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DAVID GRIGGS
BETWEEN NATURE & SIN
HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION RESOURCE

ABOUT THIS EDUCATION RESOURCE

This resource is designed for high school students and their teachers, for use before and after visiting the exhibition.

The content aims to provide a range of reference material to inform and extend students' engagement, structured around selected series of works within the exhibition. The kit includes visual reproductions and personal quotations, as well as discussion topics through to research-based and practical tasks.

Produced by Campbelltown Arts Centre to accompany the *DAVID GRIGGS: BETWEEN NATURE & SIN* exhibition presented in 2017.

CONTENT WARNING: A number of works included in this exhibition contain graphic content, scenes of violence, nudity and/or coarse language.

Cover image: ZOMBIE KISS, 2009. Courtesy of Hayman Collection.

CONTENTS

About the exhibition	4
About the artist	6
About Campbelltown Arts Centre	8
About Museums & Galleries of NSW	9
Selected series	
<i>Exchanging Culture for Flesh</i> (2005)	10
<i>The Bleeding Hearts Club</i> (2006)	12
NEW YORK LONDON PARIS ROME	14
MANILA CITY JAIL (2009)	
ZOMBIE KISS (2009)	16
<i>Frat of the Obese</i> (2011)	18
<i>Magic is Mentally Ill</i> (2014)	20
Feature film	
COWBOY COUNTRY (2016)	22
Extended responses	24
Further information	25

DAVID GRIGGS

BETWEEN NATURE & SIN

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

BETWEEN NATURE AND SIN is a solo exhibition of exceptional works by acclaimed Australian artist David Griggs who currently resides in Manila, the Philippines. Famous for his bold approach, Griggs takes the everyday and flips it to expose the cracks, exhuming the raw undercurrent of a society.

Borrowed popular references and street stories become Griggs' visual vocabulary which he uses to construct sophisticated compositions, often portraits, stripped back and charged with emotion. Drawing from political imagery, underground media and protest, local histories and personal experience Griggs manifests a narrative to capture daily life. He documents intimate chance moments and the deliberate actions of his friends, and strangers, within an unidentifiable Manila.

BETWEEN NATURE AND SIN features over a decade of past paintings, photographs and videos including *Exchanging Culture for Flesh*, *ZOMBIE KISS*, *Bleeding Hearts Club* and the premiere of *COWBOY COUNTRY*. A film inspired by realities and twisted with rumours, *COWBOY COUNTRY* follows the imminent fate of a Filipino American teenager who is kidnapped and held for ransom. Set in a fishing village and produced collaboratively with the community, this epic film features

Philippines film royalty Soliman Cruz, the late Dante Perez and Melanie Tejano.

Manila has challenged, broken and rebuilt Griggs in countless ways, as have his collaborations. The succession of this experience is revealed in the works presented in *BETWEEN NATURE AND SIN*.

Twelve years in the making, this exhibition will take you on a journey along the back streets of society that echoes many localities but at its core is Manila.

Developed by Campbelltown Arts Centre, *BETWEEN NATURE AND SIN* will tour nationally between 2018-19 through Museums & Galleries of NSW. National venues include Glasshouse Regional Gallery, Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Redlands Art Gallery, Cairns Regional Gallery, Lismore Regional Gallery, Griffith Regional Art Gallery, Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Orange Regional Gallery and Burrinja Cultural Centre. This exhibition is part of the Bayanihan Philippine Art Project, a collaboration between the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Blacktown Arts Centre, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Mosman Art Gallery and Peacock Gallery (Auburn) in association with Museums & Galleries of New South Wales.



Zoloft Nation (self portrait), 2009, acrylic on canvas, 282 x 232cm.
Germanos Collection, Sydney. Image courtesy of the artist.

