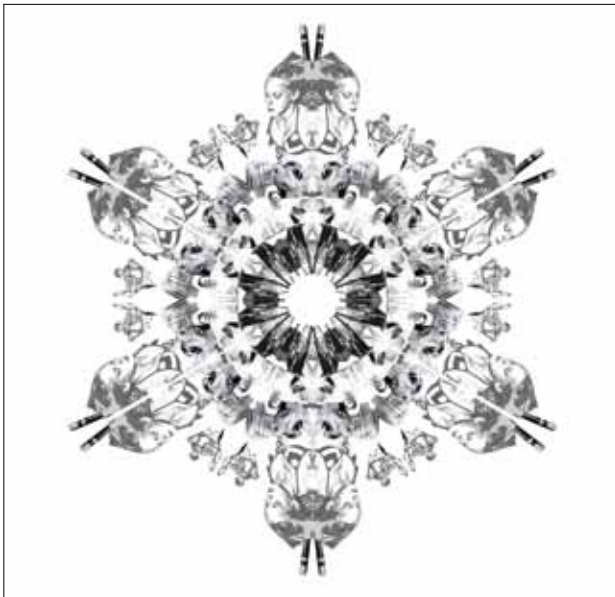


From the collection



Drawn from material gathered over 14 months between 10 January 2004 and 4 February 2005, the snowflakes in *Overcast* are digital collages. There are 15 in total, and each one is made up of images harvested from the newspaper on a particular day.

Using a scanner to cut and replicate each picture, Yuk King Tan has then reassembled the parts into different snowflake patterns. The result is high tech square images which suppress the gritty reality of bombings, terrorism and dictatorship and make the urgency of the news into frozen patterns.

2004 was a leap year which saw Putin win another term in Russia, NASA land twice on Mars and Pervez Musharraf secure another term as dictator of Pakistan until 2007. In February the CIA admitted there was no imminent threat from weapons of mass destruction before the

2003 invasion of Iraq and in June, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States released its report on 9/11. Taking the fall of the twin towers as an iconic moment in American history, Yuk went on to make a much more complicated crystalline art work which was chronologically arranged from September 11 to the London train bombings on 10 July 2005. This later work is called *Shock and Awe 2005*. As she writes: "I am always interested in this idea of the systems that I create – or other people create – that are, on the one hand highly rigid, but that also talk about chaos. They can swell and compress again."

The unique formations of snow crystals which are on the one hand predetermined but then on the other, purely serendipitous, is ideal as a metaphor for systems of political control. It is well-known that no two snowflakes are alike, and that they form by chance, and have chilly consequences. A tiny speck of dust that gets carried up into the atmosphere by the wind has ice collecting around it until the snow crystal forms in one of four shapes: a long needle, a long hollow, six-sided prism, a thin, flat six-sided plate or a complex six-pointed star. Temperature determines the shape of the crystal, with the six-sided prism formed in the highest clouds where the temperature is the coldest. As the tiny snow crystals grow, they become heavier and fall, bumping into each other to form snowflakes. Each snowflake comprises between two and 200 of these separate snow crystals in the four shapes joined together.

Yuk was attracted to the snowflake, a favourite motif in crochet and paper cutting, as a framework for commenting on her contemporary geopolitical environment. It seemed to her that the world was indeed overcast. To point out how seemingly random and unconnected events might be tied into a pattern, she chose to collage her snowflakes from the news photography of particular days when the headlines and imagery were dominated by the age-old battles of Christian and Muslim. 8 November 2004, for example, carried the images of the previous day when US forces launched a major assault on the Iraqi town of Fallujah.

She writes: "I think about the snowflake as a framework...but you could also think of it as a constantly growing organism about the extent that chance and order impact upon our lives. A snowflake is such a rigid and complex pattern, but it is also formed totally by chance. If you analyse any particle and go down into it, you will see a structure. You can think of September 11 as part of a structure, a kind of crystallised framework. I wanted to use another form of communication to intuitively understand some of the issues around September 11. So time and the chronology of the works are critical."

Paper-jams: artists between the covers, is an exhibition using books, collage and paper curated by Andrew Clifford, on show at Gus Fisher Gallery until 28 April 2012.

Linda Tyler

Yuk King Tan, Overcast (snowflakes) 2004-2005
photographic paper, resin-coated paper, photographic gelatin, dye, aluminium, adhesive, 345 x 345mm