

# C o l o u r s o f I n d i a

Marissa McDowell | 2013 NAIDOC Week



*Red Chair*

Marissa McDowell has worked in live production for the Canberra Raiders and Brumbies, hosts and produces an Indigenous radio program on 2XXfm 98.3 Community Radio and has worked on news and events with the ABC. She is a Wiradjuri woman, from Cowra in the Central West of New South Wales. Marissa is our 2013 Emerging Indigenous Photomedia Artist and *Colours of India* is her first solo exhibition.

Listening to Marissa talk I heard a well educated and worldly woman. She spoke enthusiastically about her recent trip to India but said she only made a few photographs and was unsure how they would turn out. She needn't have worried.

India is a favoured destination for photographers and travellers. Steeped in history, it is a country that has strong ties to the past and traditional ways of living, culturally as well as spiritually. The word 'India' itself conjures up colour in our minds, even if we have never been there. Looking at the images Marissa made in India a few immediately stood out for their honesty and response to something personal. My enthusiasm for her photograph *Red Chair* led Marissa to tell me that the green awning had reminded her of Cowra. 'That shot', she said, '...could have been made in my gran's place.'

As human beings, we relate to what we know, and also to what reminds us of what we know. This is an important aspect of photography that cements our belief in something that already exists, whether it is a physical object or an emotion that we have felt before. Marissa's *Colours of India* doesn't only show us what the title so obviously refers to. Her document of a far away land is a personal response to what Marissa has felt, and seen before. The photographs reveal her inquisitiveness and open-mindedness.

*Colours of India* by Marissa McDowell is our contribution to 2013 NAIDOC Week. PhotoAccess is privileged to share Marissa's work with visitors to the HUW DAVIES GALLERY.

Sean Davey

Supported by the ACT and Commonwealth Governments

## Artist Statement

I travelled to Mumbai with 16 other film students from the University of Canberra to study the art of Bollywood filmmaking. I stayed in a six story building at the YWCA where I shared a floor with 13 other women; the men stayed in a separate apartment close by. As students we were privileged to watch behind the scenes and learn how the television and film industry works from production to showing on television. This also included a visit to the costume and props stores that are sourced to build amazing sets. I spotted a Coca Cola sign painted on a rundown film set at the ND Studios, the biggest film set in India, and a rack of brightly coloured costumes covered with sequins and lace towards the back at the Maganlal Dresswalla. I turned my eye to one of the film crew on a television set, the series called Mrs Kaushik Ki Paanch Bahuyien—he was adjusting a studio light and positioned himself to make the perfect silhouette.

This was my first trip overseas and was an introduction to such cultural diversity that touched all of my senses. I arrived at the airport at midnight and I was overwhelmed by the heat and humidity. I got my camera out as soon as I hopped onto the bus heading towards the YWCA and immediately started filming and taking photos. I filmed a man on a motorcycle with a passenger passing by who was waving at us and people asleep lying on the top of truck roofs and in the streets.

I was nervous about how my photographs would turn out because I was using a Cannon Power Shot camera that I won in a Christmas raffle at a local club. I packed light and didn't take my DSLR because of its weight. I photographed an older woman sitting on a mosaic rooftop; she was watching a beautiful sunset, which was a part of her daily routine from what I observed. I travelled to the Amber Fort, one of the most colourful and interesting places I have ever seen, constructed by Raja Man Singh in 1592. I photographed two huge cast iron cooking pots set alongside a contrasting golden wall, one of my favourite photographs. Another one included the tour guide who was leaning against the wall. The remote villages set in the countryside were filled with charm. I observed the people as they passed by and I smiled at them while capturing their beauty as a moment trapped in time. Not even the threat of the wet season could dampen my spirit and keep me from shooting. Tucked away in the mountains in Malvali a country guest house called Indrayani had a red fire bucket hanging outside next to some red cricket stumps, clearly a much loved game. A couple of metres away stood a rainbow coloured spiral staircase leading to the rooftop where the sunset shone pink.

On my return to Lohagarh Iron Fort I saw a tiny village temple splashed with colours of red and blue, it drew my attention as a woman passed by wearing a beautiful pink Sari. Everything that was coated in such intense and vibrant colour grabbed my attention from bicycles beside a dusty pink wall, pots, ruined buildings to clothing, and even a red chair set behind a cold grey table—this probably being the most obscure thing I have ever photographed. A green laser light roof reminded me of my hometown Cowra, in New South Wales, and of an old Australian pergola.

