LEARNING ANOTHER WAY:  
AN ATTEMPT TO EXPAND THE “GIVEN-TO-BE-SEEN” OF MASCULINITY IN AUSTRALIA

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An exegesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

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Declaration

I certify that, except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Garrie Maguire
Jan 2011

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to Wong Meng Yeong, Wong Kit Wai, & Martin Lum who showed me another way, well before I sat down to do this project.
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Preface

In this preface I set out the personal narrative into which my exegesis is positioned. It documents the important contributions from my lived experiences that shape my photographic practice.

My mother died when I was seven¹. Her death left me in the care of Mick, my father, a blue-collar worker in the stagnant northern New South Wales ‘city’ of Grafton. It is near the northern border with Queensland. Mick was a nickname. Mick’s brother was also known as Mick. If both brothers were in the same room my father would be called ‘Boxer’. He is a small man, smaller than me and like me, not good at fighting. As an Irish Australian family, we knew something about ethnic stereotypes. Our family told stories of our convict heritage, and of being in Australia as a result of the Irish potato famine. One would be confirmed later by family history studies. One of my forebears was sent to Australia on suspicion of being a 1792 Irish rebel². We were raised without Catholicism but we had retained a belief in the primacy of conscience, an the stubborn dignity of the underdog.

I was never comfortable ‘being a man’. I was bullied at school. I didn’t like team sports and I was regularly the last to be picked from the mass of boys lined up against the wall – that great, grinding repetitive ritual delineation of physical and social hierarchy performed every day in every schoolyard across the country. I am the artistic type; I have a ‘soft’ masculinity³. Soft masculinity is neither dominant nor even valued in my experience of the Australian culture. I knew I was not like the other boys. I retreated into a more academic clique, although I did not have the emotional maturity nor academic ability to ‘keep up’. Despite this, I was accepted into this academic clique and found a group of like-minded people, united by our status as outsiders. Thinking now about that group, its members have had more influence on society than the ‘jocks’ ever had.

Later, I would rebel against my family and their atheism by going to church. Education was not valued by my family, and at the time when most of my peers went on to University education, I retreated into the church. I entered theological college, studying a Bachelor of Theology.

After two years of study, the theology faculty decided I was not ‘mature enough’ to continue. Shortly after, I moved to Sydney and faced the reality of my homosexuality. By late 1988, I was working in a factory and had fallen in love with a co-worker, but again, it was an attraction that I did not recognise. This emotional confusion resulted in two years of clinical depression. I felt intensely a failure to live up to the standards of my culture; neither the church’s standard, nor hegemonic masculinity. This was the period of Australia’s bi-centenary. I was very conscious of the hegemonic masculinity that dominated narratives in popular culture and what being an Australian man was meant to be.

While at Theological College, my nascent interest in photography grew as I learnt the craft from Trevor Peddler. In 1989 I entered Sydney Technical College and was trained as a commercial photographer. At first I worked in the documentary and portraiture traditions. Importantly, in addition to learning the skills of photography, I began the journey to question why it is that we were making photographs.⁴

¹ Although my practice seems to be a world without women, I have grown up in public schools where females were always considered equals. As a 12 year old my closest friends were female and their mothers. I was one of the first males to enrol in typing and I was enrolled in home economics but due to peer pressure (and being the only male in the course and it was designed for females at that time – 1979) in my school I changed my course selection. At theological college we acknowledged that the two female students were by far the best pastors and at writing and delivering sermons. I’ve never had a problem with females per se. Just coming to adulthood in the Sydney queer community in the early 90s one did not encroach on that territory, so I stayed with males and masculinity. During the August 2010 trip to Shanghai I met with Kim Xu who grew up without a father but with his mother and sister and his work is all about women. From this I pondered the idea of why I’m interested in men, and not women in terms of my photographs and realised it was the question of how to be a man that was central to deliberations.

² John Tierman born 1780, arrived on the ‘Friendship’ arrived Sydney February 18, 1800.


⁴ See Appendix 1 for a brief selection of photographs from my college years. All my themes were in place by 1994.
Then, in 1991, I decided I'd had enough of fighting my sexuality and went to Mardi Gras for the first time. There, I stood behind a Chinese man who started up a conversation with me, and we became friends. We discussed homosexuality, the subject of being a man and what was important in masculinity. I felt much more affinity to his culture's values than to those of my own. This would be the first in an unfolding personal history of meeting-encounters, where each new person added something new to my understanding of the difference between Chinese culture and the Australian culture that I was brought up into.

By 1991, there were important themes that were emerging in my creative practice. I became aware of the repertoire of images in circulation, those that have currency, on which we base our stereotypes and attitudes. This is what David Eng describes as the ‘given-to-be-seen’5. I was aware that there were gaps between reality (what I saw around me) and that which was presented in the media and galleries. Eng discusses the ‘Golden spike’ photograph6 (depicting the joining of the transcontinental railways in the United States of America). He notes that the ‘reality’ of the captured photograph omits the reality of the racial mix of the workers; that the people in the photograph are all of European descent while the railway was built with a large Chinese workforce. This same omission I found in Australian media.7

In the nineties, I worked as a commercial and magazine photographer. This included gay publications8. Through my friendships and relationships with Chinese (and other Asian) men, I shared their sense of injustice of their lack of representations in these media9 and the difficulties they faced in the gay community, in terms of their capital in the economy of desire10. I was offended and incensed that the men I loved and lusted after were not seen by my culture as desirable. Initially, they were rarely represented. The gay publication, Campaign11 magazine published a photograph of a Chinese man on their cover in 199112. Publishing this photograph created a very heated and racist discussion in the gay press. Gay men in the audience of those publications protested the inclusion of photographs depicting Asian men.13

It was a period when the Asian men of the Australian gay scene were considered of such low status that they were not afforded visual representation. It was much easier for me to get a drink at a bar of the Albury Hotel even if I was behind three lines of Asian men. Asian men were treated with contempt, a point brought out in Caluya’s paper.14 Even to this day, representation of people of non-European descent on TV is largely limited to SBS.15 In my practice as a photographer, I sought to change this through the inclusion of Asian models. At first there was resistance from art directors and editors, although I persisted. There has been much relevant discourse in books and papers relating to this phenomenon, providing a useful context.16

Within the gay community there is a hierarchy of race, bodies, and age in terms of what is desirable.17 At the top stands the blond hair, blue eyed, 20’s smooth ‘gym’ed’ man, with his ‘six pack and pecs’. This system of racial hierarchy terms described the ‘white man’ at the top and, at the bottom of this list and almost invisible, is Asian18.

6 See Appendix 7 p 160 for these photographs
8 See Appendix 2
9 See Appendices 4 and 5
12 Campaign magazine was the longest running gay publication in Australia at this time. It ceased publication in 2000. I worked for them from 1994 – 2000.
14 Ibid. In this article a graphic example of the racism is recounted.
I am proud of my contribution to a series of firsts: first photo of an Asian man in (Not Only) Blue magazine\(^1\), first spread of photos of Asian men in (Not Only) Blue magazine\(^2\), the inclusion of Asian men in an AIDS Council of NSW (ACON) and Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) education campaign\(^3\) as well as insisting on the inclusion of Asian men in my Mardi Gras, Sleazeball and feature photography for Campaign Magazine under four editors.\(^4\) Other photographers\(^5\) joined in and began to work in, and enlarge, the space opened up by these developments. The other ground-breaking photographer was William Yang who, having rediscovered his 'Chineseness', took an interest in the Asian gay community of Sydney.\(^6\) The space we opened up allowed critical discourse to shift and enlarge as well – from a focus on the lack of representation, to analysing the qualities of the photographic representations that began to appear.\(^7\)

Robert Mapplethorpe\(^8\) is my flawed hero. I am attracted to the idea that making beautiful, formal photographs of subjects from within my life is acceptable and necessary. I love the formalism of his later work. I love the visual investigation of his life, including the parts that have never been brought into the public sphere (the gay subculture photographs). I remember when I first saw a photograph of Ken Moody\(^9\) (1983) with his eyes closed, which is composed like a passport photograph. I remember being 'shocked' by the beauty of the photograph, the lighting, and the way the skin looked. The tones were unlike any I had seen before. The second Mapplethorpe image I remember being 'shocked' by was Dominick and Elliot.\(^10\) It is a photograph of two men in an unusual gay relationship. These two images opened up possibilities that my work still explores today.

I would also like to note here that my partner of the last 14 years is of Chinese descent. He and I collect photographs together; we are interested in representations of Asian men by photographers. We have an extensive collection and it is one of my areas of interest.

My work has been informed by multiple and extended periods in Chinese communities located in Shanghai, Singapore, Hong Kong, Beijing and Taipei. This provided an opportunity to be immersed in and to experience Chinese culture, and to test the themes and hypotheses posed in this exegesis.

As the debate as to the place of Asian men in Australian culture continues, my work as a producer of photography challenges our understanding of power, justice and responsibility in representation and interpretation of visual images. I address the relationships between subject and Other, White and Chinese, producer and viewer. This project represents an opportunity to invite viewers of the exhibition to explore them with me.

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\(^{1}\) See Appendix 2 p 122
\(^{2}\) See Appendix 2 p 124
\(^{3}\) See Appendix 6
\(^{4}\) See Appendix 2
\(^{5}\) I would like to acknowledge the work of Jamie Dunbar who presented images of Asian men in the gay press before I did. When he left the Sydney Star Observer the amount of representation decreased, which was at the time I became aware of the gay press.
\(^{7}\) My contributions are contained in Appendices 8, 11, 13, 14, 15 and 16.
\(^{8}\) See Appendix 7 Mapplethorpe
\(^{9}\) Ibid
\(^{10}\) Ibid
Introduction

This exegesis forms a framework for understand the production of the photographic exhibition that was staged at Federation Square Atrium from 25 January to 17 February 2011. The exhibition is an installation of two sets of 10 photographs printed as life-sized banners on polycarbonate suspended from the ceiling in a triangular formation. One set depicts stereotypes of Australian masculinity while the other depicts Chinese masculinity.

This subject matter is illustrative of the discourse around intercultural representations of masculine archetypes. The exegesis will explore issues arising from the execution of such a body of photo-media work.

The Preface introduces my history as a life narrative that frames my art practice.

Chapter 1 sets out to answer the question of how I can represent people like me, and the ‘other’ in order to attempt to expand the ‘given-to-be-seen’? The chapter begins by referencing Mapplethorpe, whose work was particularly influential in the formative period of my practice. Mapplethorpe recognised the problem and complexity surrounding his representation of the ‘other’. Mapplethorpe’s desire to fill a visual gap resonates thematically with my current work. The problem has been theorised by Eng within his interpretation of Lacan’s ‘given-to-be-seen’, which can be defined as ‘the group of culturally sanctioned images against which subjects are typically held for their sense of identity’. Mercier’s writing on how Mapplethorpe negotiated the issues around representing the Other has provided a framework and starting point for my own practice. In my earlier exhibition toHave & toHold, I sought to create a discussion about what we include in the ‘given-to-be-seen’ of Australian masculinity, by locating all the men (Asian, Koori, Caucasian, able bodied, disabled bodied, of all ages, wealth, etc) in a range of normal differences. The press reviews to toHave & toHold are examined to triangulate the public response to this work. In concluding the section on representing the Other, the paper considers Zahalka’s Bondi: Playground of the Pacific and curatorial selections from it. The relevance of Zahalka’s Bondi series is its demonstration of the ‘given-to-be-seen’ within an Australian context. Whilst ‘The Bathers’ became an iconic image, the comparative critical and curatorial response to ‘The Surfers’ illustrates the cultural and nationalistic boundaries of the ‘given-to-be-seen’.

Chapter 2 deals with the question of masculinity; What does it mean to be a man in Australian and Chinese culture? First, it gives a brief historical development of Australian masculinity and the role of physicality. It also examines the role of the muscular body in gay Australian culture and how the emphasis on physicality and muscularity produced what Rey Chow would call ‘dismemberment’ of Asian men in both Australian and gay cultures. The controversy over the presentation of an Asian male cover model in Campaign magazine in October 1991 further expands the exploration of the “given-to-be-seen” theme, as it is located in the context of Asian masculinity.

