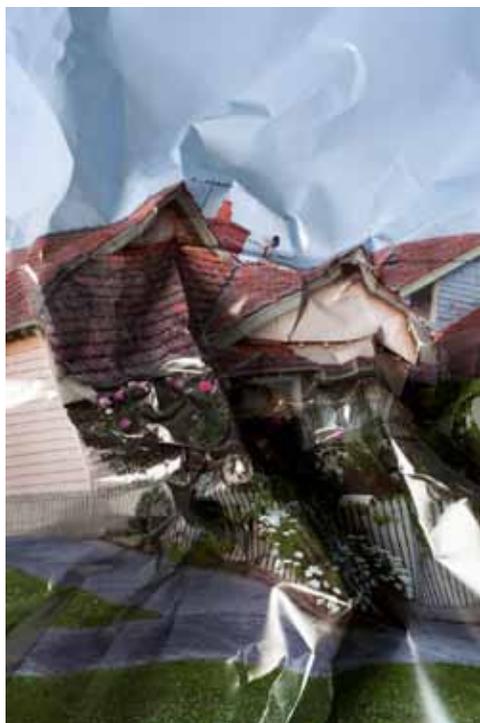
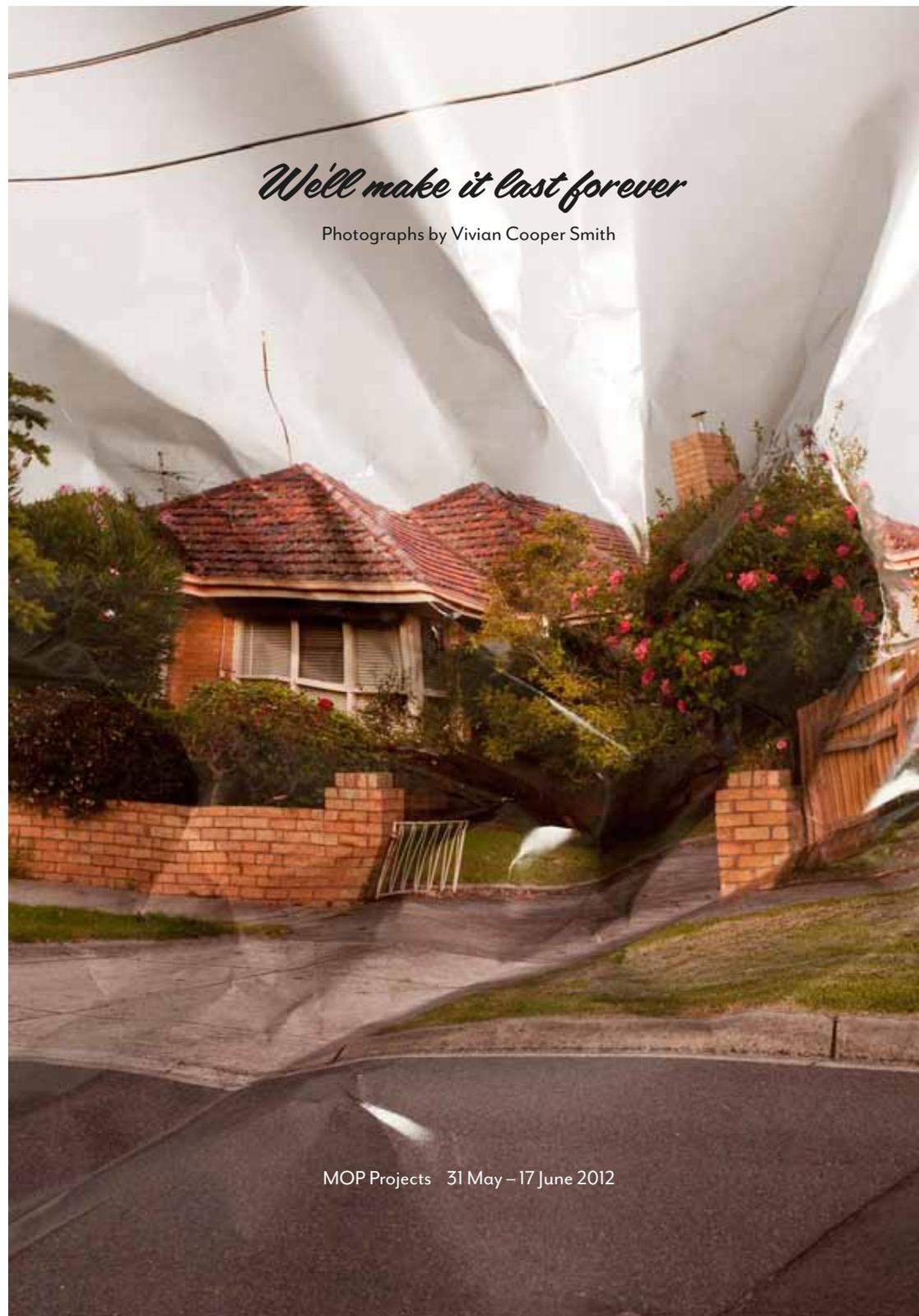


