. Accordingly, I sought metaphors that might operate as vehicles for expressing the deeply visceral nature of my experience. The first of these dealt with the sense of churning, a constant unease and repetition, the dark and unrelenting nature of the unresolved. I explored the potential for this in the movements of eels in water (Figure 3.5). Eels were considered because their form suggested organ-like properties and their movement could be metaphorically aligned with the sense of turmoil experienced in the stomach. In exploring the potential of this metaphor, my experiments went through many iterations (see Chapter 2).



*Figure 3.5.* Miller, L. (2013). *Carcass*. Photographic Print.

Almost concurrent with the exploration of this metaphor was another, which was the idea of the carcass; exposed, torn and yet unsettled. Here, I was attempting to express the sense of disruption on the body, of being ripped open and having one's vital organs removed. The absence of organs, of the body being disassembled, deformed and hollowed out, metaphorically referred to the aggressive force of violation (Figure 3.6). Like the eels, this exploration progressed through many reshoots and refinements. Both *Eels* and *Carcass* suggest a sense of movement. While their unsettledness could be conveyed in a still image, the deep unease, the silent rhythm of being unable to find closure or understanding, suggested that the metaphor might require treatments that moved through spatio-temporal dimensions.



Figure 3.7. Miller, L. (2013). *Pheasants*. Photographic Print.

The metaphor of pheasant carcasses, while arresting, did not produce the level of emotional response. Although I knew that these bodies were dead, the metaphor did not suggest connections to loss, violation or grief.

Although I explored a number of other corporeal metaphors including the feathered bodies of pheasants (Figure 3.7), the final metaphor I considered was the body as an exposed and vulnerable form. This image represents the metaphorical corpse, reconceptualised as grief and flux. Here, the body is depicted as pain and dissipation. Isolated and bruised, the form clings to itself, seeking solidity in an environment (the swamp)<sup>24</sup> that remains in flux (Figure 3.8).

While this collection of photographic images may, at first glance, appear fundamentally disparate, the eel, carcass and figure operate as extensions of the internal body. Each offers a consideration of the experience of invasion. As a series they are not ordered, obvious, or coherent. They do not move logically through grief but contemplate its effect on the self. When viewed as a series they suggest intensity. They are collectively an expression of the internal, the violated, and the visceral nature of grief.

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<sup>24</sup> The metaphor of the swamp suggests suspension, an infertile quagmire where all becomes stagnant. It is an unresolved space where nothing is concrete, and within this irresolution, it suggests danger. Although on its own the swamp was not a metaphor, I explored the potentials of utilising it as a background template for the figure (see Figure 3.8) in both still and moving images. In overlaying four transparent layers from multiple nude photographs on top of the swamp, the subtle blue and green blended into the flesh and provided the effect of bruising.



Figure 3.8. Miller, L. (2013). *Figure*. Photographic Print.

## ***Conclusion***

In this thesis the body is conceptualised metaphorically. It is seen as a container of sensations and movements that are not simply associated with grief, but are uniquely encoded, embodied experiences. These experiences are multilayered, enigmatic, transformative and open to interpretation. They are not fixed, nor do they offer closure. They do not ask the viewer to recognise the subject but propose that we might think about our own experiences of the physicality of grief. It is in the questioning of the work that both the integrity and power of the phenomenon is revealed.

## EXEGESIS CONCLUSION

## CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

*The Visceral Metaphor* is an autobiographical journey into the experience of a home invasion. Through the photographic and kinetic work, thoughts, sensations and movements within the body and the grief that courses through it become visually manifest. However, this research reaches beyond the surface of the body; it opens, unfurls and translates that which is undisclosed and inaccessible to words.

Physical, emotional, and sensory resonances are represented as subjective metaphors that exhume the repressed contents of my unconscious. It is within the process of apprehending and developing these images that I become encoded within my

work. This process enables the viewer to experience sensations of loss, violation, grief and irresolution, and to access meaning through a process of analogous thinking.

While this research is based around the traditional photographic image, it reconsiders multiple facets of a lived experience. Thus, while part of the significance of the thesis resides in the project's ability to generate new approaches to assembling stills with multiple perspectives, more importantly, it demonstrates how the enigmatic metaphor (as a spatio-temporal concept) may be used to communicate complex and unresolved expressions of grief.

By approaching the photographic image as a "moving still," we engage with the paradoxical. As such, the project alludes to Barthes' notion of a "moment-that-has-been," while providing the viewer with a sense of "being there" in the moment.



## FURTHER RESEARCH

Etymologically the word thesis means a placed proposition, (from the root of tithenai “to place”). This may suggest something absolute. However, a thesis may also be seen as an idea; an intellectual proposition. In this regard we might understand it as something living. *The Visceral Metaphor* reflects on a lived experience and, in so doing, it suggests ways we might reconsider the photographic image and its manifestation in space and time. This is an idea that I would like to explore in a practice-led PhD. The aim of the research would be to develop a new genre of fine art photography that may extend notions of dimensionality. In so doing, the thesis would

consider ways of heightening the communicative potential of the intimate, immersive and unresolved experience.

However, before embarking on this trajectory I will exhibit *The Visceral Metaphor* in the Auckland Festival of Photography (2014) and look to establish relationships with (dealership) galleries such as the Two Rooms: Contemporary Art Gallery. Establishments like this foster emerging contemporary artists. I will also enter photographic stills from the thesis into the IPA, Sony World Photography Awards and The Wallace Arts Trust Awards.

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