

trouble



Social Work

No Comments

Social work : Roger Ballen



Roger Ballen, 'Threat' (detail) 2010. Image Courtesy of the artist and MONA Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

The Asylum of the Birds

Working with black and white film, Roger Ballen is what you might call 'a wound opener, shedding light on the darker side of the human self – a place that most of us would rather leave untouched.

Ballen was born in New York City in 1950, and has lived and worked in Johannesburg, South Africa for almost 30 years. During this period from 1982 to 2008 he produced many series of works, evolving from photo-journalism to a unique artistic vision.

In an Australian first, Roger Ballen brings his unique craft to Hobart's Museum of Old and New Art ahead of the release of his new book *Asylum of the Birds*, to be published in early 2014 by Thames & Hudson.

What do you hope for?
R.B. Hope is an illusion.

Do you think its ok to lie?
R.B. There are various degrees of lying. One should try to remain truthful to oneself.

What does freedom mean to you?
R.B. Being able to act according to one's will... Nevertheless, one is bound by the human condition and therefore we are never ultimately free.

Which member of your family influenced you the most?
R.B. My mother was very responsible for introducing me to photography as she worked in Magnum in the 1960's.

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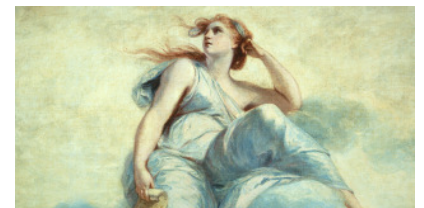
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Genius & Ambition: The Alternative Royal Tour

June 2, 2014 | troublemag



Four years in the planning, the latest exhibition in Bendigo Art Gallery's continuing engagement with international institutions *Genius and Ambition: The Royal Academy of Arts, London 1768-1918* (until 9 June, 2014), is soon to depart these shores for Japan. It brings ...

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How do you make important decisions?

R.B. Sometimes important decisions require pondering the various issues; other times I make decisions instinctively.

How do you feel about someone taking their own life?

R.B. It is hard for me to comment as I would require knowing the circumstances.

Do you think things happen for a reason?

R.B. Not really.

What beliefs do you have that you think will never change?

R.B. I believe that the forces of nature on its various levels are supreme.

Do you believe in the supernatural?

R.B. Nearly everything I come across is supernatural in their own way.

Have you ever come close to dying?

R.B. One never knows how close one has come to death. Sometimes it is a matter of a split second that determines whether you will die or live.

What do you like the best about your body?

R.B. It's loyalty to itself.

What do you think would be the best thing about being the opposite gender?

R.B. Having long hair

Who is the best teacher you have ever had?

R.B. H. Dreyfus who taught classes on existentialism at the University of California at Berkeley.

Have you ever been lost?

R.B. Many times during the time when I hitchhiked from Cairo to Cape Town in 1974.

What do you like most about where you live?

R.B. The weather.

What stays the same in your life, no matter how much other things change?

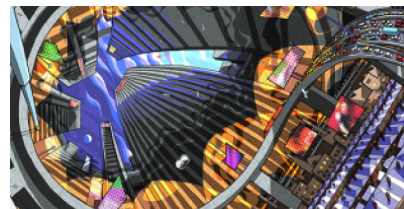
R.B. Roger Ballen

What is stopping you?

R.B. The human condition pervades.

Horizon

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When I don't work from home I'm a commuter. I catch the train. It's cheaper, less stressful than driving, and better for the environment. Today however, I missed the train and because I was so desperate not to be late, ...

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The pitcha makin fellaz are a deadly mob of handsome, easy going, passionate young men who



Roger Ballen, 'Threat' 2012. Image Courtesy of the artist and MONA Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

One of the last generation of black and white photographic artists, Ballen's work has been shown in important institutions throughout the world and is represented in many museum collections such as Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England and Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA.

More than a photographer, Ballen's work has developed from a photo-journalistic style into a combination of photography, theatrical performance, sculpture and a photographic drawing technique developed by Ballen himself.

The Asylum series is major project evolving since 2008, inspired by a house that Ballen visited in Johannesburg; a space inhabited by not just humans, but wild birds, cats, rabbits, mice and other creatures. This menagerie is made more surreal by the strange drawings rendered on the walls. The world 'asylum' bears connotations of on the one hand internment; and on the other, shelter and security.

