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20 YEARS

FLASH
CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY
FEBRUARY-MAY 06

CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

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The Centre for Contemporary Photography (CCP) is one of Australia's premier venues for the exhibition of contemporary photo-based arts, providing a context for the enjoyment, education, understanding and appraisal of contemporary practice. Established in 1986 by the photographic community as a not-for-profit exhibition and resource centre, CCP has played a pivotal role in the support of photo-based arts and public engagement with photography. In 2005 CCP relocated to purpose-designed premises by Sean Godsell Architects.

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COVER

Petrina Hicks *Zara 2* 2005 (detail) lightjet print, 80cm x 108cm, from the exhibition *In Cold Light*. Image courtesy of Stills Gallery.

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GALLERY

INTERVIEW: CHANTAL FAUST, *MONSTER*, CCP GALLERY FOUR, 20 JANUARY – 11 MARCH 2006



Chantal Faust, *Monster* / 2005 (detail) type C print, 100x72cm

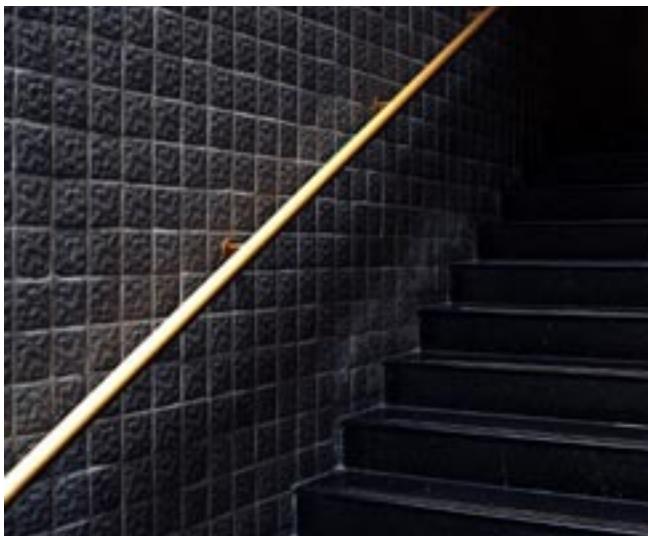
Naomi Cass, CCP Director (NC): Your practice has its foundations in photography, but you have chosen to supplant the role of the camera with a flatbed scanner. What is the relationship between scanning and photography?

Chantal Faust (CF): It's incestuous... although there are no negatives and no grain. There is only pixel. My work relies on a pre-existing language of photography—how we read and understand images and the spatial relationships that can be expected when viewing a photograph. It's the subversion of this photographic vernacular that occurs through scanning which makes the viewing experience so strange. The scanner disobeys the rules of lens-based photography, associated with aperture, depth of field and the use of perspective. Scanning requires an immediate proximity to the subject. It distorts and stretches space and yet the focus maintains an acute sensitivity to surface detail; so much so that the images often can appear 'hyperreal'. What really interests me is the way the scanner visibly impacts upon the surfaces of that which it scans. The photographic idea of an anonymous voyeur is denied by physically altering its subject matter and then freezing this pressured moment into a flat image.

NC: Your engagement with objects seems to be of great importance. What is the selection process?

CF: The objects used in my images stem from the rejected overflow of mass production. Those weird things you find in the back aisles of two-dollar shops. Often, their intended use is belied through the oddity of their design. The creature in the *Monster* series started off as a child's toy, but its stiff body, pushpin eyes and unidentifiable fur would suggest that it is a highly inappropriate plaything. When I found it hanging from a butcher's hook in a stall at the South Melbourne market I knew I had to take it home. It seemed so desperate. I wanted to rescue it, but I also wanted to exploit its vulnerability.

PRINT DRAWER INTERVIEW: PAUL KNIGHT



Paul Knight *Untitled (handrail)* 2004 (detail) type C Print, 68x66cm. Courtesy the artist and Neon Parc



Paul Knight *Untitled* 2005 (detail) type C print, 124x140 cm. Courtesy the artist and Neon Parc

Karra Rees, CCP Curator (KR): In 2006 the Australian Centre for Photography will present a large solo show of your work and you will be represented by a commercial gallery. Can you tell us about your plans for this year?