The chapter goes on to examine the theoretical framework of Chinese masculinity, starting with an attempt to think through differences in the formation of Western and Eastern intellectual traditions and how that affects current thinking. Then the work of Kam Louie, which presents a detailed analysis of Chinese history to derive the Wen/Wu dyad, is examined. (Wen being masculinity concerned with intellect and cultural understanding and so much more. Wu is concerned with martial valour and so much more). Louie’s Wen/Wu dyad forms a central frame for my photographic representations in the current work. Therefore, a literature review of the readings and responses to Louie’s work provides a critical analysis of his position. The concept of the ‘hegemonic masculinity’, and Western theoretical understanding surrounding it, points to the discomfort with the current position of Australian masculinity.

Chapter 3 poses the question: Does the work by the Chinese artists within the case study fit with Kam Louie’s theoretical position? The case study of the exhibition called ‘Men Like Me’ was curated by the author and presented as part of Midsumma Festival in Melbourne at Off The Kerb Gallery in January 2008. This exhibition was created to examine how (queer) Asian men represented other Asian men and evaluate how Louie’s Wen/Wu theorisation works as a framework for curation. Eight men who use the camera to make photographs were selected because of their diverse practices and concerns. After explaining these concerns and backgrounds the paper examines the four ethnically Chinese participants and the negotiations concerning image selection. The issues of presenting in an Australian context, showing of genitals and the ‘what would sell’ are also addressed.

Chapter 4 looks at the project created as part of this degree, first within the histories of ‘the history of photography’33 and secondly in relation to the advent of, and tension created by the Biennales outside of the ‘West’. The exhibition is then positioned in light of Heartney’s essay34 about the collapse of consensus and the rise of micro narratives.

The frame by which the individual masculine types were selected, that of cinema stereotypes, is examined, as is the process of determining what types are represented.

The problem of finding a new vocabulary for digital photography, as well as, the making of the individual portraits, by a process of joining multiple photographs is discussed, as are materials. It concludes with observations about other interpretations that might be present in the final exhibition.

33 That is books that purport to be Histories of Photography
Documentation of the Exhibition

1. Photographs from several Angles
A video of the instalation is here.
2. Ten Australian Types
3. Ten Chinese Types
Chapter 1: Representing the Other

(The photographs of black men) were taken because I hadn’t seen pictures like that before. That’s why one makes what one makes, because you want to see something you haven’t seen before; it was a subject that nobody had used because it was loaded... Why did it? I don’t know; I was attracted visually. That’s the only reason I photographed them. But once I started, I realized there’s a whole gap of visual things.35

In the quote above, Robert Mapplethorpe describes a process. He was first visually attracted to black men, in a way he didn’t understand and wanted to explore. The subject matter was ‘loaded’ because representing the Other is always a politically and ethically charged act. But there was also a curious and transgressive desire to see what hadn’t been seen before. The images he produced were shocking on two levels. This chapter begins with David Eng’s reworking of the Lacanian concept of the ‘given-to-be-seen’. It suggests Mapplethorpe’s images are shocking because they highlight the exclusion or silencing of an entire category of photographic subjects from the visual consciousness of Western culture. On a second level, Kobena Mercer has used the avant-garde shock value of the images to modify an earlier reading in which he argued Mapplethorpe’s work was fetishising – a representation that reduced the Other to ‘thinghood’. Shock on that level, he suggests, disrupts overly rigid and pre-determined emotional responses to artistic representation.

1. Challenging the ‘given-to-be-seen’

Mapplethorpe (above) describes the realisation of a ‘whole gap of visual things’, and in his text Racial Castration, David Eng uses Lacan’s categories of the screen and the given-to-be-seen to show how gaps like these marginalise minority cultures36. The categories fit in between the look – which belongs to the individual person, and deliberate acts of seeing and unconscious desires – and the gaze – which belongs to the Other, an imagined and unknowable person whose gaze we imagine as we shape ourselves and develop subjectivity. Photography involves both. Audience members look at the photos, and as Laura Mulvey37 has argued, the construction of photos also reveals the gaze – the expectations about desires and power relations in the audience that inform their construction. As Eng points out, understanding what the audience sees and whether they can see requires Lacan’s third concept:

[Lacan] is quick to emphasize that the gaze or camera in and of itself does not determine how the subject will ultimately be seen, or what form he or she will assume as a picture within the field of the visible. The gaze or camera, in other words, determines neither how the subject will apprehend his or her reality nor under what material conditions. For this process, Lacan reserves the category of the screen – the field of representations and the image-repertoire of visual perceptions. Intervening between the human look and the gaze, the screen is comprised of ideologically marked and pre-given images through which the subject is captured as a picture within the visual domain. It is these pictures, from television, cinema, and print media, that permits subjects to assume their social – for example, racial, sexual, economic and national – identities38.

In other words, the concept of the screen connects up the visible and the social. Eng describes at length the famous ‘Golden Spike’ photograph of railroad barons39, surrounded by white labourers, hammering in the last spike in, of the railway connecting the East and West of the United States40. It has become an iconic image in the visual history of United States nation building – part of the image-repertoire that white Americans draw on for their sense of political and national identity – yet, as Eng and others have pointed out, the railway could not have been built without Chinese labour, and there is not a single Chinese man visible in the photograph.

39 see Appendix 7 p162-3 for these photographs
Lacan goes on in this eleventh seminar to connect the images of the screen with a category he labels the 'given-to-be-seen'. The 'given-to-be-seen' is that group of culturally sanctioned images against which subjects are typically held for their sense of identity. In this second quote, Eng shows a further connection between the screen and identity – or how people are taught to view themselves. The castration of his book's title refers to the erasure, by non-representation, of Asian masculinity and male sexuality. As described in the preface (above), this is the situation I encountered when I began working as a scene and feature photographer for gay publications in Sydney. Asian men were invisible – and as William Yang reports, this sent a powerful signal to men working through the formation of identities as gay Asian men. Not only that, for all gay men, the idea and possibility of desire for Asian men was also therefore made invisible. And the place of Asian people in Australian visual culture and national history was similarly barren.

Eng wants to find ways for viewers of photography to resist the normativity of the 'given-to-be-seen':

It is crucial to point out that the reality of the given-to-be-seen is neither inevitable nor inviolable. The given-to-be-seen is ultimately dependent upon collective affirmation of those images comprising it. Far from being absolute or static, the given-to-be-seen is finally dependent on widespread ratification of its repertoire of conventional images. Despite the normative allure of the given-to-be-seen, how might individual viewers withhold their visual sanctioning of its pregiven images? In other words, might the spectator look awry at the given-to-be-seen[ness] of the photograph, look away from the dominant historical narrative that it proffers to be validated?

Through his discussion of the 'Golden Spike' photograph he encourages readers to look not only for what is sanctioned within the image but also what is omitted. As a photographer I have had a wider set of options for resisting the exclusion of Asian masculinity from the 'given-to-be-seen' of Australian culture. At first when I set out I wanted to redress what I saw as an imbalance. But I quickly became aware of the difficulties and complexities of representing the other, even with good intentions.

2. The dangers in representing the other

This section of this essay uses two articles by Kobena Mercer using the concepts of fetish and objectification. He writes about the same images by Robert Mapplethorpe that I found so inspiring in my early practice, using labels that have been applied to my own practice over the years.

Kobena Mercer first wrote an article analysing Mapplethorpe’s The Black Book as fetishistic and objectifying.

The fantastic emphasis on [technical photographic] mastery also underpins the specifically sexual fetishisation of the Other that is evident in the visual isolation effect whereby it is only ever one black man who appears in the field of vision at any one time. As an imprint of narcissistic, ego-centred, sexualising fantasy, this is a crucial component in the process of erotic objectification, not only because it forecloses the possible representation or the collective or contextualized black male body, but because the solo frame is precondition for voyeuristic fantasy of unmediated and unilateral control over the other, which is the function it performs precisely in gay and straight pornography.
Much of the academic debate around Mapplethorpe’s work is very much rooted in its time, and the problems the work encountered with the conservative backlash where republican politicians tried to have the National Endowments for the Arts not support work that was ‘difficult’. In this, a very unholy allegiance was formed with anti-porn feminists.

Mercer wrote two important articles about his encounter with Robert Mapplethorpe’s work. In the first he was critical, pointing out problems in Mapplethorpe’s representation of the other, in particular what he saw as the objectifying of the black man, as described above. In the second text, however, Mercer opens with the line “To shock was always the key verb in the avant-garde vocabulary”. He recounts his first encounter with The Black Book and the mix of emotions he felt – guilty enjoyment, sensing they were problematic, and yet recognising they were beautiful. This poses a challenge to the viewer, who is not sure whether the images perpetuate or undermine stereotypes of black male sexuality – and in effect the photographs throw this judgement back upon the shocked viewer.

But now I am not so sure whether the perverse strategy of visual fetishism is necessarily a bad thing, in the sense that as the locus of the destabilizing “shock effect” it encourages the viewer to examine his or her own implication in the fantasies that the images arouse.

Mercer investigates the history and place of the nude in Western art and philosophy and concludes that it excludes non-White others because:

The nude is one of the most valued genres in Western art history because the human figure embodies the central values of liberal humanism. In this sense, the model of physical perfection embodied in classical Greek sculpture serves as the mythical origin of the ethnocentric fantasy that there was only one “race” of human beings who represented what was good and true and beautiful.

What Mapplethorpe does is inject fears and fantasies from popular culture into high art, creating a bridge or nexus between the Western aesthetic ideal – the ultimate in ‘given-to-be-seen’ – and men who had been excluded from it. As a white man in control of the representation of others, Mapplethorpe’s privilege and power are unmistakeable, but Mercer argues that gay men and black men “both shared conditions of marginality”. Although Mapplethorpe is not a black artist, Mercer suggests that in his work, “the trope of visual fetishism paradoxically decentres and denaturalizes whiteness by showing its dependence on what is denied as Other to it”.

Mercer’s argument shows the need to make critical space in which a photographer who is privileged with maleness and whiteness can carefully and consciously work to undermine those privileges in his work practices and destabilise them in his audience members’ interpretation of his work. McDowell, examining Mapplethorpe’s work in light of the conservatism of the feminist anti-porn movement and Judith Butler’s work on performativity, concludes:

The work of Mapplethorpe and Serrano opens us to the possibility that all explicit imagery is not degrading to women and other minorities. Certain artists work from within the dominant power structure to undo its own established norms. They appropriate the apparatuses which have been used to dominate.

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50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
As a ‘scene’ photographer, I had set out to ‘correct the imbalance’ by increasing the number of Asian men shown in gay publications, but I came to realise the exclusion of Asian masculinity from the ‘given-to-be-seen’ of gay and mainstream Australian cultures was not a simple numerical imbalance – it was an ideological problem involving masculinity, race, sexuality and nationalism. Inspired by Mapplethorpe, I wanted to shock viewers of my work into a reappraisal of their assumptions and provoke critical discussion of my work to bring this process out beyond the exhibition space.

3. Press responses: toHave & toHold

Working on toHave & toHold55, my photographic series from year 2000, prior to developing my current awareness of critical and photographic theory, I sensed it was important to locate Asian men among a range of ordinary differences – of bodies and faces, hopes, desires and expectations. I wanted to challenge audience members but also to create a bridge for them through the common experience of looking for partnership. Chris Sidoti, then-Human Rights Commissioner for New South Wales, opened the Sydney exhibition with a speech emphasising this power of empathy to cut across the boundaries of difference:

The arts have this ability to unmask prejudice and cut it away, to undermine assumptions and preconceptions, to speak the truth, to challenge us to think better and to be better. Both through images of beauty and images that shock, the arts can disarm. They can draw us to a deeper understanding of and a new commitment to ourselves and others as human beings.56

In his speech, Sidoti describes the approach I took to representing the masculinity of the racialised Other by situating it within a range of differently ordinary bodies:

Garrie’s work challenges two assumptions. The first is that gay men are all the same... His photographs show the diversity of gay men’s bodies and personalities. Some gay men have ‘perfect’ bodies like the classic Greek nude. Most don’t. They reflect in fact the diversity of the Australian community. They are ethnically diverse, including indigenous men and those descended from people from all other parts of the world. Their bodies are fat and skinny and in between. Their ages run through the entire spectrum. The personalities they reveal are playful and shy and serious and exhibitionist. Their words indicate just as wide a range of hopes and aspirations as the range of body shapes and personalities their photos reveal.57

Whereas Eng in Racial Castration is concerned with finding ways of reading photographic texts against the grain to discern what they exclude from the ‘given-to-be-seen’ of American culture, in my work I wanted to provoke discussion and start a conversation, both critical and creative, that might shift perceptions of the exclusion of Asian masculinity from the ‘given-to-be-seen’. This section deals with press reactions to my work as a proxy measure of how successful my project might have been.

