

Petrina Hicks
Polixeni Papapetrou
Catherine Nelson
Maria Fernanda Cardoso
Murray McKeich

South of the Border

Queensland
Centre for
Photography

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In the last three decades, major changes in visual technology have witnessed the demise of the industrial giants and the traditional photographic technologies that once dominated the medium. These changes as well as the increased capacity for the medium to portray imaginary environments has brought into question the alchemical nature of photography as a continuous system thus highlighting its newly acquired relationship to the discrete values of digital technologies.

With this context in mind, the exhibition *South of the Border* presents the work of five artists exploring aspects brought into focus by these changes; they provide us with glimpses of future developments on the medium, addressing topics that range from interactions with new technologies, fictional narratives, advances on the genealogy of genres as well as innovative interactions with other media.

The notion of an image as a visual puzzle was explored from the earliest times of the medium particularly in the efforts of studio photographers such as is in this exhibition by the works of Petrina Hicks, where she assembles allegories of beauty through the hidden symbology imbedded in the postures of her subjects to explore the way images populate our social desires of consumption.

Petrina Hicks *Sphinx* 2011, Lightjet print, courtesy of the artist.



Petrina Hicks *Lauren with Fruit* 2011, Lightjet print, courtesy of the artist.



This reconstruction of the real was originally discarded in the 1910's by luminaries including the American photographer Alfred Stieglitz that heralded the emphasis of photography as a medium for documentation, thus creating a divergence from the emerging art of cinema that saw its future in the realm of fiction.

In some ways the works of photographer Polixeni Papapetrou address this divide by using methodologies that reference the cinematic works of Georges Melies while retaining through its use of actual landscapes a foothold on the real. Her work recalls the essay by Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier on "The Baroque and the Marvelous Real" linking her work to ideas developed from 1935 in literature by the Latin-American writers of the "magic realism" movement. In this idea lays its revolutionary attitude both as a challenge to the assumed bourgeois perception of the real and to the place of photography as a document of these assumptions.

left to right: Polixeni Papapetrou
The Holiday Makers
The Philosopher
The Wave Counter
2011, Archival Pigment Print, courtesy of the artist and Stills Gallery, Sydney



