

Valerie Sparks

1 February - 1 March 2008

Opening 6 - 8pm Friday 1 February

It is with great pleasure that staff from Turner Galleries welcome their first artist in residence for 2008, Valerie Sparks. Valerie is a Melbourne based artist, represented by Flinders Lane Gallery in Melbourne, and Roger Williams Contemporary in New Zealand. This will be Valerie's first solo exhibition in Perth.

Many of Valerie's digitally manipulated photographic prints are inspired by the French scenic wallpapers manufactured by Zuber in the 1800s. One of the centrepieces of the exhibition will be the six metre long *E/ Dorado Springs* (2007). The name is taken from *Eldorado*, a scenic wallpaper produced by Zuber in 1849. Like the original, it takes liberties with perspective and reality, drawing together different landscape and architectural elements to create a seamless, but impossible place. Valerie has combined buildings, such as the Russian Orthodox Church in East Brunswick, Alliance Francais in St Kilda, St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne and the Bright Moon Buddhist Society in Springvale along with the Zagros Mountains and assorted gum trees, religious sculptures and flowers. The result is a breathtakingly beautiful and surreal environment that pays homage to multiculturalism, particularly in Melbourne.

Other works that refer to the history of scenic wallpapering include the series *With a View to Paradise Gallery*. Originally exhibited in Linden St Kilda Centre for Contemporary Arts in 2006, they depict the interior of this Victorian building wallpapered from floor to ceiling with a fabulous tropical paradise. But viewer beware, these are fictitious works, Linden was never wallpapered. Like the utopian arcadia depicted on the walls, these are false images, gracing Linden with an imaginary history.

Also on display will be the impressive *The Event*, measuring 7.2 meters long, depicting a mountainous landscape at night, interspersed with trees and desert plants in the foreground. Valerie has masterfully combined the quiet eeriness of the night with exquisitely lit vegetation, as though being caught in the first rays of morning light.

Valerie's interest in virtual or 'hyper reality' also has its roots in Valerie's studies of Anthropology, Sociology and Pacific Studies at La Trobe University, before heading to RMIT to study Visual Arts, followed by Fine Arts at the Victorian College of the Arts, graduating in 2003.

Valerie has created a free limited edition print for each of the 2008 Art Angels that will be presented to them in November this year along with prints by Cherry Hood and Hossein Valamanesh. Memberships are still being taken for 2008 and the public is encouraged to contact the gallery for further information, or visit the gallery website: www.turnergalleries.com.au/artangels/index.php

Please do not hesitate to contact staff on 08 9227 1077 or email info@turnergalleries.com.au should you require more information or images from the exhibition. Exhibition works will be available to view on line: www.turnergalleries.com.au and Valerie is available for interviews and photo opportunities when she arrives in Perth from 28 January.

Valerie's residency and exhibition are proudly sponsored by Turner Galleries Art Angels and Central Tafe.

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