

# UNHOUSED



*Encounters  
with the hidden  
in the Allport*

ALLPORT LIBRARY  
AND MUSEUM OF  
FINE ARTS



UNHOUSED:  
ENCOUNTERS WITH THE HIDDEN IN THE ALLPORT

*Curated by Emily Bullock*

Art by Julie Gough, Linda Fredheim, Brigita Ozolins,  
Sally Rees, and Elissa Ritson

9 June — 30 September 2016

Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts  
Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office  
91 Murray Street Hobart



## FOREWORD

I rushed out, and looked up and all round ... but there was nothing — For six weeks I believed I had heard poor Gordon's voice; but with such a mournful sound, not like a little happy spirit going home; I began to ponder on the possible truth of the old stories of Fairyland, and that my lost darling had been stolen only for a time.

~ Mary Morton Allport, on the second anniversary of the drowning of her 5-year old son Gordon.

The body as a house, the eyes as the windows of the mind. It's an idea as old as consciousness. For Mary Morton Allport's generation, the standard home medical guide was Thomas Girtin's *The House I Live In* (1837). By 1850, the year little Gordon died, it was in its sixth edition. The Allports probably owned a copy.

Unhoused takes its inspiration from the relationship between the Allport family and their houses over several generations. From their crude bush hut at Broadmarsh (endured for barely a year in 1832), to the sturdy Georgian sandstone of Fairy Knowe (West Hobart), the Victorian splendour of Aldridge Lodge, Lebrena, and Fernleigh (all in South Hobart), and the Edwardian opulence of Cedar Court (Sandy Bay), their houses were inseparable from their identities as artists, socialites, professionals and collectors.

When Henry Allport died childless in 1965, he left Cedar Court and its contents to the people of Tasmania. For a short time the State Library tried to operate Cedar Court as a house museum, but was ill-equipped to provide an attractive museum visitor experience, let alone manage the security of priceless collections out of hours, in an empty suburban house. In 1972, Cedar Court was sold and the Allport family collections moved to the State Library's new tower block at 91 Murray Street.

Unhoused is an opportunity to reflect on the alchemical transformation that occurs when private domestic spaces become public. The incongruity of housing an Edwardian gentleman's residence inside a windowless, concrete tower has been commented on by many. But Cedar Court was only one of several houses occupied by the Allports and, just as its many internal spaces mimicked or memorialised many others, the re-housed collections pay homage to all of them.

**Ian Morrison, Senior Librarian Heritage Collections, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, May 2016**

BRIGITA OZOLINS

Detail from *The Black Tulip*.

2016



November 14<sup>th</sup>...I have just found an old memorandum dated Nov. 14<sup>th</sup> 1850 which says, 'Yesterday they carried my little darling to his grave -- at night I had left Minnie in her room, and went out of my own window into the moonlight -- I heard a faint 'Mama' in Minnie's voice, and thought she had heard my footstep and called me from her window --Grouse too pricked up his ears, and looked towards that end of the house--I ran in to beg she would not stand in the night air, but her window was shut, and she was saying her prayers --Then I thought it was Curzon wanted me, but he was in the dining-room, and the shutters closed--then, too late, I rushed out, and looked up and all round; their voices were so much alike; but there was nothing' --For six weeks I believed I had heard poor Gordon's voice; but with such a mournful sound, not like a little happy spirit going home; I began to ponder on the possible truth of the old stories of Fairyland, and that my lost darling had been stolen only for a time. At last I heard a sound in the day-time so like, that I was convinced it was the cry of a distant Peacock, I had heard; and thanked God sincerely for removing such a load of doubt from my mind.'

**From Mary Morton Allport's journal, Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts collection, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office.**

SALLY REES

Detail from *For Six Weeks I Believed I Had Heard Poor Gordon's Voice (after Mary Morton Allport)*.

2016





GORDON ALLPORT

*Dear little Gordon's flowers*, from Mary Morton Allport's Book of Treasures.  
Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts collection, Tasmanian Archive  
and Heritage Office.

1850



## HIDE

Hide is a series of three works installed between two locations in the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts. Crayon rubbings on paper, embroidered cotton muslin and a sound recording explore the time-space discontinuum and dislocation of the human remains, the grave markers, and the belongings of five long deceased members of the Allport family.