I spent a total of five magnificent weeks travelling through Mumbai and the Golden Triangle: Delhi, Jaipur and Agra. I stayed in a 300 year old palace, visiting the Taj Mahal and many other interesting and beautiful places. My experience of this magical place is one I will forever treasure.

This culturally rich and colourful country offered the perfect backdrop for these 17 images.



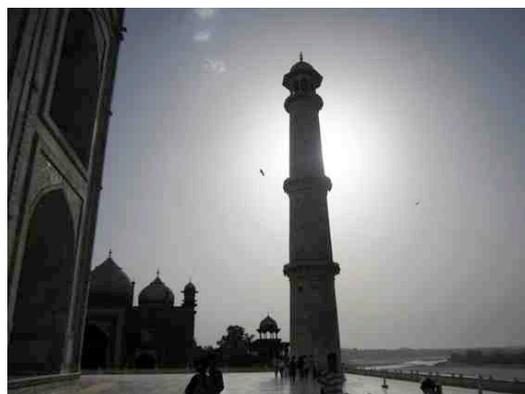
*Coca Cola*



*Street Stall*



*Guesthouse #1*



*Taj Mahal*

## Artist CV

### Education

- 2012 Bachelor of Media Arts and Production, University of Canberra; University of Canberra; Film and Media Bollywood Studies Winter Semester, Mumbai, India
- 2008 Advanced Diploma in Media Production, Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT)
- 2006 Diploma of Screen and Certificate IV Broadcasting (Radio), CIT



*Young Girl*



*Bollywood*

### Solo exhibitions

- 2013 *Colours of India*, HUW DAVIES GALLERY, PhotoAccess, Manuka Arts Centre, Canberra, ACT

### Awards

- 2013 2013 PhotoAccess Emerging Indigenous Photomedia Artist
- 2011 Finalist, Canberra Short Film Festival (Canberra Glassworks Documentary, Dendy Cinema Canberra).
- 2005 Short film screening and finalist for the CIT Film and Television Awards (National Museum of Australia)

### Professional experience

- Current 2013 documentary commission NITV; 2006 to present, Audio Visual Assistant, Canberra Stadium; 2012 to present Radio Presenter, 2XXfm 98.3 Community Radio Canberra
- 2012 Producer, Director, Cinematographer, Editor for Jujitsu documentary for 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Peter Morton Academy of Judo, Jujitsu, Karate National Seminar screening (The Boat House Canberra); Producer, Director, Cinematographer, Editor for *The Canberra Glassworks* documentary; Indigenous Glassworks Artist documentary shown at 2012 Festival of Pacific Arts; Editor of short film produced in Mumbai, India, public face for India Study Abroad Centre (ISAC)
- 2011 Producer, Director, Cinematographer, Editor for short film *Super Steve* (Tuggeranong Arts Centre).
- 2006–08 News Operating Assistant (NOA) and Radio Operating Production Officer (ROPO); Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)
- 2007 Event Manager, Public Relations and Sponsorship Manager, Short Film Maker, for Charity Film Festival (Ojo's Café and Bar Tuggeranong) raising money for the National Breast Cancer Foundation
- From 2006 Live events: bumping in and out, filming, switching and directing at The National Folk Festival, The National Museum of Australia, the Rock Eisteddfod at the Canberra Theatre and the Music Industry Centre (MIC) Fest at CIT

## List of works

Images are pigment inkjet prints on Canson Infinity Rag Photographique; edition of 15 + 2AP  
\$185 each (unframed)

		mm (paper size)
1	<b><i>Red Chair</i></b>	430 x 565
2	<b><i>Bollywood</i></b>	565 x 430
3	<b><i>Bicycle</i></b>	430 x 565
4	<b><i>Guesthouse #1</i></b>	430 x 565
5	<b><i>Staircase</i></b>	565 x 430
6	<b><i>Guesthouse #2</i></b>	430 x 565
7	<b><i>Village Temple</i></b>	430 x 565
8	<b><i>Sunset</i></b>	430 x 565
9	<b><i>Palace</i></b>	565 x 430
10	<b><i>Taj Mahal</i></b>	430 x 565
11	<b><i>Street Stall</i></b>	430 x 565
12	<b><i>Tour Guide</i></b>	565 x 430
13	<b><i>Fire Bucket</i></b>	565 x 430
14	<b><i>Amber Palace</i></b>	430 x 565
15	<b><i>Street Scene</i></b>	430 x 565
16	<b><i>Coca Cola</i></b>	430 x 565
17	<b><i>Young Girl</i></b>	565 x 430

### Multimedia Room

- 18 ***The Observer***, 2013 (DVD, 15 minutes)



*Fire Bucket*



*Staircase*