

# MICHAEL RILEY SIGHTS UNSEEN



Michael Riley 1997 colour photograph Courtesy of the Australian Broadcasting Commission

## Education Resource

**Michael Riley** was born in 1960 on Talbragar Mission outside Dubbo, in western New South Wales. Although he lived his last 20 years in Sydney, his deep connection with the land of his mother's family from Moree and his father's community from Dubbo provided the spiritual centre around which his life's work revolved.

Although Riley died young, at the age of 44 from renal failure, he left behind an amazing body of work. Portraiture, social documentary, and conceptual photography and film were the means by which Riley challenged non-Indigenous perceptions of Indigenous experience. His pictures of family and community were the antithesis of the bleak photojournalist studies of contemporary Aboriginal life often portrayed in the media of the day.

Riley's later work received international recognition when he was selected for inclusion in the 2003 Istanbul Biennial *Poetic Justice* and, most recently, the Australian Indigenous Art Commission at the Musée du quai Branly, opening in Paris in June 2006.

## SYDNEY PHOTOGRAPHS

In the late 1970s Michael Riley moved to Sydney in search of employment, initially as an apprentice carpenter. It was during this time that he met the people who would become his surrogate Sydney family, as well as cousins and relatives who had relocated from rural New South Wales. After undertaking a Koori photography course in 1982 at the Tin Shed's Gallery, University of Sydney, Riley met Bruce Hart whose encouragement gave him the confidence to combine his artistic vision with his cultural heart. After working as a technician in the Sydney College of the Arts darkroom and freelancing, Riley was offered a training position at Film Australia. From this time the moving and the still image were integrated to form a body of work that reflected Riley's understated but powerful approach to contemporary Indigenous issues. The subjects of Riley's early photography are always his Indigenous friends and relatives, usually shot against a plain background. By removing the context their iconic presence is enhanced. The warmth and intimacy of these early portraits indicates the familiarity between the subject and the observer.

At this time Michael Riley was also involved in documenting gatherings of families and friends attending political rallies and marches, rock gigs and football matches.



*Clevo Koories at anti-James Hardie asbestos rally, Sydney 1984 type-c colour photograph Museum of Sydney*



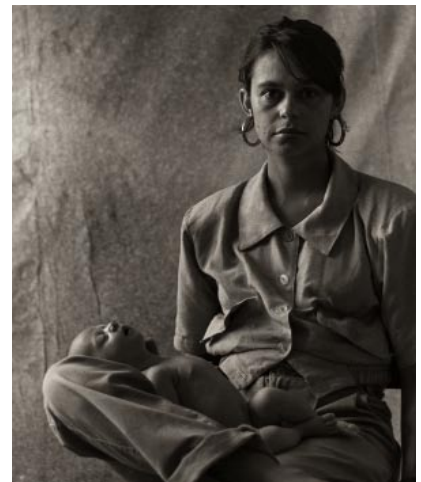
*James Williams' daughter, Ngiarain 1984 type-c colour photograph Museum of Sydney*



*Toni and Maria (Polly) Cutmore early 1980s colour photograph Ms Cathy Craigie*

### *Toni and Maria early 1980s*

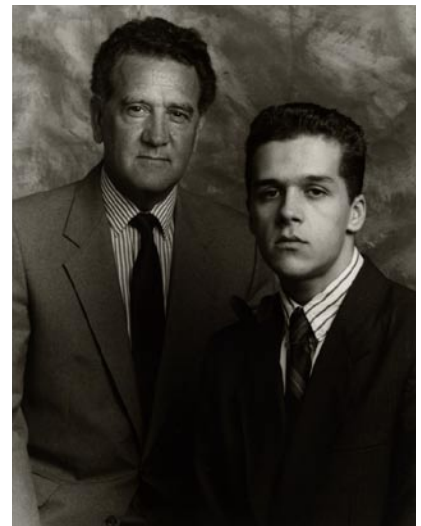
Toni, a cousin from his mother's side of the family in Moree, and her sister, Maria were the subject of many of Riley's early attempts at 'fashion photography'. These sultry, dramatic portraits captured the beauty of the subjects while proposing the question of their invisibility in the white dominated fashion world. The issue of identity is raised, challenging the ethnographic, anonymous records of the past. These images replace the labels of the past by revealing the beauty and individuality of the subjects.



