

Education Kit

Tracey Moffatt
MAMA Education Resource



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About the Education Resource

This education resource is designed to assist teachers and students in exploring the Tracey Moffatt works within the MAMA collection. Activities and inquiry questions are suited to Visual Arts subjects within the NSW Visual Arts curriculum. This education resource will help teachers and students to gain a further understanding of MAMA's Tracey Moffatt collection.

Cover Image: Tracey MOFFATT (1960—) *Laudanum #15* 1998. Toned photogravure print on rag paper. Purchased with funds from the New South Wales Ministry, 2001

Curriculum Links Stage 6

Preliminary course

P1: explores the conventions of practice in artmaking	•
P2: explores the roles and relationships between the concepts of artist, artwork, world and audience	•
P3: identifies the frames as the basis of understanding expressive representation through the making of art	•
P4: investigates subject matter and forms as representations in artmaking	•
P5: investigates ways of developing coherence and layers of meaning in the making of art	•
P6: explores a range of material techniques in ways that support artistic intentions	•
P7: explores the conventions of practice in art criticism and art history	
P8: explores the roles and relationships between concepts of artist, artwork, world and audience through critical and historical investigations of art	•
P9: identifies the frames as the basis of exploring different orientations to critical and historical investigations of art	
P10: explores ways in which significant art histories, critical narratives and other documentary accounts of the visual arts can be constructed	

HSC course

H1: initiates and organises artmaking practice that is sustained, reflective and adapted to suit particular conditions	
H2: applies their understanding of the relationships among the artist, artwork, world and audience through the making of a body of work	•
H3: demonstrates an understanding of the frames when working independently in the making of art	
H4: selects and develops subject matter and forms in particular ways as representations in artmaking	•
H5: demonstrates conceptual strength in the production of a body of work that exhibits coherence and may be interpreted in a range of ways	
H6: demonstrates technical accomplishment, refinement and sensitivity appropriate to the artistic intentions within a body of work	
H7: applies their understanding of practice in art criticism and art history	•
H8: applies their understanding of the relationships among the artist, artwork, world and audience	•
H9: demonstrates an understanding of how the frames provide for different orientations to critical and historical investigations of art	•
H10: constructs a body of significant art histories, critical narratives and other documentary accounts of representation in the visual arts	

Introduction

Tracey Moffatt is one of Australia's most successful international artists, known for her film, photography and video works. Drawing on cinema, television and the media, her art is equally inspired by popular culture, recollections from her childhood and art history.

Moffatt began her career as an experimental filmmaker and producer of music videos, and she continued making films after establishing herself as a photographer.

She first came to prominence in the Australian art world with her series *Something More*. Commissioned in 1989 by MAMA (formally Albury Regional Art Gallery) and shot in the Link Studios in Wodonga, the series set the tone and themes for much of Moffatt's later work. This sequence of nine images is a loose narrative, shot like film stills, in which the artist references the possible meanings of the title and its hint of sadomasochism.

MAMA also has a selection of photographs from Moffatt's *Laudanum*, *Scarred for Life* and *Some Lads* series.

Something More



Image: Tracey MOFFATT (1960—) *Something More #1 - #9*, 1989. cibachrome photography. Commissioned by Albury Regional Art Gallery, 1989

In the first image of the series, 'Something More #1', Moffatt stands in the centre of the frame wearing an Asian-style dress. Behind her is a hut. A woman wearing a negligee leans against the door of the hut, smoking a cigarette; inside, a man sits at a table drinking beer from a bottle. Two children look on, and a boy wearing a coolie hat is seen in the background. The backdrop is an obvious artifice. Moffatt's image seeks to confuse and disturb meanings of cultural identification while questioning the authenticity of the presentation by reinforcing its own 'fake' construction.

As the series develops and the protagonist strives for 'something more', it all ends tragically after an encounter with a whip-wielding biker with ruby-red fingernails. The inevitability of the woman's circumstances, and the juxtaposition of luscious Cibachrome with monochromatic silver gelatin, are reminiscent of the 1950s Australian film *Jedda*.

Scarred for Life



Image: Tracey MOFFATT (1960—) L – R: *Charm Alone* 1965, *The Wizard of Oz* 1956, *Heart Attack* 1970. photolithograph. Purchased with funds from the Albury Regional Art Gallery ,1995.

