

Moral Ambiguities

Tony Stewart

I was driving when I heard Tony Stewart interviewed about his *Use By* exhibition in April 2002. Puzzled and intrigued by his description of the work—an unlikely marriage of the humble bread tag and images made on a visit to India—I decided I should take a look.

Use By was a small but striking show. The works were complex, with minute individual and group portraits woven together by and shining through a grid of bread tags, each marked with its own use by date. The clear depth of Stewart's feeling for humanity and the vitality and technical precision of his images made an impression on me.

Later that year Sasha Grishin reviewed Stewart's *Transit* at Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Manuka. In *The Canberra Times* of 4 October 2002, Professor Grishin commented that *Transit* was '... a very rich and rewarding exhibition, where cutting wit is combined with an engaging intellect.'

I met Tony Stewart when I became Director of PhotoAccess. Sasha Grishin's description of the *Transit* exhibition could also have been a description of Stewart himself, who is a long time PhotoAccess board member, generous supporter and regular contributor to group exhibitions. *Tag*, in September 2005, was first his solo exhibition in the HUW DAVIES GALLERY.

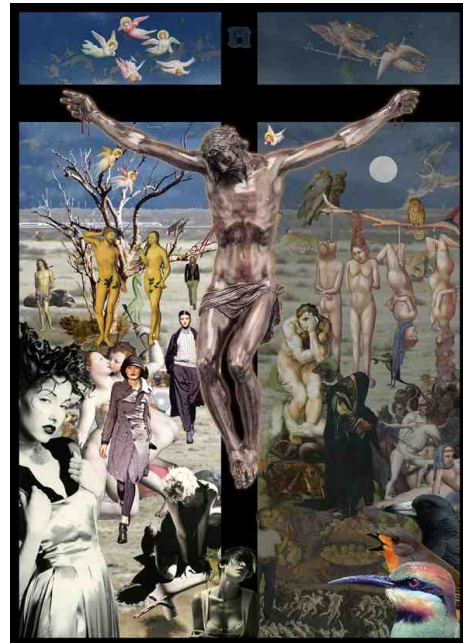
Moral Ambiguities, Stewart's second solo exhibition at PhotoAccess, includes work produced over the past three years. Again it is a quite complex show, conceptually and technically, drawing heavily on Tony Stewart's humanist values and concern for the future of the planet—as suggested in this statement from the catalogue for our 25th Anniversary Life Members Show:

Cesspool Earth is a protest against inaction. None of us wants the world we are creating for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. But nations, governments, corporations and individuals do nothing, while everything goes to hell around us. For example, the Murray Darling Basin in Australia—the problem seems too buried in complex entitlements and interests but, as the previous Director of the basin authority said before she retired: 'We know all the science and what needs to be done. All that is required is action'. Similarly, problems of the 6th great extinction (human caused over the last 400 years), declining biodiversity, declining fisheries, climate change, poverty, global pollution, even such things as health and education are not intractable, but certainly seem to be?

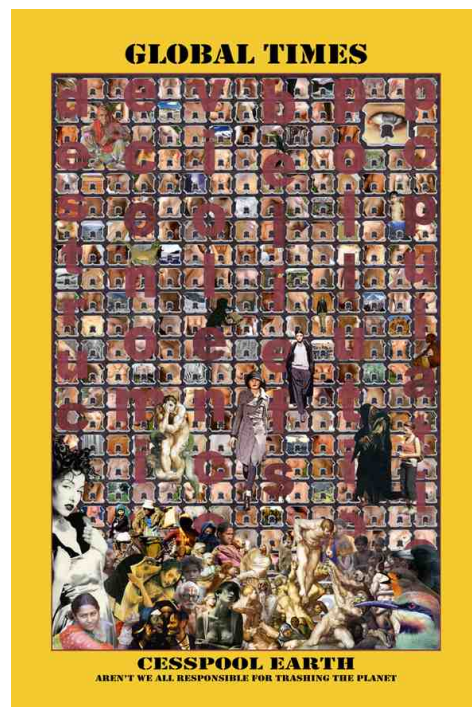
Stewart's recent essay also bearing on the pressing issues confronting us, *In praise of Indian Mangoes*, can be accessed by following the link from the website.

PhotoAccess is delighted to present Tony Stewart's thoughtful and provocative *Moral Ambiguities* in the HUW DAVIES GALLERY at the Manuka Arts Centre.