For the initial Sydney showing of the work I gave the press the choice of four photographs: Bill Phillips, a tall 40s Caucasian man, who was editor of Campaign magazine; Jayden, a tall and very handsome suited Filipino man in his 20s who was studying locally; Edie, a south American man who was in his early 40s and flamboyant; and Peter who was tied up and suspended above the pedestal. From looking at Peter’s photo, one could deduce that he was in his 20s and reasonably ‘gym fit’ but there was little to signify his race.58 Looking at my press clippings there was fairly even reproduction of the photographs. Bill appears three times, Jayden four, Edie three and Peter once in Sydney and four more times as I staged the exhibition in other cities.

The press interviewed me59 which gave me opportunities to communicate a sense of my project in taking the photos and staging the exhibition. I was interviewed on gay radio in Sydney and on gay programmes in both Brisbane and Adelaide, although none of these were transcribed. The central theme of diversity

55 See Appendix 8
57 Ibid.
was picked up in the interviews and in the reviews⁶⁰ and 'mentions'⁶¹, and the tone was supportive on each occasion. It was the year 2000, the height of John Howard's conservatism and a counterbalanced progressive community backlash against it, symbolised by marches for Reconciliation and against Pauline Hanson, and the closing ceremony of the Sydney Olympics featuring Midnight Oil performing in 'Sorry' t-shirts.

In mainstream press reactions, the Courier-Mail noted that "men were chosen to represent diversity in the gay community and to negate what Maguire calls the 'white muscle boy stereotype'"⁶² The Adelaide Advertiser said, "Maguire documents a lifestyle with a commendably broad range of men, including the limbless and the less than beautiful".⁶³ The same article also revealed a certain discomfort with the stark aestheticisation of the men portrayed in toHave and toHold, saying "It is interesting to ponder why the photographs of William Yang, for instance, who chooses to photograph people he knows – in generally realistic environments – have a greater resonance".⁶⁴

Reactions in the gay press were more positive. Capital Q Weekly wrote "the variety of bodies, age groups, faces and expressions is strikingly diverse. Some look cocky, some look jaded, some are raw with vulnerability and some have more layers than an onion".⁶⁵ Anne Broinowski in (not only) Blue magazine wrote:

Carrie Maguire loves men. So much so that since 1992, the year he started taking photographs, he's collected hundreds of images of them. Far from homogeneous, these men are bent, straight, Asian, European, African, slender, toned, disabled, pierced, chubby, kinky, conventional, romantic, spiritual, political, lonely, playful and wicked – a cornucopia of masculinity united only by diversity. And not a single one of them fits the buffed, Anglo stereotype of perfect manhood currently monopolising the market of gay desire.⁶⁶

Given the themes I address in this exegesis, it was interesting to read back over the press coverage and see glimpses of my current project emerging in the interviews I gave:

I would like to see masculinity get beyond how manly you can act or how violent you can be. I would like to see it get closer to the Confucian/Buddhist position, where masculinity is about how in control you are and how considerate you can be.⁶⁷

The Turning of the Tables is one of a series I am working on concerned with Asian masculinity. I noticed that Asian men were portrayed in Australian popular culture non-sexually in those cases where they were portrayed at all. In fact, African Americans have a higher profile in our fashion and advertising than Asian Australians.⁶⁸

The publications themselves endorsed and subscribed wholeheartedly to this project, and seemed to recognise the limitations of the blond-and-blue aesthetic ideal of masculinity that had predominated in the 'given-to-be-seen':

It's all part of Maguire's agenda to turn the media-perpetuated myth of the body beautiful on its head and instead celebrate the masculinity of Joe Blow. 'What I wanted to do with this show was take a really skinny guy and make a beautiful photograph.'⁶⁹

As with previous exhibitions, Maguire explodes the nation of all-pervasive Anglo-Saxon beauty by using Asian, Aboriginal and Maori models.⁷⁰

⁶¹ That is the small mentions in the 'what is on' sections of magazines.
⁶⁴ Ibid.
⁶⁷ Ibid.
⁶⁸ Ibid. The photograph being referenced is on page 116 of the Appendix p 9.
⁷⁰ Ibid.
4. Lessons in challenging the ‘given-to-be-seen’: the work of Anne Zahalka

The photography in *toHave & toHold* is clearly inspired by Mapplethorpe and relied on the common experience of desiring partnership to build a bridge with audience members, activating their empathy at the same time as challenging their preconceived image-repertoire of gay masculinity. By contrast, in her series *Bondi: Playground of the Pacific*71 the Australian photographer Anne Zahalka tackles the exclusion of people of non-Anglo ethnicities from the ‘given-to-be-seen’ of Australian nationalism – in particular the role beach culture plays in it.

Zahalka created a set of photographs using the artifice of the studio – with a painted background of Bondi beach, and sand spread out on the studio floor. This photographic space was located just a short walk to the beach.72 The series reframes the Bondi myth with the reality as it was in the late 1980s. She photographed Anglo Celts, Japanese tourists and surfers, Chinese sitting by the ‘beach’, the family and friends from various European countries, older ladies playing cards and the various workers that looked after the beach. Zahalka named the photographs without any reference to ethnicity, only to the activity shown. In this she took images from ‘given-to-be-seen’ that society was familiar with – the beach, family groups, groups of friends from snapshot traditions – as well as borrowing from the fine art tradition, and into this familiarity she introduced unfamiliar faces.

Most critical attention has been given to the ‘Bondi Bathers’, ‘Sunbather #1’ and ‘Sunbather #2’.73 Two of these three photographs reference other artworks.74 The Bathers is often commented on as multicultural75 but in it are people of European descent, and in the Sunbathers both are Anglo-Celtic.76 It is interesting to query why the photographs with Asian men are less commented on77 when they surely illustrate multiculturalism. In the literature, ‘The Gang’, which shows a mix of African, Islander, Anglo Celtic and probably Asian, and ‘The Skateboarders’ which shows the city that Sydney has become, get only a passing mention by one author.78 Ellison refers to this body of work as ‘queering canonical instances of Australians at play’.79

Zahalka told me of her first institutional sales,

*When I first exhibited these works at Bondi, I made some of my first sales to an institution. The AGNSW [Art Gallery of New South Wales] purchased 5 works for the Hallmark Cards collection. They were to be included in the exhibition titled Twenty Australian Photographers which was shown at the NGV and the AGNSW soon after. They chose The Bathers, The Tourists, The Sunbather #1 and #2 and the Women*.80 I was so excited by such a substantial sale (unbelievably priced at the time) that I didn't think about the selection. I might have offered donating the Surfers as I felt it was one of the more important images in the series but I can't quite remember. I later donated it to the AGNSW collection to join the others. I often speak about this work when I give talks, being the most challenging for viewers – in that the Asian men occupy a space usually reserved for white Anglo males. Some 18 years later I replaced them with Muslim women at Cronulla.81

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71 See Appendix 10 for the photographs from this series.
72 ZAHALKA, A. (2010). Email. “I worked at the back of the Bondi Pavilion which is where the exhibition took place.”
79 Though by using a person with pale skin and red hair she is referencing the non ‘bronzed Aussie’ side of the Celtic heritage. Also see discussion of Red heads in CASIMIR, J. (2010). The Gruen Transfer. Sydney, ABC Books. p 58
80 In this article Petersen equates the Muslim women with the Surfers, the Muslim as masculine, but one cannot help wonder if the reverse is also inferred; at least she mentions the Surfers. PETERSEN, T. (2007). Working Backwards. *Broadsheet*. 36 p 129.
83 See Appendix 10. The Bathers (of European decent), The Sunbather #1 (Anglo-Celtic women), The Sunbather #2 (androgyne Celtic), The Tourists (Japanese couple – outsiders), The Women (European and Asian women).
Heide Museum of Modern Art’s major exhibition The Beach (1994) displayed 9 of the 16 works from Bondi: Playground of the Pacific. The Surfers was included but The Boys, Skateboarders and The Tourists – other works featuring non-Anglo subjects – were not. Zahalka’s offer to donate The Surfers shows the importance to her project of locating non-Anglo subjects amid the imagery of Australian beach culture and its traditional Anglo subjects; the curatorial decision to split the set apart, works to re-exclude non-White subjects from the ‘given-to-be-seen’. In titling the set Zahalka does not racially identify her subjects (except obliquely, in ‘The Tourists’). In everyday surfer/beach culture – boiling over in the race riot at Cronulla – race is highly significant, yet Zahalka declines to make the distinction, leaving it to the audience to process. As an article in the Sydney Morning Herald states:

[O]ne of her personal favourites, The Surfers, shows three young wetsuit-clad Japanese men with their surfboards. Zahalka chased them down Campbell Parade to ask them to pose for her. “What I love about it is they occupy this space that is usually set aside for white Anglo-Saxon males and there’s something quite unsettling about it.”

Just as I had to do with gay publications, Zahalka initially had to ‘sell’ the inclusion of The Surfers, and it is her other works, Two Sunbathers and the Bathers, that have become iconic images in Australia’s national image-repertoire, with The Surfers sitting on the margins. This shows the importance of what Eng calls the process of ‘cultural sanction’ in the ongoing formation and reinforcement of the ‘given-to-be-seen’. Modifying it is not a simple matter of putting new images out there: they need acceptance by gatekeepers and to garner a response by critics, media, and audience members. But what Zahalka’s work demonstrates is the value of building a visual bridge between the familiar and the new – using the postcard stereotype and simulacrum of the beach with ‘new Australians’ in juxtaposition. Just as the common experience of looking for a partner helped audiences see past the differences and empathise with my subjects in toHave & toHold.

Later, Zahalka would return to the beach in the Welcome to Sydney series commissioned by Sydney Airport to highlight Sydney’s multiculturalism. In one work she photographs a Jewish man in his full traditional dress on the beach. Having paved the way with the Bondi works, this time the critical response understood her visual strategy much better. After going through the myth and symbolism of the beach, Allon concludes that Zahalka ‘arrests the tendency to generalise and essentialise identity, while at the same time significantly decontextualising the sites and place in which contemporary, everyday experiences and practices of diverse groups are played out’. In this work the contrast and challenge to the ‘given-to-be-seen’ are stronger, but her earlier work offers a way of understanding what she’s trying to accomplish so it’s not completely unfamiliar. And when the Cronulla riots occurred, Zahalka’s name and work were remembered and became a resource for a broader conversation about nationalism that reconsidered the Aryan racial aesthetic of beach culture as immortalised by Max Dupain. Around this time, Zahalka also produced one of her most powerful and affecting photos, the Girls II, Cronulla Beach, as she placed moslem women in religiously approved swimwear on the beach at Cronulla.

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82 See Appendix 10 for a pictorial representation. Also included for comparison is CCP’s retrospective Hall of Mirrors selections.
Chapter 2: Theorising Masculinity

1. From experience to critical understanding

The preface outlined my early life experiences, and how they led me to perceive a lack of space in Australian masculinity and, in encounters with Chinese men, the possibilities afforded by the masculinity available to them in Chinese culture (and barred to them in Australian culture). This section looks at Australia’s national and visual histories to contextualise this exclusion in terms of how masculinity is valued in our culture. It is necessary and important to look at Australian culture, rather than just focusing on Asian masculinities, since this would put Australian masculinity in the position of a default and position Asian masculinity as a departure from it. Instead, in the photographic project I am completing for this Masters, I want to set up an encounter between them. Knowing where the encounter might lead involves knowing how we got ‘here’ and where ‘here’ is.

2. Masculinity in Australian history

White history in Australia began with the establishment of a penal colony. Transportation to Australia was proposed as a solution to overcrowding, starvation and disease in English prisons, in the wake of the Industrial Revolution in Europe and the colonisation of Ireland by England. The bulk of Australia’s first white inhabitants were the losers in a massive process of social change taking place in Britain. In my own family, the story contains both elements: my earliest forebear in this country was apparently transported for stealing a pewter mug and being suspected of taking part in the 1792 Irish rebellion.

