

On Belonging(s)



Belonging

1. *Possession*
2. *A close or intimate relationship – a sense of belonging*

The double meaning of the word *belonging*, as both a possession and as a relationship to others, is of interest when we consider the role belongings play in our sense of belonging.

Belongings

Our possessions are in many ways extensions of the self, and are an important part of the self-identity we build and convey to others. Theorists suggest that there are three distinct phases of life in which our relationship to our belongings forms an integral part of building and communicating our sense of self. The suggestion or contention is that during youth, possessions play a role in the creation of identity; that they are important in maintaining this identity throughout adulthood; and that they assist in preserving this identity as we reach our elderly years¹. This concept of the changing role over time was summarised by Joseph Neal as ‘our years of learning, our years of earning, and our years of yearning (for immortality)’².

Our sense of having the ability to possess objects begins when we are very young, when a particular object may be adopted for comfort, sometimes referred to as a ‘transitional object’³, and jealousy over what other children have is common. During adolescence, objects begin to become more closely linked with our identity, and materialism is often considered highest during this period when, conversely, self-esteem is often at its lowest. During this time, possessions begin to play a role in who we are, but can also become a projection of what we want to be. For example, buying a first car is often viewed as a symbol of an independent identity as adolescents transition into adulthood, and the choice of car may say a great deal about who we are or aspire to be. As we negotiate adulthood our possessions, including (and perhaps especially) our houses, remain a cornerstone of our identity but also begin to

become imbued with our memories. In our later years, it is suggested the elderly often begin the process of passing down their valued possessions to younger generations of the family, as a means of preserving their identity and ensuring a memory of their life after their death.

In discussing our possessions as extensions of the self, it is also interesting to consider the emotions we experience as a result of the loss of our belongings. Russell Belk suggests that the unintentional loss of belongings can strongly impact and lessen our sense of self⁴. The loss of possessions through natural disaster or theft typically produces strong emotions, with the experience of having possessions stolen often being equated to a feeling of violation. However, the loss of possessions through an involvement with institutional settings also demonstrates the link between our belongings and our identity. Belk discusses the systematic deprivation of possessions of individuals as they enter prisons, boarding schools, the military and more, as a means of encouraging the development of a controlled and standardised identity⁵.

On Belonging

Throughout our lives, we use possessions to both align ourselves with and differentiate ourselves from others. Whether through interests that our possessions denote, or through engagement with particular styles or brands, our possessions can signify membership of a particular social group, our social status, or adherence to a particular set of values or beliefs. What we own and what we buy can have a direct correlation with how we belong.

Architecture and place may also be considered as extensions of the self, with influence over how we belong, in similar ways to our possessions. Distinguishing between *space* and *place*, Datel and Dingemans discuss a sense of place as ‘the complex bundle of meanings, symbols, and qualities that a person or group consciously and unconsciously associates with a particular locality or region’⁶. The concept of place attachment further explores the way in which we connect to place, with theorists noting that place attachment is ‘an emotional connection between people and their surroundings...’⁷ which links our experiences, beliefs,

emotions and routines of a particular place. Like the objects we own, the places we frequent, the routines and rituals we engage with, and the emotional responses these elicit, each play a role in building our self-identity and connection with others. This connection through shared experiences of place may cross generations and create a sense of a communal identity.

The links between objects, places and identity each converge in the home. The home plays a role in both revealing and concealing aspects of our identity, both as individuals and communities. Carl Jung asserted that our house can be a symbol of our self⁸, and the privacy afforded by the home may allow for a divergence between the self we present publicly and the one we explore in private. Significantly, the home is also a space that, through our routines and possessions, we transform into a place that reflects ourselves. Like the individual possessions we acquire, the accumulation and presentation of these possessions in the home, and our shared experiences of these places, becomes an outward communication of our social identity – a fundamental part of being human. Ultimately the places and possessions we feel an affinity toward, and the identity they communicate, provide us crucial opportunities for connecting with others and feeling a sense of security and acceptance, all contributing to our sense of self, and our sense of belonging.

