

DARK AND LIGHT:

INSIDE THE MIND OF ROGER BALLEEN

YOU KNOW ROGER BALLEEN'S WORK; THE INTERNET HAS SPREAD HIS SHIFTING, VISCERAL IMAGES WIDE. IT'S GOOD, SO IT TRAVELS, HIS WORK IS REPRESENTED IN MAJOR GALLERIES ACROSS THE WORLD SUCH AS THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON, MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK AND THE CENTRE GEORGES POMPIDOU, PARIS. HIS BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS TRANSCEND TIME AND PLACE, YOU'VE SEEN THEM ON BLOGS, SHARED THEM ON FACEBOOK, YOU'VE SEEN HIS ALMOST ABSTRACT AND SOMEWHAT HOSTILE IMAGES OF SOUTH AFRICA'S DIE ANTWOOD.



ROGER BALLEEN ASYLUM

December 7 2013 – April 21 2014
MONA Round House and Library Gallery
Museum of Old and New Art
655 Main Rd, Berriedale, Hobart, Tasmania

Once known for his raw documentary photography of apartheid South Africa, these days his trademarks are theatrical sets, insensible, abstract hieroglyphs and vaguely menacing animals: are they alive or dead?

Ballen has been shooting black and white film for half a century. His command of his medium is obvious; he is a master of light and dark, and uses techniques drawing on film and an almost collaging or pastiche of images to achieve a deeply theatrical end product.

For his first Australian exhibition Ballen brings his work to the Museum of Old and New Art this month. MONA's Library Gallery and Round House will house works from his *Asylum of the Birds* and *Apparitions* series, ahead of the release of his new book *Asylum of the Birds*, which will be released in 2014 by Thames & Hudson.

For MONA, Ballen will also create a site-specific installation environment, similar to that seen in the images of *Asylum of the Birds*. Ballen says "It has been one of my goals as an artist to show at MONA. The overall aesthetic of the Museum overlaps mine. I am thrilled that I will be able to show my latest series of photographs in this space, as well as create an installation mirroring the physical spaces I have worked in"

The *Asylum* series has been evolving since 2008, inspired by a house that Ballen visited in Johannesburg, which was filled with creatures: humans, birds, cats, rabbits and mice. The word asylum bears connotations of both imprisonment and shelter and in this work we are invited in to Ballen's psycho-theatrical landscape, which is at once terrifying and engaging. Ballen describes his work as an exercise in defining himself. It is a descent into the mind of someone truly engaged with the dichotomies of existence: dark and light.

PIP STAFFORD

COMEDY:

NEIL HAMBURGER WITH DOCTOR EL SAUVO

AMERICA'S FUNNYMAN, NEIL HAMBURGER, IS THE PERFECT PARODY OF AN INCREDIBLY AVERAGE C-LIST COMEDIAN WORKING A SLEAZY CABARET CIRCUIT AROUND THE MOST DESOLATE PARTS OF MIDDLE AMERICA TO A DISINTERESTED AUDIENCE. THE ACT IS KIND OF TERRIFYING AS IT PLUMBS THE DEPTHS OF HUMAN MISERY IN A TOTALLY PRECISE WAY THAT WILL AT ONCE REDUCE YOU TEARS OF LAUGHTER, WHILST EXPOSING A WORLD OF DEAD AND DECAYING HOPE. IT'S INCREDIBLY, EVEN DANGEROUSLY FUNNY; BLACK COMEDY OF THE VERY DARK VARIETY, AND IT'S ONLY FOR THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD, BUT IF YOU LIKE YOUR COMEDY SURREAL, POINTED AND BRILLIANT, NEIL HAMBURGER IS UNMISSABLE.

He's toured as the handpicked opener for Tenacious D, Tim & Eric, and Faith No More, and his TV credits include Fox News' *Red Eye*, *Tim and Eric Awesome Show*, *Tom Green Live*, and *Jimmy Kimmel Live*. His most recent album, *Live At Third Man*, was produced by The White Stripes' Jack White in Nashville. an early Hamburger effort was included in SPIN's "40 Greatest Comedy Albums Of All Time." Neil has been described by The Scotsman as "the greatest comedian I've seen the greater majority of an audience walk out on" – yes, he's that good that he scares people out of the room. If you're into comedy, this guy's shtick is to skewer with merciless precision comedy itself, turning the idea of what a joke is back onto the audience in a brave, antagonistic fashion. You will laugh and you will cry. There's nothing like Neil Hamburger, he must be seen to be understood.

Accompanying Neil Hamburger at the Brisbane Hotel will be the astounding Dr El

Sauvo, Australia's premier parlor magician and exotica DJ. He's a social commentator in a mask, known and loved in Hobart for his methods with hecklers and his gentle way with animals. El Sauvo will play a fabulous selection of lounge, exotica, and trash rock and roll and accompany with Theremin and live parlor magic.

With the bill filled out with some sacrificial local comedians and a whole bunch of great bands in the front bar, the Brisbane Hotel will be a hotbed of fantastic culture and black comedy. Which is appropriate, because it all happens Friday the 13th of December – get along and get giggling.

ANDREW HARPER

Offensive material guaranteed. Sensitive types should stay home and watch Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries on iView and have a chamomile tea. Else wander up to The Brisbane Hotel Friday December 13.

