

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sean Davey and Emmanuel Onom Mel 8 mile: photographs from the margins of Port Moresby

FOCUS GALLERY
28 January–28 February 2010



Sean Davey
Emmanuel Onom Mel (detail) 2009
silver gelatin print
courtesy of the artist

Monash Gallery of Art begins 2010 with *Pasifika: three Oceanic encounters*. *Pasifika* runs from February-April 2010 and focuses attention on our Pacific neighbours.

***Pasifika* begins with a photographic collaboration between Sean Davey and Emmanuel Onom Mel.**

Sean and Emmanuel's exhibition portrays life in the small community of 8 Mile Settlement, located just outside Port Moresby, PNG. Over the past few years, Sean has visited 8 Mile, photographing it and teaching its residents how to take photographs. Emmanuel has also documented his community: together, Sean's black-and-white and Emmanuel's colour photographs produce a compellingly gritty picture of contemporary life in PNG.

Emmanuel photographs the real conditions of life in and around his home in 8 Mile. A self-acknowledged 'bad boy' with a criminal past, he presents a remarkably sensitive portrayal of a community that struggles with basic amenities. Families are forced to spend hours each day collecting and transporting water to use for drinking, cooking and washing, and crime, alcohol and drugs are common.

Sean is a Cairns-based photographer who is forging creative ties with the region, through project-based creative workshops. Sean describes himself as a 'welcome outsider' in the community and sees his project with Emmanuel as an exchange. He continues to visit 8 Mile, photographing and supporting the ongoing creative endeavours of Emmanuel and 8 Mile's other photographers. The creative space that he has fostered between Emmanuel and himself not only serves to highlight the cultural difference, but it also looks to construct new possibilities for our collective future.

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