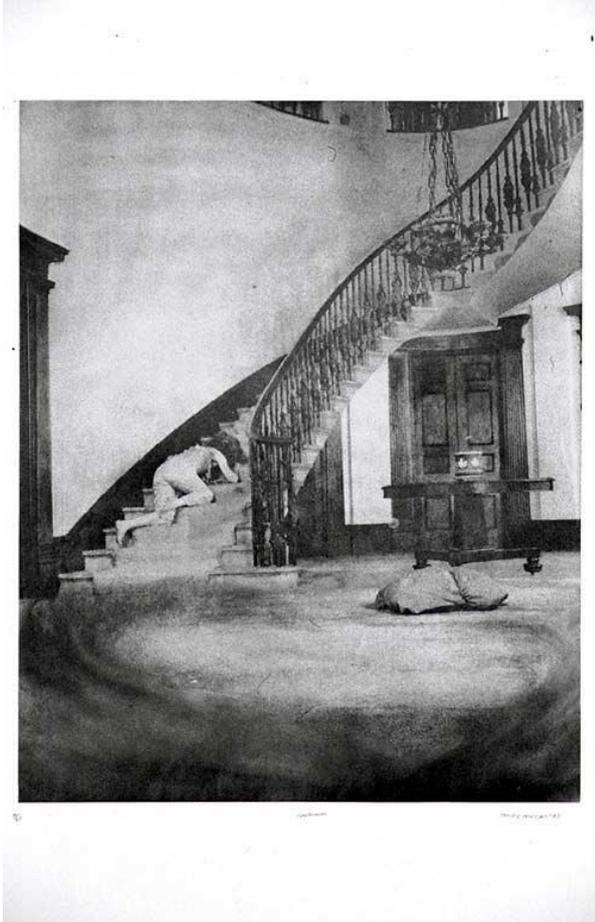
The artfully staged series, *Scarred for Life* 1 and 2, captures the real memories of Moffatt and of many of her friends and family who passed on their stories to her. This series “dramatises the various indignities that parents (and other adults) can inflict on children: the offhand remark, the put-down, the careless abuse, and insult that ensures that the experience of growing up remains a handful of shameful memories.”¹ While these images are sometimes humorous they also contain a very serious message about wrong doings that have happened in these people’s lives. “Each individual work betrays the persistence of childhood and adolescent trauma lodged within adult memory. Each work is generated from such memory of psychological scarring – of moments in which childhood consciousness is fractured by the abrasive intent of others.”² Each photograph is also captioned guiding the viewer as to how to read the image, telling them how the subject had been ‘scarred for life’. Some images contain a caption describing only what is occurring in the images, leaving the viewer to wonder what happened to this person in the future; while others also describe an action prior to the image, sometimes sharing a consequence of the shown abusers behaviour. For example in *Heart Attack, 1970* the caption tells the viewer what happened to both people in the photograph. The caption states, “She glimpsed her father belting the girl from down the street. That day he died of a heart attack.” *Scarred for Life* is a two part series by Tracey Moffatt, the first series was created in 1994 containing 9 works and the second in 1999 containing 10 works. Moffatt stated that she created the second series after the popularity of the first became apparent. Viewers felt that they related to this series and wanted to share their own stories of

¹ Simon Garrett, 'Tracey Moffatt's Exuberant Art', *The Lancet* 359 (9318): 1706, accessed May 2, 2014, doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(02)08549-5.

² Moffatt, *Tracey Moffatt*, 43.

Laudanum

Image: Tracey MOFFATT (1960—) L – R: *Laudanum* #19 1998, *Laudanum* #15 1998. Toned photogravure print on rag paper. Purchased with funds from the New South Wales Ministry, 2001



The *Laudanum* series that Moffatt created in 1998 is a dramatic, black and white series of photographs with a narrative that can be interpreted a number of different ways. The series seems to depict a crime scene where a violent act of homicide is being acted out between two women. It is an uncomfortable series which poses too many questions through the use of narrative breaks. Moffatt teases the audience with images that are fuzzy and distorted making them hard to read, suggesting the effects of the drug Laudanum, the woman possibly under its influence. “*Laudanum*, presents an elegant world simmering on the verge of madness. Like Moffatt’s previous series, *Something More* (1989) and *Up In The Sky* (1997), *Laudanum*’s narrative never quite adds up, with the potential for the viewer to interpret the story any number of ways.”⁴

⁴ 'Tracey Moffatt, *Laudanum*', Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, 3 May, 2014
<http://www.roslynnoxley9.com.au/news/releases/1999/04/14/190/>