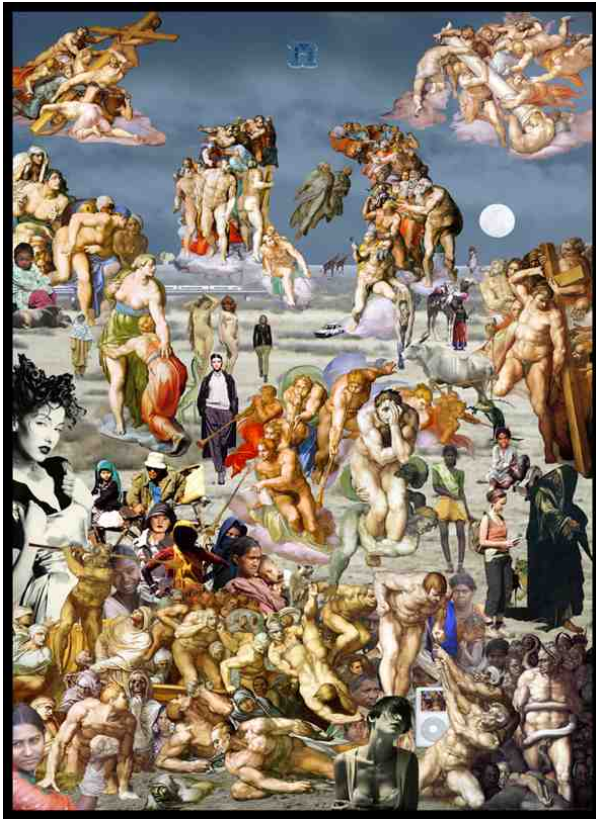
David Chalker



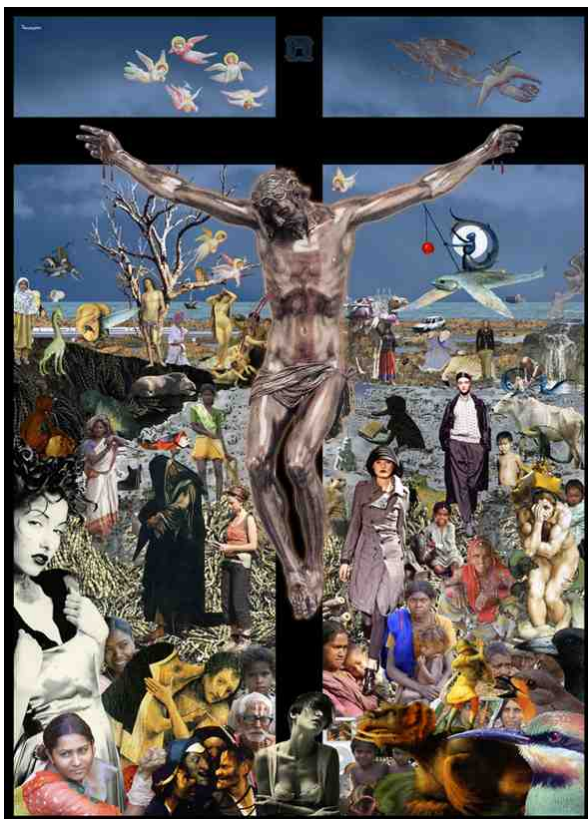
Contradiction Christ



Cesspool Earth



Dress rehearsal for the end of the world (major players not required)



Sargasso Christ - What happened?

Artist statement

The two streams of work in *Moral Ambiguities* seem shockingly disparate. But, eventually I realised that they were just approaching the same topic from extremely different starting points.

The first uses the Renaissance and modern iconography to ask quietly where we are in the modern world and what globalisation means as a transition period. The second series uses breasts as icons to expose nasty sides of globalisation.

Both streams I've realised come from anger. I was deeply shocked at the turn of the century by the common dogma that globalisation was inevitable and therefore we did not have to concern ourselves with the fate of losers because the juggernaut would roll on regardless. Morality does not seem to be an issue any more and yet to avoid asking difficult questions is an evil choice that may well doom our civilisation.

With the Renaissance Series, I initially thought I knew the meaning of what I was doing but as I progressed in making the works I realised that it had all bubbled up from deep within my psyche and I had no clear idea anymore what it all means.

With the Trafficked Series, I was initially sensitive about downloading images of soft core porn but, as we all do, I became inured quickly.

