



LYNNE ROBERTS-GOODWIN

Disappearing Act

10 February – 5 March 2005

S H E R M A N   G A L L E R I E S



## Disappearing Act

Four thousand years ago, camel caravans traversed the deserts of the Arabian peninsula in the directions of Rome and the Far East, carrying the sacred aromatic frankincense. This trade route is known as the Frankincense Trail, a zone where cultures and merchants have clashed and merged for millennia. Lynne Roberts-Goodwin's journey through Oman, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria during 2003 and 2004 followed this famous trade route. She was in search of contemporary and historic encounters that exist beyond the carefully guarded national borders of today's Middle East. Indeed, her photographic project, *Disappearing Act*, invokes a trail in transition.

Photographic images of the Middle East have been in circulation since the second half of the nineteenth century, when thousands of photographs were taken by keen travellers who followed the orientalist painters to Egypt, Algeria, the Ottoman Empire and Morocco. Initially, the primary interest was in the architecture, and the human figure was used as a measure of scale. However, the orientalist photographers soon took up portraiture, not so much with the intention of individual insight, but rather in the tradition of ethnographic documentation. As Mounira Khemir points out, "the very word "desert" impresses the western mind with images of solitude, retreat, meditation and serenity." 'The Orient' is a place in the imagination of Westerners; an exotic destination that is made so by its relative inaccessibility, and the seemingly complete 'otherness' of its culture. Edward Said wrote extensively about orientalist perceptions of the Middle East and their grounding in a racist ideology that sees the Islamic world as a colonial destination suspended in time.

It is with this tradition in mind that the Australian war photographer Frank Hurley (1885–1962) made composite prints – where more than one negative is used to create the photograph – during his official visits to Europe and the Middle East. Hurley's compositions were met with a certain degree of opposition within the military. It was, nevertheless, his view that a synthetic image could best convey the powerful extremities of war and the harshness of life in a foreign country. Some of Hurley's most compelling images are of the Bedouins in Jordan (undated, but probably taken during the Second World War). The images depict vast Bedouin camps as timeless entities: a man smoking a traditional pipe, another playing an instrument, horses kicking up the desert dust, a meeting of Bedouin sheiks.

Today, photographs of the Middle East appear daily in our newspapers, particularly from Iraq, Palestine and Israel. War photographers seek the most horrific or the most compromising moments for our consumption and, depending which newspaper or news channel you see, the point of view differs. But perhaps one of the most powerful sequences of images from the region in recent times are the digital pictures taken and staged by United States military personnel in Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison in which Iraqi prisoners of war were ridiculed in humiliating and dehumanised positions. Judith Butler has commented that there is nothing journalistic about these images; no sense that a crime is being exposed. Rather, these images are couched, most shockingly, in terms of the 'souvenir': 'The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, USA, has recently exhibited the Abu Ghraib images in tandem with Warhol's *Electric Chair* paintings, perhaps as a comment on America's shame.

Within this complex context, the ability of Lynne Roberts-Goodwin to capture the modest gaze of contemporary Bedouins and their country during her own exploration of the Middle East is all the more remarkable. Yousef and Abdullah look at us in the most unassuming of ways. They are the boys who sell petrol along the Frankincense Trail. They stand in the landscape with a matter-of-fact ownership and knowledge of its vast red sandy terrain. They are Bedouins with a name, a face, contemporary clothing and a modern trade, who criss-cross an ancient route, a desert, as if it is a busy part of the country. Yousef and Abdullah express to us that perception of place is in the mind and eye of the occupant. With this exhibition, Lynne Roberts-Goodwin provides a counterpoint to both orientalism and contemporary battle lines. She restores a human face to what has become a deep tragedy.

**Victoria Lynn** is a curator and writer living in Melbourne.

- 1 'The Orient in the photographers' mirror' from *Constantinople to Mecca*, Orientalism, exhibition catalogue, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1997, p. 190.
- 2 Judith Butler, cited in Louisa Gray, 'The power of perspective', *Art Review*, vol. LV, November 2004, p. 52.





above  
left:

**FRANKINCENSE CROSSING** 2004  
C-type photograph 180 x 230 cm  
courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney

centre:

**FRANKINCENSE HIGHWAY 1** 2004  
C-type photograph 180 x 230 cm  
courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney

right:

**FRANKINCENSE ROAD** 2004  
C-type photograph 180 x 230 cm  
courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney

below

left:

