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Four logos need to be on top line:
Next Wave - Creative Vic - AustCo - City of Melbourne
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Lower case: 'Odwalla dumpster locket like a diary'

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A Domain of Proliferated Doubt

By Peter H. Johnson
& Denise Thwaites

Otherwise known as 'imposter syndrome', the fraud complex is a neurosis which plagues the individual with a deep sense of inauthenticity and inadequacy. Suffered by many, but by marginalised people disproportionately,¹ this syndrome is symptomatic of an authoritarian dichotomy between authenticity and fraudulence that permeates contemporary life. Operating within public discourses that at once promote the assuming of our 'authentic selves', while recognising the multifaceted instability and fluidity of personal identity, the conceptual opposition of authentic/fake inflects and infects our thinking about perceptual, cultural, social and political fields of experience.

Echoing its namesake, *The Fraud Complex* is a dissonant assemblage of works that seeks to suspend established categories of selfhood and knowledge. An expanded exhibition that brings eleven contemporary artists into dialogue with writers, performers and thinkers, *The Fraud Complex* seeks to destabilise the binary of authentic/fake. It asks questions such as 'what does it mean to be authentic?', and 'are we all just faking it in different ways?'

This exhibition opens at a time when political, theoretical and cultural approaches to authenticity and fraudulence intersect in complicated and sometimes discordant ways. This emerges from a complex history in which political movements founded in identity, such as feminism, black power and gay pride, have over the past century fought for the rights of such groups to publicly assume their heritage or desires without fear of persecution or oppression. However, the latter half of the twentieth century has seen notions of essential, authentic self critiqued through poststructuralist and postmodern thought. Seminal texts such as Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1967), Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) and Homi Bhabha's *Location of Culture* (1991) introduced critical frameworks through which to examine assumed gender and

racial binaries, which are otherwise sustained through the power dynamics of linguistic, gendered and colonial hierarchies.

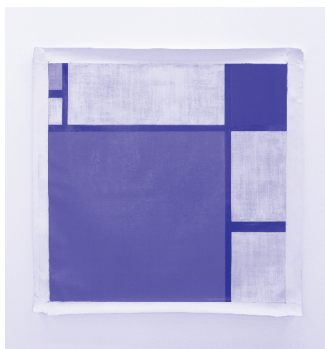
In the present day, neoliberal mantras resound, increasingly valorising the individual at the expense of collective identity. This is a world where self-help, mindfulness and feminist empowerment can all be bought at Lululemon for the right price; where Caitlyn Jenner's admirable coming out as a trans woman sits uneasily with her strongly expressed conservative politics; where Rachel Dolezal makes a case for the existence of transracial identity.² This sits in contrast to enduring bureaucratic processes of authentication in Australia, where access to specific rights or programs demand documentation of, for example, certified Aboriginal ethnicity or a legally recognised relationship. The criteria for these assessments are not only derived from the presumption of an authentic/fraudulent status, but seek to establish the definitive line where one becomes the other.

Given the pervasiveness of the authentic/fake binary that shapes our perceptions of ethnic, social, and gendered self, how might contemporary art's field of impersonations, farces and simulations perturb its assumed authority? As far back as Plato's *Republic* (370 BCE), we see the arts described as third order reproductions of reality — as mimesis far detached from a realm of abstract truth.³ In contrast, more recent art theory and critique has focused on the importance of perceived authenticity when discussing or valuing works of art. Walter Benjamin's seminal 1936 essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' dissociated modern art forms from the the innate, authentic 'aura' of earlier art objects, gesturing towards the critical role that institutions would play in determining the value of the work of art. Since then, modern and contemporary artists have interrogated, inverted and undermined the dichotomies of illusion/reality and direct/mediated experience in a multitude of ways.

While these ideas have informed *The Fraud Complex*, reflected by a number of artists making works from a position of marginalised identity — be that one of gendered, ethnic or cultural difference — the exhibition does not attempt to answer the breadth of questions provoked by engagement with identity politics. Rather, it proceeds from the premise that individual and collective identities are not closed systems, considering instead how they intersect, influence and internalise orthodoxies, assumptions and pedagogies across the social fabric. This expanded exhibition does not present a unified argument or narrative. It plunges the visitor into a domain of proliferated doubt. Through the suspension of certitudes, *The Fraud Complex* reminds us of the instability at the core of everyday judgments of authenticity and fraudulence.

