

PENELOPE DAVIS

CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN ARTIST | WORKING WITH PHOTOGRAPHY AND
SCULPTURAL INSTALLATION

Penelope Davis was born and lives in Melbourne. Davis is primarily known as a post-photographic artist creating photographs without a camera. Her final images are not simple photographs but are cameraless photograms or scans that capture light refracting through transparent resin casts taken from objects such as analogue cameras and old books. Using complicated sculptural techniques, Davis makes silicone moulds then resin casts of the now absent objects. Finally light is passed through the casts to expose photographic paper that is developed and printed. The result is an indexical trace of an object many steps removed from its origin. In doing so, the works record not only an image but a process - a chain of transformations and inversions - akin to the processes of photography itself but one that recasts photography in a new light.

More recently Davis has been creating jellyfish forms from a collage of components in a similar way. Taking the detritus of contemporary technologies and combining these with organic source material such as leaves and seaweed, Davis makes casts in silicone, then uses these casts themselves as forms. The artist hand sews these 'skins' together to create delicate hybrid forms that resemble jellyfish. These works reflect on, and embody, a painstaking attempt to recuperate an appreciation for the natural world, our symbiotic relationship with it, and the necessity of our shared future.

Davis has exhibited extensively throughout Australia and overseas and has been included in many prestigious group exhibitions including, *Order & Disorder: Archives and Photography* (2008); *Light Sensitive: Contemporary Australian Photography* (2006), *First Impressions* (2003), and *2nd Sight* (2003), all at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. In 2003 Davis was the recipient of an Australia Council Studio Residency in Tokyo and in 2007 she was the recipient of the *ANZ Visual Arts Award*. In 2015, Penelope Davis and Stephen Haley were awarded the Rupert Bunny Fellowship for a collaborative work. In 2016 Davis will undertake a City of Melbourne grant and residency at Carlton Connect Lab-14 to develop a body of work addressing issues of climate change and sustainability

Davis has been a selected finalist in several other award exhibitions such as the *Josephine Ulrich and Wynn Schubert Photography Award*, Gold Coast City Gallery, Queensland (2007 & 2009); the *William and Winifred Bowness Photography Prize* (2007), Monash Gallery of Art and the *Fremantle Print Award* (2007), Fremantle Arts Centre, Western Australia. She was also a finalist in the *Moet and Chandon Touring Exhibition*, touring all Australian State Galleries in 1999. In 2007 Davis exhibited with 2 other artists, Joyce Kohl and Stephen Haley, at LA Artcore in Los Angeles. More recently an extensive survey exhibition of Davis' work, *Phototropic*, was held at the Academy Gallery in Launceston in 2012.

Recent curated exhibitions include *Divine Abstraction*, Justin Art House Museum (2016), *Ex-libris - the book in contemporary art*, Geelong Gallery (2014), *Perceptions of Space: Justin Collection*, Glen Eira City Gallery (2014), *Missing Presumed Dead* travelling to regional galleries in Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia (2013), *Interieur-Exterieur* at Lumas Galleries, Paris (2010), and *The Apple Project*, AC Institute, New York (2010).

Penelope Davis' work is held in numerous public and corporate collections nationally and internationally, including the National Gallery of Victoria, Artbank, ANZ Bank, DC Design China, Victorian College of the Arts, City

of Port Phillip, BHP Billiton, University of Melbourne and private collections within Australia, USA, Europe, China and Japan.

EDUCATION

2006-7

Master of Fine Art, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne

1996-97

Post-Graduate Diploma in Fine Art, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne

1988-9

Certificate of Illustrative Photography, Photography Studies College, Melbourne

1982-85

Bachelor of Arts, University of Melbourne

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021 *Plastic*, MARS Gallery, Melbourne

2018

Sea-change (site-specific 4th iteration) Arup Gallery, Arup offices, Sydney

2018

Sea-change (site-specific 3rd iteration) Installation Contemporary, Sydney Contemporary, Sydney

2018

Sea-change (site-specific 2nd iteration) Art Central Hong Kong, Hong Kong

2017

Reverse Photography, Rupert Bunny Fellowship Exhibition, St Kilda Town Hall Gallery, Melbourne

2017

Sea-change, MARS Gallery, Melbourne

2012

Phototropic, Academy Gallery, Uni of Tasmania, Launceston

2011

Smack, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne

2008

Fiction-Non-Fiction, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne

2008

Index, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne

2007

Index, Postgraduate Gallery, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne

2005

Tissue Issue. Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne

2003

Heavy Light, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne

2000

Penumbra, Robert Lindsay Gallery, Melbourne

1998

Proof, Talk Gallery, Melbourne.

