

**B**

**U**

**Lucy Foster**  
*Matter of course*

**S**

**PROJECTS**

# B

Bus Projects is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria. Bus Projects' 2017-19 Program is supported by the City of Yarra.

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**CREATIVE  
VICTORIA**



# S

Lucy Foster  
*Matter of course*  
30.10.19—23.11.19

Lucy Foster is a Melbourne based artist who works across a range of media including photography, assemblage and installation. The act of appropriating and repurposing found encounters are a common motif in her practice. In *matter of course*, Lucy explores the nature of materiality through erosion and palimpsestic memory.

Memory is defined here in terms of the palimpsest because it is non-linear and non-exclusive. It is not bound to a particular event or person, but instead forms diverse networks across space and time, bodies and materials.

This collaborative text by Lucy and Trevor Louw accompanies the exhibition. The conversation between the two was sparked by an uncanny feeling of déjà vu when experiencing art, as though inanimate things have a mind and memory of their own. At times the work is directly referenced, particularly the photographic series of the tiles at Flinders Street Station taken here in Melbourne, of which many of you will have passed at some point in your life.

*...What a strange thing. I have been wondering lately if these happenings come from a previous life. Re-incarnation and all that. Deja vu passes so quickly you can't catch it. Past and present collide and sever in a flash.*

Past lives? Every day is the memory of it having passed. Today is my whole life. When I sleep I die. Tomorrow someone else is born. I will leave them gifts to pleasure them. Traps, so they are bound in them. Me in another life tomorrow. Months from now. Years. Not me at all.

But you mean other past lives, the lives of strangers? Like when you painted in a loft in New York with Schnabel. Set fire to the church with the villagers barricaded inside. Or fell from your horse as it tripped in a sudden stream. Wove the first yarn of cloth with the land dwellers.

Or you mean the lives of those near, like your parents? You echo them. Or how you echo those who passed through you. Who you brushed against. Who slept by your side. How they endlessly return. Someone's name repeats; a face seems familiar. You've been here before. Echo, repetition. Nothing for you here but repetition.

*Echo, repeat.*

*You tell those stories as if you have a clear recollection of an event that's already occurred.*

*I like to think that lives can be mapped over time through materials which are exposed to consciousness, and that certain materials behave differently to bodies in public space. I'm thinking about the networks that exist in a city. The physical steps, each repetition, brushing past or moving through deposit marks of time within the network. The public space performs as a platform, a carrier of mental journeys; thought currents, both positive and negative co-exist with the material to create a unique map.*

*Together, they divert, modify, sublimate and redirect. As they build up residue, they also fall down with decay.*

I remember a short science fiction I once read where the memories of someone's life in a house cascades sequentially and are re-lived: his life there with his wife, his children, games they played, a party. But at the edge of all these memories is something cold and indeterminate. The narrator of these memories, near the end, becomes lucid outside the memorial sequence and sees that where the house once stood is now only barren and dead earth, cold with the end of the sun, and some metallic arc of an alien machine is harvesting the latent energy left in the material remains of the planet. As though memories left in a place is an energy you can use to fuel ships, like oil. It is this harvesting of the memories that reignites the brief consciousness of the narrator. What is being

stolen allows him to remember that he once was, and will no longer be.

This idea of the latent trace deposited by consciousness on objects, on things; a trace beyond the marks left on them, like a cut, a crack in a glass that was dropped, a dent in a wall where something was thrown, beyond the physical marks, a trace of consciousness, it is like a haunting? The way spiritualists would ask for an object of a deceased loved one to be brought to the seance.

But I like how I imagine for you it doesn't have to be a death, a trauma. It's enough that it was touched, brushed past. Even the mundane: hands that pulled open curtains to let in the light. Where someone slipped on a street corner. A plate washed after lunch, left clean, to dry on the rack. No physical traces, but marked still. Or do you only feel the violent histories? The histories of heartbreak and loss?

*The question of framing invisible things comes into play. It is not violence, but it is certainly death – because death is the only thing I can be sure to happen in this life. I don't like that it's feared. This is why I turn to materials to remind me that all matter, including our bodies, is destined for impermanence and decay. But what I am unsure of is where our consciousness might go. This is the question that haunts me. What interests me about the tiles is that time gave form to innate human*

*characteristics. Each tile cracked uniquely, as though they had a consciousness of their own.*

*The cracks on the train platform walls are heavy with memory and relation. These walls exist on the edge of visibility, forever standing but never mediated. An entire circuit of connections between bodies, between matter and minds, repeatedly seeps experience into its compound.*

*Consciousness heaves between these walls.*

*Daily, shadows empty themselves onto the walls. Billions of footsteps reverberate a humming frequency; one step inseparable from another. Multiple bodies emit unique fragrances; the air becomes laden with billions of breaths. Deep fried food is stuffed into mouths. Necks protrude from shoulders in search of light held in a stiff hand. Desperately trying to connect, the bright awareness becomes dully unaware.*

*Mind and eyes come together and we see.  
Mind and ears come together and we hear.  
Mind and nose comes together and we smell.*

*I'm glad you found them, the traces.*

*I've been thinking about palimpsestic memory. Palimpsest: "parchment from which earlier writing has been removed to clear it for new writing". I first thought it meant the way the act of remembering rewrites a*

memory. That each recall changes what is remembered. But palimpsest writing is as much about what had to be erased to create an empty page for new writing. Isn't it just as much about what we forget, what we have to forget, in order to be able to remember?

It makes me rethink my Grandpa's last years. Towards the end he'd lost all interest in the present. He had a bookcase filled with ring binders of photos he'd taken on trips when he was young. He would sit there for hours and page through them. We thought of it as a hopeless reminiscing, a way of getting lost in the past. But what if he sat there because remembering was what made him alive. That if he stopped looking, if he began to forget, what held him here, what held his consciousness here, would let go. If dying is just a form of forgetting, then he wasn't remembering as much as trying not to forget.

And yet, his heart broke and then it stopped. After that he couldn't speak anymore, his eyes closed, the business was finished. Maybe it had nothing to do with photos or traces or forgetting, just a biological separation, a sudden irreversible decay.

*A photograph gives the illusion of the eternal through a simulation of past experiences. We superimpose layers of feelings onto the experience of remembering, which in your Grandpa's ending, could no longer will him to live.*



*The ambivalent space of the palimpsest reminds us that the personal and the collective, the visible and the invisible, absence and presence, are locked in a tense relationship at all times. One thing cannot exist or be seen without the other.*

*This is nothing new in terms of certain cultural beliefs or spiritual practices, but perhaps dying is not so much a separation, but a process of transcending the restraints of the material world. What remains to live beyond our bodies, in eternal life, is our consciousness... which has the potential to be so pure and real that it knows no time.*

*Imagine knowing no time.*



**Lucy Foster** graduated from a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne (2018). She has participated in a number of solo and group exhibitions both locally and internationally, and is the recent recipient of the Bus Projects Exhibition Award and First Commissions Award (VCA). Selected exhibitions include an end seems very finite, Cathedral Cabinet (2019); healthy loss, Castlemaine Art Space (2019); group show, Low Standard Gallery, Oslo, NO (2019); you make me sick, Second Space Projects (2018); crossed hair, Testing Grounds (2018); debut xiii, Blindside ARI (2017); doublevision, George Paton Gallery (2016); Majlis Scholarship, Margaret Lawrence Gallery (2016); and more or less, The Běhal Fejér Institute, Prague, CZ (2015).

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