

Exhibition Notice

ANNE ZAHALKA

WONDERLAND 31 Jan - 25 Feb, 2006

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Wonderland continues Anne Zahalka's forays into both real and artificial worlds through a series of large-scale photographic images taken during her travels. In the documenting of 'leisure' and 'nature' scapes for her previous exhibitions Leisureland and Natural Wonders, Zahalka collected a menagerie of creatures and an array of landscapes. She has retrieved these from the archive in the development of this body of work and produced a series of dramatic dreamlike images. Departing from her earlier documentary approach she constructs new landscapes much like a film set on which her cast of characters are directed. 'Nature' is manipulated via the agencies of tourism and by the photographer's sleight of hand to appear both factual and fantastical. While the camera bears witness to these landscapes and to its visitors, the lines become blurred between fact and fiction.

In Strangers in a Strange Land, Pinnacles Desert, Zahalka presents Nature as spectacle and a site of consumption for the tourist's gaze. The flow of foreigners through these landscapes turns nature into theme park. The tourist travels there in order to experience it as different and other. While the observer becomes caught in an act of looking and being looked at, they continue to buy into both the authentic and manicured experiences of Nature.

Zahalka's landscapes are visited and colonised by creatures that don't appear to belong. While her subjects are free to roam, they appear caught in the camera's spotlight. Introduced species from one place become dislocated and displaced in these new surroundings. Witnessed out of their usual habitats these juxtapositions create a conundrum in the viewer as to what is real and what's not. Children feature predominantly in Zahalka's landscapes nostalgically reminding us of the sense of awe and discovery which nature provides. Immersed in such illusionary worlds we are invited to share their wonder. The photographs in Wonderland examine our relationship with nature and the desire to escape into its magical realm.

Anne Zahalka has been exhibiting her photographs in Australia and overseas for over twenty years. She was the recipient of the prestigious Leopold Godowsky Color Photography Award in Boston last year. Exhibitions of her two Leisureland series Leisureland and Leisureland regional have both toured extensively within Australia. Recent international group exhibitions include Supernatural Artificial at the Metropolitan Museum of Photography in Tokyo curated by Natalie King and currently touring in Asia. Photographica Australis (2002) premiered at the Sala del Canal de Isabel II in Madrid and was toured by the Australian Centre for Photography throughout Asia. Her works are held in most major public collections in Australia as well as numerous private and corporate collections in Australia and overseas. Wonderland will be Anne Zahalka's first solo exhibition with ARC One Gallery.