

Title: “Never Look Away” a captivating screenplay exploring the connection between trauma and art.

“Never Look Away” (German movie: *Werk ohne Autor*) is writer/director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck’s 3 hour 2018 German screenplay likely to address topics of interest for many Australian New Zealand psychiatrists at diverse stages in their careers. It is no hindrance that it is in German with English subtitles. It is a recent historic account, borrowing from the biography of otherwise very private German contemporary abstract artist Gerhard Richter going back to Germany’s Nazi regime, his traumatic childhood, his East German and then West German personal life and his artistic career, offering various salient aspects from the 20th century German history with its beauty and its terrors, euthanasia, genocide, politics, physical health medicine and psychiatry (ABC News¹). The themes of acute and chronic, personal and collective, trauma is visited from diverse angles. Specifically, various levels of trauma present in the lives of Barnett [Richter] family, particularly Kurt Barnett (Gerhard Richter) played by Tom Schilling (Hollander-Goldfein, Isserman, Goldenberg²). An artistic medium flows through the film as the conduit that links the defining principles around mental health. Kurt responds to these traumatic events with periods of sadness and confusion; however, he shows resilience to this trauma (Miller-Karas³). Joseph Beuys, his West German mentor, who has his own WW2 traumatic background (Beuys is famous for his art with animal fat and felt) guides Kurt to his true “self” and then break through with Kurt’s own true - very distinct type of art. “Never Look Away” ends with Kurt finding his inspiration and freedom to look at the world through his artistic eyes and find contentment with his life and family. This film provides an interesting attraction. We were reminded of the resilience and hope that art can instil whether it is in the European or the Australian New Zealand context where art can be an expression from trauma, on recent and distant past (King⁴). Down under,

of course, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's artistic expression of what is true and important goes back well over 10000's of years (Bulter5).

References

1. ABC News. Gerhard Richter in his Cologne studio <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-06-20/portrait-of-artist-gerhard-richter-in-his-cologne-studio-before/11226116> (accessed 20 April 2020).
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3. Miller-Karas E. *Building Resilience to Trauma: The Trauma and Community Resiliency Models*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2015.
4. King J L. *Art Therapy, Trauma, and Neuroscience: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2016.
5. Bulter S. 'Art for a New Understanding': An Interview with Valerie Keenan, Manager of Giringun Aboriginal Art Centre. *MDPI* 2019; 8: 91-99.