

# Rendering Self and Microaggressions Visible Through the Shadow Image

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Volume 12, numéro 2, 2021

Massive/Micro Sensemaking: Towards Post-pandemic Futures

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1085736ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE.MM.12.2.5>

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Éditeur(s)

York University

ISSN

1918-8439 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Snepvangers, K. (2021). Rendering Self and Microaggressions Visible Through the Shadow Image. *Imaginations*, 12(2), 71–95.  
<https://doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE.MM.12.2.5>

Résumé de l'article

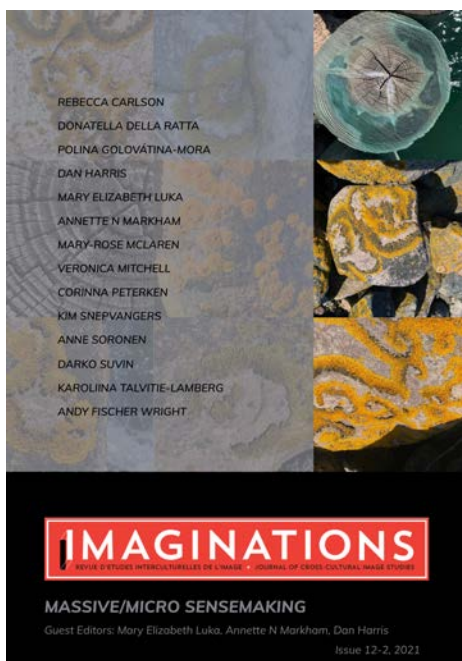
Ce projet, qui a débuté avec Prompt #2 du Massive Micro Sensemaking (MMS) dirigé par Annette Markham et Anne Harris de mai à juin 2020, m'a aidé à faire face à l'anxiété causée par le confinement de la COVID-19. J'ai mis en place quatre représentations visuelles - une série de photographies qui, à travers un processus de déploiement, établissent des liens avec des questionnements plus larges au cours de mes recherches d'archives dans le contexte de la colonisation de Sydney, en Australie. Explorer l'expérience vécue à travers la photographie prévoit un objectif a/r/tographique créatif, axé sur la représentation des objets afin qu'ils prennent un aspect plus que représentatif, touchant la matérialité des objets en tant que données. Adapter la superposition des rendus va au-delà de l'aspect dimensionnel en tant que simple capture d'un phénomène observé. Cette première photographie a ici une couche d'ombre supplémentaire pour créer du volume et recréer des semblants du monde figuratif à travers le reflet.

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IMAGINATIONS:

JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL IMAGE STUDIES |  
REVUE D'ÉTUDES INTERCULTURELLES DE  
L'IMAGE

Publication details, including open access policy  
and instructions for contributors:

<http://imaginationsglendon.yorku.ca>

**Massive/Micro Sensemaking:  
Towards Post-pandemic Futures**  
**Guest Editors: Mary Elizabeth  
Luka, Annette Markham, Dan  
Harris**

**December 23, 2021**

Image credit: Annette N Markham

To cite this article:

Snepvangers, Kim. "Rendering Self and Microaggressions Visible Through the Shadow Image." *Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, December 23, 2021, pp. 71–95, doi: 10.17742/IMAGE.MM.12.2.5.

To link to this article:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE.MM.12.2.5>



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## RENDERING SELF AND MICROAGRESSIONS VISIBLE THROUGH THE SHADOW IMAGE

KIM SNEPVANGERS

*This project, starting with Prompt 2 from the Massive Micro Sensemaking (MMS) led by Annette Markham and Anne Harris in May through June 2020, assisted me to move through the anxiety of COVID-19 lockdown. I set up four visual renderings—a series of photographs that, through a process of unfolding, make links to broader issues in my archival research in the context of settler colonial Sydney, Australia. Exploring lived experience through photography anticipates a creative a/r/tographic lens, focusing on rendering objects so that they take on a more-than-representational aspect, touching the materiality of objects as data. Adaptively layering the renderings moves beyond one dimensionality as a strict capturing of an observed phenomena. Here, an initial photograph has a latent, additional layer of shadow to build volume and re-cast semblances of the representational world through reflection.*

