

CAGED

An exhibition of works by
MultiFocus

Photomedia Artists

Official Opening
6.00 pm - 8.30 pm.
Tuesday 5 February 2008

Guest of honour: Mary Porter
AM MLA Labor Member for
Ginninderra



Barb Smith - Marianne Pietersen - Jennifer Phillips

Marlene Lux - Tamara Makeev OAM

Petra Weber - Lulu Respall-Turner

MultiFocus was formed by a number of Canberra-based photographers and PhotoAccess members in 1998. Although there have been some changes since then, the current members share with their predecessors diverse cultural backgrounds and an interest in the big themes central to Australia and Australian life—including migration, resettlement and gender. Since its inception, MultiFocus has presented 10 exhibitions, including *Starting Again*, *Echoes from the Past*, *Continuance*, *For those who've come across the Sea*, *Refuge?*, *Separate Realities* and *The History of Migrants*, *Disposable* and *Affluence* throughout the Canberra region and in Melbourne.

The artists have focused on various aspects of caged in a physical sense, in a cultural sense, and in an emotional or spiritual sense, raising the question of what should be caged and why. Cages can be either protective or confining. They can operate in domestic situations, social environments or under overtly hostile and alien conditions. The artists invite the viewer to consider the nature of a society that incarcerates people who lend phonecards to relatives, creates walled communities to keep the poor out, and the implications of fitting the mold for the survival of cultural traditions.



Contributing Artists

Barb Smith B.Sc (Hons), M.Sc Associate Diploma of Art (Photomedia), Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Writing.

Barb Smith is an award-winning artist and writer living in Canberra. She completed a diploma in Photomedia at the Canberra School of Art in 1992, and a post-graduate diploma in Creative Writing at the University of Canberra in 2005. She has had seven solo shows, participated in four travelling exhibitions, and contributed images to numerous group exhibitions in the ACT, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and the United Kingdom. Her images and her articles on the visual arts have appeared in various Australian publications. Her recent series *Australian Journeys* will be shown as part of the National Photographic Festival "Vivid" in Canberra, during July – August 2008



Marlene Lux Dip. IT.

Marlene describes her life as one full of activities and energy. She was born in Santiago de Chile in 1962, left home and that city to attend university at 16 years of age. By 23 she was married, with two lovely children and an IT degree, when the idea of immigrating to Australia was set. A four-year rewarding period of teaching IT followed, ending with the family's arrival in Sydney. It meant leaving the extended family and many friends behind, the beginning of discovery of new beautiful friends, and immersion into a new culture that she had to understand, accept, and somehow make her own; on top of all that, learning a totally new language! Always upbeat and curious, she started her photography career at 40, marking the end of her studies with an exhibition about Cuba. An absolute devotee of colour, she is now dedicated to photographing people.



Jennifer Kathleen Phillips BEd., Dip. IT., Dip. T.C., T.T.C.

As a child Jennifer loved making art. She won prizes for her art and had her work published. In 1969 she moved from New Zealand to Australia and achieved the highest possible marks for the state secondary school Art exams and exhibited and sold her work. At the age of 17 she returned to New Zealand. In 1973 she was sponsored to attend the Canterbury Arts Workshop for the potentially most gifted secondary art students. She completed three years at Teachers College majoring in Art for which she received the grade of 'Outstanding' each year. In 2000 she graduated in the top 5% with a degree in Education and migrated to Australia. While teaching full time, she completed a range of studies including an IT Diploma in Multimedia Integration and a certificate in Screen. In 2004 she published her fifth book and made her first piece of digital art. In 2006 she was awarded a Diploma of Excellence (Honourable award) in the Realtime Juried Online Global Art Annual Award, had her first solo digital art exhibition, won the People's Choice Award at the *Art Views in the Hills* exhibition in Wanniasa and began selling her limited edition prints to an overseas market through one of her many online galleries. You can keep up-to-date with her achievements and work through her website: <http://citwings.com>



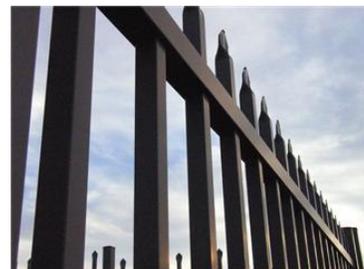
Tamara Makeev OAM

Tamara was born in Poland. Her parents had fled from Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution. She herself fled from Poland during the second World War on the last train and wound up in a displaced persons camp in Germany. Tamara came with her husband to Australia in the post-war migration. She is the founder and coordinator of the Malinka Russian Dance Group of Canberra. For many years she was also an executive member on the ACT Multicultural Council. In the early pioneering days of the Snowy Mountains project Tamara lived in Jindabyne with her family and has plenty of memories of how, as migrants, one adapts to difficult and primitive conditions. Her lifelong interest in photography has led to a vast collection of photographs documenting her journey from WW2 Poland as a refugee to her destination in Australia. She has been living in Canberra now for over 30 years. She continues to document her life's journey and experiences in Australia via photography, and never leaves home without her camera.



