

# **“Faceless Self-Portraits”**

A Contemporary Group Exhibition

at APSCON 2018, HOTA, Gold Coast

11 - 16 September 2018

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# Background to the exhibition

The winning image in the 2017 Olive Cotton Award for photographic portraiture was created without a camera. It is a portrait of the photographer's grandmother, who does not appear in the image. It features scrawls made by the grandmother onto a piece of film using pens. The judge called it a "very complex photographic portrait" and said "It made me think a lot about the act of the making a portrait – about what it means today to make a photograph of someone else, even if in the end it doesn't reveal what they look like." He also pointed out that photographic images, such as photograms, had long been produced without cameras. The prize-winning portrait provoked controversy, not least amongst the members of Contemporary Group.

In response to the controversy, all members of Contemporary Group were invited to produce two dimensional self-portraits that did not include their face and submit them for possible selection and printing for an exhibition at the venue during APSCON 2018, with the selected images also to be published in an issue of "Free Expressions". Members were also invited to create 3D faceless self-portrait installations to exhibit along with the prints.

Subsequently, a Facebook group was established to allow interested members to share their thoughts and ideas and to comment on each other's early image ideas.

By the deadline, 27 images created by nine members and accompanying artist statements had been submitted. They were provided, anonymously, to two selectors (Doug Spowart and Victoria Cooper). In due course, Doug and Vicky selected 22 images for the exhibition.

Doug and Vicky told us "the selection process has been quite absorbing, the images were incredibly diverse and many deeply personal. We chose images based on the following criteria:

1. Their relevance to the theme
2. The connection with an artist's statement
3. A level of aesthetics that would need to stand up in an art gallery exhibition

Ideally everyone should have something on the wall but there was a limit to the numbers for selection along with a need to provide a quality gallery show of deeply considered work. Some works were not selected as we chose the best of a few images from one participant or alternatively the photographer needed to bring something more to the theme.

Although some images may be humble documents of everyday life, we felt that in many cases we could not separate the image from the artists' statement. So we felt that to include some of these images that may not necessarily be strong on their own, but in a group show, their inclusion brought diversity. We felt that this group of images were not only deeply personal they also made a statement about broader social issues of facelessness."

When advised that just one of the nine contributors had not had at least one image selected, Doug and Vicky decided to choose one more from that contributor bringing it to 23 images for the exhibition.

Exhibitors were asked to place their images within an A2 size with wide-ish white borders. Their positioning on the pages of this catalogue reflects those placements and borders. All prints were made on Canson Infinity Baryta Prestige paper by Stephen Best of Macquarie Editions based in the small NSW town of Braidwood - <https://www.macquarieeditions.com/>.

# HERE'S LOOKING AT ME - 2018

## Anne O'Connor

I was the child of my father who worked alongside him with many things from birth. I learnt about photography in a makeshift darkroom and watched as he moved through different mediums and cameras. He was the one who dabbled in all things, a fix it, a person who had answers when asked and an experimenter. When he died, I replaced him as a 'fix it' in mum & my sibling's eyes. Now, with mum gone, I am considered the eldest surviving member of that family, a 'chip off my father's block', the 'solid one', a replacement for mum and dad.

This portrait is about my future, perhaps more than my past, but I am linking the past to the future with the use of the slide mounts. A medium my father used in his later years as did I before I eventually succumbed to digital. Now I have gone back to combine this medium with digital by using slide mounts to hold abstract images of parts of myself taken with a digital camera & scanned to create a grid. These tiny slide mounted images relate to how small I really am in the world and how much growing and learning is still to come.

I have used a lens cap in some of the tiny images to represent the opening and closing of circumstances. I have reversed the positive to create a negative, which to me is about my beginning and the future to come. We are all negatives when born but the influences that rub off on us are what make us in the future and my future is still evolving.



# **IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD - 2018**

## **Anne O'Connor**

We live our lives within many places, some we call home, others temporary homes.

Changes to all these places can be spelled out as perhaps changes within architecture and spaces. I have lived in many places and memories attach themselves to the architecture and to the spaces surrounding it.

This image is representational of one such place that I called home. A place I came into when first married and again after my in-laws died. When their house became our house and eventually our home for a short time, which was substantial in our lives.

Now I look back at this time and my life as a married person and the places we shared together for the first and almost last time in our life as it stands today. It is my story and my husband's family story that becomes ours. A portrait of my life that stands tall around me as we grew together over 48 years.