Paul Knight (PK): The forthcoming exhibition at ACP came out of the blue and since I was offered this show it has become my main focus. Representation by the new Melbourne gallery, Neon Parc, came as a welcome surprise. To be represented feels very exciting and they have secured a great space. This year I really want to develop my work beyond my own understanding (I guess that's what everyone wants). I aim to push my work into a more emotional sphere. Still formal, but emotional too.

KR: In addition to your art-based practice you also work commercially as an architectural photographer. I think this is often visible in the formal and structural composition of your work, as well as your focus on geometric patterns. Do your two photographic roles intersect or influence each other?

PK: Most of my commercial work comes via graphic designers and is not always based on built structures. I guess I'm selected for this work because of my response to buildings and structural relationships. Working commercially is a huge challenge, but it has taught me a great deal. Normally the way I work is quite a slow process based on a response to the subject matter. Working to a brief within a job forces you to make decisions very quickly; hopefully in the moment you make the right ones. When I make my own work, a moment is more like blocks of half hours or more.

Right now I am spending more time dealing with people in my images,

so being quicker with decision making has definitely been a great help.

KR: Formally your images of purpose-built spaces have been curiously emptied of human presence. It appears that your new work will make a marked shift in style and will now centre around people. Can you tell us why you have made this turn-around in subject matter?

PK: At the end of 2004 I spent some time overseas and I left intending to engage with people in environments that I would normally be drawn to photograph. 2005 turned out to be an intense year for me and after long discussions with a family member who was looking very deeply into every aspect of their life, I found the ability to dissect my process of exploring subject matter. In the past I felt that to achieve a clear understanding and true representation of the psychology of people using these spaces, I needed to remove them, that they would somehow confuse or narrow the possibilities of what I wanted to reveal. Now, I want to photograph people as spatial objects rather than as individuals so as to tease out certain relationships more intensely. I'm hoping these new people-based images will reveal a deeper understanding of an old problem for me.

My former work was more about a private or domestic psychology, in a sometimes ambiguous or suspended setting. Although the new images will be in similar settings, they extend the theatricality of the spatial photographs, and are more narrative-based. I have always been drawn to the sexuality of spaces and this will also continue in the new work.

Paul Knight prints are on sale at CCP until April 2006.

REVIEW

AN HONEST LIE: REVIEW OF *REMOTE CONTROL: CONTEMPORARY PHOTOMEDIA* (NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA) BY KERRIE-DEE JOHNS

As the entrapments of modern life cause us to lose touch with what it is to be human, the desire for confessions of a sad and vulnerable type increases. A wave of emotional declaration washes up daily on the internet. The sensitive male has made a comeback. Authenticity has become a meal warmed up in the microwave and eaten in front of the telly. And yet the demand for what is authentic remains in too short a supply.

Owing to this deficiency, literature in the United States has begun to produce counterfeits in order to satisfy a growing appetite.¹ In the last six months, the press have exposed two literary hoaxes, both by cult authors selling stories of vulnerability and loss. The first was JT LeRoy, an alleged former child prostitute whose infamous writing and quick-witted candour became his salvation. The second was James Frey, a reformed crack addict whose yesterday glory was aided by none other than Oprah Winfrey. His book, entitled *A Million Little Pieces*, sold two million copies in the US in 2005, making it the highest selling non-fiction title of the year.

In the case of LeRoy, a 40-year-old woman wearing a blonde Warholian wig and sunglasses for disguise posed as a 25-year-old transgender male. Meanwhile, the couple credited with his rehabilitation were actually the collaborative team of authors who produced the text. The last remnants of the scam still exist in the form of a testimonial on LeRoy's blog. In a written quote, Shirley Manson, lead singer of British band Garbage, bore witness to the existence of LeRoy. Unfortunately, there were many reputations tainted by the association, not least of all the reputation of authentic works of autobiography.

In contemporary photography, a mode of autobiography has similarly lost its footing. Spearheaded by the likes of Nan Goldin and Wolfgang Tillmans, the snapshot mode of photography that created a notable photographic trend in the last two decades has reached its expiry date. The age of cynicism is upon us. Today an artist's identity can be readily transferred to the status of a commodity and, in addition, an artist's work can be eclipsed by their fame. As such, it is no longer conceivable to turn the camera on oneself without it seeming contrived.

