

Polixeni Papapetrou: *Between Worlds*

29 October - 21 November 2009

Polixeni Papapetrou's fascination with masks was first revealed in her series *Phantomwise*, 2002. In her most recent work, *Between Worlds*, she adopts the animal mask to explore the magical affinity that children have with animals.

Papapetrou sees childhood as the space between worlds: between the world of infancy and adulthood. In her photographs, the children multiply their between-state by uncannily also presenting as animals.

Though in a sense absurdist, **Papapetrou** presents the children as animals because she sees parallels in their worlds. Animals enter our consciousness in mysterious ways and we look to them in order to understand ourselves and our emotional realm. For most of the history of philosophy, it is what we don't share with animals that defines us as human. In a similar way, children are the Other that defines adulthood; and for that reason, children pervade our consciousness, at times adorably and at times threateningly.

In *Between Worlds*, the children wear animal masks and perform dramas in the landscape. Matching the gravity of the actions, the landscapes are portentous—as if at the edge of a space or the end of an epoch—conveying some of the wonder that children might entertain in entering the animal kingdom. Although the children appear as something we immediately recognize, they have been fantastically hybridized. They have lost their child identity and have adopted sublime identities borrowed on the terms of the mask.

Papapetrou's work asks, where the animal body ends and where the human body begin? What separates humans from animals and children from adults? Within these ambiguities, she fathoms the space that children occupy in our understanding and how they might bestride the stage of art.

Polixeni Papapetrou is an Adjunct Research Fellow at Monash University. She holds the degrees of PhD, Monash University (2007), Master of Arts (Media Arts) RMIT University (1997), Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws, University of Melbourne (1984). She has held numerous solo exhibitions throughout Australia and had participated in group exhibitions nationally and internationally. In 2009, she was the recipient of the Josephine Ulrick-Win Shubert Photography Award and an Australia Council New Work Grant. This is **Polixeni's** fourth solo exhibition with Nellie Castan Gallery.

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