# MEMORIES - 2018

## Anne O'Connor

When one looks into a mirror, one can look at oneself or perhaps look at the past flying by within it. What if that mirror represented the past and the future at the same time? This image was taken in the house where I grew up, many years after I'd left it.

Now a brand new family lives there, with children once more playing in the yard and sleeping in our bedrooms. Yet within that house is a mirror, identical to ours, hanging in the same place with the same light fitting reflected within? Immediately my life as a young person within that house floated back to me and I became the mirror on the wall, looking at my parents and my siblings as we were within the walls many years ago.

Now the mirror is not mine, but it does share the memories of a new family living where we used to live. A family, which now call our house home, is co-incidentally friends with my daughter. It is they who are creating new memories within this mirror, blending the two sets of memories from our linked families that are reflected within it; both in the past and in the future still to come.

# THE SIGNATURE - 2018

## Anne O'Connor

Are we defined by the names we are given at birth? At this point we, as people, have little choice in the matter, but does that choice improve with age or reason?

For me I have always been defined by who I am and that is becoming more solid every day. Security is tight; my name as an identity is sacrosanct. Identity theft is a go word that is banded around as something to be aware of. I now think about a name and a signature in a totally different way than before. It is no longer a name that one 'hangs your hat on'. It has to be proven that you are who you say you are. No longer can you sign a stat declaration to say your name is what it is because you've always been known by it. Proving it is complicated. A new passport, do I really need it!!!

This work is created from the letters of my first name & my digital signature as I look up at the original name from which I was known and contemplate who I am.



# MY ROAD

## Brian Rope

A traditional portrait only shows what we look like at a moment in time when it was taken. An environmental portrait reveals more because it includes something of the environment in which we live or work. This composite image portrait seeks to show the viewer much more by featuring a selection of “waypoints” throughout my life from its starting point through to the present. Each “waypoint” is “attached” to a rope (reflecting my surname) and everything is overlaid on a photograph of a piece of road (representing my life journey). The viewer who studies the image will see places where I have lived, schools I have attended, people who have been a significant part of my life at various times, images revealing things that have been important to me, items that I have made and photographs of significance for me. The future journey is unknown – as in the past there may be unexpected paths to be followed. Viewers will, of course, have difficulty understanding the complete story behind some of the elements incorporated in the portrait, but will interpret it for themselves.

# MIRROR OF THE SOUL

## Fran McFadzen

"The photo taker" is reflecting in the landscape as well as reflecting upon the landscape, distilling its essence having contemplated what should be sampled as representative of the scene and for consideration later. The camera on the lap is the conduit between the seer and the seen.

The hand in front of the face is a reaction to the banality of social media. Everyone takes incessant and meaningless images with phone cameras and note books; No one looks at them later once the immediacy of me-me-me fades into obscurity. Pesky intrusive self chroniclers, their images are valueless. My hand says, bugger off, this is NOT a selfie!

It's a mirror of my soul.



# **ALONE ON LIFES ROADS**

## **Lorraine Brace**

I am fascinated by all things strange, dark, unusual, and melancholic, as they are often overlooked, yet have a sublime beauty. This is a form of beauty that all too often goes unnoticed and/or unappreciated in today's society, yet it reflects very real aspects of our own humanity and the world we live in. My photos for the most part explore such "darker" themes of loss, despair, fear, oppression, religious/spiritual conflict, sensuality, personal identity and more.

I ask each viewer to consider the oddity and absurdity of their own human condition in its various manifestations. I typically work toward a goal of combining dark, sometimes disturbing imagery with a more subtle layer of beauty and mystery.

# **CONTEMPLATION**

## **Lorraine Brace**

My photos are a means of self-expression and creativity, I create photos for myself, to identify with hidden aspects of my character, to better understand my reality, and to express my interpretation of the world around me. To gain a clearer understanding of myself and of my world I try to be adventurous.



# **GHOSTLY FIGURE**

## **Lorraine Brace**

Some of my photos are planned in advance and reflect imagery derived from my overactive and slightly twisted imagination. However, I also derive immense pleasure when I am able to find and photograph things that are strangely beautiful just as they are, or twist an image to reflect something hidden or imagined.

# **LONE FIGURE**

## **Lorraine Brace**

It may be a lonesome figure on an isolated hill or in a dark interior of a strange building. Whatever the scene, images stir up unexpected feelings and thoughts when creating my images and I hope the viewer can transport themselves into my images and stir unexpected feelings and thoughts.



# THE SHOWER

## Phillipa Frederiksen

Reflections and water patterns in the shower have often fascinated me.