1996

Photoelastic, Temple Studios, Melbourne.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2021 *Spring 1883 Art Fair*, online at MARS Gallery due to COVID restrictions, Melbourne

2019 *Drowning Not Waving*, Wyndham Art Gallery, Melbourne

2018

Recent Acquisitions: Port Phillip City Collection 2016-2018, Carlisle St Arts Space, Melbourne *Material Memories*, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston

Co-Curator (with Andy Dinan) *Staying Power*, MARS Gallery, Melbourne

Antipodean Emanations: cameraless photographs from Australia and New Zealand, Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne

Speed: Mobility and Exchange, MonaFoma Festival, Academy Gallery, Launceston, Tasmania

2017

St Kevins Art Show, St Kevins College, Melbourne

2016

Divine Abstraction, Justin Art House Museum, Melbourne

2015

Unintended Refrains, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne

2014

Ex-libris – the book in contemporary art, Geelong Gallery, Victoria

Perceptions of Space: Justin Collection, Glen Eira City Gallery, Melbourne

2013

Missing Presumed Dead, Geraldton Regional Gallery, WA

2012

Missing Presumed Dead, Devonport Regional Gallery, & Cast Gallery, Launceston, Tasmania

Chromogenic, Fairfax Building, Melbourne

The Art of Collecting, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne

St Kilda Bowling Club Studio Artists, The Gallery: St Kilda Town Hall, Melbourne

A Hand Up: fundraising exhibition for Prahran Mission, Deutscher and Hackett, Melbourne

2011

Recent Acquisitions: City of Port Phillip, St Kilda Town Hall Gallery, Melbourne

2010

Interieur-Exterieur, Lumas Galleries, Paris

The Apple Project, AC Institute, New York, USA

St Kilda Bowling Club Studio Artists, The Gallery: St Kilda Town Hall, Melbourne

Nellie Castan Gallery @ the Depot Gallery, Sydney

2009

Josephine Ulrich and Wynn Schubert Photography Award, Gold Coast City Gallery, Queensland

Selected Works, Lumas Galleries, Berlin, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Cologne, Munich, Stuttgart, London, Paris, Vienna, Zurich,

New York

Linking: St Kilda Bowling Club Studio Artists, The Gallery: St Kilda Town Hall, Melbourne

2008

Order & Disorder: Archives and Photography, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

When You Think About Art, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne

Artists for Kids Culture Annual Exhibition and Auction, Brightspace, Melbourne

2007

Penelope Davis, Stephen Haley, Joyce Kohl, LA Artcore, Los Angeles, USA

Josephine Ulrich and Wynn Schubert Photography Award, Gold Coast City Gallery, Queensland

ANZ Visual Arts Award, VCA, Melbourne

Fremantle Print Award, Fremantle Arts Centre, Western Australia

William and Winifred Bowness Photography Prize, MGA, Melbourne

2006

Light Sensitive: Contemporary Australian Photography from the Loti Smorgan Fund, The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia,

Federation Square, Melbourne

20/20, 18th Street Centre for the Arts, Los Angeles, California, USA

Linden Postcard Show. Linden Gallery, Melbourne

2005

Julie Millowick Photography Award, Castlemaine, Victoria
Recent Acquisitions City of Port Phillip, Linden Gallery, Melbourne
Paper Chase, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne
A4 Art, Westspace, Melbourne
Fundraiser, Ocular Lab, Melbourne

2004

Floranova, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne
Josephine Ulrick and Win Schubert Foundation for the Arts Photography Award, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Surfers Paradise
Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne Art Fair, Exhibition Buildings, Melbourne

2003

First Impressions, The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Federation Square, Melbourne
2nd Sight, The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Federation Square, Melbourne
Boogy, Jive and Bop, Academy Gallery, University of Tasmania, Launceston

2002

White and Black Photography, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne

2001

31st Alice Art Prize, The Araluen Centre, Alice Springs
City of Hobart Art Prize, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart
Salon Exhibition, Penthouse and Pavement, Melbourne

2000

The Hutchins Art Prize, The Long Gallery, Salamanca Place, Hobart
'F': Divergent Abstraction and the Photographic Project, Casula Powerhouse, Sydney
A4 Art 2000, Westspace, Melbourne

1999

Moet and Chandon Touring Exhibition, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; RMIT Gallery Storey Hall, Melbourne.
'F': Divergent Abstraction and the Photographic Project, Glen Eira City Gallery, Melbourne
BAab/ talk exchange, Hanover Gallery, Liverpool, Britain.