DAVID GRIGGS

ABOUT THE ARTIST

David Griggs was born in Sydney in 1975 and grew up in the suburbs of Western Sydney. During adolescence, he turned to skateboarding and his art practice as a way to escape the drug and alcohol abuse that surrounded him. At the age of 18 Griggs began working for an underground newspaper, photographing poverty in North India and Nepal. In 1996, while travelling internationally, Griggs had a near death experience and has since devoted his life to producing paintings that explore the darker sides of humanity.

In 2005 Griggs undertook an Asialink Visual Art Residency in Manila, the Philippines. On route to Manila, he contracted a mystery illness forcing him to be admitted into hospital where he spent his first ten days in the city. This experience allowed him to peer past the tourist gaze and see Manila as locals see and experience it. Further inspired by local artists and the intense, contradictory nature of the city, he continuously returned to Manila and eventually relocated in 2009.

... I was travelling to different parts of Asia and different parts of the world, including South America, as a backpacker. I'm always fascinated by the naivety in paint, particularly in these poorer countries, where people just communicate in paint. They use paint

on advertising billboards—if something is broken you paint over it; and then I realised that the modernist ideas that we were taught could not be all there was, we have to look at the world and what's happening when we are talking about the application of paint. What University did give me was the freedom to explore ideas... I was just using it as a free studio and it had the most killer sculpture workshop where I was able to experiment.

David Griggs

Cited in Dagostino et al. 2017 page 1

Education

Bachelor of Visual Arts in Painting from Sydney College of the Arts (1999)

Masters of Fine Arts in Sculpture from the University of New South Wales (2007)

Select Group and Solo Exhibitions

Future Primitive, Heidi Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne (2013)

Bastards of Misrepresentation (doing time on Filipino time), Freies Museum, Berlin (2010)

David Griggs at IMA@TCB, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2008)

Blood on the Streets, Artspace, Sydney (2007)

Exchanging Culture for Flesh, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (2006)

The Buko Police, Green Papaya Art Projects, Manila (2005)

Awards

Archibald Prize (finalist), Art Gallery of New South Wales (2013)

Primavera Artist Prize, Museum of Contemporary Art (2007)

Freedman Foundation Travelling Art Scholarship for emerging artists (2003)

Sir William Dobell Scholarship, Sydney College of the Arts (1997)

Recommended Resources

Michael Dagostino, Megan Monte, David Griggs, Jarrod Rawlins and Sidd Perez, *David Griggs: BETWEEN NATURE AND SIN*, Campbelltown Art Centre 2017 (exhibition catalogue)

Kon Gouriotis, *David Griggs | Horror Business*, Artist Profile 2016

<http://www.artistprofile.com.au/david-griggs/>

Anni Turnbull, *the art of skating – David Griggs*, Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences 2014 <https://maas.museum/inside-the-collection/2014/01/13/the-art-of-skating-david-griggs/>

Rose Vickers, *Interview | David Griggs | Vibewire* 2008 <https://vickersvoogel.wordpress.com/2008/06/25/interview-david-griggs-vibewire/>

Themes

Portraiture

Filipino mural art

Tattoos, graffiti, street culture

Relationship between painting, photography, video and film

Vibrant colour, form and composition

Storytelling

Case studies

Manuel Ocampo

Louie Cordero

Jean Michel Basquiat

Diego Rivera

Juan Davila

Guy Maestri

Shaun Gladwell

Adam Cullen

These artists are recommended to study alongside David Griggs. They range from collaborators and peers; some have inspired Griggs' work; others are part of Australian or international movements in which Griggs' practice can be situated.



CAMPBELLTOWN ARTS CENTRE

ABOUT C-A-C

Located on the edge of Sydney, Campbelltown Arts Centre (C-A-C) is in a unique position to forge collaborative exchanges between artists, disciplines and communities. These opportunities allow for new curatorial situations to occur and challenging streams of practice to be realised. C-A-C is a national leader in the delivery of an expanding high quality community engaged contemporary artistic program. C-A-C is located on Tharawal land, with strong ties with Aboriginal Elders and community and is owned and managed by Campbelltown City Council.

