

Dark Rooms: The unseen city and histories of Brisbane through the Camera Obscura

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ABSTRACT

In the 2015 exhibition, Cloud Land, for the Museum of Brisbane, Robyn Stacey transformed hotel rooms into dark rooms that captured a unique series of portraits of Brisbane in Australia. These portraits enfold conditions of interiority and exteriority as well as spaces that resemble the past and the present. The collapsing of time and space found in Stacey's work is central to the analysis presented in this paper. Anthony Vidler's reading of Deleuze's concept of 'the fold' informs the analytical framework of Stacey's work. Vidler uses the camera obscura to describe the theories presented in The Fold and he also presents a critical view on how designers have previously read and applied Deleuze's theories to 'architectural space.' This paper also draws from Vidler's concept of 'dark space,' described as the unconscious way we are forced to engage with the often confusing spatial experiences of contemporary built environments. This confusion leads to our experiences of the city being largely unseen.

The works presented by Stacey in Cloud Land are, for the most part, informed by her experiences of living in Brisbane during Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen's authoritarian government (1968-1987). This recent history of the city is hardly present today, but Stacey finds the visible traces of the oppression experienced by many during this period through the camera obscura. Stacey's work proffers a way to consciously engage with the city and the unseen histories that are embedded into its fabric. Additionally, through Stacey's work we consider the placeless and benign spatial quality of contemporary hotel rooms and spaces—an example of Vidler's 'dark space.'

INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to Anthony Vidler's *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (2000) he continues the concept of 'dark space' that was presented in his previous book, *The Architectural Uncanny* (1992).¹ Vidler describes this critical concept 'in the context of psychological theories of doubling and identity... or of spatial absorption for current critiques of architectural monumentality.'² Specifically, he is referring to the discombobulating affect of contemporary approaches to architecture: buildings that work to de-sensitise the subject and ignore bodily sensation, making spaces that can only be engaged with unconsciously. The darkness he refers to is one created by an inhibition of the senses (sight especially) caused by these 'architectural spaces,' correlating to an anxious condition in modern society.³ Here, we speculate on an expansion of

Vidler's concept of dark space via an analysis of the work of photographer Robyn Stacey and her use of hotel spaces. This research focuses on Stacey's exhibition of work commissioned by the Museum of Brisbane in 2015.⁴

The exhibition, titled *Cloud Land*, involved a series of photographs of interior spaces, predominantly hotel rooms and tourist sites, transformed into a camera obscura, literally dark rooms, from which the entrance of light was completely blocked. Except for a small pinhole, through which, with the aid of an optical lens, a sharp inverse image of the exterior environment was projected onto the surface of the room. Stacey described the effect of the works as '...transforming the interiors of offices, meeting rooms, high rise hotels, institutional spaces, airports and vacation sites, literally wallpapering the rooms with the world outside their windows.'⁵

The exhibition was titled *Cloud Land* in reference to the visual effect of the camera obscura's projection of the upside-down sky onto the room's walls. The images appear to make people walk amongst the clouds. It is also a tribute to the Brisbane dance hall of the same name, Cloudland, that was demolished in 1982, during the era of Joh Bjelke-Petersen (colloquially known as 'Sir Joh') as the Premier, when the Australian state of Queensland was known as a police state. During Sir Joh's time in power, numerous historically significant and heritage buildings in Brisbane were demolished, disappearing overnight. Cloudland, like up to 60 other heritage buildings demolished in the 1970s and 1980s, was pulled down in the dark hours before sunrise, out of sight and without the required permits.⁶ Cloudland was much loved by the community and had been listed for protection by the National Trust. It was demolished by the Deen Brothers, who arrived on site at midnight and had the building mostly torn down in an 'adrenaline rushed' 20 minutes.⁷ The Deen Brothers were responsible for demolishing many significant buildings in Brisbane during this era, under the direction of state and local government as well as wealthy developers.

Throughout Sir Joh's infamous authoritarian rule over nearly two decades, Queensland gained a reputation for heteronormative, patriarchal, racist values at the core of established political

society. To paint all of Queensland of the era as authoritarian and Christian conservative is to ignore the ambiguities that also made Queensland in that era the most radicalised state in Australia.⁸ Nevertheless, Brisbane of the late 1970s was experiencing a conservatism unlike other cities in Australia. As Raymond Evans and Carole Ferrier wrote in their 2004 text *Radical Brisbane*, 'while other Australian cities felt the weight of Malcolm Fraser's Cold War Politics, only in Brisbane did punks experience a political climate comparable to that of Margaret Thatcher's London.'⁹ A number of artists, writers, and punk and rock bands, such as The Saints, emerged from Queensland in response to this situation. Robyn Stacey was amongst these.¹⁰ Many artists, including Stacey, fled from Brisbane to other Australian cities or overseas during the Sir Joh era. Author John Birmingham, whose career also emerged during this time, stayed in Brisbane. He still lives in Brisbane, where the legacy of Sir Joh has been mostly forgotten.¹¹ He recently reflected about his experiences of oppression as a young person during this period that, 'It's hard to imagine, if you didn't live in Queensland during the great darkness.'¹²