Roger Ballen says: "It has been of my goals as an artist to show at MONA. The overall aesthetic of the Museum overlaps mine."

Curator Olivier Varenne says: "As a geologist Roger Ballen's fieldwork sometimes took him two kilometres under the earth's surface, in search of diamonds, gold, and other minerals. These subterranean pursuits have deeply influenced him, supporting his artistic development, which he likens to a psychological descent into the mind."

paint and write together on a regular basis in Ballarat. Formed in 2013, artists in the group are William Blackall, Ted Laxton, Peter-Shane ...

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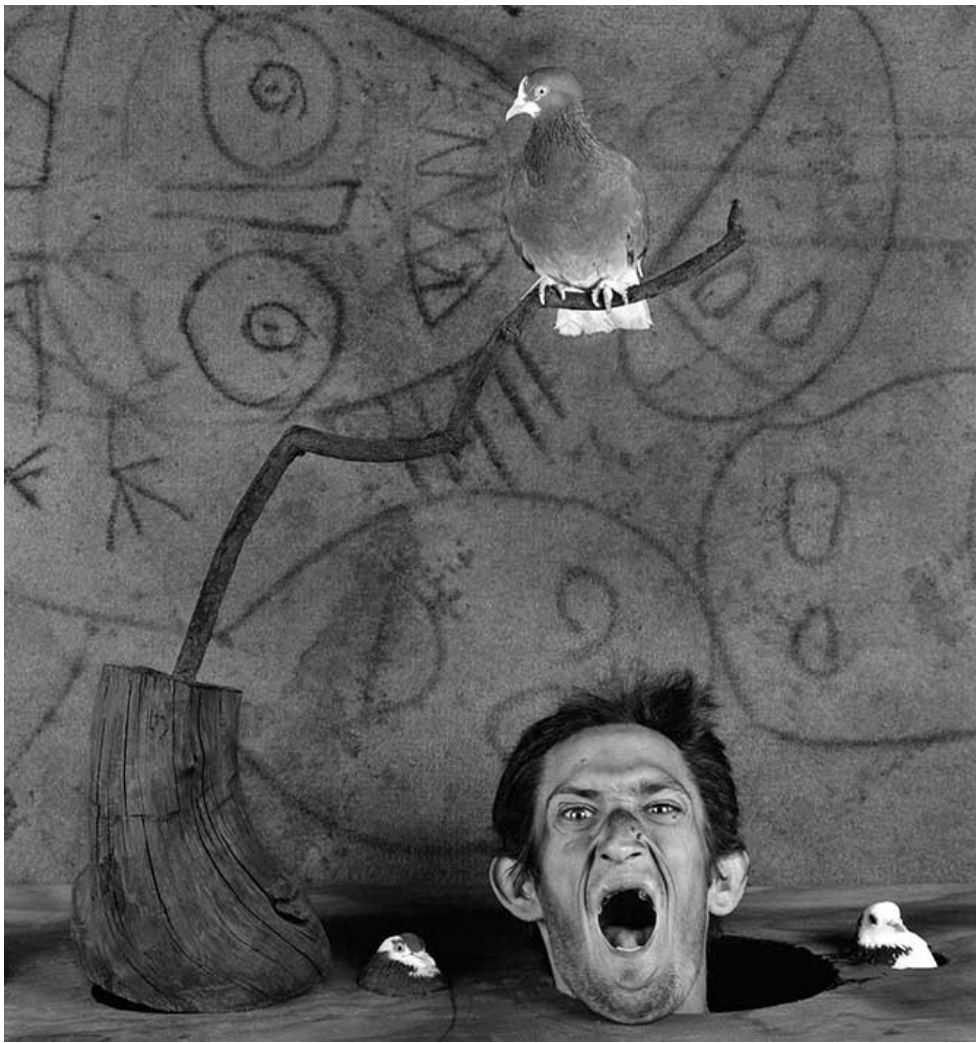


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Roger Ballen, 'Take off' 2012. Image Courtesy of the artist and MONA Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia



Roger Ballen, 'Scream' 2012. Image Courtesy of the artist and MONA Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

*ROGER BALLE*N – *ASYLUM*, MONA Round House & Library Gallery, Museum of Old and New Art 655 Main Rd, Berriedale, Hobart, Tasmania 7011, December 7, 2013 – April 21, 2014. Curated by Olivier Varenne and Nicole Durling – www.mona.net.au

Artist site: www.rogerballen.com

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