*Ce projet, qui a débuté avec Prompt #2 du Massive Micro Sensemaking (MMS) dirigé par Annette Markham et Anne Harris de mai à juin 2020, m'a aidé à faire face à l'anxiété causée par le confinement de la COVID-19. J'ai mis en place quatre représentations visuelles - une série de photographies qui, à travers un processus de déploiement, établissent des liens avec des questionnements plus larges au cours de mes recherches d'archives dans le contexte de la colonisation de Sydney, en Australie. Explorer l'expérience vécue à travers la photographie prévoit un objectif a/r/tographique créatif, axé sur la représentation des objets afin qu'ils prennent un aspect plus que représentatif, touchant la matérialité des objets en tant que données. Adapter la superposition des rendus va au-delà de l'aspect dimensionnel en tant que simple capture d'un phénomène observé. Cette première photographie a ici une couche d'ombre supplémentaire pour créer du volume et recréer des semblants du monde figuratif à travers le reflet.*

*I acknowledge the Bidjigal and Gadigal peoples of the Eora nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which I work. I acknowledge the Gamayngal people of Kamay (Botany Bay) as the traditional custodians of the land on which I live. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Sovereignty never ceded.*

## THE MASSIVE MICRO SENSEMAKING PROJECT AND POSITIONING

In creating photos to capture habituated yet non-interrogated routines, I engage transformative encounters with seductive photographic moments that are about objects, yet they maintain invisible micro-aggressions hidden in plain sight. By examining ways of understanding locutionary positionality within a geographic council area, static, pre-determined notions of community/collectivity can be challenged. Using conceptions of the local that encompass personal, community, and council boundaries, due to the pandemic lockdown, I seek nuanced understandings of Australian identity through new spatial perspectives that I had not previously considered. This unsettling work provokes audiences to interrogate their own origins and question belonging in a nation built on genocide and lies. Through visual images that move towards contemporary possibilities of reclamation, this project creates new entanglements of Self, the Other, and the World with a provocative gaze that focuses on the system itself.

The Massive Micro Sensemaking Project (MMS) led by Annette Markham and Anne Harris in May through June 2020 was a self-guided series of prompts conducted over 21 days. The autoethnographic challenge was to “build embodied sensibilities towards the material we study, practice autoethnographic forms of writing and analysis, and transform personal experiences through this COVID-19 moment into critical understanding of scale, sensemaking, and relationality of humans, nonhumans, and the planet” (Markham and Harris 2020, 1). Engaging with the MMS project through embodied relationality set the stage for an engagement with post discourses

and prioritizing the materialist critique of representation through “movement, change and the emergence of the new” (MacLure 2013, 659). In this case a “more than representational” (Lorimer 2005; Thrift 2008; Thrift & Dewsbury 2000; Connell 2013) sense of the significance of alternative educative spaces, informs this article. Rather than purporting a sedentary social progress narrative, the role of artmaking practices in promoting encounters of care is discussed. A “more-than-representational” approach has been devised to show how visually layered or rendered images provide a powerful ‘voice’ in working with settler colonial relations and environmental sensibilities. Rendering (Levoy 1990) is a commonly used graphical technique typically utilized in computer graphics, which I have appropriated for its focus on photographic layering of pixels through the casting of rays to generate image volume and dimensionality. In my case, though, rendering involves the sensemaking of casting and recasting shadow.

Rendering images in this way links to cultural identity and spatial concepts such as entanglement, specifically through the lens of potentialities for internal transformation (Papastergiadis 2003). Rather than cultural identity being sedentary, fixed to a place, or universalised analytically, Papastergiadis employs Michel de Certeau’s (1988) distinction between place and space. The constitution of self in the world, positionality, and ties to the “constitutive force of space in identity formation” (Papastergiadis 165) are linked to forming dynamic narratives rather than seeing place as a stable entity. Papastergiadis notes that “Place is the way in which we inhabit and arrange our activity to intensify our attachment to a particular territory” (165). Providing a contrasting view of space, de Certeau suggests that “space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities and time variables ... Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalise it ... Space is a practised place” (1988, 96). To enhance the spatial intensity, force, and qualities of temporality in my work, I engage processual walking through arts-based inquiry (Snepvangers et al., 2019), through a/r/tographic methodology (Irwin 2013; Cutcher 2015; Lazszik-Cutcher and Irwin 2017; Lazszik-Cutcher 2018). To add the vectors of ren-

dering directionality, velocity, and time during lockdown, I woke and observed the same objects and considered the potentiality of shadows each day. The question became: how to include and layer shadow imagery to create temporality with both contemporary objects and issues with historical import? Gradually adding a short walking routine, I started with the shadows in my mirror, then I walked to fill my garbage bin (each day) to empty it (each week on a Monday), and finally as a practice of everyday life I walked around the streetscape block each day. The garbage bins from the unit blocks appear on my walk every Thursday in their serial splendour, only to be absent again by about 10:30 am.

