

# anzjat

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## Exhibition review

### *Katthy Cavaliere: Loved*

Carriageworks, Sydney, and the Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart

Curated by Daniel Mudie Cunningham

5 August – 11 September 2016 and 28 November 2015 – 28 March 2016

Reviewed by Jill Segedin

On a recent trip to Australia I caught the train from Penrith to Sydney, to visit the retrospective exhibition of Australian artist Katthy Cavaliere that was showing at Carriageworks. On the train that cool wet August day, I listened through my headphones to music that fit the mood of the weather: David Bowie's last album, *Blackstar*. As I walked from Redfern station to the gallery, I found myself hearing some of the lyrics more clearly than I had previously. And with the feel of this album still resonating with me, I entered *Katthy Cavaliere: Loved* and Cavaliere's poignant exploration of life and death, identity, dislocation, and the stuff that makes up our lives.

Bowie, though at the forefront of music culture in the '70s and '80s, had fallen off my radar for some time, but had been drawn back into my consciousness by the Victoria and Albert Museum's retrospective of his career that toured Australia in 2014, and then, at the beginning of this year, by the posters advertising what was to be his last album. He died two days after its release. The BBC News item announcing his death showed a clip from the video of *Lazarus*, where the singer, eyes bandaged, struggles then levitates in a hospital bed, and writes furiously before retreating backwards into a cupboard. One wonders if he was using his creativity to process his impending death.

This album playing quietly in my head made a thought-provoking backdrop to the Cavaliere exhibition. The posthumous show, curated by a friend of the artist, Daniel Mudie Cunningham,

seemed to be imbued with the artist's sense of working out matters of existence, of grappling with the realities of death and what is left behind. Set in darkened gallery spaces, the 17 works were lit dramatically and created a haunting trip through the artist's life.

*If I never see the English evergreens I'm  
running to  
It's nothing to me  
It's nothing to see* (Bowie, Dollar Days)

The Italian-born Cavaliere was diagnosed in 2011 with ovarian cancer, the same disease her mother had died of three years earlier. The artist fought her illness for six months before dying in January 2012 at only 39 years old. As she stated after her diagnosis, "I was dealing with mortality as a conceptual artist. But it's not conceptual any more; it's really happening" (Tan, 2015).

In the midst of all Cavaliere's searching for the meaning of mortality, it is an interesting proposition that a body of work left behind grants an artist a degree of immortality. And a posthumous exhibition brings this into sharp focus.

*Look up here, I'm in heaven  
I've got scars that can't be seen  
I've got drama, can't be stolen  
Everybody knows me now*  
(Bowie, Lazarus).

Bowie casts himself as *Lazarus*, a symbol much used in art and literature to convey life after death, well aware that his artistic legacy will transcend his death (Denham, 2016).