

ANITA TRAVERSO GALLERY

JOHN BODIN *Rite of Passage*

10 August – 3 September 2011

OPENING SPEECH BY DR. MARCUS BUNYAN, ARTIST + WRITER

[11 August 2011]

I want to preface what I am about to say by noting that I am interested in how these photographs, as physical objects, might speak to what is not physical, what is intangible and ineffable about the spaces they display.

I saw a fantastic documentary about the pianist Arthur Rubenstein recently on SBS. When he was playing in concert he believed that he recognized in the audience a person that was more attuned to the nuances of his phrasing and performance than others and he played for them – he wanted to show them something new, insightful and challenging. This made him play better, taking more risks for greater reward, for himself and for the audience. These moments have the possibility of becoming moments in eternity (*or to introduce the analogy of the road, milestones*). For us it is the recognition of these moments in eternity (*or to keep the analogy going, a journey*), the unenclosed and apparently insignificant. The material world's strange mixture of familiarity and otherness, 'humanness' and non-humanness.

Where these ideas share a quality with the photographs by John is a recognition of the fluid energy flowing through these spaces, like infinite ribbons of consciousness. For me this is not an escapement nor contentment but a point of stillness within self – an awareness and balance at that moment, at that point in time, in that line of sight when the photograph was taken. A stillness within self that acknowledges the journey taken and the journey to be taken – something that is beyond language and goes to the most intimate place of our being.

The photographs become the surface of the body, stitched together with lines, markers pointing the way - they are encounters with the things that we see before us but also the things that we carry inside of us. It is the interchange between these two things, how one modulates and informs the other. It is this engagement that holds our attention: the dappled light, ambiguity, unevenness, the winding path of consciousness that floats and bobs before our eyes looking back at us, as we observe and are observed by the body of these landscapes. One of the fundamental qualities of the photographs is that they escape our attempts to rationalize them and make them part of our understanding of the world, to quantify our existence in terms of materiality. I have an intimate feeling with regard to these sites of engagement. They are both once familiar and unfamiliar to us; they possess a sense of nowhereness. A sense of groundlessness and groundedness. A collapsing of near and far, looking down, looking along, a collapsing of the constructed world.

Why here? Why this particular angle? This section of the visible, this turn in the road. Not quite knowing where we are we are neither here nor there, within nor without; it is an experience of being between the two – a potential space, a "between" that is formed only in the simultaneous presence of the two. As Donald Winnicott has observed in the book *In/different Spaces* by Victor Burgin it is "the potential space between the subjective object and the object objectively perceived" that becomes the location of cultural experience.

"Those things of which I can perceive the beginnings and the end are not my self." Grimm says. Like the road in these photographs there is no self just an infinite time that has no beginning and no end. The time before my birth, the time after my death. We are just in the world, just being somewhere. Life is just a temporary structure on the road from order to disorder. "The road is life," writes Jack Kerouac in *On the Road*.

John's skill as a photographer is to make visible the not really seen, potential spaces that we could have not have imagined otherwise. And for that I am truly grateful.