1998

Focus #4: Click, Robert Lindsay Gallery, Melbourne
Deacons Graham and James/ Arts 21 Award and Exhibition, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne
taken, Project Space, RMIT, Melbourne
Post-Postcard Show, Linden Gallery, Melbourne
Anniversary, Talk Gallery, Melbourne
taken, Project Space, RMIT, Melbourne
3rd Exhibition, Pin Oak Gallery, Melbourne

Talk Artist's Initiative @ Platform 2, Platform 2, Melbourne

'F': Divergent Abstraction and the Photographic Project, Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart

1997

"Disclosure": new photo artists '97, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney

Introduction, talk artist's initiative, Melbourne

Christmas Fundraiser, talk artist's initiative, Melbourne

ANZ Fellowship Exhibition, ANZ Bank, Melbourne

Work, Westspace Gallery, Melbourne

Victorian Campus Art Prize and Exhibition, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne

Proud, VCA Student Union Exhibition and Award, VCA Gallery, Melbourne

A4 Art, Westspace Gallery, Melbourne

VCA Graduate Show, VCA Gallery, Melbourne

Ashton, Raggert, McDougal Exhibition, Ashton, Raggert, McDougal Studios, Melbourne

1996

times five, First Site, Storey Hall, Next Wave Festival, Melbourne

Some Slips Don't Show, VCA Gallery, Melbourne.

A4 Art, Westspace Gallery, Melbourne

Agfa Summer Salon, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne

1994

Four Photographers, Linden Gallery, St.Kilda, Melbourne

A4 Art, Westspace Gallery, Melbourne

Agfa Summer Salon, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne

1993

Graduate Show, Photography Studies College, Melbourne

AWARDS / GRANTS / RESIDENCIES

2017

Winner, Brother McCarthy Memorial Award, *St Kevin's Art Show*

2016

City of Melbourne studio residency, Carlton Connect Lab-14

2015

Winner, Rupert Bunny Foundation Visual Arts Fellowship, City of Port Phillip

2009-12

Studio residency, City of Port Phillip Shakespeare Grove Artist's Studios

2007

Winner, ANZ Fellowship Award

2005-07

Melbourne Research Scholarship, University of Melbourne

2001

Tokyo Studio Residency, Australia Council for the Arts (Feb-May 2003)

1999

Finalist, *Moet and Chandon Touring Exhibition*

1998

Finalist, *Deacons Graham and James/ Arts 21 Award and Exhibition*

1997

Victorian Campus Art Prize and Exhibition, Award for Innovation

VCA Student Union Exhibition and Award, VCA Student Union Award

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Victoria

Heide Museum of Modern Art

Artbank, ANZ Bank

City of Port Phillip

City of Wyndham. BHP Billiton

University of Melbourne Student Union

Victorian College of the Arts

Charles and Leah Justin Collection

Private collections within Australia, China, Europe, Japan and the USA

ASSOCIATED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

2007

Lecturer, Sculpture and Spatial Practice, Victorian College of the Arts

2004, 2008

Final Year Assessor, Photography Studies College, Melbourne

1997-2002

Founding Member, *Talk Artists Initiative*, artist-run space, located Melbourne CBD

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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<https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/jellyfish-where-art-meets-science>

Sea-change: Penelope Davis, Assemble Papers, 21/4/2017, <http://assemblepapers.com.au/2017/04/21/sea-change-penelope-davis/>

