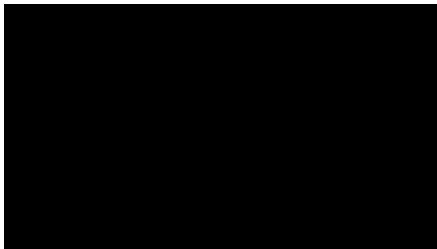


**EXHIBITIONS** Meg Cowell *The Sea, The Shore* 25th November 2014 - 19th December 2014

"A being dedicated to water is a being in flux."  
 Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay  
 on the Imagination of Matter*.



[Meg Cowell - The Sea, The Shore](#) from [Peter Lamont](#)  
 on [Vimeo](#).

Shakespeare's infamous Ophelia—broken-  
 hearted, grieving the death of her father—  
 drowns slowly in a river in Denmark. In a state  
 of spiritual collapse, she has fallen from the  
 bough of a tree while collecting flowers. Now  
 submerged, the young woman's hands puncture  
 the river's surface like lilies. As she welcomes in  
 death, Ophelia sings, her flaxen dress turning  
 lavender as the water exchanges its initial  
 offering of buoyancy for debilitating weight.



Melbourne based artist, Meg Cowell, photographs  
 undulating feminine garments in, what appears,  
 a vacuum of infinite space. The dresses, rich in  
 hue and excessive in their skirting, are  
 handpicked for their unique and romantic  
 character: "Each garment has to speak to me in  
 some way, to tell me what its wants me to do  
 with it, as cosmic as that sounds." The chosen  
 articles of clothing are then photographed in a  
 1000-litre pool Cowell has installed in her inner-  
 city backyard.



Meg Cowell  
*Flume* 2014  
 giclee print on archival paper, 3 of 5 editions available  
 133cm x 92cm , framed.



Meg Cowell  
*How High The Moon* 2014  
 giclee print on archival paper, edition of 5  
 133cm x 92cm , framed.



Ritual dress accompanies many important rites of passage. For women, white wedding gowns and Victorian mourning attire are iconic artefacts that carry their wearer from one stage of life to the next. In turn, it is not beauty, vanity or a political reading of fashion that concerns Cowell's practice. Instead, it is the moment when a woman dons a costume for her transformation that is of interest. For the artist, such occasions elevate garments beyond their materiality to become an embodiment of female ritual.



Cowell's exhibition, *The Sea, The Shore*, presents a series of large-scale photographic works that illustrate this shift from garment to artefact. Through sophisticated direction, the artist creates vignettes of unique gowns, lingerie and couture as they bloom into new forms: for example, dresses appear flower-like, floating in the abyss. She describes the satisfaction when clothing abandons its inanimate physicality for a sense of agency: "I think an image is successful when it shows metamorphosis. Good images require a kind of imaginative collaboration from the viewer to interpret what they are seeing."



However, it is the body of water (literally, metaphorically) filling each gown that encourages spiritual transformation. Water—as a passage between shelves of land—is inherently connected to transition: mortals and immortals alike have cleansed, purged and even re-born here, moving from one tangible or metaphysical place to the next. Although the actual water is not visible in Cowell's images, it acts as an agent for movement and a deep, almost cosmic, setting for the garments. Inspired by scenes like Ada's drowning in *The Piano* and Ophelia's watery demise, the artist explains, "It's the Romantic idea of the psyche unanchored and adrift in deep water that fascinates me." In this way, aqueous infinitude becomes a chamber for the memorialisation of female transition. As woman and outfit are separated, they alight one another, passing through the rigor of ritual toward transcendence.



Meg Cowell  
*The Shallows* 2014  
giclee print on archival paper, edition of 5  
133cm x 92cm , framed.



Meg Cowell  
*The Mast* 2014  
giclee print on archival paper, 3 of 5 editions available  
133cm x 92cm , framed.



Meg Cowell  
*Big City Lights* 2014  
giclee print on archival paper, edition of 5  
133cm x 92cm , framed.

Essay by Laura Skerlj



Cowell's large-scale photographic works depict theatrical feminine costumes that have been arranged and illuminated whilst suspended in water. The garments are carefully selected and curated due to the sensory and emotional value that is evoked by colour and quality of the fabric. Also taken in to account is their association with a formality and deliberateness in how we once clothed ourselves that has now slipped from present day society – just like the absent wearer from her images.

Historically, fashion has played an important part within the cultural and psychological rituals of transformation from birth, through to marriage and death. One theorist suggests that we as humans 'are defined by our clothing, in the way that the sea is defined by the shore.' The institution of the white wedding dress is a potent example of the transformative properties of clothing; bodied as transformative phenomena and then disembodied to become relic. The Victorian era 'mourning dress' is another loaded example of the symbolic power of clothing. After the death of her husband, Queen Victoria spent more than forty years wearing black to symbolise her spiritual darkness, and an entire country of women followed suit, or rather, dress.

Meg Cowell graduated with Honours in Photography from the University of Tasmania in 2007, and has gone on to exhibit nationally and abroad. In 2013, she was a finalist in the 2013 Josephine Ulrick and Win Schubert Award, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, QLD. She has been a finalist in the Cliftons Art Prize, SA, the Sunshine Coast Art Prize, Caloundra Gallery, QLD, and the Prospect Portrait Prize, SA. Meg also completed a mentorship in 2012 with acclaimed artist Deborah Paauwe with whom Cowell was paired through the mentorship program during her post-graduate work at the University of South Australia. This is Meg's first solo exhibition at FLG.

[MEG COWELL PROFILE](#)  
[DOWNLOAD BIO / CV \(PDF\)](#)



Meg Cowell  
*Proserpine* 2014  
giclee print on archival paper, edition of 5  
133cm x 92cm , framed.

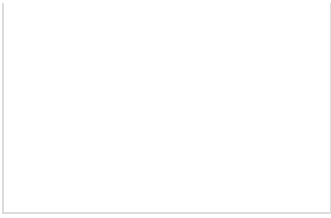


Meg Cowell  
*Night Garden* 2014  
giclee print on archival paper, edition of 5  
133cm x 92cm , framed.



Meg Cowell  
*We Come in Threes* 2014  
giclee print on archival paper, edition of 5  
133cm x 92cm , framed.

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Meg Cowell  
*The Sea, The Shore* 2014  
giclee print, edition of 5 (4 of 5 editions remaining)  
133cm x 92cm , framed.



Meg Cowell  
*Leda* 2014  
giclee print on archival paper, edition of 5  
133cm x 92cm , framed.



Meg Cowell  
*Isis (The Throne)* 2014  
giclee print, framed, 3 of 5 editions available  
133cm x 92cm , framed.



Meg Cowell

*Diana 2014*

giclee print on archival paper, edition of 5  
80cm x 80cm , framed.

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