Using the edge as a starting point, C-A-C creates a secure platform for communities and artists to take risks, challenge perceptions, confront issues, ask questions and create experiences through the commissioning of new works

that invite collaboration, partnership, local/national/international dialogue, the collision of emerging and traditional techniques, and cross-disciplinary approaches. This is achieved by placing contemporary artists at the forefront of our programming, through an open process of consultation with our communities in south-west Sydney and beyond, the continuation of our key strategic priority areas, and diversification of our resource base to deliver a program that profiles contemporary visual arts, performance, dance, music, live art and emergent practices.

Photo: Installation view, Campbelltown Arts Centre, 2017. Photograph by Document Photography.

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES OF NSW

ABOUT M&G NSW

Museums & Galleries of NSW (M&G NSW) helps museums, galleries and Aboriginal cultural centres of NSW create exciting and inspiring experiences for visitors and strong, thriving local communities. We develop their skills, connect them with others in the industry, provide funding, point visitors their way and give them access to ground-breaking exhibitions.

Our focus is the 500+ organisations in NSW that have the passion to inspire their communities and visitors through art, artefacts, stories and ideas but do not always have the means to realise their potential. And with 66% of museums, galleries and cultural centres located outside of metro areas, we also want to help more people discover the many cultural gems NSW has to offer.

M&G NSW runs the largest regional touring program in NSW, delivering the very best contemporary Australian art to regional, remote and metropolitan audiences through the comprehensive network of public galleries Australia wide. We partner with artists, curators, regional galleries, contemporary art spaces, university galleries and other producing organisations to develop innovative exhibitions for tour nationally. We work directly with artists and commission new work for the benefit of Australian regional audiences.

Our exhibitions and associated programs balance the programming needs of regional galleries and support their staff, facilitate skill sharing and professional development, foster collaboration and build connections, capacity and networks for artists, curators and arts workers across distance.

Our program reflects the capacity and diversity of the sector with a focus on access and engagement. We present the full spectrum of contemporary art practice by leading artists, both emerging and established including Richard Bell, Tracey Moffatt + Gary Hillberg, Patricia Piccinini, Justene Williams, Claire Healy + Sean Cordeiro, Mikala Dwyer, Angelica Mesiti, Deborah Kelly, Jason Wing, Joan Ross and Caroline Garcia. Each of our exhibitions engage diverse audiences through a range of public and educational programs, interpretative material, digital resources and scholarly publications written by curators, academics and experts.

In the last five years, M&G NSW has reached over 875,000 visitors nationwide through 24 exhibitions of contemporary art and craft that toured to 131 galleries across six States and Territories.

This is one of those exhibitions where you walk into the gallery space and are almost physically assaulted by its retinal ping, as colour seemingly pulses off the walls and images jostle with a "look at me" attitude... What is interesting here is the kind of ownership of a style - a movement, dare we ask? - that has an echo of grunge and skater culture but is as conceptually driven as the classiest echelons of contemporary art.

Gina Fairley, 'Between Nature and Sin: David Griggs', ArtsHub, 2017.

EXCHANGING CULTURE FOR FLESH

(2005)

This series of large scale paintings depicts scenes both picturesque and disturbing. In each work, Griggs has placed slightly amiss figures over unassuming backgrounds and simple natural landscapes. These superimposed images are jarring not just in their references to violence and death, but also in the way they seem to forcefully insert themselves into a painting that doesn't want them.

Figures include a blue skeleton that appears as if spray painted onto a horse; an apparent Osama Bin Laden casting no shadow as he happily floats over a lake; a disembodied T-rex head, its imagined body impossibly hidden behind a narrow tree; two dimensional militant figures in balaclavas and patterned silhouettes all cut-and-pasted onto unyielding landscapes.

The works are informed by Griggs' extensive travel, but are distinct from later works which are so deeply embedded in the culture of Manila and the Philippines following his 2005 residency and 2009 relocation. The works consider cultural and political contexts of an uncertain world, the disruptive fear of terrorism increasing fissures since 2001, alongside repression and global pressures which are continually eroding culture within marginalized societies.

