



**SOPHIE
GANNON
GALLERY**

SELINA OU NEIGHBOURHOOD TALES

26 APRIL – 21 MAY 2022

Selina Ou is recognised and celebrated for her large-scale documentary style photographs that often depict her subjects at work. Across a practice spanning more than two decades, Ou has sought out employees in the service industry – bartenders, butchers, chemists, and shop assistants of all kinds – to explore themes of consumerism, cultural and social hierarchies, identity and personal worth. By extending this focus to countries such as China, Japan, Chile and the United States, Ou’s images also bring into sharp relief the challenge of maintaining culturally specific traditions and ways of life in the face of global capitalism and its rampant consumerism. Ou’s images are dependent on the willing collaboration of her subjects, who are treated with a dignity and respect that places them at the centre of the frame, enabling them to participate in the way in which, through her photographs, they are presented to the world. Despite their recognisable roles, Ou’s subjects are not ‘types’. They are individuals, replete with their own rich and complex lives beyond their occupations. It is the hint of this – the realms beyond the expectations of work and the presentation of a public face, that give these photographs their power.

The images comprising Ou’s most recent series, *Neighbourhood Tales*, have moved away from the subject of work to a more personal space – one where motherhood and the making of art coexist. The fact that the mother of the children in these images is the person behind the lens brings a complex bundle of emotions to these photographs – a whirling dervish of intense love, longing, anxiety and anticipation of futures and possibilities yet unknown. In several of the works, Ou’s young sons stand at the boundary of the environment they find themselves in – staring into an empty soccer pitch or vacant amphitheatre, at a skate ramp devoid of skaters, or at the edge of a new housing estate under construction. The sense of the subjects being at a precipice in these images, and the tension of what lies beyond that invisible threshold is palpable. The artist-mother’s hope for their futures charges the stillness of these spare and beautiful photographs. Will they find a space of acceptance or rejection, a place of community and belonging? Will their cultural heritage prove a hurdle? Will they be touched by the violence of society? Will they be safe, and loved? And yet, as both mother and image-maker, these photographs also capture exquisite moments of childhood, with its ‘first times’, its boredom, its frustrations, joys, and surprises. This is a place she can’t be part of, but can only support, nourish and observe.

In her 2010 series *Beside Myself*, Ou photographed women in domestic interiors in several different guises – dressed up, lounging around, as working professionals, artists, and mothers – presenting each aspect of the individual subject within the one image. This sense of split and multiple ‘selves’ speaks gently but insistently of the complexity of women’s lives; of the different and often invisible roles they are required to assume, and of the very real toll of this contemporary burden. As discussion continues around twentieth-century feminism’s promise that women can ‘have it all’, Ou’s public insertion of her role as mother into *Neighbourhood Tales* brings these issues to the fore while knowingly highlighting the specific challenges of the artist-mother – the push-pull that occurs between the desire to create (and the time, dedication, and headspace that this requires) and the need to be a good mother. While there is currently much discussion about the cultural biases and institutional impediments to the success of women artists and the changes required to remedy this, little has been written about the impact of motherhood and of caring responsibilities on the careers of women artists. Women artists have certainly juggled the making of art and motherhood across the course of art history (from Artemisia Gentileschi and Élisabeth Louise Vigée-Le Brun to Louise Bourgeois, Alice Neel and Kara Walker), and photographers such as Sally Mann and Polixeni Papapetrou have actively collaborated with their children in their image making. But until recently however, the perception of a successful woman artist largely accorded with Tracey Emin’s famous quip, ‘There are good artists that have children. Of course there are. They are called men.’ In practice, contemporary women artists are constantly shifting the dial on long-held assumptions about what it takes to lead a creative life, but by bringing motherhood, as Ou has done, into the work itself, these issues are foregrounded in a way that cannot be ignored. Embedding artmaking in the fantastic mess of family life, makes it both accessible, understandable, and meaningful. Surely this is something to be celebrated.

—Kelly Gellatly

Kelly Gellatly is a curator, writer and arts advocate and is the founding director of Agency Untitled.



Selina Ou
The Kite 2020
inkjet print
edition of 5 + 3 APs
80 x 120 cm
\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)



Selina Ou
The Trampoline 2022
inkjet print
edition of 5 + 3 APs
80 x 120 cm
\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)



Selina Ou
The Playground 2021
inkjet print
edition of 5 + 3 APs
80 x 120 cm
\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)



Selina Ou
The Neighbour 2020
inkjet print
edition of 5 + 3 APs
80 x 120 cm
\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)



Selina Ou
The Pony 2021
inkjet print
edition of 5 + 3 APs
80 x 120 cm
\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)



Selina Ou
The New Suburb 2022
inkjet print
edition of 5 + 3 APs
80 x 120 cm
\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)



Selina Ou

The Community Fence 2022

inkjet print

edition of 5 + 3 APs

80 x 120 cm

\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)



Selina Ou
The Ramp 2022
inkjet print
edition of 5 + 3 APs
80 x 120 cm
\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)



Selina Ou
The Amphitheatre 2022
inkjet print
edition of 5 + 3 APs
80 x 120 cm
\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)



Selina Ou
The Red Lanterns 2021
inkjet print
edition of 5 + 3 APs
80 x 120 cm
\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)



Selina Ou
The Pines 2022
inkjet print
edition of 5 + 3 APs
80 x 120 cm
\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)



