

PHOTO: Cooper+Spowart  
Bedroom Camera Obscura: Toowoomba 2000



An exhibition by Victoria Cooper + Doug Spowart

**DATES:** May 5 – 9, 2022

**HOURS:** Monday, Thursday + Friday 10.00 – 4.00pm  
Saturday + Sunday 10.00 – 2.00pm

**VENUE:** Art Gallery on Ovens Shop 4, 103 Murphy St, Wangaratta, Victoria



# H·O·M·E

A SHELTER - A FRAGILE TEMPORARY PLACE - A CREATIVE SPACE



## COOPER+SPOWART – ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Over human history writers, artists, poets and philosophers have considered the physical, psychological, emotional and political place we call **HOME**. We reflect on and are inspired by their work as we consider our personal perceptions of home within the broader human condition.

We have been artists and collaborators for over three decades. Our **HOME** has been: a house in a suburb or town, our car, a friends place, an artists in residence, a studio, a library, a campsite, a motel room. Whether stable or temporary the places we have inhabited - their architecture, history, social condition or collected objects have evoked our creative and questioning thoughts about perceptions of existence.

All these places we call **HOME** are spaces where we can contemplate, re-invent, conceive, originate, initiate new ideas for the future. We use the broad palette of our arts practice to resolve both the mind and material thinking into visual works and books.

## PROJECTIONS

The (over) Lie of the Land,  
Artists in Residencies:  
Myall Park Botanic Garden and  
Arthur Boyd's Bundanon

This work is a collaboration by Doug Spowart and Victoria Cooper in which they combine and overlay their perceptions of the landscape. The nature of this work is a site-specific response to place- including its human and natural histories.

The photographs presented here are a documentation of the projection of images made in response to the local landscape overlaid on structures on the each of the properties.

Central to this work is the importance of portraying the connection between things: History and present, the personal narratives imbued by a life in the landscape, Human habitation and land use and the land's response.



PROJECTION: Writer's Cottage, Bundanon



PROJECTION: Avochie Cottage, Myall Park Botanic Garden



PROJECTION: Laundry Avochie Cottage, Myall Park Botanic Garden

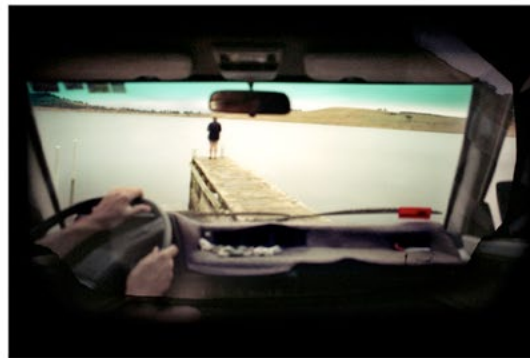




CAMERA OBSCURA: Bedroom, Toowoomba



CAMERA OBSCURA: We were watching TV - Travelodge Hotel, Sydney



CAMERA OBSCURA: CarCamera - jetty volcano lake

## THE CAMERA OBSCURA

The camera obscura is a darkened room except for light passing through a small aperture in a window or door. This control of light entering the room creates an inverted image of the environment outside the window. The image is projected onto and across the reflective walls and surfaces within the room or space.

Here, we record our interaction within the room as both a performance and as viewers. In the space this natural phenomenon of light is experienced as a movie of everyday life.

For many years we travelled in a Tarago van that we converted into a camera obscura. As with our many other HOME environments, each of our excursions into the field or town were an investigation of journey and place.



CAMERA OBSCURA: Bathroom Myall Park



CAMERA OBSCURA: Reading - Wooli Beach House



CAMERA OBSCURA: CarCamera - jetty volcano lake





Wooli Beach – Making the kenetic cyanotype

## KENETIC CYANOTYPE

The print and book **WHITE SHADOW** is a collaboration between Victoria Cooper, the sun, sea and the wind.

This book presents an investigation of the cyanotype process and image within the context of site-specific work. In this work I offer the unexposed sensitised material to the site for the natural elements to imprint their own marks as the image. The documentation of this exchange is located within the metaphorical space of this book. It is an allegory that identifies, through the order and chaos in the sea and the wind, with aspects of existential human experience.

The **WHITE SHADOWS** artists book, resulted from the collaboration between Victoria as performer and Doug as documentor. Inspired by this work Victoria wrote a poetic evocation which was woven into the book's design by Doug.

The book itself also becomes a performative reading experience referencing the movement of the waves and the wind.



CYANOTYPE: White Shadow



WHITE SHADOW – the book (detail)



WHITE SHADOW – the book displayed

## CYANOTYPE

### WOOLI BEACH JUNK

A cyanotype by Doug Spowart

This book is derived from the junk collected during frequent beach walks whilst at the Wooli retreat. The daily cycling of the tides just kept washing up all kinds of stuff - mostly man made plastics and other indestructible buoyant objects. Nature herself throws interesting bits of animals, fishes and plants up along the tide-lines as well.

On my walk I was not considering these collected objects as the fodder for an artwork, but rather I thought of myself as an Ian Kiernan 'Clean-up Australia' disciple, doing my bit for a garbage-free foreshore. Daily the pile grew - collections of 'types' of objects, unique state items and weird things.

