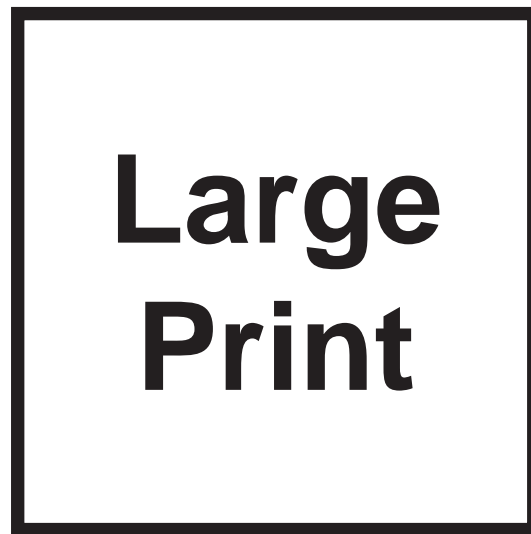


Wesley Stacey

The wild thing

4 March – 28 April 2017



MGA: the Australian home of photography

Wesley Stacey is a living legend of environmental photography. For over 40 years he has been photographing the complex ecology of the Australian continent. This has included expansive folios of work on cultural heritage, the natural environment, and the Indigenous custodianship of land.

Across the breadth of his art practice, Stacey connects us with a certain kind of wildness. For Stacey, 'the wild' is not something out there on the horizon; something to be passively observed from a civilised distance. Instead, it is an untamed energy that flows through us and our environment; something that needs to be felt with the body as much as seen with the eyes.

This is particularly evident in Stacey's panoramic photographs of unfolding landscapes, which draw the viewer into mysterious depths. His image sequences, elaborated in photobooks and serialised installations, also launch us on rhythmic trajectories through the landscape. And his impressionistic snapshots, with their motion blur and vivid colours, embed the viewer in a world of matter and movement.

This exhibition surveys four decades of Stacey's art practice, highlighting how he has used various photographic forms to engage us with the wild side of life.

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

The sphere 1971

pigment ink-jet print on linen, mounted on board
collection of Clayton Simms

I allow myself to be drawn to landscapes and sometimes I feel like Luke Skywalker, with an accompanying life-support vehicle, on the Desert Barrier Range, remote. I love being out in it, immersed, involved with photographic possibilities, with my individual point of view, personal but shareable – essentially interacting with others.

–Wesley Stacey, 1988

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Tree saw teeth 1970

gelatin silver print, mounted on linen
collection of Wesley Stacey, promised gift

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Damsels transforming into mermaids! 2007

ink-jet print on canvas
collection of Blake Stacey

I see myself as an environmental photographer: us affecting it, it affecting us. In my own head I have been working on how environment affects consciousness. Whether it's someone's red lounge room, or a natural bush garden, something is happening to you as a result of that environment.

–Wesley Stacey, 1977

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Friends 1973

gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by William Donald Bowness 2013

MGA 2013.139–153

These photographs were shot at a fancy dress party in Sydney during the summer of 1972–73. Stacey set up his camera on a tripod and used the available light to take a series of portraits. The aim of the exercise was to share and collaborate rather than simply document the occasion. The dark tones and motion blur help communicate Stacey's own immersion in the party and his personal proximity to the subjects.

Stacey exhibited his *Friends* series at Brummels Gallery of Photography in 1973, showing alongside his workmate David Moore. Stacey and Moore shared a studio in Sydney at the time, and worked together to establish the Australian Centre for Photography that same year. A portrait of Stacey, taken by Moore, is included in this exhibition.

Stacey's photobooks, personal albums and commercial publications constitute a substantial aspect of his creative practice. In the late 1960s he began documenting the history of Australian architecture and design for a series of commercial publications with the architect and architectural historian, Phillip Cox. He continued to work on large format, image rich publications throughout the 1970s, exploring cultural heritage as well as the flora and physical geography of Australia.

Throughout his career, Stacey has embraced the photobook as a creative way of sequencing and sharing his images. His major photographic series *The road* and *Signing the land* have both been transfigured into finely crafted photobooks. And he has worked with creative writers to produce poetic 'picture books'.

Stacey has also produced countless unique albums that he makes for himself and to share with friends. The craftsmanship and materiality of these albums reflect Stacey's broader interest in giving a palpable physical presence to photography.

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Driving thru kitsch 1976

artist's book, includes 24 chromogenic prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection
donated through the Australian Government's Cultural
Gifts Program by Christine Godden 2012

MGA 2012.065

Joy of driving 1974–76

Kombi trip 1974–75

chromogenic prints in spiral bound books

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection
donated by Wesley Stacey 2012

MGA 2013.022; MGA 2013.021

Parked cars, Sydney c. 1975

chromogenic prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection
donated by Gael Newton in honour of Noel Denton 2015