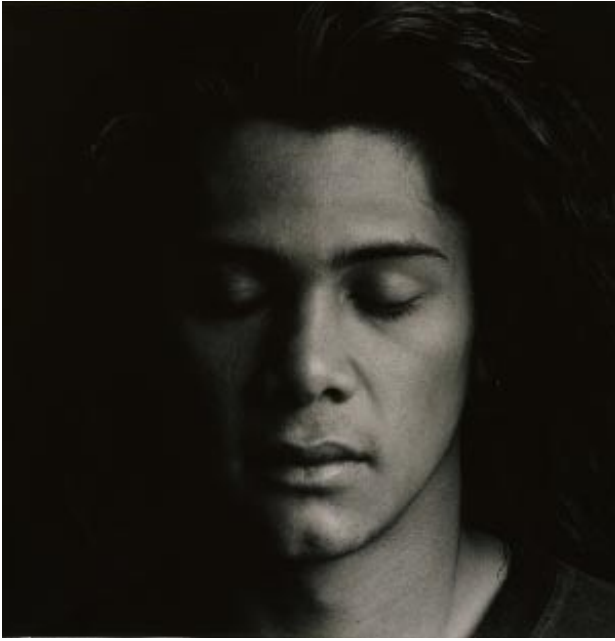
*Avril and Miya from the series Portraits by a window 1990 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra*

### *Portraits by a window 1990*

This series of photographs were shot at Boomalli Aboriginal Artist's Co-operative Chippendale premises in 1990. Riley invited friends and their families to sit in front of a simple, paint-spattered backdrop on whatever chairs were available, lit by a suffused side light in the artspace premises. In 1987 Michael Riley was instrumental in establishing Boomalli, a studio and exhibition space established in response to the lack of facilities and support for Indigenous artists in the Sydney metropolitan area. Two aims of this organisation are to promote work by urban- and city-based Australian Indigenous artists and to ensure that the marketing and exhibition of Indigenous art remains as much as possible within the control of the artists themselves. Riley's first film, *Boomalli: Five Koorie artists*



*Charles and Adam from the series Portraits by a window 1990 gelatin silver photograph Courtesy of Ms Hetti Perkins*



*Darrell* from the series *Portraits by a window* c.1989  
gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



*Telphia* from the series *Portraits by a window* 1990  
gelatin silver photograph Courtesy of mr Pat Corrigan

The antipodean Black Power movement of the early 1970s resulted in the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy (1971) in Canberra, and Aboriginal Dance Theatre Redfern, Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre and the National Black Theatre, in Sydney.

By the early 1980s Sydney was a haven for Aboriginal and Torres Strait artists from all over Australia. There were exhibitions of Aboriginal art in shows such as *Koori Art '84* and *Urban Koories 1986*, and the *NADOC '86 Exhibition of Aboriginal and Islander photographers*.

Michael Riley was involved in many of these exhibitions, which traced the emergence of a vital culture that could no longer be ignored.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Look carefully at two photographs from the series *Portraits by a window* and analyse the images. Examine the geometry of the compositions, repetition of angles and postures, lighting, view point, texture and mood.
- These are glamorous images. What questions are raised about the more common representation of urban-based Aboriginal people?
- What is Riley saying about contemporary glamour/fashion photography?
- By using side lighting and a plain background take a 'glamorous' photograph of a friend and compare it with a photograph taken with standard lighting.

## EARLY PHOTOGRAPHS

### *After 200 years 1988*

Michael Riley's mother was from the Moree Kamilaroi people and she settled in Dubbo after marrying Michael's father from the Wiradjuri people. Michael was the third of 4 children and he spent much of the first years of his life on Talbragar Reserve, 7.3 hectares of land located on the outskirts of Dubbo, at the junction of the Talbragar and the Macquarie Rivers. His family had long links with this area, having lived for generations on this traditional land gazetted as an Aboriginal Reserve during Victorian times. Although the last members of the family moved into town in 1970, this tranquil area, now cared for by the Dubbo Local Aboriginal Land Council, is still visited as a place to remember earlier times. These early photographs demonstrate the main interests that Riley was to pursue for his entire working life. His love of family and friends, his emotional connection with his birthplace, his desire to represent a positive image of rural and urban Indigenous life, and his observer's eye for an interesting and arresting composition.

