

Studio program residency: 27 October -18 January 2008

Artist talks and opening of studio program outcomes: Wednesday 17 December 2008

Studios open to the public: 17 December - 18 January 2009 [closed from 25.12 - 05.01]

## Katri Walker

### The Black Swan

an audio visual installation

18 minutes

HDV

Curated by Amy Sales

### The Impossibility of an Absurd Truth

#### Ric Spencer

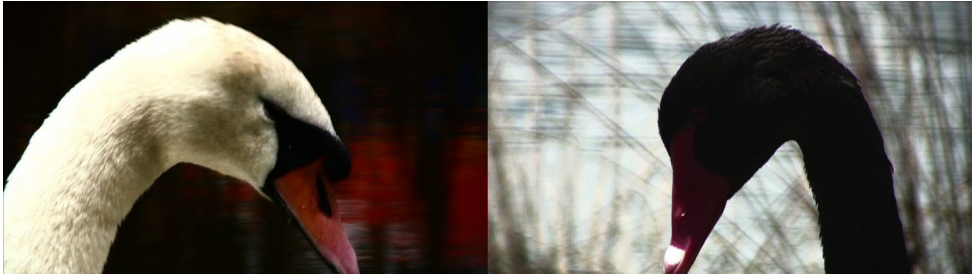
Glasgow based artist Katri Walker has come to Perth in search of a legend, a myth; an antipodean falsity. In days gone by April Fools Day was called topsy-turvy day, a celebration of the world being turned upside down and life being played out through its extreme opposites. This carnival was a reminder of our propensity for negation as a proof of existence. A certain logic suggests that Truth is as it should be because it is not its opposite; Truth exists as reality because it is the opposite of an absurdity.

Is this then the start of the search for the Great Southern Land, Terra Australis? Was it a desire to seek the opposite, the upside down world, the land of the topsy-turvy, a place where Europe could define its own truth by finding its absurd opposite. How apt then, how poetic, to sail into sheltered

waters, in a land whose discovery, it was hoped, would keep the truth in balance, to find that emblem of the impossible opposite, the Black Swan...so apt in fact that the place should be named after it.

The Black Swan has a history as an emblem of proving a truth because it was considered absurd - who ever heard of a black swan; "all swans are white" so the saying went. Katri Walker, through two years of research has sifted through this myth of impossibility by sourcing local experts in various fields to share their own perceptions of the Black Swan's symbolic journey.

I say symbolic because the swan (black and white) has throughout history become so loaded with symbology that it's almost impossible



to view without anthropomorphising its shape in front of our eyes. As such Walker's audio recordings are not merely observational descriptions but rather take on a need for us to "be" through the existence of an other. The habit we have of turning animals into humans realises one such other. Our childhood literature is loaded with such examples and their behaviour helps define and structure our cultural perceptions. I wonder if this is an ode to simulation or disassociation, of being an animal or separating ourselves from the animal kingdom. Regardless, the swan does not escape our anthropomorphic gaze, whether it is Zeus seducing Leda or the ugly duckling finally finding himself beautiful. But if the white swan is passion, beauty...and therefore truth, then what of its impossible and absurd opposite...the Black Swan.

A local Nyungar story (as told here by Noel Nannup) tells of it being burnt while trying to capture a piece of the sun's colour; the residue of this event still manifests in the red on its beak. In this story white becomes black and the beauty of the swan's new colour is marvelled at by the other birds. For me

the Black Swan becomes more than a site of truth or non-truth, it becomes an emblem for the impossibility of seeing. I imagine the words for sailing ship and white fella entering the Nyungar language as "all swans are white" leaves the English language. In this land of the topsy-turvy new truths come into being through speaking - the connection between language and acknowledgement is constantly tested.

Katri Walker enters a land of stories, myths and legends to entertain the concept of the Black Swan as it exists in today's world of global communication...whilst simultaneously questioning the power of the visual in contemporary art. Settling in front of a lake and watching a swan effortlessly glide by empties the mind, Walker capture this in her video work, but so too does the emblematic history of the swan cast shadows over the possibility of us really seeing this event. Walker's project base and interest laden work understands the continuous possibility for new forms of communication and technology to gain access to the absurd...and the impossible...even if it's right in front of our eyes.

## **Audio sources:**

### **Dr. Jean Chetkovich**

Director of Western Australian History, University of Western Australia

### **Sally Lake**

Environmentalist, The Claisebrook Catchment Group

### **Dr. Raoul Mulder**

Zoologist & Behaviourologist, University of Melbourne

### **Noel Nannup**

Nyungar Storyteller

### **Nassim Nicholas Taleb**

Author of 'The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable'

Since 2002, Katri Walker [b.1978, Edinburgh Scotland] has been living between Mexico City and Glasgow where she graduated from the Master of Fine Art programme at Glasgow School of Art in 2007.

She has a cross-disciplinary practice, working predominantly with video installation and has exhibited in group shows and had her work screened throughout the U.K, in Mexico, Australia, Iceland, The Netherlands, Italy, Sweden and the U.S.A. Most recently she exhibited in a duo-show alongside Dani Marti as part of Glasgow International Festival of Contemporary Art 2008.

Katri is also the Creative Director of the Dos Equis Series, an ongoing collective project showcasing emerging Mexico-based visual artists in the UK.

[www.katriwalker.com](http://www.katriwalker.com)

[www.dosequisseries.com](http://www.dosequisseries.com)

**Supported by:**



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