

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION

How do artists confront troubling national histories?

photographers from the southern hemisphere, Rosângela Rennó (Brazil) and Fiona Pardington (New Zealand), to a trend in contemporary art that seeks to recover forgotten or neglected histories. Against the dominant trends in political art, Rennó and Pardington have adopted a reparative approach to shameful events of the past. Their work seeks to offset this shame by drawing attention to the power and beauty of the original archival objects and images. Thus, rather than focusing solely on wrong-doing, their work combines both positive and negative feelings.

-99, Rennó makes portraits from found identification photographs of the backs of heads of prisoners at the São Paulo State Penitentiary Museum taken between 1920-40. Rennó transformed the original identification images into large format photographs where delicate rose discolouration directs the eye towards

patterns. Pardington also uses large format photographs in the 2009-10 presents nineteenth-century life casts made by French phrenologist Pierre-Marie Alexandre Dumoutier on one of the last so-called voyages of discovery le -40. The casts, originally intended to support emerging theories of racial difference, placed the Pacific peoples into a racial hierarchy. 170 years later, Pardington transforms the casts into startlingly beautiful images of distinct individuals.

The works of these two artists encourage a reassessment of the treatment of vulnerable subjects their objectification in the interests of science and/or security while also holding together in exquisite tension the past and present, damage and repair.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ARTISTS

Rosângela Rennó was born in 1962 in Belo Horizonte, Brazil and lives and works in Rio de Janeiro. Rennó graduated from architecture from the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte in 1986, and from visual arts from the Escola Guignardi, Belo Horizonte in 1987. In 1997 she received an Arts Doctorate from the School of Communications and Arts of the University of São Paulo. Rennó has exhibited extensively internationally.

Rennó calls the sources of her works dead files

YEARS 7-8 FOCUS

Observe -

YEARS 9 - 10 FOCUS

Observe- First impressions what can you see?

Explore- What particular things do you notice or discover when you spend more time looking?

Investigate- Do you think the artist has made some things stand out?

Evaluate (Meaning)

YEARS 11-12 FOCUS

Ancestral portraits allow forebears to come in presence, cancelling the distance between life and death, subject and object. They act as portals between te pō (the dark world of ancestors) and te ao (the everyday world of light).

ANNE SALMOND in *Fiona Pardington: The Pressure of Sunlight Falling*, 2011, p.135.

I was looking at thousands of portraits that were testimonies to nothing, twice forgotten faces with

CREDITS

Guest curator: Professor Susan Best, Convenor, Fine Art and Art Theory, Griffith University

This resource has been developed by Griffith University Art Gallery in partnership with Griffith University 4th Year Bachelor of Secondary Education (Visual Arts) students: Hannah Banister, Juliet Bucknell, Lauren Coyle, Laura Dean, Stephanie Dixon, Claire Fountain, Inneke Hay, Elizabeth Hendrie, and Ethan Lam; led by Dr Marta Kawka, Lecturer, School of Education and Professional Studies.