According to a recent report on US teens, only 48 per cent identify as exclusively heterosexual, and 56 per cent know someone who uses gender neutral pronouns such as 'they' or 'ze'.⁴ There has been a semiotic explosion in the ways in which people define their sexual and gender identities; Tumblr overflows with users identifying beyond the LGBT, as asexual, genderfluid, demisexual, pansexual, demiromantic, pomosexual and so on.⁵ In June 2014 the cover of *Time Magazine*, featuring transgender actor and activist Laverne Cox, declared 'The Transgender Tipping Point'. Long gone are the days when 'men were men and women were women'.

The expression of these new and varied identities is often understood in terms of the individual's right to be their 'true selves', or to live 'authentically'. Without diminishing the profound importance of people being able to live and love in the ways that make them most happy, these increasingly complex taxonomies of identity are often shaped by the same discourses of authenticity and fraudulence that inflect traditional notions of gender.



Artsheaven.com
painting-9752 [Composition
with Red, Yellow and Blue] 2016
oil painting reproduction on canvas,
92 x 92 cm

~~SHE ISN'T A
PHONY BECAUSE
SHE'S A REAL
PHONY. SHE
BELIEVES ALL
THIS CRAP
SHE BELIEVES.
YOU CAN'T TALK
HER OUT OF IT.~~

Breakfast at Tiffany's
Fruman-Capote, 1958

~~SHE'S A REAL
PHONY. YOU
KNOW WHY?
BECAUSE SHE
HONESTLY
BELIEVES ALL
THIS PHONY
JUNK THAT SHE
BELIEVES.~~

Breakfast at Tiffany's
dir. Blake-Edwards, 1961

Two artworks in *The Fraud Complex* by Tyza Stewart and Técha Noble (in collaboration with Casey Legler and Jordan Graham) complicate both the traditional binaries and increasingly specific divisions between gender and sexual identities. Stewart's life-size self-portrait depicts the artist's body as they pull their hair back into pigtails. Markers of sexed identity — chest and genitals — are erased, fading into the white voidspace of the background, suggesting both ambivalence and ambiguity. Noble's video collaboration with Casey Legler, former French swimming champion, artist, and first woman to be contracted as a male Ford Model, depicts its subject shifting between various attitudes and poses derived from modelling. In this study of specific body language designed for commercial purpose, Legler seems to morph between feminine and masculine, the heightened performance foregrounding the artifice of gendered expression.

There is perhaps no more pernicious instance of the idea that 'authentic' identity is rooted in biology than in the historical treatment of Aboriginal people. The history of Aboriginality in postcolonial Australia is fraught with disagreements over what constitutes 'authentic' Aboriginal identity. From the 1830s until the late 1950s, blood quantum were the measure of whether or not someone was Aboriginal, with States legislating 'all forms of inclusion and exclusion (to and from benefits, rights, places etc.) by reference to degrees of Aboriginal blood'.⁶ While legislative definitions may have shifted, discriminatory rhetoric about Aboriginal identity continues. Right wing columnist Andrew Bolt has attacked fair-skinned Aboriginal people on a number of recent occasions, claiming that their 'self-identification as Aboriginal strikes [him] as self-obsessed, and driven more by politics than any racial reality'.⁷ Nine Aboriginal people, including artist Bindi Cole Chocka, subsequently sued Bolt

successfully in the Federal Court, where he was found to have breached the Racial Discrimination Act.⁸

In spite of Bolt's public prosecution, fair-skinned Aboriginal people are continually called on to prove the authenticity of their identity, both by bureaucracies and in public life. Of course it is rarely mentioned that so many Aboriginal people are fair-skinned as a direct result of genocide, dispossession and government policies of forced assimilation designed to sever connections to country, culture and kin. The impacts of such policies and the fractious nature of Aboriginal identity are discussed from a personal perspective in Myles Russell-Cook's text, published as part of *The Fraud Complex*.

Chocka's photographic series *Not Really Aboriginal* (2008) responded to this history and was a catalyst for the aforementioned court case involving Andrew Bolt. Presented in *The Fraud Complex* at reduced scale, in fold-back frames, they feature the artist's family in domestic and urban settings painted in black face. Megan Cope's work, *Discover Your Aboriginality* (2016), is a provocative extension of these concerns. Inviting people to take a test and be eligible for a membership package bestowing Aboriginal identity, the work raises uncomfortable questions about the co-option of identity and Aboriginal culture by non-Aboriginal people. *Discover your Aboriginality* also challenges audiences to 'put their money where their mouth is' and to reflect critically on a moral economy when supporting activism and Aboriginal people.

