Preservation: Resonance of the Actual
- an investigation of the phenomenon of ‘on-the-road’ photography
RESEARCH QUESTION

Can photographic images of everyday scenes and landscapes (elements overlooked or ignored), change audience's perceptions of their environments? And how can this photographic practice reinvent itself out of the powerful influence of American 'on-the-road' photography?
ABSTRACT

Preservation: Resonance of the Actual refers to fundamental questions and explorations regarding the phenomenon of ‘on-the-road’ photography and the impact of photographers who practice it in their role of depicting society. These central ideas underpin all aspects of my research, studio based and theoretical.

Firstly, I discuss the projects that comprise my MFA practical work, within the framework of three field trips, one to the US exploring notions of being an outsider, another field trip focusing on my external environments close to home and most recently a trip into landscapes further afield, in western New South Wales. The paper then discusses theories advanced by authors Walter Benjamin, drawing on Charles Baudelaire’s concept of the flâneur and Roland Barthes’ notion of studium and punctum both in relation to my own work and other photographic artists including Walker Evans, William Eggleston and Alec Soth.

This research comprises three parts. Firstly, the paper presents an investigation into the theme of ‘on-the-road’ photography, which in turn leads to an analysis of the purpose of photographers’ documentation of everyday scenes. I examine both the historical and contemporary situation, looking at how this has challenged traditional ideas of beauty. Through this research I also question the value society places on the uncommissioned photographic archive, and the worth it finds contained within.

Lastly, I explore the impact of curator and writer John Szarkowski, as well as photographers Paul Graham, Stephen Shore, Zoe Leonard, and Trent Parke. These artists have been a source of inspiration for much of my work and create a framework against which I can assess my own output and reflect on different elements of my practice.