

Huw Davies Gallery
2nd - 27th November, 2021

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398

Aloisia Cudmore

Through a series of touching and personal black and white images, Cudmore explores her experience as a young person in the age of COVID. Capturing intimate moments in and fragments of relationships with her friends, family and community, the artist considers the significance of memories when travel restrictions, prohibitions on gathering and ultimately lockdowns separate you from those most important in your life.

398 presents outcomes from Cudmore's PhotoAccess' 2021 Australian National University *Emerging Artist Support Scheme* residency.



Aloisia Cudmore, 4, 2021, 43.8 x 32.9 cm, 35mm negative, linkjet on photo paper

Treasuring Everyday Intimacy

From 10 July 2020 to 12 August 2021, the Australian Capital Territory experienced three-hundred-and-ninety-eight days without a single locally acquired case of COVID-19. As Sydney and Melbourne rotated through frustrating cycles of lockdown and easing restrictions, Canberra was graced with comparative stability and freedom. Aware of their unique privilege, Canberrans lived with a heightened sense of gratitude, conscious that the pandemic could separate them from friends and family at any moment by restricting their movement and prohibiting their gatherings. In July 2021, as COVID numbers swelled nationwide, it seemed inevitable that Canberra's good fortune would come to an end. And so it was that on 12 August the ACT government reinstated stay-at-home orders and Canberrans were forced to close their doors to one another.

In *398*, Aloisia Cudmore documents the intimate moments that she shared with her loved ones between the two lockdowns, including road trips to the coast, family birthdays, and quiet cups of tea. Shot on 35mm film, this series of grainy, black-and-white photos celebrate the small, mundane moments that underscore our most precious relationships and give texture to our everyday lives. While we might have overlooked the beauty of such unremarkable instances in our pre-pandemic lives, these everyday vignettes take on a new poignancy in a post-pandemic world, when we know what it feels like to crave the physical proximity of those that we love.

An emerging artist, Cudmore uses photo media to examine evolving notions of intimacy in the digital age. Her work often reflects the increasing entanglement of online and offline communication in millennial relationships. In many ways, this new body of work is a departure from Cudmore's recent practice, not least because she has opted to use analog photography rather than multi-media installation or digital art. Yet, as the artist explains, the uncertainty of the pandemic drove her towards the simplicity and familiarity of the analogue process. Rather than approaching her art-

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making practice from a conceptual standpoint, she surrendered to intuition, allowing her curiosity to guide her creative choices. Carrying her Pentax K1000 with her at all times, Cudmore cataloged her everyday interactions, slowly building a personal archive one frame at a time. It is a surprising yet welcome change of direction and the result is a warm and nostalgic body of work.

One of the key advantages of shooting on a small camera, like the Pentax K1000, is its discrete, unobtrusive nature. Throughout *398*, most of Cudmore's subjects are so close to her lens that their bodies are cropped. Not only does this proximity reveal the artist's fondness for her subjects, but it also pinpoints these photographs as moments in times when socialising was unaffected by social distancing. In one image, for example, Cudmore nestles next to her Nonna on the sofa. All we can see in the image is a woman's arm and a copy of *Art Edit* magazine strewn on a nearby cushion, yet we get a palpable sense of a soft and quiet moment shared by two people, snuggled side by side.

Other photos capture something more fleeting, like the perfectly framed reflection of a friend in a car door or a chance encounter with a bull on a family hike. Indeed, one photo depicts a stranger clambering back into his car after helping Cudmore remove a frighteningly large spider from her car boot. I can understand why Cudmore has included this portrait of an unknown man amongst those of family and friends. This hilarious encounter with a kind-hearted stranger is precisely the kind of interaction many of us yearned for during the lonely hours of lockdown.