Stacey's images portray the unseen city and the unseen histories of the city. The use of a historical device, the camera obscura, is understood in this paper as an intentional method of image making through which to talk about histories of a given site. Frances Trepak wrote that when the camera obscura was applied to a whole room it was 'one of the devices that introduced us to the delights and dangers of watching images of events as they unfold.'¹³ That is, the camera obscura enfolds an exterior and an interior and at the same time it unfolds a history over the present. The relationships between these conditions is rendered visible via Stacey's employment of the camera obscura. In relation to Vidler's work, Stacey also captures 'dark space' by depicting these unseen spaces and histories.¹⁴ This paper is informed by a close reading of Vidler's dark space—the erased histories of the unseen city—as an analytical lens through which to write about Stacey's work in the *Cloud Land* exhibition.

Cloud Land comprised 22 of Stacey's images from various sites around Brisbane. The analysis in this paper is very much informed

by an unstructured phone interview with the photographer.¹⁵ Her descriptions of how the works were created led to the selection of three of the *Cloud Land* images for discussion: *Quay West Apartments Brisbane* (Figure 1), *Guards Room Boggo Road Gaol, Rena* (Figure 2), and *Room 930 Royal on the Park, Maroochy Barambah, Song woman and Law-woman Turrbal people* (Figure 3). Stacey studied Fine Arts at University of Queensland in the late 1970s, and her reflections on living in Brisbane in the Sir Joh era also give great insights into the history that she portrays in these images. In the interview, she informed us that:

It was pretty much like a police state. I mean, not as bad as somewhere like South Africa. But if you were different, you were constantly being pulled over by the police. We had a police car parked outside our house every night for a period. I mean looking back on it now, the police were a way of controlling any dissent or difference of opinions, and even though you were kind of pretty harmless, you just had to look different enough to come under attention.¹⁶

These experiences of Brisbane influenced Stacey's approach to her work in *Cloud Land*, but they also help to better understand the contextual, and rarely spoken about, history to the exhibition.

WORKING WITH HOTEL SPACES



A great example of the unseen, or when we experience 'dark space,' is as a tourist. Distracted by guidebooks and moving from one monument to another, there is much of the city that goes unseen. Writing about Walter Benjamin's preference to 'lose his way in the city,' Vidler proposes that the 'interior might provide at least temporary sanctuary for the wanderer and the stranger... or at least substitute dark spaces for those of dreams, liminal places for the confrontation of the psyche.'¹⁷ The hotel space, then, offers some respite, some familiarity, from the unfamiliar space. The majority of Stacey's camera obscuras are set up within hotel rooms or tourist sites, and for this reason Vidler's theory is very useful in this analysis of Stacey's work.

Stacey is not the first photographer to use the camera obscura in hotel rooms. Cuban-American photographer Abelardo Morell did so as well, as discussed in Diana Gaston's essay "The Secrets of a Room."¹⁸ The camera obscura and the hotel room have interesting correlations because they are both reliant on time and transience. As Gaston writes, the camera obscura lasts from eight hours to two days, much like the amount of time that people will stay in a hotel room. It is also interesting that the camera obscura is clearest during the middle of the day, when the hotel room is empty, as its occupants are normally out at meetings, conferences or roaming the city. As such it captures, as Morell suggests, 'what the room would see.'¹⁹ Through this analysis of Stacey's work, this paper shifts away from a description of the technique of the camera obscura itself, instead focusing on the spatial agency it reveals of the places in which it is set up.

Stacey's initial work with the camera obscura started in 2013 when she worked as an artist in residence for the Sofitel Hotel chain in Melbourne, Australia. Her concept for this residency, titled *Guest Relations*, was inspired by a desire to capture the view from the room and the room itself, not unlike Morell's motivation for using the hotel room.²⁰ Through the camera obscura she could effectively overlay these two images. Hotel rooms have been central to her work for some years; however, with the 2015 exhibition *Cloud Land*, Stacey added a focus on still life; hence people are present in the foreground of the images in this exhibition. Each of these people relates to a specific history belonging to the site. This is also where her work differs from Morell's use of the camera obscura in hotel rooms.