In response to this cynical climate, contemporary photography has turned to the only honest lie that exists: fiction. By means of exquisitely staged tableaux, a new mode of photography has created a world unto itself. Termed by American critic AD Coleman, the 'directorial mode', this style of photography defines a cinematic mode highly constructed by its author.²

Currently showing at the National Gallery of Victoria International, the contemporary photomedia exhibition *Remote Control* showcases this mode. Curated by Kate Rhodes, the exhibition contextualises this form of photography amid an assorted display of academic and cultural influences. The exhibition includes Melbourne-based artists, Darren Sylvester and David Rosetzky, as well as East Coast American artists, Gregory Crewdson and Malerie Marder. *Remote Control* is not merely interesting from the point of view of the work, but also operates as an innovative curatorial exercise in itself. On an opposite wall to the photographs, influences are on display that range from the musical inspiration of a singular artist (contained in a technical and cultural innovation in itself, the iPod), to works that have now become part of a historic canon of photography.

In such an institutional setting, the importance for the curator to establish a secure place for photomedia is evident. The juxtaposition of photomedia with nineteenth-century social realism, however, immediately reveals obvious correlations between the two. Both forms of art convey a commonality among humankind through an explicit subject, message or anecdote. Stripped bare of its specificity, the shared stories of contemporary photomedia resonate with a broad audience. Furthermore, as a naturalistic medium that retains a vital connection to social commentary, contemporary photomedia could possibly have more in common with the pre-modern, than with any other form of contemporary art.³

In David Rosetzky's video work, *Weekender*, 2002, an emotional distance divides a group of young holidaymakers as much as it unites them.



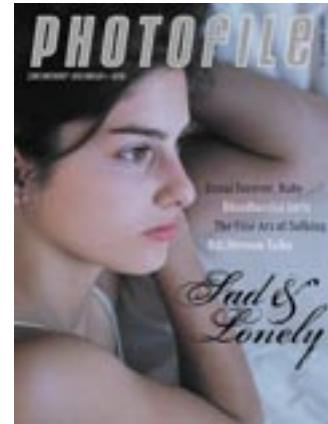
Whilst they may appear like a close bunch of friends who could easily make up the cast of a family television series, their search for personal perfection seems to paralyse them. Darren Sylvester's photograph, *If all we have is each other, that's OK*, 2003, might be seen as a sincere form of sociability, but its saccharine quality undercuts any likelihood of earnest emotion. The mock advertising typical to Sylvester's oeuvre narrates aspects of life now inseparable from consumer culture.

These artists seem to own a licence for the liberal use of irony. It is difficult to tell which part of the narrative is fiction and what is non-fiction. Do certain aspects of these stories originate from the artists' own lives, or are they simply generated by a cultural obsession with collective melancholy? As cultural commentary, the latter equates more to what the artists may strive for as opposed to actual confessions of an intimate type. Their distance from the work displays professionalism, as much as a well-adjusted ability for observation and comment on contemporary life.

Moreover, the critical distance these artists maintain conveys an adept knowledge of

the medium in which they work. They do not pretend to show an accurate and objective portrayal of the world, but know the qualities intrinsic to photography produce an effect of fiction: the directing of actors, creation of *mise en scène*, and scouting of locations, all afford them with absolute creative control over their craft. This effect is most apparent in the work of Gregory Crewdson, whose photographs are similar to movie stills. Of the four photographs, Crewdson's work has the highest production value, the artist often employing a full crew of technicians.

The theatricality of Crewdson's images betrays the constructed nature of his world to the same degree that his content acts as an allegory of this condition. In *Untitled (Sod Man)*, 1999, an ordinary man divulges an obsession with the physical creation and destruction of his own domestic environment. In a work of similar psychological provocation, Malerie Marder reveals the limits of photography: as Marder's body collides violently with a plate-glass window, the artist makes us aware of the psychological frame between acting out a scenario and having it exist in real life.



Above: *Photofile*, 'Sad and Lonely', No. 73, Summer 2005.