It may be postulated that these men and women were imprisoned and governed by a minority, frequently comprised of the second and subsequent sons of aristocratic families in decline following the rise of a middle class. Their primary qualification was their ability to read and write – which was essential since government was conducted by letters sent from the other side of the earth. Free settlers later followed and quickly established cultural practices to mark their differences from convicts and their offspring. As Manning Clark argues in his history of Australia, these differences (English/Irish, convict/settler) would become the driving force in Australia’s political and cultural history.

Masculinity was one of the key battlegrounds in the formation both of an Australian native identity and nationalism separate from British and Englishness. In sketching their formation, this section does not attempt to offer a comprehensive analysis of Australian history – it aims only to show the close implication of masculinity and racism in Australia’s national identity. With the rise of the Bulletin, the bushman was offered as the ideal masculine form of a newly emerging Australian ‘native’ consciousness. Importantly, he was an Anglo-Celtic figure, at a time when divisions between Anglo and Celt were highly volatile. Irish rebellion was a major theme in both the Eureka Stockade and the Jerilderie Letter written by the Kelly Gang.

After the Gold Rush brought significant immigration of labourers from South China and Afghan traders with camels, the Bulletin led a particularly vicious moral panic against Chinese immigration in particular, involving stereotyping, race-based taxation and immigration controls, sexually-charged claims of ‘White slavery’, and fear of the ‘yellow peril’. Momentum gathered for unification of the colonies into a federation, particularly over the issue of immigration. At Federation in 1901, ‘Australia’s national identity was based on racial exclusiveness and legislation was enacted by the government of the day to keep it so.’

90 Eleanor Rush (born approx 1780 Co Down)
91 John Tiernan (born approx 1780)
At first, this identity remained strongly connected with the British Empire, and with England’s entry into the Great War, Australian men enlisted enthusiastically to go to battle for King and Empire. Although more Australians fought on the Western Front in Europe than at Gallipoli in Turkey, the latter became the focus of an intense mythology of ‘the birth of a nation’, and with it a new masculine ideal was born – the laconic, hard-fighting digger. A key part of the myth, as elaborated in the iconic movie Gallipoli, involves British military incompetence and even reckless, aristocratic disregard for working-class Australian men.

During the Great Depression masculinity came under intense pressure as jobs and savings evaporated and whole families had to rely on charity. During this time, both employment and the family were stripped away from men as sources of masculine identity and value. Sporting achievement came to assume a very intense significance, as the celebration of Phar Lap and Donald Bradman offered the ordinary man access to a kind of heroic masculinity. Within a decade, the next World War had begun, and throughout Asia many Australian troops were captured and held prisoners of war. Following their liberation, photos of emaciated diggers circulated through Australian newspapers and cinema newsreels, destabilising the myth of the ANZAC. With the fall of ‘fortress Singapore’ in 1942, Australia’s confidence in the military power of the British Empire was destroyed, and the United States soon replaced it as our primary cultural, economic and military relationship.

In all of these events, separation from England was either an explicit theme or a subtext. These events encouraged distrust of a particular type of man – the effete, urban, educated, aesthetically sensitive, bureaucratic or creative type; in the imagery of Weir’s Gallipoli, he is the man who gives the orders but does not ‘go over the top’ of the trenches to get shot and killed; he is neither bushman, nor digger, nor sporting hero. The distrust of this ‘type’ remains strong in our culture, as shown by the furious reaction in the everyday media to the emergence of the ‘sensitive new age guy’ in the Nineties and his Noughties counterpart, the metrosexual.

In this cultural history, we see masculinity broken down by the machinery of Empire and economics, with only fleeting moments to celebrate and eulogise it – mostly in the sporting achievements of young men before marriage and enlistment or employment. Indeed, escaping the breaking-down of masculinity by dying young is a central theme in Australian films. The traditional outlets of this broken-down masculinity were (at best) stoic and self-deprecating wit and (at worst) violence and alcoholism. It is not difficult to see how this led to homophobia and the disqualification of ‘soft’ masculinities – my own, as a sensitive and creative boy growing up in Grafton (see preface), and the masculinity of Asian men who migrate here.

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107 Ehrenreich observed that what had been understood as masculinity, with its implications of hardness and emotional distance, was at odds with the more ‘feminine’ traits appropriate to a consumption oriented society, traits such as self-indulgence, emotional lability and a ‘soft’ receptivity to whatever is new or exciting.
108 B. Ehrenreich, 1he Hearts o/Men, New York, 1983, pp. 170-1. Thus, the elasticity of terms such as ‘sensitivity’ and ‘sharing’ allows New Man rhetoric to appear to occupy the terrain opened up by women, demands for change, while at the same time inscribing a reformed masculinity, in which gender difference remains relatively intact. In a supposedly post-feminist: world, some kind of reformed model of masculinity has to exist, but the New Man is sufficiently flexible to be able to render plausible optimistic post-feminist rhetoric, without seriously compromising male privilege.
3. Physical masculinity

As the backlash against metrosexuals\(^{108}\) (and by implication, homosexuals) illustrates, going to the gym in leisure time to build muscular bulk or definition is not seen as fitting the Australian cultural and historical ideal of authentic masculinity. Indeed, the sought-after body in Australian gay culture has followed American trends made available through globalisation and travel.\(^ {109}\) Artistic photography of the wholly or partly naked ‘muscle man’ has existed since Eugene Sandow in the 1890s and continues a long tradition of painting and sculpture dating back centuries before that. In the years before gay liberation, associations with this artistic tradition\(^ {110}\) or physical instruction\(^ {111}\) provided the ‘gay gaze’ and same sex desire with an alibi.\(^ {112}\)

From the seventies onwards, more overtly and specifically gay body cultures began to develop, although these did not privilege masculinity until the AIDS crisis struck in the eighties. When that happened, many gay men (both negative and positive) used bodybuilding and gym work to distance themselves (physically and emotionally) from the imagery of wasted, emaciated bodies that surrounded AIDS, in gay and mainstream popular culture.\(^ {113}\) The gym became an important site for identity formation. During this time I was living in Sydney and new acquaintances would routinely ask me ‘Where do you work out?’ before asking for my name. In gay culture at that moment, masculinity meant muscularity, and using Chow’s term, this contributed to the ‘dismemberment’ of those Asian men whose masculinity was not traditionally grounded in physicality.\(^ {114}\) Some Asian men certainly went to the gym to build their masculinity\(^ {115}\), but their exclusion had multiple bases, such as stereotypes about penis size and sexual passivity.\(^ {116}\)

4. The dismemberment of Asian men in Australian and gay cultures

In the early 1990s a storm broke out in the Sydney gay press, when Campaign magazine ran a photograph of an Asian man as its cover image. The issue was the lowest selling of that period.\(^ {117}\) An outraged letter to the editor arrived and was printed,

> …you are really kidding yourself when you feature an Asian on the front cover and try to be multicultural. It is only the stupid Australian (gay/poofters) who want the so called “multicultural” pot. We hate each other. There are only a few men interested in the small Asian dick…\(^ {118}\)

To its credit, Campaign also printed the replies to that letter and an editorial justifying why it was printed. Campaign remained willing to run photographs of Asian men, and as their photographer I made sure to include non-white faces in feature photography and sets of party and scene photos. But photographs of Asian men in gay publications in the early to mid Nineties was few and far between. Blue magazine featured an image in issue 4 and a collection in issue 11.\(^ {119}\) The overall effect was to make Asian men invisible in a culture where the visible, muscular body was the touchstone of masculinity and desirability.

> What I didn’t realise was that, according to the predominant rules of Caucasian Western sexual attraction, being Chinese was actually a distinctive sexual category in a racial hierarchy. Asians were behind Black and Latino men in the scale of things. Of course, white men were on top.\(^ {120}\)

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\(^ {108}\) It should be noted that Simpson saw the metroseuxal as self obsessed, living close to the centre of a metropolis and having money to spend on himself. SIMPSON, M. (1994). Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity. New York; London, Routledge.


\(^ {117}\) Kerry Bashford, editor, Campaign magazine, personal communication.


\(^ {119}\) See Appendix 2 Part 2 for reproduction of these pages.

Likewise, Fung has written Asian men in cinema:

Asian men, however... have been consigned to one of two categories: the egghead/wimp, or – in what may be analogous to the lotus blossom–dragon lady dichotomy – the kung fu master/ninja/samurai. He is sometimes dangerous, sometimes friendly, but almost always characterized by a desexualized Zen asceticism. So whereas, as Fanon tells us, “the Negro is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis. He is a penis,” the Asian man is defined by a striking absence down there. And if Asian men have no sexuality, how can we have homosexuality?\(^\text{121}\)

Hibbins points out that to male Chinese immigrants, masculinity in Australian culture

appears to emphasise sporting prowess, the ability to consume alcohol, sexual conquest and heterosexuality. In general, the culture seems to Chinese males to be more physical, emphasise bodies and be sexually open. Women seem more independent, and children are expected to save money for those consumer items they desire rather than have them provided by parents. These male migrants witness a male culture that appear to be racist and homophobic, in a setting where the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras is given prominence in the media. This paradox is extended when they realise that a culture that prides itself on being multicultural is, institutionally and in terms of value orientations, predominantly monoculture, i.e. Anglo-Celtic.\(^\text{122}\)

As I suggest in my sketch history above, both anti-Asian racism and the different ideals of hegemonic masculinity (bushman/digger/sporting hero) worked to smooth over differences of culture (Anglo vs. Celtic) and history (colonial settler vs. convict and colonised). These invisible yet stubborn differences no doubt produced some of the paradoxes that Hibbins’ Chinese respondents perceived in Australian culture. In their encounters with Australian masculinity, Chinese men faced the impossibility of accessing the historical and cultural knowledge that day-to-day performances of masculinity subconsciously encode. Before commencing this project, I had certain intuitions about how Australian masculinities work, but not why – reading Australian history produced a series of ‘light bulb moments’. From this experience I could see the extreme danger in simply reproducing what I, as a gay White man, perceived to be essential and distinctive in my encounter with Chinese masculinity. This section describes the two theorists whose work I have relied on as a guide to understanding Chinese masculinities and their history and cultural background.

The first was Nisbett’s *The Geography of Thought*\(^\text{123}\), a classic text on cross-cultural psychology. According to Nisbett, it is wrong to assume (as most of Western psychology does) that all people think the same. The book charts his journey from being a universalist to understanding of the cognitive differences between ‘East’ and ‘West’. As one review summarised his argument:

> From the Greeks comes the idea of unique individuals and distinctive attributes and individual goals. From the Chinese comes the idea of harmony and the notion that individuals are primarily members of a group or collective where debate and other forms of confrontation are inappropriate.\(^\text{124}\)

Nisbett argues that this is because the Greek society formed in coastal lands where trade and exploration were the norm, where strong individualism was needed for bargaining and philosophy proceeded through contradictions and negations, in contrast to China, which he depicts as a land of fertile plains and agriculture without much need for argument, and Taoist, Buddhist, and Confucian philosophies emphasized dialectical thinking, harmony, holism, and interrelatedness. Although Greek preoccupation with the discovery of the truth paved the way for the discovery of the processes of invention and science, the Chinese focus on complex interactions led to the primacy of relationships, context, and dialecticism – the use of contradictions to understand multiple relations of truth among objects or events.\(^\text{125}\)


Nisbett’s point about logic is helpful for understanding how Western cultures view masculinity: we think of an opposition between male and female, with the constant suspicion that soft masculinity is ‘really’ either feminine or homosexual.\textsuperscript{128} But his version of Chinese history is highly simplistic depicting a peaceful, harmonious, inward-looking, agricultural country. It completely overlooks the intense rivalry between dynasties and the mammoth struggle China underwent in uniting six kingdoms into a single country in the thousand years leading up to contact with European culture.

By contrast, Kam Louie in \textit{Theorising Chinese Masculinity} undertakes a close and detailed analysis of Chinese cultural and national history. Louie sees his work as ‘developing broad facts facilitating the theorisation of Chinese masculinity’\textsuperscript{127} He looks at culture and history – the concepts, icons and symbols which have led to the ‘lived experience’ rather than the lived experience itself.\textsuperscript{129} And for understanding Chinese masculinity, he argues, the two most important gods are Confucius 孔子, the god of ‘Wen’, and Guan Yu 关羽, the god of ‘Wu’. Simplistically put, \textit{Wen} is civil and intellectual masculinity, whereas \textit{Wu} is physical and martial. Guan Yu is the god of war, a red-faced warrior with high morals and ethics. Confucius is the god of learning and wisdom, understands life, is cultured and an articulate scholar.