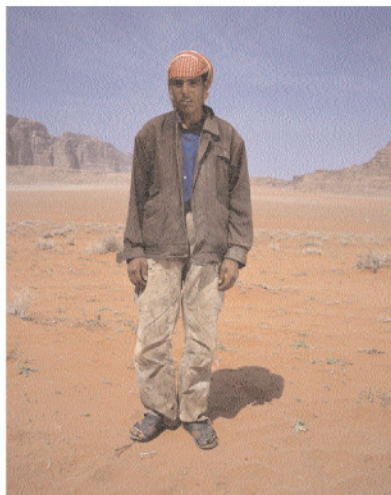
**DISAPPEARING ACT 1** 2004  
C-type photograph 180 x 230 cm  
courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney

centre:

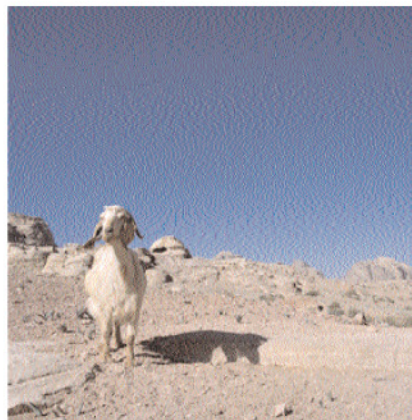
**DISAPPEARING ACT 2** 2004  
C-type photograph 180 x 230 cm  
courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney

right:

**DISAPPEARING ACT 3** 2004  
C-type photograph 180 x 230 cm  
courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney



**PETROL BOY MUHAMMAD** 2004  
C-type photograph 230 x 188 cm  
courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney



**BORDER 0** 2004  
C-type photograph 188 x 188 cm  
courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney



**BORDER 3** 2004  
C-type photograph 188 x 188 cm  
courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney





PETROL BOY YOUSEF 2004  
C-type photograph 230 x 188 cm  
courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries, Sydney



## BIOGRAPHY

- 1954 Born Sydney, New South Wales  
1975-76 Bachelor of Fine Arts, University of Sydney  
1975-78 Diploma in Art/Bachelor of Visual Arts, Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education, Sydney  
1979-80 Master of Fine Arts, Medford Fine Arts Centre, Manchester University, UK  
1986-87 Associate Diploma Teaching, Sydney College of Advanced Education  
1987-2001 Senior Lecturer, School of Media Arts, COFA, University of New South Wales, Sydney  
2001 Senior Lecturer/Postgraduate Coordinator, School of Media Arts, COFA, University of New South Wales, Sydney

## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2005 *Disappearing Act*, Sherman Galleries, Sydney  
2003-04 *Acute Artists'* Annual, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, United Arab Emirates Gallery, Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi, UAE  
2002 *Landings*, Boutwell Draper Gallery, Sydney  
2001 *Landings and Fractured Landscape*, Nature Morle Gallery, Delhi, India  
1999 *Lynne Roberts-Goodwin*, Renard Wardall Gallery, Melbourne; *Standing the world on its head*, Lakewood Gallery, Mumbai, India  
1998 *Luminous*, Light Work Gallery, Artist Residency Show, New York, NY, US  
1997 *Blindfold*, Contemporary Level 2 Project Space, AGNSW, Sydney; *Lynne Roberts-Goodwin*, Michael Wardell Gallery, Melbourne; *Pink planks*, Artspace, Sydney  
1995 *False tales, Dogs to the Wall*, Artspace, Auckland, NZ; *False tales, Dogs in Space*, Michael Wardell Gallery, Melbourne; *False tales, Dohy Dogs*, 4 x 4, New Museum of Contemporary Art, NY, US  
1994 *A Certain Blindness*, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne; *Remote*, Perth Institute for Contemporary Art, Perth; *Remote-Half-Light*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne  
1993 *Phantom*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney; *903 Works*, Bista Gallery, Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, US  
1992 *Touch*, First Draft Gallery, Sydney  
1991 *Terracape*, Citi Gallery, RMIT, Melbourne  
1990 *Spaces of Dissent*, ROAR 2 Studios, Melbourne  
Moment, Camera Lucida Window Space, Sydney  
1989 *No Space*, Camera Lucida Window Space, Sydney; *Works 1989*, Coventry Gallery, Sydney  
1986 *Recent Works*, Coventry Gallery, Sydney; *Looking Glass*, Salle Sandoz Gallery, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France  
1984 *Works 1982-1984*, Images Gallery, Sydney; *Site Works*, Salle Sandoz Gallery, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France  
1982 *Recent O/S Works*, Coventry Gallery, Sydney  
1981 *Works 1981-1982*, Sloane Street Gallery, London, UK  
1981 *Drawn*, Sloane Street Gallery, London, UK; *North/South*, Whitworth Gallery, Manchester City Gallery, Manchester, UK  
1980 *From Here*, Peterloo Gallery, Peterloo Square, Manchester, UK  
1979 *Over There*, Coventry Gallery, Sydney