The kinds of everyday place making activities undertaken during the pandemic are not simply then about intensifying my attachment to place. In a way, I am already attached, and my sensing observations are rather spatial meanderings about self and microaggression to form a circuitous route towards making visible the tensions and microaggressions extant in Australian society. How previously invisible thoughts and tensions have been brought forth through shadow rendering is shown with deliberate directionality, a velocity that brings the past into the present, playing with temporality.

In arts-based inquiry, such post-qualitative methodologies manifest as “creative assemblages, articulated through modes of arts-based, practice-based, artistic, research-creation, and in this case, a/r/tographic inquiry” (Sinner 2021, 2). Here I am then, situated in Sydney, near Kamay (Botany Bay), New South Wales, Australia with a key focus on shadow imagery as a way of sensemaking in the pandemic. As Irwin (2013) argues, energizing continuous movement with new spaces of exchange, relationality, intensity, and becoming are key features of an a/r/tographic approach. What MMS allowed me to do was to add to a/r/tographic sensemaking by exploring “object itineraries as encounters, rather than more common approaches of object representations or object biographies, which retain qualities of human centeredness” (Sinner 2021, 2). This focus on the perspective of the object has been developed largely from Prompt 2 in the MMS challenge.

## PROMPT 2—RENDERING SELF THROUGH OBJECT ITINERARIES

**M**y focus in this article is on Prompt 2/21 in the MMS project, which provided a rich source of material data from the purview of the object. Prompt 2 asked participants to:

“Take photos of the three most intimate/familiar objects in your lockdown. What have you spent the most time with? Write a couple of paragraphs each from the perspective of each object (hint: you do NOT have to be the subject of their attention!). Write in the first person.” (Markham and Harris 2020, 4).

This focus greatly assisted me on moving from my human frailty and anxiety in thinking through pandemic experiences by providing a strong catalyst to make a start on the project at the micro level, at home. This is where the shadows first appeared. Prompt 2 allowed me the time and space to visually focus on intimate and familiar objects. In this case, following Barad, my mirror became ‘live,’ emergent, and actionable through a photographic sensorial phenomenon of lockdown, as in Figure 1, where:

“A phenomenon is a specific intra-action of an ‘object’; and the ‘measuring agencies’; the object and the measuring agencies emerge from, rather than precede, the intra-action that produces them.” (Barad 2007, 128).

Writing from the perspective of the object caused me to interrogate previously unthought about, overlooked ideas, feelings, and affective image making within my locutionary gaze. This change in my usual proceedings started visually, photographically, with space for contemplating the diffraction of a temporal light phenomenon and for developing new starting points for creative artworks and intra-action (Barad 2007, 2003).

Alongside this time-in-place creation, a new emergent contemplative space was evolving around my unknown paternal ancestry and cultural identity. Previous exhibition and performative work about troubling my paternal Indigenous ancestry in Australia with the artistic collective SISTAS Holding Space (2020, 2019, 2018) and my artworks

(Snepvangers 2020, 2019, 2018a, 2018b, and 2018c) began to coalesce. A new mode of inquiry began to emerge from the MMS project, focused on rendering ‘visible’ the various forms of shadow imagery to actively interrogate becoming. The modes were generated using unprecedented pandemic thinking during social distancing, lockdowns, and quarantine: all terms with historical class- and race-based precedents in the Australian settler colonial context. Concerns with identity, ancestry, and belonging as well as an ethics of care have been the subject of my earlier photographic artworks, films, and performative pieces (Snepvangers 2020, 2019, 2018a, 2018b, and 2018c). Typically, in non-COVID-19 times, I conduct my work with SISTAS Holding Space an artistic collective of Australian women academic artist researchers, with Aboriginal, convict, settler, and migrant ancestries. MMS, however, gave me permission as an individual to slow down and build new embodied sensibilities by considering new ways to explore understandings of dissent within Australian identity formation. Rather than just focusing on new observational foci or making previously invisible histories visible, I am interested in troubling ancestries and exposing daily misrepresentations that have until now been sitting, searing in the background of tensions surrounding my unknown cultural identity.

What is of interest is finding a visual sense-based approach to welcome Indigenous Australian Sovereignty alongside environmental alignment, especially when your own paternal family history is not available through western archives, ancestries, and family tree research. This series of four visual renderings show how attention to sensemaking through local “microscopic practices of everyday life and inquiry connects it with the massive scales and macroscopic aspects of this moment in time” (Markham, Harris, and Luka 2020, 1). In this granular case, layers of materiality have been adaptively refined over time to evoke larger tensions in the construction of belonging in the Australian nation state. Visual rendering as a research sensibility has been built in two ways: through individual adaptations in each of the photographs in Figures 1, 2, 4, and 5; and through the transitions in the article itself via mirror>shadow, logo>shadow, row of bins>shadow, and row of bins/filmic cuts>shadow. It is



my contention that visual rendering of self and microaggressions through an array of objects layered with diverse cast shadows gradually builds the volume and intensity of meaning in each photograph through attention to personal, cultural, and environmental sensibilities.

