

art and travel

Phil Edwards
Peter Ellis
Robin Kingston
Greg Moncrieff
Nick Mourtzakis
Wilma Tabacco
Fran Van Riemsdyck
Louise Weaver

Curated by Peter Ellis

Opening night celebration Thursday 30 March 5-7 pm
Exhibition dates Monday 27 March – Friday 7 April, 2006
RMIT SCHOOL OF ART GALLERY
Building 2 Bowen Street RMIT University Melbourne

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MANAGED BY THE SCHOOL OF ART
GALLERY CO-ORDINATOR Dr Louiseann Zahra
ADMINISTRATION Olivia Gleeson TELEPHONE 03 9925 4971
DESIGN Gracia Haby & Louise Jennison gracialouise.com
For information about this exhibition contact: peter.ellis@rmit.edu.au
OPENING HOURS Monday–Friday 9.30am–12:30pm and 1:30pm–5pm

Front cover: Fran van Riemsdyck *Location of second piece 26.01.06* (detail)
digital image, dimensions variable, 2006, collection of the artist

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Louise Weaver *Invisible bird*
C type photograph of 1997 sculpture, 30 x 30cm, 2000, private collection
Louise Weaver is represented by Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney

Louise Weaver

“Invisible Bird” is a work created for my individual exhibition “I have a small yellow bird in my ear that sings” at Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces in 1997.

As a migratory bird the Hoopoe travels northerly as far as Iceland and easterly to Japan. The image of the Hoopoe is represented in many cultures including wall paintings in Egyptian tombs.

“People used to think that the Hoopoe bird could hide entirely from the sight of all living creatures, which explains the fact that, at the end of the Middle Ages, it was still believed that there was a multicoloured herb in the Hoopoe’s nest which made a man invisible when he wore it.”¹

The original taxidermy bird form of this Hoopoe (Upupa epops) was discovered in a second hand shop having arrived upon our shores as a tourist memento from South Africa in the 1940’s. In its current form the bird is covered in white tightly crotched cotton thread and sequins, simultaneously revealing and concealing aspects of its form. All that remains uncovered is its beak, claws and erect crest. The pristine white reflective plastic sequins allow the bird to remain invisible as it assimilates in its new surroundings of the gallery.

This photograph was taken as stand in for the actual sculpture for an exhibition that toured Canada in 2000-2002. Due to quarantine restrictions the actual work would not have been allowed to re-enter the country.

¹ Quoted from A. Toussanel, *Le monde des oiseaux*, Ornithologie passionnelle, Paris 1853, p32. in “The Poetics of Space” Bachelard, G. p94. Beakin Press. 1994



Fran van Riemsdyck *Throw no. 37*
digital image, dimensions variable, 2005, collection of the artist

Fran van Riemsdyck

Travelling through S.E Asia, Singapore and Hong Kong has helped me look in to the past, into my Dutch/Indonesian background and my upbringing in Australia.

This experience of these countries has revealed more clearly to me my cultural heritage. Teaching students in Hong Kong has engendered an insight into the subtle influence of traditional Chinese culture, especially ideas of luck and chance, ghosts and superstitions.

How does the idea of luck and chance work in reference to Western ideas?

The work in this exhibition takes its departure from these musings with specific reference the mullock heaps to the miners that tested their luck in the gold fields of Castlemaine.



Phil Edwards *Postcard from Sorrento*
Gouache, texta and digital imaging, 10 x 15cm, 2006, collection of the artist

Phil Edwards

Travel is a fine alternative to art making. When not making art I can think only of travelling. Art in itself is a kind of travel experience. A meandering gaze over a painted surface, the cul de sac of a bad decision or the luxuriance of a foreign experience - all can be experienced with the intensity found in travelling or art making. Travel does not need to be exotic or to distant places for moments of recognition to occur. But the differentness that a journey to another country can reveal can be especially memorable.

For me the real travel experience is the one that occurs in our imagination when we reinvent our memories.

My work in this exhibition seeks to reflect upon how sublime moments of recognition can be intimately intertwined with memories less sophisticated and more gauche. What is important is what stays with us after our travel experience – the desire to relocate our memories in souvenirs, photos or home movies.

