

Jesse Marlow is a young photographer from Melbourne who has gained considerable acclaim for his documentary and editorial work. He has been a regular contributor to *The Age* and several other leading Australian newspapers and magazines over the last decade. On top of his many accolades, he has recently been invited to take up a twelve-month residency at *Fabrica*, Benetton's research facility in Italy.

A long distance call

Mark Hislop interviewed Jesse Marlow shortly before he left for Italy.

Mark Hislop: Jesse. Can you briefly describe your early years and your introduction to photography?

Jesse Marlow: I started taking photos at the age of 8 in 1985 of the brightly covered murals that cropped up around Melbourne in the early eighties. I was given a book by my uncle on New York subway graffiti, and it sparked an interest in wanting to photograph and document it locally. From that age I had my mum drive me around from wall to wall and I'd jump out and take pictures. That was my first experience with photography. I did that for about 10 years with my mum driving me around on school holidays and weekends. (laughs).

After school I started a photography TAFE course. It was there that I met a really inspiring mentor - a Melbourne photographer who took me under his wing and was really encouraging in his approach. He was quite radical and wanted me to start looking for work and trying to get me to not think like a student. He was very supportive in getting me out in the industry and ever since then I've been working as a photographer and on personal projects ever since.

MH: You've been curated into the Footy show at the MGA, *Australian Rules: around the grounds* and you'll be showing a series of work that culminated in a book *Centre Bounce* that was published in 2003. Can you tell me how that book came about, and what is your interest in sport as a subject for you?

JM: I was always interested in Aussie Rules. I played it growing up, and got up to a reasonably good level, but I had an injury ruin my career.

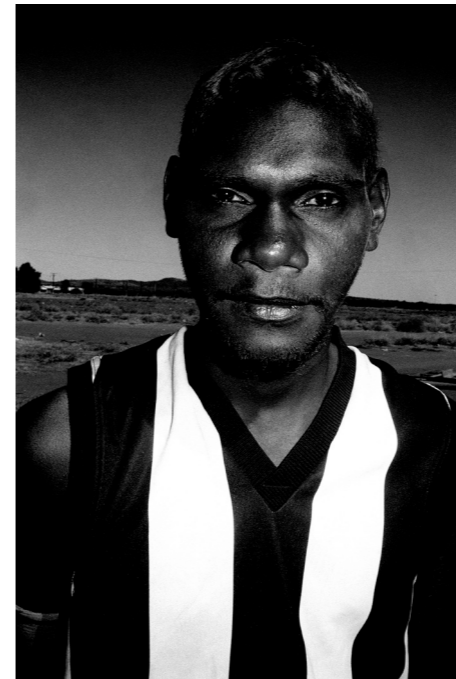
MH: What was that?

JM: I did my back, anyway... I was always interested in football. I usually went every week to watch the AFL with my brother and my dad. I was always intrigued by the indigenous players, and it was in the late 90s when I used to watch Michael Long play and Nicky Windmar that I became interested in wanting to see a whole carnival. I heard about a carnival up in Alice Springs where there was 30 teams who used to drive in from all over the Northern Territory and square off in a 4 day carnival that used to take 6 days and sometimes go on forever. So I turned up - I think I had just turned 21 and I went up there on my own and spent a week photographing this carnival. I was amazed with the passion of these teams, players and families who were playing AFL football.

I met people at this carnival that said to me that "if you think this is good you should go to...". So then for the next 4 years I would go up there photographing different carnivals all over the territory.

MH: Is the book *Centre Bounce* a documentation of the Alice Springs carnival?

JM: No, well the book is about the 4 years work. It documents about 8 trips up to the territory over that 4 year period, and the communities and carnival that I visited over that time. But it was about 2 years into it that I realised that there hadn't been a serious photographic body of work done on indigenous football. So at about that time, 2 years into it, I thought maybe I should consider making it into a book.



Jesse MARLOW
Steven Brown Japanangka, 2000
Type C print
Reproduced courtesy of the artist and Crossley & Scott.

MH: So this book naturally evolved as an idea while you were doing the project. It wasn't a five year plan?

JM: No, my first plan for it was to shoot this carnival in Alice Springs, and try and get a spread in a sports magazine out of it. It just grew from hearing about other carnivals.

MH: Was someone interested in publishing it at the time?

JM: I looked at other ways of getting it done through private sponsorship and grants. I put together a plan and approached the AFL and ATSIC (which was together back then) and a camera company. They all loved the idea and I think it was a very positive project for them to get involved in. So yeah, I received some funding which paid for the publication of the book.

MH: I'm interested in the way a photo-journalist may approach producing a book or an exhibition of work compared to how an artist might approach a gallery space for example. Can you define that for me?

JM: Well I came to it at the time from a strictly photo-journalist approach. Back then I was looking at this body of work as 60 or 70 photos to tell the story of what I was seeing, so an exhibition didn't come into the equation. For me the book could tell the whole story.



Jesse MARLOW
Phonebox 2006
Type C print
Reproduced courtesy of the artist and Crossley & Scott.

MH: You work both in photo-journalism as well as in a fine art context. Have you worked it out yet?

JM: I haven't worked it out yet, but there seems to be a lot of photographers in Australia that are doing the same thing. They might be doing books and exhibitions, you might see their work in magazines, then they might be doing corporate work or advertising work. I'm pretty much the same as that. At the moment I'm working in all those areas.

MH: Can you talk a little about the next project - the Benetton project - is it a project?

JM: I don't know what it is (laughs). In 2006 I got a scholarship to the *World Press Photo Master Class* which every year there are 12 photographers, under the age of 30, that are selected by an independent jury around the world to go to Amsterdam and do this intensive week long Master Class. And it was there that I met the people from Fabrica. The Fabrica course is run in conjunction with *Colors* magazine which is groomed by Benetton in Treviso just outside of Venice where I work exclusively for them working on one project for the whole year. The course has been running for 15 years and is the creative arm of Benetton where they sponsor young graphic designers, photographers and illustrators and creative writers.

MH: Thanks Jesse.