## RENDERING MICROAGGRESSION

This a/r/tographic inquiry concerns the rendering of self and microaggression through shadow images. Situated in the settler colonial nation of Australia, the concept of racial microaggression (Wong et al., 2014; Sue et al., 2007) is important to write about. Because it is often an invisible aspect of microaggression, often resulting from a lack of awareness, the seeming overlap with overt racism forms part of the settler colonial present on this continent. Settler colonialism is a specific form of colonialism where an imperial non-native metropole—in Australia’s case, the United Kingdom—invades Indigenous lands and establishes permanent settlements. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015), Patrick Wolfe (2006), and Lorenzo Veracini (2015) have described some ongoing effects of settler colonialism on ownership of conquered lands, extraction of natural resources, exploitation of conquered workforces, and intergenerational trauma.

Nesting within everyday experience, racial microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative (racial) slights and insults towards people of colour” (Sue et al. 2007, 271). After initially contemplating self/object relations through the MMS Prompt 2 as in Figure 1: *The Mirror in My Room*, these beginning observations were not under the purview of thinking about racialised microaggression. However, after my ambling text/photo work over the first few days of the MMS prompts, racialised microaggression emerged to address worrisome local observations such as the council logo on my garbage bin, then how that logo filled nearby streets in the rows of bins on garbage collection day, as in Figure 2. I gradually came to see how these ideas

nested within some of the main ideas in my exhibition/research regarding the troubling of my personal ancestry and the invisibilities of historical colonial microaggression.

The local council logo on my garbage bin enabled my thinking about the tensions inherent in 'discovery' narratives which abound in Australia. In First Nation/settler relations the term is a key point of tension in colonial timeline histories, for example, where Australia was purportedly 'discovered' by Captain James Cook. Tension surrounds the passive acceptance of this event in the historical record, described merely as an 'encounter' between First Nation peoples and British invaders. Such tensions are evident today even as we fill and empty our garbage bins. Specifically, the logo on my garbage bin (Figure 2) came further into focus during lockdown, as I was reminded each and every-day of the pandemic in a focused way, not possible before the MMS project.

The garbage bin in my personal localised micro space was then logically extended for me into an investigation of other community members' local garbage bins in the larger street space. The street space during lockdown was the limit of my reference for the MMS project, and Figure 3 was taken at a later point to illustrate the pervasiveness of the discovery narrative in Australian parks through geographic naming conventions, such as "Cook Park" on Kamay-Botany Bay. The environmental indignity and microaggression of putting so many individual bins out on a Thursday morning, from one unit block in a community streetscape as in Figures 4 and 5, points to further indignities, through the repetition of the logo again and again. The myriad of bins lined up, and seemingly all the same, reveal a kind of environmental microaggression: an attack on the very concept of sustainability, revealed through the shadows of the street and my cast shadow. The next section commences with a discussion of how shadow theorising provides a point of creative insight about how my photographic renderings emerged.

In all of the shadow images I am there, albeit only partially.

## WHY MIRRORS AND SHADOWS?

Many theorists and artists have entertained conceptions of shadows, and the concomitant concept of shades of darkness, in their writing and practice. An example of the emerging significance of shadow work can be seen in the installation of a contemporary First Nation artist, Daniel Boyd's "Pediment: Impediment" (2021) (<https://www.sydney.edu.au/museum/news/2020/11/18/reframing-the-enlightenment.html>) in the exhibition "Reframing the Enlightenment." Signaling the efficacy of questioning received museum objects through shadow, Boyd's work has an affinity with Edouard Glissant. Specifically, how ideas of darkness can be utilised as an opposing force to light, and in this case as a form of resistance to Enlightenment and Western civilisation in the art museum context.

A few examples of theorists with relevance to my broader research include: rendering thought patterns through cast shadow vocabularies in painting (Gombrich 1995); questioning the moral and educationally hidden aspects of the economy through the concept of shadow work (Illich 1981); and raising consciousness of the interplay of cultural oppression and resistance through concepts such as the "shadow beast" (Anzaldúa 1987). Rather than providing an explanatory text regarding each theorist, for the purposes of this (MMS) project I have focused on the mechanics of production of ideas as they relate to Gloria Anzaldúa's mirror work. Entry to the article through conceptualizing mirror and shadow in this way seemed the most appropriate course of action.