Both streams are linked by the ubiquitous plastic bread tag, an icon of technology, with its use by date. I use ephemera to explore time and movement through geographical and social space, and across cultural divides. I've tried to move on from the bread tag but seem unable to. Besides, all the work is iconography and I hope that the icons represented in my images are at least thought provoking.

Tony Stewart
October 2011

Artist CV

Education

BSC (Hons – 1st Class), Australian National University (ANU) (1972)
PhD (Biological Sciences), ANU (1979)

Solo exhibitions

- 2011 *Moral Ambiguities*, HUW DAVIES GALLERY, PhotoAccess, Manuka Arts Centre, Canberra, ACT
2007 *Tag II*, X Gallery, Bungendore, NSW
2005 *TAG*, HUW DAVIES GALLERY, PhotoAccess, Canberra, ACT
2002 *Transit*, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Manuka, ACT; *Use By* (with Allan Byrne), Art Space 71, Canberra, ACT

Selected group exhibitions

- 2002–11 *Access all areas*: the PhotoAccess Members Show, HUW DAVIES GALLERY, PhotoAccess, Manuka Arts Centre, Canberra, ACT
2008–10 *HIY (Hang it Yourself)*, PhotoAccess, HUW DAVIES GALLERY
2010 *Holiday Snaps Exhibition; 25th Anniversary print portfolio exhibition; Thredbo – A PhotoAccess Group Exhibition*, HUW DAVIES GALLERY
2009 *In for life*, Life Members Show celebrating 25 years of PhotoAccess, PhotoAccess 25th Anniversary print portfolio exhibition, HUW DAVIES GALLERY
2007 *'Gifted' Exhibition*, Charles Darwin University, Darwin
2006 40 Polavaram Dam Project *Not wanted: Oustee posters* for political anti-dam campaign, Hyderabad, India
2005 *'33'*, Artist's Exchange portfolio (33 printmakers) 33 x 33 cm, coordinated by Rona Green, Melbourne; *'33' Exhibition*, Port Jackson Press Australia, Melbourne
2004 *'23' Exhibition*, Port Jackson Press, Melbourne; *Fotosource @ Affordable Art Show*, Sydney; *'23' Exhibition*, Phyllis Palmer Gallery, Bendigo
2003 Summer Salon, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne; Finalist, Churchie Emerging Art Exhibition, Brisbane; 10th Birthday Exhibition, Canberra Contemporary Art Space; *'23'*, Artist's Exchange portfolio (23 printmakers) 23 x 23 cm, coordinated by Rona Green, Melbourne

Collections

Charles Darwin University, Darwin, NT
Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, NSW
PhotoAccess, Manuka, ACT
CMAG (Canberra Museum and Gallery), ACT Public Art Gallery, Canberra
Private collections in Australia and overseas

Publications

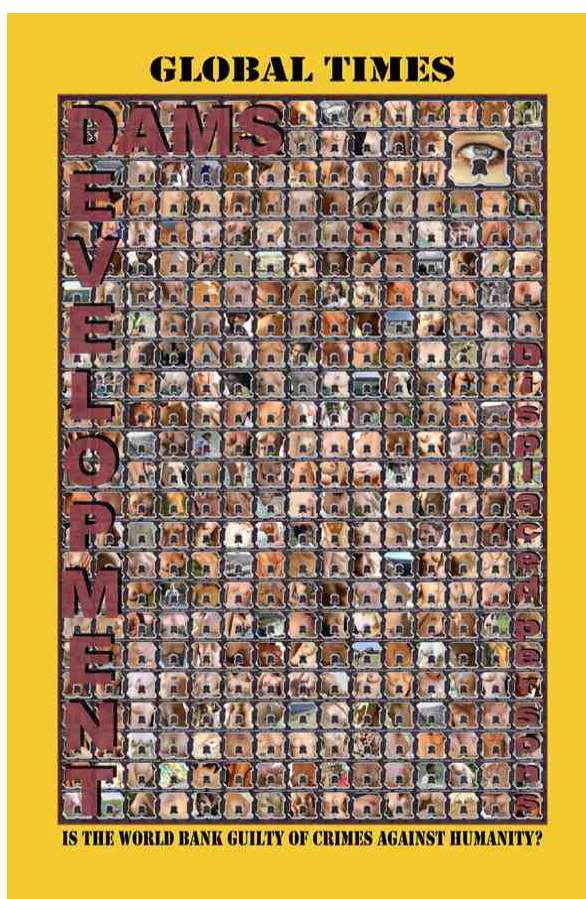
- 2009 *In for life: the PhotoAccess Life Members Show* (exhibition catalogue), October 2009; *PhotoAccess 25th Anniversary Print Portfolio* (catalogue), March 2009
2007 *Tag II Exhibition*, X Gallery Bungendore, February 2007 (catalogue essay by David Chalker)
2005 *Putting a tag on contemporary life*, Sonia Barron, *The Canberra Times*, September 2005; *TAG* (catalogue essay by Professor Sasha Grishin), PhotoAccess, September 2005
2003 Tony Stewart artist profile, Sonia Barron, *Australian Art Collector*, April to June 2003
2002 *Provocative use of the familiar*, Sonia Barron, *The Canberra Times* April 2002; *Exhibitions probe senses*, Sasha Grishin (*Use By* exhibition review), *The Canberra Times* April 2002; *An exhibition rich and rewarding*, Sasha Grishin (*Transit* exhibition review), *The Canberra Times* October 2002; *Visual Art: Transit*, Ed Whalan exhibition review), *Muse Magazine*, November 2002