Marianne Pietersen BA., MA.

Marianne Pietersen is from the Netherlands. When in her twenties she moved to the USA and after 20 years there she moved to Australia in 1989. Marianne was secretary of the Canberra Dutch Club 1993-2003, and a member of the ACT Multicultural Council. She holds a BA in Maths and an MA in Economics and worked for the Commonwealth government. Since retiring last year Marianne does a Dutch radio show as well as many other volunteer activities. Marianne has been interested in photography since she was a teenager. Both her parents were accomplished amateur photographers. After completing her degrees in New York, Marianne trained in art, photography and movie production. Most of her images for *Disposable - Affluence* were taken with a digital camera but Marianne still uses 35mm cameras as well. Since coming to Canberra in 1992 she has participated in twenty group exhibitions and has won prizes in competitions. Her present focus is on computer manipulation of her images.



Petra Weber

Petra studied photographic and dark room practice at the Technical College of Pretoria, South Africa in 1987, and Berlin in 1991. She extended her painting and drawing skills at the Canberra School of Art from 1994 to 1996 and studied printmaking at the Rijks Hogere Onderwijs School voor Kunst (Art Academy) in Brussels from 1997 to 2000. She joined MultiFocus in 2000. From 1996 to 2000 Petra showed in group exhibitions in Brussels. She was selected to show in the Royal Society for Artists watercolour exhibition at the Pall Mall Gallery, London in 1999 and 2000, and Kunsttriennale FURAMENT '99 in Tervuren, Belgium. She has also exhibited works in oil at Galerie Joseph II, in Charleroi, Belgium in 1999, and more recently in Berlin at Gallery Twenty-Four, and in Moscow, her work of protest art, 'Ne Moltchi'(Don't Be Silent) showed at the Andre Sakharov Museum and Gallery. Petra has a diploma in Journalism, degrees in Political Science and International Politics, and graduated with a Master of International Relations degree from the Australian National University in 2003. She has worked in diplomacy and the civil service in South Africa, as a journalist and editor with the Hungarian Observer in Hungary and as an educator and guide at the National Gallery of Australia. From 2003 to 2006. Petra resided in Moscow with her husband and two children and after a one year stay in Canberra she recently moved to Budapest.



Lourdes (Lulu) Respall-Turner

Lulu was born in Zamboanga, in the southern Philippines, where she grew up in an environment blended of Filipino Christian and Muslim cultures. She has lived in Canberra with her family since 1987, and now calls Canberra home. Lulu is a freelance copyeditor, and has many artistic interests: writing poetry, singing and performance theatre among them. She has been actively involved in multicultural community affairs, as a volunteer and advocate, especially on social justice issues. Photography has been part of her repertoire of interests since she received her first Kodak brownie. Her favourite subjects are nature and wildlife, and portraiture. Lulu hopes to extend her photographer's sight to macrophotography and still life abstracts.



Caged Statements

Jennifer Kathleen Phillips

What should be caged?
a pattern of wire
to cage a tree
protecting from humanity
with a pattern
of thoughts
that cage
a rage
of feral behaviours