Continuing this enquiry into authenticity as it relates to Aboriginal cultures, *The Fraud Complex* presents one in a series of Next Wave Indigenous Language Workshops led by Paul Paton, Executive Officer at the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages. In this presentation, Paton addresses the issue of authenticity in the contemporary revitalisation of Indigenous languages. While introducing central principles and methodologies of language revival, Paton considers the use of historical records in this process,

asking questions such as: 'Is our (indigenous) language authentic if we use what white people have written down?'⁹

Issues regarding cultural authenticity and fraudulence are not limited to the sphere of Australia's relations with its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Ethnic stereotypes and expectations mediate our experience of cultures across the world. Problems surrounding the exoticism and fetishism of other cultures are addressed through Yoshua Okón's work *The Indian Project: Rebuilding History* (2015). This single-channel video navigates the threshold between documentary and performance, as Okón records the presentations of a committee seeking to restore an 80-foot monument to the original Indigenous population of their town, Skowhegan, Maine, a site where a genocide of the Indigenous inhabitants took place. This uncomfortable work presents the impossibilities of adequately resurrecting or atoning for cultures lost, and the problematic dynamics of cultural appropriation that can arise as a consequence.

Issues of cultural stereotyping are further addressed through Abdul Abdullah's work *WHY CAN'T I BE ANGRY* (2016) and his accompanying series of works in ceramic. A black velvet curtain, embroidered and tasseled with gold thread asks the viewer 'Why can't I be angry?', while a collection of glistening ceramic trophies are adorned with the phrases 'Most Kind', 'Most Strong', 'Most Fair' and 'Most Great'. The palette and form of the textile work recalls the monumental Kaaba of Mecca, while the trophies bear English translations of some of the 99 names of Allah, drawing associations with the spiritual identity shared by Muslim worshippers across the globe. This is contrasted by text that alludes to the expectation of self-censorship or social cohesion thrust upon young Australian Muslims. In this, the work highlights how the means and conditions which enable people to be their 'authentic selves' are enjoyed by a privileged few.

Through his work, Abdul-Rahman Abdullah initiates a dialogue with his brother Abdul Abdullah both as art-makers and members of a marginalised culture. *Monster Maker* (2016) is a life-sized bust of Abdul wearing a mask from sci-fi film series *Planet of the Apes*. The work directly references Abdul's series *Siege* (2014), which explored the monstrous representations of Muslims in Western media. It also recalls Abdul's later series *Monsters* (2014) around a similar theme, while making reference to 'Rick Baker the Monster Maker', a legendary figure in practical makeup and effects in Hollywood films, who crafted the mask worn by Abdul in his photographic series. Through this process of mimicry and doubling, Abdul-Rahman engages with fictitious cultural stereotypes, while also presenting the multifaceted quality of artistic influence implicit in the creation of the art object.

The intertextuality of *Monster Maker* exemplifies the widely applied technique of artistic appropriation which, having once suffered criticism as an indication of unoriginal creative thought, is now embraced by theorists and critics alike as a vital strategy in modern and contemporary art. However, to what extent can the disassociation of ideas of artistic value, originality and authorship be pushed? *The Fraud Complex* integrates a number of



Artsheaven.com [detail]
painting-8598 [Guernica][detail] 2016
oil painting reproduction on canvas,
61 x 122 cm

curatorial interventions to destabilise the notion of the sacred artistic space. Replica paintings of iconic modernist artworks—a disproportionate facsimile of Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) and a faux-Mondrian—sit alongside 'authentic' artworks. Both attributed to their literal creator, online business ArtsHeaven.com, these paintings problematise the connection between authorship and the identity of the art object, forcing visitors to re-examine the differences between forgery and artistic appropriation. Other elements mingle in the space—living room curtains and exposed-brick wallpaper—destabilising the sanctity of the artistic white cube via the integration of domestic signifiers.

