

## Gallery Site Visits: Researching Installation and Curatorial Decisions

Alannah Chan

**Exhibition:** Turrangka...in the shadows

**Artist:** James Tylor

**Location:** John Curtin Gallery

**Curator:** Leigh Robb

In *Turrangka...in the shadows*, James Tylor explores the impact of colonisation on Indigenous cultures through photographic works and cultural objects. The exhibition title is drawn from a Kurna word, highlighting a significant ongoing aspect of Tylor's practice: the learning and sharing of his Indigenous language. As well as shadow, turra also translates to reflection, image and mirror.

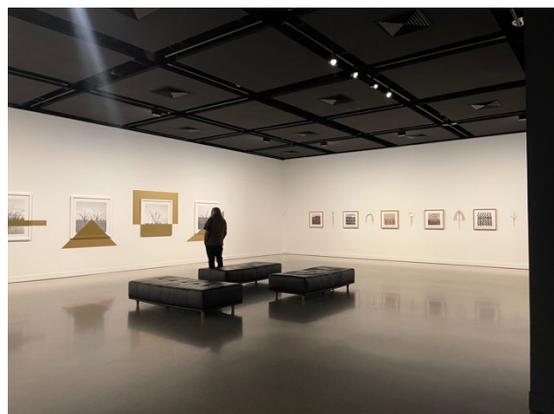
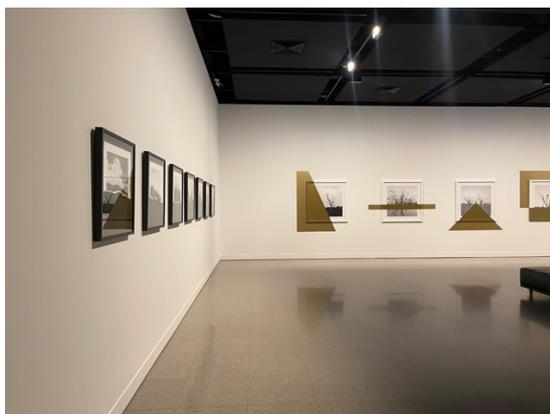


Part of the exhibition *Turrangka...in the shadows* was installed on a large wall facing the entrance, separate to the gallery rooms. I thought the monochromatic photographs and objects were striking and bold and contrasted well with the white gallery walls. The installation alternated between photograph and object, and I thought this was visually appealing as the composition of the works encouraged me to walk along the wall and experience the different spatial qualities. The photographs and objects complimented each other well and I think this is because of the monochromatic scheme and appropriate negative space in-between the works. When looking at the

installation from afar, I could see how the works were informed by a midline and possible grid lines. I thought it was interesting how the midline was lower than the average midline of 1.5 metres. I think the midline was purposely lowered to draw the audience in and encourage them to look at the works closely, encouraging reflection. I also liked how one of the cultural objects leaned against the wall as if it could be picked and used by the audience.



The black frames accentuate the form of the objects and voids in the photographs. The large wall was well lit from above so that you could not see any harsh light lines.



When entering the gallery room, monochromatic photographs in black frames were installed on the left. I thought it was interesting how the closest wall correlated to the installed works outside. I also liked how the works transitioned from monochrome to some colour. There were seats placed in the centre of the room. The gold interventions also correlated to the gold frames at the far end.



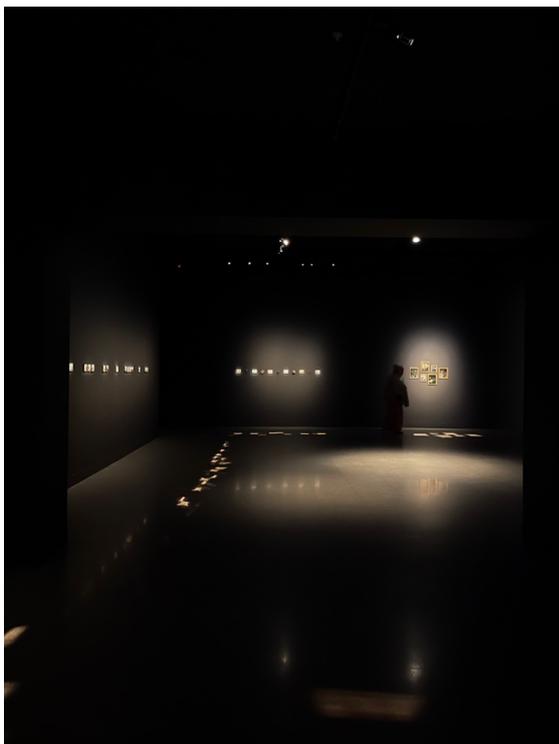
The wall on the far end also employed the same strategy as the works outside, alternating between photograph and object. This encourages the viewer to contemplate the objects and their relationship to the landscape.



A moveable wall was used in the room. Warm coloured spotlight was used for the black wall which not only accentuated the gold frames but also created soft feel. Cool lights may have caused a harsh feel. I think some of the spotlights were either diffused or placed further along the track so that the lighting was evenly distributed.