This series was first exhibited at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2006, installed on cartoon-like mural backdrops of a brick wall, cloud-dotted sky, camouflage patterns alongside a living room setting of worn out couches on a giant Persian carpet.

Further resources

David Griggs: Exchanging culture for flesh, Art Gallery of New South Wales 2006
http://archive.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/media/archives_2006/david_griggs/

Questions

- 1) Identify three ways this work shows a fake or artificial scene. If something doesn't belong in the landscape, what techniques tell us it is out of place?
- 2) In your own words, explain some of the curatorial techniques in the 2006 exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.
- 3) Elaborate on why the artist, in collaboration with the curator, would have chosen to create an artificial environment within the gallery.

Research

- 4) Why would an artist show a disturbing or poorly constructed image?

In your answer, focus on the relationship between the work, artist, audience and world.



Hellfire homestead BUSH wacking dingo #1, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 183 x 153cm.
Courtesy of Hayman Collection.

THE BLEEDING HEARTS CLUB

(2006)

The Bleeding Hearts Club is an ambitious series of paintings intended to be installed as billboards, large and looming sculptural pieces. The series was created as a personal response to what Griggs witnessed in the Philippines; death, violence, poverty, religion, sex, all written on huge scale banners throughout Manila.

Every trip to Manila I spent longer and longer, and wondered what was really going on here. It was politically charged and it was chaos. You know, there is something about the constant movement of a 24-hour city. It usually stresses people out; but I always need a distraction and making art can offer a part of the distraction. So as soon as you walk out the door it is on, with a constant flow of distractions, a flow changing every week. Streets changing direction then authorities blocking them off. Nothing here is constant and for an artist, that's an interesting place to live in.

David Griggs

Cited in Dagostino et al. 2017 page 8

Following his 2005 residency in Manila, Griggs created *The Bleeding Hearts Club*, a series of eight large scale paintings. These works drew inspiration and directly quoted photographs from a series created and exhibited in Manila, *The Buko Police* (the coconut police). *Bleeding Hearts Club* is a bold representation of contemporary Filipino pop culture and inspired by the huge billboards of the iconic thoroughfare of Metro Manila. They were produced in collaboration with established Filipino mural artist Manuel Ocampo, renowned for his prolific paintings that traverse social and political territories specifically within a Filipino context.

The paintings explore the culture of Manila, providing audiences with insight into how Manila is perceived by tourists and how locals really live once you venture outside of the city and standard destinations; extreme poverty, social injustices and struggle are reality.

Further resources

Prizes: Archibald Prize 2007, Art Gallery of New South Wales 2007

<https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/archibald/2007/28467/>

Tracey Clement, *The Bleeding Hearts Club*, Sydney Morning Herald, 2006

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/arts-reviews/the-bleeding-hearts-club/2006/12/19/1166290515992.html>

Questions

- 1) Identify at least three symbols in *The Bleeding Hearts Club* #8.
- 2) Suggest one theme or social issue that each of these symbols brings to mind.
- 3) Griggs has juxtaposed both serious, dark symbols as well as playful, rude symbols in these works. With reference to your answers above, discuss the effect of placing these different symbols together.

Practical

- 4) Create a photo series documenting your home and surrounds, with attention to how locals live in your area.

Consider how your photographs can offer a different perspective to the way visitors might perceive your area, or create a 'behind the scenes' view.



The Bleeding Hearts Club #8, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 320 x 400cm.
Image courtesy of the artist.

This is where I started photographing people on the streets with home-made tattoos. I didn't know until a skater friend told me that they were gang insignia, and they were concerned that I was photographing gang members, but I wasn't, I just thought their tattoos were crazy. So all of a sudden it went from being ignorant of the symbolism, to getting a crash course, to understanding it, all of the meanings from the idea to the actual tattoo. Then realising that all the tattoos were done in jail and I was photographing people that had previously been incarcerated.

