

## Voodoo Objects: "Under My Skin"

Eugenia Raskopoulos' latest installation straddles dark domestic and political territory. The messages range from blunt to subtle. A video camera looks through a car windscreen across which the word "refugees" is written against a clear blue sky, bordered by gum trees and full of hope. No matter how frenetic the pace of the windscreen wipers, the sullied text remains discernable within the smear as a symbol of Australia's unresolved refugee issues.

Elsewhere crisp and formally framed large photographs dominate with a very odd set of objects, abject reminders which carry bodily memories of intense affect: wisdom teeth, a burnt singlet, various medical casts and prosthetic aids. A neon sign reading "inpain" is not a typo but a deliberate misspelling as if the state of being in "in pain" were an abstract noun describing a political condition. In an earlier body of work, Raskopoulos had subjected the word "democracy" to various political tests and pressures, undermining the cheapness of its currency as a buzzword for political gain. Text and visual metaphors – like the windscreen wiper's attempt to "wipe away" political problems - have long informed Raskopoulos' work.

The photograph of the inwardly crumpling gourd like shape, masquerading as decaying vegetal matter, turns out, upon closer inspection, to be bladder of a soccer ball – or "wogball" as the game was named in an Australia marked by post World War Two migrant tensions. The 'wogball' bladder sits opposite another abject shape, the bladder of an Aussie rules football, begging the question of the political priorities of a sports obsessed nation. Raskopoulos, it seems, is visualizing the nation's inner core, exorcising national pain through a kind of voodoo logic akin to the way a shaman or healer manipulates abject objects like sacred shit and talismans.

Her own guilt, that of her younger art school self, is exorcised in a playful image of distorted scale: the very weird item of a child's sized dress bizarrely photographed with Raskopoulos' arms appearing as legs. Raskopoulos fesses up she stole it from a Biennale of Sydney (1979) installation by Christian Boltanski as a dare.

The implication is that it's time to fess up, to unbury objects loaded with abjection or guilt, to face up, as a nation, to what still hurts. A wall text of the alphabet, some letters highlighted, others not, like a cryptic puzzle requiring some arrangement, spells out the word "ABORIGINAL PEOPLE". It's an oblique reminder that the national record on indigenous matters is still abysmal. Raskopoulos doesn't need to spell out the many issues like indigenous health, or deaths in custody. The word sits there, nagging away, like the refugee issue, under surface of national consciousness.

Some images are intriguingly playful like the Boltanski dress. The story behind the burnt singlet is another anecdote of exposing guilt. Called to dinner after swimming her son had flung his singlet off, inadvertently landing it on the dining room light. During dinner there was a smell of burn as flakes of burning cotton fell on the food. Like this, and other reminders of accident, or guilt, the political message is of outing truth.

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