Melbourne Art Foundation 2010 Lecture Monday 2 August, 6.00pm – 7.30pm, BMW Edge, Federation Square Presented by Bill Henson

Free entry, doors open from 5.30pm
Presented by Melbourne Art Foundation in partnership with the City of Melbourne's Melbourne Conversations Program and Monash University Museum of Art.

Bill Henson
Australian artist
THE LIGHT AND THE DARK AND THE SHADES OF GREY

We should be wary of governments and interest groups who try to impose restrictions on the free exercise of the artistic imagination. Our zeal to protect innocence should not come at the cost of violating artistic experience.

If we believe that art is a high form of education, that its basis is moral and its goal truth, then we should resist the impulse that would deny the artist the right to deal with what may sometimes be ambiguous, complex and disturbing.

Artists can seem like holy fools, they can seem like devils. They may exhibit the cunning of the insane or the illumination of the saint. But genuine art is the great bridge between the inner world in each of us and the ordinary world in which we live. Art shows us the truth and it should never be the quarry of the witch-hunter or the social engineer. Any attempt to make the world better by destroying or shackling art represents a repudiation of the truth.

Bill Henson is one of Australia's leading contemporary artists. Born in Melbourne in 1955, Henson had his first solo exhibition, at the age of 19, at the National Galley of Victoria in 1975. He has since exhibited extensively in Australia and overseas, including New York, London, Paris, Beijing, Tokyo, Montreal, Barcelona, Vienna and Amsterdam. In 1995 Henson represented Australia at the Venice Biennale, with his celebrated series of cut-screen photographs. He holds an honorary doctorate from the University of NSW.

In 2003 Henson's work appeared in *Strangers: The First ICP Triennial of Photography and Video* at the International Center of Photography in New York. In the same year he had a solo exhibition at the Centro de Fotografia, University of Salamanca, Spain. In 2005 a comprehensive survey of his work was held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney and the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne. This landmark survey show attracted record visitor numbers for a contemporary art exhibition in Australia. In 2006 Henson exhibited a major body of work in *Twilight: Photography in the Magic Hour* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Bill Henson's work is to be found in every major public collection in Australia including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Art Gallery of South Australia, the Art Gallery of Western Australia, the National Gallery of Victoria and the National Gallery of Australia. Overseas collections include the Bibliotheque Nationale de Paris, the Houston Museum of Fine Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, the Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna, the Sammlung Volpinum, Vienna, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

A number of major monographs on the artist's work have appeared over the years, the most recent being *Lux et Nox* (2002) and *Mnemosyne* (2005); both published by Scalo (Switzerland). A second edition of *Lux et Nox* was published by Thames & Hudson in 2009.

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