

Pilgrimage

Courtenay Place Light Box Project

Andy Palmer & David Boyce

All Wellington, and all those who could find time and money to come to Wellington, flocked to Athletic Park ... men hailing from hill, valley, or plain, from provincial township or wayback station – farmers, miners, sawmillers, clerks, bank managers – all sorts and condition of men, bent on a pilgrimage to the altar of the deity of Rugby.

Evening Post, 15 August 1904, p.2

Here rugby is more than just a game, more than the famous teams and players. It permeates society. It infiltrates peoples' lives and homes. Its reach is nearly impossible to escape in this country. It exists beyond the temporal boundaries of the eighty minute game. There is the build up, and the dissection. Rugby is in the land, the fields, played on or not.

Pilgrimage, a collaborative project between photographer/curator Andy Palmer and photographer David Boyce is an examination of the essence of rugby and sporting culture in New Zealand. This new collaboration between Palmer and Boyce sets up a metaphorical contest between the two artists and their bodies of work.

Palmer explores the rugby field, as a starting point to examine the landscape in terms of archaeology and definitions of 'monument', particularly in relation to the photograph. Influenced by artist Robert Smithson's essay '*A Tour of the monuments of Passaic, New Jersey*'¹ in which Smithson proposes his vision of contemporary monuments to include industrial objects such as pipes, bridges and factories.

Palmer furthers his engagement with place, site, and landscape through these photographs. The photographs point towards the broader implications of rugby - environmental impact and the cultural phenomena of rugby and its relationship to patriotism and national identity.

Hong Kong-based photographer David Boyce ongoing series 'From a short story ...' draws on traditions of Chinese and Asian narrative in art, creating abstract narratives from Western sports paraphernalia as the building blocks of his images. Boyce is "interested in the beauty of things that we usually pass over" and also "the transformation of the mundane" and has used this in his approach to these works. While living in China, he has been influenced by traditional Chinese scroll painting and calligraphy. His works are a commentary on the confluence of sport and language, using photographs of simple markings on sports grounds to create calligraphic-like images.

"I find it interesting that I left Wellington to live in China and I am now bringing a version of China back to a part of Wellington that has strong historical connections to China and Chinese culture – the nearby Haining Street area," says Boyce.

¹ Robert Smithson's essay *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic* was published in **Artforum** magazine in 1967.

Pilgrimage will be a unique exhibition of rugby photography sidestepping the obvious in favour of contemporary images which touch on many aspects of the game's hold on our nation.

Conceptual artist David Boyce looks at how cultural influences can come full circle.

Artist Background

Andy Palmer

Andy Palmer exhibits regularly in both public and private galleries. He has also curated a number of exhibitions, most notably the inaugural exhibition in the Courtenay Place Park light boxes in 2008. He will also be co-curating the photographic exhibition *Neither One Thing Nor The Other* at Toi Pōneke Gallery during the Rugby World Cup 2011.

David Boyce

Born in New Zealand, David Boyce has been living in Hong Kong since 2006. His work is based around two broad themes. The first is a continuing exploration of spirituality and language, and the second, "Random Beauty", is an attempt to uncover beauty in the everyday world. David has exhibited in New Zealand, Hong Kong and the United States and his works are held in a number of private, public and corporate collections in New Zealand, North America, Europe and Asia.