



Nicholas Mangan:
Nauru, Notes from a Cretaceous World

Opening Saturday 31st July, 4-6pm
Exhibition dates 29 July – 28 August, 2010

Nauru, Notes from a Cretaceous World, follows Nick Mangan's second expedition to Nauru and digs deeper into the phosphate nation, surfacing relics of a redundant industry and examining the barren surreal landscape. Mixing sculpture, found objects, documentary style video footage, and more stylized filmic elements, this body of work reflects on the complex socio-political history of the small Pacific island of Nauru, a once lush and self-sustainable atoll which has plunged into financial and environmental destitution over the past two decades.

Mangan has taken on a curious proposal put forward by Bernhard Dowiyogo, the late Nauruan president, to rescue the nation's economy by turning the island's mined rock pinnacles into coral coffee tables, as a cue for the project. Nauruan rock, embodies the evolution of excrement to phosphate rich coral to its current barren form. Mangan's conscious re-staging of this exploitative appropriation in a contemporary context pinpoints a shift in Nauru's value as a source of mineral rich phosphate, to a potential site of authenticity. With their porous surfaces and curved edge, the materiality of Mangan's coffee tables does not only reference the social, financial and cultural turmoil endured, but physically mimics the contoured coastline of this petite island nation and its eroded, broken landscape.

With a focused depiction of Nauru, the main video projection immerses the viewer in eerily desolate scenes of surreal mined out pinnacles, a colourless coastline and relics of the redundant mining industry juxtaposed with images of Melbourne's Nauru House taken during the preceding height of national affluence. This projection is a poignant testament to the artist's personal expedition to the site and his physical presence is apparent in both his considered choice of footage and more directly in the introductory voice over.

An indirect, though timely reference to 'the Pacific Solution' and the implication of Nauru's compliance predicated on its desperate financial situation, serves to highlight some of the major social inequalities that operate in the current world order. These themes of distance, transit and cultural exchange that underlie Mangan's personal exploration of Nauru, parallel broader concerns about the dynamics of the contemporary global political economy.

Following his studio residency at Gertrude Street Contemporary Art Spaces Nick Mangan has held numerous solo exhibitions at Sutton Gallery, Melbourne. Mangan, has also frequently been curated into significant group exhibitions including in 2004; *Australian Culture Now*, a collaboration between the National Gallery of Victoria and Australian Centre of the Moving Image, Melbourne; *Primavera* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney in 2004; *Adventures with form in space: the fourth Balnaves Foundation Sculpture Project* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney in 2006 and *Uncanny Nature* at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2006. Mangan was the recipient of an *Anne and Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarships* in 2007. He completed post graduate studies at UDK in Berlin as part of this scholarship. Mangan created a major site specific work, *A1 Southwest Stone*, for the seventh SITE Santa Fe International Biennial in 2008. In 2009 he exhibited *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales Contemporary Project Space Level 2 and earlier in 2010 Mangan presented, *The Nauru Project*, as part of the Adelaide Biennale of Art, at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

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