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# • nellie castan gallery

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## PRESS RELEASE

### *polixeni papapetrou: haunted country*

3 february – 25 february 2006

Inspired by real and fictional accounts of children who have gone missing in the Australian bush, Papapetrou revisits the sites of the most notorious disappearances and stages scenes proposing what the physical and psychological circumstances may have been like for these lost and wandering children. These include sites in Victoria such as Wimmera, Daylesford and Hanging Rock where most cases of the 19th and 20th century have been reported.

The figure of this bush-lost child is one of the poignant themes in Australia's cultural remembering. Papapetrou's desire was to create photographs that embody the harrowing psychological aspects of these stories. She wants to draw the viewer into this emotional space,

experience the undercurrent of the psychological drama unfolding and make connections between past and present consciousness about land and country.

The bush-lost child acts as a metaphor to reflect upon other ways that children become lost to adults. In these images, Papapetrou tries to capture feelings about Australia, but also about children and their external vulnerability in both the natural and social orders of our culture.

In the catalogue essay, Robert Nelson writes, "An ambivalent spectre hangs over the Australian Landscape. It is beautiful land, famous for its scale and dryness. But there is a special discomfort wherever white people tread. They do not all together belong...The colonial encounter with the land involved progressive destruction and degradation. The virgin bush was experienced as an impediment and a threat...Through (these) children, the most vulnerable tenants of the bush, Papapetrou contemplates visually the historical meaning of the land throughout the period of European Occupation."

**Polixeni Papapetrou** graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Melbourne in 1984 and a Master of Arts (Media Arts) from RMIT University in 1997. She is currently completing a PhD in Fine Art at Monash University. She has had numerous solo exhibitions in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Perth, and group exhibitions nationally and internationally. In 2005, she received an Australia Council grant to produce new work. This is Polixeni's second solo exhibition with Nellie Castan Gallery.



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level 1, 12 river street, south yarra, victoria 3141

**opening: 6 – 8pm saturday 3 february**

exhibition ends: sunday 25 february

hrs: tuesday to sunday 12–5pm t: 03 9804 7366

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