Anzaldúa comments on three aspects of the mirror in the context of setting forth what she calls the "*Coatlicue*" state. First, she describes her mother putting blankets over the mirrors when her father died, as she thought her mother "knew that the mirror was a door through which the soul may 'pass' to the other side" (42). Her mother did not want the children to follow. Next, Anzaldúa notes that the mirror is "an ambivalent symbol – [it] reproduces images (the twins that stand for thesis and antithesis); it contains and absorbs them" (42). Finally, the aspect that informs my text/image work is where the mirror is

the very act of seeing itself: “Seeing and being seen. Subject and object, I, and she. The eye pins down the object of its gaze, scrutinizes it, judges it. A glance can freeze us in place; it can ‘possess’ us. It can erect a barrier against the world. But in a glance also lies awareness, knowledge. These seemingly contradictory aspects—the act of being seen, held immobilized by a glance, and ‘seeing through’ an experience [...] cluster in what I call the *Coatlicue* state” (Anzaldúa 1987, 42). Anzaldúa’s work questions oppression and resistance of systems-based thinking, through observations of self from the perspective of the unsaid. I link mirrors to shadows and shadows to visibility as a form of resistance to the unsaid.

### RENDERING #1 MIRROR>SHADOW: THE MIRROR IN MY ROOM.

**T**his visual rendering started in the intimacy of my thoughts as I awoke inside my home, through the completion of Prompt 2. This reflective piece focused on the first thing I see each day, a mirror, a heritage piece of furniture made of Australian red cedar. My response to the prompt, focused on the perspective of one object, is visual (see *Figure 1: The Mirror in My Room*, 2020) as well as textual:

*“These three photos are of the one object, my mirror in my room; the first thing I see each day and I am the first thing this mirror sees each day. Yet, it was not until this moment that we became knowledgeable about each other’s knowing. Firstly, my angle of view is situated in a downcast light with amazing shadowy patterning on my face now seeing and being seen in a new light. My lighting is darkly fascinating as it mobilises from the slivers of morning light to awaken with each other in the same space. I have been present for many traditional milestones in your life, your wedding, gracing your parent’s room and being an authentic wooden antique, as opposed to shitboard (Australian slang for cheap wood). I have travelled each day with you although the everyday nuances of my being have until today, escaped you. Today, we have come into being, into a relation with each other, one that we can never unsee. I/we could not get past this one object of reflection which became fascinating to the point of reminiscing about each oth-*

*er and artists who use shadowy tones and patterned lighting to evoke temporality and to capture moments in time. Each moment to moment is diverse in its passing and intimacy, with light the driving life force of wakefulness and physicality, revealed through laconic waking as a mutation of pandemic living. Thank you for the 3 familiar objects prompt, maybe we can move on the other two soon ...” (Snepvangers, May 23, 2020)*

Anzaldúa’s Coatlicue state of using the mirror and the morning shadows, light, and seeing through an experience is taken up quite literally in my work in Figure 1. The addition of shadows to mirror work

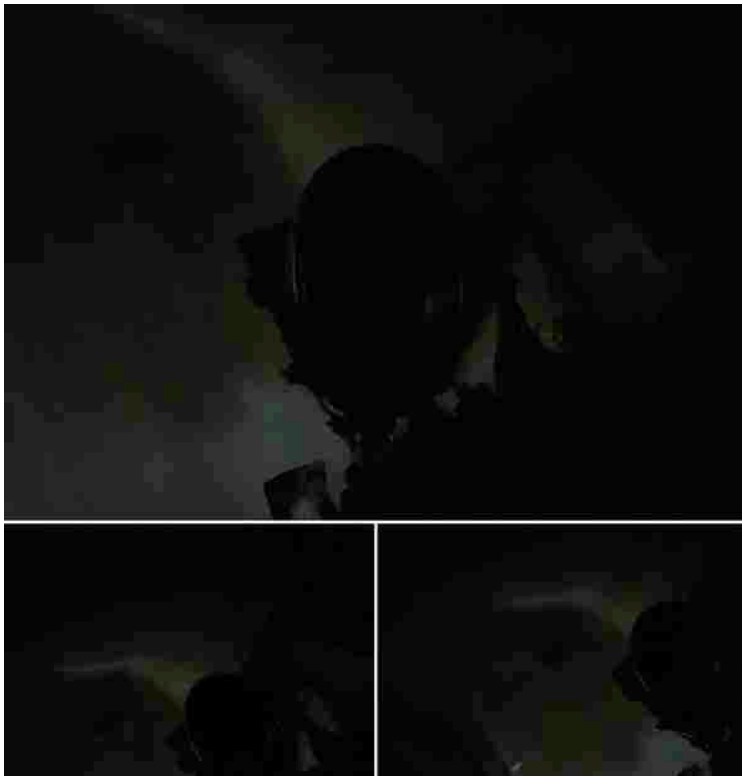


Figure 1: The Mirror in My Room, 2020. Image by the author.

brings forth Anzaldúa's concept of the shadow beast. Whilst not having enough time or space here to delve into the work of the shadow beast, the concept implies further research, as it is a 'rebel' state that "refuses to take orders from my conscious will, it threatens the sovereignty of my rulership" (Anzaldúa 1987, 16).