Maybe I have always collected souvenirs of journey as signifiers of the substance of place. The walks along the beach in a place we have called home from time to time during the last 22 years has revealed much about human impact on this local and more global environment. From fires, floods, cyclones, and eroding tidal flows, I have seen many stories left on the beach over time.



Wooli Beach – Northern New South Wales



CYANOTYPE: Wooli Beach Junk



Making Wooli Beach Junk





NOCTURNE: Childers Masonic Lodge



NOCTURNE: Woolli beach sign



NOCTURNE: Cygnet servo back door

## NOCTURNE PROJECTS

Through our Nocturne documentary photography projects and residencies we have explored connections with *Place* in urban and regional communities throughout Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania and Victoria.

As night falls and the dusk lights come on buildings, busy street corners, quiet alleyways become filled with the dramatic light of a movie scene. For us the phenomenon of nocturnal light transforms these everyday spaces that can both challenge and transform our perception of place and home.

In Nocturne Projects residencies we usually link the images made with a Facebook page and encourage the local community to log on and tell stories that connect with the subject pictured.

## ARTISTS BOOKS PHOTOBOOKS

For around 40 years Victoria Cooper and Doug Spowart produced numerous artists books and photobooks both as individuals and in collaboration. They have a deep affinity with all forms of the book and visual reading. Through this medium they continue to experiment and explore the photographic and poetic narrative potential of books.

Their work has been acquired for the artists' books, rare book and manuscript collections in many private, regional and state public galleries, national and international collections including the British Library. Both Cooper and Spowart have judged photobook awards, presented lectures and contributed to photobook review panels in Australia.

Over 10 years ago completed individual PhD studies in photography, photobooks and artists books. Since their academic studies, they have received individual Siganto Research Fellowships at the Australian Library of Art, State Library of Queensland to research aspects of this seminal artists books collection.



They have published and presented papers on the contemporary photobook and artists' books at national and international forums.

Doug's research on Australian and New Zealand Photobooks was featured at the Vienna Photobook Festival and recently he has completed the curation of a collection of ANZ photobooks to be included alongside the Martin Parr collection at Tate Britain.

Doug and Victoria actively maintain the photobook Blog for Australian and New Zealand Photobooks – [www.theantipodeanphotobook.com](http://www.theantipodeanphotobook.com)





## HOME

A photobook by Doug Spowart

This book was conceptualised and created during an artist's residency at Bundanon near Nowra in New South Wales in June 2018. The final design of the book took place in 2019.

For 5 years I have been homeless resulting from the need to travel, seeking work, looking for a place to settle, and maintaining connections with supporting friends and colleagues. The residency enabled inner thoughts to emerge that have been suppressed throughout this time.

Self-imaging is not something new to me. What is new however in this work is the frank reality of the expression, pose and perhaps vulnerability I present in these moments contemplating 'home' and what it means to me.



## BEING PRESENT

An artists book by Victoria Cooper

Being Present has its physical origins from the Bundanon Trust and the Shoalhaven River. In this book I traverse the microscopic and human experience of land and space. The visual/text narrative refers to my life long awareness of the living earth: land/air/water and the short moment of deep time of human habitation.

The electron microscopic images come from unexplored work made during an earlier Bundanon artists-in-residence in 2007 of collected detritus from the river. The montages were constructed with these microscopic images as interventions into a riparian environment near the property.

The book is informed by the work of notable writers, thinkers and philosophers, Martin Heidegger and Rachel Carson.



## QUESTIONING/ KNOWING

Contemporary  
Regional Architectural Practice.

A collaborative book by Spowart and Cooper with architect/academic Dr. Lindy Burton and landscape/commercial photographer Neil Burton.

Inspired by Alain de Botton's seminal text, The architecture of happiness, these collaborators present a visual enquiry into the homes, their design and contents of collected personal artefacts, that are represented as saleable for a potential new owner.

The book is presented in eight visual chapters, each of which address a distinct question on: ideals, desire, values, emotions, identity, taste, ambitions, and worth. This critique investigates these psychological themes through the photographic representations offered as the best view or aspect of each home as presented on [www.realestate.com](http://www.realestate.com).

It is intended that this book contributes to a larger discussion about what we know as 'home', and what makes us happy.



## ARTISTS IN PANDEMIC ISOLATION

An artists Book by Julie Barratt, Solange Baques, Victoria Cooper and Doug Spowart

Nearing the end of their artists in residence in Finland, Australian artist Julie Barratt and Argentinian photographer Solange Baques found themselves stranded far away from their homes and on the other side of a pandemic stricken world.

Concerned for their friend and colleague, Cooper and Spowart connected with Barratt and proposed the concept of a collaborative Artists Survey book project to present the artists' experiences during the COVID-19 enforced isolation.

It is a small gesture to bridge the vast physical and psychological distance that this pandemic has engendered.

Victoria **COOPER**  
Doug **SPOWART**

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Photobooks | Mentors

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INSTAGRAM: @wotwesaw (Victoria) @woteyesaw (Doug)

PHOTOBOOKS: [www.theantipodeanphotobook.com](http://www.theantipodeanphotobook.com)

@antipodeanphotobooks

VIDEOS: [www.youtube.com/user/CooperandSpowart/videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/CooperandSpowart/videos)

