
ANNIE HOGAN

Statement

Politically motivated, works examine the relationship of power to space, race and the body as I straddle the roles of artist, tourist, historian and humanist in their creation. Photographic works are representative of the often absent, yet implied presence of the body whether in a domestic space, a jail cell or a Southern plantation. Early works made in Australia include working class domestic spaces both in rural and city settings. These former dwellings, I see as a repository for the imagination as a container of time of once lived experience. Natural light pours in from dressed and undressed windows highlighting specific textures and surfaces. This can evoke a palpable sense of absence/presence. Mural size prints are of unfurnished, untenanted spaces in limbo, awaiting habitation; illuminated domestic spaces in which something is felt by the viewer, rather than merely seen.

The binary oppositions of space/place, absence/presence, light/dark, freedom/confinement have been an evolving interest since my early career. Initially, drawn to domestic spaces in Australia, my research centers on the philosophical aspects of phenomenology, space and representation. I am influenced by the writings of the French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard and draw on his ideas of the house as a portal to metaphors of new imaginings of space. In addition, I believe that lived experience is left as palpable energy on a space once the physical body is no longer present. This path of research was followed by works made in decommissioned prisons in Australia and the US where I question the power of the human mind to possibly transcend a physical environment of constraint as a focal point.

Utilizing the prison structure as site and subject, my images explore the tensions between the objective world and the human experiences of suffering, deprivation and the passing of cumulative time. The works offer a translation of the visceral shock of confinement; the cell as a space of the constrained body and site of possible psychic transcendence. The harsh reality of imprisonment and deprivation in solitary confinement as supposed rehabilitation, are two counter narratives the prison works examines.

Recent research centers on how architecture that is primarily used to protect, might also imprison. This duality of protect/imprison becomes most evident through the historical nature of Southern slavery of how might the walls of a grand house or slave cabin be used to reinforce and maintain an imbalance of power between those owned and the owner (another's) flesh. The trajectory of these works have grown from my experiences of living and working in North Carolina and extended to the states of South Carolina, Georgia and Virginia.

For all works, the route and transmission of the gaze and where this is located for the institution (domestic, carceral, plantation) the body (child, inmate, slave) and the viewer of the photographic work (audience) prompts questions regarding external control (by the institution), internal control and self exploration (by the body) and the negotiation of this felt tension by the viewer when confronted by the work. The role of the viewer becomes the locus for this dialectic at the site of exhibition and the straddling of this in-between troubled space.