

# The Burning World

\*August – November 2020

***The Burning World*** brings together four significant photographic series created by leading Australian artists **Hoda Afshar, Peta Clancy, Rosemary Laing** and **Michael Cook**.

Taking its title from the apocalyptic science fiction text of the same name by JG Ballard, the exhibition interrogates urban and natural landscapes to reveal truths about human inhabitations. Addressing the contemporary ramifications of past actions, the works hold confronting realities in tension with idyllic and iconic environments, challenging dominant narratives to focus attention on what has been overlooked, denied or concealed. In particular, they draw upon colonial histories, fact and fiction, to consider the landscape as an amorphous political site.

## **Hoda Afshar – *Remain***

Hoda Afshar's potent 2018 video *Remain* follows a group of stateless men sent to Australia's Manus Island detention centre and left to languish on the island despite the centre's closure in 2017. Weaving together still and moving imagery, voice recordings and text this intimate video portrait portrays individual and shared experiences of loss, boredom, violence and desperation juxtaposed against the outwardly idyllic environment of the island. Featured in Afshar's *Remain* series is Kurdish Iranian writer, journalist and human rights defender Behrouz Boochani. In 2018, her striking portrait of Boochani won the William and Winifred Bowness Photography Prize.

## **Peta Clancy - *Undercurrent***

Developed in 2018 as part of The Koorie Heritage Trust Fostering Koorie Art and Culture Residency, for *Undercurrent*, Bangerang artist Peta Clancy collaborated with the local Dja Dja Wurrung community to research, develop and create a major series of large format landscape photographs responding to a massacre site on Dja Dja Wurrung Country now submerged underwater. In one of Bendigo Art Gallery's historic courts a 14 metre-long wallpaper installation and soundscape recorded on site will accompany these photographs as well as oral histories shared by Dja Dja Wurrung community members Mick Bourke and Amos Atkinson. In addition, for *The Burning World*, Clancy has collaborated with Dja Dja Wurrung artist and curator Natasha Carter, who has selected a series of nineteenth century paintings and works on paper from the Bendigo Art Gallery collection, depicting local landscapes. Hanging in dialogue with *Undercurrent* the selected works further explore hidden histories literally and metaphorically submerged under contemporary life in the Bendigo region.

## **Rosemary Laing – *Buddens***

Rosemary Laing is one of Australia's most revered conceptual photographers known for creating large scale photographs that explore notions of place, landscape and human relationships with the natural world. In *The Burning World*, Bendigo Art Gallery presents works from the artists' recent *Buddens* series, in which Laing materialises resonant traces of human habitation on the land through creative interventions on site. In *The Flowering of the Strange Orchid* and *Drapery and Wattle*, Laing installed 100 brightly coloured pieces of rolled cloth onto a dry riverbed on the south coast of New South Wales - a site of shipwrecks and colonial trade.

## **Michael Cook - *Invasion***

In his most ambitious photographic series to date, Cook conjures an alien incursion in the heart of London. The *Invasion* series, with a cinematic aesthetic akin to a 'boys-own adventure' mixed with a

Hitchcock horror movie, required a cast of 50, a crew of 20 and months of production in what is a complex narrative reflecting on Australia's colonial history and the broader notion of invasion.

Bendigo Art Gallery Director **Jessica Bridgfoot** said the exhibition presents a broad and diverse approach to the medium of photography and film under the overarching theme of the political landscape.

"In the wake of the global Covid 19 pandemic, the role of the artist and photographer to interpret world events and document our collective present is more relevant than ever. Recent events have exacerbated many of the global issues that have been burning away under the surface for decades – over/mass consumption, the rampant toll on the natural environment and the division of societies by race, class and age. This exhibition approaches some of the more pertinent of these issues through the lens of photography and film," Ms Bridgfoot said.

"This project has been wide ranging - involving bringing together for the first time in a public gallery the entire *Invasion* series by Michael Cook – to working with local Traditional Owners to curate historical artworks from the gallery's collection into the exhibition. We are also very proud to present Hoda Afshar's important film *Remain* – which tells the heartbreaking stories of refugees left behind on Manus Island - to regional Victorian audiences. The medium of photography has long been a method of truth telling and we intend to use this exhibition to highlight some very real environmental and political events of our time."

**\*The Burning World opening date will be confirmed closer to August, and decided in accordance with COVID-19 related protocols for public spaces.**

Further media info:

Katrina Hall  
Publicity/Communications  
0421153046 [kathall@ozemail.com.au](mailto:kathall@ozemail.com.au)

Exhibition: <https://www.bendigoregion.com.au/bendigo-art-gallery/exhibitions/the-burning-world>

Images: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/u7sox5hqkr8birc/AAAr8jWoWtqH01IMgRqg7jEfa?dl=0>