



SERIES BY MICHAEL CORRIDORE

# SEEING THINGS

A photographer creates  
intriguing images by finding  
out what's going on...  
then turning away.



A SERIES OF IMAGES CAN CONVEY AN ENTIRE story – a plane crash, a football match, an election campaign, a demonstration... But what if the photos capture not the plane crash nor, say, the footballers but rather the onlookers: the expressions on their faces; the innumerable things taking place simultaneously away from the central action. Do the pictures then tell the same story, or something quite different?

In his new exhibition, *Angry Black Snake*, photographer Michael Corridore explores this concept by photographing spectators of events or leisure activities out of context with their existing environment. For Corridore, the actual event is not important. "The photographs are not meant to represent the people or the events that the spectators are participating in or watching. Even though the events could be very spectacular in their own right, I found the reactions of the spectators to be quite moving," he says.

The photographs, taken at the same annual event over a four-year period, go beyond recording the event and instead observe the personal experience of onlookers. Taken out of context, their emotions can be difficult to read. "Some people initially think that they are images of something tragic happening. Then, after a second take, people see that the gestures of the people don't reflect that, so slowly people begin to conjure up many varied interpretations of the scenarios."

Corridore, who is based in Sydney and New York, has received a variety of responses to his work. "I've shown a handful of people in Europe and the USA, and their interpretations have been heavily influenced by their cultural mindsets," he says. "In Europe, they see the work as possibly [being] interpretations of dreams

that I'd set up and choreographed, whereas in the USA almost everyone thinks they are explosions or scenes that have unravelled as a result of natural disasters," says Corridore.

The photographs raise questions rather than provide answers (his images tend to be untitled, and the exhibition's name seems wilfully perplexing) and this engages the viewer more than conventional subject matter might. Indeed, Corridore maintains that there were many pictures taken that revealed too much and didn't seem successful to him. "They illustrated the drama of the moments, I guess, but they would not sustain one's attention for long. The photographs are at odds with the moments captured; it was the irony or conflicting emotions of the people in the photographs which seem to appeal."

The series is not a conventional narrative. Instead, it portrays the spectators and participants during moments of enjoyment or anxiety. The event, while occurring just outside the frames of the photos, is irrelevant; it is the experience of the onlookers that is most interesting: "The events are not a secret in any way. If people ask me I'll tell them where the photographs were taken. But, really, will knowing change the viewer's interpretation of the scenarios?"

by Ruby Lohman

*Angry Black Snake* is showing at the Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne, until 15 March.

*The Big Issue* welcomes Roving Eye submissions by photojournalists. The work should represent a series with a coherent theme. Please send proposals to [editorial@bigissue.org.au](mailto:editorial@bigissue.org.au); Subject: Roving Eye.