David Griggs

Cited in Dagostino et al. 2017 page 8-9

NEW YORK LONDON PARIS ROME MANILA CITY JAIL (2009)

David Griggs painted these works in collaboration with inmates of the Manila City Jail, Recto, Manila. Each of the large scale canvases contains a coat of arms for the various convict fraternities or gangs within the jail.

The series also includes photographic documentation of the coat of arms in their original contexts. The symbols appear inside the prison compound as murals to mark out territories but are also used in tattoos, a source of pride and dignity for members living in cramped and at times unsanitary conditions.

The development of this work was an extremely significant point in Griggs' life and artistic practice as it stripped him of his tourist title and made him a local.

The experience changed my whole outlook of Manila. I began to understand the code the inmates lived by and it was an education I wasn't sure if I really wanted to have. But I did, and all of my ideas about the society changed. The veil was lifted. In a way the project made me a local. No more tourist living here. I knew too much.

David Griggs, 2017

Cited in Dagostino et al. 2017 page 67

Further resources

David Griggs: NEW YORK LONDON ROME MANILA CITY JAIL, Green Papaya Art Projects 2009

<http://papayapost.blogspot.com.au/2009/05/may-6-david-griggs-new-york-london.html>

Questions

1) Griggs' paintings have what has been called a 'skillful badness'.

Truth to Power, The Art Life 2006
<https://theartlife.com.au/2006/truth-to-power/>

Describe how the paintings in this series show both amateur and skilled approaches, with attention to technique, colour, composition and/or subject matter.

2) Identify three different forms of appropriation or quotation happening in the painting, *NEW YORK LONDON PARIS ROME MANILA CITY JAIL No 4*.

Consider different cultural references, as well as the painting process.

3) This painting includes a coat of arms to symbolise a group within the prison. Creatively imagine and describe what this symbol means to its members and where else it is displayed.

Discuss

4) In what ways is this series, by David Griggs, different to the coat of arms appearing on jail walls, or a mural painted on a community hall?

Is one more valuable than the other?

Discuss the value of the work in relation to the audience, world around it, artist(s) as well as the mediums of the different works.



NEWYORK LONDON PARIS ROME MANILA CITY JAIL No 4, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 212 x 243 cm.
Image courtesy of the artist.



NEWYORK LONDON PARIS ROME MANILA CITY JAIL, 2009.
Photographic documentation.

... I was about to publish a book, which I had been working on with members of the local Bahala Na Gang: a photographic essay about gang tattoos. So at this time I myself felt like a walking cliché: the white middle class male foreign artist who is welcomed with open arms into the slums of Manila to conceptualise projects, then at the end of the day goes back to an air-con studio. I was a joke within my own art practice so I wanted my identity to be in question not the Bahala Na Gang's.

David Griggs (discussing *Zolof nation (self portrait)*, 2009)

Cited in Prizes: Archibald Prize 2009, Art Gallery of New South Wales 2009

<https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/prizes/archibald/2009/28765/>

ZOMBIE KISS

(2009)

This 2009 series layers a range of seemingly disparate symbols, but more obscured and abstracted than previous works. In the context of today's visual culture where images are not just abundant but vital, the meaning of each symbol in these works becomes less important than the appropriation itself.

Most recognisable in each painting is the figure of a woman, often partially naked with tattoos, markings, scarification or jewellery. The figures have poses and dress similar to historical anthropological photographs, tools of oppression and colonialism used to document diverse people around the world. These historical photos were usually carefully set up by the photographer, telling more about the photographer and their culture than the person in front of the camera.

Griggs has used a similar tool of colonisation in attacking each of these figures with crude marks, scrawled words, graffiti-like body modifications. These rich paintings also incorporate other stolen symbols of swastikas, skulls, a suit of clubs from playing cards, crescent moon and star but also broken hearts and cartoon figures.

