

Maunsell Wickes Gallery Paddington

WILLIAM YANG

William Yang was born in North Queensland, his grandparents migrating from China to the Top End in the 1880's. After completing a Bachelor of Architecture at Queensland University he moved to Sydney in 1969 and worked as a free lance photographer documenting Sydney's social life which included the glamorous, celebrity set and the hedonistic, sub-cultural, gay community. His first solo exhibition "Sydneyphiles" in 1977 at the Australian Centre for Photography caused a sensation because of its frank depiction of the Sydney gay and party scene.

In the mid eighties William began to explore his Chinese heritage which had hitherto been lost to him by his complete assimilation into the Australian way of life. His photographic themes expanded to include landscapes and the Chinese in Australia. During this period he made visits to China.

In 1989 he integrated his skills as a writer and a visual artist. He began to perform monologues with slide projection in the theatre. These slide shows were a form of performance theatre and have become the main expression of his work. The third one, "Sadness", wove together two themes: William's discovery of his Chinese heritage and the rituals of dying and death in Sydney. Like his more recent work "Sadness" has toured all over Australia and the world. He has done eleven full length works in all, including "China", "Objects for Meditation," "Shadows", "My Generation" about Sydney in the 70's and the 80's, and "I Am A Camera", a memoir of recent times.

William has had photographic exhibitions in UK, Japan, China and Hong Kong, as well as many solo photographic exhibitions in Australia. In 1998 his retrospective exhibition "Diaries" at the State Library of New South Wales was one of their most heavily attended shows. He was a significant contributor to The China Project at the Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane in 2009.

In 1993 William Yang won the Higashikawa-cho International Photographic Festival award of International Photographer of the Year. In 1997 his exhibition "Friends of Dorothy" won the Outstanding Visual Arts Event award at the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. In 1998 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Queensland University for his services to photography. In 2007 he was awarded the H.C. Coombs Creative Arts Fellowship at the Australian National University. In 2010 he was awarded a two year Australia Council Fellowship to make DVDs of his performance pieces. He is currently doing this at the University of NSW, where he is a visiting fellow.