Endings #1



Endings #2



We'll make it last forever

Photographs by Vivian Cooper Smith

Vivian Cooper Smith was born and raised the son of missionaries and spent time in New Zealand, Bangladesh and India before being assimilated into Australian society in Perth. After completing an Honours degree in Fine Arts he moved to Melbourne where he works as a photographer and graphic designer. His philosophically driven art practice centers on photography however has previously included sound installation, performance and text. His work has been exhibited widely across Australia, most recently at the Wollongong City Gallery as part of *Near Earth Art: the knock of the shoe*.

For more information on Vivian's work please visit his website: www.viviancoopersmith.com

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*The current of the flowing river does not cease, and yet the water is not the same water as before.
The foam that floats on stagnant pools, now vanishing, now forming, never stays the same for long.
So too, it is with the people and dwellings of the world.* Kamo no Chomei, *Hojōki* 1212

It's a pretty blue day when I start thinking about life. Boy, does it get blue. Life! An endless parade of sorry headed migrants. Shuffling onwards. Not sure where or why. Just shuffling. A lifetime of struggle. Yep it's a pretty blue day when I start thinking about life.

It's so bloody linear! Why so linear? Why a straight line? Why this beginning and end? I know what you're thinking and yes I agree. We all have a beginning and end, no doubt. The me I see in the mirror (ignoring a philosophical contradiction there) is tethered to this world and I must endure my turn on the wheel. But what gets me is that one side of the story is happy (beginning) and the other side is sad (ending). And everything that happens along the way to speed up the journey from happy to sad is seen as bad. Why? Why are we so scared of the looming doom? The yawning hole in the earth. You know, we wouldn't be humans without that gaping black mouth. We're all part of this planet and being part of this earthy club means we have to stop at some point. It's in the rules. Don't know who made the rules (some people reckon they know but I'm not jumping to conclusions) but we've got to stick with them. Pink, slimy beginnings to grey, sunken endings. There's no choice.

And so how can we deal with this ocean-big system of happy to sadness? Well you can shop, pop or drop out. It's a bit self centred but that's what we're meant to do right? Its all about the individual – me. I have some choices right? Not sure actually but that's the story anyway. What else? God? A bit of satiny comfort for your stained heart? Well that might work too but there is a fair amount of suspension of disbelief going on. Not really my thing.

So after all that what's left? At risk of alienating my discerning arts-educated reader – how about...love?

What? What the hell is that? How does that make any sense? Surely we all know love's only a lame everything-word for a bulging mish mash of seduction, manipulation, addiction, compulsion, tradition and revulsion. Where did it come from? Why do we need it? What does Darwin say? Did our cousins the Neanderthals have their big furry, low browed version of love or is it one of our clever more recent inventions (like trains or zips)?

Hmmm. I don't know about love. I listen to what Whitney said a lot of the time because her kind of love is easily absorbed. It's all consuming with magnificent horizons and lusty shirt busting moments of passion. I mean who doesn't want those kinds of moments right? It's about living in the moment. The very moment. No forwards or back. It's staring into another pair of eyes and they are staring into yours and you're not thinking about lunch or your pants or anything. You're just looking and maybe feeling something. Not sure what, but you're feeling and that's supposed to be what its all about. Present in the present.

But that won't work either 'cos you can't be in the present. Try and pinpoint the present. You can't do it can you? It seems like it's always past or future. Like trying to catch a raindrop with a fork. Just doesn't work! In fact according to some past, present and future don't exist. Everything was, is and will be happening at the same bent spacetime! (or something like that).