Interview with Penelope Davis, LAB-14 Artist-in-Residence, Creative Spaces Blog, City of Melbourne Creative Spaces, <http://www.creativespaces.net.au/blog/669/creative-spaces-open-studios-in-december>
 MacDowell, Belinda, Art + Climate = Change 2017, The Culture Concept Circle, <https://www.thecultureconcept.com/artclimatechange-2017-belinda-mcdowell-reports>
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 Attridge, Derek, *The Work of Literature*, Oxford University Press, 2015, front and back cover image
 Stephens, Andrew, "[Inspiration by the book](#)", *The Saturday Age*, 8/2/14
 Gellatly, Kelly (ed.), *101 Contemporary Australian Artists*, National Gallery of Victoria, 2012, pp. 58-59
 Williamson, Geordie, *The Burning Library*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2012, image on front cover
 Machen, Mary, "A cutting-edge vision", *The Examiner*, Launceston, 5/5/2012
 Snell, Paul, Missing presumed dead (the loss of the referent?), catalogue essay
 Le Monde Diplomatique, No. 682-58, Paris, France, January 2011, image on front page
 Bunyan, Marcus, 'Penelope Davis: Smack at Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne', *Artblart*, 31/5/11, <http://artblart.com/tag/penelope-davis-fluther/>
 Fereday, Susan, "Stretched Skin", catalogue essay, March 2011, accompanying exhibition *Smack*, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne
 Marsh, Anne, *Look: Contemporary Australian Photography since 1980*, Macmillan, Melbourne, Australia, 2010, p. 197
 Dander, Heike, Heinemann, Julia and Ullrich, Marc, *Collecting Fine Art Photography, Volume 1: Highlights of the Lumas Portfolio*, teNeues Publishing Group, Kempen, Germany, 2008
 Finch, Maggie, *Order & Disorder: Archives and Photography*, National Gallery of Victoria, 2008, pp. 25-27, pls. 18-19, also front cover image
 For the exhibition, *Order & Disorder: Archives and Photography*, National Gallery of Victoria, work featured on exterior promotional banner and exhibition poster
 Haynes, Janet, "Stephen Haley and Penelope Davis: saturated visions", *Two Up, Australian Art Review*, Nov-Jan 2008/2009 Issue 17, pp. 56-59
 Crawford, Ashley, "Penelope Davis: Fiction-Non-Fiction", *Photofile* 84 Summer 08, p. 67
 Stephens, Andrew, "Grasping the Past Imperfect", *A2, The Age*, 18/10/08
 Universite du Luxembourg, Service de la biblioteque pamphlet, front cover image
 Haley, Stephen, "Double Exposure: Post-photographic practice", *Photofile* 84 Summer 08, p.47
 Crombie, Isobel, *Light Sensitive: Contemporary Australian Photography from the Loti Smorgan Fund*, National Gallery of Victoria, 2006, pp. 17, 107, pls. 2-3
 McAuliffe, Chris, catalogue essay for *Recent Acquisitions, City of Port Phillip*, 2005
 Nelson, Robert, "It's a Wrap", *Sightlines Critical Guide, The Age*, 2/9/05
 Haley, Stephen, *Tissued*, exhibition essay for *Tissue Issue*, Nellie Castan Gallery
 Crawford, Ashley, *Preview, Australian Art Collector*, #33, July-September 2005
 Stephens, Tony, "Ulrick Schubert Photography Award", *Photofile*, #72, Spring 2004
 Backhouse, Megan, "Camera-ready Artworks On Display", *Around the Galleries, The Age*, 4/10/03
 Haley, Stephen, *Transparent Things*, Catalogue essay for *Heavy Light*, Nellie Castan Gallery
 Van Wyke, Susan and Lindley, Paula, *Second Sight* Educational Resource, National Gallery of Victoria, 2003
 Nelson, Robert, "Elusive signs of the real in primitive photography", *The Age*, 16/4/03
 Day, Charlotte, *First Impressions: Contemporary Australian Photograms*, *Photofile*, #69, 8/03
 Crombie, Isobel, *First Impressions Catalogue*, National Gallery of Victoria, 2003
 Crombie, Isobel and Van Wyk, Susan, *2nd Sight: Australian Photography in the National Gallery of Victoria*, National

Gallery of Victoria, 2002, p. 112, and front cover image

Ennis, Helen (ed), *Photofile* 66, September 2002, *Traces*, front cover image

Nelson, Robert, "A Strong Showing", *The Age*, 27/12/00

Nelson, Robert, "Unravelling Layers", *The Age*, 30/8/00

Nelson, Robert, "Pushing the right buttons", *The Age*, 5/4/00

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Nelson, Robert, "Focus on photographers who click as artists", *The Age*, 27/10/99

Brown, Scott, "Give Me Something to Believe In", *1999 Moet and Chandon Exhibition Catalogue*, 1999

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Artbank Promotional Pamphlet, 1998, work reproduced

Klaosen, Diana, "Divergent Abstraction and the Photographic Object", *Artlink*, Vol. 18, #4, December 1998, p.84

French, Blair, "Reticent thoughts on 'dumb' theory", *Photofile*, #55, November 1998, pp.28-31, work reproduced

Cuthbert, Simon, 'F': Divergent Abstraction and the Photographic Project, *exhibition catalogue*, September 1998

Kent, Rachel, *Deacons Graham and James/ Arts 21 Award*, finalists exhibition catalogue, 8/98

Cattapan, John, *Taken*, *exhibition catalogue*, July 1998

Clabburn, A., "Getting it together for a little showing off", *The Age*, 11/2/98

Parker, K. and French, B., "Disclosure", *Disclosure: new photo artists '97*, *exhibition catalogue*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney

James, B., "Galleries", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19/12/97, work reproduced

"Dress Circle: A Critical Guide to What's On", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30/12/97

Bridie, Sandra, *Photoelastic*, interview accompanying exhibition, Temple Studios, 1996

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