

## Practitioner's Statement

### ***Presence***

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In developing my own aesthetic and practical ideas, I was drawn to the concept of a lack of 'presence' in society, with individual awareness of surroundings disintegrating due to the rapid pace of living, and coupled with the impacts of contemporary technology.

In my first practical *Caetra Desunt* (Latin: *the rest is missing*) I capitalised on raw identity through unedited photographs, utilising long-exposure as a mechanism to distort the identification and distinctiveness of the subject. The transparency achieved through the exposure also encompasses the concept of not being entirely present within a space, with the non-uniform light also corresponding with this ideology. The light itself acts as a representation of internal make-up and personal identity, 'matter' that is subsequently visually reduced alongside the opacity of the figures within the image. In my second practical, *Dot-to-Dot*, the gradual process of the decrease of presence was acknowledged utilising a child as the subject, highlighting the extent of this impact of the contemporary world on human personal development. The positioning of the hand impacting the constraints of the image also provides an understanding of the limitations of societal expectations and developing technologies on the next generation. The incorporation of light as matter, intentionally decreases alongside the full opacity of the photograph to furthermore enhance the decreased individuality of the subject. The contingency of the light also becomes more refined, symbolising a new conformity, different from individualistic behaviour of the past. The use of stippling as a restriction of presence can be directly compared with child 'dot-to-dot' puzzles, whereby their completion reveals an image, hence the title of the work. My third practical, *T.J. Eckleburg* references the billboard in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, a symbol for judgement of characters' behaviours within New York's Valley of Ashes. In the text, the sign is described as '*watchful, vigil*', which personally can also be acknowledged as an internal awareness of an individual's loss of manifestation within their surroundings. This work relates to personal awareness and judgement of oneself as an independent entity, and a realisation of external influences overpowering those internally specific to us. I have intentionally utilised technology throughout my body of work as an ironic contradiction to its impact on society overall, restricting social interaction and awareness of our surroundings. This conveys that although there are some advantages to the development of technological principles, the disadvantages can be detrimental to a sense of presence within the social fabric of contemporary culture.

My main inspiration for the foundation of *Caetra Desunt* specifically was the *Proximity Interactive* installation by Garry Stewart in the SAMSTAG Museum, within the Adelaide Biennial Magic Object Exhibition. Within this, the specific filter utilising long-exposure in interactive collaboration with the actions of the viewer inspired me to capture a range of long-exposure photographs as an experimental starting point. The depth and isolation of the space in *Proximity Interactive* furthermore fuelled the importance of the use of lighting in my own experimentation, with the darkness of the surrounding space emphasising the subject. This depth also demonstrates how the subject remains isolated, external to other stimuli, due to the impact imposed by previous societal conditioning. The work of media

artist Lynette Wallworth, specifically *Duality of Light*, inspired my conceptualisation of presence being eroded by a physical barrier, disintegrating the clarity of a subject's individuality. I conducted experiments specifically utilising a barrier of glass in different stages of opacity with steam and water, observing its impact on the subject's identity behind it. Wallworth's works also demonstrate the subject in contact with the barrier itself, signifying the constraints of the space and in my interpretation, society itself. Referencing this, I ensured my experiments included aspects of contact with the glass, developing into the clarity of the palm in *Dot-to-Dot*. Inspired by the stippling technique of Australian artist CJ Hendry, I was also intrigued to investigate how my photographs would translate as pen drawings. My experimentation evolved as three separate stippling works, from my different photographs: one with a clear image, one including long-exposure and one of the glass image. Although separately these experiments were noteworthy works, I utilised Photoshop to layer them alongside photographic images, and hence my finals in both *Dot-to-Dot* and *T.J. Eckleburg*.

My personal aesthetic is intrinsically tied to the mechanics of production that I employed to create my body of work. I cannot discuss my aesthetic development without also discussing the processes by which my works were created, and refined. My belief in the ability for my art to draw attention to contemporary issues could only be realised through the continual critiquing of my production methodology, as I developed my body of work. To achieve the successful use of long-exposure in *Caetra Desunt*, the process required constant adjustment of the camera's aperture, shutter speed and ISO to achieve the desired image. This was also critical in effectively capturing the light surrounding the subject, which was later on slightly adjusted in Photoshop with regard to exposure. In *Dot-to-Dot*, the layering of drawing and photograph, and gradual changing of the opacity, was achieved in Photoshop scaling. In this work, it was essential to ensure the stippling work aligned precisely with the photograph, with the consistency of the work being critical in demonstrating the reduction of the full image. Due to the development of my own conceptualisation, I also made adjustments to the stippling work itself by reducing some 'dots' in Photoshop, making the clarity of the stippling image alone reduced further. This is particularly enhanced with the works printed in their final A2 size. Alongside this, I conducted separate experimentation specifically capturing lighting, similar to that in *Caetra Desunt*, to go alongside the individual layered works and establish a consistent tie between them. In *T.J. Eckleburg*, the use of layering was between two different images, in a Wallworth-inspired photograph and stippling experiment, achieved through Photoshop and adjusting the opacity of the photograph. Throughout the works incorporating stippling, the clone stamp tool was essential in adjusting the levels of dots in particular areas, also providing further depth in areas in which it was required.

In the evolving emphasis of technological significance in contemporary society, individual presence and awareness within this environment has decreased in alignment with increasing conformity. My body of work, therefore, comments on its prevailing existence, influence on developing generations, and the ultimate internal discussions by individuals on its prevalence.