On Belonging(s)

The artists in this exhibition *On Belonging(s)* explore different aspects of both notions of *belonging* and *belongings*. Jessie Pangas' work is a quiet reflection on the nostalgic significance of the possessions that commonly surround us in the home, acting as repositories and holders of our memories and stories. Liam James positions the European vase as a receptacle signifying the possession and control of the invaded Australian landscape, while exploring this family collectable's role in reconciling a sense of place in this landscape. Amber Koroluk-Stephenson explores the experience and tensions of migration, and the role of objects as signifiers of place and identity, whether maintaining connections to the past or aiding assimilation into new places and cultures. Finally, Alex Davern focuses on items that are acquired and consumed through our everyday

lives, and the role the routines surrounding these objects play in developing our sense of identity and connection to place and to others.

Together, these artists explore how we attach value to objects, and the role these possessions play in the stories we tell about ourselves, both individually and communally.

On Belonging(s) is a reflection on how we construct our identity, connect ourselves to place, and engage with our possessions, both nostalgically and idealistically, as extensions of the self.

- Erin Wilson
Curator

¹ Gentry, G., Menzel Baker, S., & Kraft, F.B., (1995), "The Role of Possessions in Creating, Maintaining, and Preserving One's Identity: Variation Over the Life Course", in NA - *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 22. ED. F. R. Kardes & M. Suajan, Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 413-418.

² Neal, J. in Gentry, G., Menzel Baker, S., & Kraft, F.B., (1995).

³ Green, K.E. in Jarrett, C., (2013), "The Psychology of Stuff and Things", *The Psychologist*, Vol.26 (Aug. 2013), pp. 560-565.

⁴ Belk, R.W., (1988), "Possessions and the Extended Self", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Sep. 1988), pp. 139-168.

⁵ Belk, R.W., (1988).

⁶ Datel, R. E., & Dingemans, D. J., in Najafi, M., Shariff, M.K.B.N., (2011), "The Concept of Place and Sense of Place In Architectural Studies", *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, No. 8 (2011), p. 1101.

⁷ Najafi, M., Shariff, M.K.B.N., (2011), "The Concept of Place and Sense of Place In Architectural Studies", *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, No. 8 (2011), pp. 1054-1060.

⁸ Jung, C. G., (1967), *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, The Fontana Library: Theology and Philosophy, Collins.

Incongruous scenes blend images of landscape with modern and historical objects to explore tensions in the Australian landscape and ideas about place. The idyllic scenes merge European and Tasmanian objects and environments that do not really belong together in time or place to symbolise historical and contemporary passages between places both near and far.

Black and white swans allude to the swan's Antipodean identity, but also to its status as a species that inhabits both northern and southern hemispheres in black and white forms. This crossing of hemispheres is aimed to capture possibilities of assimilation, adaption, identity and mythology, and to consider the Australian landscape as a shifting, shared environment.

These works invite reflection on how different meanings and histories can co-exist in the one place, but also on the illusory nature of painting itself and how it conceals certain meanings whilst revealing others.

- Amber Koroluk-Stephenson



Amber Koroluk-Stephenson, *Southern Reach*, 2019, oil on canvas



Amber Koroluk-Stephenson, *As above, so below* (detail), 2019, oil on linen (double sided bi-fold diptych)



Amber Koroluk-Stephenson, *Black and White*, 2019, oil on linen (diptych)

A place to hold flowers

My Mother has owned a single John Campbell vase since her 30's, it was always her prized object; stowed safely in the laundry cupboard, away from her prying children. My Father, in the listlessness of retirement, spends Wednesdays hunting for them in auction houses. Now a collection of small low-value Cambells are scattered on a large coffee table in their lounge room.

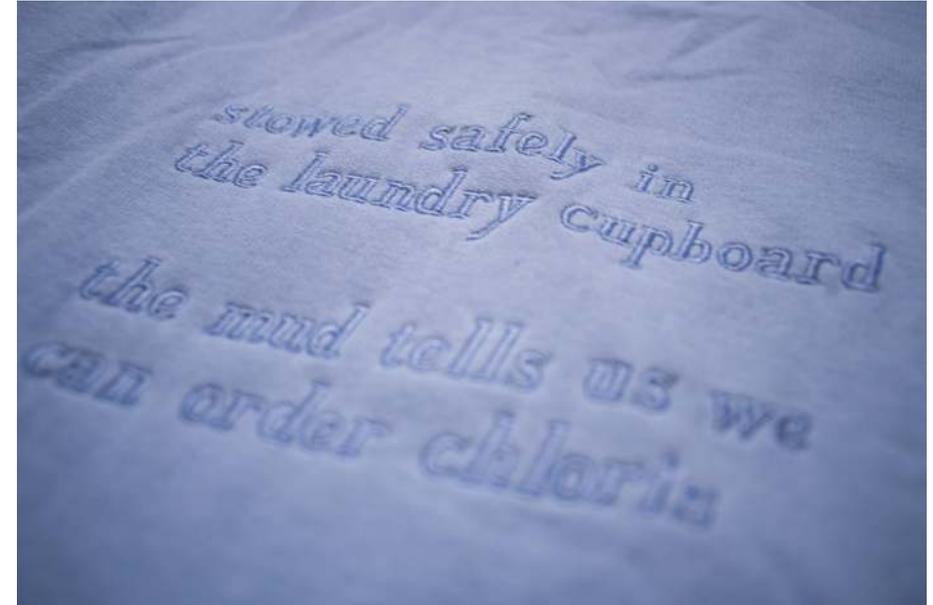
Vases are a great signifier of the European attitude towards the landscape. A vessel accentuating the belief that the landscape can be owned, controlled and organised. A commodity to be consumed.

