

# A History of Happiness

Curated by Juliana Engberg

Nan Goldin, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Peter Land, Robert Mapplethorpe, Yoko Ono, Robert Owen & Yoshihiro Suda

The **Australian Centre for Contemporary Art** will open with two exhibitions presented by the **2002 Melbourne Festival**. The first will be an emotional ride through **A History of Happiness**, a group exhibition curated by **Juliana Engberg**, which explores and questions our understanding of what it means to be happy.

**A History of Happiness** takes its lead from one of exhibiting artist Barbara Kruger's works, which challenges: 'Your pleasure is short lived and spasmodic'. Perhaps this is the essence of happiness – a fleeting feeling of euphoria, momentarily within reach, which then evaporates into the general miasma of ennui. Carl Jung reflected that 'a happy life cannot be without a measure of darkness, and the word happiness would lose its meaning if it were not balanced by sadness'.

**A History of Happiness** follows this line of thought, scrutinising the emotion by breaking it down into three main concepts; self delusional and often enhanced; optimistic, but realistic; and uplifting, verging on spiritual enlightenment.

The curatorial layout of **A History of Happiness** melds perfectly with these notions. The first section of the newly opened ACCA space will feature almost 60 striking images depicting dependency in all its forms. Sometimes emotional, sometimes sexual, these images by **Nan Goldin** and **Robert Mapplethorpe** tell stories of addictions between people; people and drugs; people and the falsities we set up to try to achieve happiness. At this level, happiness is a transient, momentarily orgasmic burst.

The second section moves into a slightly more gentle area. Acknowledging the little things that make us happy in everyday life, this section looks at individualism through the images of artists including **Jenny Holzer** and **Peter Land**. The works here express life as a balancing act and address the need to make the best of whatever comes along if we are to be happy.

The third and final section of **A History of Happiness** shows the peak of happiness – enlightenment, often of a spiritual nature. The works of **Yoshihiro Suda**, **Felix Gonzalez-Torres** and **Yoko Ono** feature here, representing the self controlled happiness, a feeling that perpetuates throughout life.

As human beings we are compelled to move between states of joy and tragedy. In each we find small things that can produce an opposite effect. **A History of Happiness** brings together works by international artists to evoke the quixotic nature of the pursuit of happiness in all its manifestations from sex to serenity.

**Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA)**

111 Sturt Street, Southbank

Wednesday, October 16 – Sunday, December 1

Tuesday–Sunday 11am–6pm

Admission: Free

Curator Juliana Engberg will conduct free floortalks. Please contact ACCA on 03 9654 6422 for dates and times.