MGA 2015.051

**WA – Kalbarri – Coolgardie – Norseman –
Useless Loop – Coral bay – Kalgoorlie**

Sydney – work-day roads

Sydney – peak-hour roads

**WA – Port Hedland – Roebourne – Wittenoom – Nanutarra
Service Station**

North Queensland – Normanton to Cairns

WA – Mount Tom Price and the Hamersley Range

Sunny Sydney streets

Inner Perth

**East Coast – Southport, Surfers Paradise – Brisbane – Sydney
– Gundagai – Wodonga – Melbourne – Hobart**

Up the centre – Quorn to Alice

Outback to the city

Western NSW to the Nullarbor

Sydney – night roads

Perth – fun city

Sydney week-end roads

Sydney – roads home

Outer Perth

Bulli to Canberra

Sydney – lots of cars

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

The road 1974–75

chromogenic prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

acquired 2012; donated by Wesley Stacey 2012

MGA 2013.001–019

The road is Stacey's most iconic work, and could justifiably be described as his masterpiece. This project grew out of Stacey's interest in instamatic cameras and automated colour printing, which became readily available during the early 1970s. Stacey saw the potential for these new technologies to capture the experience of driving through the landscape, and he made a practice of documenting his road trips back and forth across Australia in his Kombi Van during 1973 and 1974.

As Gael Newton has noted, *The road* 'revealed Stacey's interest both in process and in extended repetition as a rhythm with its own hypnotic beauty, and also indicated that he was responding to contemporary developments in conceptualist art.'

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Feather Queen, Les Girls, Kings Cross 1970–71

Surfboards, Darlinghurst Road, Kings Cross 1970–71

Go Go Girl, Whisky a Go-Go, Kings Cross 1970–71

Carlotta upfront, Les Girls, Kings Cross 1970–71

chromogenic prints, printed 2013

collection of William Donald Bowness, promised gift

collection of Wesley Stacey, promised gift

During the summer of 1970–71, Stacey and Rennie Ellis documented Sydney's infamous Kings Cross. The photographs, along with texts by Ellis, were subsequently published as *Kings Cross Sydney: a personal look at the Cross* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1971).

Stacey's use of medium-format colour film to engage in street photography was an innovative gesture at the time. Photographers with artistic intentions rarely used colour film stock during the early 1970s, and photographers doing spontaneous documentary work in public spaces generally used lightweight 35 mm cameras. Stacey also experimented with different lenses on his forays into Kings Cross. For the work 'Basement club, Kings Cross' he used a 17 mm lens to create a sense of immersion, with druggy distortions. Stacey has continued to experiment with the expressive potential of new photographic technologies throughout his career.

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Basement club, Kings Cross 1970–71

chromogenic print

collection of Wesley Stacey, promised gift

Rennie ELLIS

Australia 1940–2003

Wesley Stacey and Eleanor Williams, Bermagui 1977

pigment ink-jet print, printed 2017

exhibition print courtesy of the Rennie Ellis Photographic Archive (Melbourne)

Photographer, Wes Stacey, moved out of Sydney and set up a permanent camp on land overlooking the sea near Bermagui on the NSW south coast. He effectively dropped out, gave up a successful commercial career and devoted himself to helping local Aborigines document sacred sites.

–Rennie Ellis

David MOORE

Australia 1927–2003

Wes Stacey, Kurnell, Sydney 1973

gelatin silver print, printed 2017

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

acquired 2017

MGA 2017.23

The respected Australian photographer Wes Stacey loved doing mad things.

–David Moore

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Burning forest remnant on the Monaro 1981

chromogenic print

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

acquired 1983

MGA 1983.47

Koorie mates in the tea trees 1980

Willie near Mallacoota 1979

Party at the Murrah 1979

Ernie near Mallacoota 1979

Koories looking down to Nadgee 1980

Ted and Dylan at Shelly Point 1979–80

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Koorie set 1979–80

gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Christine Godden 2011–12

MGA 2011.138, MGA 2012.064, MGA 2011.120,

MGA 2011.121, MGA 2011.122, MGA 2012.063

By the late 1970s Stacey had become deeply engaged with Aboriginal land rights and used his skills as a photographer and image editor to raise awareness around Indigenous issues. During this time he befriended the Aboriginal elder, Guboo Ted Thomas, who Stacey credits as having taught him how to 'see and smell and feel the bush'. These photographs of Koorie people, embedded in the coastal landscapes of New South Wales and Victoria, were taken while documenting sacred sites with Guboo (meaning 'good friend').

Barraga Beach c. 1983

Sapphire Coast 1988

Middle Beach passage c. 1980

The Kings Head c. 1980

Bush beside the Murrumbidgee River c. 1981

Mumbulla Creek bed c. 1978

Wind on the Monaro c. 1981

Monaro moon c. 1984

Bend in the lower Snowy c. 1987

Looking east from Dead Horse Gap, winter 1984

Kosi from Ramshead Range c. 1980s

Monaro trees c. 1988

Sheep in the mid-day 1991

New South Canberra c. 1990

The Great Western Plain from The Rock c. 1987

**The Mundi Mundi Plain, looking west
from the Barrier Range c. 1986**

Strzelecki Track c. 1985

Mootwingee hands c. 1971

**Grave of the artist, naturalist Ludwig Becker,
Koorliato Queensland 1992**

**Pool in the Indulkana mesas,
South Australia c. 1988**

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Barragga to Indulkana 1971–92

gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated by Wesley Stacey 2013

MGA 2013.117–126, MGA 2013.128–131, MGA 2013.133–138

This sequence of images is a compilation of landscape photographs taken with panoramic cameras between 1971 and 1992. The photographs plot an imaginary road trip from the beach at Barragga (where Stacey lives) to a waterhole at Indulkana in northern South Australia. This cross-country transect includes views of beaches, creek beds, snow fields, grasslands, forests and deserts, from New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory.