It is as if to travel in itself is not enough – memory trophies must be brought back to prove to ourselves and others that what we experienced on our adventures was not a dream.

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Nick Mourtzakis *Island*
Pencil on paper, 11 x 16cm, 2001, collection of the artist

Nick Mourtzakis

“As you set out for Ithaka
hope your road is a long one”

These lines from Konstantinos Kavafis’ ¹ poem ‘ITHAKA’ ² are true to the spirit of my purpose and reason for taking the journeys I have taken. My first journey however, was certainly not one of my choosing. I was barely four years of age and I have only the most subtle and elusive sensations of memory of my early experiences and the journey by ship to Australia.

“Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you’re destined for.
But don’t hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years” ²

More than four and a half decades later I returned to Greece and those subtle and elusive sensations of memory proved to be completely accurate. There, in the presence of the realities of memory, only poetry matters. And who would say what or where this poetry is.

¹ Konstantinos Kavafis (1863-1933) a Greek poet of Alexandria (his name is usually anglicised as C. P. Cavafy).

² Cavafy, C.P. Collected Poems The Hogarth Press, London, 1975, p67.



Wilma Tabacco *Pirouette 1*
Oil on linen, 46 x 61cm, 2004, courtesy the artist and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne

Wilma Tabacco

Being elsewhere.

Italy, France, Switzerland, Spain, Scotland, England, Morocco, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Yugoslavia (former), Greece, Turkey, U.S.A., Canada, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, South Korea:

These are all the places that I can remember visiting over the last 30 years. Many of these countries I have stayed in for long periods of time, others I have visited many times. I have worked in some and merely played in others. Irrespective of this, no artist can experience so much ‘foreignness’ and escape being profoundly altered in mind, body and spirit. Such alteration is reflected in one’s artistic endeavours either obviously or subtly. ‘Foreignness’ interests me. ‘Foreignness’ informs my work and forms a significant part of its content.



Greg Moncrieff *Lost Toy, London.* (detail from series)
Laser print from colour transparency, 27 x 43cm, 1975, collection of the artist

Greg Moncrieff

I first traveled overseas for a year in 1975. Since then I have traveled intermittently, most recently as a recipient of staff development leave and in the School of Art’s offshore teaching program. Traveling initially was to see in the ‘flesh’ various works that I thought were important to me. I traveled through central Asia to Europe, finally returning to Australia through North America.

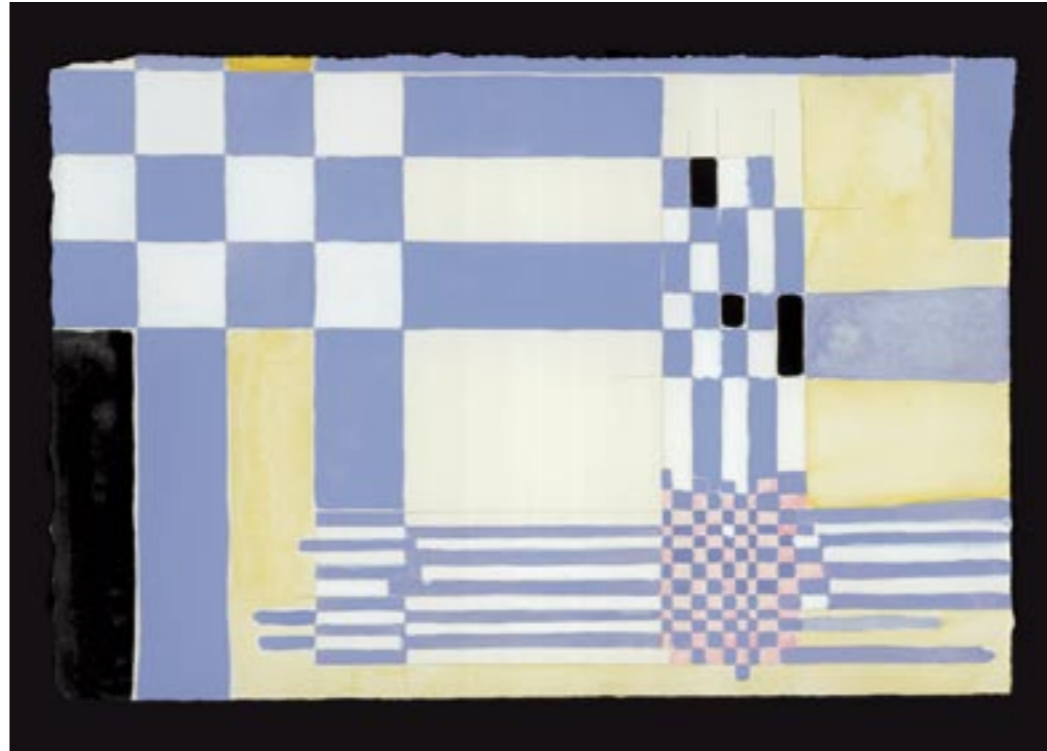
In its various forms (black and white through to digital) photography has been an integral part of the travel experience for me. From the beginning, photography seemed the only practical way of capturing information for use on my return and of course coming back with something that captured the experience was very important. Travel is an exhausting and frustrating business so somewhere there had to be a result. All the images I have taken were

