

MEDIA RELEASE

27 February 2023



HEIDE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART PRESENTS FIRST AUSTRALIAN SURVEY EXHIBITION OF CELEBRATED US PHOTOGRAPHER CATHERINE OPIE

1 APRIL - 9 JULY 2023



Melbourne, Australia: Heide Museum of Modern Art has today announced the **first survey exhibition in Australia** of renowned US photographer **Catherine Opie**. Presented at Heide from **1 April to 9 July 2023**, the exhibition ***Catherine Opie: Binding Ties*** brings together more than fifty key works traversing the artist's historic and recent practice.

Since the 1990s, Catherine Opie's photographs have challenged and illuminated our understanding of notions of personal and political affiliation, the central theme of the exhibition. In **1994** Heide exhibited eighteen of Opie's portraits in the exhibition ***Persona Cognita***, curated by **Juliana Engberg**, which represented Opie's first showing in Australia. Now almost three decades later, Heide will host the first survey of the artist's work in this part of the world.

Heide Museum of Modern Art Artistic Director Lesley Harding said: *"We are delighted to present the first survey exhibition of Catherine Opie's photography in Australia, three decades since her work was first displayed at Heide. The exhibition is an exciting opportunity to consider Opie's remarkable body of work from new perspectives, from her iconic portraits of her friends and contemporaries to photographs and digital animations giving voice to political and environmental issues that concern and unite communities across the world."*

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The exhibition at Heide presents Opie's early, most recognisable works exploring constructions of gender and sexuality, through alternative conceptions of the nuclear household, to more recent explorations on solidarity and collective action in the face of proliferating global crises.

Opie remains well known for her portraits of leather dykes, drag performers and trans members of her queer community in San Francisco and Los Angeles in the nineties, offering incisive commentary on identity expression and group membership. Her most recent series extend this thinking, exploring the ways our identification as individuals is eclipsed by the more critical need for us to identify collectively, working together toward common goals of environmental sustainability and social equality. Now more than ever, we relate to one another as citizens of the world tasked with its protection, reflected in social movements like Black Lives Matter.

Guest Exhibition Curator Brooke Babington said: *"The selected works demonstrate Catherine Opie's mastery of photographic technologies and genres to offer us a heterogeneous conception of human relations—one that moves beyond the traditional limits of identity as defined within and against the wider group, through changing notions of 'family', 'community' and 'collectivity'. A consistent motivation across Opie's three decades of work, these ideas offer us new and challenging ways of thinking through the role of the individual in a rapidly changing world."*

Bringing together over fifty works traversing Opie's incredible oeuvre, **Catherine Opie: Binding Ties** is the first chance for audiences to experience a major survey of the internationally celebrated photographer's work here in Australia.

Ends

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EXHIBITION DETAILS:

Catherine Opie: Binding Ties

1 April to 9 July 2023

Heide Museum of Modern Art, 7 Templestowe Road, Bulleen Victoria 3105

IMAGES available to download [HERE](#)

IMAGE CAPTIONS (L-R): Catherine Opie, *Bo*, 1994. © Catherine Opie, Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Hong Kong, London, and Seoul; Catherine Opie, *Oliver in a Tutu*, 2004. © Catherine Opie, Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Hong Kong, London, and Seoul; Catherine Opie, *Untitled #4 (monument/monumental)*, 2020. © Catherine Opie, Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Hong Kong, London, and Seoul.

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ABOUT CATHERINE OPIE

Catherine Opie (b. 1961, Sandusky, OH; lives in Los Angeles) is known for her powerfully dynamic photography that examines the ideals and norms surrounding the culturally constructed American dream and American identity. She first gained recognition in the 1990s for her series of studio portraits, photographing gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals drawn from her circle of friends and artists. Opie has traveled extensively across the country exploring the diversity of America's communities and landscapes, documenting quintessential American subjects—high school football players and the 2008 presidential inauguration—while also continuing to display America's subcultures through formal portraits. Using dramatic staging, Opie presents queer and trans bodies in intimate photographs that evoke traditional Renaissance portraiture—images of power and respect. In her portraits and landscapes, Opie establishes a level of ambiguity of both identity and place by exaggerating masculine or feminine characteristics, or by exaggerating distance, cropping, or blurring her landscapes.

Opie was a 2019 Guggenheim Fellow recipient and the Robert Mapplethorpe Resident in Photography at the American Academy in Rome for 2021. Opie's work has been exhibited extensively throughout the United States and abroad and is held in over 50 major collections throughout the world. Her first monograph, "Catherine Opie", was recently published by Phaidon. Opie received a B.F.A. from the San Francisco Art Institute, and an M.F.A. from the California Institute of the Arts in 1988, and lives and works in Los Angeles.

Full CV available at <https://www.regenprojects.com/artists/catherine-opie/biography>

ABOUT HEIDE

Set on sixteen acres of parkland with Yarra River frontage, Heide Museum of Modern Art, or Heide as it is affectionately known, is one of Australia's most important cultural institutions. Once a significant Wurundjeri gathering place, the property was later a dairy farm before becoming known as a hub for Australian modernist art and writing after it was purchased by art patrons John and Sunday Reed in 1934.

The Reeds opened their home to the most progressive artists of their era, including Sidney Nolan, Albert Tucker, Joy Hester, John Perceval, Charles Blackman and Danila Vassilieff. Nolan's famous Ned Kelly series (1946–47) was painted in the dining room of the Heide farmhouse.

Continuing this spirited legacy, today Heide works to inspire creative talent, collaborating with emerging and mid-career artists as well as celebrating those who have made major contributions to Australian and international art.