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2004 *Jajpur Biennale Arts Festival*, Jajpur, India  
2002 *Time Travel Sanctuary 2*, Victorian College of the Arts Gallery, Melbourne; *A Silver Lining & A New Beginning*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, COFA, University of NSW, Sydney; 2002: *The Year in Art*, SH Ennis Gallery, National Trust Centre, Sydney; *The Synthetic Image*, The Faculty Gallery, Monash University, Melbourne; *Open Source*, Foadki Nelson Gallery, NY, Paris Days, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney  
2001 *One X One Memo*, Boutwell Draper Gallery, Sydney  
2000 *Metropolis*, Museum of Sydney, Sydney  
1999 *Triggered*, First Draft Gallery, Sydney  
1998 *Last Structure*, Sherman Galleries Goodhope, Sydney  
1997 *Multiplication: The multiple object in art*, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne; *Release: Recent Photo-Based Works*, Michael Wardell Gallery, Melbourne  
1996 *Fourth Annual Digital Sale*, The Museum Gallery, NY; ACAF 5, Michael Wardell Gallery, Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne; *In Process*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, COFA, University of NSW, Sydney; *New Space - Gallery Artists*, Michael Wardell Gallery, Melbourne; *Inheritance*, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney  
1995 *From Strength to Hope*, Artspace, Camula Powerhouse, Sydney; *It's about time*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, COFA, University of

- NSW, Sydney; *Art Felt*, The University of Newcastle Gallery, Newcastle, NSW; *Interim*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, COFA, University of NSW, Sydney  
1994 *Next Wave Festival*, George Fairfax Hall, Melbourne Arts Centre, Melbourne; *Bitmap 101*, 101, Collins Street, Melbourne  
1993 *21,600 each 24 Hrs*, Canberra Travelodge, Canberra; *Virtu*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, COFA, University of NSW, Sydney  
1992 *In Print*, Art Images Gallery, Adelaide; *Menu et Monte*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, COFA, University of NSW, Sydney; *International Printing*, IPI Chicago Art Fair, Chicago SIGGRAPH 92, US; *Citri Show*, Citi Gallery, RMIT, Melbourne  
1991 *ARS Electronica*, Digital-Photographic Symposium and Exhibition, Linz, Austria  
1990 *Scanning the Code*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, COFA, University of NSW, Sydney; *Untitled 1990*, Performance Space, Sydney; *Stare*, Electronic Art, Groningen Arts Centre, Groningen, The Netherlands  
1989 *Project Gahia*, ARS Electronica, Digital-Photographic Symposium and Exhibition, Linz, Austria  
1988 *Spirit of the Times*, Riverside Studio Gallery, EXPO '90, Brisbane  
1985 *Sulman Exhibition*, AGNSW, Sydney  
1984 *Xmas Coventry Artists*, Coventry Gallery, Sydney

## PUBLIC ART COMMISSIONS

- 1999 *Scanning the Code*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, COFA, University of NSW, Sydney; *Untitled 1990*, Performance Space, Sydney; *Stare*, Electronic Art, Groningen Arts Centre, Groningen, The Netherlands  
1989 *Project Gahia*, ARS Electronica, Digital-Photographic Symposium and Exhibition, Linz, Austria  
1988 *Spirit of the Times*, Riverside Studio Gallery, EXPO '90, Brisbane  
1985 *Sulman Exhibition*, AGNSW, Sydney  
1984 *Xmas Coventry Artists*, Coventry Gallery, Sydney  
1997-98 *Customs Hall*, Sydney Airport, Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
1998-99 *Tankstream*: *Into the Head of the Cove* (five sites), Tankstream City Project, Sydney Sculpture Walk, Council of the City of Sydney  
1997-98 *Customs Hall*, Sydney Airport, Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; *Design and production of Seal/Anon Book*, AQIS, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
1997 *City of Light*, Tamworth City Light Sculpture, NSW Ministry of the Arts

## GRANTS AND AWARDS

- 2003-04 *New Work Grant*, Visual Arts Fund, Australia Council  
2001-02 *Australia Research Council Grant* (UAE; Washington; Chicago; US)  
2000-03 *Australia Research Council Grant* (Saudi Arabia; Pakistan; India)  
2000 UNESCO Sanskriti Artist Atsalk Residency, Sanskriti, New Delhi, India  
1999-2000 *Australia India Foundation Grant*, collaboration with World Wildlife Fund and Wilderness India; Faculty Research Grant, COFA, University of NSW, Sydney  
1998-99 *Department of Primary Industries Grant*, Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS)  
1996-97 *New Work Grant*, Visual Arts Fund, Australia Council  
1992-96 *Faculty Research Grant*, COFA, University of NSW, Sydney  
1989 *New Image Research Grant*, Australian Film Commission, Sydney  
1985 *London Education Authority Artist Travel Grant*, UK  
1983 *Artists Overseas Travel Grant*, Visual Arts/Crafts Board, Australia Council  
1980 *Dyson Bequest Artist Travel Grant*, AGNSW, Sydney  
1979 *Basel and Marial Hooper Travelling Art Scholarship*, AGNSW, Sydney