We cage many things to protect them from the kind of behaviour that should be caged. We cage trees, reserves, art works, our homes and our land. We even cage our children for large periods of their youth. We have legalized the schooling cage even though it labels and places people and subjects in boxes that are too small. The schooling cage often produces gifted underachievers, low self esteem, the measuring of worth against grades achieved in a limited range of subjects and other people. We call this cage 'education'. But because it is compulsory, it takes it out of the realm of what philosophy teaches us is the freedom implied and necessary for something to be considered 'education'. School is the cage where our children learn the values and cultures of others often resulting in the rejection of family values for those of peer and 'others'. In this cage the importance of group cohesiveness is valued more than individual integrity; conformity is valued more than uniqueness; blind obedience and trust rather than questioning authority figures and theories, which are sometimes portrayed as truisms, thus necessitating revisions of our science books. The value of achieving similar learning and being ranked is valued more than finding, nurturing and honouring the skills, abilities and potential of each person. Academic study is given more status than what we call 'technological' skills. It is valued more than socializing and enjoying each others company with a range of ages. Our values are reflected in the time we give to each subject or classroom management. We are often too busy to do anything but worry about the discrepancies between what we think we value and what our actions show we value. We insist on Secularism because some believe that knowledge can be taught outside a value system, as if some learnings are value free, truths are outside of the cultural, gender and language constructs that make it subjective. "Secular" schooling is no more free of religion than "Religious" education. It has consequences for political, social, religious and every other area of life. Do we think that without knowledge of our religious heritage (and we do have one!), we can study our past? Art History, Culture and the other subjects we view as of "educational" value need religious literacy. This cage could be called the propaganda cage because it involves knowing the world through other peoples world view and seeks to communicate only one world view – what is thought to be a non religious one.

Lourdes (Lulu) Respall-Turner

We all live in cages in one form or another, whether we realise it or not - our cage may be of our own making, or may be beyond our control. Sometimes, we may escape one cage, only to be caught in another, albeit of a different sort. As diverse as we are and in our cultural, social and material experiences, so are our cages. For the most part, we simply ignore our caged life and make the most of it. However, don't we also sometimes feel like the little puppy, longing for someone to rescue us?

Note: "Caged Diversity" is an image of Sorry Wall Fragmentation, art installation by Pamela Croft and Cheryl Moondai Robinson [2007], displayed in the Focus Gallery of the National Museum of Australia.

Tamara Makeev OAM

Cages protect things inside or outside, depending on the situation. My cat stays in the dog house when the weather is extreme. The cage was used when we needed to take the cat to the vet. Memories are caged for security.

Barb Smith

Extraordinary Rendition is the euphemism coined by the USA Administration to describe the CIA's post 9/11 practice of off-shore detention and interrogation.

Terror suspects, collected by CIA kidnappings or through bounty payments to locals, are transported to secret American jails located in a variety of acquiescent countries. There, beyond the reaches of the American legal system and international law, they are tortured to extract so-called intelligence information. Many of these prisoners have been incarcerated for several years, with no prospects of release unless their own governments lobby the USA for their return home.

Barb has incorporated texts and slogans— randomly selected from print media adverts—to enhance the illusions portrayed in her B&W images. The original images were made in 2000 and the text applied in 2007. The series is four 18 x 22 inch prints, and a 12 page 10 x 10 inch Leporello book.

Marlene Lux

As a wedding photographer, I am fascinated by the fact that so many ceremonies follow a similar format. Despite the diversity of participating couples, most seem powerless to resist the many pressures exerted by friends, family, prevailing fashions, social trends and the marketing strategies of wedding venues. New outfits are essential. Rings are obligatory. Flowers are a must. Every couple is expected to have a cake and the whole sequence must be officially photographed. To step outside this boxed set of standard requirements would risk damaging the prescribed memories of the Happy Day.

Petra Weber

The pain/sins of the fathers...!

In the frozen air of a Budapest winter we wander in the Jewish cemetery among the forlorn and broken splendour of the tombs and gravestones of the prominent and the modest, sunk in the past and neglected among the trees and teeming shrubs. Too few left to tend them. Cruel history murdered their offspring and flung the survivors away. Some, I'm told, only started hearing long after about a pain and shame too immense to bear. I portray with my images of Jewish tombs, war pocked houses in Pest and found memorabilia how we inhabit the cage of our past. And thinking how our personal and societal narratives are shaped by our real or imagined histories. Here it's all so visible, it's imprint so clear on the present, but we all exist in cages of our immediate or faraway pasts, suffering their consequences and shaping our identities and futures . . . not always knowingly.

Marianne Pietersen

In Canberra it is not allowed to have fences or even tall hedges around residential buildings. However, there are plenty of exemptions, mostly for diplomatic or industrial properties. There are even some semi-gated communities. Are people living behind gates because they are afraid someone will hurt them, or is there a clear and present danger to their property? As Canberra is a pretty safe place I always wonder whether the fences are to keep the danger out, or to keep the idiots in...

It is a sign of the times that government buildings are protected by controlled entrances and surveillance, but do we really need 2m high electric fences around some of those Russell offices? The plethora of unused sentry posts in Canberra makes one wonder.