Difficult Conversations

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Difficult Conversations

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On the edge of urban renewal
Katie Hayne

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.


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’.