Australian ceramics often takes this a step further, not only does the vessel hold the landscape, but also it aims to represent it. Eucalyptus leaves are adorned, the yellow of wattle flourishes in rich glazes, and blues of sea/sky gird throughout.

A place to hold flowers is a criticism of our colonial relationship to the landscape; the historic and continued use of nationalism in artmaking and its successful ability to whitewash history.

It is also a personal questioning of my city, my family's and my personal want for a relationship to this invaded land. An adoration of its beauty tied to a melancholic rancour of its domination and desecration.

- Liam James



Liam James, *A place to hold flowers (Blue Jumper First Lines)*, 2019, embroidered cotton-poly sweatshirt



Liam James, *A place to hold flowers (Pair)* (detail), 2019, photographic cotton weave rug



Liam James, *A place to hold flowers (Tall)* (detail), 2019, photographic cotton weave rug

HELD

To belong is to be held, by a place, by people, but also by the spaces and possessions we create and collect around ourselves. These objects and the relationship between them provide the holding environment for our lived experience, our sentiment, our memories and the stories we tell ourselves.

It is so easy to overlook, to lose connection with this felt sense in the daily to do lists and search for significance. In making this context the content, I invite you to reconnect with the intimacy of your own surroundings. The comfy chair that you sit in at the end of the day, the rug on the floor on which your children played as toddlers and later, as teenagers, lounged in beanbags playing video games, the lamp in the hallway that holds the light and provides a sense of belonging in the darkness and the images in photo frames and albums that hold memories and illuminate our stories.

This subtle, causal felt sense of our everyday environments holds us. And in the relationship of the objects to each other, a space created for you to fill with meaning and the deepening of the intimacy with your own belonging.

- Jessie Pangas



Jessie Pangas, *Held*, 2019, installation of domestic lounge room effects including pastel blue shag pile rug, vintage coffee table, slide projector, and video projection of slide show (duration 5 mins)
Lauren McKinnon Photography, 2019



Jessie Pangas, *'To feel abandoned is to deny the intimacy of your surroundings'*, 2019, vintage photograph album containing a portrait collection of furniture and shadows.
Quotation from David Whyte, *'Everything is waiting for You'* *River Flow: New and Selected Poems*, Minnesota, 2012.
Lauren McKinnon Photography, 2019



Jessie Pangas, *'It must have been in the slant of the light'* (detail), 2019, collection of vintage photo frames with family portraits of furniture and shadows illuminated by a lamp on a bedside table.
Quotation from David Whyte, *'Leaving the Island'* *The Sea in You*, Many Rivers Press, Minnesota, 2016.
Lauren McKinnon Photography, 2019

Tartrazine is a synthetic lemon yellow azo dye primarily used as a food colouring. It is also known as E number E102, Colour Index 19140 or Yellow No. 5. Tartrazine is a commonly used colour all over the world, mainly for yellow, and can be used with Brilliant Blue FCF (E113) or Green S (E142) to produce various green shades. Like many azo dyes tartrazine is manufactured using petrochemicals as starting stock, and was formerly manufactured using chemicals derived from coal tar as the starting material.

- Wikipedia.org accessed 11 January 2018

- Alex Davern



Alex Davern, *Yellow No. 5*, 2018, Tasmanian oak, plywood, LED lights, electrical components, steel, plastic, soft drink and acrylic
Photography by Peter Whyte.
Image courtesy of the artist and Bett Gallery, Hobart.