Riley showed an early interest in photography, saving up for a box brownie by collecting golf balls from the waterholes on a golf course. He bought a simple photographic kit from the local chemist and began processing his own prints in his room at home when he was about 14. His earliest images were of family members in domestic settings.



*Mark Morgan and Edward Urquahart on the bank of the Murray River, Robinvale 1986 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra*



*Michael and Yvonne Hill at home on their block outside Robinvale 1986 gelatin silver photograph Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra*



*Darcy Pettit hunting kangaroo with Seymour Western and Joe Hansford 1988 gelatin silver photograph Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra*

## RURAL PHOTOGRAPHS

### *A common place: Portraits of Moree Murries* 1991

These portraits were taken in Moree. Many of the subjects are family members and their relaxed demeanour indicates their affectionate relationship with the photographer. Everyone looks directly at the camera and they are titled simply with the sitter's name. All the photographs were taken with the same backdrop, a long white canvas sheet merging the background with the foreground. The lack of context creates both a sense of intimacy and formality. These portraits subtly challenge familiar images of Aboriginal people either as the 'noble savage' at one with nature, or the disempowered and poverty stricken, as seen in the media's representation of the plight of Indigenous people in rural areas.

These images are dignified and relaxed, identified not by their background but by their gestures and relationship with the photographer. The results reflect an intimate collaboration. The photographer is working to create portraits that reflect more than their identity; he captures a sense of pride and comfort with their physical and spiritual selves.

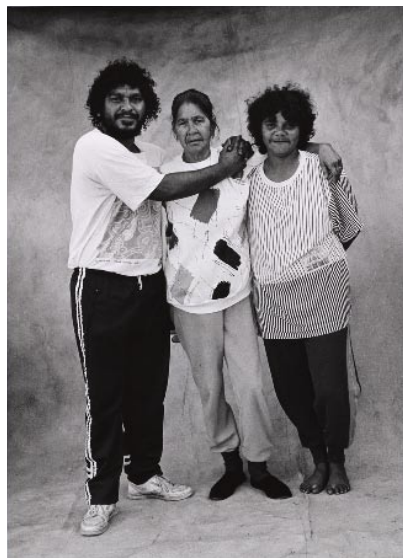
Each person is treated differently, some images are close and cropped but most are fully revealed against the plain background. Some have props; animals or children, sometimes standing or sitting alone. The gentle light, the balance of dark and light, textured and smooth, the angle of the limbs and bodies are carefully but seemingly accidentally composed. These are neither the artificial studio photos that present formal unreal images nor candid covert images. They are almost autobiographical, as the subjects are friends and family; they are political in a climate of changing Indigenous awareness; and they are aesthetically commanding and elegant.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

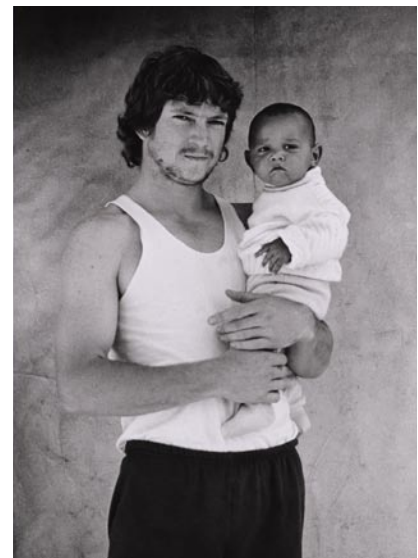
- Discuss the concept of 'location' in helping to unpack the meaning of a portrait. What does the lack of context suggest?
- Discuss the concept of 'the gaze' in photography. Connections are made between the viewer and the subject. Discuss the issue of voyeurism in relation to this concept.
- What sort of relationship is revealed between the photographer and the subjects?
- Create a blank background and take a photograph of some members of your family. Try to capture them in a pose that expresses something about their personality or your relationship with them.