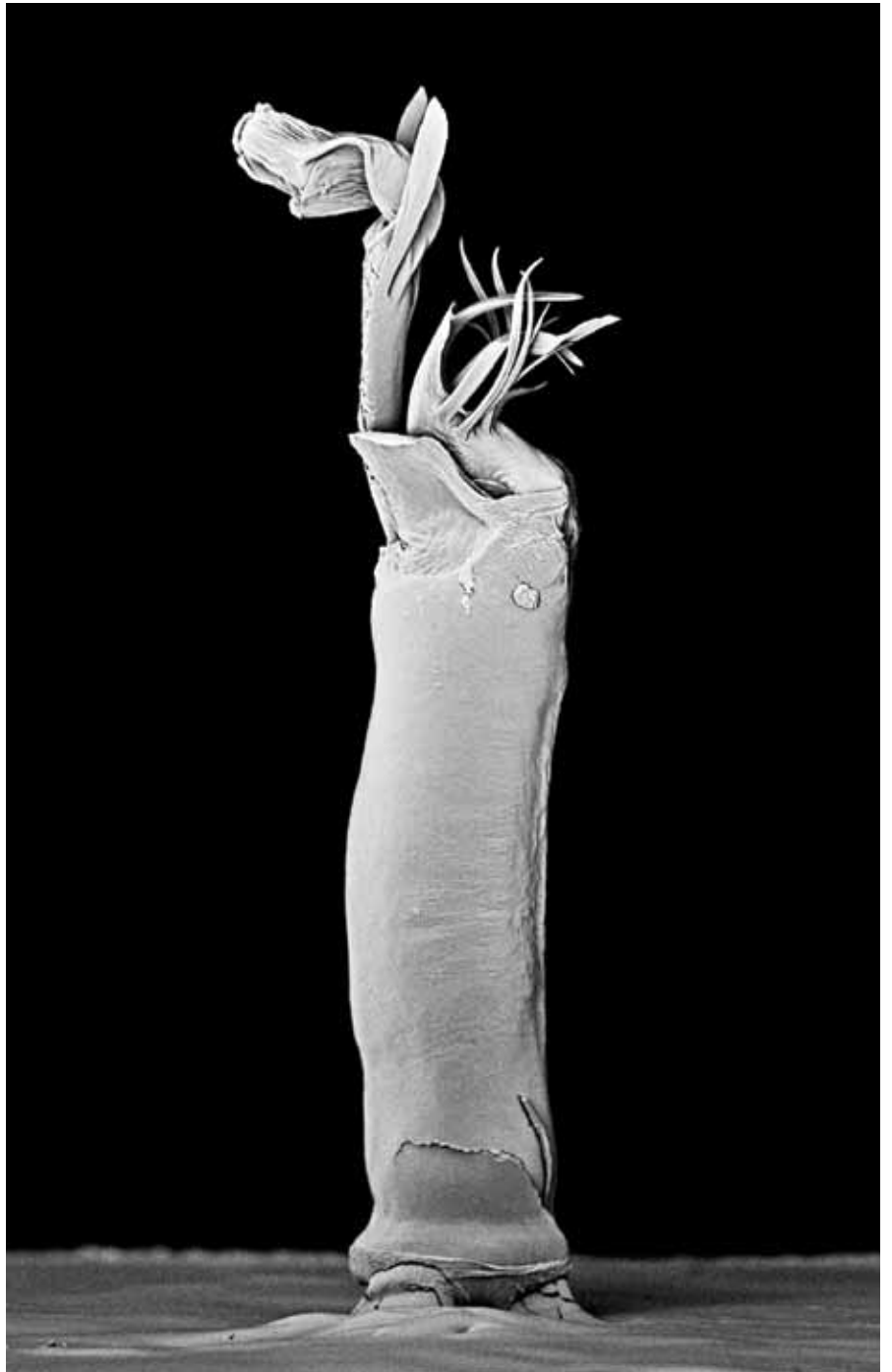


Catherine Nelson *The End of Winter* 2011, Pigment Print Facemounted on Plexiglass, courtesy of the artist.

The landscapes of Catherine Nelson take the idea of photomontage to new heights making reference to the impressionists in their celebratory and emotional charge while also challenging preconceived ideas of the landscape and photographic time. Moreover the idea of the Baroque as conceived in magical realism, as an “extraordinary” plenitude of disorienting detail is used to full effect in the contemplative intimacy of these reconstructed metaphors.

This notion of extraordinary detail is taken to electronic microscopic scale by Maria Fernanda Cardoso that in a similar vein (as its title suggest “It’s not size that matters, it is shape”) explores the intersection of complex form, photographic typology and the representation of nature’s fertility; An exploratory view of nature’s reproductive imperative through the copulatory organs of mites that extend the artist’s interest on our perception of the extraordinary and the equivalents in our daily lives.

One could attribute the current interest on the fictional capacity of photography on a reaction to the oversupply and cloning of realistic images spawned by digital technology and while this advances have provided us with a democracy of the image as William Eggleston postulated, it has as well rendered engaging meaning through straight photography almost impossible to articulate as Alec Soth has commented in relation to his narrative efforts. This cacophony spoused by the idea of meaning as something simply captured by the camera seems to be giving rise to new complexities in the creative process that force the maker and audience to create and engage meaning in new ways.



Maria Fernanda Cardoso *Intrmitent organ of the Thelbanus mirabilis (Harvestman) Opiliones* 2009, Archival Pigment Print, courtesy of the artist and ARC One Gallery, Melbourne.



In Murray McKeich 's generative portraits created by computer algorithms, this question of complexity is brought to the foreground in relation to the genre of "the portrait" challenging assumptions at many levels. At one level, the binary nature of the images means that we cannot only address the image in traditional visual terms such as point of view or framing but also in terms of their physical genome as mathematical puzzles. At another the hypothetical character generated by the algorithm provides us with a blue print for a cognitive imprint (recognition) creating a vessel for our imagination that in reality has no underlying sentence.

It could be argued that these manipulations are in a baroque sense, a complicated way to appeal to the senses, yet I would suggest that the purity of the photographic image as it was proposed by Alfred Steiglitz has been overexploited to the extent that the promise of meaningful content and artistic discourse is in crises. Perhaps these works propose a new avenue of dialogue for the artists and for an audience bored with images of the banal or catastrophic and as Carpentier would have it, it can be a culmination, just as it can be a premonition.



Murray McKeich
Pzombie 2.3 2011, Archival Pigment Print,
courtesy of the artist.

right:
Murray McKeich
pzombie (anime) V.2 2012, still from animated photomedia,
courtesy of the artist.

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Pigment Print Facemounted on Plexiglass, courtesy of the artist.
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Opening Night

Saturday 1 April 4.00 – 7.00 pm

Exhibition Dates

1 April – 29 April 2012

Public Program

Thursday 19 April, 5.30 pm

'South of the Border' Floor talk by Maurice Ortega

Gallery Hours

Wednesday - Saturday 10.00 am – 5.00 pm

Sunday 11.00 am – 3.00 pm



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