

Esperanza

In a widely reported story released on 10 May 2010, AAP seemed to sum up the media's main interest in the protest:

The captain of a Greenpeace ship has been fined about \$8,000 over a protest that shut down a Queensland coal terminal, costing BHP millions of dollars

But Esperanza captain Vladimir Votiacov escaped a conviction for his role in last year's blockade, which forced the closure of the Hay Point coal terminal south of Mackay for 36 hours ... At the time of the protest in August last year, the Queensland Resources Council said the protest had cost taxpayers about \$1 million a day in royalties, and BHP about \$13 million a day. The ship blockade coincided with protests by individuals at Hay Point, and another coal terminal at Abbot Point. Fifteen activists have already faced court over their actions. They pleaded guilty and were fined.

Because Belinda Pratten was there to document it we have another view entirely of what the Esperanza (Spanish for 'hope') was doing in the waters off Mackay on 5 August 2009, and the actions, motivation and personalities of the people on board. This exhibition, and other exhibitions of the images in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne, helps bridge the gap between the media's preoccupation with business interests and the punishment of dissenters, and the message of people who have a need to voice their concerns through protest.

Belinda Pratten's work as a photographer and filmmaker has taken her to many places, physically and emotionally—managing the pictures bureau for the Australian Financial Review, documenting the release of rehabilitated orangutans in Borneo's Meratus forests, assignments for Greenpeace, teaching in Brewarrina and at the Canberra Institute of Technology. The face we most often see is through the multitude of always intriguing and beautifully made entries in PhotoAccess group exhibitions and Belinda's memorable 1994 *The Surfer* in the PhotoAccess 25th Anniversary Print Portfolio.

So at last we have a solo HUW DAVIES GALLERY exhibition from Belinda Pratten. It's a compelling look at the Abbot and Hay Point protests, dramatic and full of action but also revealing of the personalities of the protestors and the ship that allowed them to get so close. *Esperanza* is a very fine example of documentary photography and an exhibition we are proud to present in the HUW DAVIES GALLERY.

Stephen Best from Macquarie Editions printed the works and sponsored the exhibition, profits from which will be donated by Belinda to Greenpeace.

David Chalker



Artist's Statement

I was commissioned by Greenpeace to document a direct action in north Queensland, off the coast of Cairns, and general life on board the Greenpeace ship the Esperanza in August 2009.

The activists were calling on Kevin Rudd to take some real action on climate change, asking him to choose between standing up for his own people and our neighbours in the Pacific Islands, or backing the continued expansion of the coal industry.

Australia is the world's largest coal exporter, and towering over the coastline at Hay Point in Queensland is one the largest coal terminals on the planet. Greenpeace figures say that current and proposed expansions would take Australia's export capacity from 332 to 730 millions tonnes per year. This equates to over one billion extra tonnes of carbon pollution. Not only this, but Australia also has 12 new coal-fired power stations on the books.

The action was timed to coincide with the Pacific Islands Forum in nearby Cairns, a summit at which Pacific Island leaders were demanding climate policies that would safeguard the future of their people. There were two actions, the first at Abbot Point and the next day at Hay Point. The Hay Point activists managed to shut down the coal export facility for over 36 hours, as four activists attached themselves to cables 50 metres above the sea.

Dr Linda Selvey, Greenpeace CEO, said before the April 2010 court cases for the activists:

The actions of these brave individuals are even more relevant today than they were eight months ago. The politicians may have stopped talking about it, but climate change is here, it's real, and we must make changes to avert disaster. Coal is the biggest single contributor to climate change and Australia continues to expand its coal industry like there is no tomorrow.

I was honoured to be documenting this historic action and also to have a window into the lives of the activists on board the Esperanza. They are real people, doing a real job, who believe that the best avenue for them to voice their concerns, about climate change, is through direct action. I hope that this exhibition gives their action a longer life span and that it encourages people to think more deeply about the most important issue facing humanity.

