

MEDIA RELEASE

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oculi

TERRA AUSTRALIS INCOGNITA A PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY

27 January – 25 March 2012

to be opened by Michael Coyne

Adjunct Professor of Photography, RMIT University
and eminent Australian photojournalist

3.00pm Saturday 4 February 2012



Donna BAILEY
Blanche and Serene 2005
from the series *Unconditional*, printed 2011
chromogenic print
68 x 101 cm
courtesy of the artist

Ten years ago, a group of Australian photographers began the photography collective Oculi.

Committed by a united vision to represent contemporary Australia and its regions, the group embraces a range of distinctive styles and perspectives that include a strong documentary focus.

Photographs by members of Oculi have long been recognised for their dynamic composition, intense lighting and deeply saturated color. But it is their unflinching vision of Australia, its neighbors, landscape and people that distinguishes Oculi as an important force in contemporary Australian photographic practice.

Oculi: Terra Australis Incognita offers a vision of Australia that is empathic, humorous and interpretative, as well as defiant, questioning and critical. The exhibition comprises around eighty photographic images of Australia. The term *Terra Australis Incognita* translates as 'the great unknown land of the south'. It aided the interpretation of the mysterious southern continent as it was invented, reinvented, mythologised and dreamed about.

Today, Oculi uses the term as a metaphor for the experience of contemporary Australia, especially those aspects of it that we can't fully understand, recognise or see; the uncertainty we face in terms of huge environmental, social and economic changes and the enormous challenges we face as a nation.

Andrew Quilty asserted: "This work often scratches beneath the surface of the image one would initially think of when visualising Australia."

Donna Bailey describes the work as "A vision of Australia which is empathetic and humorous, interpretative and defiant, questioning and critical."

Photographer and critic Robert McFarlane says: "Social documentary in Australia is historically the province of the young, independent freelance photographers and during this decade Oculi's photojournalists have energetically documented important Australian issues for both today's press and for future posterity - to considerable acclaim. This exhibition will be particularly important historically speaking."

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