

EMPTY

Photographs by Laki Sideris

Taken in December 2002 on a road trip to observe the total solar eclipse, this series of photographs by Laki Sideris shows a vacant and arid land inhabited by strange incidents of nature and deserted man made forms. More poetic than documentary, these photographs explore emptiness in the minimal and monumental landscape of the Woomera region.

Nothing distracts from this study. Each black and white image has been stripped back to emphasise the flatness of the weathered terrain. The horizon extends and dissolves into the heat of the day. Only the sky interrupts this disorientating stretch of land. The terrain is so flat that a passing car on the Sturt Highway has sky beneath it.

There is an arresting disquiet about Empty. A concrete picnic ground is the inhospitable invitation to rest in the middle of nowhere. An abandoned water tower awaits rain that will not come. At the edge of the Prohibited Area, a weathered sign prohibits entry to nothingness. Another sign warns of the hidden danger below the surface of a salt lake.

This is no terra nullius. There is a sense of waiting and unease that pervades these photographs. A distant car will stop and someone will look out. An unknown volatility waits beneath the surface of a salt lake and we are told not to cross a landscape that has no perceptible beginning and end. A solar eclipse erases momentarily the texture of the landscape. Only a ghostly aura is visible.

Empty is about a land of abandoned ordnance, refugee detention centres and discarded concrete constructions. It is a political wasteland, where human presence is held at a distance. It is a landscape where ideas about emptiness and identity have been forcibly imposed.

Fiona Symington, January 2004

Centre for Contemporary Photography

205 Johnston Street Fitzroy VIC 3065, Australia

www.ccp.org.au

Exhibition opening Thursday, January 29, 6 - 8 pm

January 30 - February 28, 2004

Wednesday - Saturday, 11 am - 5 pm

Prints are available in two sizes

80 x 80 cm, Edition of 3, \$650 AUD

36 x 36 cm, Edition of 5, \$400 AUD

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