

Anne Ferran Artist statement: SPILL

SPILL is the most recent project where I have used photograms of clothing to recall past lives and histories. I am drawn to photograms because, like the x-rays which they resemble, they dematerialise objects, rendering them ghost-like. I also like them for the simple and direct way they are made, by laying the cloth onto light-sensitive paper.

Clothes are a very special kind of personal possession. As well as being intimately connected to the person who wears them, they retain a memory of that person via the shape of their body.

In previous projects my photograms have been made on photographic paper. For SPILL the images have been transferred to film, emphasising their transparency and floating quality. It is my hope that the light leaking from inside the cabinet will suggest something like life within.

The project came into focus for me once I began to explore the Museum collection. I found a surprising wealth of items relating to pregnancy and birth, and to children, so much so that I began to envisage a work encapsulating the years of female fertility (a time of life that you think will go on forever and are amazed when it does not). This use of a theme to select items is a first for me and arises directly out of the depth of the NMA collection.

One way to think about this work is as a memorial to an experience shared by all women, whether they have children or not. Though we have the stories of most of the objects - not all - I prefer not to foreground them. By leaving individual stories more or less in the dark, I look to the evocative power of the clothing and the light to give the work meaning.