Further resources

David Griggs: Zombie Kiss,

Hayman Design 2009

<http://www.haymandesign.com.au/cms-publication/david-griggs/index.php>

Questions

- 1) Read the quote from an essay by Jarrod Rawlins on p. 17 and explain the use of the crescent moon and star in ZOMBIE KISS. Stage 6: In your answer, discuss both the cultural significance of the symbol and the relationship between the artist and the work.
- 2) Research the following terms and explain the meaning of each.
 - Appropriation (in a visual art context)
 - Cultural appropriation

Discuss

- 3) How does Griggs' work challenge the concept of appropriation? What does it mean to borrow images from minority groups, for use by dominant cultures? Do you think his work brings to question this abuse of power? Can audiences' emotional responses change the ethical nature of an art work?



ZOMBIE KISS, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 290 x 183 cm.
Private collection.



ZOMBIE KISS, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 290 x 183 cm.
Private collection.

It seems important to David the way a symbol represents something abstract with a history and tradition, and then how that symbol becomes appropriated by culture and politics to represent something very different to its earlier meaning.

Take the Islamic star and crescent moon for example. Today an internationally recognised symbol of Islam, it was originally used by the Zhou Dynasty [China 1045 BC – 256 BC], the Greeks and the Persians. It wasn't until after the Ottomans copied it that it became a symbol representative of Islam in general... For Griggs, the details of the symbol, its meaning if you like, may not be as important as the cultural appropriation. Griggs has a tattoo of the star and crescent moon on his wrist... This symbol appears as a smudged tattoo on the breast of one of the women in Griggs' Zombie Kiss paintings. Above it the woman wears a swastika on her necklace, while below her breasts her traditional tribal markings or scarring are still visible.

Jarrod Rawlins, David Griggs: *Zombie Kiss*, Uplands Publishing, 2009.

FRAT OF THE OBESE

(2011)

This series articulates the techniques and styles of Manila art and culture that had originally captivated Griggs during his first visit to the Philippines. Griggs combines underground motifs, symbols of popular culture and street stories to illustrate issues within the political and social structures of the Philippines.

He is both an outsider or 'other', intentionally positioning himself on the periphery of mainstream culture, but also immersing himself in the cultural substrata that become his subjects...

This imagery seems to pour forth from diverse sources – skateboard graphics, tattoos, sub-cultural animation, painted religious icons, Bollywood films, graffiti, placemats, pirate CDs, hip hop, and Irish linen tea-towels...

Neil Fetting, hired hands: the Filipino collaborations of David Griggs, Artlink 2008 page 42

Drawing on his active participation and engagement with everyday Filipino culture and communities, Griggs is able to borrow from his surroundings to construct a new reality within his works. He creates a language of the city, a visual vocabulary which echoes the industrial development of Manila. Griggs' work draws on daily practices of painting over previous signs, superficial repairs to buildings, manifesting the façade of a new city over the top of existing, dilapidated constructions.

The series shows excess, gluttony, exorbitance and waste – without necessarily

commenting on this as positive or negative. *Frat of Obese* returns to Griggs' early portraiture, combining imagery and motifs of the new façade, a superficial mask that is Manila.

Further resources

DAVID GRIGGS, *Frat of the Obese*, 2011, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery 2011
<http://www.roslynoxley9.com.au/news/releases/2011/04/07/195>

Questions

1) *Frat of the Obese* reflects excess as well as the way Manila is being continuously re-built. Locate two images to symbolise gluttony or re-construction.

Discuss

2) As a class, research postmodern architecture. Discuss how this movement compares to *Frat of the Obese* and Griggs' interest in the ongoing re-construction of Manila.

Practical

3) Work in small groups to create a collaborative painting.

- Start by working individually on wooden boards or cardboard, to create a commercial street sign.
- Swap signs so that another member of the group works over the top of the sign – adding random symbols, graffiti-like features or vandalizing the original work to either obscure or change its meaning.
- Swap signs again, for another member of the group to paint on crude constructions or barricades, such as wooden beams, prison bars or solid strips of colour.



