

ROOM NOTES



australian centre for photography



IMAGE © Magdalena Bors *Castle on the Hill* 2007

Phantasia

MAGDALENA BORS, MARK KIMBER,
ANDREW MAMO, ALEXIA SINCLAIR,
SIMON STRONG

Friday 2 May to Sunday 7 June

Vivid, complex and magical, the works in this exhibition abandon the traditional realm of the photographic – the real world – to conjure images of the fantastical. The result of highly skilled and detailed construction, these enchanted scenes are either created as theatrical settings and then photographed or pieced together from hundreds of photographic fragments.

The concept of ‘phantasia’ was proposed by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle to describe the way the mind makes images of things not directly in front of the eye. These could be memories of real events, projections of what is happening out of sight or purely imaginative inventions. Writing at a time when art was considered not as an act of creation but as the knowledgeable execution of a set of skills, the word ‘phantasia’ suggests both that artistry flows from the activity of making, and that memory and imagination are parts of the same process. The life of the mind is a world of images whose potency is not constrained by whether they arise from real experience or pure fantasy.



IMAGE © Andrew Mamo *Every Distance Longer* 2003

Andrew Mamo

"While the work here may seem to be focused on the theme of flight – in many of its senses – it's almost coincidental. As imagined scenes, each image is more about the exploration of something beyond the terrestrial: for most of human history, flight has been the metaphor of choice for that concept and I'm simply tapping that stream." Andrew Mamo

Andrew Mamo's work has been influenced by the visual style of nineteenth century French illustrators such as Isidore Grandville and Albert Robida. Their images of imaginary worlds coincided with a number of scientific breakthroughs at the time; the invention of photography, early flying machines and perhaps most importantly the birth of the science fiction genre in Europe with the writing of Jules Verne and, later, HG Wells.

Magdalena Bors

"The images I'm currently creating explore the idea of the sublime in the everyday. I do this by constructing and photographing imaginary worlds and improbable scenarios in ordinary domestic spaces. Castle on the Hill is made of various sized sugar crystals and sugar cubes." Magdalena Bors

Magdalena Bors' meticulously constructed photographs evoke fairytales spewing forth from domestic activities like knitting or making a cup of tea. Their glowing, fantastically crafted landscapes, together with the uncertain presence of a young woman who appears to be their author, suggest an uncontrollable everyday magic. (Daniel Palmer, Photofile 82)



IMAGE © Magdalena Bors *Castle on the Hill* 2007

Simon Strong

In the dream-like narratives that run under Simon Strong's work, the beginning and end of the story is never quite clear and the details are often obscured by the twilight. A vague unnatural menace is implied but never quite realised, suggesting itself through a field of glowing cabbages, steaming vegetation reclaiming a suburban home or rock formations suddenly appearing in the middle of a freeway.

"I don't feel so concerned anymore that my work needs to be immediately comprehensible. I'm consciously allowing concepts to evolve and develop in a less linear fashion. I'm enjoying the possibilities presented by a more enigmatic or mysterious tone...where you only get glimpses of what may be a more encompassing psycho-drama..." Simon Strong



IMAGE © Simon Strong *Way Out* 2007



IMAGE © Mark Kimber *St Elmos* 2004

Mark Kimber

"My grandmother gave me a scrapbook gathered through years of travel, it held pictures from magazines, postcards and a diverse collection of family snapshots. As a child my first introduction to art was through this book. Paintings by Turner, Martin, Caspar David Freidrich and Bierstadt were dispersed amongst the pages, their beauty and power as inspirational to me today as they were then." Mark Kimber

In producing these *Fictive Landscapes*, Mark Kimber has digitally brought together the landscapes that fascinated him as a child and combined with them his own photographic landscape images in an attempt to relocate that place of wonder. The gap between memory and experience, between then and now or between imagination and realisation, is, of course, unbridgeable but that will never stop us from trying.



IMAGE © Alexia Sinclair *Isabella of Spain* 2007

Alexia Sinclair

In *The Regal Twelve* the viewer is invited on a journey of imagined worlds that are actually based on historical truths; each image being a study of true historical female monarchs.

"The criterion for the selection of each character was their regal descent; each ruled her realm and each displayed a strength that allowed her to do so when women generally held little power."
Alexia Sinclair

Each artwork is created in the computer by combining hundreds of photographic layers. The landscape and architectural backdrops relate to the reign of the subject. The model's hair, makeup, costume and body-painting are all inspired by the period and fashions of the time, reinterpreted into a contemporary visual style. Precious historical treasures such as royal jewels (many of which originally belonged to the monarch herself and now held in museums) are also incorporated during postproduction. The final stage of the process is to blend the elements using computer illustration, a process also employed to create the highly polished and elaborate hairstyles that epitomise each subject's style.

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Australian Centre for Photography is supported by the NSW Government through Arts NSW, the Australia Council, the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body, and the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments.

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