List of works

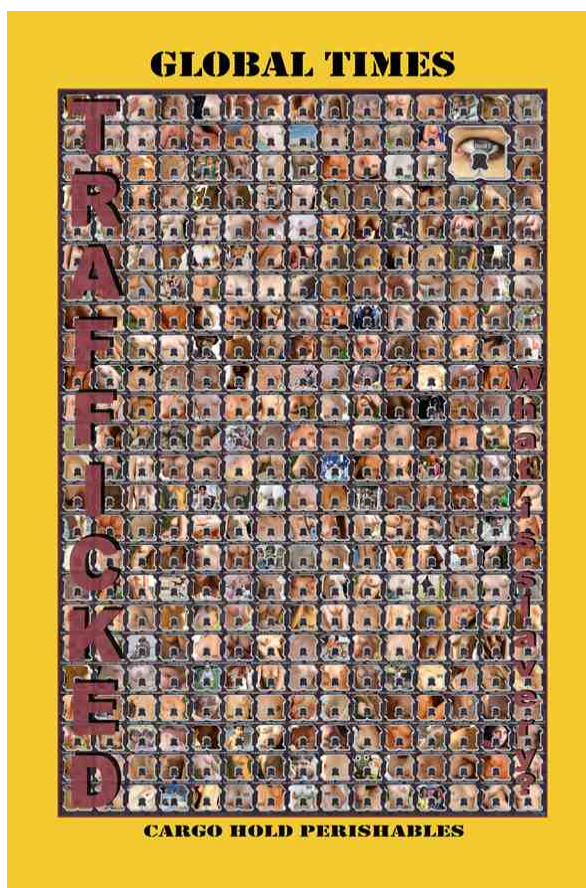
Editions of 10 unless otherwise stated. All prices for unframed prints. Numbers 5 and 7 also available at 44 x 32 cm for \$420

		Paper size (cm)	\$
Trafficked Series			
Lambda prints on Kodak Professional paper			
1	No harm. Is there? 2009	152 x 101	950
2	Cesspool Earth, 2009	152 x 101	950
3	Trafficked, 2009	152 x 101	950
4	Is the World Bank guilty of crimes against humanity? 2009	152 x 101	950
Renaissance Series			
5	Contradiction Christ, 2011	152 x 112	1850
Inkjet print on Arches Velin Museum Rag			
6	Dress rehearsal for the end of the world (major players not required), 2011	152 x 112	1850
Inkjet print on Arches Velin Museum Rag			
7	Sargasso Christ – What happened? 2011	152 x 112	1850
Inkjet print on Arches Velin Museum Rag			
8	Dress rehearsal for the end of the world (major players not required), 2009	44 x 32	420
Inkjet print on BFK Rives			
Edition of 30			
9	Hovering Christ, 2009	44 x 32	420
Inkjet print on BFK Rives			
Edition of 30			

HUW DAVIES GALLERY at PhotoAccess, Manuka Arts Centre, Corner Manuka Circle and NSW Crescent Griffith ACT
tel. 02 6295 7810 www.photoaccess.org.au



Is the World Bank guilty of crimes against humanity?



Trafficked