From the quiet contemplation of my room, I am present yet transparent, seemingly lost in the willowy reflections and darkness of the early morning light. From this place of power, cocooned in my bed, I realized the potentiality for an object-led itinerary, fueled by a type of 'shadow beast.' I felt energized and decided to tackle with intensity some systems-based objects (the garbage bin logo and the rows of garbage bins) in my immediate purview using visual rendering as an artistic exchange.

RENDERING #2 LOGO>SHADOW: IMAGE OF SELF IN THE RECOVERY BIN LOGO FROM KAMAY – (BOTANY BAY).

This second scenario presents a review of relationships beyond binaries, and takes literally my local council logo and its naming convention. Each logo has been earnestly tattooed onto garbage bins to last through geological time. In this case, time is a mundane and secular thing though, as only some, not all bins in the local government area have this specific logo, as the councils amalgamated some years ago. The point is that the mundane, the secular, and the everyday materiality of logos and text do last a long, long time, so it is important to see what the logo is and what is not. The seriality of use—daily, weekly, and bi-weekly trips to and with the bins, as well as emptying rituals—breeds a familiarity that masks the meaning and significance of what is on the bin. The pandemic has allowed a focus on what is typically overlooked.

Just outside my house, within the front yard, my review of situatedness unearthed the following. On my bin, and no doubt more outdated council ephemera such as land rate notices, the text is as follows (see image detail in *Figure 2: Image of Self in the Recovery Bin Logo from Kamay-(Botany Bay), 2020*):

"Garbage & Organics Recovery Bin

Rockdale City Council

On Historic Botany Bay"



Figure 2: Image of Self in the Recovery Bin Logo from Kamay – (Botany Bay), 2020.

Image by the author.

I live in Kamay (Botany Bay) in the micro-context, yet the broader context extends in multifarious ways. The ways this image can be unpacked are myriad and manifest. Until recently, the perspective of First Nation Australians and the Gamayngal people of this area of Kamay (Botany Bay)<sup>1</sup> have not been prioritised and have indeed been overlooked. A recent National Museum of Australia exhibition details the missing perspective of First Nations Australians through documentation about the landing of James Cook in Australia on 29 April, 1770 when at 34°00'16" South 151°13'04" East:

"It was at Kamay (Botany Bay) that James Cook first set foot on the Australian continent. His landing was challenged by two men from the Gweagal clan of the Dharawal nation, standing on the beach." (Kamay - Botany Bay Exhibition, National Museum of Australia, 2020).

The significance of the exhibition is that the remit for the Australian National Museum mission and values addresses key debates and issues across all Australian States and Territories. The micro location and significance of place therefore transcends localised concerns, and spatially inserts a cultural and macro-conceptual debate about national imagery, contestation, and nationhood into the practice of everyday visits to the seaside. This ecologically locates my work in the practice of space as a temporal present-day phenomenon with unfinished historical renderings still present in everyday life.

In Figure 3 you can see the emphasis of claiming of territory through council signage and through the erection of monuments of James Cook's ship, the Endeavour, which you can see on the right-hand side of the image. One construal is about tensions surrounding the 250 years since the HMB Endeavour's Voyage, and the celebrations,<sup>2</sup> planned for 2020, of the so-called 'discovery' of Australia. The specific micro context of where I live is a constant, potent point of irritation regarding the macro context of contested national imagery involved with Cook's 'discovery' narrative. For example, in 2017, a prominent Australian journalist stated that the inscription on a statue of the British explorer Captain James Cook located in Sydney's Hyde Park was a "damaging myth" (Grant 2017). In an opinion piece,





Figure 3: Looking towards the Heads of Botany Bay (Kamay) from Cook Park, Bayside Council, Sans Souci, 2020. Image by the author.

journalist Stan Grant, a Wiradjuri man, argued for historical accuracy. He contested the inscription on the statue, which states that Australia was discovered by Cook in 1770, a description that for him aligns with the national narrative of Australia's discovery by the British, and omits recognition of the country's Indigenous inhabitants. Intense debate followed this article, with some politicians sounding the alarm over the rewriting of history. Meanwhile, this example highlights how national imagery in Australia is undergoing a phase of contestation and enquiry about the meaning and connect-edness of national narratives (Giovanangeli and Snepvangers 2016).