Hotels have been analysed in architectural theory and geography, with great fascination surrounding the tense boundary between public and private space. Hotels are buildings 'composed largely of extremely private spaces (bedrooms) located adjacent to very public spaces.'²¹ Otherwise, literature on hotels focuses on the urban and capitalist implications of tourism and hotels in cities. There is also the plethora of image dense texts on hotel and bar fitouts that, as books, are themselves objects for consumption. This emphasis on the hotel as a site for consumption is described emphatically by Rem Koolhaas in his essay, "Junkspace":

It is the interior of Big Brother's belly [...] The subject is stripped of privacy in return for access to a credit nirvana. You are complicit in the tracing of the fingerprints each

Opposite
Figure 1: Quay West Apartments Brisbane. Image courtesy of Robyn Stacey

of your transactions leaves; they know everything about you, except who you are. Emissaries of Junkspace pursue you in the formerly impervious privacy of the bedroom: the minibar, private fax machines, pay-TV offering compromised pornography, fresh plastic veils wrapping toilets seats, courtesy condoms: miniature profit centers coexist with your bedside bible . . .²²

Hotels have developed in response to late models of capitalism. Here, as Koolhaas describes, they are the placeless, soulless spaces engendered by capitalism and bereft of any memorable spatial or temporal experience — a distinct contrast to Benjamin's depiction of the hotel space.

Koolhaas's criticisms are likely to have been spurred on by Fredric Jameson's 1984 text *Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, in which he depicts the hotel as the site for the 'Hyperspace.'²³ Describing his experience of staying at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel (opened in 1977) in Los Angeles, designed by the neo-futurist hotel architect John Portman, Jameson wrote that, "the hotel rooms are visibly marginalised: the corridors in the residential sections are low ceilinged and dark, most depressingly functional, while one understands that the rooms are in the worst of taste."²⁴ Through this description, Jameson elucidates the disjunction between Portman's infamous grand scale lobbies and the underwhelming rooms in his hotels that can be found in numerous international locations.²⁵ Jameson finds this disjunction disorienting: a series of dialectics that act to hinder the capacity for a body locate itself within space.²⁶ Hyperspace, then, as it refers to the philosophical concept of hyperreality, is a postmodern condition that acts to inhibit a conscious deciphering of what is real and what is a simulation of space.²⁷

In Joanne Finkelstein and Rob Lynch's careful but brief essay they describe the 'staged authenticity' of the hotel room, where the hotel room is in itself a theatrical space that imitates domesticity and a sense of home, while at the same time alluding to a reflection of some other foreign space. In reality, the hotel room is neither home nor a foreign space.²⁸ As such it is a hyperspace, simulating two different spaces at once, while projecting a sense of displacement onto its occupants. Stacey's work also conjures hyperspace in her work, expressed in how she described the aesthetic of the camera obscura, 'where everything comes in upside down and in reverse. The skyscrapers hang from the roof and the clouds and the sky run over the floor—it really works with that kind of hyperreal space of the city'²⁹ (see Figure 1).³⁰

Stacey's work emphasises the temporality of the hotel space; in its 'transience, [it is] not so much ephemeral, but it's impermanent.' Stacey goes on to describe how this temporality of the hotel room translates to a space of epiphany:

... [hotel rooms are] often sites of epiphany because you're out of your comfort zone and you're in this anonymous space and so that in a sense anything can happen. And sometimes you're confronted with yourself because you're away from everything that's

familiar and sometimes it's nothing because you just go there to have a good time with your friends. But the whole thing of being anonymous and transient — it creates this heightened space in which anything could happen.³¹

In Finkelstein and Lynch's work on the hotel room they also describe 'this tension between the old and new, the familiar and the exotic, stability and flux. . .'³² and how the hotel room is a space somewhere between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Hotel rooms are trying to replicate a sense of the domestic, a place like a home, in a place far away from the inhabitants' home.

The sudden epiphany or self-realisation that is brought about by Stacey's camera obscura in the hotel room is discussed in Inge Boer's work, where he writes, 'evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man.'³³ This description directly correlates to Vidler's concept of 'dark space,' where the confusing and disorienting nature of contemporary architecture can only be engaged with in an unconscious way. The legibility of Stacey's works comes through this refined appropriation of a specific site and time. Her works fold both time and space through the overlay of the camera obscura in the hotel room. Stacey describes the overlay of artistic method and material in that 'the hotel is a site of epiphany. It is a space of transition. People are there for travel—it's a transformative site. You are on your way somewhere, you are in an in-between space.'³⁴

It is through the superimposition of the camera obscura over the hotel room that the spatial and temporal condition of both elements is brought to the viewer's immediate attention, as Stacey described:

And because the camera obscura is a totally transient experience — it lasts for a couple of hours and it's probably only at its peak for an hour — where all parts of it will work really well — those two things came together — it's the thing I want to talk about and the actual process is that very thing, a transient, ephemeral process. That's why I started in hotel rooms.³⁵

Stacey has also chosen rooms that overlook significant heritage or historical sites. The images that are projected over the interior of the hotel room are therefore images that are informed by another time and another space. This is also a critical statement about the internalisation of modern hotels; where hotels were once regarded as architectural landmarks, they are now almost completely concerned with their interiority. This can be seen in the internationally famous hotel interiors of Phillipe Starck, where hotels are consumed via images of their interiors, and not as vital architectural elements of the city to which they belong.³⁶

The hotel room is a place of transition, of people coming and going. No one is personally connected to the hotel space. Interstitial spaces are both temporal and spatial — therefore, in Stacey's images

of *Cloud Land*, elements of time and space are implicated in the work's visual effect. The camera obscura, in Stacey's reflection, 'is a good tool to talk about a place, and the changes and the projection of what it can be.'³⁷ The inversion of the image invites narrative because the images are not the right way up. Right way up, how we normally view images, is a convention — a habit of seeing. The camera obscura inverts the conventional view, and in doing so, opens up new ways of looking and being.