Alex Davern, *DEEP FRY*, 2019, HD video projection (looped, colour, stereo sound), wood, acrylic and used frying oil
Image courtesy of the artist and Bett Gallery, Hobart.



Alex Davern, *Night shift*, 2019, pigment print on aluminium
Image courtesy of the artist and Bett Gallery, Hobart.

Alex Davern

Alex Davern is a Hobart based visual artist. Primarily a painter, Davern's practice has now expanded to installation and video and is used to confront various aspects of Australian culture, including major economic sectors such as the oil, art, housing, and food industries and their ability to shape our society.

Since graduating with a BFA in 2012, Alex Davern has exhibited solo and group shows nationally and is represented by Bett Gallery, Hobart. He has been selected for a number of Australian prizes including The Hadley's Art Prize, Tidal National Art Award and The Glover Prize. He has received several grants and awards for his practice, including an Australia Council ArtStart Grant, winner of the Tasmanian Portraiture Prize and Tidal People's Choice Award. Davern has also received numerous studio residencies including Contemporary Art Tasmania, Cradle Mountain Wilderness Gallery, Launceston Church Grammar School and Villa Lena, Italy. His artworks are held in collections such as Artbank, National Gallery of Australia and Villa Lena Foundation.

Liam James

Tasmanian born artist Liam James completed his Bachelor of Contemporary Art at the University of Tasmania in 2010 with Honours from the Australian National University in Canberra in 2012. Now based in Launceston, he has shown in various galleries across Tasmania and has exhibited nationally and internationally.

He has an accompanying curatorial practice that has seen him involved with several artist-run initiatives and project-based exhibitions; these inform and compliment his practice.

James works primarily with photography, creating evocative scenes and portraits rich with references to Australian art history, his personal identity and the wider canon of art. Each

image cleverly critiques its place within this dialogue; and provokes questions from the viewer about the discomfort of belonging and our understanding of art and local history, as it is presented to us and by whom.

Amber Koroluk-Stephenson

Amber Koroluk-Stephenson's practice examines intersections between natural and manmade environments to explore structures of facade, and paradoxes of taming or staging the landscape. Drawing on contrasts between the natural and artificial, wild and domesticated, interior and exterior, the familiar and the unknown to explore layered complexities of identity, place and belonging within contemporary Australia.

Jessie Pangas

Jessie Pangas is a North West Coast based visual artist whose uses installation and archival based processes to explore place and presence in the neglected fringes of the regional urban landscapes. Vernacular architecture and household items provide the visual language through which this exploration is articulated.

Since returning to Tasmania five years ago, Pangas has participated in a number of group and solo exhibitions including *Right Here Now*, Regional Arts Australia's National Showcase in the Museum of Australian Democracy, Old Parliament House as well as in collaborative community projects including the co-creation of *Here She Is*, a *Ten Days on the Island 2019* festival project.

In 2018 Pangas graduated from the University of Tasmania Bachelor of Contemporary Art program with first class Honours and is currently continuing her studies through the University of Tasmania's Masters of Fine Arts program.

Alex Davern, *DEEP FRY*, 2019, HD video projection (looped, colour, stereo sound), wood, acrylic and used frying oil

Alex Davern, *Night shift*, 2019, pigment print on aluminium

Alex Davern, *Yellow No. 5*, 2018, Tasmanian oak, plywood, LED lights, electrical components, steel, plastic, soft drink and acrylic

Liam James, *A place to hold flowers (Tall)*, 2019, photographic cotton weave rug

Liam James, *A place to hold flowers (Long)*, 2019, photographic cotton weave rug

Liam James, *A place to hold flowers (Squat)*, 2019, photographic cotton weave rug

Liam James, *A place to hold flowers (Pair)*, 2019, photographic cotton weave rug

Liam James, *A place to hold flowers (Blue Jumper First Lines)*, 2019, embroidered cotton-poly sweatshirt

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O n B e l o n g i n g (s)

Devonport Regional Gallery, Main Gallery

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Quotation from David Whyte, *'Leaving the Island' The Sea in You*, Many Rivers Press, Minnesota, 2016.

Lauren McKinnon Photography, 2019

Devonport Regional Gallery

paranable arts centre

Market Square

145 Rooke Street Devonport Tasmania

03 6420 2900 | artgallery@devonport.tas.gov.au | devonportgallery.com

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