

Nina Ross' video work *That takes balls* (2019) exists on the external walls of the Centre for Contemporary Photography as a counter-monument to the 69 women who died due to violence in Australia in 2018. The video begins with refusal. A hand-drawn cock and balls, that scrappy symbol of cheap masculinity found on school desks and public bathrooms, is erased by the artist's hand.

No.

The empty space left behind is filled one-by-one with the first-names of women who were fatal victims of violence. Each name is handwritten, backwards, by the artist on verso pane of glass. Even when it appears there is no more space, the smallest gap is filled with yet with another name. Individual names blur into a common sprawl of red text. The title of this work is another refusal, a reversal of admiration into accusation. "What is refused" writes essayist and poet Anne Boyer, in an essay titled No, "often amplifies what is not".

Counting Dead Women Australia, a subsection of the feminist collective Destroy The Joint are responsible for recording and publishing the circumstances of these violent deaths, as verified by police and media reports. Destroy The Joint keep a running tally on their facebook page: currently, 14 women have died due to violence in Australia this year, at the time of writing. In 2018 80% of the Australian women who died by violence was due to violence perpetrated by men.

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" Sometimes, I'll read a novel written by a man in which a woman walks home alone, late at night, in America, without having a single thought about her physical safety, and it's so implausible that I'll put the book down" writes the American author R.O. Kwon. I, too, weaponize my keys, holding them tight in my hands as I walk dark streets, and find that the smell of metal lingers on my fingers long after I have made it safely into my door. Disbelief can be a kind of refusal, a wake-up call to different experiences of sexual violence. A refusal to accept women's responsibility for their own "personal safety" as good enough.

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Cuban American artist Ana Mendieta refused to be silent in 1973 when a fellow student, Sara Ann Otten, was murdered and raped in her dorm room on their Iowa University campus. In the months that

proceeded this event, Mendieta produced a series of work that tested indifference against complicity. For *Moffitt Building Piece* (1973) she poured animal blood and viscera onto the street outside her apartment and secretly filmed the reactions of the passersby; the neat sidestep, the head turned away. Their failure to respond or react is far from a refusal, it is a convenient acceptance: a Yes. The same year Mendieta presented *Rape Scene*, staging herself as victim, pants around her ankles, blood poured down her leg. Fellow art students were invited to her studio to observe the scene for over two hours. Mendieta refused passivity, demanded that we look.

No, No, No.

In the 1985 trial for Ana Mendieta's murder, a doorman testified he heard a woman screaming "No" several times before hearing the thud of a body hitting the roof of the all-night delicatessen below. She had "somehow gone out the window" is what her accused murderer, husband and acclaimed artist Carl Andre told emergency services. Refusing to accept her death as accident or suicide, the activist group WHEREISANAMENDIETA routinely protest Andre's exhibitions, in some cases recreating *Moffitt Building Piece*, nearly always staining their hands with blood-red paint. In 2018 68% of the Australian women died by violence at the hands of someone they know. According to a 2018 report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, one in six Australian women have been subjected, since the age of 15, to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or previous cohabiting partner.

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Ross's artwork hovers between record and refusal. It refuses the normalization of sexual and gendered violence perpetrated by rape culture, at the same time memorializing its very victims. *That takes balls* does not accept the death of women due to violence as a hazard of gender. "Transpositions and upendings refuse and then reorder the world," writes Boyer. Intersectional feminism is built upon refusing the various orders of the world. No to patriarchy, no to oppression, no to the capitalist yes. If we refuse, we are forced to confront an alternative.

Amelia Wallin, 2019

Cara, Edith, Eden, unnamed, Rhonda, Maddison, unnamed, Kym, unnamed, unnamed, unnamed, Bette, Michelle, Toyah, unnamed, Erana, Jacqueline, Dannyll, Kristie, unnamed, Gayle, Nicole, Julie, Beverley, Mara, Pamela, Fahima, Kristina, Dawn, Mary, unnamed, Samantha, Laa, Nicole, Michelle, Fatima, Amanda, Jan, Larissa, Eurydice, Qi, unnamed, Caroline, unnamed, unnamed, Karen, Cynda, Katrina, Debbie, unnamed, Cecilia, unnamed, Kay, Teah, unnamed, Simone, Katherine, Kerrie, un-named, Marija, Le Ngoc, Sally, Radmila, Mary, Nowra, Nancy, Amelia, Antonia, Margaret.

69 women were murdered due to violence in Australia in 2018.*

That takes balls is a response to the culture of gendered violence against women in Australia. Presented on CCP's public-facing Night Projection Window, the work confronts the safety and visibility of women in public space, as well as broader problems of cultural attitudes towards women and girls.

*The artist would like to acknowledge the time and research of Destroy the Joint, who count every known death due to violence against women in Australia, verified by police and media reports.

Nina Ross is a Naarm (Melbourne) based artist who draws on individual experiences to interrogate the use of visual and textual language within political and personal spheres. Using the body, her work speaks to current global issues, while giving a voice to personal narratives and concerns.

Nina's work engages in collaborative practice including co-founding Artists' Committee (2017) and Artists' Subcommittee (2018) and is a founding member of the Arts/Mums Collective (2015).

Currently Nina is collating research, conducted with artists Jessie Scott and Lizzy Sampson that proposes practical ways in which galleries can support working artists who are also parents.

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