Left: David Rosetzky
Australian 1970-
Weekender 2002
DVD
16 mins 19 secs
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through the NGV Foundation with the assistance of the Joan Clemenger Endowment, Governor, 2003
© David Rosetzky, courtesy of Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

The directorial mode of photography elicits a clear confidence in artists' ability to fabricate fictional worlds parallel to our own, as demonstrated through a cultural congruency provided by the curatorial strategy of *Remote Control*. An honest lie indeed.

Kerrie-Dee Johns is a volunteer at CCP, she is currently undertaking a MA in Curatorship at The University of Melbourne.

1 'Hoax charges levelled at best-selling writers', *Agence France Presse*, Tuesday 10 January 2006, available at: <http://www.aegis.com/news/afp/2006/AF060109.html>

2 AD Coleman 'The Directorial Mode: Notes Towards a Definition' in AD Coleman, *Light Readings: A Photography Critic's Writing 1968-1978*, 2nd ed, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1998

3 Thierry de Duve, 'The Mainstream and the Crooked Path' in *Jeff Wall*, Phaidon Press Ltd, London, 2002, p. 29

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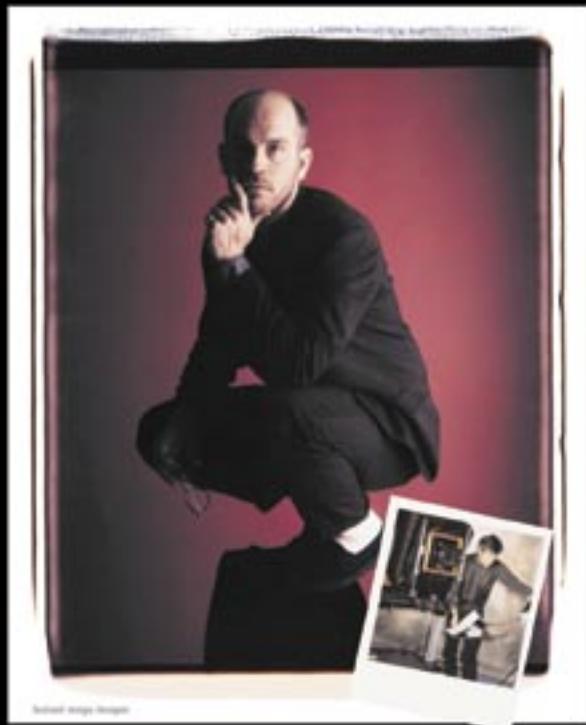
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ESSAY

PHOTOBLOGS: GEORGINA NEBE WRITES ON THE EMERGING TREND OF ONLINE PHOTO SHARING

Information wants to be free—the unofficial catch cry of the early nineties cyberpunk generation. Computers, internet, scanners, digital cameras, email. Never before has the digital distribution of the written word and image been so far-reaching. The World Wide Web has emerged as a central player in this cultural evolution, influencing the way we work, shop, relax and also how we receive and view information and images.

The simple existence of technology, however, does not necessarily afford us a captive audience or the utopian ideal of absolute freedom of information. Today, the concentration of media ownership has become a tedious reality but, in extreme contrast to this, the internet still holds potential for those without a mainstream agenda. The entry level to web-based information channels and blogging sites requires only a limited amount of technological knowledge and, of course, access to such technology.

A weblog is defined by the creation site www.whitepage.com.au as "...a personal or non-commercial web site that uses a dated log format ... and contains links to other web sites along with commentary about those sites... is updated frequently and sometimes groups links by specific subjects, such as politics, news, pop culture, or computer issues." Adrian Miles, Senior Lecturer at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology School of Applied Communication, acknowledges the difficulty of defining a blog: "A blog might have once been thought of as a genre, but it is now clearly a specific media, and so definitions are quite pragmatic". Despite this, a photoblog must contain photos, and they must be presented in a chronological log format whether text is included or not.

Comparatively easy access to free weblog creation programs means that blogging is no

longer the domain of the technologically elite and is, arguably, liberating the means and methods of photographic distribution. Those without web design abilities can take part, and hundreds of thousands do. Enter the proud parents, navel gazers, experts, fans, travellers, observers, marketers and creators who, facilitated by modern technology, have become the online attention seekers that are now known as 'bloggers'.