with a particular purpose in mind and I am still amazed at how clearly looking at the photographs brings back the circumstances of their taking.

Obviously I made choices early on about what to photograph, as film wasn’t always readily available and processing often unreliable, so shots were at times rationed. My photos seemed from early on to follow particular themes. They have almost never contained people or are about places or buildings in general. They are about shrines, surfaces, graffiti, discarded material, toys, repetition, patterning and signage, etc. generally the results of human activity. I use them in my artwork or to illustrate a point to others. On my first trip I remember clearly the concern I felt when one film out of a batch of ten I had sent for processing in London failed to return and on further enquiry I was sent a form with boxes to tick that might help identify my unlabelled film. The form had a long list of categories that a person might have photographed, family groups, parades, churches, etc... nothing that was on my film! It was finally found.

Often I extract sections from photos and use these through the collage process to make artwork in various media; usually screen prints and paintings and more recently as digital prints and mixed media constructions.

With the advent of digital technology I have been able to revisit colour transparencies I took up to thirty years ago and, with a minimum of intervention, produce single images that I think are of worth in their own right. A selection of these is included in this exhibition.



Robin Kingston *Untitled Drawing #3*
Gouache, watercolour and graphite on paper, 19 x 29cm irregular, August/September 2005, collection of the artist

Robin Kingston

Travel has been an important influence on my painting and the opportunity to see major collections, and to learn directly from them, vital. My art education really began when I travelled OS for the first time at nineteen. It was a revelation. There was the realisation it was essential to spend a considerable period of time in a place that afforded me

contact with significant contemporary and historical artworks. New York was and still is that destination. Currently, The RMIT New York Study Tour provides the opportunity for an annual visit to refresh the connection and further discover. Its influence directly flows into my practice.

Peter Ellis

The experience of travel has had a profound impression on my work. Journeys in 1979 acted as pilgrimages, visits to shrines to seek out early heroes, Marcel Duchamp in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, to Belgium for James Ensor’s house in Ostend, The Arthur Rimbaud Museum in Charleville and to Paris for the Gustave Moreau Museum.

Over the past fifteen years visits to Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong have inspired hundreds of calligraphic drawings that demonstrate a Zen-like philosophy. Spontaneity, chance, paradox, control, humour, poetry, absurdity and automatism that I believe have strong philosophical parallels with Dada. I greatly admire Chinese painter Wen Zhengming active in the 16th century and the Zen Masters Hakuin (1685-1769), Sengai (1685-1769) and Nantembo (1839-1929).

The large ink drawing on multiple gold-rimmed Japanese panels, is titled “Pilgrim feeding molluscs”(2006). The work references the scallop shell, the Pilgrims symbol from the 15th century.

“Pilgrims must undertake this long and dangerous journey, half on water and half on land. First as pilgrims, then as pilots.” ¹

¹ Fulcanelli/Canselier, *Le Mystere des Cathedrales*, Paris 1925, 1964 edition as quoted in Alexander Roob, *The Hermetic Museum, Alchemy and Mysticism*, Taschen 1997.



Peter Ellis *Orang-Utan*, Singapore Zoo
Watercolour on Lana paper, 22.5 x 22cm, 1997, private collection