On the other side of the moveable wall was a large-scaled photograph which corresponded to the gold works on the gallery wall parallel to this wall. John Curtin Gallery has a large entryway between the first and second gallery room which I think is interesting. The further I walked inside and looked back, the more intriguing I found the large photographic. The entryway frames the work well, and I liked how the warm coloured lights in the dark gallery room as well as the gold projections on the floor harmonised with the gold photograph. I think the curator successfully utilised the space so that the various works speak to each other from afar.



The photos taken in the dark gallery space do not do the lighting justice. There were no harsh lights around the works in person, and the works were evenly lit. In the dark gallery room, smaller photographs and objects were installed which I thought this was effective as the solemn mood in the dark gallery space compelled me to draw in closer to the works. I believe the photographs were printed on copper plates so that the spotlights create light projections on the gallery floor. There were two or three spotlights lighting the centre of the room even though there were no works there. The curator may have lit the space in the centre to activate the room or provide better accessibility for the audience in case the room was too dark.



I think the curatorial decisions for this exhibition were successful in its narrative and lights and shadow. I also liked how the curator incorporated both objects and photographs, so it was not just images. The selection of works really resonated with me and I thought the various installations were impactful and visually intriguing. I also like how there was a black moveable wall which was placed in-between the two gallery rooms which created an interesting transitional space between the works in the white gallery room to the black gallery room. The installed photographs in the last gallery room had photographs installed quite differently and they followed different compositions. They were grouped together rather than following linear horizontal lines, and some of the sizes were varied which I thought was intriguing. I thought it was effective having a linear approach at the start of the exhibition to more complex installations. The smaller scales and different configurations at the end suggested different interconnecting ideas and I liked how it encouraged me question the works and engage with them differently.

**Exhibition:** The Ballad of Sexual Dependency

**Artist:** Nan Goldin

**Location:** John Curtin Gallery, Bentley

**Curator:** Anne O’Hehir

Her curatorial practice is grounded in feminism, with a strong – though not exclusive – focus on the histories, lineages, and legacies of women’s photographic practice.

The Ballad of Sexual Dependency is a series of photographic portraits formed out of the artist’s own experiences in New York from 1970s to 1980s. Nan Goldin’s documentary photography captured intimate moments of her and her friends, and of love and loss.

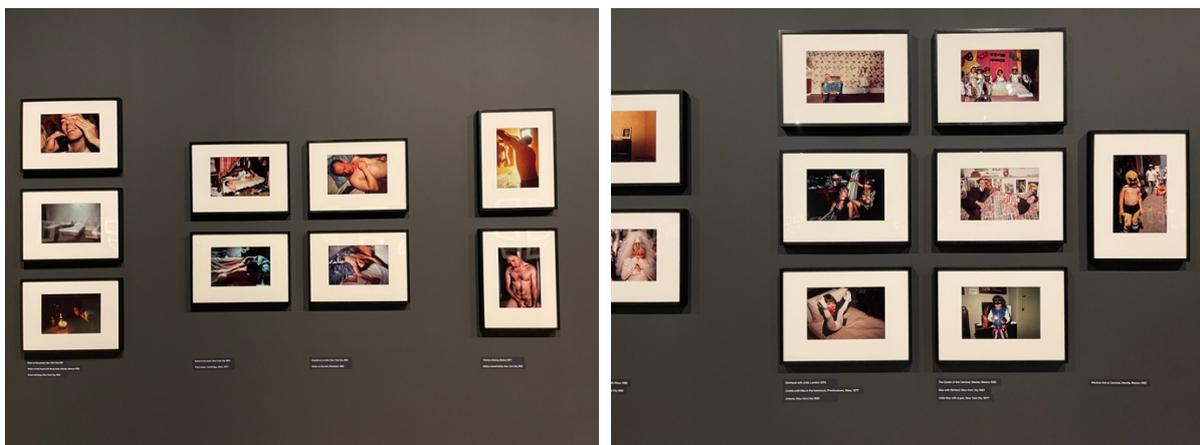


Before entering the exhibition space, there was a content warning advising the viewer of its depiction of nudity, sexual acts, drug use and impacts of violence against women. This sign was placed in the centre of the walkway, so viewers were forced to read the content warning before proceeding. As I entered the exhibition space, there was a large moveable wall in the centre. Having the exhibition wall in the centre of the gallery was effective as it allowed me to recognise the exhibition name and the artist’s name. The entrance is from the corner of the room, so the moveable wall did not block the works as I thought it was interesting how the photographs on the wall aligned with the photographs at the far walls. The spotlights lighting the moveable wall were on a track that was far enough for the light to reach the wall, so this created nice, soft lighting which lit the entire wall. Cool coloured spotlights were used in this exhibition, and I thought this cool tone complimented the vivid colours of the photographs and the white borders of the frames. All walls of the gallery were painted black which I created greater visual impact. The works also felt more dramatic. The black walls also helped highlight the photographs and encouraged me to focus on the photographs. Each photograph was accompanied by a small sticker at the bottom of the wall listing the title, location and date. I thought the stickers were very low, however I did understand that space was given to accommodate vertically arranged photographs. I really had to bend down to look at the descriptions, and I thought it was a bit strange. For me, I maybe would have limited the number of

vertically arranged photographs went up to 2 instead of 3, so that the bottom line for the stickers could be raised higher up from the ground.