The conceits of the art world are further addressed in Beth Dillon's performance *The Tallest Artist In Next Wave* (2016). Standing upon an intricate apparatus and in disguise, the artist proposes a toast at the exhibition opening, self-aggrandising her fraudulent position within an art world system of value. In this, she performs a humorous nod to the sense of imposter syndrome that arises through an artist's attempt to distinguish or 'brand' their creative identity.

Beyond the fixtures of the gallery space, the fluid identity of the art object itself is explored in Holly Childs' poem 'Odwalla dumpster locket like a diary' (2016), included in this publication. Through her work, a crust punk aesthetic is redetermined through the eyes of a needlepoint connoisseur, highlighting the multivalence of artwork semiotics and challenging the idea of authoritative artistic interpretation. The notion of singular artistic meaning is further destabilised in Kelly Fliedner's project, *Ships in the night* (2016), which develops a series of 'love letters' between artworks in the Next Wave Festival 2016. Rejecting the didactic register of the traditional exhibition exegesis, Fliedner responds to the aesthetic and conceptual elements of works in *The Fraud Complex*, presenting a live reading that complicates our attempts to pin down the 'true meaning' of the art object.

Twentieth century critical theory is known for its interrogations into how, in addition to our socialised experience as persons categorised into gendered, ethnic and cultural or professional categories, our phenomenal experience of the world may be shaped by conceptual binaries. While it is easy to take for granted the 'authenticity' of our pre-reflective experience, we may question how we come to know ourselves as individuated subjects, our position within the greater world, and our apprehension of the 'real'. To what extent might these apprehensions be informed by an authoritarian binary between authentic/fake?

Despite its seductive mirrored surface, Hany Armanious' artwork *Body Swap* (2014) is a violent rejoinder to the assumptions we hold about our bodies in space. Shaped like an enormous guillotine blade, the work severs the viewer at the head and knees. If aligned properly, it appears that two viewers have swapped bodies with one another, collapsing the binary between self and the other.

Further to this, in an internet-as-everything age, the line between that which is 'real' and authentic, and that which is simulation and virtual becomes increasingly indistinct. Tully Arnot's work *Waterfall* (2016), presents a slippage between these two realms. A stock photo of a waterfall is printed on fabric and presented in an infinite mechanised loop; a gif made real; a glitched version of Romantic awe, instigating feelings of phenomenal doubt.

The fragile dynamics of self-perception and its relationship to our creative output are also explored in Astrid Lorange's text, *Fr(e)a/ud Complex* (2016). Drawing on the Freudian interest in parapraxis, or the act of misreading or misspeaking, Lorange considers the legacy of psychoanalysis, and how the psychic state of imposter syndrome may be intimately tied to the processes of artistic creation.

Maps are perhaps the most commonly employed analogues for reality, allowing us to situate and navigate our bodies in space. Sara Morawetz's work *1:1 (After Umberto)* (2016) is a 1:1 scale architectural floor plan of West Space's front gallery. It draws inspiration from

Umberto Eco's short story *On the Impossibility of Drawing a Map of the Empire on a Scale of 1 to 1* (1992), which in turn responds to Jorge Luis Borges' short story *On Exactitude in Science* (1946). A 1:1 map, while a near-perfect simulation of reality, is of course entirely impractical, suggesting that all lived experience is mere imperfect shorthand for a more complex existence.

The Fraud Complex contributes to the critical discourse surrounding notions of authenticity and fraudulence, by presenting a diverse group of creative practices that explore the manifold ways in which these concepts play out in relation to different spheres of existence. The works exhibited, along with curatorial interventions, commissioned writing, and discursive events, act as a pivot to question how senses of fraudulence relating to gender, ethnic and cultural identity, as well as phenomenal and artistic experience, may arise from a common and pervasive conceptual root.

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3. Plato, '[Book X](http://www.penguin.com/9780140431951)', in *The Republic* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 363.

4. Tsjeng, Zing, '[Teens These Days Are Queer AF, New Study Says](https://broadly.vice.com/en_us/article/teens-these-days-are-queer-af-new-study-says)', *Broadly*, 10 March 2016, available: https://broadly.vice.com/en_us/article/teens-these-days-are-queer-af-new-study-says, accessed: 12 March 2016.

5. '[Terminology](http://safespacenetwork.tumblr.com/define)', *The Safe Space Network*, 7 June 2012, available: <http://safespacenetwork.tumblr.com/define>, accessed: 12 March 2016.