In Figure 2, you can see the logo, as well as the slightly scratched and erased patina on the wording, the content of which has been a source of amazement and tension for me for a long, long time. It is only now, during a period of somewhat forced reflection and non-hierarchical thinking beyond the workplace, that I can bring forth

this concentration. For example, the seemingly closed binary of the two males on the logo on either side of a traditional heraldic shield is inset with an Endeavour-type ship. The commemorative aspects of this so called 'First Encounter' set out an agenda of colonial seafaring supremacy and a strong maritime-esque maleness on the left, alongside an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander figure on the right. The tension is palpable in the context of Australia as a settler-colonial nation. For a start, each figure has a weapon at hand, yet the local council, through the lens of the logo, seems oblivious to any contested practice. In other words, the duality of the visual logo sets up an interplay of text and image that mirrors the outmodedness of the wording "garbage and recovery" in many nuanced ways. By placing myself in the image as a blurred figure, indistinct yet mutable, in lockdown, I float in and out of the enmeshment, at once at home and away. This visual rendering is speaking back to the half-said. Awayness is felt and palpable, as the conventions of logos and text often become unquestioned histories, especially in places of contested historical significance, such as 'On Historic Botany Bay.' Placing myself outside as the photographer and within as the photographed brings an interplay into being, becoming, and creating. As a person working with Aboriginal Cultural Mentors to make visible my hidden ancestry, the significance of uncovering microaggression in plain sight in everyday life is of paramount importance. My 25-year history of working in visual arts education across diverse sites has maintained a focus on working with Aboriginal mentors, and this remains a key concentration in my exhibition and performative work.

### RENDERING #3 ROW OF BINS>SHADOW: IMAGE OF SELF IN ROW OF RECYCLING BINS FROM KAMAY – (BOTANY BAY).

**M**y focus on binaries and layering relationships through visual rendering continued on my daily walk around the block from my house (see *Figure 4: Image of Self in Row of Recycling Bins from Kamay-(Botany Bay), 2020*).

The MMS project and the excess time at home during the pandemic spatially forced my focus on garbage bins. Staying at home sharp-



Figure 4: Image of Self in Row of Recycling Bins from Kamay – (Botany Bay), 2020.  
Image by the author.

ened my observations of daily procedures and historical tensions, especially stemming from the initial focus on my own garbage and recovery bin in my front yard. This grew to a communal interest. This is because the logo on my bin is repeated all over the suburb, and indeed the whole council area, thus reinforcing historical events from

the perspective of the dominant victor. Such indignities are hidden in plain sight, yet it took this project for me to be able to render a creative response. In Figure 4, I am present, witnessing this accumulation, as a solid shadow, casting a light on the events and activities, yet spatially separated from the system that sustains and supports these shadowy renderings.

The visual elements of the bins are overwhelming and intriguing at the same time; exactly how do you logistically service such an enterprise? Providing a full-time job for a person who took the bins in and out—this Thursday morning affair has social effects, particularly around the demeaning of the streetscape as a pleasant place to live, and logistically as a garbage transportation nightmare. The street becomes blocked when the garbage truck arrives, and the mechanical actions required to empty the bins continue for quite some time. The placement of the garbage bins affects the social relationships among neighbors, as there are just so many clustering along the walkway. The older part of the suburb and streetscape, where I live, does not have the same visual and structural impediments, yet this newer garbage and service arrangement just seems to create a focus on the unsustainable nature of garbage recovery. Perhaps the visual elements of accumulation also served to create an impression of unsustainability, which I had previously overlooked; yet unsustainability, like the logo on each bin, is seemingly overlooked by a range of individuals and collectives.

RENDERING #4 ROW OF BINS/FILMIC CUTS>SHADOW: FILMIC CUTS OF RECYCLING BINS FROM NUMBER 95, STREETSCAPE IN KAMAY – (BOTANY BAY).