Most importantly for my analysis here, \textit{Wen} masculinity is considered in Chinese culture to be superior to \textit{Wu} masculinity. This is quite a stark departure from the ideal masculine type in gay, Australian and Western cultures, where ‘hard’ masculinity is hegemonic and ‘soft’ masculinity is constantly questioned.\textsuperscript{129} Although \textit{Wen/Wu} exist as a dyad, they both exist in opposition to barbarism, and \textit{Wu} requires a touch of \textit{Wen} in order to distinguish itself from barbarism. In contrast to Western culture, Louie argues male and female are not defined in relation to each other in Chinese culture, and for this reason, the dialectical framework of \textit{yin} and \textit{yang} (a favourite example of Nisbett) does not give the terms enough analytical clarity and separation. Interestingly, Chinese culture also seems to practice the reverse of the dismemberment Asian men encounter in Western society, describing coarse and hairy Western men having three testicles and a barbaric animal masculinity.\textsuperscript{130} ‘This does not imply that non-Chinese were not considered masculine but rather that their masculinity was sexualised in such a way to reveal their animal barbarism’.\textsuperscript{131}

The \textit{Wen/Wu} dyad is about the essence of maleness and as such is not applied to women, even great women who achieved in male roles like Hua Mulan (popularised in a Disney movie of the late 1990s) who achieved \textit{Wu} though battle dressed as a man, yet had this \textit{Wu} achievement taken from her when she reverts back to being perceived as a female and in the story an even more feminine woman. \textit{Wen/Wu} has for most of the history of the Chinese people created a system where women held court in the inner (the home) and men in the outer (the public sphere). Among men, during most of Chinese history and, it can be argued, today, \textit{Wen} has been the dominant part of the dyad.

There is some debate over whether \textit{Wu} ever was truly dominant. One must note that the writers of history are of \textit{Wen} masculinity and not that sympathetic to \textit{Wu} masculinity. Throughout Chinese history, ‘either \textit{Wen} or \textit{Wu} or both \textit{Wen} and \textit{Wu} were perceived to be essential for men of substance.’\textsuperscript{132} In this dyad there is authority vested in both the scholar and the soldier, but the social, economic and political power accompanying success in the civil service examinations meant that \textit{Wen} is associated with the masculinity of the powerful while \textit{Wu} is more a ‘working class’ (peasant-based) masculinity. It is the same cultural battle that developed in Australia, between the Anglo and the Celtic, except in China, as Louie argues, the civil and intellectual masculinity has the upper hand.

Both \textit{Wen} and \textit{Wu} have developed over time and will no doubt continue to be adapted to suit the changes that globalisation will cause. The base conceptual framework remains relatively consistent but the application is adaptable. \textit{Wen} has historically been associated with the emperor’s public service. Each year, during the imperial era, there was a call for the men of China to sit the public service entry exams in Nanjing in the grounds of the Confucian temple. To succeed here was the Chinese equivalent of being in a grand final winning football team in terms of perceived manliness and public adoration.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{128} Ibid. p 3
\end{itemize}
5. **Wu** 武 masculinity

*Wu* masculinity is easier for an Australian to understand. It is the masculinity of Hong Kong action cinema (and to an extent its Hollywood imitation) that Australians are familiar with. The masculinity has its roots and support among the lower socio-economic classes. It is one where the brotherhood is highly regarded and women are not. It puts an emphasis on the physical body, skills and self-control. With his great skills the *Wu* man also obtains some cultural understanding.\(^\text{133}\)

*Wu* is more closely aligned with the dominant representations of masculinity in the West. *Wu* is ‘manifested in behaviour such as bravery, mateship and physical strength’.\(^\text{134}\) One important difference is that the *Wu* ‘hero’ in Chinese culture doesn’t do it for ‘love’ (and by implication sex) but for higher ideals. The hero rarely gets the girl.\(^\text{135}\) The god of *Wu* is Guan Yu (160-221AD), the god of war. Louie comments that ‘it is difficult to find any parallel figure in Western narratives of power and rulership… However, one feature in his personality is constant – his immovable self control. In modern times he would be the epitome of ‘cool’’.\(^\text{136}\)

Louie acknowledges that *Wu* is often seen as asexual or non-sexual, driven ‘by lofty ideas or loyalty or alternatively by animal savagery’,\(^\text{137}\) but offers a different reading. ‘The failure to recognise the sexuality inherent in *Wu* lies partly in the dominance of a reading that regarded sexuality as being fundamentally hetero-erotic. This assumption implicitly regards displays of affection between men as non-erotic. However, our perception of the *Wu* hero changes dramatically if we read the texts from a perspective where bisexuality is taken as the norm and where homo-eroticism is privileged over the hetero.’\(^\text{138}\) As Louie notes, Guan Yu would rather decapitate a beautiful woman than be tempted by her; women are not to be conquered and the *Wu* man is wary of them, fearing they might make him lose self-control. To this day, in Chinese diaspora films, in the *Wu* masculinity, embodied by Jet Li, Jacky Chan and others, the heroes don’t get the girl, don’t find love, all the action happens to save face and exact revenge, and claim victory against all the odds.\(^\text{139}\)

The *Wu* hero is the hero of the under-classes and the underprivileged. The American kung-fu films starring Hong Kong actors have strong support from minorities the world over. One other thing to note about *Wu* masculinity – it cannot just be physical; it must have some cultural attainment as well. Pure physicality would be animal and therefore uncivilised. *Wu* implies physical power combined with restraint, strategy and superior judgment about how that power is used.

6. **Wen** 文 masculinity

Simply put *Wen* is a masculinity in which cultural attainment is pre- eminent; it is about the application of intellect. *Wen* has elitist overtones, though anyone may aspire to *Wen*. In practice *Wen* has such attributes as literary excellence, civilised behaviour, and general erudition.\(^\text{140}\) Confucius is the god of *Wen*. *Wen* masculinity was reproduced through the institution of the emperor’s court, a kind of public service where people were admitted through examinations that covered not just intelligence but cultural sensitivity and creative skill as well.

The concept of *Wen* is related back to the person and teachings of Confucius and linked into a number of traditional Chinese concepts. He taught four subjects; ‘cultural refinement (*Wen*), moral behaviour (*xing* 行), loyalty (*zhong* 忠) and faith (*xin* 信)’.\(^\text{141}\) The later three are ethical concepts and therefore the skills that Confucius was noted for teaching must have been contained within the *Wen* category. These included ‘literature, music, archery, charioteering, writing and mathematics’.\(^\text{142}\)

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\(^\text{133}\) This is one of the themes of YU, R. (Director), 2006. *Huo Yuan Jia* (Fearless), Hong Kong.


\(^\text{135}\) Any number of Chinese films examine this. *Fearless* is a very good example of the *wu* man; it features a man with all the skills of the *wu* hero but he has to go through cultural learning to understand fully *wu* masculinity. Further his masculinity is compared to British boxer, a Spanish swordsman, a Belgian soldier, and a Japanese martial artist, YU, R. (Director), 2006. *Huo Yuan Jia* (Fearless), Hong Kong.


\(^\text{137}\) Ibid. p 24

\(^\text{138}\) Ibid. p 24

\(^\text{139}\) Ibid. p 145

\(^\text{140}\) Ibid. p 161

\(^\text{141}\) Yang Bojun, Lunyu Yizhu (the Analects Translated and Annotated), beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958, p78 quoted by Kam Louie page 45

Confucius taught that with a balance of she (the essence of a man) and Wen (cultural attainment) a man will turn into a genteel junzi (exemplary person). The junzi 君子 contrasts to the xiaooren 小人 (inferior man - one who seeks only profit rather than moral standing). A Wen man was also a great talker and convincing. All this makes for a very attractive man for Chinese women. Even today the romances in Chinese films are usually between a man of fairly ordinary physique who is a cultural producer of some kind and always gets the girl – such as in Wong Kar Wai's 王家卫《2046》 where Tony Leung 梁朝伟 beds almost all the female characters, or The Road Home where the romantic hero is a teacher.

7. Literature Review

Kam Louie laments the lack of research into Chinese masculinity. What was available in up to the year 2000 was primarily sociological or post-colonial, and he intended Theorising Chinese Masculinity to create a space for an understanding both from within Chinese culture and to make sense of crossing cultures.

The purpose of this section is to review the writing and scholarship on Kam Louie's theory, in order to show his central position in the study of Chinese masculinity. By doing so I am justifying my own use of his theory as the basis for my work. As has already been pointed out in this paper, I am not Chinese. Therefore to attempt to make or modify an understanding would be problematic from a post-colonial perspective. If the reader would like a comprehensive and up-to-date literature review of the history of the study of gender, masculinity in the west and of the Chinese I would point the reader to Annie Yan's May 2010 PhD. Many other papers and books were read as part of this research but due to space limitations they will be referenced elsewhere in the text or in the bibliography.

This literature review examines how Kam Louie’s book ‘Theorising Chinese Masculinity Society and Gender in China’ has been received by academic writers. Upon release a number of reviews were published in various journals. Ralph Litzinger praised the book for its contribution and scholarship. Constantinos Phellas emphasises that Louie’s theory responds to the demands of the present, perhaps anticipating Yao Soochow’s criticism that:

both in China past and present and the societies of Chinese diasporas, Chinese male-hood has taken forms more strange and varied than the book would have it. If Theorising Masculinity is a major contribution to the subject, it also makes frustrating reading because of its poor empiricism, and the lack of what has become de rigeur for Chinese Studies, attention to historical/dynastic variations and regional differences.

Xiao Hong acknowledges at-times questionable translations and missing Chinese characters in Louie’s work as a concern, but still concludes that the work ‘overall is a thoughtful, intriguing, and important analysis of Chinese masculinity’.

Lo’s review summarises Louie, but challenges the appropriateness of generalised theories constructed under the Western gaze. The authors of the book, Asian Masculinities: the meaning and practice of Manhood in China and Japan overwhelmingly support Louie’s theory, but this is perhaps to be expected, since it collects papers from a conference held to explore the implications of Louie’s work. Wu Cun Cun, in a number of papers, uses his dyad to explain culture, involving men in the Qing dynasty. In her paper “The culture of war in China: empire and the military under the Qing Dynasty”, Waley-Cohen uses Louie’s theoretical perspective and frames him as ‘literary scholar’. Berry in

143 Ibid. p 44
144 YANG, Y.N.A. (2010). An Expedition into the Uncharted Territory of Modern Chinese Men and Masculinities. PhD, University of Missouri-Columbia.
looking at kung fu films frames his discussion around Wen/Wu but points out that Bruce Lee 李振藩 李元鉴 李小龍 transgresses the code by fighting and showing his chest.153 Holden’s biography of Lee Kuan Yew’s 李光耀 references Louie’s framework in his examination of Lee’s understanding of self.154 Ruane examines diplomatic negotiations between China and the USA in a Wen/Wu framework.155

In the literature several writers draw a distinction between indigenous or localised perspectives – which is how they see Louie’s work – and the hybridised perspectives of post-colonial scholarship.156 In their reading of Louie, they argue that he offers a static historical model that applied to men in China during the age before Western contact, whereas their own preferred approach looks at men in the Chinese diaspora.157 Y.F. Chow suggests Louie presents “Chinese masculinity in a manner highly susceptible to problems of essentialization, self-exoticization, and homogenization” 158, while others particularly in the diaspora wish to “locate Chinese men right in the space of hegemonic Western masculinity, both geographically and culturally”.159 I would argue it is bad faith to judge an author who undertakes one project on the terms of another project you think he should have undertaken instead. It also overlooks the potential for Chinese masculinities to influence Western culture, through film and interpersonal interactions like the encounters that had such an impact upon me, and my work.