Frat of the Obese 14, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 110 × 128.5 cm.
Courtesy of the artist & Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

MAGIC IS MENTALLY ILL (2014)

Throughout this photo series, Griggs has used the camera as an extension of himself to capture his daily life, documenting intimate chance moments and the deliberate actions of his friends whilst living in Manila.

His work intertwines global and local pop culture with street and gang aesthetics, infused with dark satire. Behind this series lies a critique of the representation of poverty in the Philippines, portraying local identities and individual personalities through a twisted lens

Unlike the traditional role of a photojournalist as an outside onlooker, Griggs shows an insider's perspective. Using tight shots and moving low with the camera, Griggs documented his friends on a daily basis. He used sunsets and coloured walls as backgrounds, cutting out dull, recognizable streetscapes of Manila as well as any identifiable skateboarding terrain.

Further resources

DAVID GRIGGS: *Magic is Mentally Ill*, Station, 2014

Includes link to text: Jack Willet interview with David Griggs

<http://stationgallery.com.au/exhibitions/david-griggs-2014>

I'm looking for the absurd and the beautiful at the same time... Like the photograph of the man's legs. One of his legs has gang green and is rotting away. I will encounter that on my way to the train station then 40min later I will be in another location surrounded by a beautiful sunset and gorgeous women.

That's absurd to me. And it's completely amusing and horrific. The extremities of life that's what I'm documenting.

David Griggs

Cited in Willet 2014 page 2

Questions

- 1) David Griggs is interested in the beautiful and the absurd. Describe the emotions you feel when looking at the images from this series.
- 2) Some of the photographs look like they could have been taken from Instagram, while other images are more disturbing or abstract.

After viewing the works in the exhibition:

- a. Identify what it is about some images that creates a social media aesthetic.
- b. Explain why other images wouldn't belong on social media platforms.
- c. What is the emotional effect on the audience in placing these different images together?

Discuss

- 3) Research and discuss poverty tourism or slum tourism.

Discuss the ways tourists might exploit or dehumanize the people they photograph while on holidays, or create photographs which reinforce stereotypes.

Consider the quotes from Griggs and describe the artist and their context, compared to a photographer on holidays. Does an artists' process and context change the final artwork?



Magic is Mentally Ill #10, 2014, digital colour photograph, 41 x 63 cm.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Magic is Mentally Ill #15, 2014, digital colour photograph, 80 x 114cm.
Image courtesy of the artist.

I have always been interested in the marginalised. More specifically I'm interested in how people create a way out or a way to stay stable within their situation. I came from this sort of background also. I grew up in an area that was full of drug and alcohol abuse. What saved me was skateboarding; it gave me an outlet and a community that was outside and different than the environment surrounding me. Skateboarding is an extremely creative thing to do and be part of. Living here in Manila and being engaged in the skateboarding community on a daily basis I suddenly realised that I had never documented it. I had never photographed my friends or the culture. It was so liberating to photograph from the inside. The camera became invisible. It's all about trust and once you have that that's truth.

David Griggs

Cited in Willet, 2014, page 1.

COWBOY COUNTRY

(2016)

Warning: This film contains violence, adult themes, and is not recommended for viewers under 15 years.

David Griggs' *COWBOY COUNTRY* is an epic feature length film, appearing to be shot through a series of Instagram filters. Griggs was inspired to create the film after reading a fabricated story in the local newspaper, the Philippine Star.

Maintaining his ethical, locally situated practice, the film involved both locally employed extras alongside Filipino film stars. Local collaboration was key to working effectively in the diverse culture and language of the Philippines, both a small fishing community and the city of Manila.

In a story of love, loss and death, the narrative follows the kidnapping of a Filipino American teenager, Kevin. Looking to find out more about his heritage while on holidays in the Philippines, Kevin finds himself kidnapped and held for ransom by un-named, armed men, but goes on to fall in love with the commander's mistress.

Interviewing the artist about the film, Campbelltown Arts Centre curator Megan Monte drew a comparison between David Griggs and the main character, Kevin. Though not literally kidnapped, Griggs is also an outsider in the Philippines – not from the Philippines, yet deeply connected to place and culture.