## ARTIST RESIDENCIES

- 2004 *Fahad Bin Sulhan Centre*, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
2002-03 *Environmental Research Wildlife Development Agency*, UAE  
2000-01 *Institute of Electronic Arts*, Albert University, NY  
2000 UNESCO Sanskriti Artist Atsalk Residency, Sanskriti, New Delhi, India  
1999 *Wilderness India*, Delhi and Bombay, India  
1998 *Light Work Gallery*, NY  
1992 *LA County Museum*, Los Angeles, California  
1983 *Moya Dyring Paris Studio*, AGNSW, Sydney

## SELECTED COLLECTIONS

- Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Artlink  
BRIT Collection, Melbourne  
TAFE Collection, Bathurst, NSW  
Peter Stavestun Trust  
Tandefield/Kamagae Australian Collection  
Westpac Collection  
Austrian Embassy, Abu Dhabi, UAE  
Department of Trade & Foreign Affairs, Australia-India Commission, Delhi, India  
HH Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nayhan  
Sheikh Mohammad Bin Sultan Al Nayhan, Crown Prince Private Collection, UAE  
Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France  
University of Illinois, Chicago, US  
Groninger Gallery, Manchester, UK  
Medlock Fine Art Centre, Manchester, UK  
Peterloo Gallery, Manchester, UK  
Sloane Street Gallery, London, UK  
Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, UK  
ERWDA (Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency) Collection, Abu Dhabi, UAE  
NID Collection, Almenabad, Gujarat, India  
Private collections in Australia, Canada, United States, United Kingdom, France, India, Pakistan, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Au Jacob, *The Gulf Today*, Abu Dhabi Bureau, 24 September 2004, vol. 9, no. 164, p. 3  
Kavitha S. Daniel, 'Around Emirates, The Gulf News', 26 September 2004, p. 2  
Arjuna Sankar, *Artspace*, *Khaleej Times*, 27 September 2004, pp. 1-2  
Peter Hill, *Spectrum*, Sydney Morning Herald, 18 April 2003, p. 29  
Robert Nelson, *Metro*, Sydney Morning Herald, 11 April 2003  
Sharon Veghish, 'Catching the fastest predator on film', Sydney Morning Herald, 11 March 2003  
Melinda Hicken, 'Aboriginal Sydney', Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2001, pp. 2-3  
Sue Best, 'Public art in the Olympic City', Architecture Australia, September 2000  
Bruce James, 'Remembrance of things past', *Spectrum Arts*, Sydney Morning Herald, 21 August 1999, p. 12  
Helen Lochhead, 'Sydney ahead', Architecture Australia, September-October 1999  
Adrian Herbert, 'Sculpture Walk', Architecture Review Australia, no. 65, spring 1998, pp. 18-20  
Geraldine O'Brien, 'Artists get green light', Arts Review, Sydney Morning Herald, 25 June 1998, p. 15  
Zara Stanhope, *Multiplication: The Multiple Object in Art*, exhibition catalogue, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne, 1997  
D. Haines, 'Blindfold-False Tales', *Photofilia*, no. 47, pp. 47-8  
Charles Green, 'False Tales', *Art & Australia*, vol. 33, no. 2, summer 1996, pp. 285-6  
T. J. McManus, 'Participative on Art', *New Zealand Herald*, 4 October 1995, p. 11  
Louise Adler, *Arts and Entertainment Review*, Age, Melbourne, 7 July 1995, p. 15  
Robert Nelson, *Arts and Entertainment Review*, Age, Melbourne, 28 June 1995, p. 23  
Victoria Ryan, *False Tales*, exhibition catalogue, Michael Wardell Gallery, Melbourne; *Artspace Gallery*, Auckland, NZ, 1995  
Charles Green, *Remote-Half-Light*, exhibition catalogue, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Perth, 1994



This project has been assisted by the Commonwealth through the Australia Council, its Arts Funding and Advisory Board

## OWNER:

FRANKINCENSE HIGHWAY 1 2004 (detail)  
C-type photography 180 x 230 cm  
courtesy the artist and Sherman Galleries

## SHERMAN GALLERIES

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