Belinda Pratten
June 2010



Biography

Belinda Pratten is a Canberra based freelance photographer, filmmaker and teacher of photographic practice and theory. She has worked as a Canberra Press Gallery photographer, as photographic bureau manager with the Australian Financial Review and is a Director of *freeswimmers* specialising in cinematography and photography, and producing original content. Her work is represented in the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra Museum and Gallery, PhotoAccess and private collections in Australia and overseas.

Education

B Ec. (University of Sydney), 1988; Certificate in Photography, Sydney Technical College, 1993; short courses Screen ACT/Screen Australia, ACT Filmmaker's Network, Australian Film Television and Radio School, PhotoAccess, Alliance Francaise

Solo exhibitions

- 2010 *Esperanza*, images taken on board the Greenpeace ship Esperanza, HUW DAVIES GALLERY, PhotoAccess, Manuka Arts Centre, Canberra, touring to Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne
- 2008 *Strength for Tomorrow - Hope for Today*, portraits of Anglicare workers for anti-Poverty Week, Belconnen Community Centre, Belconnen, ACT
- 1998 *Brewarrina Faces*, Council Chambers, Brewarrina, NSW
- 1999 *Brewarrina Faces*, Correlli's Cafe, King Street, Newtown, NSW
- 1996 *Images of Our Elders*, Sydney Opera House, Sydney, NSW

Recent group exhibitions

- 2010 *Access all areas 2010: The PhotoAccess Members Show*, HUW DAVIES GALLERY, PhotoAccess, Manuka Arts Centre, Canberra; *Holiday Snaps*, HUW DAVIES GALLERY, PhotoAccess
- 2009 *One Shot*, Tuggeranong Arts Centre, ACT; *Access all areas 2009: The PhotoAccess Members Show* and *Hang it yourself 2009*, HUW DAVIES GALLERY, PhotoAccess
- 2008 ACMP Signature group exhibition, VIVID: The National Photography Festival, Canberra; *Access all areas 2009: The PhotoAccess Members Show*, HUW DAVIES GALLERY, PhotoAccess, Canberra; Canberra Living Artist's Competition and Projection, M16 (2nd place winner)
- 2007 *Plastic? Fantastic!* HUW DAVIES GALLERY, PhotoAccess, Canberra; Signature Exhibition ACMP Melbourne
- 2006 *Animals in Focus*, World Society for the Protection of Animals touring exhibition (UK, Denmark, NZ, Tanzania, Brazil, Costa Rica and Canada); *Visage*, Canberra Contemporary Art Space; *Wildside: What's going on on the hilltops of Canberra?*, HUW DAVIES GALLERY, PhotoAccess, Canberra
- 2005 AIPP Awards Show, Canberra Centre; *Access all areas 2005: The PhotoAccess Members Show*, HUW DAVIES GALLERY, PhotoAccess
- 2001 *East Timor: through the eye of the lens* (Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne); currently on permanent display in Dili, East Timor
- 2000 *Leave Your Hat On*; toured NSW with singer-songwriter Merri-May Gill
- 1999 *Images of Our Elders Retrospective*, National Portrait Gallery, Old Parliament House

Works

30 images on Hahnemühle Bamboo 290gsm paper 30 x 45 cm or 45 x 30 cm and 61 x 92 or 92 x 61 cm, with four images on Jacquard Silk Habotai 16 mome 100 x 61 cm (see Room List for details and titles)

All images are for sale in an edition of 15; small images \$360, large images and images on silk \$600

Digital photo frame: Anthony Downs, Hay Point, Day 1 (images of the blockade from activist Ant's camera)



photoaccess
at the Manuka Arts Centre
An ACT Government Arts Facility

www.photoaccess.org.au
Manuka Arts Centre, Manuka Circle
Griffith ACT 2603



supported by the ACT & Commonwealth Governments

Esperanza



Belinda Pratten

11 - 27 June 2010

HUW DAVIES GALLERY

photoaccess
at the Manuka Arts Centre