Research Statement

Title: Judith Wright: Desire, ‘Judith Wright: Desire’ in Jensen, A., Barker, J., Bruce, C., De Zegher, C., Williams, M, Judith Wright: Desire, QUT Art Museum and the artist Brisbane, Queensland
Creator: Williams, Megan L
Year: 2014

Research Background

Since 2007, senior Australian visual artist, Judith Wright, has been making artwork that imagines and restages the life of a lost child. While authors have written about works from this series focusing their analysis on readings of touch, time, theatre, fragility, love, loss and grief, this essay looks at this series as a whole and asks how desire is embodied in the artist’s practice.

Research Contribution

This essay contributes to new understandings of Wright’s practice by drawing on theories of desire to argue that Wright makes artworks that deny an absolute reading thereby creating an unknown, and this encounter with the unknown can be a deeply humanising experience for the viewer. Not only does this essay contribute to critical understandings of an important Australian artist, it adds to broader scholarly research about contemporary visual art by women.

Research Significance

The essay was included in the 160-page scholarly publication that accompanied a major survey exhibition of the same title at QUT Art Museum, Queensland in 2014 and was launched by Rhana Devenport, Director of Auckland Art Gallery. Four other commissioned essays, including one by internationally renowned curator, writer, art historian and current Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Gent, Catherine de Zegher comprised the publication. It is sold in the bookshops of major state galleries in Australia including QAGoMA, Art Gallery of New South Wales and National Gallery of Victoria and was conceived as a second volume to Judith Wright: Conversations 1987-2007. The essay has been cited in Boulous Walker, M. 2016 ‘Desire, vulnerability, approach: the work of Judith Wright’ in Eyeline, issue 84, Eyeline Publishing, Brisbane.