Why is it that, when I am getting INTO the shower, I forget to bring my camera/phone with me to actually capture those patterns?

For my Faceless Self-Portrait I DID get into the shower. I really liked the small triangle of the bathmat in the corner. This led me to creating a geometric pattern from the square shape of the shower head. The main image in the centre is small because I am very aware that I am but a small part of this universe. It is not me that is important, but the world around me and how it affects me and how I affect it. Will it be for the better or worse?

# THE EYE

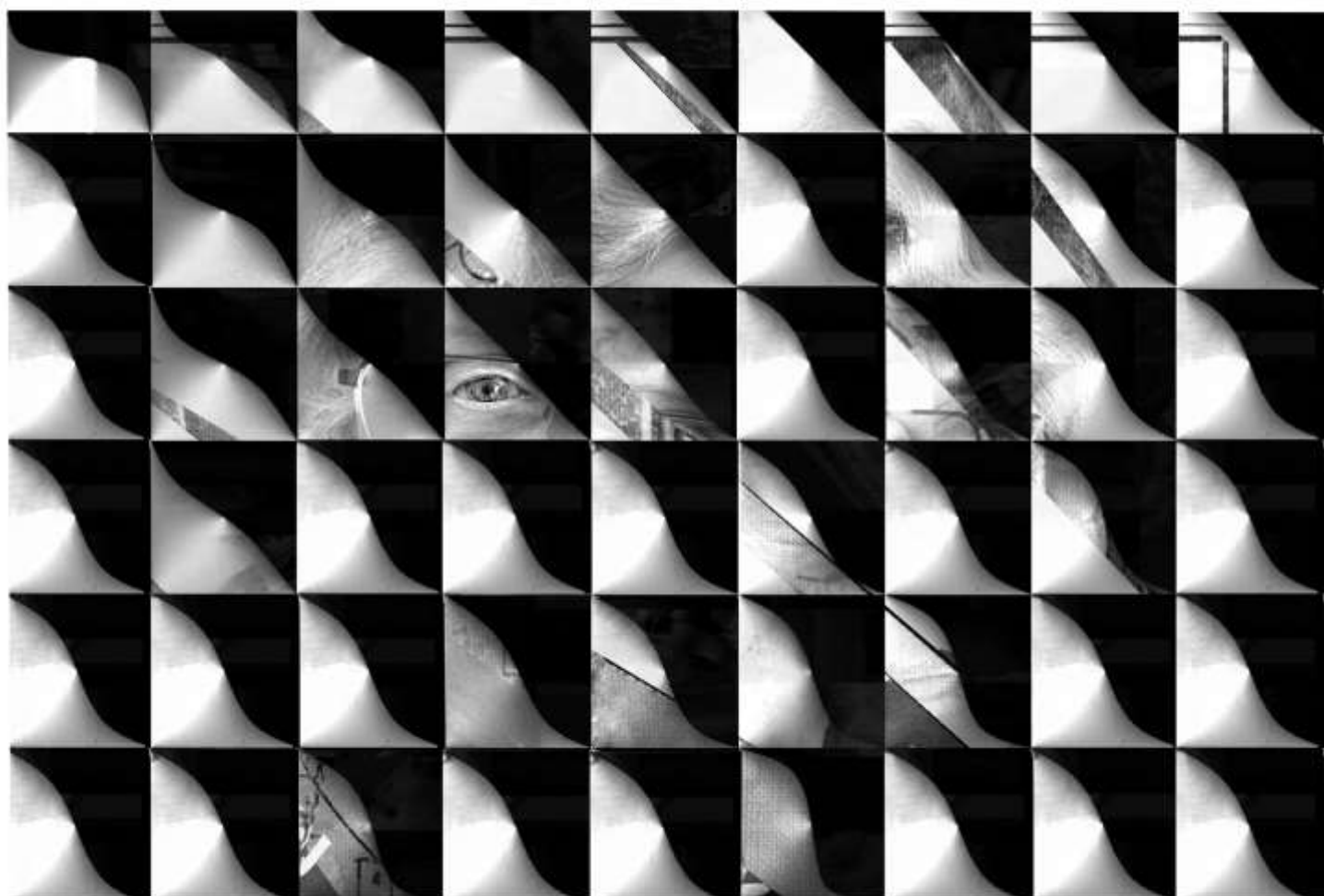
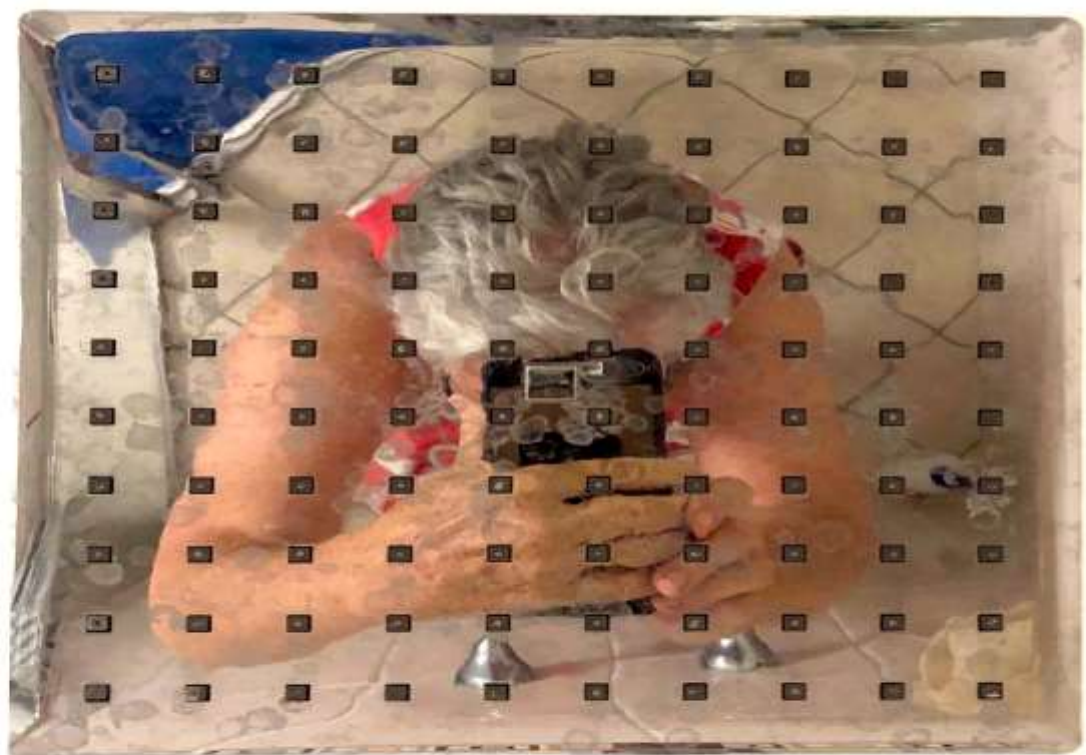
## Phillipa Frederiksen