Viewing Louie through this theoretical lens casts him in stone and fixes him in place. Alvin Koh still claims “Chinese masculinity does not wholly conform to Louie’s Wen/Wu paradigm but is transformed by global co-production [and] hybrid histories”,160 even though the entire final chapter of Louie’s work deals with globalisation of Wen/Wu. What this criticism seems to insist is that works dealing with Chinese masculinity must be wholly conceived with a post-colonialist framework that has by and large been developed in the Western academy, which Rey Chow points out, has its set of issues.161

Some look for ideological and theoretical purity. For me, the value of Louie’s work lies in how it helps the reader understand the historical formation of major themes in Chinese masculinity. Through this understanding, we can better understand the encounter that takes place between Chinese men and Australian understandings of masculinity, without stereotyping, essentialising and fetishising them as the inscrutable Other. This shows the value of Louie’s work for looking at the experiences of men in the Chinese diaspora. It simply treats the encounter as ongoing, unstable and contingent, rather than some past event that has finished and produced hybridisation. In contrast to the implicit claim of ‘post’-colonialism162, this approach recognises that colonisation still happens every day – such as when an Asian man learns to speak in an ‘Ocker’ voice163 and goes to the gym to build up his body to make it recognisable in the limited terms of nationalist assimilation and gay White masculinity.

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159 Ibid. p 334
162 Anne McClintock 1996 Progress and the Perils of Post-Colonialism
My project tackles that problem of recognisability. As the next chapter explains, the exhibition seeks to challenge audience members and via critics, the wider society to reconsider the limitations imposed by the ‘given-to-be-seen’ on what they will recognise as masculine. The power of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is symbolic, not numerical, and excludes all kinds of men, Asian and white, heterosexual and gay, as Richard Glover recently pointed out in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

“For too long, we’ve allowed a tiny minority to define Australian masculinity. When I grew up, I had a sharp sense of not fitting in as an Australian man; there seemed to be an enforced ideal of the good sportsman with a rapacious and somewhat ugly libido, a thirst for beer and an enormous self-regard. It took me about 30 years to work out that nearly everybody else shared my feeling of being the odd man out, of not fitting in.”

Although ‘hegemonic masculinity’ sounds like it refers to a ‘dominant’, singular masculinity, Connell’s work actually describes a plurality of competing masculinities. Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley propose that there are many different masculine attributes that men can choose from, and providing they enact enough of them, they can be considered masculine. Cultures generate these attributes, both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’, as well as themes enabling men to relate to other men and to themselves as masculine. In the sketch history presented above, youthful sporting achievement is an example of one such theme for heterosexual men, while for gay men in Sydney a key theme was building the ‘gym-fit’ body. As Louie shows, education and civilisation (defined as aesthetic sensitivity) were key themes for Chinese masculinities, both Wen and Wu. But Glover argues that homophobia in Australian culture has delegitimized ‘soft’ expressions of masculinity, with harmful consequences for all:

[‘Hard’] masculinity forms around a sort of “anti-drag” — a pantomime in which [young men] enact a reverse image of whatever they believe it is to be “gay”. A less homophobic society would not only liberate gay Australians, it would relieve straight teenagers from the burden of playing out this dangerous panto every night — a panto created from worn-out stereotypes of what it means to be both gay and straight; stereotypes that the rest of us have shamefully allowed to stand.

As the next chapter sets out, in the exhibition I tackle these stereotypes by making them visible, using stereotypes from film (as embodied by ‘extras’, who must be instantly recognisable as exemplars of a given ‘type’) and photographs of ‘real’ Australian and Chinese men.

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168 Ibid.
Chapter 3: A study in comparisons: Asian men photographing Asian men

Case study ‘Men Like Me’ - an exhibition staged in January 2008 at Off the Kerb Gallery

1. Background

Men Like Me was an exhibition staged as part of this Masters project at Off the Kerb gallery in January 2008, featuring photographs of Asian men by eight queer male Asian photographers. Holding the exhibition was an opportunity to draw together the three main conceptual threads of my project – highlighting and expanding the ‘given-to-be-seen’ of Asian masculinity in gay/Australian cultures, comparing how Asian photographers approach this project and their subject matter compared to my own practice, and evaluating whether Kam Louie’s Wen/Wu theorization offers practical, workable guidance to photographic and curatorial practices addressing and responding to Asian masculinities.

Because I wanted to start a conversation about the limitations of the ‘given-to-be-seen’, the intended audience for the exhibition was members of the Melbourne arts circle (informed patrons, teachers, practitioners and critics) reached through the Midsumma festival and publicity by Off the Kerb gallery. Some of the artists featured are personal friends, but an extensive search was also conducted to identify and invite photographers working outside Australia and my network. All the photos included deal somehow with Asian masculinity, seen from a very wide range of different work practices, cultural perspectives, political projects and personal motivations, since I wanted the exhibition to be about the possibilities of photography, the genres of photography, rather than limit the show to art photography.

2. Artists

William Yang (photographer turned artist) is an older, very considered, ‘Wen’ man, who can still see the beauty of youth, and has watched the history of Asian men finding a place within the (gay) Australian community. His own journey has been documented in his monologues with slides that he tours around the world. Several of the images in this exhibition have featured as part of the storytelling. He can see beauty in age as well as youth. He brings to the show an understanding of the history of Chinese/Australian relations and understanding. Though this his work, he adds to the imagery of Asian males, being both visible and understanding of what masculinity can be.

In terms of this show he is the most important as he brings the themes together in a considered way that only an older artist can, as George Bernard Shaw is said to have once observed why is youth ‘wasted on the young’?

Michael Shaowanasai ไมเคิล เชาวนาศัย (artist); born in the USA, lives and works in Thailand. His work looks at the Asian man within the context of globalisation. He responds to the feminisation of Asian men and their becoming a ‘commodity’ for the pleasure of Western men. There is also a strong vein within his work of how he, as a very masculine male (shaved head and physically large), fits into that narrative and the narrative of the art world where one’s biography is near as important as the work one creates. He has twice represented Thailand in the Venice Biennial.

Koky Saly (artist); Grew up in Australia and found that equality was not a given. His major series is about positioning the most marginalised of Asian men, those that are small in physical frame as sexual and desirable. He does this by positioning them in various provocative poses and states of undress on couches or beds in very domestic environments. Koky’s work has toured with the group show Asian Traffic to Asia.

See Appendix 18
These artist descriptions were written with the input of the artists.
Interestingly as famous as this quote is, its origin seems to be lost.
Taguchi Hiroki (photographer); works and lives in Japan. Is the only work in this exhibition that doesn’t reference the aesthetics and cultural norms of the Western media directly. His works are seen in Japan’s largest circulating gay magazine BADI. The work presented here is both from BADI as well as from the film stills of ‘First Love’ and personal work. The work depicts a softer masculinity that has boyishness. His work is of Asian men for consumption by Asian men within a rather insular Asian society. Perhaps one can read this work as being photos of men desired by the Japanese equivalent of the ‘Wen’ man as well as the younger readers.

Marcus Mok (stock and commercial photographer); Marcus was born and lives in Singapore, though he stayed for extended periods in Sydney. His work is a reinterpretation of the ‘Wu’ man for an Asian audience. These images are very influenced by the visual vocabulary of the western media. Mok’s work is about surface. It is about taut muscle under silky skin. Mok has a problem in that his models rarely like to show face or genitals, for they believe that doing so would identify them as gay. What we’re left with are decapitated images and, more recently, the use of masks. This brings up questions of identity and references a recent debate, about how gay men seem to do everything possible to have smooth tanned hairless bodies, something that comes quite naturally to most Singaporean Chinese men. His work then begs the question: Why the race-based sexual hierarchy? It also is uncomfortably about substitution: same fashionable male body, only the race has changed.

Norm Yip (wedding and commercial photographer); Born in Canada, lives and works in Hong Kong. Norm is looking for the ‘perfect’ face as well as ‘perfect’ body. Norm writes to the traditions of B+W photography of the 1988-2002, and the Blue magazine style. This leaves many of his images distant both in terms of the time made as well as the connection with the sitter. For this show I’ve chosen the one image that is full of joy and happiness from his 2 self-published books. His ‘gay’ work is the polar opposite of his wedding work. This was very much about capturing Henri Cartier-Bresson’s ‘decisive moment’. I’ve included two photos of these moments featuring men only. Although women are not present in the images, they are there by inference. In Australia we could view these photos as great moments of ‘mateship’. Although Norm spends much of his efforts on making images of the new ‘Wu’ man who can compete for attention with white men, he also has moments where he captures ‘Wen’ in all its glory, such as the image of Zhang Yi Mou.

Tuck Hong (commercial photographer) born and works in Singapore. Tuck is less concerned with the Western understanding and much more focused on Singaporean understandings of self. This is probably due in part from being the only photographer who is art-directed in the show. That is, the work shown here is collaborative. There are photographs from the short-lived ‘Manazine’, the first local gay magazine, while another is from Action for Aids, the local HIV awareness Non Government Organisation. Perhaps notable is that in all works representing commercialised gay work in Singapore, muscle is important for masculinity.173

Justin Thai (hobbyist photographer); born in Vietnam and moved to the USA at a young age, now living in St Paul. He recognises many of the issues brought up by Asian American scholars in his daily life. He believes race is not a determinator in desire, nor is muscle but instead it’s personality. The men he chooses to photograph are based on his liking of them as people, and then he goes about making interesting portraits and nudes. The work presented here is mainly of Asian men, though his work is not even the slightest bit racially focused. For the purposes of this show, I’ve limited it to fit the theme. He photographs in his spare time and during his many travels. The work included here is from an HIV campaign, commissions from friends, and of men whose personalities he liked. His work straddles expectations of ‘gay photography’ of both the sitter and the photographer, and his desire to capture the personality of the sitter.

173 As an aside I’m amazed at how many times the Chinese men I talked to about this project used ‘muscular’ as the signifier of masculinity.
3. Case study

The analysis in this section focuses on four of the eight photographers - Norm Yip, Marcus Mok, Tuck Hong and William Yang. Of the eight, these four are Chinese, and because Kam Louie’s theory is so closely informed by his reading of Chinese history, it would be dangerous to assume it applied to men from other cultural histories. Secondly, a case study of their work, and our negotiations in the process of selecting which works to show, will illustrate the interrelationship of the three key threads and the usefulness of Louie’s analytical framework.

The exhibition sets out to present photographs embodying Wen and Wu masculinities for the viewer to compare and consider, and this meant selecting examples of each from the bodies of work of the featured artists. The artists were invited to first nominate which images they wanted to exhibit, and then we had a discussion about these, and finally I selected additional images from their portfolio, usually the ones that interested me or helped draw out the Wen/Wu dynamic. It might seem that this introduced a kind of selection bias, so it’s important to note the exhibition is not empirical. It is not meant to accurately represent the proportions of Wen and Wu men in Chinese cultures. Instead the goal was to start up a questioning process for the audience members and the images were purposefully selected and in one case art-directed to enable that.

Negotiations with the artists over the selection of images for the exhibition really highlighted the importance of curation in the construction of the ‘given-to-be-seen’. This played out in three tensions around physicality, genitality and commerciality – all closely related to the themes of masculinity described in Chapter 2. In the first phase of the process (the artist’s choices), Marcus Mok and Norm Yip both offered a selection comprised entirely of faceless, naked photos of muscular Asian male torsos. Yip has made a project of photographing ‘the strong man of Asia’,\(^{174}\) and both Yip and Mok said they believed that muscularity was essential if their works were to sell in Australia, based on their perception of the ‘given-to-be-seen’ as revealed in gay photographic magazines like DNA and Blue. This shows the power of the photograph in reinforcing physicality as the Western cultural marker of hegemonic masculinity across cultural and even national boundaries.

Yip who grew up in Canada and takes the polar opposite approach to my own – rather than diversification, he pursues intensification and purification, seemingly taking the same photographs of different muscular bodies. It seems he is trying to disprove the stereotype of Asian men. Similarly, when asked why he first offered photographs of young, muscular Asian men, Mok stated:

\begin{quote}
First of all, there was a dearth of such images, especially Asian, hence the need to fill the gap… second, to prove to the world that Asians too can have beautiful, toned and muscled bodies and not just the stereotypical "sissy" or average looking physique.\(^{175}\)
\end{quote}

However, there is a danger of implicitly adopting the same value system that sustains the stereotype – the norm in which physical muscularity equals masculinity – and therefore does nothing to challenge (and probably reinforces) the exclusion of other kinds of masculinity from the ‘given-to-be-seen’. As Kwame Appiah points out, the danger in a statement like ‘Black is Beautiful’ is that it refers to an essentialist understanding of identity that can easily turn into a dominating assertion of “proper ways of being black”\(^{176}\), and something similar might be happening for non-muscular Asian men viewing photos like Yip’s in an exhibition titled ‘Men Like Me’.