My attempt to visit these earliest generations of Van Diemonian Allports at their Queensborough cemetery vault was thwarted. Their inscribed cenotaph was missing from this graveyard, now reduced to an ad hoc gathering of surviving slabs on a verge beyond the perimeter of Hutchins School. The absent headstones were found, carelessly installed, at Cornelian Bay. Here, inscribed on two stones, were the details of five members of the Allport family deceased between 1877 and 1902, yet now minus their mortal remains. Hide responds to this literal unhousing of Allport progenitors Joseph and Mary, and three of their children Morton, Curzon and Francis (Evelt).

In an effort to highlight and symbolically redress this dispersion of individuals from their identifiers, three actions were undertaken. The first action in response to the exhibition invitation was to make crayon rubbings of the tombstones, which are exhibited in the Allport gallery. The second was to embroider five cotton shrouds with stitched text copied directly from the gravestone rubbings. These shrouds were then placed over a personal effect of each of these family members, communicating to the withheld objects information about the lifespan and passing of their former owner. The third element was a sound recording, taken at the defunct Queensborough cemetery as dawn approached. Enveloping the objects and tombstone rubbings-reworked-into-embroidered-memento-mori, these sounds of place bring together the missing dead with the markers of their memory, and transport a real place into a suspended, staged world to disrupt, even momentarily, the impossible, awful perfection of museums.

While reuniting or at least identifying objects with their owners, the work simultaneously hides them from the public. This shrouding is as much a sanctifying act as one of refusal and defiance, questioning the place of private lives in public realms and the museumification of the dead. Placed in the panelled room of the Museum simulacra of an Allport home, these personal effects are as unhoused as their original owners, interred many miles distant from their relocated grave stones.

JULIE GOUGH, May 2016.

Detail from *Hide*, 2016.



LINDA FREDHEIM

Detail from *Repositories for Unhoused Objects*.

2016



ELISSA RITSON

Detail from *Wild White Flower — A Ritual Evocation of Mary's Ghost*.

2016





## HIDDEN ENERGIES. UNSTILL LIVES

Lumbered with memories elusive to a contemporary visitor, the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts bewitches with its dark, orphaned furniture remembering the tactile traces of past pressings of bodies against brocades. The result of over four generations of collecting of the locally respected Allport family and beyond, the Allport is loaded with the freight of a multitude of memories.

At least since the movement of rare books, maps, manuscripts, photographs, works of art and decorative arts from their home at Cedar Court in Sandy Bay in the 1970s, the Allport collection has endured a sense of unease. In their new home in the vault of the LINC Tasmania's brutalist office block, and overwhelmed by the weight of Hobart's memory atop it, the collected artefacts seem to speak the language of a displaced haunting. Long abandoned by their original owners, these homeless ghost-objects exist in dim half-life, caught between here and other places, other times. In their re-remembered museal home, a replica of the original interiors of Cedar Court, they receive a careful, almost surplus level of attention. They exist in displays cordoned, secured, and labelled; haunted by touch.

Through the darkened, warren-like museum corridors, the visitor drifts, taking in the strange incongruity of times and spaces: furnishings of 19th century gentility rub against modern architectural surfaces, which speak of functional bureaucracy. And here, she gazes into a series of arrested miniature worlds, domestic tableaux composed

of objects removed from their original context and history. Regarding these scenes, she is reminded of the miniature, which, as Susan Stewart observes, 'presents a diminutive, and thereby manipulatable, version of experience, a version which is domesticated and protected from contamination.'<sup>1</sup> Perpetually suspended in a repetition of the same, the fetishised objects, inculcated into the museum gaze, are re-situated in spaces evacuated of time's touch — scoured of dirt and dust, dead skin cells, the rank odour of death. Death haunts the edges of these tableaux, reminds of the shaky limits of self.

A preservation in memory of a family all but extinct, the perception of the Allport collection as almost crypt-like, the artificial light and air creating a world far removed from both the outside world and the world in which these objects once existed. Here, the materials of everyday life, once considered private, domestic belongings, have become haunted, disorganised, as they open to a precarious public world, recalling one of Freud's descriptions of the *unheimlich*, or 'unhomely', as 'something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light'.<sup>2</sup> As 'nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression', the uncanny speaks of the unease of seething absences and disquieting returns of buried pasts. Occupying the threshold of the private and public, past and present, absence and presence, the uncanny archive brims with the energies of fragments of the submerged or forgotten brought to surface. Charged with dynamic presence and affective potential, a repository of feelings and emotions, the force of the archive is to buzz, tear, urge.<sup>3</sup> And, afford new energies, new imaginative lives.