Sight is one of the most sensory important part of our nervous system. People who cannot see learn to use their other senses to compensate for the loss of their sight.

For me, as a photographic artist, my sight is extremely important but as I get older I'm finding that my eyes have a tenuous relationship with my brain and body.

I am finding that I cannot spend too much time sitting at the computer to look at my own images let alone critique other people's images!

For this example of a faceless self-portrait I find myself highlighting my eye as my eyes have very much begun to be the focal point of my personal care and attention.



# DECREPITUDE

## Sue McLeod

Ageing is largely perceived as a negative process in our society. Older people are often abused, even by their families; they are thought to be slow, and difficult with homogenised interests (Bingo anyone?), and are thought by many to be a 'burden' on the taxpayer, even though they have worked all their lives for their pensions. Our elders are often ignored; kept waiting in shops considered to be political 'liabilities' (until an election looms!); they take too many medical resources, and are generally disrespected and undervalued.

And yet.....

We are slowly diminishing from the day we are born. Through lack of experience, it is difficult for the young to imagine themselves old, however, most old people have had very full lives and have developed wisdom which they have the time to share if the world has the time to listen.

In my younger days I was trained for the ballet, now, at the age of 70 with severe medical problems, I feel I am disintegrating a little! Even so, sometimes, even when using my inhaler, the dancer emerges in the carriage of the arms!

Ageing can be hard, but it has many compensations, and although we are all slowly diminishing, if we can somehow, as individuals, and as a society, rise above our egos and accept our fate as finite and infinitesimal beings in a vast universe, perhaps we can together move forward into a more equal and enlightened future.

# ESCAPE

## Sue McLeod

Having been hospitalised many times in eighteen months, I was often confined to a wheelchair, but longed to feel the sand under my feet and the wind in my face.

A sudden disability is not an easy thing of which to make sense, but make sense of it we must, or we become bitter, resentful, angry and often, depressed.

