

BEHELD
Graham Miller



Companion Curator > Fiona Wilkie

Since 2006, UK artist Graeme Miller has been collecting and presenting instances where stowaways have fallen to the ground from the undercarriage of aircraft throughout the world.

Beheld gathers fragile traces of these charged places in glass, sound, and 180 images. For this Melbourne installation, *Beheld* features an Australian incident amongst other occurrences around the globe. The installation poetically engages with the tragic consequences of desperate acts of attempted informal migration to enchant audiences into a meditation upon a shared human condition – a global connection to human life on earth, relationships between the living and the dead, and how individuals and societies negotiate responsibilities and intractable issues.

Being with *Beheld* offers a live experience at its most artfully affecting and hauntingly powerful. In a blackened space seemingly opening out to the universe, we are called to reflect on the tension between our bodily encounter with specific places, with desperate acts of migration, and with urgent globally-proportioned questions of human rights and ethical action.

Beheld was first created at Dilston Grove, London, and has since been exhibited across Europe, adding further instances of falling to the ground in the places in which it is shown. This is its first presentation in the Southern Hemisphere.

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Respondent > Mammad Aidani

I approached the room, it was calm and welcoming. A bowl was placed in the centre of the room. I fixed my eyes towards it. I wanted to be introduced to the space by this object. That is what I began to think. When I faced the room, the feelings of beauty and anxiety invaded my being.

When focusing on what was happening in the room, I thought of human beings falling from the sky. As I watched the walls, I stopped and uttered to myself: '*for the purpose of finding a new home, somewhere that is welcoming and safe*'. Desperation and determination to run away from violence and the fear of persecution forces millions of people to act upon things that are impossible to comprehend for those of us who have not experienced political, racial or cultural repression.

The space that *Beheld* occupied drove my attention to the beauty and tragic importance of the zest for life, survival and resilience. The dark room and the tension that it created took my attention to the sky and the stars. It made me think of the insignificance of objectification, and I began to be immersed into the poetic space of subjectivity and the lived world of the body of a human being.

Migration, if I have to interpret it within the context of *Beheld*, does not mean an act of '*I want to go*', but an act of '*I must go*'. These are two very different notions: '*I must go*' does not leave you with many options whereas: '*I want to go*' does. It is softer and safer. '*I must go*' means I must run away from injustices and violence. When I saw *Beheld*, I felt that I was facing a powerful installation with all its appearance of simplicity and normalness.

There was something haunting about the installation. The way Graeme chose to point us to spots of lights was very poetic, illuminating and welcoming. The core of the experience of the exhibition for me was the glass bowl that was installed in the middle of the dark room, as well as the inclusion of the lights, which softened the space without losing the powerful presence of the bowl.

The bowl and lights had a unique impact on me. Memory and emotions were evoked by touching the bowl; the darkness and lighting spots reminded me of how fragile and, at the same time, how resilient human beings can be.

It took me a while to decide to touch the bowl. And when I touched it, I was led to think beyond the immediacy of the walls surrounding the room. It led me to see the sky and the tragic falling of desperate human beings striving to live in a safe place. When I saw those houses, offices and a plane, I just closed my eyes.

I hold the bowl with my hands as gently as I can. When I was doing this, I was so anxious that it could fall from my hands onto the ground. It was in these moments that I looked around the room and saw those bodies falling from the sky into a city or country where they dreamed to begin a new life, to live in peace and freedom. This dream was not only unfulfilled but they also faced a tragic death.

I have realized that we can share our humanity by showing the injustices and horrors that others undergo, and I think Graeme's work has achieved this. I wanted to tell him how I saw the bodies falling from the sky, but then decided to keep this feeling to myself. Holding the bowl and the sounds that reverberated from it caressed my body and emotions.

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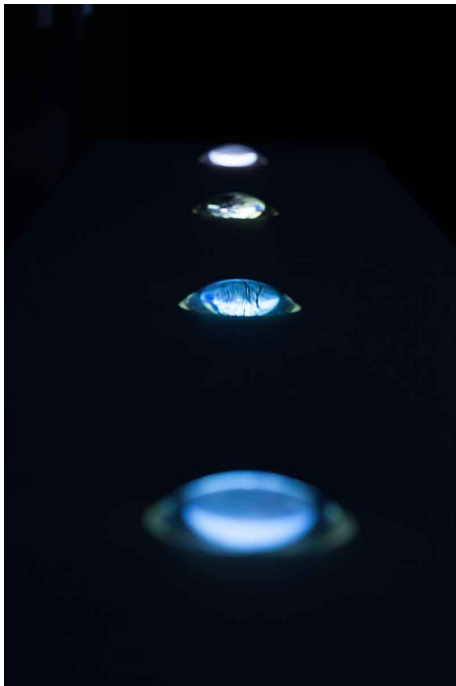
Beheld, RMIT Gallery, 2015. Photography: Graeme Miller.



Beheld, RMIT Gallery, 2015. Photography: Mark Ashkanasy.

>> http://www.performingmobilities.net/symposium/traces_gallery/beheld/

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Beheld, RMIT Gallery, 2015. Photography: Mark Ashkanasy.



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