\(^{174}\) As apposed to the “sick man of Asia” a term used to describe China at the time of colonialism and referenced in Bruce Lee’s Fist of Fury and Jet Li’s Fearless.

\(^{175}\) Mok, personal communication, 15 December 2010.

Working in Singapore and for some time in Sydney, Mok had to negotiate a different tension around genitality. His subjects were extremely reluctant to show both their faces and their genitals in any photographs he took. Both Mok and Hong have worked in Singapore where censorship regulations prohibit not just pornography but any visual representation that suggests homosexuality.\(^{177}\) In relation to Black men, Mercer quotes Fanon on the symbolic reduction of Black men to their supposedly monstrous phallus: ‘He is a penis.’\(^{178}\) But as Fung points out in his analysis of representations of Asian masculinity in gay porn, titled ‘Looking for My Penis’, Asian men have faced the opposite problem – a symbolic dismemberment. In Mok’s work, the combination of censorship and homophobia has made it almost impossible to represent Asian men with faces and penises. They recreate the framing that Mercer’s first article\(^{179}\) criticizes in Mapplethorpe’s work as fetishising and objectifying, without either the shock value or the phallus.

Finally, Hong’s work as a commercial photographer lends credence to the idea of a gay ‘male gaze’, independent of any particular individual. His work shows an extremely clear and strong understanding of what gay men are supposed to desire – despite coming from a heterosexual photographer. In conversation Hong said that his photographs are not a visual exploration of what he thinks others might desire in a man, but rather what he would like to be as a man. Hong has also done work for the local AIDS organization, Action for AIDS, and found the Singaporean censorship code an impediment to representing genitalia or male-male intimacy.\(^{180}\)

The third and final tension, around commerciality, is important to understanding how the ‘given-to-be-seen’ is reiterated and reinforced over time. Yip and Mok have contributed photographs to magazines like Blue, as well as identifying them as sources of inspiration. As Yip writes:

> [This] is an image that first got published in Dreamboys, a special edition of Blue magazine. It was very exciting at the time, because Blue was considered one of the pre-eminent magazines featuring the male physique in a highly artistic manner, giving rise to many photographers that focused on this genre. I remember the day I received a fax announcing that one of photographs was accepted for publication.\(^{181}\)

In our negotiations, both Yip and Mok were quite adamant that only their images of muscular, semi-naked men would sell in the Australian market. Representing the Wen male was my project, but to Yip and Mok, hegemonic Western masculinity with its emphasis on physicality (and the saleability it seemed to guarantee) carried the day. In this respect, the ‘given-to-be-seen’ could also be called the ‘given-to-be-sold’.\(^{182}\) The later purposive selection of photographs of Wen men added diversity and another dimension to the exhibition, and for Mok at least, the result was a welcome surprise:

> There was an element of surprise but at the same time a sense of calm and warmth to see the “Wen images”. It also brought back memories of my Asian culture when I see the wedding shots...an event that I grew up with as a child all the way til my late 30s. I started out as a wedding photographer and hence could relate well to those images. The use of “Wen” images gave a balance to the show and shows the balance that Asians can achieve between mind and body. We can be cultured and strong as a people.\(^{183}\)

\(^{177}\) Under MDA codes homosexuality is treated with paedophilia and incest... 5.2 Information, themes or subplots on lifestyles such as homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, transsexuality, transvestism, paedophilia and incest should be treated with utmost caution. Their treatment should not in any way promote, justify or glamourise such lifestyles. AUTHORITY, M.D. (2010), “Free-to-Air Television Programme Code.” Retrieved 30 September, 2010, from http://mda.gov.sg/Documents/PDF/industry/Industry_TV_ContentGuidelines_FTATVPogCode.pdf. 9 part d. Films should not promote or normalise a homosexual lifestyle. However, non-exploitative and non-explicit depictions of sexual activity between two persons of the same gender may be considered for R21. AUTHORITY, M.D. (2010), "Film Classifications Guidelines." Retrieved 30 September, 2010.


\(^{180}\) Manazine was Singapore’s first gay publication (not that they used those words), which had been refused classification, in other words feel foul of the Singapore government and its edict that there should be no promotion of ‘homosexual lifestyle’. The issue was banned because of images of men in ‘Speedos’ that had heads too close to groins or fingers of the wrong model in the elastic holding the back out a bit. The same issue carried far more suggestive photographs that didn’t seem to be noticed. Hong also did work for the local Singaporean photographer of the phallus.\(^{180}\)

\(^{181}\) A name given by Daniel Reeder during editing. That describes work made by artists and put on display by curators/galleries with audience tastes/expectations in mind.

\(^{182}\) MOK, M. (2010). Email. G. MAGUIRE.
4. William Yang

In this case study (and in so many other ways) William Yang is exceptional. He is an Australian photographer whose family has lived in Australia since migrating from China several generations ago. It therefore wouldn't make a great deal of sense to apply Louie's Wen/Wu paradigm to Yang's work. Although his work is obviously inflected by his experience of living as a gay Chinese man in Australia, it is not closely informed by Chinese national and cultural history, from which the themes of Wen and Wu are drawn. Yang's life and work, however, show the need for Australian culture to engage with the Wen theme in a cultural encounter that enlarges the ‘given-to-be-seen’, not just of masculinity but of ethnicity in Australian national identity as well.

In addition to his commissioned work, Yang has worked for decades as a diarist, chronicling in particular the Sydney gay party scene and the lives and deaths of his friends and acquaintances during the AIDS crisis. In one interview, Yang suggests the invisibility conveyed upon him in the gay scene by his Chinese appearance actually made it easier for him to take photos of people having sex and taking drugs. This is a sad and yet incredibly powerful statement, suggesting the power of the ‘given-to-be-seen’ goes far beyond the photograph, permeating ‘real life’ to dismember Yang not just from hegemonic masculinity but from his embodied presence in the social space of community and his agency as a photographer.

Of course, through his slide show monologues, Yang has achieved a remarkable kind of agency as the narrator of stories made almost untellable by trauma in the aftermath of the AIDS crisis. And in his show Sadness, later made into an award-winning documentary film, Yang weaves together those stories with the journey he underwent in discovering his Chinese Australian family history. Yang approached his Chinese identity carefully and quite late in his photographic career, perhaps in recognition of the danger of being pigeonholed as a minority issue artist: Greg Leong, for example, refers to “The twin issues for which William Yang has become famous — being gay and being Chinese” while Caluya notes most academic treatments of Yang’s work have been focused on his identity rather than his art.

The most recognizable of Yang’s recent self-portraits is Alter Ego, Bondi, 2002, from Miscellaneous Obsessions: Australia, and it could easily be read as a visualization of the Wen-Wu dyad, showing two views of a suited, older, contemplative Yang and a younger, naked, muscular Asian man named Daniel facing each other. Many of the key elements of Louie's Wen-Wu theory can be read off from the image – especially the notion of aesthetic refinement through contemplation over time, represented at fruition by Yang but also beginning to emerge in the reflective gaze of the younger man Daniel. The sight lines of the two subjects do not meet; both look out of frame, Yang looking upwards as if to the horizon, while Daniel's gaze is cast slightly downwards, perhaps respectfully. It is a confronting work, and of all the images in Men Like Me it is the most successful in highlighting the need to enlarge the ‘given-to-be-seen’ of gay and Australian visual cultures – to include the Wen masculinity, to think about ageing and generational handover, and of course Asian men. The next chapter describes the exhibition I created in an attempt to provoke just that expansion.

189 Appendix 18, William Yang
Chapter 4: The Project

I would like to see masculinity get beyond how manly you can act or how violent you can be. I would like to see it get closer to the Confucian/Buddhist position, where masculinity is about how in control you are and how considerate you can be.  

Garrie Maguire quoted by Anna Broinowski.

The project was conceived as part of an exploration of multiculturalism with a particular focus on the intersection of Australian and Asian cultures. It builds on bodies of work that examined multiculturalism in Australia and a proposed project in Singapore. This project explores the performance of masculinity in contemporary Australian culture, reframed by a queer post-feminist and trans-cultural perspective. From this perspective, the work provides a platform to reflect on the social performance of masculinity in Australia and presents to the audience an expanded repertoire of masculinities drawn from this multicultural context.

1. Positioning the project and the cultural lens

Within the discourse of art theory, Clement Greenberg proposed that art was a series of movements toward a perfect expression. Critical of Greenberg, post-modernist writers such as Heartney argue: “He does so by looking through the history of Western art. This presumes that there was only one important movement at a time and that the west was the centre for production of art.” Greenburg’s ideas were extended into critical photography. For example, Daval’s ‘Photography, History Of An Art’ (1982) doesn’t make reference to Asia except for the Vietnam War. What reference there is, is of Western photographers (despite one of the two seminal images being made by Huỳnh Công Út). Similarly, at the 150 year anniversary of photography, curatorial work for a major exhibition in 1989 (for the National Gallery of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Australian National Gallery) featured selections that were again Euro-American-centric. Chalifour continues the Euro-American bias as recently as 2005 in ‘Photography As Contemporary Art’.

A shift towards a more inclusive perspective is seen in Cotton’s ‘The Photograph As Contemporary Art’ (2004) and Marien’s ‘Photography a Cultural History’ (2006), in which other areas of the world and their rich histories in photography are represented.

Many area-specific publications have been produced since 1992 that deal more fully with individual countries’ histories. However, these publications are made for exhibitions that toured Western capitals, meaning that the curation was with Western tastes and interests in mind. This poses issues similar to those encountered in the case study. That is, the non-western artist and curators, who are responsible for packaging the show, might have a tendency to select work in that they feel fits with Western interests. Melissa Chiu describes this problem – the meditation of work through western curatorial ideas – and offers alternative ways of approaching cultural exchange.
With Biennales in Taiwan, China and other places around the world, local curators are examining international contemporary art in their local context and choosing work based on their concerns. Others argue that photography from other places need not have a discernable influence on Western practice in order to be recognised. This body of work fits into this movement. It is a deliberate attempt to put my practice and myself in the ‘in-between space’ that is occupied by artists who exist in two cultures. Furthermore, it is also an attempt to bridge that space. It is adding to the ‘given-to-be-seen’ of both Western and if the opportunity exists, in the ‘East’ as well.

A consequence of the post-modern rejection of the Greenberg position is the disruption to the certainty derived from a grand narrative.

Sometime in the early 1990s this sense of unification suddenly collapsed, leaving us in what some commentators call a state of pluralism and others a reign of chaos. This era of profusion, which persists to this day, is characterized by a welter of critical theories.

Heartney concludes,

“What does it tell us about art today if it can encompass such diversity? Would it be possible to create a contemporary genealogical diagram like Barr’s, one that would account for each of these examples as works of art?”

Greenburg’s ideas of modernism ‘are replaced by the belief that all experience is in some way mediated, that the natural order of things always capitulates to some kind of controlling ideology, and that our sense of self is constructed from the blandishments of mass media and advertising’. In essence the artist becomes the performer to an audience who interprets. By doing so micro-narratives are constructed rather than the grand narrative of Greenberg. One of those micro narratives is globalisation, not just of exporting American ideas to the rest of world but the expanding of the ‘given-to-be-seen’ of imagery, so that in countries such as Australia, there are representations of many more types of people, of attitudes and of ideologies. This work is part of a micro-narrative here in this place.

2. Choices and frames

The range of masculine types referenced for this project are derived from performances of masculinity appearing as sketches in contemporary Australian and Chinese cinema. Other frames considered were advertising, television dramas and still photography. Advertising imagery is often aspirational and the selection of masculine performance is in a narrow band gravitating towards the wealthy and middle classes. Similarly press advertising has been quite limited in its types. Still photography collections have not offered a great range, even looking at the professional bodies.

Within the cinematic genre, the minor characters and extras offered a broad range of sketched characters. The performances of these parts required a strong emphasis on a semiotics that audiences can instantly relate to, so that one can identify these figures according to their socio-economic status, occupation and even morals. In cinema studies these are referred to as stereotypes. Hidden in these characters are examples of culturally recognisable shorthand, as they had to communicate who they were and what they stand for instantly. Hidden in these characters are examples of culturally recognisable short hand, as they had to communicate who they are and what they stand for instantly. In these sketches we have the physical display, or to put it another way, the semiotics of masculinity.


