

Sarah Rhodes

Art & social documentary photographer

Sarah Rhodes' art and social documentary photography practice combines her careers as a museum collections storyteller and newspaper photographer, allowing her to explore the role of creativity in shaping identity. Her interest in portraiture was born out of a psychology and fine art degree gained at the University of Sydney, combined with her innate interest in people. She began exploring the essence of creativity by watching artists closely in their kitchens and studios for the coffee-table book *The Artist's Lunch* (Murdoch Books, 2008) and the exhibition series *Great Australian Artists* (2005–2008). Her ongoing series *Play* (2008–) looks at how children use games of survival in the bush to transition from child to teenage-hood.

Sarah's first encounter with Albury LibraryMuseum's collection of possum skin cloaks was in 2009, when she was working for the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. That introduction started her on a journey that would take her around Victoria and back to the LibraryMuseum. Her lens is now firmly focused on the positive role the revitalisation of the possum skin cloak-making tradition has played in connecting Aboriginal people to their country and culture.

With the blessing of *possum women* Vicki Couzens and Lee Darroch, Sarah set off in March 2011 on a two-week road trip across Victoria (often with several cloaks in the backseat of her car). The journey was both fulfilling and life-changing. Having been touched by the spirit of a possum skin cloak, it has refused to let her go.

Sarah found the Elders to be passionate and generous. Kerang sisters Esther Kirby and Phoebe Nicholson told stories of their childhood spent on the Murray River. Uncle Ivan Couzens reminisced about growing up on the mission at Framlingham Aboriginal Reserve, and of how he rose above racism in Warrnambool in the 1950s, on the football field and beyond. Aunty Carolyn Briggs spoke about deep listening, and Aunty Nancy Rooke told of her efforts to encourage Albury's Aboriginal young people to learn about their culture.

Sarah's work has been published and exhibited nationally and internationally, and is held in the collections of AlburyCity, National Library of Australia, Mandurah City Collection (Western Australia), Koorie Heritage Trust, Margaret Hannah Olley Trust and Charles Blackman Trust, as well as in private collections.

You can find out more about Sarah and her work on her website at www.sarahrhodes.com