
Difficult Conversations



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Published by British Council Northern Ireland
in collaboration with the British Council
Research & Insight team

<https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/>

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight>

<http://adifficultconversation.com>

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DOI

<https://doi.org/10.57884/BVMS-Y812>

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The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. A registered charity: 209131 (England and Wales) SC037733 (Scotland).

Acknowledgements

The Editors wish to thank the British Council and the British Council UK/Australia 2021–2022 Season for their generous support for the difficult conversations project and in doing so fostering a global partnership between the University of Canberra and Ulster University. In particular we acknowledge the work of Camilla Rous, Jonathan Stewart, Helen Salmon and James Perkins. We also wish to thank Cian Smyth for his significant contribution to the design and development of the difficult conversations 2022 symposium and website, Ben Ennis Butler for design of the project website and all those who participated in these important forerunners to this edited volume. We are grateful to the anonymous reviewers in the United Kingdom and Australia who offered their expertise and comments to authors and editors on this manuscript, and to Pablo Rossello, Rosanna Lewis, Jenny Daly, and Nikki Locke of the British Council for their helpful feedback and support.

On the edge of urban renewal

Katie Hayne



Figure 1. Katie Hayne, *On the edge of urban renewal*, (2017–2021). [Oil on reclaimed cupboard doors, 146 x 146 cm each]. Image: K. Hayne (2022).

These works are part of a creative research project documenting a contested urban renewal project in Canberra (Hayne, 2022). For three years I regularly visited a group of public housing estates as the residents were being displaced and the buildings demolished. I was an outsider to the housing community and sought to gain an insight into the complexities of gentrification in the context of lower socio-economic housing. Similar to Lynne Manzo's affordable housing research, I found that the residents expressed a desire to escape the stigma of public housing and at the same time a reluctance to leave and lose their attachments to place and social connections (Manzo, 2014, p. 402). In these works I have painted on cupboard doors salvaged from the demolition sites to communicate these conflicting emotions. The phrases are gleaned from my conversations with the residents, as well as from graffiti that appeared on the buildings and slogans used by property developers. The 1960s cupboard doors act as a nostalgic reference to the past whilst also symbolising the liminal position of myself, an artist/observer, and of the residents being dislocated from their homes – encapsulating the tensions between our real and ideal experiences of place.

References

- Hayne, K (2022) "'I loved and hated the place': Painting on the edge of a public housing precinct undergoing urban renewal'. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.25911/M2EM-E040>.
- Manzo, L C (2014) 'On uncertain ground: being at home in the context of public housing redevelopment'. *International Journal of Housing Policy* 14/4: pp. 389–410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616718.2014.947125>.

¹The spelling of 'Ngunawal' is taken from graffiti at the housing sites and the artist acknowledges some Aboriginal groups prefer the spelling to be 'Ngunnawal'.



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