6. Gardiner-Garden, John, '[Defining Aboriginality in Australia](http://www.parliament.gov.au/parliamentary-education/aboriginality-in-australia)', *Parliament of Australia*, 3 February 2003, p. 3.

7. Bolt, Andrew, '[White is the new black](http://blogs.news.com.au/heraldsun/andrewbolt/index.php/heraldsun/comments/column_white_is_the_new_black)', *Herald Sun*, 15 April 2009, available: http://blogs.news.com.au/heraldsun/andrewbolt/index.php/heraldsun/comments/column_white_is_the_new_black, accessed: 12 March 2016.

8. Bromberg, J, '[Eatock v Bolt](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/FCA/2011/1103.html)' [2011] *FCA 1103*, 28 September 2011, available: <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/FCA/2011/1103.html>, accessed: 12 March 2016.

9. This question is addressed in the VACL Factsheet: Principles of Language Revival - '[Getting it Right](http://www.vaclang.org.au/images/projects/Meeting%20Point%20Fact%20Sheets/GettingItRight.pdf)', available: <http://www.vaclang.org.au/images/projects/Meeting%20Point%20Fact%20Sheets/GettingItRight.pdf>, accessed: 7 April 2016.

Fr[e/a]ud Complex

By Astrid Lorange

I am always misreading. Freud for Fraud, for one. And what a misreading, too; for not only is the proper name Freud hysterically entangled with the term 'complex', but it is the thinker Freud who invested so much in the meaningfulness of misreading (or misspeaking, forgetting, substituting one word or gesture for another by accident). He calls this 'parapraxis', a word wide enough to include almost any occasion in which the unconscious reveals itself through error: calling the wrong name; getting out housekeys when in front of a doorbell; speaking unusually to express something very simple. Parapraxis, whatever form it assumes, is the unconscious made evident by errors in habit, memory or structure. So when I read Freud for Fraud, as in the case of this exhibition, I am reminded (and what an embarrassing thing to both think and remember, let alone reveal!) that my own unconscious is never free from the labour of grappling with Freud and his capacity to be at once present and absent (that is, thoroughly repressed), in my thought.

To take Freud's enthusiasm for misreadings seriously — to take his own seriousness enthusiastically — I read my misreading as part of what's interesting about fraudulence and its tendency to be felt as a complex. If for psychoanalysis a complex refers to an intimate, dynamic cluster of affects and tendencies that articulates itself as a kind of constant psychic state, then the fraud complex can be understood as that general but persistent feeling that one's efforts and achievements — if not one's entire existence — are a sham. This feeling is intensified when one has internalised a sense that one's very capacity to achieve is limited or absent; it's also intensified when the work that one does (make art, for example) appears to exist almost entirely apart from intention or desire, yet remains no less connected to one's name.

Art has a habit of making everyone feel like a fraud: artists for the simple fact that the work they produce is always in excess of what they have intended or what they can claim; and anyone else who, in the humiliating context of interpretation, finds themselves in a paranoid state ('the meaning is hidden from me, and from me alone!'). For us today, the profundity (or not) of art presents itself as a secular version of Pascal's wager: it is better to assume that art has a higher meaning than not, for to be revealed as fraudulent in the event of meaningfulness is worse than overdetermining the meaningless. But fear of fraudulence, in the context of art, relies on a wholly inadequate logic of meaning — in which it is assumed that meaningfulness is like a rare earth mineral: hidden, elemental, precious.

Listening to Freud, momentarily, as he appears in thought in the moment of parapraxis, fraudulence takes a new shape; not as a precondition for participation in the humiliatingly inscrutable world of art, but as an instructive dimension to the kind of thought that makes participation in the inscrutable not only possible, but constructive, desirable, perhaps even important.