*Nanny Wright and dog* from the series *A common place: Portraits of Moree Murries* 1991 gelatin silver photograph Moree Plains Gallery



*Mary Stanley with son and daughter-in-law* from the series *A common place: Portraits of Moree Murries* 1991 gelatin silver photograph Moree Plains Gallery



*Glenn and son* from the series *A common place: Portraits of Moree Murries* 1991 gelatin silver photograph Moree Plains Gallery



Florence Nolan (Florrie Carr) from the series *Yarns from the Talbragar Reserve* 1998 gelatin silver photograph Gift of the Artist – Guardianship Dubbo Regional Art Gallery



Willy Hill from the series *Yarns from the Talbragar Reserve* 1998 gelatin silver photograph Gift of the Artist – Guardianship Dubbo Regional Art Gallery



Dotty Burns from the series *Yarns from the Talbragar Reserve* 1998 gelatin silver photograph Gift of the Artist – Guardianship Dubbo Regional Art Gallery



Will Burns from the series *Yarns from the Talbragar Reserve* 1998 gelatin silver photograph Gift of the Artist – Guardianship Dubbo Regional Art Gallery

### *Yarns from the Talbragar Reserve* 1998

This suite of black-and-white portraits was made seven years after *A common place: Portraits of Moree Murries*. During this time Riley was exploring overtly symbolic imagery relating to his spiritual connection with the land and his sense of loss associated with European dominance. The two suites of portraits have many elements in common, such as the frontal position of the subject, the anonymous canvas background and the open and relaxed eye contact with the camera.

These portraits may reflect the artistic journey that Riley had taken between the two suites of portraits. He may be presenting a deeper political comment about the loss of Indigenous culture by capturing the somewhat more mainstream appearance of these Dubbo relatives. He may also be investigating the difference between his father's family and the bravado of his mother's relatives from Moree.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Compare *Florence Nolan (Florrie Carr)* from *Yarns from the Talbragar Reserve* with *Nanny Wright and dog* from *A common place: Portraits of Moree Murries*. What are the differences between these two photographs, in composition and mood, that may convey Riley's relationship with these families?
- What do these two photographs reveal about the everyday lives of these people?
- Discuss how these images can be termed 'autobiographical'. What do they reveal about the personality and values of Michael Riley?
- Using collage select photographs of objects that are important to you. How does your collage act as a self-portrait?

### *They call me niigarr* 1995

This series of large, brightly coloured inkjet photographs with collaged letters was first exhibited at the Hogarth Galleries in Sydney and was toured around regional Britain in 1996 and 1997. The exhibition's title, *They call me niigarr*, was a pun on the subject's language group: Niigarr. David Prosser is seen here wearing a suit and bow tie, the symbols of assimilation and power, with derogatory words describing Indigenous people collaged over his chest.

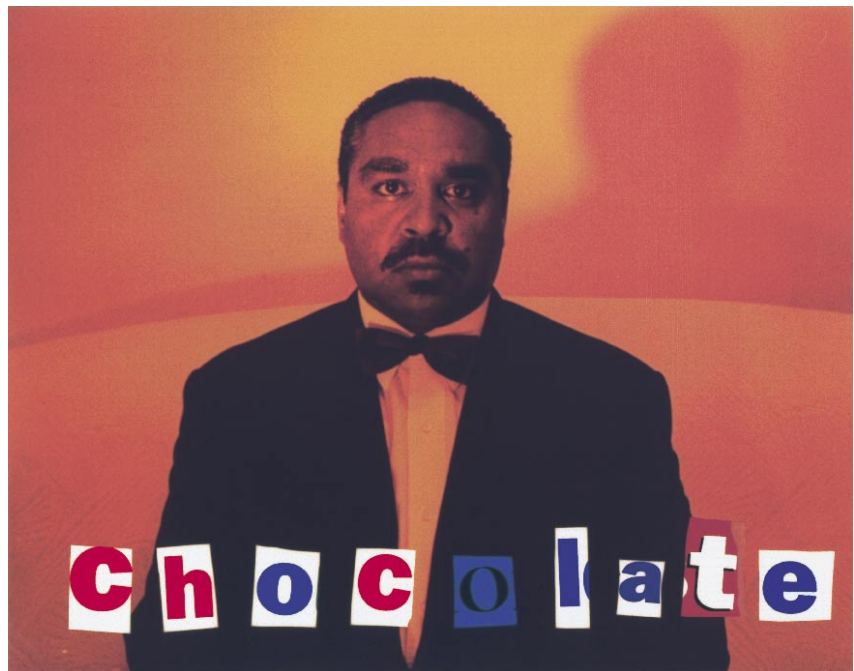
The artist's statement and these images themselves reveal a more overtly political standpoint than many of his previous works.

