

Museum of Old and New Art
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655 Main Road Berriedale
Hobart, Tasmania Australia 7011

MEDIA RELEASE



Wednesday 13 November, 2013

ROGER BALLEEN - ASYLUM
MUSEUM OF OLD AND NEW ART
December 7, 2013 – April 21, 2014
Curated by Olivier Varenne and Nicole Durling

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

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.

Roger 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. This exhibition tracks the development of his style which has made an important and influential contribution to the visual arts.

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.

MONA's Library and Round House Galleries will house works from Ballen's *Asylum of the Birds* and *Apparitions* photographic series. In a third space in the Round House, Ballen will create a site-specific environment similar to those found in the *Asylum of the Birds* series. He describes his work as fundamentally psychological and existential; making art is an exercise in defining himself. Here, the viewer is invited to partake in Roger Ballen's world.

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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.

Previously Ballen was an observer in his images, but with the *Asylum of the Birds* series his unique and complex aesthetic matures. This is a unique space that you have never visited before; Ballen has never made an installation like this.

Roger Ballen says: “It has been of my goals as an artist to show at MONA. The overall aesthetic of the Museum overlaps mine. I am thrilled that I will be able to show my latest series of photographs *Asylum of the Birds* and *Apparitions* in this space as well as create an installation mirroring the physical spaces that I have worked in.”

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.”

Curator Nicole Durling says: “For MONA, the allure of Ballen’s work is his fearlessness in bringing the dark side of the self to the surface. His work is a balance of many dichotomies – dark and light, control and chaos, knowledge and instinct. Ballen opens up the cracks in our psyches, exposing the frailty of human existence.”

www.rogerballen.com

ROGER BALLEEN ASYLUM

Saturday December 7, 2013 – Monday April 21, 2014

MONA Round House & Library Gallery

Museum of Old and New Art

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CURATOR PROFILES

Olivier Varenne is MONA's Senior Curator for international art, based in London. He has curated Céleste Boursier Mougenot's *From Here to Ear* (2009); *The Heart Archive*, Christian Boltanski (2010); *Monanism* (2011 – ongoing); *Wim Delvoye* (2011 – 2012); *Chiharu Shiota's In Silence* (2011); *Theatre of the World* (2012 – 2013), *Theâtre du Monde* (2013); *Yannick Demmerle* (2012), *Beam In Thine Own Eye* (2013); *I Look to You and I See Nothing* (2013); the art component of *MONA FOMA* and *Dark Mofo* and *The Red Queen* (2013-2014).

Nicole Durling is MONA's Senior Curator, based in Melbourne. She has curated *Monanism* (2011 – ongoing); *Theatre of the World* (2012 – 2013), *Theâtre du Monde* (2013); *Beam In Thine Own Eye* (2013); *I Look to You and I See Nothing* (2013); the art component of *MONA FOMA* and *Dark Mofo*, *The Red Queen* (2013-2014), and *Todd McMillan, Ten Years of Tears* (2013).

MONA the Museum of Old and New Art

Opened in January 2011 to exhibit the private collection of founder David Walsh, and to explore new ways to encounter art. Since then we have welcomed more than 970,000 visitors.

Address: 655 Main Road, Berriedale 7011, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia.

Operating Hours: MONA is open Wednesday through Monday. Closed Tuesdays. Closed Christmas Day. Entry fee: \$A20/adult, concession \$A15; under 18 years free.

Getting to Mona from Hobart: MRI fast ferry from Brooke Street Pier, or the Mona Roma bus, or bicycle. Go online www.mona.net or check [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) for updates.

@MONAMUSEUM

MEDIA CONTACT

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