For photographers this relatively new world exists beyond galleries, fashion shoots and pro-magazines; a seemingly more egalitarian media, whereby the process of exhibiting work is restricted only by the amount of time and technology to which one has access. Simple point-and-shoot digital cameras have churned out a new culture of obsessive snap shooters and uploaders whose ability to exhibit is not restricted by the gatekeepers of artistic merit or creative talent. We might consider the possible impact of this new 'freedom' on the future of curatorial and editorial practice.

Essentially analogue based in its image-capture philosophy, the Lomography Society website (www.lomography.com) is used by thousands to share their photographic experiments, often using plastic cameras or techniques such as cross processing, all of which are cleverly marketed on the site. Natalie Zwillinger is an Israeli artist who enjoys a great deal of fame within the Lomographic community, regularly updating her online albums and blogs with new works that she also exhibits in galleries beyond cyberspace.

In the past, printed photographic images have been collected in boxes, drawers and albums. The question of how to store such objects is increasingly problematic. With the ease

and abundance of image making facilitated by digital camera technologies, more often than not photographs are discarded, abandoned or forgotten, not even making it into folders or frames. In our current digital environment, photoblogs and photo sharing sites such as Flickr (www.flickr.com) or Lomography.com are evolving the ways in which images are collected. While amateur photographers have previously relied on projectors and slide nights to display their works, for many these websites have become the family albums of the digital age. They have become places for storing data as well as a means of sharing with others, often with an anonymous public audience.

As digital and communication technologies are further developed and companies start to see more profit potential in online photo sharing services (a recent example is the purchase of Flickr by Yahoo!), I predict we will see many more marriages of companies such as Kodak and Skype which have banded together to create a service whereby photos are simultaneously viewed and discussed online with family and friends.

Such trends are not only about producing happy snaps and sentimental family shots. Photoblogs and photo sharing sites are taking the motivations of image-makers in a different direction. It would seem that a whole new interest level has evolved in photography. The photoblog has become a new means of photographic distribution to which people are actually shooting towards; shooting in order to blog, photographing for the dedicated purpose of uploading or creating a log of sequentially dated pictures.

Gaining public interest for his online images is one New York subway commuter: Travis Ruse at www.travisruse.com adds daily photo entries taken en route to his photo editor job. Travis

was recently nominated for a photoblog award, and his photoblog documentary project was featured in *The New York Times*. A young information technology worker updates his personal blog site at www.ozman.com.au with digital pictures captured at parties, clubs and sporting events. His images seek out glamour, are overtly heterosexual in nature, voyeuristic and hint towards the kind of shots published in Japanese magazines featuring panty shots of young girls, or trash magazines seeking 'wardrobe malfunctions'. This is photoblogging without editorial boundaries.

Adrian Miles states that "... blogging, if it is not already, will be the dominant form of personal publishing. The key point is that you are a publisher when you blog ... Flickr [is] erasing the distinctions between professional and/or trained image-makers versus amateur or naive image-makers." There may be a distinctive lack of self-editing or self-criticism in a large majority of photoblogs, although it must be acknowledged that many are not striving to impress with their technical photographic abilities, but are primarily concerned with sharing images. So although many sites encourage comments or feedback, responses can often border on the saccharine and sycophantic and lack constructive critique. Posting a photoblog does not automatically merit talent, just as money can't buy good taste.

Georgina Nebe is an emerging writer and is studying photography at NMIT.

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Travis Ruse *Grand Central Station 9:25am*, at http://www.travisruse.com/archives/2005/12/grand_central_s_9.php. © Travis Ruse

CCP MEMBERS ON PHOTOGRAPHY

ELENA GALIMBERTI WRITES ABOUT AN ANONYMOUS PHOTOGRAPH OF WAR

I was only six years old when I first saw a book of collected photographs. Since then, I have been haunted by an image taken by an anonymous photographer. It is a black and white photograph of a brick wall upon which a blurred imprint of a human figure and ladder are visible.¹

Remembering this picture later in my life, I thought of it as one of only silence and shadows, because I looked at it without knowing the context of where it had been taken. As a matter of fact, I was deeply surprised to discover that it is an image of war. It was shot after the atomic bomb had been launched by the US Army on Hiroshima, Japan. It is not the soft shadow of the photographer during his/her documentary action. It is a so-called 'atomic impression' of a human profile.