The exhibition is about racism. Racism comes in many forms. It can be blatant, it can be hidden, patronising, and plain demoralising. For many Aboriginal people the result of racism has been all these things. Names such as these are not intentionally meant to be offensive. Non-Aboriginal people joke as they use these words. The words and images of this exhibition come from my childhood experiences with racism – experiences shared by my people.

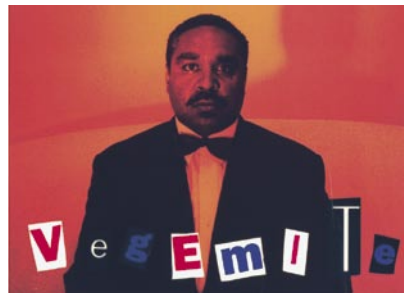
Although these collaged words may not be intentionally offensive, the fact that they are used at all to delineate difference suggests superiority. One culture asserts its dominance by naming another. The irony of these images is doubled by the fact that they have been created by a member of the race that is demeaned. Riley is revealing the insensitivity, pain and crassness of white racism. The guilt felt by some, or that should be felt, is suggested by the cut-out quality of the anonymous letters – as if the perpetrator of these taunts wants to remain unknown.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Why has Riley presented the subject dressed this way? How would the effect of these photographs differ if he was dressed in casual clothes?
- Discuss the juxtaposition of the image with the collaged words. What is the purpose of collaging cutout letters to create these derogatory names?
- Discuss how Riley mocks the mocker in this series.
- Discuss the use of satire in this work. Who and what is Riley mocking?
- Discuss how serious issues can be conveyed by ironic methods.



*Chocolate* from the series *They call me niigarr* 1995 collaged direct positive colour photograph Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative Ltd



*Vegemite* from the series *They call me niigarr* 1995 collaged direct positive colour photograph Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative Ltd



*Licorice* from the series *They call me niigarr* 1995 collaged direct positive colour photograph Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative Ltd



*Dusty* from the series *They call me niigarr* 1995 collaged direct positive colour photograph Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative Ltd



*Nigger* from the series *They call me niigarr* 1995 collaged direct positive colour photograph Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative Ltd



*Golliwog* from the series *They call me niigarr* 1995 collaged direct positive colour photograph Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative Ltd



*Marbuck* from the series *They call me niigarr* 1995 collaged direct positive colour photograph Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative Ltd



Untitled [palms and stigmata] from the series *Sacrifice* 1992 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



Untitled [lillies] from the series *Sacrifice* 1992 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

### **Sacrifice 1992**

Michael Riley worked in many media simultaneously. His film and video works informed his still photography and vice versa. The haunting film *Poison* 1991 predated the photographic essay *Sacrifice* 1992. The brooding subject matter and even some of the symbolic images of this film are reflected in the still photographs. The 'poison' refers to not only drug and alcohol abuse but also to the ways in which European society has failed Aboriginal people. There is no dialogue, with the film relying on sound, movement and a shift between black and white and colour for its meaning. The Christian cross and Bible appear in momentary flashes throughout the film.

*Sacrifice* marked a turning point in Riley's work. His imagery was set free from the classical studio set-up and the concentration on images of family and friends. He investigated a new visual language of symbolic images that conveyed a sense of stillness, loss and decay. The luscious tones of the black-and-white images were achieved by being printed on a colour processor. Riley stated that in *Sacrifice* he was exploring how the placing of Aboriginal people on reserves in the 1940s resulted in a loss of language, religion and identity. The spoons reference heroin addiction; the line of fish suggests sacrificial food and the regimentation of mission life; and flour, sugar and tea the handouts sustaining mission life. The Christian cross appears for the first time in this series as a potent symbol of Christian dominance: a crucifix on a chain and looming large

against a turbulent sky. Poppies and lilies also symbolise death and redemption. This series encapsulates Riley's feelings about the loss of culture and land in the enforced or sometimes embraced exchange for Christianity.

### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

- Discuss the different Christian symbols; what do they represent?
- Do some of the symbols have more emotional impact than others? Discuss the link between Christian sacrifice and the political message of these photographs in relation to the effect of Christianity upon Aboriginal culture.
- Riley described the *Sacrifice* series as his first conceptual work: '*Christianity, mission life and rationing, the photographs shift between the literal and the allegorical, exploring the experience of dispossession replacing people with symbolic images of poppies, fish and crucifixes.*' (Michael Riley). Discuss what is meant by 'conceptual'.
- Some of the images are more violent than others. Explore the darker side of some of the gentler symbols. Look at the poppy, the lillies and the tea, sugar and flour.
- How does the title *Sacrifice* add to the meaning of the photographs? Define this word in relation to the entire series. What have Aboriginal people sacrificed? Are they perhaps the sacrifice?



Untitled [R.I.P.] from the series *Sacrifice* 1992 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



### *flyblown* 1998

These large coloured photographs were created in 1998 and the images closely echo those in *Empire*, a film Riley made the previous year. The scale of these works and their luscious colours challenge accepted ideas of photography. By minimising the image and emphasising the symbolic content, these photographs move away from the documentary tradition to a place normally occupied by painting.

Always political, in this powerful series Riley manages to evoke a sense of loss, reflection and conflict with minimal means. He traces colonisation of the land both by agriculture – seen in the image of waving grass and the parched, overgrazed earth – and by Christianity, symbolised by the cross and the Bible. Both have dominated the landscape and culture of Aboriginal communities. This double-barrelled assault had a negative effect upon all inhabitants, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, leaving the landscape ravaged and barren. The large colour images seem washed-out, aged, like faded transparencies exposed to the harsh light of outback New South Wales.

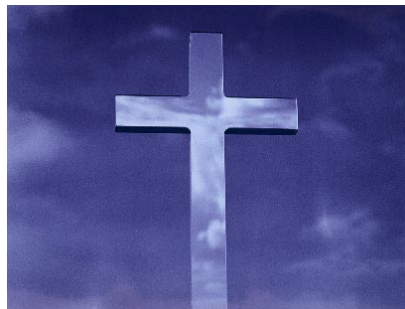
From 1998 onwards Riley's life was constrained by the need for twice-weekly dialysis, following renal failure in January of that year. A childhood bout of rheumatic fever had attacked his immune system and the effects were now being felt. It seems likely that his fragile health and sense of mortality contributed to the brooding stillness of these elemental images of sky, land and water.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

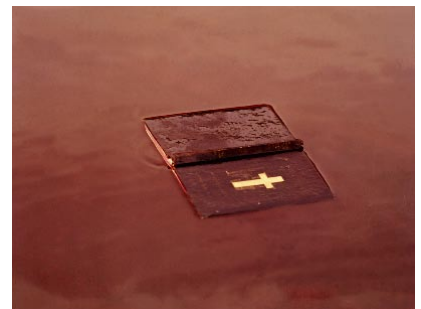
- Discuss the role of symbols in conveying information. List the characteristics of an effective symbol.
- What emotional effect is conveyed by the minimal imagery of these photographs?
- If they were paintings would they affect you differently?
- Look at the different colours used with the crosses. How do they affect the emotional reading of the image?
- What political message is being conveyed by this series?
- Analyse the image of the galah on the dried earth. Look at composition, texture and colour. How do these elements affect the meaning of this work? What might the galah symbolise?