The reason for the close ups is that the logos are different on each of the seemingly similar garbage bins. The logo which was the subject of Figure 2 is found on some, with two newer versions (minus the Aboriginal person) on several of the other bins. Some bins have the lids raised, some are completely open, some closed, a couple fallen over... as the aftermath of the bin emptying procedure is laid bare. The filmic cut (Figure 5) and cast shadow image (Figure 4) provide a



Figure 5: Filmic Cuts of Recycling Bins from Number 95, Streetscape in Kamay – (Botany Bay), 2020. Images by the author.

challenge to seriality as sameness, limiting the actions of individual bins, for example, as they are not generic and have social constructs that open the possibility of resistance and non-compliance. These are some of my initial thoughts on the sustainability of bin collection at the system-level, especially about the possibility of garbage recovery and what this might mean. Yet, I am grounded in the thought that these are garbage bins with little or no street appeal. Secondary to the bin itself is the logo, with its historical binaries and Captain Cook, so I am placing hope in questioning and even contradicting the original usage and intention of each object in this article.

## SHADOWY FINAL THOUGHTS

Rendering self and making microaggressions visible through the mirror shadow image, the half shadow and the half-said (jagodzinski 2002) is a way of making lived experiences visible during the pandemic. Making feelings visible through intimate/familiar objects (such as the mirror in my room, my garbage bin, and garbage bins in the next street of my local community) takes a close look at the power of tangible artefacts of time and place. These objects from a very small perimeter around my home at the micro level have been on a type of object itinerary themselves. Yet each rendered object is linked through an intangible, personal, yet fleeting shadow image to previously invisible, yet deeply felt sensibilities at the massive level in settler colonial Australia.

Through an investigation of micro existence from my everyday life, living near Kamay (Botany Bay), I seek to visually generate new renderings of material data. This work is necessary when your personal ancestry is also invisible. The modes have been generated using unprecedented pandemic thinking to challenge received histories. These new modes concentrate on slow velocities, walkable distances, and tension driven directionality to create layers of meaning through different shadow work mobilities. Through the quasi-darkness of mirroring, blurring effects, casting shadows on seriality, and creating filmic cuts, some darkly focused research sensibilities have now been rendered. However, the objects are nested within a potentiality for traversing tensions from the perspective of shining a light on everyday objects.

Recognizing the personal within the larger darkness implied by shadow has been rendered in the following ways:

- (mirror>shadow in Figure 1)—Individual to environmental interface: to explain person to environment interactions;
- (logo>shadow in Figure 2)—Individual to relationships: to dialogically increase people-environment transactions;



- (row of bins>shadow in Figure 4)—Individual to localised knowledge/community: to nurture change within particular environments;
- (row of bins/filmic cuts>shadow in Figure 5)—Individual to system: to expand environments so they support expression of an individual's system dispositions.

While connected through my movement, these renderings also highlight serendipity through the mirror gaze, with me literally being represented in the work in Figure 1; through reflective rendering of self in a vague shadow in a culturally reflective gaze in Figure 2; then through an actual cast shadow of myself highlighting the significance of repetition in cementing invisible tensions in Figure 4; then, finally, through an abstracted dislocation of shadows to create a filmic cut. Here the apparent continuity is the result of hidden cuts—a metaphor for the way seamlessness and unremarkability operate and become complicit in everyday life and experiences. Hence the importance of more than representational thinking when I was unable to go about typical day to day activities.

My artworks create capture some habituated routines that maintain invisible micro-aggressions hidden in plain sight. By examining ways of understanding locutionary positionality within the scope of a single geographic council area, static and pre-determined notions of historical superiority and the power of collectivity can be challenged. The challenge for me is to theorize the misguided assumptions of individual freedom that have been revealed during this project. In terms of my personal ancestry, MMS provided an opportunity to revisit creative, artographic ways of being, as well as expose my previous lack of macroscopic implications of the self in terms of capacities for autonomous action. Focusing on the system and the mechanics of production that maintain and support microaggressions in plain site/sight has emerged from the rendering shadow imagery in my daily walks and observations. Through visual images that move towards contemporary possibilities of reclamation, this project creates entanglements of Self, the Other, and the World with a provocative gaze that focuses on the system itself.

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## IMAGE NOTES

Figure 1: The Mirror in My Room, 2020. Image by the author.

Figure 2: Image of Self in the Recovery Bin Logo from Kamay – (Botany Bay), 2020. Image by the author.

Figure 3: Looking towards the Heads of Botany Bay (Kamay) from Cook Park, Bayside Council, Sans Souci, 2020. Image by the author.

Figure 4: Image of Self in Row of Recycling Bins from Kamay – (Botany Bay), 2020. Image by the author.

Figure 5: Filmic Cuts of Recycling Bins from Number 95, Streetscape in Kamay – (Botany Bay), 2020. Images by the author.

## NOTES

1. (<https://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/endeavour-voyage/kamay-botany-bay>) and <https://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/aboriginal-people-and-place/>
2. (<https://www.endeavour250.gov.au/>),