A similar photo-chemical process which allows an image to form after exposing the film in the camera, allows this picture to be created. The intense light of the atomic bomb exposed this shadow on the wall before the person disappeared forever leaving the viewers with his/her absence. What is not being shown is dramatic.

This photograph is completely different and certainly more emotive than the shocking images of war that we are used to seeing. But do these images still convey a sense of shock? Are we still able to empathise with the pain depicted by war imagery in an era of visual over-stimulation and highly controlled media 'filtering' of images?

Shock has turned into a leading stimulus of consumption and a great source of revenue in the mass media. Pictures are employed to raise interest in viewers, pressuring them to satisfy entertainment-market requirements and building greater public consensus for governments. We are constantly bombarded by ultra-familiar, ultra-celebrated images of agony; this is an unavoidable feature of our camera-mediated knowledge of war. Pictures look generic so we cannot identify with the victims.² War becomes

surreal or, at least, something we perceive as un-realistic because of the distance created by the overwhelming amount of imagery. As an outcome of this we become more cynical and distant regarding the effects of war. As viewers we passively let ourselves be trampled by these hideous visions, failing to connect intimately with our feelings of sorrow and abhorrence.

In our media age, every medium is an extension and an acceleration of our sensory reception. Our nervous system is spreading outside our bodies. Physiologically speaking, when the nervous system is overloaded with any kind of uncomfortable stimulus, it isolates the painful sensation. This 'amputation' happens when we are shocked emotionally or physically. Shock causes general torpor and an increasing refractoriness to any kind of perception. Besides, photography is defined as a 'hot medium' since it contains a great quantity of information, and there is little space for the viewer to reconstruct missing details. This implies a reduced participation and emotional involvement.³ Therefore, viewers become insensitive to suffering or sensations and they are incapable of recognising the barbarity of war.

It is not a high-definition contemporary image of warfare that can awaken our numbed conscience, but this anonymous photograph and what has not been captured. This image, with its tranquillity and immobility, is far from the typical images of international conflicts, and maybe for this reason, it makes the atrocity of the scene so suffocating.

1 Image available at <http://historyindependence.co.jp/vw/2/eng/phtop.html>

2 Susan Sontag, *Regarding The Pain Of Others*, Penguin Books, London, 2003, pp. 20–21

3 Marshall McLuhan, *Gli strumenti del comunicare*, Il Saggiatore, Milano, 1995, chapter 2

If you would like to contribute to this regular column by CCP members, please email your idea and image to Maggie Finch, Flash editor, maggiefinch@ccp.org.au.



Unknown Photographer. Human shadow cast from heat of radiation 1945

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DIGITAL CAPTURE

13/14 May or 9/10 September 2006

ADVANCED PHOTOSHOP™

27/28 May or 23/24 September 2006

DIGITAL WORKFLOW MANAGEMENT

10/11 June or 14/15 October 2006

THE 2006 CCP NIKON IMAGEBANK AWARD IS NOW OPEN FOR ENTRIES

New CCP members are invited to upload a fabulous image and accompanying information to the publicly accessible members' Imagebank at www.ccp.org.au/imagebank

Existing members are encouraged to upload a new image for the 2006 Nikon Award.

Participating members automatically enter the Nikon Award for the Best Online Image for the opportunity to win a Nikon D200 camera valued at \$2 799 (rrp).

To be considered for the prize, current members must upload their images by Tuesday 1 August 2006.

The winner will be announced on www.ccp.org.au and publicised in the CCP Flash newsletter.



At the heart of the image

**ARTS
VICTORIA**



ccp.

centre for
contemporary
photography

20 YEARS

Kodak Professional

NATIONAL CALL FOR ENTRIES 2006 KODAK SALON

REGISTRATIONS DUE → 21 APRIL 2006

Australia's largest open-entry,
photo-based exhibition and competition.
For details and entry forms visit www.ccp.org.au

Image: Mia Mala McDonald THROUGH A WINDOW 2005, inkjet print, 41x51cm (detail).
Entrant in the 2005 Kodak Salon.