Cudmore's fascination with intimacy and technology manifests several times throughout *398*. In one image, for example, we see a pair of hands holding a mobile photo, taking a happy snap of bowls and plates. This was a special potluck dinner prepared by a Chinese friend, Cudmore confides. In another image, we see a different pair of hands scrolling on a phone. This is her step-father, taking a short moment of reprieve during a family dinner. These photos astutely observe the ways in which our phones have become embedded in lives, present in every moment, for better or for worse.

It feels timely that this exhibition opens at the precise moment that Canberra's second lockdown is ending. As we all prepare to assimilate our lives with the rhythms of the 'new normal', it is valuable to reflect on how we hope to fill our time once the world begins to accelerate again. *398* offers a clear suggestion: we should hope to spend our time in the presence of those we love.

Emily Bull

Emily Bull is a freelance writer and a gallery assistant at Beaver Galleries, Canberra. She is a first-class honours graduate from The Australian National University with a special interest in contemporary Indigenous art.

List of Works

28	Aloisia Cudmore, 24, 2021, 43.8 x 3.3 cm, 35mm negative, inkjet print on photo paper	Edition 1 of 7 + AP	\$180
29	Aloisia Cudmore, 8, 2021, 43.8 x 3.3 cm, 35mm negative, inkjet print on photo paper	Edition 1 of 7 + AP	\$180
30	Aloisia Cudmore, 4, 2021, 43.8 x 3.3 cm, 35mm negative, inkjet print on photo paper	Edition 1 of 7 + AP	\$180
31	Aloisia Cudmore, 83, 2021, 43.8 x 3.3 cm, 35mm negative, inkjet print on photo paper	Edition 1 of 7 + AP	\$180
32	Aloisia Cudmore, 63, 2021, 43.8 x 3.3 cm, 35mm negative, inkjet print on photo paper	Edition 1 of 7 + AP	\$180
33	Aloisia Cudmore, 56, 2021, 43.8 x 3.3 cm, 35mm negative, inkjet print on photo paper	Edition 1 of 7 + AP	\$180
34	Aloisia Cudmore, 2, 2021, 43.8 x 3.3 cm, 35mm negative, inkjet print on photo paper	Edition 1 of 7 + AP	\$180
35	Aloisia Cudmore, 6, 2021, 43.8 x 3.3 cm, 35mm negative, inkjet print on photo paper	Edition 1 of 7 + AP	\$180
36	Aloisia Cudmore, 17, 2021, 43.8 x 3.3 cm, 35mm negative, inkjet print on photo paper	Edition 1 of 7 + AP	\$180
37	Aloisia Cudmore, 18, 2021, 43.8 x 3.3 cm, 35mm negative, inkjet print on photo paper	Edition 1 of 7 + AP	\$180

Aloisia Cudmore | About

Aloisia Cudmore is an emerging Canberra-based visual artist and the recipient of the ANU EASS 2021 Residency. She explores small moments of intimacy in a digital world. Previously her works have been digital art, installations, audio and visual sculptures, and video.

Now Cudmore has taken it back to the photograph. Throughout 2021, she used a 35mm camera with black and white film to capture these moments of intimacy shared amongst family, friends, and the community around her. What resulted was a grainy, textured, nostalgic presentation of a time that seems forgotten. The works explore important moments of connection, in a time when isolation persisted.

Artist Statement

The Australian Capital Territory had 398 days between locally acquired COVID-19 cases. As a young person living in Canberra, living in a different city to your family, it can be difficult when you cannot leave your household. Your close-knit group of friends become your support network. Your chosen family. The 398 days without locally acquired cases allowed us to grow more deeply into this family. So, what happens when you cannot see them?

Lockdowns can be lonely, but it is important to remember the times that you spent socialising with some of the most important people in your life. This series of artworks is a testament to them. The sensitive intricacies of those relationships that are most important to you. The intimacies shared amongst friends, families, and communities. The physical proximity allowed by a world where you can move freely, and the emotional proximity in a world where you cannot.

More Online

Visit www.gallery.photoaccess.org.au to learn more about 398, including works not in the gallery.