

Light Interactions - Bernadette Smith

Strathfield Library & Innovation Hub

20 October – 19 December 2022

Bernadette's photo media explores the materiality of light to emphasise non-human agency. She has photographed light waves interacting within a 19th Century window pane at the former Callan Park asylum at close range revealing an aurora-like display within. These photographs record macro sunlight refractions within heritage glass; offsetting a dominant anthropocentric view of the universe.

"Light is both the subject matter and material of my art which visually investigates diffractions or the bending of sunlight through translucent materials such as 19th Century glass. The work in this exhibition is the result of intense exploration of such phenomena using both glass and light in a changing array of colours, textures and time. The glass itself is an active partner in this project as if it also has something to say." Bernadette Smith

Bernadette first discovered the unique properties of 1880's industrially produced glass while undertaking visual research at Sydney College of the Arts then sited in the old mental hospital at Callan Park. In her western facing studio, there were a variety of undulating glass window panes which she studied and recorded. As the sunlight shifted around the studio throughout the day, so the light bouncing and fracturing within these window panes morphed into a myriad of forms presented at different times. These fleeting microcosmic diffraction patterns and other optical phenomena were photographed up close using a macro lens.

As wavelength components of white light bend at different angles within the undulating glass they converge at various focal points separating into colours and patterns. In this liminal zone of uncertainty light bounces around transforming itself in a process of disintegration. The window pane thus becomes a transformative lens through which to contemplate this vital non-human world, creating a meditative field within the photograph.

Bernadette's art was featured in the 10th Canberra Festival of Art and she has been a finalist for the Mosman Art Prize, Fishers Ghost Art Award, Eden Unearthed, Sunstudios Emerging Photographers Prize and SCA Showcase at Verge Gallery, University of Sydney. Bernadette has exhibited at Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Perth Centre for Photography, Newcastle Art Gallery and the State Library of NSW.

