

Camille Cargill
*The Great Australian
Dream*

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In *The Great Australian Dream* Camille critiques colloquial Australia for its paternally guided ideologies. Moving through centuries, the work begins with classical representations of the 'ideal' Western woman and arrives at the ruins of paternal systems.

Camille plays with binaries, exaggerating and abstracting them to show paternity and other male-orientated systems as polar to the feminine. Showcasing the inevitable outcome of male dominance, as it takes form in abandonment, foreclosure, and void. A specialisation in the construction of dead space. The continuation of silence.

Infrastructure, homes, roads, public spaces - these are the structures traditionally designed and built by male hands. Space-taking, dictating. Erected.

The images in *The Great Australian Dream* document this system. These are commercial spaces, designed by men as a means to sell things to their ideal consumer - woman. It's a familiar dynamic, where society has presumed to know what women desire, and resultantly constructed something without use for any community. The space, reflecting this lack of consideration, is empty.

Contrasting the cold and concrete imagery is a pink, transparent detail taken from the crotch of Venus de Milo. Camille's practice returns to traditional representations of this goddess and rehouses them in 21st century landscapes. The archetype of female form, Venus traditionally represents ideals of beauty and femininity. In laying a detail of Venus' drapery over the barren landscape, Camille forms a distinction between the feminine and the masculine, between the rigidity of cages and the ongoing fluidity of the matriarchal.

Despite her cultural significance, Venus' image is still shaped by male interests. Consider her appearance in *The Simpsons* as a gummy lolly, where she is desired, taken and then literally consumed by Homer. German *Focus* published a doctored image of the statue raising her middle finger to Europe. Salvador Dali famously added drawers and affixed pom poms to his plaster version of the goddess. Likewise theories of her missing arms are continually appropriated. The latest 3D Mapped theory - spinning thread - an activity which associates her with sex work and the endless task of alluring men. As the Western world's goddess of sex and fertility, the image of Venus maintains its power as the emblematic woman. In *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, the author refers to women under the term Venusians. Assuming that all women can be gathered in her namesake, that all wives are exactly the same in their wants, needs and desires.

The treatment of her image, history and body is representational of the ways in which Western society has dictated, written and critiqued women as a whole. A popular brand of razor bears her name, suggesting that use of their product will ensure a goddess-like result. This is the most enduring (damaging) quality of Venus; her desirability. It accounts for sex appeal as a means to sell female beauty products and clothing. And for the media's use of eurocentric women as representation of beauty norms, an equally damaging notion which further marginalises those women outside of this unrealistic mould.

In an act of defiance the works in The Great Australian Dream take the form of protest posters. Conventionally a transient form, these posters span milenia. Moving from 100BC to present day, they are bolted to the wall in an act of authority, announcing their criticism of the dead space. Blaming the paternal system for its creation of such decay. The closed doorways and roller shutters usually signify the end of a day's spending, their ongoing permanence turns this space into a modern day ruin. The image of redundancy, lost resources and dead space.

As a pinnacle construction of Western society, the shopping centre becomes the monument of the 21st century. Designed and constructed by male minds, these concrete masses have come to obstruct the suburban landscape. In opposition to the shopping centre, Venus de Milo is masterfully carved, enduring, her Grecian marble form is an icon of classical culture. She, in her variant forms, seems everlasting.

So long as this key representation of ideal female form is dictated by the masculine, the ability for a definition of woman to expand beyond the current mode, remains stunted. In recognising the failure of this physical space, it is possible to also recognise the female form as being misconstrued by the hands of paternity. Camille's protest posters call for a disruption of this power-down dynamic, a system which has long silenced those in the minority.

Loni Jeffs, 2018

Camille Cargill is a multi-disciplinary artist with a gentle lean towards printmaking. She is a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Visual Arts at Monash University; during which she was awarded the KINGS Artist-Run Initiative Award and 5 Press Art Award for her graduate work. Her work interrogates the consumption, creation and presence of the female unit as she's translated into and across visual and verbal language throughout time. Camille has exhibited work in the PCA Print Commission, Sydney Contemporary, HobART Book Fair and KINGS Artist-Run.

Loni Jeffs is a writer and editor based in Melbourne. She has worked with a number of organisations including George Paton Gallery, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA) and RMIT's non/fictionLab, among others. Loni was included in the KINGS Emerging Writers' Program for 2018.

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