Odwalla Dumpster Locket Like a Diary

By Holly Childs

Lower case: 'Odwalla dumpster like a locket diary

Pretty patchy
Holly Hobbie
Gingham
Toys
Lacy doilies
ギズム; is that pronounced with a hard G or soft
Lamb's ear
Secateurs
Leather glove catching on a rose thorn, poison ivy
Dis- anything really
Distaste,
Dystopia,
Hell, Disunicornucopia
Render a uni-horn, black and grey thread
Blend in some silver? metal rust corrode ruins fade
Dig a hole in the yard, keep em down there for a while
Fluffy foamy
Soil with the burial plot, worms
Juice & bone
Grow through this
Dead compost with butterfly wings
Make your own logo crest tutorial
Symbol, sigil
5 easy steps
Store it in a hope chest
Not yr heart
Oh the stories we'll try tentatively & come 2 believe
Larvae, set up with a punky penpal she knows i'm real
'String cheesy A-bomb ring to all cops are bastrads,
Break a nail break it all' I proffer
Source image via Flickr: oogle snapped his leg lost
his dog off a grainer I attach
Didn't remove those crusty patchy pants for the
surgery
10 weeks in crusty punk pants h-eaven/-ell
Someone yells 'ear jam 4 stretching up'
Compound fracture
She tags me in 'let's hop trains to Alaska'
You'll stop bleeding but the sunset never ends

Butt flap
Hack the planet
Stars are cool
And there's no one driving
Stopped on the track, watch for flashlights
Bull
Photos with fake-old filter to remember past lives:
That zine i made
Floss works better than cotton for repairs when your
arse falls out your pants
Raver-Skater
Though punk boys will get up in your shit and tell you
Digital hardcore does not exist
Sick girl 15+ years, but resourceful online
Hardcore homeless knows her shit
Traveller kid/squat into my sewing repairs
Feminist party tools, Holly's hammer epic
Nu rave anarchosyndicalist backpack rapper
Artist recluse in bed with boy in Europe
Artist recluse upstairs at parents house in the hills
Powerhouse Museum collection authentic mens punk outfit
for clues
Pass as office-job-but-tattoos-underneath
when you've got none
Schifosi, it's a backstory
Important figure in post-death metal c. 2019
Declares mosh 'safe space for men'
Knows they're all otherwise true yogalates
'you can tell she did gymnastics in year 10 and fell
into punk by accident' whispered regarding every 'girl'
Crafty patchy passes
Says 'yr a wizard on the print carousel'
better be, Hope Chest Family heirloom Sacred relic
Antiques Roadshow, not a game over here
"oi oi oi" embroidered into threadbare nothing
Odwalla dumpster locket like a diary
Pissed on in the pit
Vinegar doused pure silk
Scum, ruins, daisychain, rocks

The Imposter

By Myles Russell Cook

It is polite to introduce yourself properly to your audience, your host, and others. In Aboriginal culture introductions and identification are essential—people want to know who they are meeting, where they come from and how they are, or might be related. With this in mind, I introduce myself as someone who identifies within a discourse of cultural hybridity: that is, I openly embrace all my heritages. My identity includes, indeed privileges my Aboriginality.

While this multiplicity of identity is in many ways a strength, it can also be a cause of distress. For many years, I have lived with a type of cultural imposter syndrome. As I have fair skin and am declarative about my Aboriginality, I've often felt the need to justify my cultural positionality. I clarify that I've grown up within contemporary urban Aboriginal communities and I have endeavoured to, wherever possible and practical, learn Aboriginal languages and customs. I both self-recognise my Aboriginality and am recognised by many Elders, including those who are the owners and custodians of the land on which I live: the Boonerong and Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

My ancestors were born on Wotjobaluk land. We don't know much about them other than their names as written in Government records: 'Frances [native], and James [native]'. Although official documentation is scant and fragmented, I have been lucky enough to be raised in a wellspring of cultural knowledge passed down to me through my parents, my grandparents and my great-grandparents. While there have been many attempts in my family's history to disassociate our name from our Aboriginality, I continue to be educated within my culture because I have some proud, intelligent and generous ancestors. However, I can not deny that in addition to being Aboriginal, I am also, at least in the view of the general and unknowing public—WHITE.

I am ever cognisant that like most contemporary people with Indigenous heritage, I must consciously construct my identity against

1. This comparison of course does not apply to Native Americans, who would arguably be the most appropriate comparator and who in many ways have been usurped in the discourse surrounding race relations within the United States.

the historical and traditional perception that Indigenous culture and Aboriginal people remain ancient and untouched, and that to be authentic we must appear a certain way. In a country built on the institutionalised dispossession and removal of Aboriginal people with the sole purpose of 'breeding out the colour', fair-skinned Aboriginal people are extremely common. So why is it that fair-skinned Aboriginal people are still so often confronted with internal struggles around their authenticity?