As visitors invited into tableaux of domestic scenes assembled in miniature for public viewing, we cannot but ignore the unconscious pulsings of our projected fantasies. On these contained worlds, 'we project, by means of association or intertextuality, a deliberately framed series of actions.'<sup>4</sup> Flashes of familial rage and restlessness erupt into our day-time reveries; mix with familiar memories of detective board games with token candlesticks, in ballrooms and Colonel Mustards; mix with rumblings of lives lived as dreams, dramas, disappointments; mix with cluster troubles lingering in china teacups

and beneath bedcovers soaked with tears; mix with worry lodged in tapestries. Resonances linger, weigh down, and build in the 'infinite time of reverie.'<sup>5</sup>

The generative forces of these restless energies of dream worlds summon us. Occupying this liminal place somewhere between nightmare, memory and imagination, each of the artists in *Unhoused* have responded to the museum and archive, pressing close against their secret surfaces to study a place haunted by the excesses of material memories, by touching, feeling. Responding to the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts and the vast, amorphous collection that exceeds its spatial limits, the artists — Julie Gough, Linda Fredheim, Brigita Ozolins, Sally Rees and Elissa Ritson — all use archival material or engage with its absence to explore the dark traces of memory's materiality. Using a diverse range of media and approaches, including digital media, installation, furniture, and sculpture, the artists' works occupy the edges of domestic homeliness, frustrating the familiar, and linger in the shadows of other energies, other worlds.

Julie Gough's work, *Hide* engages with the multiple layers of absence and the traces of presence confronting artists when connecting with objects in an archival collection. Continuing her forensic-like practice into the investigation of histories, Gough sought to uncover and re-member lost objects in the collection and their lost owners. Gough searched graveyards around Hobart for the lost Allport family members' gravestones, which had been moved amongst cemeteries. She then recorded inscription traces on fabric shrouds that she uses to re-house objects from the Allport collection that once belonged to these family members. In this simultaneous act of unveiling and hiding, Gough gestures to the convolutions of erasure and inscription at play in archival memory work.

Furniture designer Linda Fredheim's series of miniature boxes, *Repositories for Unhoused Objects* also engages with the tactile traces of lost objects within the Allport collection. Fredheim's point of entry was to consider the litany of objects overlooked in, or discarded from a collection, in order to reconsider and reimagine their potential. Fredheim's work reflects on the imaginative possibilities of these lost objects and conceives of her small boxes as enclosures for items real and imagined. These enclosures are dream worlds

locked in perpetual interiority, whilst also gesturing to the external world from which these potential objects came; in their own unsettled journeys these objects take on an after-life which dispels as much as it spells.

Brigita Ozolins' installation, *The Black Tulip*, mounted in the Allport library and gallery, evokes the haunting presence of a rare novel in the WL Crowther collection of the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office. Mary Grimstone's novel *Woman's Love* (1832), written in Hobart in the late 1820s, is a book so rare that there is only one other known hard copy in the world, held in the British Library. This rarity led Sir William Crowther, who donated his copy to the State Library in the 1960s, to call the novel 'the black tulip' of his collection. Grimstone's work remains largely unknown, despite being one of Australia's first novels and the first to be written by a woman. In it, Grimstone, an early champion for women's rights, reminds us of the presence and agency of women at a time of male domination in the early days of Van Diemen's Land. Ozolins' work both commemorates and mourns the novelist's contribution through a mausoleum-like structure that contains a representation of the author's writing station, through which we might imagine Grimstone's ghostly presence, sitting, writing, thinking, imagining. Accompanying these works, Ozolins' public reading event, *Grimstone in the Allport*, invites Tasmanian women to read aloud from *Woman's Love* in the Allport library. Transformed into a dark portal to a lost time, the Allport library resounds with Grimstone's spectral voice.