Part of the work is Stacey's reflections on a dark history of conservative state and municipal governance over Queensland between 1968–1987.³⁸ Stacey commented that '... a profound impact on my thinking about the way that Queensland, Brisbane, the politics, the life, I mean everything—was that it was very much driven by this conservative agenda which was all about progress and making money.'³⁹ Most cities have stereotypical associations. Brisbane is no exception. As Stacey commented, 'I was interested in capturing as many layers of the history of Brisbane'. In the Sir Joh years, much of Brisbane's historic architecture was literally bulldozed overnight. This has led to a modern reading of Brisbane as Brisvegas, a city 'built in the last twenty minutes.'⁴⁰ Still, remnants remain. 'There are little pockets, individual buildings that are being left.'⁴¹ As with hotel rooms, people treat whole cities as anonymous spaces on which you can write any story, and people generally write the most boring, conventional stories.

The human figure in Stacey's rooms (see Figures 2 and 3) allows us to think about proximities. The inclusion of people in Stacey's images is an important departure from the work of photographers such as Morell, and will be discussed in the following sections of this paper. We are not only looking at the outside, inverted on the walls of the ambiguous space. The work opens a discussion beyond binaries of interior and exterior or light and dark. We also must deal with the presence of a person. Identity is conventionally thought about in a binary sense – male/female, inside/outside, straight/gay... The inclusion of the human figure in Stacey's *Cloud Land* series allows us to consider proximal identities in how we each relate to the scenes. Cultural theorist Elspeth Probyn uses the example of the balconies in Montreal, occupied by neighbours in proximity to one another.⁴² While

they are completely unusable in Montreal's climate in winter, they spring to life in Summer. The balconies offer a multiplicity of narratives to exist in a space. Proximal space is not attached to binaries, which are all about definition; Probyn writes, 'AND [it] is neither one thing nor the other; it's always in-between, between two things; it's the borderline.'⁴³

We read *Cloud Land* as a series of inclusive disjunctions; a series of Deleuzian 'and... and... and...' ⁴⁴ statements, rather than an either/or. In the photographs, proximity is between the image of the city and the hotel room in which there's a body. The body brings in the idea of the social, which we, the viewers, have to populate. The inclusion of the people, some with more direct contextual relevance to the spaces than others, acts as inclusive disjunctions, so that we notice the complications, and are drawn to creating a multiplicity of narratives. For example, in the image of Maroochy song woman (Figure 3), 'her placement and pose transcended both spaces.'⁴⁵ As for her own hand in the construction of the images, Stacey had to work with the temporal nature of the camera obscura. Like Morell, who works as a passive bystander once the shutter is open,⁴⁶ Stacey states that 'you can't superimpose your will over it. It's like what's there, and that's what you end up working with and that creates its own story and often that's more interesting than the one you went in with and it just evolves. And that's what happened with *Cloud Land*.'⁴⁷

THE UNSEEN CITY

Vidler introduces the notion of the unseen city by describing the unconscious way in which we interact with the city. He writes that:

We seldom look at our surroundings. Streets and buildings, even those considered major monuments, are in everyday life little more than backgrounds for introverted thought, passages through which our bodies pass 'on the way to work.' In this sense cities are 'invisible' to us, felt rather than seen, moved through rather than visually taken in... A city might



be hidden by landscape, distance, darkness, or atmosphere, or then again there may be some hidden influence at work in the observing subject to render it unseen or unseeable.⁴⁸

This process of engaging with the built environment and not really seeing that space around us is the 'dark space'—it is dark, because we cannot see it. Stacey echoed this same sentiment in interview, saying that '...we don't know the city anymore as structures and we know it more like a cinematic experience in its light and movement.'⁴⁹ Stacey's projections of the city into these dark rooms proffer an opportunity to see this unseen city.

The image in the *Cloud Land* exhibition that best explicates this unseen city is of Boggo Road Jail (Figure 2). Now a tourist attraction, this site relates to the hotel room as a space that is occupied by a revolving series of temporary visitors. Opened in 1883, the Boggo Road Goal served as the Brisbane Prison for 106 years. Its red brick wall and guard tower dominated the Brisbane skyline until Torbreck, the first multi-story apartment block, was built in the nearby suburb of Highgate Hill in 1958. Until then, no one could see in to the jail, and the only view from the jail was the red brick wall, and the blue sky. Stacey informed us in the interview that she 'was more interested in the red brick wall as the perimeter of your existence, rather than the cells.'⁵⁰ She found a large guard room that allowed for the camera obscura to project the red brick and blue sky. In the

photograph, a young woman, wearing a uniform, sits on a chair in the centre of the frame.