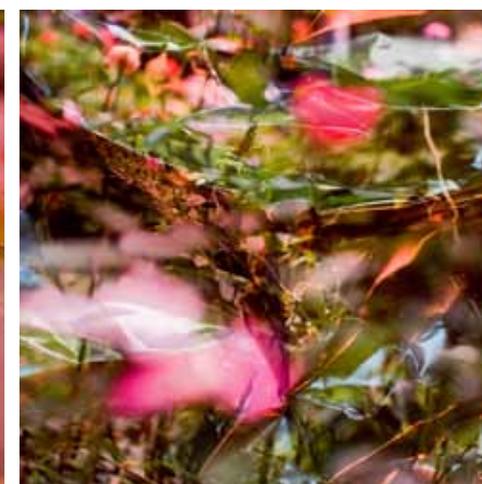
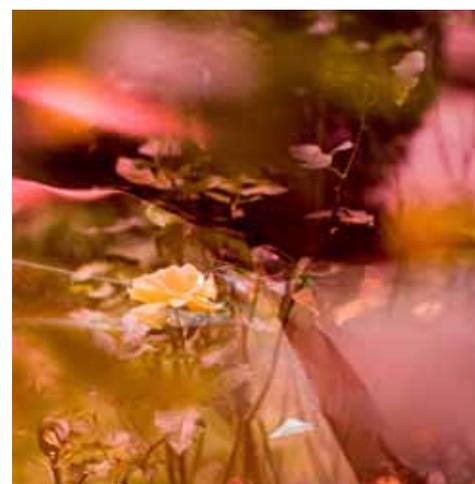
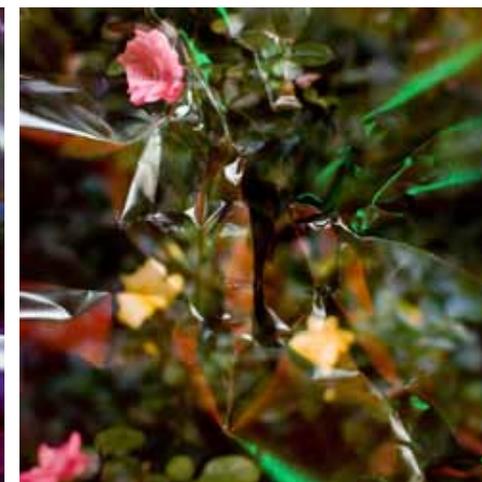
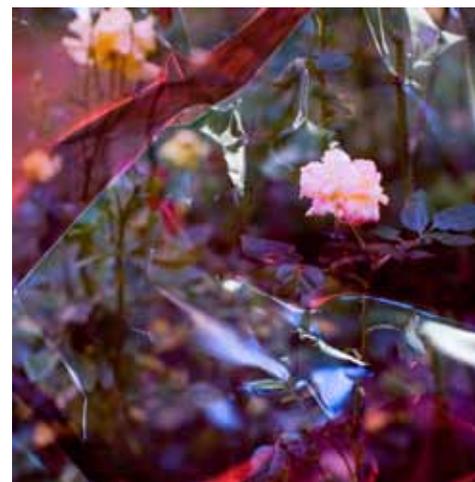
But what if we kind of ignore that technicality. I mean we all know it anyway right? We know when we live in the present. We can grasp the idea even if we can't actually grasp the thing itself. And that perhaps is the secret. Yes life is meaningless and everything changes and fades and dies and leaves us behind; but if we

look life in the eye and hold it's gaze it doesn't matter. Change is our agent, our guide, our spirit leading us over the waters. Change is our certainty.

And as we cling to change we can make other things work too. Like love. Because love is always changing – I mean even having one word to describe a valley full of emotions is kind of dumb. But humans are dumb. We need to feel part of each other and we need

a word to describe to each other how we feel and because no one really knows how the other feels we just say 'love'. That's love. I'm in love, out of love, love found me, love left me, love's shit, love changed my life, love conquers, love heals, love, love, love, love, love life.

Vivian Cooper Smith, April 2012



Clockwise from top left: *Beginnings* #1, #5, #9, #6