While in hospital I used techniques of meditation and mindfulness to keep me calm and mentally take me to the beach and the sunshine....

but I was lucky. I regained some health, was able to leave the wheelchair and resume a good (but very different), quality of life. This image represents the freedom, joy and gratitude I felt at my 'escape'. Many people of course, cannot escape from their condition, even for a short while; they are the ones from whom we have much to learn about patience, endurance and stoicism. If we can find contentment whatever life throws our way, we will truly be able to enjoy our time on this beautiful planet.



# HEARTBEAT

## Sue McLeod

The first thing I thought of when I saw the shadow of the clothes on the fence, was a readout from an electrocardiogram showing the heartbeat of a patient. But then I began to think about 'heartbeat' in a wider context; what are the things which make our world tick? Often, we overlook the simple things like housekeeping, cooking and washing, but these simple things are part of the heartbeat of our society.

# FREEDOM

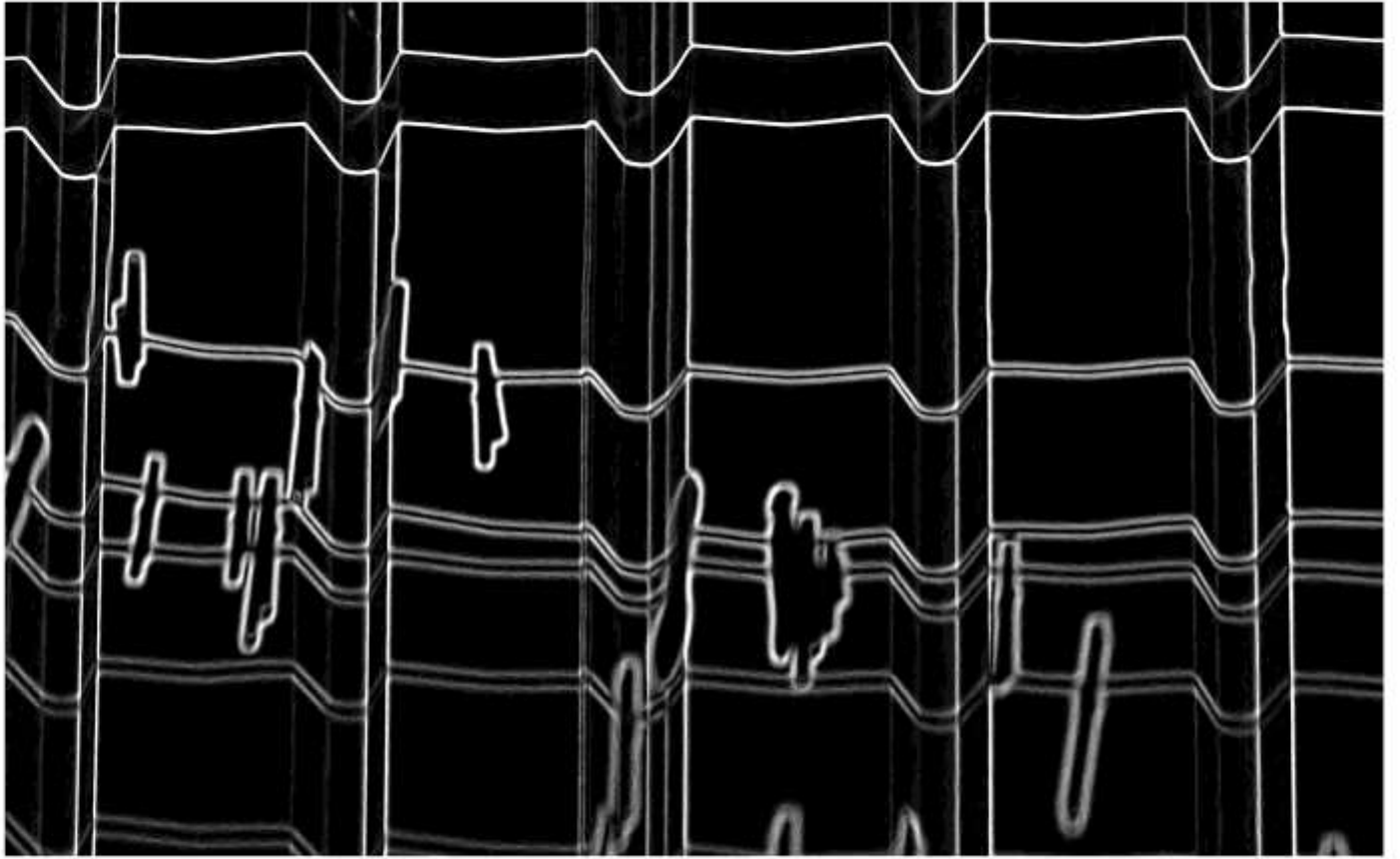
## Sue McLeod

Someone said to me recently that she thought I was walking away from something - and she was so right!

