

DEREK KRECKLER  
by Isobel Crombie

Derek Kreckler's photographs of the beach are, as his quite literal title states, 'holey'. In a playfully disarming manner, he has excised spheres from the once seamless surface of his photographs, placing these circular elements on low plinths on the floor. As a performance artist of long standing, Kreckler brings a similarly dynamic quality to his photographic work. By creating a jigsaw of sorts, he invites the viewer to take on an active relationship as they look at the photographs, giving them the chance to imaginatively reassemble the 'missing' pieces of the images in their mind.

As I cheerfully performed this visual game, Kreckler's work made me think again of the photographic sleights of hand that distinguish this wonderfully mutable medium. For most photographers, no matter how radical the imagery they depict, the physical surface of the photographic emulsion generally remains unbroken, acting as an inducement to enter into its illusion of three-dimensionality. However, Kreckler's work points towards a different, albeit less popularised, heritage in which the fine print is not inviolate but a means to an end. His distant photographic cousins in the nineteenth century, for instance, freely cut, shaped and modelled photographs (generally portraits) into all manner of formats in an effort to make photography, and the human subject, more tactile and 'real'.

In Kreckler's photographs, the disruption of the image has both a physical and conceptual dimension as the formerly intact skin of the work becomes permeable, porous – holey even – and altogether more open to new meanings. In particular, the subject of these photographs leads us to think about the natural world and the means by which it is photographed. Kreckler beguilingly dismantles two main tropes of landscape photographs by juxtaposing 'holey' images of sublime nature – wild seas and rugged coastlines – alongside the more domesticated view of the Australian ocean as the playground of the Pacific.

In the case of the sublime especially, there is a dominant history in photography of what has been evocatively termed 'green pornography'.<sup>1</sup> These seductively lush or awe-inspiring images of the wilderness, produced along tightly established formal lines, idealise the natural world as an aesthetic commodity to be consumed by the viewer. In a non-dogmatic fashion, Kreckler literally punctures this tradition, suggesting that the complexity of the real world cannot be so easily contained in objectifying views of the landscape.

In Kreckler's photographs, the landscape is no longer 'watertight' in terms of its representation, but is a realm in which alternative interpretations are possible. What these meanings are seems to be offered by the spheres that Kreckler cuts out and which act as highlighted areas of significance. His large and small spheres emphasise the fundamental qualities of the watery landscapes – ocean, sky, rocks – along with the figure of a bather. Their separation suggests the process by which we break down our visual analysis of any scene into its key constituent parts. In a more poetic sense too, the spheres bring us back to the basics by emphasising some of the elements that constitute the natural world, returning the land to us in a way that is more interactive, and certainly more enlivened.

## NOTE

1 M. Drysdale, 'Cappuccino Papers Number 1', *Imagine the Future*, Melbourne, 1995, pp. 56–60.

right:  
**Derek Kreckler**  
*Holey 3*  
2003

opposite:  
**Derek Kreckler**  
*Holey 1*  
2003