In the image, Stacey presents a simple tableau: a chair, a large open space within a room that seems at odds with itself; enclosed, confined, yet its interiors open and exposed for all eyes, seeing and unseen. Punctuating the centre is a figure — a female in what appears to be a prison guard uniform, but in fact is the uniform for museum staff. She is seated and alert, hair pulled back into an austere bun, eyes directly engaging with the viewer. Her hands meet in an unnatural vee-shape, impervious of any emotional body language. Projected into the scene and flipped one hundred and eighty degrees is the interior of the prison courtyard, the exercise area, which leads up to the razor wire that hedges the tall brick wall. Just peaking over the wall are a few tops of buildings.

The site is important to Stacey's experiences of Sir Joh's Brisbane. She spent time in the Brisbane Watch House after protesting, and the prison is a representation of this oppression experienced by herself and her peers.⁵¹ More significantly though, Boggo Road Jail was closed one year after the end of Sir Joh's premiership, and as such the transformation of this site from prison to tourist site also marks the end of the Sir Joh era. In the 1980s, the jail became a site of protest from both inside and outside of its perimeter walls. The last of these protests took place in 1988, shortly after Sir Joh was voted out of office, and became the trigger for plans to close the jail.⁵²

Above
Figure 2: Guards Room Boggo Road Gaol, Rena, 2015. Image by Robyn Stacey, courtesy of Museum of Brisbane

When Boggo Road Jail was built in Annerley in the late nineteenth century, it was located on the outskirts of Brisbane. The city grew to meet its perimeter walls in the twentieth century, until it was surrounded by suburban life. It has had a marked presence within the city. It was built in an era of incarceration framed by punishment and not rehabilitation. By the end of its life, these practices were condemned by communities within and outside of the prison complex. Evans and Ferrier write:

In early 1988 following the shooting of a prisoner by a guard, an administration office was wrecked by inmates. Several prisoners also climbed onto the roof overlooking the armed catwalk where they unfurled banners demanding human rights, justice, and an inquiry into conditions in the prison. Over the following two weeks, a constant vigil was held outside the prison wall by the Women's House and the Catholic Worker community. The vigil was joined by former prisoners, solidarity activists and civil libertarians. On the roof the men endured threats of violence from 'armed screws', surviving on little food and water, and suffering from the effects of torrential rain and blasting sun to alert the community of the barbarous conditions they were forced to endure. Following this act of resistance from within and without, the government commissioned the Kennedy Inquiry which eventually led to the closing of the gaol.⁵³

This was activism from both sides of the prison's perimeter. The physical presence of the wall did not divide the protestors' will, which transcended the separation of occupying either the interior or the exterior of the prison.

After the jail closed it was re-opened as a tourist site in 2002, a place to be hired for office parties and twenty-first birthday parties, and opened on Sundays for farmers' markets. Stacey reflected:

But it can be so powerful in the way that it was, and now — they haven't done anything. That seems to be the fascination in it. That you still go there and you can see the cells and you can read the graffiti and all that, but it's entertainment. It's like the same way knowledge is now information — there's a lack of depth to it. It's a surface thing.⁵⁴

Parts of the jail remain as a ruin and its meaning is relegated to a tourist attraction; a slight tribute to its history as a site of incarcerations, protests and, at one time, executions. In Stacey's image, the reclaimed surfaces of this space are covered with reflections of the oppressive, endless red brick wall, and the coils of barbed wire that sit atop it. In this image, the dark space is revealed; we see the unseen city and also the unseen history of this site.

UNSEEN HISTORIES

Traces of indigenous histories in Australian cities are too often ignored or overlooked. From the beginning of the project, Stacey was committed to making an image that pictured a more inclusive

historical narrative of Brisbane. Stacey described the process of setting up this image by starting with the selection of the place first and then finding the person to feature in the image.

'The Turrbul people of the area occupied what was that bend of river along the Central Business District, near the botanical gardens, where the Queensland University of Technology is today. I had to find somewhere in that area. I decided from the first series I would start with the name of the place, then the person. When I found Royal on the Park [a hotel] which overlooks the gardens — it was in a sense perfect — it has that colonial thing just in that title 'Royal on The Park.'⁵⁵

The woman featured in this image is Maroochy Barambah, song woman and law woman of the Turrbal-Gubbi Gubbi people, and a mezzo-soprano singer (see Figure 3). In this unique image, the projection from the camera obscura does not include any buildings, only the vegetation from the Brisbane City Botanic Gardens and the sky. It is as though she is trying to evoke an image of the city before colonisation.



