

Dear friends of art

here is a text that will be published in the C.G.JUNG Journal Germany in May 2023.

Shadowy errors - Dancing

For 15 years I have been working artistically with old photographs, which I have printed on fabric. The series I review here are large format images,, I process them with needle and thread, the Cross-Over stitches, textile objects and print them. By coloured comments in these black and white photos, I underline their expression and strengthen their theme. In modern times, these photos seem strange by the different clothes, the ambience and the limited technical possibilities of photography at the time. A special atmosphere is also created by the long wait while photographing. It is like a pause in time.

These are three series of Mug Shots of accused women 100 years ago (police identity photos) from Sydney, Australia. Courtesy of the Police Museum, I was able to work on some of these images over time. The documented accusals show their stories. I am interested in accompanying and immersing myself in these particular life stories. My emotions, projections and fantasies flow into the artistic treatment, as well as today's view of the legal situation at the other time.

What makes people become criminals, step into the shadows, commit essential errors by harming others or themselves...?



MUG WOMEN I

from left to right

"Too young..." Eileen was first reported as a "missing person." A 17 year old girl who had run away. Police described her as "inclined to be weak." Her clothes are playful, almost overstuffed. Defiant and helpless, she stands there.

"Drying the tears..." Dorothy shot her young lover when he tried to break up with her. She then attempted to take her own life. She was in jail for 9 years and this photo is taken at the end of her sentence. I dealt with her for a long time. A bourgeois appearance in plaid dress with lace trim. It is an outsized pain of abandonment, the pain of losing him completely and surplus through self-inflicted death.... Here she has a handkerchief to dry the tears. Her right knee is red - did she kneel next to her shot lover? Her hands are tied with a ribbon.

"Royale Lineage..." Patsy was a barmaid. She was charged with various crimes including theft and selling cocaine.... She got into an argument with another criminal that resulted in life threatening attacks. In the press it was written "looking like a mannequin on parade". She appears confident. In that picture she is dressed with the insignia and clothing of power: sun on her head, broad shoulders, gold embroidered etc, as if she had been born in a princely environment.... The royal lineage would have put her life on a different trajectory. Which is not to say that she couldn't have become a criminal there as well. But certainly in a different setting.



MUG WOMEN II

from left to right

"The most touched woman in town..." Nellie was one of the most popular prostitutes in town. According to the first female police officer in town, she had an attitude and poise that set her apart from all the other women in the underworld.... A woman who through all the adversities of life yet managed to maintain a personality. The many hands remain outside, not reaching the core of her person. The golden glints in neckline and on legs emphasize her attraction.

"Broken Heart ..." Dorothy was already introduced in the series I. As neat and special as her clothes were, the heartbreak for her lost lover makes her bleed.... How will she go on living after almost 10 years?

"Like a mannequin..." Patsy, the barmaid.... In series II, the focus is on her own clothes. As if she were in a tailor's shop "looking like a mannequin..." The police measuring stick on

the edge becomes like a tailor's measuring tool. The laces are sewn on, the belt is decorated. Another side of her: the love of tasteful design of their own clothes. In this context, it is noteworthy how wrinkled the clothes were. Spent a night in jail already? (All lace comes from the heritage of my Austrian aunt).



MUG WOMEN III

from left to right

"Army of God..." Myrtle was described in the press as a well dressed woman. She was charged and sentenced to 6 months in jail after a racist attack on a Chinese woman . Dubbed in the press as "White and Yellow." She wears a selected and special clothing. I read the story about it later and was immediately seized with anger at her. An edit was at first not at all for me in question. Then there was a cloth from my fundus. An unfinished embroidery from the last century with the text: "My dear child - sleep gently all night - God's angels - keep watch". A misunderstood Christianity, the idea of a superiority of the white race produce defending soldiers of God, who attack and kill in his name. The cloth is turned over, the ugly, stained and unfinished reverse side is revealed. But she herself does not know that. She sees herself as an angel and keeps watch. A "medal" is emblazoned on her chest.

"Wings..." A second treatment of Nellie, the prostitute. A true angel? Who knows how she lived on. There are accounts of criminals who later became saints. An example is one of the greatest in Buddhist history: Milarepa . These transformations are also found in the disciples of Jesus: Saul becomes Paul. Probably Nellie did not change her life then. The bright wings of hands, whether her own or others, adorn her like wings.

" My dear child ..." Myrtle, the "Soldier of God," once was also a child, was she loved? We don't know. All of them - including Myrtle - are beloved human children in some form. They have come into being and awakened, come fully into the world, whether they are white or yellow ...

According to C.G.Jung, it is the personal and archetypal shadow that leads people to perform negative actions. The fact that in this shadow there are also the un-lived positive sides is often not considered when using this term. Shadow - it almost appears as a fixed quantity. As if it is a fixed part of the personality.

In Buddhism, it is errors that lead people to actions that harm others or even themselves. The error that this and that behavior brings happiness, own, personal happiness, even if it is the fulfillment of a revenge.... Error - is basically a misfortune, resulting from the current condition, one's own experiences and current and past events.... For example, in Dorothy's case there was an action, the sudden emotional state, a high excitement, switching off the "reason" then bring about actions that promise a release from the inner state, pain and sorrow.

In Daoism, these actions are described as a result of imbalance, a lack of balance of different aspirations and influences.

Balance - is actually also a fixed quantity, a standstill in the weighting of the different sides of a scale....

The Balance - here KLUGE (Etymological Dictionary 2002) writes of the original relationship of the word with "Bilancia", (again the balance) and the possible secondary motivation of the change of Bil to Bal from the word "Ballare" - dancing.

Hence the choice of the title : Shadowy Errors - Dancing.

The stories of the Mug-Women are full of fractures. They start their life, are exposed to the whispers or cries of their environment, are carried, loved, hated, seek their happiness, fall for the monsters of errors, are teachable, repent and are stubborn, untouched by the pain and distress of others, are defended, hated and persecuted, suffer shame and pain, joy, good fellowship, brotherhood, sisterhood and are exposed to so many coincidences of life.

They stagger or dance through life. Sometimes it is a madhouse and they lose the control and guidance of their own lives. Sometimes they go astray - and get caught. Sometimes the laws are against them, even if their lives were not based on error. (The first series of Mug Women featured, among others, women who sold alcohol at curfew, helped with abortions, committed petty theft...)

With these images, they are memorialized. But their stories are archetypal courses of many women's and people's lives that are repeated over and over again. As beautifully described in the chaos theory: the in itself regular natural laws of motion of the water result in a pattern in the sand despite and with their chaotic nature on the beach. An interplay of various factors with nevertheless unpredictable results. A slight twist of the wind, the currents in the water create a new structure, a manifesting image in the sand. Very concrete, tangible, touchable and already gone in the next waves....

Katharina Sommer lives in Darmstadt

Film about the Cross-Over stitches in English: <https://youtu.be/4GC2pWBn5Mw>

Series I was exhibited in 2022 in Pittsburgh, USA Pennsylvania at an International Textile Art Exhibition. Series II came to Australia in 2023 in an International Textile Art Exhibition and won the "**International Award of Excellence**" Series III is still in progress and is also presented for the sake of completeness. It is "almost" finished. Photos courtesy of the Sydney Police Museum <https://mhns.wa.gov.au/visit-us/justice-and-police-museum/>