



TASMANIAN INTERNATIONAL
**ARTS
FEST
IVAL**

5-29 MARCH



Detail from Habits and Habitat. Image courtesy of the artists

HABITS AND HABITAT

The Ronalds

CITY OF LAUNCESTON QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM AT INVERESK
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Detail from *Habits and Habitat*. Image courtesy of the artists

HABITS AND HABITAT

The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston is one of the most significant galleries in Tasmania. It is only fitting that Tasmanian International Arts Festival, the only state wide multi-arts event in Australia, should again be partnering with QVMAG to bring two high quality, challenging and engaging contemporary exhibitions to residents and visitors to Launceston and its regions in 2015. The Ronald's delightful and fascinating installation at Inveresk will entice audiences to recall and reflect on many of the big and little things that make life worth living.

David Malacari
Artistic Director Tasmanian International Arts Festival

We are delighted to be participating once again in the Tasmanian International Arts Festival, an exciting program of events and exhibitions that enrich our lives. The City of Launceston Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery is presenting an exhibition at each of our two sites. The museum at Inveresk is hosting *Habits and Habitat* by The Ronalds, artists from rural NSW whose early work is represented in the QVM Collection. The art gallery at Royal Park presents *Made in China, Australia*, works that address complex issues of Chinese Australian heritage curated by Greg Kwok Keung Leong. Both exhibitions highlight the diversity of the Festival, and indeed our own Tasmanian community and the cultural wealth we have around us.

Richard Mulvaney
Director, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery



Detail from *Habits and Habitat*. Image courtesy of the artists

I became drawn to the almost forensic photographic practice of Patrick and Shannon Ronald not only from an uncomplicated enjoyment of their very complicated representational methodology and its results, but also through their emotional connection to places: specifically to Australian country towns, which form a large part of their shared experience as artists who have chosen to live and work outside city centres and hubs of contemporary practice.

In the past, The Ronald's photographic representations of buildings in country towns shared something of the objective and aesthetically unfettered practice of German photographic duo Bernd and Hilla Becher, who began working together in the late 1950s on a typological project documenting disappearing German industrial architectures and engineered structures. Their famous series of black and white images of water towers stood out among examples of formal modernist photography, for the palpable sense of distance they achieved and attention to difference within a seemingly mundane range of subjects. Where the Becher's approach relied on calculated distance, The Ronald's process relied on a calculated proximity, with each photograph being constructed from hundreds of close range images digitally stitched together. The effect of this process was a kind of uncanny flattening, which represented the building as floating free of its surroundings, without the sense of perspective and depth that one can usually distinguish in photographic images taken from a single vantage point. Shown together, and often to scale, the range of buildings, from small houses, to local shops, to post offices to large warehouses, revealed the scale and scope of economic change and its impact on basic services and the ability of a town to function as a community.

Habits and Habitat is a micro-to-exact photographic extension of the artists' deepening concerns with change in communities and places that have previously been defined by their relative stability. The project re-presents selected elevations of rooms in a working farmhouse in NSW, in two-dimensional 1:1 scale. As a house that has remained largely unchanged for many years (save the necessary upgrades in entertainment and other technologies), it stands in opposition to the nature and appearance of city-based properties, as markets revolve increasingly around temporary occupation, cosmetic and structural renovation, and speculation. Viewing the kitchen image, with its original fittings and the text-drawn graph accumulating the standing heights of loved-ones and visitors, it seems like we are being shown a projection from the past; a fragment from a time when people remained in one place, and followed a path firmly established by the generation that preceded them. Though pseudo-scientific in nature, borrowing from archaeological photography I view *Habits and Habitat* as an attempt to take a measure and a resonance of domestic spaces that have held the lifetimes of their occupants, but are yet fragile and will, in time, disappear.

The Ronald's work is processual in ways that are both epic in terms of scale and quantity of visual data, and also minute and painstaking in detail. From a small country town in NSW, the artists work in a micro-realist modality that is rooted to an emotional connection to the places from which they collect their images. Rather than tourists or day-trippers in their commitment to exactitude in representation, the duo is rather firmly entrenched in rural Australian habits and habitats.

Bec Dean, Curator



ABOUT THE CURATOR

Bec Dean is a curator and writer who trained as a visual artist. She is currently a PhD candidate at the College of Fine Art, UNSW and Curator-at-large for Performance Space. She joined Performance Space as Associate Director in 2007 and was Co-Director with Jeff Khan from 2012 to 2014.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Patrick and Shannon Ronald met at Charles Sturt University, Albury while studying photography in the early 2000s. The two artists first collaborated in 2005 during a period of further study in Launceston, Tasmania. They have worked together ever since. The Ronalds live in Ganmain in the Riverina region of NSW.

From their first series of photographs MICROCOSM – Launceston Heritage Study (2005) which is held in the QVM Collection, the artists have employed intricate digital processes to create highly detailed images. Their first major documentary project, Disappearing Tasmania: An Image of the West (2006), was an intensive survey illustrating what creates and sustains a community and what visible evidence marks a town's decline. They are currently working on IN COMMON – Public Areas of the Murrumbidgee/Riverina, to be presented at Wagga Wagga Art Gallery later this year.

www.theronalds.com.au

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**ARTS
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