Above
Figure 3: Room 930 Royal on the Park, Maroochy Barambah, Song woman and Law-woman Turrbal people. Robyn Stacey, 2015, courtesy of Museum of Brisbane

Stacey re-images Brisbane's riverside parklands in collaboration with Maroochy, who sits for the portrait. She is wearing traditional paint on her face and shins, a painted kangaroo skin cloaks her shoulders, while another is draped across a dressing table to her left. She wears a traditional grass top and skirt. Her hair is black, loose and long. In her left hand she holds a spear. It is her gaze, however, that hints at the uneasiness of the sitting, the repeated history of sitting for the European camera man, in traditional garb, framed by a Western interior. It is as if her gaze, not oppositional as in the direct gaze that bell hooks writes of, is countering the colonial gaze — a 'sign of dissent.'⁵⁶ It is an alert and particularly fierce gaze; she has 'another agenda.'⁵⁷ Creating a third presence in the room is the shadow of Barambah herself, perhaps a reference to an acute absence.

When we remember that these photographs are taken in a dark room, Maroochy's shadow is really quite interesting. To render the subjects in these photos visible, Stacey had to use a torch, to 'paint' them into the image with light. For Maroochy to cast this shadow, she had to be standing directly in front of the pinhole, as Stacey explains:

The thing that happened on the day that for me really makes the image was the shadow. There was only one place in the room that Maroochy could be and that lined up with the opening for the Camera Obscura and that's why the shadow is cast — if she'd sat anywhere else in the room I wouldn't have got the shadow.⁵⁸

Understanding the careful and layered process that Stacey went through to create each of these images allows for deeper reading of the exhibition.

DARK ROOMS AND DELEUZE'S *THE FOLD*

Through this process Stacey is effectively folding space and time over each interior space, collapsing a history of the city with the current experience of an interior space. She explains that 'the photographic process itself is an active participant in creating

a "going between" time and history.'⁵⁹ Gilles Deleuze, in his text *The Fold*, uses the term to 'go between or go between' in his description of the interstitial space between the body and clothing.⁶⁰ Referring to Deleuze's text, Vidler explains the important link between *The Fold* and the camera obscura. In describing the mediating device that is the dark room he writes that:

The outside may have windows, but they open only to the outside; the inside is lit, but in such a way that nothing can be seen through the 'orifices' that bring light in. Joining the two as we have seen, is the *fold*, a device that both separates and brings together, even as it articulates divisions acting as invisible go-between and matter...⁶¹

It is interesting to note that dark rooms, that is rooms with windows and openings that have been blacked out or closed off, create an effect that exposes so much of an external condition. The camera obscura separates and brings together, in the same manner as Deleuze's *Fold* does. It separates by blocking the views to the outside but then brings it together through the lens projecting the outside onto the inside.

In the introduction to *The Fold* Deleuze draws a diagram of "The Baroque House (an allegory)."⁶² The house is depicted with two floors and "It is the upper floor that has no windows. It is a dark room or chamber..."⁶³ This dark room is apparently informed by Deleuze's reading of John Locke's analogy of the human brain as camera obscura. A small dark room, completely shut off from light other than two small openings with lenses through which images are projected and then ordered and interpreted.⁶⁴ Robyn Stacey's work with the camera obscura proffers a valuable example of folding of space and time, of histories and the present, anchored to a specific site and type of space.

Vidler uses the camera obscura to discuss a spatial application of Deleuze's theory in *The Fold* rather than a building or architectural work. This is because architectural interpretations of Deleuze's reading of Leibniz in *The Fold* (1992) have resulted in a formal

response of folding façades or surfaces.⁶⁵ Vidler is critical of this approach, writing that:

the fold is at once abstract, disseminated as a trait of all matter and specific, embodied in objects and spaces; immaterial, and elusive in its capacities to join and divide at the same time, and physical and formal in its ability to produce shapes, and especially curved and involuted shapes. This last characteristic has been of especial interest to architects, always searching for the tangible and attribute of an abstract thought; but it is not at all clear that folds, in the sense of folded forms, correspond in any way to Deleuze's concept, or even less to Leibniz's model... Folds then exist in space and in time, in things and in ideas, and among their unique properties is the ability to join all these levels and categories at the same moment.⁶⁶

These literal readings by architects of Deleuze's text into physical folded forms to create 'architectural space,' have, in some instances, only acted to distance bodies and the senses from the spaces they inhabit, thus creating the very dark spaces that Vidler argues are, in part, responsible for modern society's anxious state. Disconnected, confusing and disorienting in such a way that built environments can only be experienced unconsciously.

