

MEDIA RELEASE

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TASMANIA IN LARGE FORMAT

Mark Humphries' exhibition of photographs from his stunning new book, *Wilderness, the essence of a wild land*, opens at Lab X Gallery on October 14, 2005. The 41 photographs on display were taken by Mark on scores of mainly solo forays into the wildest and most remote wilderness regions of Tasmania. In the four years it took to put the book together, Mark trekked thousands of kilometres.

These pictures are special, not just because they are technically brilliant, not just because they reveal a Tasmania few people can ever experience, but because every image was taken on a heavy large-format camera – namely, a Linhof Technica flatbed field camera - which Mark had to carry on his back, along with a 90-litre pack loaded with food, fuel and other essentials necessary to survive treks of two weeks or longer. Mark has printed all the images for the exhibition at Lab X, using Kodak Metallic Endura paper, which beautifully accentuates the fine detail of the photographs. Most pictures are displayed in 20x24 inch frames; additionally, there are several larger panoramas.

While the photographs depict a pristine environment where civilisation has never encroached, and is unlikely to in the future, they give no hint of the challenges Mark faced in creating them. It wasn't unusual for him to hike an area three or four times before he was able to take even a single picture. He lost count of the number of times he started walking a trail, only to have the rain set in and not let up the entire time. And this happened even in summer, officially Tasmania's 'dry' season!

However, Mark trekked through all seasons, including winter when the night temperatures on the plateaus hovered between minus 10 and minus 15 degrees celcius. In fact, this was one of his favourite experiences as he had the silent, snow-covered wilderness entirely to himself. And when you look at the 'blue and white intricacies of ice', as Senator Bob Brown described the photograph of a frozen tarn near Forty Lakes Peak in the Central Plateau Conservation Area, you can understand why he considered these winter trips so special.

The incessant challenges Mark faced in exploring this wild country meant that every photograph he was able to create became a precious reward for perseverance. The sweeping landscapes and exquisite close ups provide achingly beautiful glimpses of Tasmania's most famous wilderness regions: national parks such as Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair, Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers, Southwest, Mount Field, Walls of Jerusalem, Ben Lomond and Freycinet, as well as the Arthur-Pieman Protected Area and the Central Plateau Conservation Area.

For those who came to photography in the pre-digital era, it's sobering to reflect that this exhibition may be one of the last of its calibre. "People just don't do large format anymore: it's a dying breed of photography," says Mark. "Digital is taking over, even in commercial photography. It's the way the industry is going, so from that point of view, what we've done is pretty special, and the work is definitely to be seen by everyone."

The exhibition 'Wilderness' and book launch will commence at 6pm Friday 14th October, 2005. The exhibition runs from October 14 to November 8, 2005, at the Lab X Gallery, 40 Pakington Street, St Kilda, 3182. Gallery hours are: 7:30am to 9:30pm Monday to Friday and 1pm to 7pm on Sundays.

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