

Hung Out to Dry

Space, memory and domestic laundry practices

UQ Art Museum
The University of Queensland
Opening 18 April – 10 May 2015



UQ
ART MUSEUM



Hung out to dry: Space, memory and domestic laundry practices

Hung out to dry is a playful, nostalgic and introspective exploration of the daily routine of laundry. Part oral history project, part artistic response, this exhibition reveals the significance of clothesline aesthetics, gendered labour and environmental sustainability, as embodied in the air-drying of washing.

“In what circumstances can a chore become a game, a pleasure, even a source of powerful symbolic meaning? And how do our dwellings allow or prohibit this most basic of household tasks? Private stories of maternal love and childhood peek between the bed sheets moving in the breeze...”

— *Hung out to dry* Creative Consortium

About the project

Hung out to dry is presented by UQ Art Museum in collaboration with The University of Queensland’s Research Centre for Architecture Theory, Criticism, History (ATCH), in the School of Architecture. The concept arose from the creative consortium’s shared interest in the backyard as a site for significant personal events: celebratory family photographs that demanded open space and natural light; siblings, cousins and kids from the neighbourhood at play oblivious to the canopy of wires and fabric overhead. Then, released from its duties, the clothes hoist became the mainstay for sheet cubbies, a climbing fortress or swinging carousel.

“The expansive grassed backyard complete with clothesline is disappearing as the suburban idyll; the quarter-acre block is no longer the norm. Swimming pools and BBQ gazebos have consumed back lawns, with the rotary hoist superseded by retractable lines and clothes dryers. Occasionally, on the tiled balconies of inner-city apartments, a folding clothes rack may be spotted.”

— *Hung out to dry* Creative Consortium

Hung out to dry: Exhibition

Curated by Dr Allison Holland, the exhibition will feature 16 artworks including contemporary and historical works from the UQ Art Collection, as well as works loaned by a number of the artists. Featured artists include Chris Bennie, Bill Henson, Mari Hirata, Adrienne Kneebone, Tracey Moffatt, Georgie Roxby Smith and Arryn Snowball.

Hung out to dry: Oral history

Laundry practices have often been framed in terms of drudgery – of slavery to the washing machine or clothesline, marked by endless, deadening repetition. Individuals develop their own systems of drying, each with highly specific methods and techniques. Such systems can be playful – a game, with a set of changing rules. Systems can be handed down and explicitly taught, most often by mothers to daughters, but also in institutional settings, as civilising rituals and modes of domestic training.

The oral history interviews conducted by Dr Naomi Stead and Dr Kelly Greenop reveal that for some, this everyday chore holds personal significance and is the focus of specific ritual. *Hung out to dry* will feature an interactive installation that brings selected commentary from these interviews to life, alongside imagery documenting laundry practices in Australia and around the world.

Selected quotes from the project's Creative Consortium:

Dr Naomi Stead, Associate Professor, School of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Information Technology, UQ

“‘Dirty laundry’ stands as a well-known metaphor for things best kept private, whereas clean laundry offers the potential for public display. Clean washing on the line expresses domestic order: propriety, cleanliness, decency, and civilisation *per se*.”

“While laundry practices are often framed in terms of drudgery – of slavery to the washing machine or clothesline, marked by endless, deadening repetition – there can also be aesthetic pleasure in hanging out the wash, experienced on a visual and sensual level.”

“As the hanging textiles billow and flutter against the backdrop of garden and house, the colour of the sky, the movement of clouds, the ambient light and breeze all combine in an exchange between human and natural worlds.”

Dr Allison Holland, Lecturer in Art History, School of Communication and Arts, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, UQ and Coordinator of Academic Relations, UQ Art Museum

“From clean sheets hanging in the breeze to the washer woman’s bare arms, laundry has long presented artists with a fascinating subject. However, while artists have engaged with domestic practices in their work, it’s often the architecture, landscape and light that continues to capture the imagination of art historians.”

“The embodiment of the landscape is what fascinates me most – the people who inhabit these places and their impact on, and connection to, the landscape. That’s what makes the artworks detailing these practices particularly appealing.”

“*Hung out to dry* will feature the work of contemporary artists including Adrienne Kneebone and Mari Hirata, who are inspired by diverse cultural experiences. Chris Bennie and Arryn Snowball respond to a shared aesthetic moment, while Georgie Roxby Smith considers gendered labour in the virtual world of gaming.”

Dr Kelly Greenop, Lecturer, School of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Information Technology, UQ

“From an anthropological perspective, I find the aspects that drive attachment to place, and why people love their home interesting – for many people, the simple routine of everyday tasks like laundry are a really enjoyable and important part of home and life.”

“*Hung out to dry* is a fun and playful concept that’s both enchanting and meaningful, as it provides a sense of the joy, satisfaction and order in daily life. Clothes, sheets and towels are such intimate objects in our lives, and caring for these objects provides a direct connection with family members, children and partners.”

“Modern architecture often prioritises lounge and living spaces over the spaces where so much time is spent undertaking domestic chores. But perhaps the fact that laundry spaces are often hidden away, in darker corners under the house, is part of their appeal – they’re places of quiet and calm where systematic domestic processes restore a feeling of control.”

KEY INFORMATION FOR LISTINGS & DIARIES

- Exhibition title:** *Hung out to dry: Space, memory and domestic laundry practices*
- Running dates:** 18 April – 10 May 2015
- Opening event:** Friday 17 April, 12.30 pm
- Curator:** Dr Allison Holland, Lecturer in Art History, UQ and Coordinator of Academic Relations, UQ Art Museum
- Webpage:** <http://www.artmuseum.uq.edu.au/content/hung-out-dry>
- Art Museum address:** The University of Queensland Art Museum
James and Mary Emelia Mayne Centre (Building 11)
University Drive
The University of Queensland
St Lucia Qld 4067
(07) 3365 3046
<http://www.artmuseum.uq.edu.au>
- Opening times:** Open daily, 10.00 am – 4.00 pm (Closed public holidays)
Free entry
- Public program:** Panel Discussion: *Hung out to dry*
29 April 12:00–1:00pm
Dr Allison Holland, Dr Naomi Stead, Dr Kelly Greenop, artists
Mari Hirata & Chris Bennie.
- Media images:** [Download images for news and review here](#)
- Image caption (Cover):** **Adrienne Kneebone**
As rough as grass undies, 2006/2015
Mixed media installation: Clothes hoist, cotton underwear,
Cockatoo Grass seeds (*Dicanthium sereciun*) and Spear Grass
seeds (*Sorgum intrans*)
Reproduced courtesy of the artist
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