

RESEARCH STATEMENT: Alex Kershaw

TITLE: Petalody

YEAR: 2007

Research Background

Field – Photographic representations of family and the use of photography as a device that enacts and embodies social exchange.

Context – *Petalody* is the result of a year-long series of photographic visits to my grandmother, her house and garden. The work engages with her passion for Ikebana, the ancient art of Japanese flower arrangement.

Research Question – How can photography be used as a device for articulating family history and generate acts of intimate social exchange?

Research Contribution

Innovation and new knowledge - *Petalody* began as a way of composting my grandmother's passion, and of organising it in decidedly flawed ways. Together we arranged flowers with personal relics resulting in a series of portraits loaded with a sense of intimacy and estrangement. The work became a passage between family, attended by intimacy, resistance, resolutions, and inevitable change. The genre of still life photography was extended, as it became more than just creating compositions for the camera but the result of intimate corporeal experiences of time and place.

Research Significance

Exhibited at GRANTPIRRIE in 2006. Curated by Zara Stanhope in the exhibition *Perfect for every Occasion Photography Today* at the Heide Museum of Modern Art. Reviewed by Dr. Dougal Phillips for Art & Australia. The work is featured in 'Look: Contemporary Australian Photography Since 1980', by Anne Marsh. One of the works, *Kill them with kindness*, was selected as a finalist in the National Portrait Prize 2007.