I personally thought there were too many photographs shown in the exhibition as the installation was quite varied and strange in some areas. It also felt like there was not enough space to accommodate the photographs. I think the thick white borders of the frames contributed to the lack of space. I think the white borders were purposely made thicker to not only frame the photographs but also accentuate the small scale of the photographs as if they are windows into these moments, creating more intimate connection with the audience. However, there were too many photographs, so I also think the thick white borders also took away from the work. I also could not really understand the composition of the photographs as I thought there were too many variations being used. Some photographs were arranged vertically in threes or twos, and some were moved closer to each horizontally to create groups of sixes or fours. Although I could see how multiple photographs worked well together, the installation felt too busy at times especially when portrait and horizontal photographs were mixed.



I thought the exhibition was most effective in areas where there were less photographs installed and more space in-between each work. The timelines were non-linear, and I liked how good and bad moments contrasted each other. There were no benches either so I liked how we were encouraged to walk along the walls and experience the narratives and emotions conveyed in the portraits.



**Exhibition:** HALE TENGER / BORDERS / BORDERS

**Artist:** Hale Tenger

**Location:** AGWA, Perth

**Curator:** Rachel Ciesla

Hale Tenger is a visual artist based in Istanbul, Turkey who has spent 30 years exploring how to navigate the search from freedom, and how we act in the world when faced with its absence. HALE TENGER / BORDERS / BORDERS is an invitation to reconcile the psychic, physical and political borders that define and transform the world. The exhibition showcases the artist's work from the 1990s to present, and features multimedia installations, projections, photographs, videos, sculptural works and sound.



When entering the exhibition space, there was an entrance into an immersive installation made of lightboxes which formed a corridor, guiding the audience through a maze of photographs. You had to walk through the corridor to get to the rest of the works. I liked how the first installation created a liminal experience, and it set the mood of the exhibition. I thought it was effective how the viewer was overwhelmed with images. The walkway was also 1.5m wide so two people could pass.



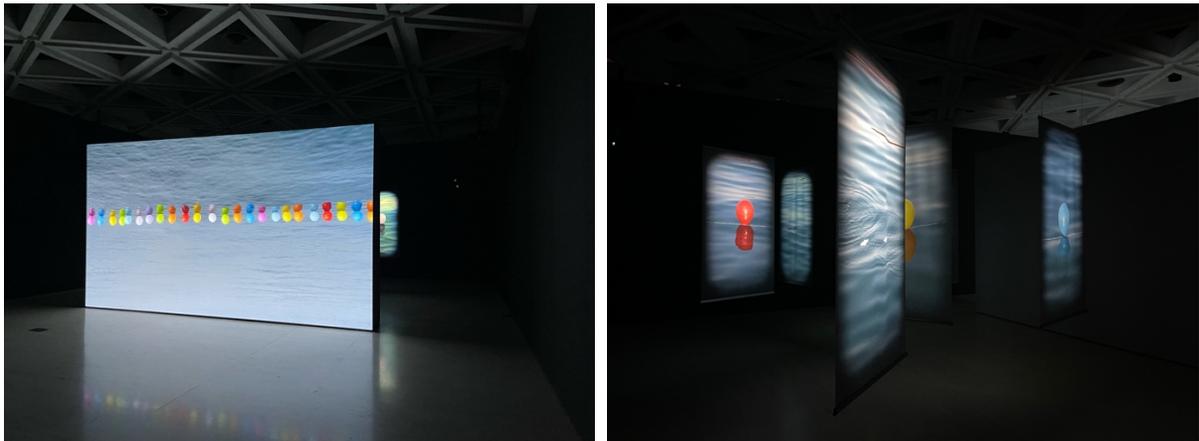
When exiting the corridor, there were a large empty room with a video on the back wall. The video in the centre shows a line drawn in the sand with a stick before getting washed away in the water. Underneath, it depicts kids playing tug of war. The underlying tension in the artist's works subverts the sense of play which I think is interesting. This tension is also encapsulated in the space, as the audience is forced to choose sides and enter two different spaces on either side of the wall.

This visit was my second time visiting this exhibition and I only found out during my second visit that there was another room behind the wall which you could enter through the left. I do not think it was obvious to the audience that there was another space. I remember when I exited the room, I could tell that other visitors had no idea that there was another space behind the white wall. I also asked my friend who visited the exhibition if they went inside the room behind, and they told me they completely missed it. I thought it was a shame that the navigation of the room behind was not clear, as it ended up being one of my favourite installations in the exhibition.





Although it may look obvious in hindsight and in the photographs that there is another space behind the wall, it was not obvious in person. I think the curator should have used a bigger arrow or placed the accompanying text on the left wall so that viewers were aware there was another installation behind.



The dark room behind included projections and sound installations. I thought the large projection at the front was impactful and coincided well with the smaller projections behind. There was no seat available for the audience, so viewers were encouraged to walk behind and meander through the suspended fabrics.