

**Eliza Hutchison**  
—*Hair in the Gate, a biography*

Centre for Contemporary  
Photography  
01 June – 15 July 2012



*Santa's Death, Atrodromo*  
Enzo e Dino Ferrari, 1994 2012



*Dad, Demman Pool, 1973* 2012



*November 11, 1975* 2012



*Heller Skeller No 2, 1969* 2012



*Darlinghurst, 1983* 2012



*Tatum, 2012* 2012



*Heller Skeller No 3, 1969* 2012



*Polanski and Tate, Santes*  
*Martes-de-la-mer No 3, 1969* 2012



*Polanski and Tate, Santes*  
*Martes-de-la-mer No 2, 1969* 2012



*Stroh, Bangkok, 2004* 2012



*Pete, Turrumulla, 2011* 2012



*Alice Lynne Chamberlain,*  
*1980* 2012



*Heller Skeller No 1, 1969* 2012



*Instant Karnal 1969* 2012



*Untitled, 2012* 2012



*Family Conviction*  
*No 1, 1970* 2012



*Family Conviction*  
*No 2, 1970* 2012



*Somers, 2011* 2012



*Montrose, 1998* 2012



*Aeria, 1988* 2012



*Spector Trial, 2007* 2012



*Heart of Glass, Prince*  
*Alfred, 1979* 2012



*Blonde, Prince Alfred, 1979* 2012



*Tate Funeral, Holy Cross*  
*Cemetery, Calver City, 1969* 2012



*Asel, San Paulo, 1992* 2012



*Mourners, Calver City, 1969* 2012



*Polanski and Tate, Santes*  
*Martes-de-la-mer No 1, 1969* 2012



*Faces, 1981* 2012

The artist would like to thank Brian Gilkes from Pharos Editions,  
Alexander Knox and Justin Clemens,  
[www.elizahutchison.com](http://www.elizahutchison.com)  
ISBN 978-0-9872933-2-9

All works:  
inkjet prints  
365 x 54.8 cm or 54.8 x 365 cm

ccp.

404 George Street Fitzroy VIC 3065  
+613 9417 1549 info@ccp.org.au www.ccp.org.au

**ARTS VICTORIA**  
Centre for Contemporary Photography is supported financially through Arts Victoria and is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council. It receives art funding and advisory input, Centre for Contemporary Photography is supported by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, state and territory governments. CCP is a member of CAOC Contemporary Arts Organisations of Australia.

---

## Many mirrorical returns; or, self-portrait in a convex medium

---

— Justin Clemens

The strange expression — at once quotidian and surrealistic — of *Hair in the Gate* comes from photography: the gate is the place of the opening between the plane of the film and the light of the world. As the film passes through the gate, celluloid fragments can become detached and enter the frame, thereby ruining the integrity of the shot. Hair in the gate is a disaster, especially for a film shoot. Even the latest post-production digital editing will be hard-pressed to rectify the issue. There's even something satisfyingly paradoxical about this possibility: the means one requires to capture the world in an image threatens always to interfere with its own smooth functioning. Means *qua* media, that is, as ways of registering, storing, representing and transmitting information, are distinguished from the matter they capture; means *qua* ways of doing, are also distinguished from the ends at which they are deployed to achieve. *Hair in the Gate* is a phrase that at once sums up the interference of means with their own ends, as well as the interference of means with themselves. *Hair in the Gate* means *means against means*. It calls for more means, supplementary means, the necessity to find more means to check the vicissitudes of your own means. With cinematic photography, one can at least have professionals checking the gate for 'hair', and whisking it away if it's found. With human memory, there's nobody you can employ able to verify that your gate is clean. On the contrary: human beings are those beings whose gates are irrevocably dirty, and for whom there is ultimately no way of telling the difference between accuracy and fabrication. Between memory and experience, there is only the ruination of false impression and the distortions of recovery. This state of affairs has been confirmed by every development in modern psychology since Sigmund Freud formalised his theory of repression. Contemporary neuroscience has both verified and refined this theory, to the point where it now seems that every recollection of a memory itself alters the memory further. To recall is to transform, such that even the most precise details may be invented, and even the most strenuous conviction of fidelity is more suspicious than persuasive. Moreover, it's not always very clear, in these heady days of technological multimedia convergence, whether there's even any unmediated experience in the first place: on the contrary, some of the most intense moments of our lives now come from television, film, photography, magazines, email and the internet, and many if not most of these images are of global events, implicating natural disasters and human catastrophes, celebrities and the otherwise famous. The death of Ayrton Senna in a tragic crash; the emphatic gestures of a witness at the trial of Phil Spector for murder; the mutilated, blood-stained body of Sharon Tate *belter skelter* on a Californian carpet; Blondie's red dress; Gough Whitlam present at a press-conference following

his dismissal; the blank face of Lindy Chamberlain, unreadable in the calamitous light of legal, medical, and political attention. Newly discovered distant memories, flickering up from unremembered childhood pasts. Trauma adds an intensity to representations that encourages their memorialisation; but the very intensity of trauma also distorts the memory to the point of defacement and misrecognition. Even more confounding — the traumas of media, in both senses of the genitive — come to be completely integrated into the most intimate recesses of subjectivity, such that, entirely within the same orders of consciousness and unconsciousness, the bucolic images of trees, flowers and children are intercalated with scenes of bodily assault and destruction, famous faces twisted into a rictus of pain or ecstasy, mobilised for seduction or immobilised in shock, articulated between the snapping open of the gate and its immediate snapping-shut. Yet that snap of capture is also what smears the shot, redistributes the details as if you were lost in a funhouse, to use John Barth's expression, multiplies, splits, unfocuses, refocuses, compresses and extrudes events into depthlessness and unreason. Your intimacy is an 'extimacy', a psychic topology in which global popular culture is woven into your most secret interior like a serpent of deracinated imagery. No wonder Marcel Duchamp used to speak of 'mirrorical returns', suggesting that everything can always come back as something else, looking like something you recognise although it's something completely different. And no wonder that Harold Bloom speaks of 'catastrophe creation', that you are the deranged yet precise outcome of cosmic media catastrophes. At least in art something of this situation can be exposed, and exposed in the form of hermetic beauty. To make something unprecedentedly beautiful from the horrors of experience has always been the aim and alibi of art. Here, in these extraordinary sequences of rephotographed images, anamorphically reflected and streamed on the walls into a filmic sequence of its own making, one can begin to get a sense of the strange contingencies of self, that the most intimate and affecting memories are shifting collages of extreme, disjointed moments in the lives of otherwise unknown others, who are only others insofar as they are you yourself as another, enigmatic remnants of public private disasters scattered from the untimely and terrorising underworld of encounters, encounters flattened, distorted and returned to you — you to you to you.

*Polanski and Tate, Saintes Maries-de-la-mer No 2, 1969 2012*  
from the series *Hair in the Gate, a biography*  
inkjet print  
54.8 x 36.5 cm