The *Barragga to Indulkana* sequence features many of Stacey's most dramatic panoramas. Carefully composing his shots to take advantage of the panoramic format, he uses the stretched proportions to make vistas breathe and accentuate lines of perspective.

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Mootwingee Hills 1973

Mumbulla corridor 1980

gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated by Gael Newton in honour of Noel Denton 2015

MGA 2015.052–053

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Sunrise in Riverland east 2006

Sunrise in Riverland west 2006

gelatin silver prints, river redgum supports

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated by Wesley Stacey 2016

MGA 2017.08

During the late 1980s Stacey began experimenting with folded panoramas, as a way of introducing a more interactive dimension to his landscapes. The concerted surfaces accentuate a sense of volume in the image and open up multiple perspectives for the viewer.

20 years later Stacey took these experiments to a new level with his major late-career work, *Sunrise in Riverland*. Using two photographs shot in the Riverland region of South Australia during the mid 1980s, Stacey created large-scale folded photographs that immerse the viewer in the play of light and shadow across a flooded landscape.

Tree ferns Face Creek c. 1975–80

Creek bed in Mumbulla 1979–80

Birds nest ferns Biamanga Place c. 1975–80

Ferns and flowers Biamanga Place c. 1975–80

Murrah River pool c. 1975–80

Rocks in Biamanga Place 1979–80

Mossy rocks Murrah River c. 1975–80

Rock orchids Murrah River c. 1975–80

Far south coast bush 1975

Mumbulla Pool c. 1975–80

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Mumbulla set 1975–80

gelatin silver prints

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Christine Godden 2011–12

MGA 2011.131, MGA 2011.136, MGA 2011.133, MGA 2011.137, MGA 2011.123, MGA 2012.127, MGA 2011.125, MGA 2011.128, MGA 2011.126, MGA 2011.129

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Mumbulla - Spiritual - Contact 1980

off-set book

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Christine Godden 2011

MGA 2011.141

Biamanga Jack Mumbulla, featured in the poster image for the *Mumbulla Spiritual Contact* exhibition, was the last Indigenous 'clever man' in the Wallaga Lake region of New South Wales. Wallaga Lake is a sacred site for the Yuin people, and in 1977 an island on the lake was the first place in New South Wales to be declared an Aboriginal heritage site by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The national parklands surrounding Wallaga Lake, which comprise a network of ceremonial sites including Mumbulla Mountain, were formally handed back to the Yuin people in 2006.

During the late 1970s Stacey joined the ranks of people lobbying the government and educating the public about the Indigenous significance of the area. One of the projects that Stacey embarked on during this period was the photobook and touring exhibition, *Mumbulla Spiritual Contact*, which helped save sacred areas of Mumbulla Mountain from logging.

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Pink and green garden in Brogo c. 1988

Reflections c. 1988

chromogenic prints

collection of Wesley Stacey, promised gift

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Mid-day in The Snowies c. 1988

chromogenic print

collection of Wesley Stacey, promised gift

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Signing the land 1972–90

gelatin silver prints mounted on boards; timber box

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated by Wesley Stacey 2016

MGA 2017.07

Signing the land is a sequence of images that documents various examples of humans marking the natural environment with signatures of their presence. Photographed in both Italy and Australia, the series includes images of graffiti, cave painting, gravestones, rock cairns and shell middens.

Signing the land was originally exhibited at the Canberra School of Art in 1990, and published as a photobook with foldout panoramas in 1993. The set of vintage prints held in the MGA collection is housed in a custom-built wooden carrying case, which doubles as a display stand for presenting the series to an audience.

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

The south east rocky shore 1988

from the series *Signing the land* 1972–90

gelatin silver print mounted on board

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated by Wesley Stacey 2016

MGA 2017.07.18

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

The one true stone, Burmagui Point 1990

from the series *Signing the land* 1972–90

gelatin silver print mounted on board

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated by Wesley Stacey 2016

MGA 2017.07.17

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Australian cultural fragment 1989

from the series *Signing the land* 1972–90

gelatin silver print mounted on board

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated by Wesley Stacey 2016

MGA 2017.07.02

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Memorial stone Twelve Apostles coast 1986

from the series *Signing the land* 1972–90

gelatin silver print mounted on board

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated by Wesley Stacey 2016

MGA 2017.07.11

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Collusion on the shore, Cutagee 1992

gelatin silver print

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated by Charles Nodrum 2010

MGA 2010.041

Wesley STACEY

born Australia 1941

Tree marked 'dig' Coopers Creek 1984

from the series *Signing the land* 1972–90

gelatin silver print mounted on board

Monash Gallery of Art, City of Monash Collection

donated by Wesley Stacey 2016

MGA 2017.07.20