*Untitled [galah]* from the series *flyblown* 1998 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



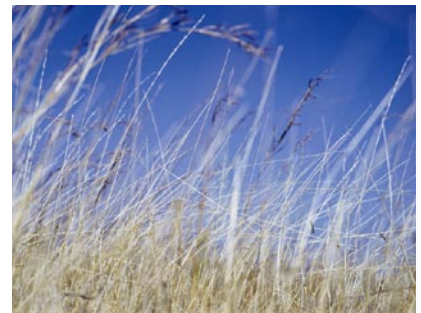
*Untitled [blue cross]* from the series *flyblown* 1998 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



*Untitled [bible]* from the series *flyblown* 1998 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



*Untitled [blue sky with cloud]* from the series *flyblown* 1998 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



*Untitled [long grass]* from the series *flyblown* 1998 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



*Untitled [water]* from the series *flyblown* 1998 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



*Untitled [grey sky]* from the series *flyblown* 1998 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

### cloud 2000

*cloud* is the work for which Riley is best known in Australia and overseas. This is the first series in which he used digital manipulation and it was selected for the 2002 *Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art* at the Queensland Art Gallery and, soon after, was exhibited in Spain as part of *Photographica Australis*, and at the 11th Asian Art Biennale in Bangladesh. His winning series was selected from more than 630 works drawn from 44 countries across Asia, the Pacific region and Africa. In 2006 the series was selected for permanent display as part of the Australian Indigenous Art Commission at the new Musée du quai Branly, Paris.

Like the earlier conceptual series, these huge, elegant images work on a number of levels. Here Riley shifts from the earth to the sky, distilling his ideas about physical reality and the spirit world. They are not about a place or a time, but rather a state of mind. The strange, surrealist, floating compositions evoke both western art traditions and the Aboriginal Ancestral world of creator beings. Aboriginal creation stories follow the journeys of an original being across a physical, seasonal and emotional landscape. They observe, name and thereby create the physical world. Ceremonial song cycles follow this progression and Riley's set of large, single-subject images evoke a song cycle of his own, in which he reveals both a sense of his own impending death and an affirmation of the role of contemporary Indigenous art in today's society.

There are clouds in every image. *'In the cloud series there are clouds in every shot. I just find a very sort of serene beauty in clouds, in the movements of clouds, how they change, and people take them for granted, you know. . . . But once you isolate them and look at them there's this incredible changing sort of beauty in them.'* (interview with Michael Riley, 2002 *Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*)

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- Look at all the photographs in this series and think of a sequence that suggests poetic connections. For example, the three images of a bird's wing suggest the filmic movement of a bird in flight; however the feather suggests death, as do the wings of the marble angel. Find other works that relate to each other.
- What might Riley be saying when he places a standing cow in the sky?
- The bible seems to be floating, but note the angle of the cross. What does it suggest and how does it connect with the image of the boomerang?



Untitled [feather] from the series *cloud 2000* gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

A floating feather suggests a number of things. Death and loss spring to mind, as a bird doesn't tend to shed its feathers on the wing. Why is the feather floating alone? Where is the bird it belonged to?

Human beings use feathers in a number of ways on ceremonial or religious regalia. Aboriginal people use feathers attached to tassels – marking a journey, or a link with ancestral spirits. Feather shoes disguise footprints and have protective powers. A feather left behind is often evidence of a spiritual visit.

The feather is not falling as a feather normally would. It hovers horizontally, superimposed against the glowing light of the white cloud behind it. Alternatively, it suggests an arrow, arrested as it moves from left to right towards its target.



Untitled [cow] from the series *cloud 2000* gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Looking at this cow as it stands nonchalantly in the sky we can become aware of the potential for digital images to be manipulated to represent invented realities.

Most subjects represented in the series can float or fly, either actually (in the case of feathers) or metaphorically (in the case of angels), however the bible and the cow are surreally arresting in their out-of-place contexts.

Perhaps the cow, symbolising the religion of economic progress, is comparable to the animal spirit ancestors of Aboriginal spiritual beliefs; perhaps it stands as a symbol of environmental degradation, as the fragile soil of Australia tends to erode quickly from the impact of hoofed animals.

