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# M o M e n t o

PhotoForum NZ

Members Only Magazine

Issue One

Abby Storey

January 2008



**photoforum**

## Editorial:

For some time now we have been concerned that our lack of resources have meant that we are unable to produce copies of PhotoForum more frequently or regularly; although what we do publish clearly has our member's approval. The concept of Momento is to supplement both our print and electronic offerings and bring you, as a member, a special and more regular benefit for your support. The name Momento incorporates Mom (member's only magazine) with momento (moment in Italian, Portuguese and Spanish).

We have achieved a great deal in numerous ways since PhotoForum was founded over 30 years ago. Through the unpaid voluntary work of numerous enthusiasts we have been able to showcase local talent, critically inform, stimulate and challenge New Zealand photographers to develop their ideas into a tangible body of work, as a portfolio, essay, exhibition, or book. Consequently, many of our past and present members are now well established (artistically, if not financially), and have inspired new generations of independent photographers to pursue their own directions.

PhotoForum has played a significant part in increasing the awareness of photography as an art and commodity, and raising the quality of exhibitions and publications. Despite, or because of this increased activity, and despite more private galleries showing photography today, there is a great need to see a wider variety of photography in print, from both up and coming young photographers, and significant historical figures, whose work has been neglected or barely celebrated. With Momento, as a modest and relatively inexpensive short run publication, we aim to fill some of those gaps. Momento will be published three times a year under a variety of different editors.

In the meantime, PhotoForum will continue in its usual print format as a widely available showcase for larger projects. Publications like Haruhiko Sameshima's Bold Centuries, and a selection of John Johns's work, which are currently in the pipeline, require greater time and funding for their production, hence their irregularity. Our redesigned web site, [www.photoforum-nz.org](http://www.photoforum-nz.org) is continually growing, and our new blog, provides up to the minute news and links to what is going on now, throughout this country and the rest of the world.

As a member of PhotoForum Inc., we hope that you will contribute some work, or otherwise increase your involvement, to make the most relevant and exciting forum for our collective visual and intellectual stimulation.

We would like to thank Abby Storey for allowing us to feature some of her work in this, the first edition of Momento. Abby is a highly motivated photographer who has continued to work on personal projects since graduating from Auckland's Unitec in 1999. We are proud to feature what is a small thematic portfolio from a much larger and diverse body of work. Like that of so many fine photographers whose work too frequently lies under the radar of the art press, her work deserves much wider public recognition.

Feedback, and proposals for future issues of Momento, PhotoForum magazine, and our website and blog, are always welcome. These should be sent to the Publications Committee at [info@photoforum-nz.org](mailto:info@photoforum-nz.org) or to our postal address. Members are the backbone of our society, and we thank you for your continued support.

John B. Turner, Director, PhotoForum Inc., November 2007.

**Editor for this issue:** John B. Turner  
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# Abby Storey

Featured artist Abby Storey was born in 1977 at Whakapara, the Northland farming district near Whangarei, where she grew up. She attended school at Hikurangi and then Kamo. Her interest in photography came at a young age when she discovered the joy of photographing her friends and family. Leaving Kamo High School, she enrolled in the fledgling visual communications course at Auckland's Unitec, in 1995.

After graduating in 1999 she traveled around South East Asia and Europe. On returning to Auckland in 2002, she spent six months on various photographic projects including the documentation, with Mikel Taylor and Davina Monds, of the peaceful protest of Ngapuhi hapu against the building of a prison on sacred burial grounds at Ngawha hot springs. She then managed Spiral Gallery, which specialised in showing new artists, and was situated next to McDonald's in Auckland's Queen Street. Since 2005 she has managed the Depot Artspace, a multi-disciplinary arts community which has four galleries in its' Devonport base, and Satellite Gallery, located in St Benedicts Street, in central Auckland.

Over the past three years Abby Storey's photographs have been exhibited at Spiral Gallery, Artstation, Matakana Pictures, Satellite Gallery, and the Depot Artspace. Her collaborative portfolio on the Ngawha protest was published in The New Zealand Journal of Photography (No. 51, Winter 2003) and Staple magazine (Issue 1, August/September 2003). Her Observer series was recently featured as a 6 page spread in Beijing based Vision magazine (July 2007). She has her own website: [www.abbystorey.co.nz](http://www.abbystorey.co.nz) and recently initiated PhotoForum's news blog.