Since the early Frontier Wars, there has been an economic advantage for settler Australians to reduce the Aboriginal population because to put it bluntly: fewer blackfellas meant more land for the whitefellas. The late historian Patrick Wolfe called this, settlement based on 'the logic of elimination'. In Australia, having non-Aboriginal ancestry made someone less of a threat to land acquisition. There can be no doubt that generations of settler Australians also descend from Aboriginal ancestors, unacknowledged and unremembered: half-castes gave way to quadroons to octeroons and then for many they were just 'Australian'. Although Australia has officially rejected the notion of blood quantum and genetic arithmetic, fair-skinned Aboriginal people are frequently asked the intrusive question 'what part Aboriginal are you?'. So one's proportion of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry, or 'blood', remains the defining factor of Indigenous authenticity for the non-indigenous population.

This is a very different logic to that which has, for instance, shaped African-American colonial history, which was rooted in slavery. The system of slavery intended that the population of slaves must increase as this enhanced the colonial system's economic capital, whereas in Australia any increase in the population of Aboriginal people was seen as economically counterproductive.¹

So Aboriginal people, including myself, are still sorted into classifications whereby dark-

skinned Aboriginal people are accepted as authentic, and fair-skinned Aboriginal people are seen as fraudulent. This only serves to further the rationale of diminishing the Aboriginal presence from mainstream view, and thus decreases the threat to the white man's wealth. A few members of the Aboriginal community internalise this logic and direct scorn and dismissal towards fair-skinned Aboriginal people, which is a type of destructive lateral violence: that is, the misdirection of violence toward one's peers rather than one's true adversaries. I have experienced this personally with community members who don't know me or my family asking how recently I have identified. These types of questions are damaging and hurtful, and not unlike when Andrew Bolt (in one of his ill-famed articles) specifically named my family as having chosen to identify without a genuine claim. I do not identify as Aboriginal, I am Aboriginal. I have as much control over my Aboriginality as I do my skin colour.

Lateral violence from within Community is a symptom of suppression and, for the most part, it is common. This violence compounds the sense of being an imposter and ironically is allied with Bolt and other conservative denialists. While this may represent the widespread mainstream understanding that authentic Aboriginality is rooted in blood quantum and skin colour, our lived reality is very different.

After decades of struggling I choose now, consciously and out of respect, to reject this internalised feeling of being an imposter. My identity does not need to be authenticated beyond the community that recognises me, the family that claims me and sense of self that I maintain. In honour of my ancestors, who keep me rooted as a being in and of place, from now on when people ask me why I am white I will answer: Because some Aboriginal people are.

insert COMMA after 'colour'



Abdul Abdullah
Most kind 2016
ceramic
17 x 12 x 7 cm



Abdul Abdullah
Most fair 2016
ceramic
17 x 12 x 7 cm

Most great 2016
ceramic
17 x 12 x 7 cm

Most strong 2016
ceramic
17 x 12 x 7 cm



Yoshua Okón
The Indian Project [still] 2015
single-channel video, colour, sound
duration: 15:26 minutes



Megan Cope
Discover your Aboriginality 2016
mixed media



Hany Armanious
Body Swap 2015
mirror, steel
150 x 200 x 55 cm

Image courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
Photograph: Peter Morgan



Abdul-Rahman Abdullah
Monster Maker 2016
51 x 48 x 27 cm
painted wood

Image courtesy of the artist and
This Is No Fantasy + Dianne Tanzer Gallery



Beth Dillon
 The Tallest Artist in Next Wave
 [Preliminary Sketch] 2016
 pen on paper
 29.7 x 21 cm



Tully Arnot
 Waterfall 2016
 digital print on fabric,
 shutterstock image, metal,
 plastic, motor, electronics
 350 x 120 x 15 cm



↑ Técha Noble, Casey Legler
and Jordan Graham
That Self (still) 2015
single-channel video
duration: 5:56 mins

→ Bindi Cole Chocka
Not Really Aboriginal [series] 2008
digital prints on rag paper



Sara Morawetz
You Are Here. [From 1:1
[After Umberto]] 2016
mirrored perspex,
mixed media installation
perspex: 50.8 x 50.8 cm



Tyza Stewart
Self Portrait 2015
oil on board
185 x 70 cm
Image courtesy of the artists and Heiser
Gallery, Brisbane
Photograph: Jon Linkins

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italics: 'The Fraud Complex'

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