Just months before Grimstone's novel was published in London and having since returned there, another Mary had arrived in Van Diemen's Land. This Mary was to become a figure of intrigue for two artists in this exhibition. Mary Morton Allport, a trained miniature painter and mother to four surviving children. Her arrival in 1831 with her husband, Joseph, and child, Morton, saw the first generation of Allports in Van Diemen's Land. While receiving posthumous recognition for her colonial paintings, sketches, and portraits, Mary's journal writing has largely been ignored.<sup>6</sup> Sally Rees' work dwells on a lesser-known aspect of Mary's life recounted in these journals: the tragic death of four of Mary's sons, and particularly that of Gordon Allport, who drowned as

a young child aged five in a pond on their property Aldridge Lodge in South Hobart. Drawing on an oneiric passage from Mary's journal written three years after Gordon's death in 1853, Rees' multimedia works channel the melancholic haunting legacy of this loss for his mother. As an honouring of Gordon's death, Rees' work penetrates the resounding silence around this death that is everywhere displayed in the Allport museum, where the only presence of him recorded is, as one family tree didactic puts it, 'four other sons died young'. Animating the largely invisible or unknown, Rees' hauntology not only questions the fissures inherent in archival collections, but also opens a space for resuscitating subjugated histories of colonial women and their domestic labour.

Also preoccupied with the spectral presence of this historical figure within the Allport, Elissa Ritson sought to deploy a series of ritualised gestures, inspired by modern witchcraft, to build a relationship with Mary in *Wild White Flower* — a *Ritual Evocation of Mary's Ghost*. Through a performative process within the gallery space, resulting in an accumulation of abject, tactile offerings for Mary, Ritson's work seeks to both illuminate and transgress the breach between the women — both artists, both mothers. Ritson's offerings are suggestive of the fleshy matter associated with the abject, which Julia Kristeva proposes as that which simultaneously allows us to exist as subjects and which threatens this very existence.<sup>7</sup> As those repulsive substances, such as menstrual blood, toenail clippings and malting hair, which cannot be assimilated into the self, the abject threatens borders. Since women's bodies have historically been constructed as fearful and threatening, feminine sexuality is seen as most abject in this phallogentric discourse, described by Barbara Creed as the 'monstrous-feminine.'<sup>8</sup> Ritson's sculptures, comprised of a combination of real body parts and artificial substances, evoke the disturbing and grotesque uncertainty of indeterminate feminine body parts mashed together in a nightmarish transgression of the phallogentric order. En masse, and pinned to an oversized transparent veil in the Allport dining room, the offerings resemble Ritson's own intimate archive of matter.

Crossing between visible and imaginary worlds, a family archive brims with restless, unhoused counter-memories. A haunted trove is dense, but

instructive, as 'haunting involves more than revenge; it means coming to grips with one's involvement in a buried or forgotten history and the necessity of being led somewhere, or elsewhere.'<sup>9</sup> In the shadows of the archive-museum, we are transformed.

EMILY BULLOCK, May 2016.



<sup>1</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir the Collection*, Duke UP, Durham, 1993, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' [1818] in *The Uncanny*, Penguin, London, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, Duke UP, Durham, 2003, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Stewart, *ibid.* p. 54.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Stewart, *ibid.* p. 65.

<sup>6</sup> Joanna Richardson, *An Annotated Edition of the Journals of Mary Morton Allport*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, 2006, p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Columbia UP, New York, 1984, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, Routledge, New York, 2007, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. U of Minnesota P, Minneapolis, 2007, p. 205.

## EXHIBITION ARTWORKS

LINDA FREDHEIM

*Repositories for Unhoused Objects*, 2016

Boxes and Miniature boxes x 10  
Timber, fabric, metal, paper, glass and found objects  
10w x 5d x 3h each (approx and variable)

Jewellery Box  
Timber, fabric, acrylic and brass  
29w x 22d x 14h (approx)



JULIE GOUGH

*Hide*, 2016

Frottage on paper (wax crayon, 2, framed), silk on cotton (5 pieces), sound file (Queensborough cemetery before dawn, 1h 15m 58 sec), variable dimensions

Shrouded objects:

Wig Case  
31 x 21.5 cm (h x w/d)



belonged to Joseph Allport  
Born 15 October 1800  
Died 30 October 1877

Wooden box  
18 x 26 x 30.5 cm (h x w x d)  
belonged to Mary Morton Allport  
Born 17 May 1806  
Died 10 June 1895

Gun case  
25.5 x 85 x 9.5 cm (h x w x d)  
belonged to Morton Allport  
Born 4 December 1831  
Died 10 September 1878

