



15 October 2011

LIFESTYLES OF THE 19TH CENTURY RICH AND FAMOUS

Long before the Packers, Murdochs and Fairfaxes were considered Australian royalty, the illegitimate son of a highway robber, a bankrupt politician and a farmer founded three of Australia's greatest colonial dynasties.

House, a new photographic book and exhibition at the Museum of Sydney from 15 October, portrays the lifestyle and interests of three of Australia's most important colonial families – the Wentworths, Macleays and Rouses.

House is the result of a four-year collaboration between the HHT and acclaimed Australian photographer Robyn Stacey, allowing unprecedented access to the more than 29,000 objects held in the collections of Elizabeth Bay House, Vaucluse House, Rouse Hill House & Farm and the Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection.

Over 650 rarely seen objects are captured and composed in Stacey's signature 'still-life' style, providing a snapshot into colonial life and the popular leisure and pastime activities colonial families engaged in.

Stacey says, "When I read about Charles Wentworth, he reminded me of Kerry Packer, similar personalities and both powerful men with money. The Macleay's had all the trappings of position but were constantly broke and the Rouses epitomised the old cliché of one generation making all the money and the next spending it all.

"One of my favourite photographs is *Mr Macleay's Fruit and Flora* because it references the grounds of Elizabeth Bay House which no longer exist and using Alexander Macleay's plant journal, we were able to source the same heritage plants to convey the lush and exotic nature of the extensive grounds.

"The Macleays were responsible for introducing into the country the first lychees, pineapples and many flowers that are today considered commonplace in Australian gardens, and in a very real sense these people and their lifestyles shaped who we are today in cosmopolitan Sydney, we are all part of the same story.

"House museums tell us so much about the people who lived there from the values they had to how they lived their lives on a daily basis.

"As I researched and looked through the thousands of diary entries, letters and personal effects, I realised that I could not only connect quite strongly to the many personalities but could see them reflected in their furnishings and interiors.

"Little has changed today, with Australians treating home and lifestyle as one and the same, lavishing a great deal of time, money and emotion into house and garden, interiors and furnishings," says Stacey.

Working in tandem with Stacey's images, an introductory essay from renowned author Peter Timms provides a fresh perspective on the properties and Stacey's photographs. HHT curators have also written introductions to each property and short, descriptive notes to accompany the collection objects.

The exhibition will feature over 15 of Stacey's striking images, a selection of objects from each of the properties and a slide-show revealing the intricate process behind each photograph.

Robyn Stacey is one of Australia's leading photographers with works held in the collections of major galleries and institutions across the country and internationally.

House from 15 October 2011 – 5 February 2012 at Museum of Sydney, corner Bridge & Phillip Streets Sydney, open daily 9.30am – 5pm, T 02 9251 5988, www.hht.net.au, general \$10, concession \$5, family \$20

Book by Robyn Stacey and Peter Timms published by HHT. RRP \$89.95.



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