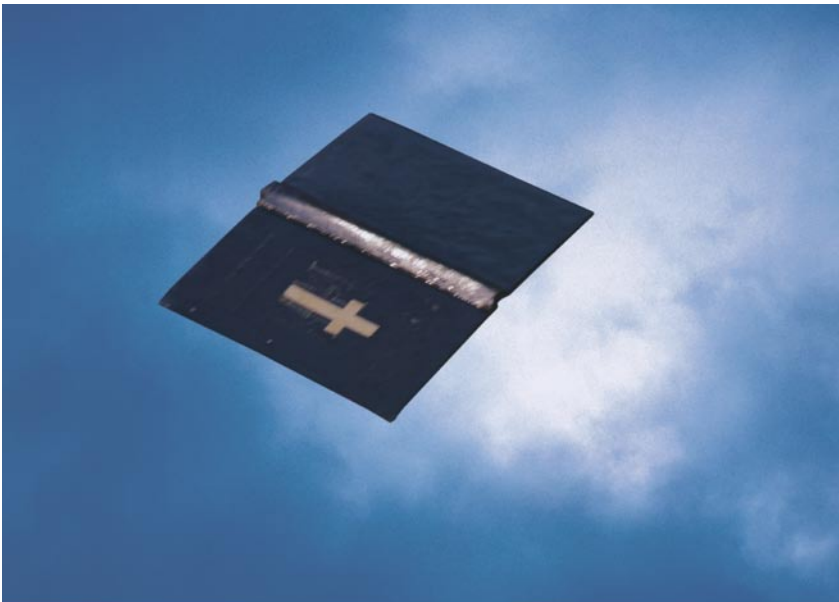


Untitled [boomerang] from the series *cloud* 2000 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

This is the only overtly Aboriginal image in the series. It carries the associations of Indigenous culture, behaviour and weaponry.

The boomerang has been appropriated by the tourist industry to stand for Aboriginality, and its status is corrupted by the western world. Here it floats free against the blue sky; a talisman for a threatened culture.

Like the feathered wings it echoes in shape and position, we expect it to move – to return – but it seems frozen, inert, a glowing abstract shape dissecting the horizontal cloud behind.



Untitled [bible] from the series *cloud* 2000 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Riley's parents were religious. They went to church on Sunday and sent their children to Sunday school. Riley found the Christian experience 'creepy', although his mother recalled that he loved going to Sunday school.

*'I hated it, I thought they were creepy, I'm not a Christian, I'm not really against Christians, I just don't like hypocrites.'* (Michael Riley in conversation with Djon Mundine 2000)

The floating bible appears in other series, often associated with images of the cross, set against a brooding sky. In this series the bible, identified by the cross on the cover, floats alone. The book is open; its pages are invisible behind the cover and the arrow like cross is aimed downward.



Untitled [locust] from the series *cloud* 2000 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Locusts are a fact of life around Dubbo, with plagues occurring there throughout Riley's life. Although a menace to agriculture, for Aboriginal people locusts have been a nutritious food source, and as happy, free and graceful spirit messengers from the land of the dead. They anticipate the change in seasons and are seen as guardian spirits. Their ambiguous nature is revealed in this elegant image, which references both the crucifix and the angel of Christianity.



*Untitled [crow, left wing, closed]* from the series *cloud* 2000 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

The sequence of wings suggests timelapse photography of flight, but it is not the graceful movement of a bird in space. The wing seems strangely dismembered from the body of the bird, and also slightly moth eaten.

A right wing and a left wing with no body inbetween leaves an imagined void. This contradiction between life and death is an underlying theme in this series.

The split wing is more dynamic; the pin feathers are parallel to the top of the photograph. It seems to be pointing, and echoes the single *Untitled [feather]* in its horizontal format.

The soft brown-grey feathers of the wings contrasts with the carved feathers of *Untitled [angel back, full wings]* and *Untitled [angel wing]*, implying a contrast between the natural and the man made, between the real and the spiritual.

*Untitled [crow, left wing, split open]* from the series *cloud* 2000 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra



*Untitled [crow, left wing, closed]* from the series *cloud* 2000 gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia, Canberra





*Untitled [angel back, full wings]* from the series *cloud* 2000  
gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia,  
Canberra

As products of faith and belief angels intercede between humans and God. As represented here they evoke the sculpture of cemeteries. Presented as truncated silhouettes against the sky, they become ambiguous and ethereal. Resonances between the carved wing of Christian iconography and the feathered wing of a native bird are poetic rather than explicit.



*Untitled [crow, left wing, closed]* from the series *cloud* 2000  
gelatin silver photograph National Gallery of Australia,  
Canberra