1	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
2	Group-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
3	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
4	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
5	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
6	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
7	Group-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
8	Group-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
9	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
10	Group-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
11	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
12	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
13	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
14	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
15	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
16	Group-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
17	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
18	Self-portrait with parent, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
19	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
20	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
21	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
22	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
23	Group-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
24	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
25	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6
26	Self-portrait, 2018-2021, inkjet print, 11 x 15 cm	1/6

Price: $230 unframed, $350 framed

Visit www.gallery.photoaccess.org.au to learn more about *Spirits*.

Huw Davies Gallery
26th May - 25th June 2022

photo access

Spirits
B Dam Pictures

Spirits, *initiated by Anthony Sillavan and Stephanie Sheppard, is a collection of wildlife photographs, seen, as they are, by the animals themselves. Amongst notions of identity, based on landscape, personality, and place, a peaceful theatre emerges as we delve into an aspect of the unknown.*

In a fragile landscape near the Murrumbidgee a motion-sensor camera awaits. In recent times, the area has been through drought, fires and storms. The fauna gravitates toward a fickle water supply. In a space defined by quiet light, the animals willingly pardon the camera. The wildlife are forebearers of a spatial existence that seems to exceed our understanding of their motives and movements. The contiguous aesthetic becomes a designated portrait, a self-portrait, belonging to several humble variations. The remarkable images exist as understudied authentic trajectories of an almost ghostly illusion. The photographs, humble in nature, are a testament to the static buoyancy of these creatures.

It is difficult not to make a comparison to the photographs of George Shiras, first published in 1906 in National Geographic. With the available technology of the time, Shiras set 'camera traps' and flash 'triggers' to capture images of wildlife at night. Far from unspoiled and authentic, Shiras` photographs show the animals cautiously frozen in a stare, or leaping from the intense light resulting from the explosive magnesium powder flash. Although preeminent in its approach at the time, and unlike the B Dam pictures, Shiras` quasi orchestrated, intentional, and obvious intrusion of habitat reflect a sense of the unreal, with the notion of authorship remaining with the practitioner. As we view the B Dam pictures we understand that there is a likeness to practitioner-led wildlife photography, but it does not extend to a sameness. Although the animal selfies we see here in Spirits share a commonality of place; the wild, authorship does not remain with a practitioner. The photographs here belong to the animals. They are not being sprung upon, nor frightened, instead are being welcomed to express their natural inquisitive behaviours.

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The most fascinating aspect is the notion of being seen. In an environment where the unknown can be seen as a two-way relationship between us and them, it actually expands to us, them, and the way they think (and know) they are being seen. Sometimes fascinating; when a wallaby peers into the world of a lens that is showing us their world within a mirrored sense of place, and other times where the lens is being ignored, accustomed to being there, the animals turn their backs to the lens` sympathetic eye.

The eternal, the unknown, and the transitory nature of the environment in which the animals reside illustrate a pictorial predicament of place that is the only space in which they can exist as wild beings. The animals document what is theirs, yet only hint at how they exist without us. Knowingly, they ponder their journeys with focused discerning eyes, amongst an astute visual description of the landscape. The photographs, clear as day, become a framework of wonderment depicting an immediate glow within the darkness of the night activity. The photographs reflect an obvious notion that the animals form a relationship with how their world is documented. The photographs also reflect both an 'inner' connectedness and an interconnectedness by way of visual dialogue generated by expressions of self(ies) and place.

The real thematic evidenced here is the absence of human intervention in the making of these portraits. The reality however, is that human intervention is the very threat that seems so prevalent in these photographs. We can't ignore that the depiction of the surrounding landscape appears as an accurate portrayal and insight to the threat we humans pose. The real 'document' is the transitory eternal passage of these beings through a particular ecosystem at this particular time, ushered with fragility, emerging as portraits.

Dr Enrico Scotece *is a photographer and academic whose work explores notions of perceptual experience as photographic response. He resides as a full-time Lecturer in Photomedia at Western Sydney University, and recently completed a PhD.*

About | B Dam Pictures

B Dam Pictures is comprised of artists Anthony Sillavan and Stephanie Sheppard. They have exhibited separately and together since the late 1980s. Both have worked for significant periods in regional parts of NSW and have based their studios in the Monaro since 2005. Broadly, Sheppard's perspective is based on the natural landscape and Sillavan is more influenced by urban and archaeological concerns.

Acknowledgements

No exhibition comes to life of its own volition, and many parties have been involved to bring these photographs to an audience.

Spirits came about through peripheral involvement in the New South Wales government's South East Local Land Services 'Save Our Scarlet Robin' program in 2018. Through the program, a motion sensor camera was provided to help capture images of subject species and habitat. The compelling nature of the images suggested that the wildlife themselves wanted to convey something of their story.

The first placement of the camera was at 'B Dam', the point when and where peripheral participants of a state government program became 'curators' of B Dam Pictures.

In all things photographic, we would like to acknowledge the continuous and wholehearted support and enthusiasm of Klaus Major and Dr Enrico Scotece, both of whom have provided specific and significant logistical and intellectual activity to this exhibition.

The images themselves are printed on 320 gsm Hahnemuhle Inkjet Photo Rag Pearl by Pixel Perfect in Chippendale. Six prints of each selected image were made, two complete sets have been kept aside as artists' proofs. The Curators are indebted to Pixel Perfect's skills.

Picture frames were made by Framemart, in Stanmore under considerable pressure and the long-standing reliability of the two principals is gratefully acknowledged.

Also gratefully acknowledged are the personnel of PhotoAccess who have ultimately made the exhibition possible.

Finally, to the artists in this exhibition, the native fauna themselves. These beguiling self-portraits ('selfies') are taken by them as they record elements of their status, personality and relationship with a particular environment in a very particular historical time.

The images were taken between mid-2018 and late December 2021. Few of any audience will require any reminder of the environmental conditions existing over that time, and indeed, the animals are presented with the conditions that they must survive in. It seems particularly futile to identify one crisis over another as any environmental conditions are potentially fatal for all native fauna. To that end, date stamps and other data have been removed from the images as they would seem to the curators to be of little significance to the subject animals and insects. No other enhancements were made to any expressions or environments depicted. The only human element outside of the camera itself is a plastic crate visible in the empty dam which was hand-filled with water.

Their story talks to our story. This exhibition is dedicated to the extraordinary creatures of this continent.

B Dam Pictures

May 2022