

## THE ROAD: PHOTOGRAPHERS ON THE MOVE 1970–85

21 JUNE–31 AUGUST 2014

Micky Allan, Virginia Coventry, Gerrit Fokkema, John Gollings, Tim Handfield, Ian North, Robert Rooney, Wes Stacey

*THE ROAD* is one of the great subjects in Australian visual culture. In many of our greatest films, books and works of art, the road is a place where personal identity is negotiated, where the national story unfolds, and where culture, technology and nature come together at times in extraordinary ways.

MGA's latest exhibition *The road* brings together a range of photographic projects that explore the road as experienced by many Australians in the 1970s and '80s.

Presenting the work of eight prominent Australian artists, *THE ROAD* announces the road-trip as the quintessential Australian journey, highlighting the challenges to life and culture that accompanied suburban expansion and the ways that Australians embraced the road during the 1970s and '80s. Using a range of strategies – from Instamatic cameras and chemist-shop printing, to expansive composite panoramas and photographic grids that replicate the experience of the modern city – these photographers helped to make sense of the particular experience of movement and landscape made possible by faster cars and better roads, in a way only photography could.

The exhibition features some of the most significant photographic projects produced by Australian photographers during this period. Wes Stacey's mythic series of over 300 photographs *The road* presents an epic travelogue of road trips made by the artist in his Kombi Van during 1973 and 1974. The exhibition also features John Gollings's monumental, ten-metre long streetscapes of Surfers Paradise Boulevard from 1973, as well as Robert Rooney's iconic *Holden park*, featuring the artist's Holden car parked in 20 different locations across Melbourne. *The road* also features work by two of Australia's most important feminist photographers, Micky Allan and Virginia Coventry, who both challenged many of the gendered assumptions about the road, automotive travel and Australian life during the '70s and '80s.

As MGA Curator Stephen Zagala notes, 'The road has often provided Australian photographers with a means to an end, whether a landscape or a picturesque community in some distant part of the country. But as this important exhibition shows, during the 1970s, the road took on a whole new meaning for Australian photographers. It provided a space for innovation and experimentation, and also a photographic reconsideration of Australian life.'

Gallery Director Shaune Lakin states, 'The history of MGA – with its genesis in the late 1970s – is intricately linked to *The road*, one of our most important exhibitions of the year. Relatively cheap and accessible petrol, increased private car ownership, and a vastly improved network of roads encouraged the suburban expansion of Melbourne, and MGA is one of the many legacies of this expansion. We are proud to present this exhibition, which provides an as-yet untold account of Australian photography and has such a close historical association with our gallery.'