

LIFE AFTER WARTIME, A SUITE OF MULTIMEDIA ARTWORKS

In 1998 Ross Gibson and Kate Richards began collaborating on the suite of works **Life After Wartime** (LAW). Based on Gibson's extensive research into a crime scene archive owned by the NSW Police Service, the suite of works is a series of interrogative responses to the archive.

These black and white images capture a startling visual record of life, folly and death in Sydney nearly 50 years ago, offering glimpses into a world often ignored by traditional records of history.

"These images remind us that the past is not really the place we comfortably imagine it to have been, but is rather a terrain as layered with tension and complexity as our own moment in time." Ross Gibson

The parent project of LAW is a CD-ROM funded by the Australian Film Commission. Released in late 2003, LAW CD-ROM is a story engine with which users can construct an infinite array of narrative circulating around various characters and locations in a portside city immediately after World War II. An exhibition version of the CD-ROM entitled **Darkness Loiters** has also been designed for gallery display.

The next work in the suite is **Crime Scene**, exhibited by the Justice and Police Museum, Sydney in 1999. This photographic exhibition of 100 prints has a generative sound design, an interactive touchscreen database of oral history interviews with forensic detectives, an additional database of images with Gibson's research notes and a web portal to contemporary forensic websites. **Crime Scene** ran for 12 months to popular and critical acclaim, and went on to an extensive tour of regional galleries.

Gibson and Richards have also devised a live version of LAW in which they improvise storytelling using images and texts from the LAW database. Staged in a syneasthetic relationship with jazz minimalists The Necks, **Life After Wartime live with The Necks** was performed at the 2002 Adelaide Fringe Festival with support from the Australia Council. It later played 2 sell out nights in Sydney at The Studio, Sydney Opera House in 2003. In what could be described as improvised movie-making (or improvised audio-visual storytelling), **LAW live with The Necks** explores an intuitive interplay of the visual sequencing of crime images and minimalist text

along with The Necks' unique improvised musical compositions. The hypnotic intensity of The Necks' music fuses with these evocative images to take audiences on a fascinating journey exploring the underside of Australian history.

Gibson and Richards are developing an immersive installation, entitled **Bystander**, based on the same images and texts.