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con(temporary) : Abby Storey



chaos : Abby Storey



observer : Abby Storey



petrol pit : Abby Storey





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## The Observer Series:

As she wrote for the catalogue of the group show, 'PhotoForum 33', at Auckland's Artstation, during the 2007 Auckland Festival of Photography, Abby Storey sees herself as 'a contemporary photographic artist and documenter' interested in examining 'social and cultural identity'.<sup>11</sup> Her interest in the locations she photographs, what she calls 'in-between' spaces, is to do with their social and cultural status and temporal beauty. They are buildings halfway between destruction and creation, found in city areas in the process of gentrification. They show the signs of temporary habitation by vagrants and vandals, of people hanging out with time on their hands, and the inevitable tags, graffiti and posters. She found them interesting of themselves, for their colour and form, then came to see them as a kind of 'collaborative project with all the participants unwittingly contributing to a greater whole'. For this reason, as a sign of recognition and empathy toward the originators of these unconscious collaborations, she decided to paste up her ongoing photographs of the sites. No longer the "invisible" hands-off photographer, this led her to the idea of taking on a more decisive, performative role in this process, by inserting a stencil of herself as the photographer in (and of) each scene.



Top to bottom :  
(con)temporary  
gun  
petrol pit  
back cover:  
In Memoriam  
: Abby Storey

I haven't seen any of the actual places she alters then documents with her camera, but they start to take on her meaning the moment she decides where to place her first mark. Using a scaled down template of her own full-length profile—a photographer's silhouette, with head tilted down to the unmistakable twin-lens reflex camera in her hands—she spray paints a good likeness in black, like a permanent shadow left behind. A crisp "shadow" on hard flat surfaces, the silhouette becomes softer and more rounded on rough textured bricks or stucco.

Who exactly is the "observer" in this intriguing series? Normally, in looking at photographs, it is the viewer, as substitute for the unseen photographer, who becomes the observer. Without Storey's obvious interventions, the viewer could enjoy the delights and flights of fancy suggested by these colourful walls, in the way one can enjoy the metaphorical black and white graffiti-derived work of say, Aaron Siskind, or Minor White. But, in Storey's 'Observer' series, with the viewer forced to acknowledge the icon as a representation of the photographer *in* the scene, the role of principal observer reverts to the photographer. The viewer now, as secondary observer of these witty, surrealist *mise en scène*, must factor in the photographer's new starring role as *the* observer observed.

While this symbolic photographer-observer stands in each picture, appearing to be just as interested in the lively surfaces she is clearly part of, her camera is actually pointed at something unseen beyond the picture's edge, perhaps incorporating some of the layered surfaces, or perhaps not. The mystery remains because the actual camera is pointed at the stage, as it were, and we, the audience, cannot see into the wings. In the case of the stairway image, there is a twist to this idea because we, but not the shadow photographer, can see up the stairs.

Like an anthropologist, Abby Storey acknowledges that being a photographer of the human condition makes one a participant/observer, and in this series she is exploring how her symbolic, metaphorical, and actual presence affects her subject matter.—JBT.

<sup>1</sup> PhotoForum 33 (*PhotoForum* #75, Auckland, June 2007), pp 1 & 34.



David Larnach: Garvie's Studio,  
Victoria Street, Dargaville, c. 1970.  
Collection of John B. Turner

A Photograph by David Lanarch:

I first became aware of the paintings of David Larnach during occasional travels around the North Island in the late 1960s. His curious murals, depicting New Zealand birds, imaginary landscapes, farms and animals, seemed to pop up everywhere, in milk bars, fish and chip shops, pubs and other commercial premises in towns and cities. During 1968 and 1969, in fact, a strange kind of Swiss chalet scene that he painted on a brick wall behind a pub in Wellington's Tory Street, became the nominal subject for my series, 'Beer Garden Wall.' My photographs recorded the slow obliteration of his painting due to the construction of a new building, and I was fascinated with the *trompe l'oeil* effect and surreal setting for his exotic scene, which had no reference to its immediate surroundings, nor this country. Enquiring about the naive mural painter, I was told that he was an itinerant alcoholic known for painting with a four-inch paintbrush in one hand and a bottle of beer in the other. In the mid 1970s I also photographed his mural of Radio Hauraki's pirate radio station, MV *Tiri* in Lucy's Fish Shop in Mount Eden, but never met the artist. By an interesting coincidence, however, I later discovered and purchased a small envelope of some of Larnach's own negatives and chemist-shop prints at a Mount Eden antique store. His picture of Garvie's Studio and the boys shown above is from that set.

John Perry, a former director of the Rotorua Museum of Art and History, who runs Global Village Antiques at Helensville, Auckland, has a painting of a church at Duntroon, Dunedin, signed 'D.L.T. Larnach' and dated 1959. John was a schoolteacher in Helensville in the early 1970s, and remembers seeing Larnach, who lived at nearby Parakai. Perry observed that the painter of stereotypical murals frequently slept in the truck with which he went from place to place. Larnach is believed to be related to William James Mudie Larnach (1833-1898) the well-known Dunedin merchant who built Larnach's Castle. David Larnach spent the last years of his life in Parakai, and died around 1975, aged about 70.—JBT.