Ibid. p 9

MAGUIRE, G. (2007). Do Asian Men Live in Aus or Oz? King Power. RMIT, unpublished conference paper. I did a study on the ACMP Photographer’s Collection key wording the photographs of men, the results did not reflect the society I lived in, of the men photographed in Australia only 3 were of Asian decent, most were of European background and interestingly Aboriginal men were strongly represented.

I'm dealing with the masculinity as it is expressed in Louie’s theory via the frame of cinema.\textsuperscript{210} The trope of ‘provider’ within contemporary masculinity is depicted in the Chinese set of photographs by the labourer, and by the suited men, who are workers who are providing for their families.\textsuperscript{211}

The period of cinema used to select stereotypes from was 1994 to 2006. This period was signified by ‘The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert’ (1994), and ‘Kenny’ (2006). These films offer two extreme representations of Australian masculinity. Perhaps Priscilla is the odd film in the history of Australian film. It presents three lead characters - two male drag queens and a transsexual. This is perhaps the representation of Australian masculinity most aberrant from the ‘bushman’, though it does fit with the larrikin tradition and the rarely addressed history of homosexuality in Australia.\textsuperscript{212} Kenny has been referred to as a ‘transformation of Australian comedy’s national type from a beer-swilling larrikin or sex-crazed ocker into a decent bloke whose ultimate role in the social imaginary is to affirm and preserve the supposed decency, goodness and superiority of the Australian way of life’.\textsuperscript{213} The Chinese cinema referenced was released within this same time frame. All films were set contemporaneously.

There were 47 Australian and 27 Chinese-language films referenced as source data.\textsuperscript{214} In Chinese cinema there are many small parts; in many Australian productions there are few. Screenshots were made of any minor male character or stereotype. The screenshots were reduced to 75 each, which were then key-worded in terms of age, clothing, occupation, props, socio-economic status, level of formality and time of year. The keywords were then sorted to see how many times each appeared and to find the 10 types of masculinities, even if they were not exactly the same as the film stereotypes. Some were combined and in some the ages were changed in order to reflect the whole better than the specifics. In each group I included one ‘stereotype’ that was like my friends, as I know them, the casual urban man.

Several observations were apparent. Clothing that represented a uniform was used by both Australian and Chinese cinema, but the way it is used is very different. In Chinese cinema the suit is sharp and the uniform denotes power. In Australian cinema the use of uniforms are invariably in sports; the suit, when worn sharply, depict characters who cannot be trusted in contrast to the ill-fitting suit denoting trustworthiness. The representation of the working class was more pronounced in Australian cinema: the stock characters of the ‘man in country pub’, the tradie, and the blokes going out. Whereas the business class is generally more emphasised in Chinese cinema even in China, it is particularly strong in Hong Kong cinema. This paper does not allow the space to write up each choice and relate it back to the keywords and individual film moment. This process took three months of film watching and photo sorting.

3. The process of making and materials

This research also encompassed understanding and exploring digital photography as a medium with its own ‘vocabulary’. It examines what digital brought to photography that was different from analogue, and how this could be used to bring a new style of portraiture.\textsuperscript{215} Working previously in black and white it was no longer tenable with digital, for at digital photography’s heart is ‘red, green, blue’ additive colour. I felt it would be dishonest to make monochrome photographs. However the colour itself can be manipulated with great scope, and can also be brought back to “natural” regardless of lighting conditions. Looking at how photographers were using colour for portraiture, a great range of moods was noticeable. At the Australian Institute of Professional Photographers Print Awards in 2010, most prints had major colour manipulation, and nothing looked like reality. Considering the approach for this project, stills had been taking their cue from cinema. Cinema has been altering the colour and tone to achieve a certain mood for the film. There is a fine line between doing work that dates badly and work that transcends its time. One can never be sure, so, in the case of this project it was important that the colour did not distract from the themes. Therefore making the colour as close to an accurate representation of the person as possible on the media selected was an important principle.

\textsuperscript{210} See later discussion in Chapter 4
\textsuperscript{211} See Appendix 19 and exhibition
\textsuperscript{212} ANEMOOGIANIS, C. (Director) The Hidden History of Homosexual Australia, 2005.
\textsuperscript{214} See Appendix 19
\textsuperscript{215} RITCHIN, F. (2009). After Photography. New York ; London, W W Norton. Much of the last 10 year of photographic theory has been considering the way that digital (particularly Photoshop) has changed our perception of what photography is and photography’s tenuous link to reality.
The photographs for this exhibition are full-length bodies and slightly over life sized. To achieve this requires images to be finely detailed. There is no camera at the moment\textsuperscript{216} that has the resolution to make a full sized portrait at 180dpi. To resolve this problem, the question of rebuilding the portrait from a number of parts was researched. In 2007 experiments were conducted to construct photographs of people from 5 sections. This was achieved by mounting the camera on a tripod, shooting the head and shoulders then down to the feet in steps. Each image overlapped by one third the previous photograph.

With a new feature of Photoshop CS3, the set of photographs was reassembled into a single image. Photoshop algorithms would take the five photographs and, based on similarities of pixel colour order reassemble the photographs as would happen with a landscape panorama, but vertical, rather than horizontally.

Initially, this seemed nothing more than an attempt to get more resolution out of the image, but there was something more interesting happening. The algorithms were creating a reinterpretation of the human form. The distortions rendered by Photoshop were at times a dramatic distortion, but mostly it was small, but perceivable. In this, I had found an interesting digital (i.e. mathematical - rather than analogue) interpretation of the human body. Reflecting on the retouching process that is now normal in portraiture and celebrity photography, this discovery was intriguing. It seems to be random (though totally mathematical), as one cannot predict the results.

As Fred Ritchin points out\textsuperscript{217}, in analogue photography the ‘magic’ was watching the print turn from a white piece of paper to a photograph. Now with digital I am not alone in trying to make the manipulation of the image in Photoshop the new magic, for no matter how good the image is when it is captured it can always be manipulated into something ‘perfect’\textsuperscript{218} or, in my case, ‘less perfect’. I’ve never been interested in hiding the ‘abnormalities’ of my models. I have, in all my personal and art works, avoided make-up and retouching of people. I have been fascinated with the differences between us all rather than the similarities.\textsuperscript{219} In making the photographs for this project I have been conscious of not making the distortions too unrealistic. I have adjusted some of the photographs to remove some of the distortions. As the exhibition borrows language from advertising, this distortion speaks to the manipulation that is happening every moment in (almost) every image that appears in advertising or magazines.

The material selected for printing is transparent with good detail, and durable. The prints will be hanging for three weeks in open air, above people, so they need to be strong. Three products were considered. Duratrans, a very beautiful process, which is used for large lightboxes in advertising. The unit cost was $A800+ which is well outside budget. Another possibility was ultra-clear PVC, a soft thick plastic used in cafés to exclude the weather in winter, but the print quality was not very satisfactory. Thirdly, and the process I used, was a flatbed print to Lexcan, the brand name for polycarbonate sheet which is then UV cured. Due to a last-minute change of policy by my supplier, I needed to change to UV-cured PETG - transparent glycol- modified polyethylene terephthalate, which is similar but softer, and not quite as transparent.

When light comes through from behind the printed side, the colours transilluminate, giving very bright punchy colours. A test print was made, and has been hung for the last year evaluating its life span. There has also been the promise of new Agfa technology that was going to allow almost any substrate to be printable, but which has not yet been delivered to market.

\textsuperscript{216} A couple of caveats, at the time I made a camera choice in Nov 2008, that was affordable, if money was no problem then one could be made. Canon has announced a 120mpx sensor, Sept 2010


\textsuperscript{219} In Gods+Warriors I included three ‘disabled’ men, to have & to hold two, see Appendix 10 and 13
In its hanging, the project makes several other readings of the masculinities possible, aside from the obvious ones. By hanging the prints (and by extension the masculinities) between the ground and the heavens it is possible to see them as ideals that can be written on. The configuration of this project references ten-pin bowling, and the idea that masculine types are regularly challenged and reconfigured. The positioning shows the figures coming together, merging and not clashing. This coming together of masculinities is not a battle to the death, as both types may well survive. During the making of small-scale visual models of the exhibition, it became apparent that there were possible religious connotations to the show. The figures looked like they were leaving earth and going to heaven. However, if the figure was posed with the arms straight down, the image took on a more sinister tone, as if there had been a lynching; therefore, more dynamic poses were adopted.
Conclusion

This exegesis contextualises a photographic installation produced and exhibited at Federation Square, Melbourne Victoria. This work represents a constellation of masculine stereotypes derived from Australian and Chinese cultures, designed to give visual representation to masculinities in the ‘given-to-be-seen’.

This exegesis answers the question of how to attempt to expand the ‘given-to-be-seen’ empathically by looking at the practices of Mapplethorpe and Zahalka. The strategies employed by them and the critical response to their practices, were examined, along with the author’s previous exhibition, toHave&toHold. An artist cannot expect alone to expand the ‘given-to-be-seen’ – it is something that happens almost out of the control of the artist, as in the case of Zahalka’s ‘The Bathers’ and ‘The Surfers’.

The portrayals in my art are conceptualised by drawing on an understanding of masculinities, the Chinese particularly, through the work of Louie. He describes the Wen/Wu dyad and its place in Chinese culture, which appears to reflect an equivalence to hard and soft masculinities observed in Australia. However the two concepts (Wen/Wu dyad and soft/hard dichotomy) are quite different, because they developed in different histories and cultures. This conceptualisation was tested via the case study. The case study examined how contemporary Chinese photographers present their masculinity and the issues that are created by the interface of presenting in an Australian context. The work they produced answers the question of how Louie’s Wen/Wu applies to their photography. Mok, Yip and Hong, prefer to put forward young and muscled Asian men (and fit within the Wu masculinity), although they did photograph men that fit within Wen masculinity. William Yang produced and offered a wide selection of both Wen and Wu masculinities. Interestingly each of the photographers were more Wen than Wu in their personal character.

The area of masculine studies is still developing and in relation to Chinese masculine studies much is to be done. This exegesis applies Kam Louie’s framework to representations in photography. Within just this area, there is a need to continue researching and exploring the theme by many artists and scholars so that the discourse is expanded and can become nuanced. The author would like to see how Chinese artists would deal with the same themes. As Wen/Wu, according to Louie, is under constant revision and in an age where Chinese culture is already being exported via cinema, sport, design and production, there is a need to be constantly reviewing and exploring the themes that this exegesis opens. This project has been made and presented in light of these different understandings.

The ‘given-to-be-seen’ examples of Asian photography in the history of world photography has been lacking up to the 1990s. Since then, there has been a movement to see photography as an international phenomenon rather than a European and United States of American one. I have placed this exhibition within the context of Heartney’s understanding of contemporary practice. As the consensus of what is considered art has collapsed in the ages of post-modernism, there is now room for micronarratives. This is a micro-narrative about how those of us who are male can be ‘men’.

The exhibition ran from January 25 to February 17 2011, in the atrium of Federation Square, Melbourne.
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**Australian Film**


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*Heaven’s Burning.* 1997. Directed by LAHIFF, C. Australia.

*Floating Life.* 1996. Directed by LAW, C. Australia.


The Interview. 1997. Directed by MONAHAN, C. Australian.

Dead Heart. 1996. Directed by PARSONS, N. Australia.


Last Train to Freo. 2006. Directed by SIMS, J. Australia.


Sample People. 2000. Directed by SMITH, A. Australia.


Chinese film

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Durian Durian. 2000c. Directed by CHAN, F. Hong Kong.


Beijing rocks. 2001. Directed by CHEUNG, M. Hong Kong.


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Huo Yuan Jia (Fearless). 2006. Directed by YU, R. Hong Kong.


The Road Home (Wo de fu qin mu qin). 1999b. Directed by ZHANG, Y. China.


Appendices

Are available in the hard cover form of this exegesis by special permission from RMIT library (Melbourne), Three Shadows library (Beijing), Gay and Lesbian Archive (Melbourne), Kinsey Institute (USA). Most of the Photographs cited can be found on a web search and for my work it’s currently (2011) at http://www.garriemaguire.com under art practice.