... yeah, Kevin is me. I couldn't exactly cast myself. Mondrian Sampang was perfect, though. He has the same spirit I do, the same interests as I did as a teenager. He's a skater kid, an outsider, lost and then kidnapped in the Philippines.

David Griggs

Cited in Dagostino et al. 2017 page 69

Questions

1) Describe three structural features of these images.

Discuss

2) Why do you think the artist chose to use Instagram filters in creating a feature film?

Consider this structural choice from the perspective of the artist and his process, as well as how it impacts the audience's connection with the work.

Practical

3) Create your own short film using social media filter(s).

a. As a class, select a relevant social media platform (eg. Snapchat, Instagram).

Identify the limitations and difficulties in creating a film with this platform.

Discuss some of its common uses and most popular content.

b. In groups of 3 – 5 people, write a short film which comments on a specific part of social media (eg. online bullying, cat pictures, FOMO).

c. In planning and shooting your film, select relevant filter(s) to help highlight or critique this element of social media and/or your chosen platform.



COWBOY COUNTRY (still), 2014, single channel video, feature length, 80min. Photography by Jed Escueta.



COWBOY COUNTRY (still), 2014, single channel video, feature length, 80min. Photography by Jed Escueta.

Filming commenced in 2013 in Barangay Badian, a small fishing village surrounded by jungle situated on the Sibuyan Sea, and one of the closest towns to a stronghold of the New People's Army (NPA). Badian isn't necessarily an identifiable place for the majority of the film's intended audience, and COWBOY COUNTRY's constructed 'tropical oasis' plays to this Western perspective of the Philippines.

Megan Monte, 'Gangs Cowboys and Collaborations', David Griggs: BETWEEN NATURE AND SIN, Campbelltown Arts Centre 2017 (exhibition catalogue), page 68.

EXTENDED RESPONSES

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

1) Compare the layers within the paintings of David Griggs to the society, culture and/or history of Manila.

In your answer, connect Griggs' work with one of the following aspects of Manila:

- Contemporary culture
- Impact of invasion, occupation, colonisation
- Religion
- Architecture

2) As a class, discuss the way David Griggs' representations of space, perspective and figures have shifted over the course of his paintings from 2005 to 2011.

3) Historically, European artists have depicted places and cultures that are not their own. Research the work and life of Paul Gauguin, with a focus on his paintings in Tahiti.

Outline how David Griggs' representation of a place or culture is different to Paul Gauguin's approach. In your answer, refer to at least one quote from David Griggs and two to three artworks in this resource.

5) As curator Megan Monte describes, *COWBOY COUNTRY* 'plays to this Western perspective' of the Philippines as a 'tropical oasis'.

This approach contrasts with earlier series where David Griggs was interested in showing how locals really live in Manila, as opposed to how tourists perceive the city.

Compare or relate these different techniques, referring to artworks from an earlier series as well as *COWBOY COUNTRY*. Suggest why the artist chose each approach, considering details such as medium, audiences, as well as time and context.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Managed by Museum & Galleries of NSW *BETWEEN NATURE AND SIN* will tour nationally between 2018-2019 to the following galleries and art centres:

Glasshouse Regional Gallery, NSW	9 March - 22 April 2018
Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, NT	9 June - 7 July 2018
Redland Art Gallery, QLD	22 July - 26 August 2018
Cairns Regional Gallery, QLD	28 September - 25 November 2018
Lismore Regional Gallery, NSW	8 December 2018 - 3 March 2019
Griffith Regional Art Gallery, NSW	22 March - 21 April 2019
Maitland Regional Art Gallery, NSW	4 May - 21 July 2019
Orange Regional Gallery, NSW	2 August - 29 September 2019
Burrinja Cultural Centre, VIC	12 October - 8 December 2019

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<http://www.mgnsw.org.au/sector/exhibitions>
<http://c-a-c.com.au>

#BetweenNatureAndSin #DavidGriggs