A Christian since the age of five, when I was 'kidnapped' by the local Sunday school, I eventually became an Anglican priest working as a hospital chaplain. I took this route, because, although grateful to the church for my education, all the theological teachings did not sit easily with me.

Now, in my older years, I am walking away from organised religion and the sense of freedom is almost overwhelming. I'm not turning my back on Christ, I just think the Church has the message all wrong; we should be teaching love and acceptance, not guilt and exclusiveness!

Suddenly, I feel like a phoenix rising from the ashes of an old way of being Christian.



# EQUALITY?

## Sue McLeod

I had some valued and valuable comments about this image, and I had to think long and hard about how to present it.

The photograph is a montage of two images which are reflections of me in the shower - one is masculine looking, with defined lines and hard edges, while the other is softer, fluid and more feminine.

To me, the image speaks of wholeness; as children most boys and girls are taught specific ways of being. Boys must be competitive, tough, unemotional and logical; 'don't act like a weak girl', 'don't show you are in pain', and 'don't cry'.

Most girls are taught to be little princesses complete with pink fairy wings. Girls must not be seen to be strong, must not compete or show their intelligence lest they threaten the male ego and fail to capture a mate - BUT;

To be whole human beings means dropping these gender stereotypes. Men need to discover their softer, feminine side. They need to know it is not unmanly to weep or show emotion - or stay to be seen doing housework. Women need to recognise their ability to be good leaders (if they so wish), they must be free to demonstrate their intelligence in whatever way they wish, and to dress how they please without being judged.

To be whole we must recognise that in each human being, there is both male and female. To be whole we must discover and embrace our opposite gender.



# **RESILIENCE**

## **Phil Lawrence**

“Imaginings” is a series of minimalist, composite self-portraits expressing my personal feelings and emotions as a reaction to worldly influences and events.

The anonymous hero of “Resilience” wears his heart on his sleeve. He tries to maintain his persistence and his sense of humour in the face of life’s challenges and adversities.



# **SELF CONTROL**

## **Phil Lawrence**

“Self Control” is from the series “Imaginings”. It is a minimalist, composite self-portrait expressing my personal feelings and emotions as a reaction to worldly influences and events.

The anonymous hero of “Self Control” wears his heart on his sleeve. He tries to maintain his balance, flexibility and his sense of humour in the face of life’s challenges and adversities.



# **A FRIDGE DOOR OF LIFE**

## **Susan Henderson**

This collection of family photographs placed on a fridge shows parts of my life, my husband, my mother and siblings I grew up with, my children and friends; many of the people who have defined my life and me over several decades.



**iAM**

## **Susan Henderson**

The ubiquity of contemporary photography! Everything's a camera, even the "i" thingy that has internet access, that let's you carry 40,000 tunes in your pocket, and coincidentally makes phone calls, is also a camera. Here the camera is reflected in my mirror.



# Shadows on the Wall

**Susan Henderson**

Shadows on the wall  
I can see them fall  
Here and there  
Everywhere  
Silhouettes in blue  
Dancing in the dew  
Here am I  
Where are you?

Quinn asks where are you? Sunday and I are here with you - we are the shadows on the wall.



## **Self Portrait**

### **Susan Henderson**

This image was part of my "Looking Closer" exhibition shown at TPR, Canberra exploring the minutiae of beach life, that part of the world where the land meets the sea. The fragility of the grasses, the textures and shadows of this part of the world that so many people see, but only some look closely, and my shadow is cast in one.



## **The APS Contemporary Group would welcome your involvement**

If you are already a member of APS and would like to join Contemporary Group, contact the APS office and ask them to add CG to your membership. If you are not a member of APS yet, then apply online [here](#).

If you would like to join the Friends of APS Contemporary Group Facebook group, simply log on to Facebook and search for “friends of aps contemporary group”. Then make an application there to become a member of the group. You will be asked to provide some information about your interest in Contemporary photography and a link to where the administrators can see some examples of your Contemporary photography.

If you would like to know more about Contemporary Group, please check out [this page](#) on the APS Website, or contact [Brian Rope](#), Contemporary Group Chairperson.