Scrapbook  
7 x 32.6 x 43.1 cm (h x w x d)  
belonged to Curzon Allport  
Born 23 February 1837  
Died 16 September 1899

Album  
11 x 22 x 22 cm (h x w x d)  
belonged to Francis Evett Allport  
Born 28 December 1845  
Died 2 September 1902



BRIGITA OZOLINS

*The Black Tulip*, 2016

*The Black Tulip*, 2016

Antique table, framed image, paper, ink  
Dimensions variable

*The Black Tulip*, 2016

Allport Library desk, book pages, steel, black georgette, thread, sound track  
2.2m (h) x 2.5m (w) x 1.8m (d)

*Grimstone in the Allport: reading aloud Australia's second novel*

12pm — 8pm, Friday 17 June 2016

Reading performance, video projection

Duration: 8 hours



SALLY REES

*For Six Weeks I Believed I Had Heard Poor Gordon's Voice (after Mary  
Morton Allport)*, 2016

Video loop with objects and audio

*Slow Serenade for Gordon's transition (after Elias Perish Elvars)*, 2016

Audio composition for museum intervention



ELISSA RITSON

*Wild White Flower — A Ritual Evocation of Mary's Ghost*, 2016

Performative assemblage of mixed media soft sculptures on veil

## ARTISTS

### LINDA FREDHEIM

Linda Fredheim graduated with a BFA (Design in Wood) from the University of Tasmania in 1992 and now runs her own practice from a studio shared with partner, Stuart Houghton. Her primary interest in furniture design and making is in the function and associations of storage and collecting. She has exhibited in numerous group exhibitions, both nationally and internationally, often collaborating with other visual artists.

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### JULIE GOUGH

Julie Gough is an artist, writer and curator whose research/art practice focuses on uncovering and re-presenting conflicting and subsumed histories, many referring to her family's experiences as Tasmanian Aboriginal people. Her current work in installation, sound and video explores ephemerality and absence. Julie holds a PhD and BA Hons, Visual Arts (University of Tasmania), MA (Goldsmiths College, University of London), BA (Curtin University), BA (Pre-history/English Literature, University of West Australia). Since 1994, Gough has exhibited in over 130 exhibitions including *With Secrecy and Despatch*, Campbelltown Art Centre, 2016; *Mildura Palimpsest*, 2015; *UNdisclosed*, NGA, 2012; *Clemenger Award*, NGV, 2010; *Sydney Biennial*, 2006; *Liverpool Biennial*, UK, 2001; *Perspecta*, AGNSW, 1995. Gough's work is held in most state galleries and she is represented by Bett Gallery, Hobart.

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### BRIGITA OZOLINS

Brigita Ozolins is an artist and an academic at the University of Tasmania with a background in librarianship and arts administration. Her art examines the links

between language, history, bureaucracy and identity and stems from her passion for books, words and libraries. She uses a wide range of materials to convey her ideas, including books, handwriting, digital images, video and furniture. Her best known works include *Kryptos* (2011), a large scale permanent installation that explores the mysterious links between codes and writing commissioned by the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) Tasmania; and *The Reading Room* (2011) an interactive installation that incorporated over 30,000 books, commissioned by the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in 2011.

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### SALLY REES

Sally Rees works across time-based, static and hybrid art forms. She is currently conducting research at TCotA, using hand-painted animation and exploring the contemporary functionality of occult practice. Often blending autobiography and pop culture with a surrealist automatism, Rees blends record-based media with hand-wrought intervention to produce works that aspire to a kind of clairvoyance or magick. Rees has held residencies at the Western Front in Vancouver (2001), the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris (2004) and CESTA in the Czech Republic (2006). Recent exhibitions include *Gratis* at The Plimsoll Gallery, *Exhaust* at CAT and *Monsterring* and other thoughtforms at Bett Gallery.

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### ELISSA RITSON

Elissa Ritson is an emerging Hobart artist exploring the fluid self and dynamics of social exchange. Elissa's work incorporates drawing, collage, painting, construction and subverted homecrafts to investigate the edges of experiential perception. She has shown work in various group and solo exhibitions in Hobart and Melbourne.

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### EMILY BULLOCK

Emily Bullock is a writer, academic and teacher. Her writing explores the gothic mode, affect and place, and fictocriticism. She completed her PhD in 2009, which explores the cultural poetics of Tasmanian gothic.

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