



KATE BLACKMORE DIANA BAKER SMITH

**VIDEO
COMMISSION**
27 December 2022 – 12 March 2023

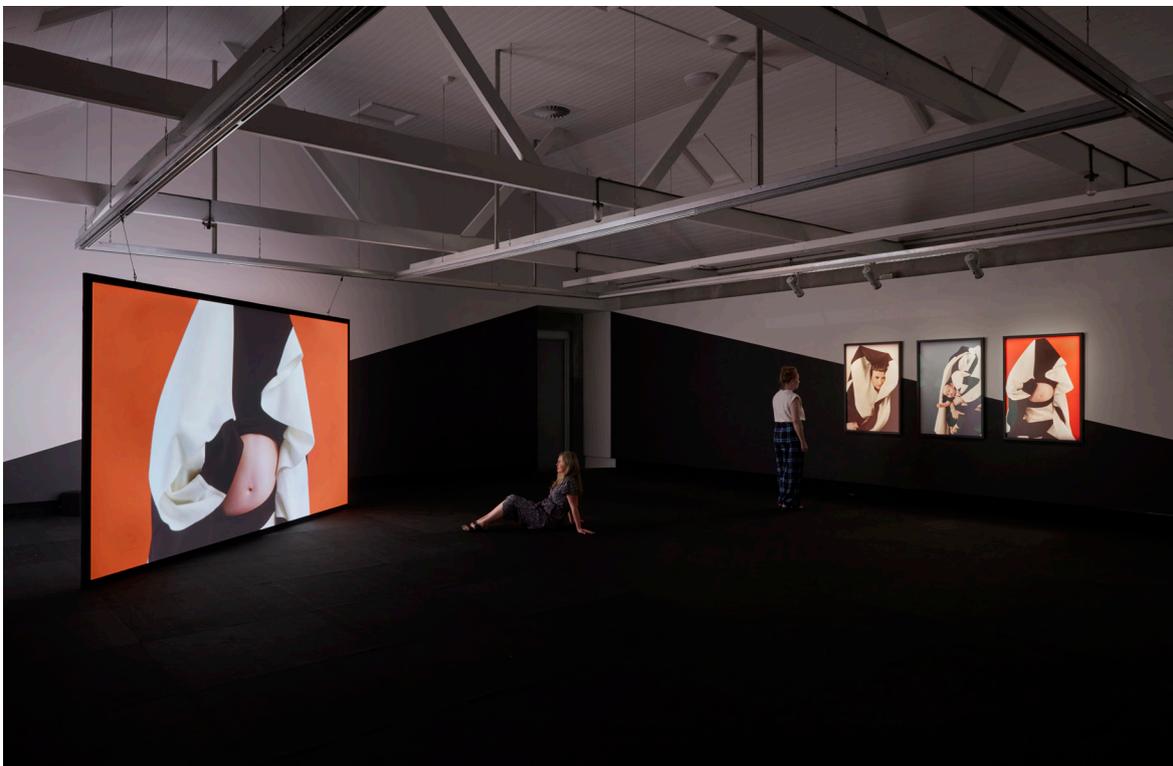
KATE BLACKMORE

- Kate Blackmore is an Australian artist and filmmaker whose films have been presented across cinematic, broadcast and contemporary art contexts. She has written, directed and produced over 20 short documentaries about art and culture for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.



DIANA BAKER SMITH

- Diana Baker Smith is an Australian artist based on Gadigal land in Sydney. Her artistic practice is highly collaborative, research driven, and underpinned by feminist methods. Her recent projects engage with art historiography and its fictions, spanning moving image, performance, photography, installation, and text.



Brief illuminations between interruptions (installation view), 2022, single channel video, photo Zan Wimberley

Cover image: *Brief illuminations between interruptions* (production still), 2022, single channel video, photo Anna Hay

Brief illuminations between interruptions

2022 | single channel video | 4K, stereo, 13mins 15secs

Brief illuminations between interruptions is a film about motherhood, artistic labour and female friendship. The work is a record of a dialogue, unfolding across two years, between artists Diana Baker Smith and Kate Blackmore. Together, they reflect on the complexities of motherhood, the politics of care and their shared experience of becoming pregnant at 40.

