The state we’re in:
Contemporary Queensland
photography

29 January – 11 April 2010

INTERPRETIVE RESOURCE

UQ Art Museum
The University of Queensland
University Drive, St Lucia
QLD 4072
www.artmuseum.uq.edu.au
The state we’re in: Contemporary Queensland photography showcases work by a selection of Queensland’s leading photographers. Focusing on artists whose primary medium is photography and who are extending the parameters of contemporary photographic practice, the exhibition explores themes concerning local history, the landscape, constructed identities and environments, sites of struggle and memento mori. The exhibition The state we’re in: Contemporary Queensland photography is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, and is presented as part of the Queensland Festival of Photography 3.

All of the works on display in The state we’re in: Contemporary Queensland photography have been produced within the past five years, and some of the artists have created new work especially for the exhibition. Included in the exhibition are artists Paul Adair, Camilla Birkeland, Eric Bridgeman, Ray Cook, Marian Drew, Shane Fitzgerald, Joachim Froese, Mari Hirata, Peter Milne, Maurice Ortega, Martin Smith and Carl Warner.

Gordon Craig, Exhibition Curator
About this Interpretive Resource

This interpretive resource is intended for use in conjunction with a visit to the exhibition *The state we’re in: Contemporary Queensland photography*. It may be used prior to, during, or following a visit, in association with the Teacher Notes and Excursion Task Sheets, that have been produced to accompany this exhibition. Alternatively, this Powerpoint presentation, together with the Teacher Notes and Task Sheets, may be used for independent teaching and learning experiences for senior students.

The information and activities are intended to support the inquiry learning model of the Queensland Visual Art senior curriculum and align with the general objectives of *making* and *appraising*. These resources provide opportunities for Year 11 and 12 senior students to:

- extend their knowledge and experience of contemporary visual arts practice and career paths;
- develop their capacity to research, develop, resolve and reflect on their own and others’ art works in the specific context of audiences and purposes; and
- explore how the visual arts reinforce and challenge their own individual experiences.

Gillian Ridsdale, Curator Public Programs
Paul ADAIR

Key concepts:

- Reconstructed environments
- Inanimate objects
- Real versus artificial spaces
- Idealised imagery

Focus questions:

1. Use three words to describe this photograph?
2. Adair questions the relationship of reality versus illusion. Explain how?
3. State the issues that you think Adair is commenting on by recreating these intensely colourful and uniform spaces?

Basketball, (from the series Three Hole Mountain Inn), 2008 inkjet print
Camilla BIRKELAND

Key Concepts:

- Constructed realities
- Imagined journeys
- Traditional photographic focus
- Sculptural constructions that challenge space and scale

*White Planet* (from the series *Airborne*), 2008
palladium print
Focus Questions:

1. What do you see? Is this a real or constructed image? How can you tell?
2. Describe how you think this image has been created?
3. Describe using five words how this photograph makes you feel?
4. Describe using five words what this photograph reminds you of?
5. What evidence do you see in this work that suggests a journey?
Eric BRIDGEMAN

Key Concepts:

- Contemporary culture
- Satire, humour and parody
- Personal histories
- Performance and staging

Focus Questions:

1. What do you think the artist is trying to say in this work?
2. Is this work a comment about place, time, class, race or gender? Explain?
3. What elements does the artist use from the past to construct the present?
Key Concepts:

- Performance and staging
- Identity and social conventions
- Satire, humour and parody

Cameron (from the series Oblivion), 2007
inkjet print from hand-toned silver gelatin print
Marian DREW

Key Concepts:

• European traditions of still life
• Environmental concerns
• Compositional focus
• Painterly aesthetic
• Domestic and feminine symbolism

AUSTRALIANA
You Tube Link:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VKZNJKYEEI
Focus Questions:

1. Which design elements does the artist concentrate on? How are they used?
2. Describe the way the artist’s use of light contributes to the mood of the photograph?
3. What do you think are some of the purposes of using ‘organic or living things’ as subject matter for artworks?
4. Discuss how the depiction of nature and its relationship to humans has changed over the centuries?

Marian DREW

Quoll with flowers and bowl, 2006
inkjet print on cotton rag
Shane FITZGERALD

Key Concepts:

• Surreal landscapes
• Constructed environments and realities
• Environmental concerns

Arpeggio III, 2006
Duraflex print
Shane FITZGERALD

Focus Questions:

1. List five words you would use to describe this photograph?
2. Is this landscape real or imaginary? Explain?
3. How does Fitzgerald question the traditional purposes and techniques of photography?
4. The title of this photograph is *Serendipity*. Does this help your understanding of the work? What does it suggest to you?
5. What similarities and differences are there in method and content between Birkeland’s and Fitzgerald’s practice?
Joachim FROESE

Key Concepts:

• Personal histories
• Still life arrangement
• Archives and collections
• Memories and loss

Focus Questions:

1. How does this work act metaphorically for the death of Froese’s mother?
2. Explain the approach taken by the artist to create this work?
3. Why has the artist chosen to arrange his works in a multi-panel format? How does this alter your perception of the work and what affect does it have?
Mari Hirata

Key Concepts:

- Cultural traditions and identity
- Cross-cultural references
- Traditional photographic focus

Focus Questions:

1. What do the images remind you of and how do they make you feel?
2. Describe the symbolism or significance of ‘shoes’ in contemporary culture.
3. Describe Hirata’s compositional methods of composing her photogram’s.
4. What do you think the artist is commenting on through the arrangement and repetition of the glass slipper?
Peter MILNE

Key Concepts:

• Performance and staging

• Identity and social conventions

• Satire, humour and parody

• Art and politics

Wet (from the series Dreams of The Skull) 2010
inkjet print
Maurice ORTEGA

Key Concepts:

• Performance and staging
• Identity and social conventions
• Satire, humor and parody
• Pop culture

Opening page (from the series I am mouse), 2008
inkjet print on cotton rag
Maurice ORTEGA

Focus Questions:

1. How many images do you see in this work? Why has the artist chosen to arrange them in a sequenced format?

2. What does it remind you of?

3. What do you think the artist is trying to communicate in this work?
Martin SMITH

Key Concepts:

- Personal histories
- Banality
- Storytelling through incised text
- Memory
- Suburbia

My frenetic anxiety driven snuffing, 2009
inkjet print
Focus Questions:

1. Describe the method that Smith uses to make you look at images in a new way?

2. What is the most dominant element of the photograph? How has the artist made it stand out from the background of the image?

3. What is the title of the artwork? What do you think it means or symbolises?
Carl WARNER

Key Concepts:

• Urban and the everyday
• Mark making
• Traces and evidence
• Sites of cultural exchange

Focus Questions:

1. List as many locations or sites you could find graffiti?
2. What type of graffiti is this?
3. Why do you think the artist has photographed this site?
4. Would you consider this as vandalism or art? Explain?
5. By photographing this site, how has the context of the site changed?

*a photograph is ii 2010 type C photograph*
Internet Resources

Camilla Birkeland  http://www.camillabirkeland.com/
Joachim Froese  http://www.joachimfroese.com/
Mari Hirata  http://www.marihirata.com/
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