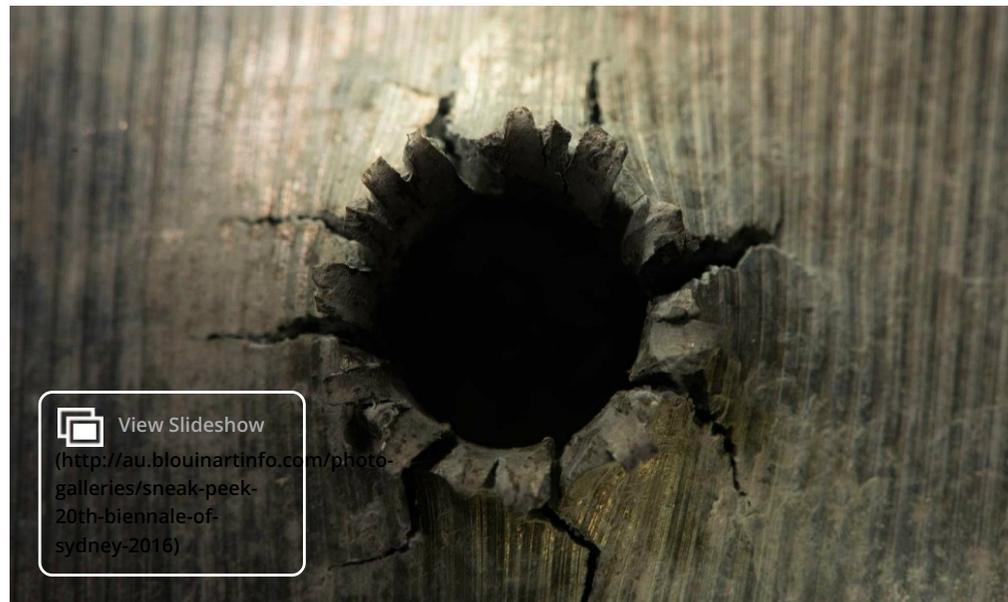


20th Sydney Biennale Q&A: Aura Satz's 'Bullet and the Hole'

BY NICHOLAS FORREST | MAY 28, 2016



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Aura Satz, 'Between the Bullet and the Hole', 2015

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The 20th Biennale of Sydney “The future is already here — it’s just not evenly distributed” presents more than 200 works by 83 artists from 35 countries across seven venues or “Embassies of Thought” as well as multiple “in-between spaces” around the inner city.

Curated by Stephanie Rosenthal, Chief Curator at the Hayward Gallery, the 20th Biennale of Sydney is on show from March 18 – June 5, 2016.

Throughout the duration of the Biennale, BLOUIN ARTINFO will feature a series of interviews with participating artists. In the interview below, London-based artist [Aura Satz](http://www.iamanagram.com/) (<http://www.iamanagram.com/>) discusses her film “Between the Bullet and the Hole” ([more info here](#))

(<https://www.biennaleofsydney.com.au/20bos/artists/aura-satz/>) in the “Embassy of Disappearance” at Carriageworks, which the artist says “draws on extensive research into the role of women in ballistics and early computing.”

Could you describe the work that you will be presenting at the 20th Biennale of Sydney 2016 and the motivation and inspiration behind its creation?

I am showing a film entitled ‘Between the Bullet and the Hole’, which draws on extensive research into the role of women in ballistics and early computing. Essentially their task as ‘human computers’ involved calculating or rather interpolating the bullet’s trajectory. To me this opened up to wider concerns around warfare and violence, and the gap between the bullet and the hole is collapsed to its bare essentials - presence and absence, positive and negative, perpetrator and victim – as well as the binary code of data, ones and zeros. The film is formally structured as a series of flickering images that break down the act of looking, like an impossible join-the dots, where each image punches through to the next. The soundtrack, composed by Scanner, is also intended to create an auditory rattle, punctuating and perforating the imagery.

How does the work you are presenting at the 20th Biennale of Sydney connect with your ongoing practice and the interests and preoccupations that form the basis of your work?

I have made several works looking at the ‘invisible’ or little-known history of women’s labour, specifically in relation to technology. I am particularly interested in the question of women’s voices, both literally (as expressed in some of my work on women composers), but also more metaphorically in relation to agency, the right to vote, the ability to author text or write code, to

invent new systems of notation, encryption, and sound-making. This in turn provides a method to destabilise the reading of history. In this piece I look at how women's work in munitions in WW1 led to the right to vote, and how during WW2 the women working on the ENIAC computer were effectively the first programmers. Unlike a number of previous works of mine which have unequivocally celebrated women's achievements, this piece tells a much more complicated story.

The 20th Biennale of Sydney 2016 is presented at seven main venues conceived as “embassies of thought.” In what ways does the work you are presenting reflect and connect with the theme and context of the particular embassy in which it is situated?

Stephanie's curatorial vision really resonates with my overall practise, in particular the idea of creating a safe space for potentially unsafe thoughts, a place in which to open up to the other and destabilise boundaries. I am showing as part of the 'Embassy of Disappearance', and I think of my work as essentially a space for making audible and visible the lesser heard voices, tapping into gaps in history. One of the anecdotes that informed my piece was the resistance of suffragettes to be counted as data in the national census of 1911, an act of civil disobedience - a voluntary disappearance in order to catalyse the possibility of a voice. Ironically women were the primary data-processing work-force, working as key-punch operators, and as such the work marks out a space for questioning who counts and what is counted. This question is still as relevant and urgent as ever.

One of the key ideas that this Biennale explores is how the common distinction between the virtual and the physical has become ever more elusive. How does your work engage with this idea?

The film explores the abstraction of violence into data, virtualising the space between the bullet and the hole. In looking at earlier historical manifestations of data-processing the work brings the virtual back to the basic principle of ones and zeros - a punched hole in a punch card. The film operates as a sequence that is perceptually hard to apprehend, a visual language of shifting measures, changing targets, opposing viewpoints. It is partly about the difficulty of reconciling the virtual and the physical, and activating the gap between the two.

What do you want to convey and/or express with the work you are presenting at the 20th Biennale of Sydney 2016?

I like to think of the film as a form of resistance, removing the usual methods we use to narrativise or mathematically calculate the space between the bullet and the hole, perpetrator and victim. It was important to me to avoid the strategies of empathy or apathy, and attempt an alternative route through the indigestibility of violence. I view the film as a gash, much like a bullet hole or a perforated punched card. I want the film to provoke a gaping hole, a space for thought and productive questioning.

atz discusses her film “Between the Bullet and the Hole”

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