Over the course of a single day, the camera observes the pair as they work, a heavily pregnant Blackmore performing alongside Baker Smith and her new-born son, Ellis. Within the context of a sparsely appointed studio, a collaborative choreography unfolds. The artists move in front of and behind the camera, creating and then framing themselves as images. Their graphic black and white costumes draw together an array of sources: from dazzle dazzle camouflage, used to conceal ships during World War 1, to Victorian-era baby portraiture, where mothers are 'hidden' in the photograph beneath swathes of fabric. There are openings concealed in Blackmore and Baker Smith's garments through which various body parts appear: an arm, a breast, a pregnant belly. This exploration of invisibility and fragmentation takes form elsewhere through the presence of mirrors, which the artists move around the space, creating optical illusions and splintered images in the process.

These vignettes are overlaid with an intimate voiceover, where Blackmore and Baker Smith explore their changing relationship with motherhood, the transformation of their bodies, and 'mothering time', among other things. *Brief illuminations between interruptions* is a deeply personal account of Blackmore and Baker Smith's lived and felt experiences: as mothers, artists, collaborators, and friends.

Think
+
Discuss

Research the history of Victorian child portraiture. The article below is a good starting point. Report your findings back to your class.

Read: Bathurst, Bella (2013) [The lady vanishes: Victorian photography's hidden mothers](#), The Guardian, (Accessed 12 December 2022)

VOCABULARY

Collaborative produced by or involving two or more parties working together.

Choreography the sequence of steps and movements in dance or figure skating, especially in a ballet or other staged dance.

Dazzle camouflage used extensively in World War I this is a type of ship camouflage that consisted of complex patterns of geometric shapes in contrasting colours interrupting and intersecting each other. Watch this explanation from [Vox Media](#).

Dialogue a conversation between two or more people as a feature of a book, play, or film.

Swathe a broad strip or area of something.

Victorian-era a time in British history, approximately 1820 and 1914, corresponding roughly but not exactly to the period of Queen Victoria's reign in Britain.

Vignette a brief incident or scene (as in a play or movie).

ARTMAKING | REFRAMING THE PORTRAIT

This lesson is recommended for a **SECONDARY** school audience

Responding

- ▶ What is a portrait? Discuss with your peers and write a definition in your VAPD.
- ▶ Watch the following video from the [Scottish National Portrait Gallery](#). Does this change or extend upon your definition of portraiture?
- ▶ One of the significant references Blackmore and Baker Smith draw upon in their work is Victorian-era baby portraiture, in which mothers were often obscured from the image through use of props. View this [slideshow](#) of 'invisible mother' portraiture from the Victorian era (**source:** Yin Cheng, Alicia and Barnett, Erin (2020) *Victorian Mothers Hid Themselves in Their Babies' Photos*, The Atlantic, (Accessed 27 January 2023)
 - what are your impressions of these images?
 - what do these images say about the time and place in which they were made?
 - how do you think your reactions to these photographs may differ from a Victorian-era audience?

Making

Lesson Plan | Reframing the Portrait

Create a photographic portrait or self-portrait that does not reveal the face of your subject.

Resources

- VAPD
- DSLR or smart phone
- Digital editing software (optional)
- Props/costumes/mask etc

Success Criteria

A student can:

- Define portraiture
- Explain some of the ways meaning can be communicated through a portrait
- Demonstrate understanding of the conventions of portraiture
- Explore visual language, signs and symbols to create meaning in their work

NESEA Syllabus Links

Frames	Conceptual Framework
Cultural Subjective	Artwork World

Australian Curriculum

General Capabilities

- Literacy
- ICT
- Critical and creative thinking
- Personal + social capability

STEP 1 Brainstorm

Brainstorm some of the ways you could create a portrait of a subject without physically showing their face. Make a list in your VAPD.

Faceless Portrait Brainstorm

- Use symbolic objects to 'stand in' for the subject
- Use props, costume or a mask to conceal the face
- Use body language, glance or gesture in a way that conceals the face
- Use strong backlight (to create a silhouette)
- Obscure the face after the image is printed through stitching, drawing, collage etc

STEP 2 Research

Research faceless portraiture to generate ideas. This [Pinterest Board](#) is a good starting point.

- Look at the symbolic use of props in the portrait photography of [Dr Christian Thompson AO](#) with particular focus on his *Australian Graffiti* series.
- Look at the theatrical photography of [Jacqui Stockdale](#)

STEP 3 Plan

Make a plan in your VAPD plotting out your photoshoot. Draw thumbnail sketches of your composition ideas. Source or generate any props, costumes or objects that you may need for your photoshoot.

STEP 4 Create

During your photoshoot, remember to:

- take a wide range of photographs
- communicate with and direct your subject
- move your body and your camera to capture a variety of angles and compositions

EXTEND

Would your work benefit from digital manipulation through software such as Adobe Photoshop? Or, can you further extend your work after printing by embellishing it with stitching, collage, paint etc?