Ricky Maynard: Portrait of a Distant Land

Do not forget these faces—they hold something you would not believe

Ricky Maynard is a leading Tasmanian Aboriginal photographer. He lives on Flinders Island in the Bass Strait between Tasmania and the Australian mainland. This exhibition, displayed on the ground floor and level one, traces key aspects of Ricky Maynard’s practice across more than two decades. Since the early 1980s Ricky Maynard has documented his people, from the renowned series *The Moonbird People* (1985–88) which depicts a Tasmanian Aboriginal community during the annual mutton-bird season to *No More Than What You See* (1993), a confrontational and emotionally charged portrait of Indigenous people incarcerated in the South Australian prison system. Urban Diary (1997) focuses on the experiences of Aboriginal people in St Kilda, while his portraits of Wik Elders in Returning to Places that Name Us (2000) was inspired by the High Court of Australia’s landmark ruling that recognised the existence of the traditional lands of the Wik people on Cape York in northern Queensland.

Ricky Maynard’s personal pilgrimage and spiritual journey as a member of the Ben Lomond/Cape Portland people of Tasmania comes full circle with his images of important cultural sites, ochre trails and scarred trees represented in the series In the Footsteps of Others (2003). Within these images is both emptiness and a strong presence—discerned in markings in the landscape and cultural practice. This series led to Ricky Maynard’s current body of work Portrait of a Distant Land which he began in 2005. From this series, the ten works included here trace songlines, massacre sites, key historical events, petroglyphs and middens, important meeting places, sacred cultural sites and practices of Tasmanian Aboriginal people. Presented alongside these photographs are insightful historical references and poignant quotations from the artist and community members who have maintained local cultural heritage. These powerful images reaffirm a cultural dynamic forged by a strong belief in the importance of upholding cultural integrity both in, and through, picture-making.

Ricky Maynard’s photographs offer a journey of alternative perspectives and cultural insights. His passion and meticulous attention to detail encapsulate an honest and deeply felt interpretation of his people and the land they inhabit.

Keith Munro, Curator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

Visitor warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visitors are advised that artworks in this exhibition feature the names and images of deceased persons.