Selina Ou
The Goal 2020
inkjet print
edition of 5 + 3 APs
80 x 120 cm
\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)



Selina Ou
The Pond 2022
inkjet print
edition of 5 + 3 APs
80 x 120 cm
\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)



Selina Ou
The Temple 2022
inkjet print
edition of 5 + 3 APs
80 x 120 cm
\$3,300 incl. GST (unframed)

SELINA OU

EDUCATION

- 2001 Bachelor of Fine Art Honours, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne
1998 Bachelor of Fine Art, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 *Neighbourhood Tales*, Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne
2011 *New York*, Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne
2010 *Beside Myself*, GRANTPIRRIE Gallery, Sydney
2008 *Mono/Mono*, Gallery Raku, Kyoto University of Art & Design, Kyoto, Japan
Japan Portraits, Centre of Contemporary Photography, Melbourne
2007 *Chile*, GRANTPIRRIE, Sydney
2006 *Sakura Season*, Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne.
2005 *Selina Ou: Photo Espana:Cuidad*, NH National, Madrid, Spain
2003 *Selina Ou, China*, GRANTPIRRIE, Sydney
Work, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne
2001 *Ache*, TCB Artist Run Space, Melbourne
2000 *Locate*, West Space Inc., Melbourne

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 *WHO ARE YOU: Australian Portraiture*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne & National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
2020 *Family Album*, Town Hall Gallery, Melbourne
2018 *20/20: Celebrating twenty years with twenty new portrait commissions*, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
2013 *Melbourne Now*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
2011 *Conversations from here*, 3+1 Arte Contemporanea, Lisbon, Portugal
2010 *Gertrude Studios 2010*, Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne
2009 *'Til You Drop: Shopping A Melbourne History*, Keith Murdoch Gallery, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne
2008 *Art as a Bridge: Tsuyoshi Ozawa, Selina Ou, paramodel, Oyamazaki ArtFesta 2008*, Asahi Beer Oyamazaki Villa Museum of Art, Japan
Basil Sellers Art Prize, Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, Melbourne
2007 *BLAST! The Influence of Manga and Contemporary Japanese Culture on Australian Artists*, Logan Art Gallery & Redcliff City Art Gallery, QLD
2006 *Light Sensitive: Contemporary Australian Photography from the Loti Smorgan Fund*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Trans-versa; conversing across the south, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo, Santiago, Chile
2005 *The All-Australian Show* curated by Tristian Koenig, Il Ponte, Rome, Italy
Outdooring, Senkukan Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
The Great Leap Forward, CCP, Melbourne
Open Letter, Asialink touring exhibition 2005–06, Gallery 4A, Sydney; National Gallery, Bangkok; Metropolitan Museum, Manila, Philippines; National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

COMMISSIONS

- 2020 Works for Hyatt Centric, Melbourne
2018 Portrait of Professor Michelle Simmons, 2018 Australian of the Year, National Portrait Gallery
2008 Oyamazaki Art Festa 2008, Asahi Beer Oyamazaki Villa Museum of Art / Kyoto University of Art & Design, Kyoto, Japan
2006 *Flash: Australian Athletes in Focus*, National Portrait Gallery, Melbourne Festival / 2006 Commonwealth Games
Royal Australian Institute of Architecture for the Australian Pavilion at the 2006 Venice Architecture Biennale, Venice, Italy
2003 Photographic essay for the 2004 International Sculpture Symposium, Changchun, China

SELECTED AWARDS AND GRANTS

- 2009 Australia Council for the Arts, (Visual Art) Skills and Arts Development Grant – Greene St, New York, USA, studio residency
- 2008 Arts Victoria, International Cultural Exchange Grant (Oyamazaki, Japan)
- 2006 Australia Council for the Arts, New Work – Established Grant (Santiago, Chile)
- 2005 ANZ Emerging Artist Award
- 2003 Australia Council for the Arts, (Visual Art) Skills and Arts Development Grant – Tokyo artist residency
City of Hobart Art Prize 2003 Photography
- 2002 The Pat Corrigan Artists' Grant, NAVA

RESIDENCIES

- 2011 Australia Council for the Arts studio residency, Greene St, New York, USA,
- 2010–11 Studio residency, Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne,
- 2008 Art as a Bridge, Oyamazaki ArtFesta 2008, Asahi Beer Oyamazaki Villa Museum of Art / Kyoto University of Art & Design, Kyoto, Japan
- 2007 Women in Research artist residency, Monash University, Melbourne
- 2006 South Project, *Trans-versa: conversing across the south*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, Chile
- 2005 Australia Council for the Arts studio residency, Tokyo, Japan
- 2004 The Pat Corrigan Artist Residency, Gold Coast, QLD
- 2001 Artist in residence, Eltham Secondary College, Melbourne

COLLECTIONS

Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
Artbank, Australia
Asahi Beer Oyamazaki Villa Museum of Art, Kyoto, Japan
Auscorp, Sydney
Australia Council for the Arts, Australia
City of Boroondara Collection, Melbourne
City of Hobart Collection, Hobart
Gold Coast City Gallery, Gold Coast, QLD
Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne
Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, Chile
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
National Library of Australia, Canberra
Pat Corrigan Collection, Australia
Penrith Regional Gallery, Penrith, NSW
The Esk Collection, Hobart
The Joy of Giving Something Incorporated, New York, USA
UBS Art Collection, Zurich, Switzerland
Wollongong Art Gallery, NSW
Private collections

