

Bashir Baraki



Batman and Superman series 1993-94
Five colour laser prints
Each sheet 21 x 29.5cm
Bequest of the artist, 1999

Football, Politics and Sexuality

Education resource

QUT's significant collection of work by Bashir Baraki, the pioneer of laser photocopier art, is showcased in 'Bashir Baraki: Football, Politics and Sexuality'.

Although Baraki is heralded as the prime innovator in the field of laser copier art through his manipulation of the Canon Laser Colour Copier, he also worked within a variety of other media such as drawing, painting, photography and later video art.

Baraki used the photocopier as a medium to manipulate appropriated images from popular culture and art history in order to examine issues including sexuality, identity and religion. He explored these themes through juxtaposition and appropriation of religious, comic and masculine icons.

Areas of interest for students:

- Religion
- Gender and sexuality
- Identity
- Politics
- Appropriation/ Quotation
- Photocopier art
- New technologies influence on traditional forms of art creation.

Photocopier art

The Canon Laser Colour Copier (CLC 1) was introduced to Australia in 1987 and Baraki became one of the first artists to explore this new technology's relationship with traditional printmaking modes. Where as artists before Baraki had

utilised the black and white photocopier to question the originality of art through mass reproduction, Baraki utilised the colour copier to manipulate and create imagery rather than merely to reproduce imagery.

To expand upon this point, Baraki utilised the copier to create imagery, in that his works didn't exist in tangible form before being created via the laser copier. Where we place a book on a photocopier and create a copy of the page, Baraki scanned multiple images into the copier and then manipulated these fragments within the copier to produce his fine art prints. Baraki manipulated imagery via the copier using processes such as zoom scaling, electronic pencil and colour alteration.

Because of Baraki's interest in the colour copier as a contemporary printmaking press, he quite often described his work within the printmaking realm, producing limited editions and referring to his processes in the vernacular of the print. Although the colour copier is seen as a machine of mass reproduction, Baraki's process sometimes meant his works were 'one-offs' and couldn't be produced in limited editions. Baraki's use of multiple source plates meant that the work within his series "Australian football and Giotto's Lamentation of Christ" could only produced once. Baraki was so in tune with the colour copier he worked with that he knew by the sound it made what colour it was printing and when to change the image it was printing from.

Goethe once commented "where works of art are rare, rarity itself is a value, it is only when they are common that one can learn their intrinsic worth". How does this statement relate to Baraki's artwork? Do you agree with Goethe? Why?

Appropriation

Baraki used appropriation in order to convey his own concerns with sexuality, religion and identity. Baraki removed images from their original context, such as newspaper football photos, and manipulated them via a digital process. In combining contemporary football images with historical imagery, he created works which questioned society's view of masculinity and sexuality. By placing these appropriated images within a new context, how do you think Baraki has affected the meaning of the original images? Do you think that Australian footballers are an icon of masculinity within today's society? Why?

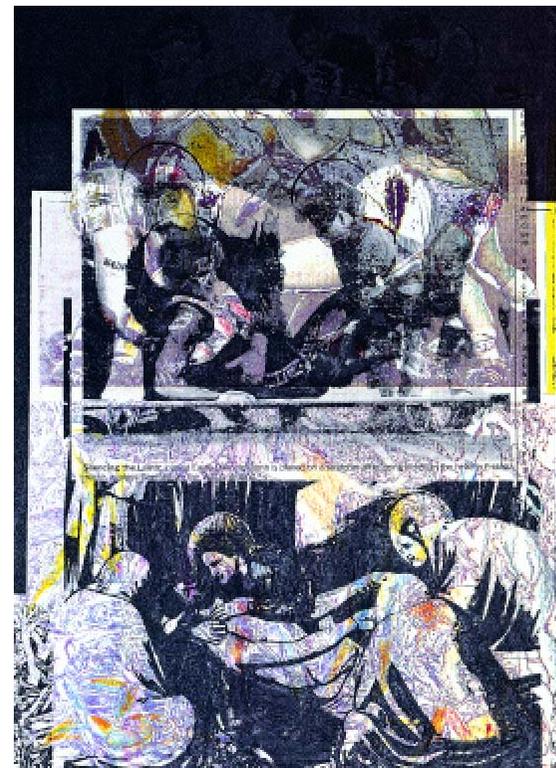
Religion

Within his work Baraki employed both religious poses (such as the crucifixion of Christ) and art historical imagery featuring religious scenes (such as Giotto's Lamentation of Christ). Amongst many concerns, Baraki mainly explored the influence religious beliefs had on the place he occupied within society, and how society viewed male sexuality.

Within his photographs, Baraki replicated classic religious poses such as pieta, the crucifixion of Christ and the mourning of Christ to comment on contemporary issues of gender, sexuality, alienation and political conflict. He also aimed to parallel history and legend with contemporary society and question whether our views on sexuality have really progressed.

Within works such as 'Crucified carcass', 'Collage untitled' and 'The sacrificial lamb' Baraki likened the form of meat carcasses to the crucifixion of Christ to combine religion and the body. The carcasses replicate the crucified Christ and emphasis is placed upon the flesh, which becomes a sexualised image about identity.

What do you think determines your identity – how you see yourself? Do you think societal and/or religious values play a large role? How do you think religion has influenced society's view of the human body and sexuality?



Australian Football and Giotto's Lamentation of Christ 1990-92
Four colour laser prints (Unique state)
Each sheet 42 x 29.5cm
Purchased with the assistance of the Visual Art/Craft Board of the Australia Council