These interpretations of Deleuze's text continue to perpetuate binary conditions of autonomous interior/exterior and so on. Vidler goes on to elaborate on the fold as a mediating action, rather than one that dissects, or creates a binary; he writes that the:

Leibnizian fold, as an interior mechanism which at once reflects the outside and represents the forces of the inside, is more of a mediating device, a spatial instrument, than an object acted on from one side or another. Here the nature of Leibnizian space is crucial; thick and full, container and contained, it recognizes no distinctions between the solid and void, and thence no real division between the inside of a fold and its outside...⁶⁷

The concepts of the dark room and the camera obscura argue for a more careful reading of Deleuze's *The Fold*. It is, we suggest, a concept that belongs also to the spatial readings/overlays/interpretations of artists and photographers such as Robyn Stacey. Stacey's work presents more as a 'metaphysical idea,'⁶⁸ that is, a spatial condition that folds time, past and present as well as space with an 'exterior' folded over an 'interior.' By extension, Stacey's work has much to offer the disciplines of interior design and architecture in a spatial reading and interpretation of Deleuze's *The Fold*. Writing about the camera obscura, Vidler comments that 'the characteristic of the "fold" precipitated by these forces is at once less ambiguous than Deleuze would want and more extensively connected to the relationships between inside and outside.'⁶⁹

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have presented a series of dark rooms, camera obscuras, for discussion. While the absence of light has produced these images, it is the effect of darkness and dark space, of the unseen, the forgotten and concealed, that Stacey's work proffers for discussion. Stacey's *Cloud Land* diverges from this fascination with the vernacular to reveal deeper meaning through the folding of space via the camera obscura. Using her home town of Brisbane, and the dark histories she both experienced and researched, Stacey illuminates the dark space that contains Brisbane's tumultuous histories into a modern-day context. Specific to the oppression of the Bjelke-Petersen regime, the Boggo Road Gaol is wrested from its current status as party hall and fun-house, to once again inhabit the dark space of its more sinister intended purpose. Similarly with *Room 930 Royal on the Park, Maroochy Barambah, Song woman and Law-woman Turbal people*, Stacey recontextualises the space assumed as history-less, re-assigning its history through the presence of Maroochy and her shadow. These images define Stacey as an artist who uses the fold well, because, through the inversion of the outside image projected into the rooms, they induce a misrecognition in the viewer — a re-reading of the city. The audience is forced to look at history, at the folds and dark spaces between monuments and the shining glass of business and hotel towers.

NOTES

1. Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, (Cambridge, USA: MIT Press, 2002); and his previous text, Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, USA: MIT press, 1992), 6.
2. Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, 2.
3. Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, 88.
4. "Cloud Land," Museum of Brisbane, accessed April 6, 2016, <http://www.museumofbrisbane.com.au/whats-on/robyn-stacey-cloud-land/>
5. Martyn Jolly, "Go Between," in *Cloud Land: Exhibition Catalogue*, (Brisbane: Museum of Brisbane, 2015), 8-12.
6. Kimberley Wilson and Desha Cheryl, "Engaging in Design Activism and Communicating Cultural Significance Through Contemporary Heritage Storytelling: A Case Study in Brisbane, Australia," *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development* 6 (3, 2016), 275.
7. George Deen describing the process in which Cloudland was demolished," Australian Broadcasting Commission, Brisbane 612 Local Radio," last updated October 27, 2008, <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2008/10/27/2401700.htm>
8. Tom O'Lincoln, "Queensland: Battles with Bjelke." In Tom O'Lincoln, *Years of Rage: Social Conflicts in the Fraser Era* (Melbourne: Bookmarks Australia, 1993), 113-142. Also Heather Faulkner, *North of the Border: Stories from the 'A Matter of Time' Project* (Perth, Australia: UWA Publishing, 2016).
9. Raymond Evans and Carole Ferrier, *Radical Brisbane* (Melbourne, Australia: Vulgar Press, 2004), 300.
10. "Return to Sender exhibition (2012)," University of Queensland Art Museum, accessed November 11, 2017. <http://www.artmuseum.uq.edu.au/content/return-sender>
11. John Birmingham wrote this essay for the Monthly Magazine in response to the election of a conservative government lead by Campbell Newman, after nearly 12 years of left leaning leadership. There were many comparisons between Newman and Bjelke Peterson at the time. 'The Shock Jock Rule of Campbell Newman' in *The Monthly*, May 2012. Accessed 6th November 2017. <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2012/may/1336010364/john-birmingham/comment-shock-jock-rule-campbell-newman>
12. Birmingham, 'The Shock Jock Rule of Campbell Newman.'
13. Frances Trepak, "Theatre D L'Univers" in *Toward a New Interior: An Anthology of Interior Design Theory*, ed. Lois Weinthal (New York, Princeton Architectural Press: 2011), 586.
14. Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, 222-224
15. Robyn Stacey, "Interview on Cloudland"; interview by Heather Faulkner (unpublished) May 21, 2016.
16. Stacey, interview. In *Cloud Land* Stacey makes a few, poignant works that are situated outside of the hotel room and this exhibition is her first foray into these alternative sites. This exhibition was also a personal endeavour as it

was based on Stacey's hometown, Brisbane. She reflects on her experiences in the Cloudland building as, 'it becomes meaningful to you because you sat your exams there or your parents met there and it's something you remember all your life, as opposed to it's a destination, you get your picture taken, you sign yourself into – you make your mark. But it's not an acknowledgement of the site, it's more about the individual.'

17. Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, 128.
18. Diana Gaston, "The Secret Rooms" in *Toward a New Interior: An Anthology of Interior Design Theory*, ed. Lois Weinthal (New York, Princeton Architectural Press: 2011), 580.
19. Diana Gaston, "The Secret Rooms," 582.
20. Freya Harding, "Robyn Stacey Guest Relations at Stills Gallery," in *Vogue Australia* (May 2013), accessed May 12, 2016 <http://www.vogue.com.au/vogue+living/arts/galleries/robyn+staceys+guest+relations+at+stills+gallery+sydney,27157>
21. Donald McNeill, "The hotel and the city," *Progress in Human Geography* 32, no. 3 (2008): 385.
22. Rem Koolhaas, "Junkspace" in *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping: Project on the City 2* ed. Judy Chuihua, Jeffrey Inaba, Rem Koolhaas, and S. Leong (New York, Harvard University Press: 2002), 281.
23. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (New York USA, Duke University Press: 1991).
24. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 44.
25. Portman is also a developer and was involved with financing a number of these hotels, which Jameson suggests adds to the capitalist intentions of his hotels. In Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 45.
26. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 43.
27. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 43.
28. Joanne Finkelstein and Rob Lynch, "The Hotel Room," *Performance Research* 6, no. 2 (2001): 63.
29. Stacey, Interview
30. Stacey, Interview
31. Stacey, Interview
32. Finkelstein and Lynch, "The hotel Room," 65.
33. Inge Boer, *Uncertain Territories: Boundaries in Cultural Analysis Vol. 7* (Netherlands, Rodopi: 2006), 84.
34. Stacey, Interview
35. Stacey, Interview
36. McNeill, "The Hotel and the City," 386.
37. Stacey, Interview
38. This is colloquially known as the time of 'Pig City' (a police state) during the Sir Joh Government in Queensland. You can read more about this period in Brisbane's history in Raymond Evans and Carole Ferrier, *Radical Brisbane*
39. Stacey, Interview
40. Stacey, Interview
41. Stacey, Interview
42. Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings* (Hove, UK, Psychology Press:

1996), 3-5.

43. Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, 4.
44. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1987), 7.
45. Stacey, Interview
46. Gaston "The Secrets of Rooms," 581.
47. Stacey, Interview
48. Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, 142.
49. Stacey, Interview
50. Stacey, Interview
51. "Return to Sender exhibition (2012)"
52. Evans and Ferrier, *Radical Brisbane*, 300.
53. Evans and Ferrier, *Radical Brisbane*, 300.
54. Stacey, Interview
55. Stacey, Interview
56. bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* ed. bell hooks (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 115-31.
57. Jane Lydon, *Eye Contact: Photographing Indigenous Australians* (North Carolina, USA, Duke University Press: 2006), 243.
58. Stacey, Interview.
59. Here, Robyn might also be referring to the Brisbane band, *The Go Betweens*, which also emerged during the Sir Joh era. Stacey, Interview.
60. Gilles Deleuze. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (London, UK, Continuum: 2010), 140.
61. Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, 230.
62. Deleuze, *The Fold*, 5.
63. Deleuze, *The Fold*, 4.
64. Deleuze, *The Fold*. 4 and Vidler *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, 230.
65. For an example of the criticism Vidler is levelling at architects' use of the fold as a formal and not spatial concept see, Greg Lynn. *Folding in Architecture*. Vol. 102 (Kensington, UK, Academy Editions Limited: 1993).
66. Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, 218.
67. Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, 222-224.
68. Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, 220.
69. Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*, 222-224.

BIOGRAPHIES

Kirsty Volz is a PhD candidate within the ATCH group at the University of Queensland. Her thesis discusses the built works of Queensland's early women architects, focusing on the work of interwar architect and ceramist, Nell McCredie. Her research on interior design and scenography has been published in the *IDEA Journal*, *TEXT Journal*, *Lilith: a feminist history*, and the *International Journal of Interior Architecture and Spatial Design*.

Dr Heather Faulkner is a documentary/transmedia practitioner and researcher whose work explores the synergetic themes of identity, place and belonging. Her professional career as a photojournalist and award-winning picture editor has seen her work published broadly on an international scale. She has exhibited and published creative works nationally and internationally. Faulkner was born in Calgary, on the edge of the Canadian Rockies, and has lived in Asia and Eastern Europe before settling in Australia with her partner. She is a senior lecturer and Program Director of the Bachelor of Photography at Queensland College of Art, Griffith University.