



PRESS RELEASE

**Roger Ballen**  
**The Body, the Mind, the Space**

Roger Ballen will attend the opening on Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup> and will sign his book *Ballenesque, Roger Ballen: a Retrospective* (Thames & Hudson) at 7.00 pm.

**Press preview**

Friday June 7<sup>th</sup> 2019, 2.30 pm

Reservation required

**Opening**

Saturday June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019

From 3.00 pm to 8.00 pm

**On view**

June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 – September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Daily, 10.30 am – 7.30 pm

Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10.30 am – 9.00 pm



The Sozzani Foundation presents the exhibition “**The Body, the Mind, the Space**” by Roger Ballen, fifty photographs from the 1970s to the present, a video and a site-specific installation.

Rogen Ballen is one of the most relevant and original contemporary photographers, who reveals the invisible with often disturbing images, suspended in a space between painting, drawing, installation and photography.

American by birth, living in South African since 1982, over the past thirty years he developed a distinctive style of photography using a simple square format in stark and beautiful black and white. In his earlier works his connection to the tradition of documentary photography is clear but through the 1990s he developed a language he describes as “*Ballenesque*” that was instantly recognizable in the art world.

Ballen creates photographic works that border between reality and imagination.  
*“Reality is a word that has no meaning for me. It’s unfathomable. I’d rather like to express the enigma of this world rather than reflect on its fundamental nature.”*

The exhibition at the Fondazione Sozzani is developed into three themes.

### **The Body**

Ballen’s black and white photographs are powerful psychological portraits, which peer deeply into the human condition, his characters act out an absurd *tableau*, creating photographs which are profound and enigmatic in equal measure.

### **The Mind**

Fossil-like facial forms and dismembered body parts coexist uncomfortably with vaporous, ghost-like shadows. Timeless and innovative, earthly and otherworldly, physical and spiritual.

*“There is no way accurately to describe this place...It is a hard place to get to. It took me many years not only to reach it, but also to define it visually.”*

### **The Space**

The mysterious, cell-like rooms in Ballen’s photographs are actual places, but they are unsettling, strange and illogical. The walls are covered with scribbled drawings, stains and dangling wires: the floors are strewn with bizarre props and artefacts.

The altered sense of place contains drawn and sculptural elements, and the collaboration between artist and subject are clearly evident.

**Roger Ballen** was born in New York in 1950 but has been living and working in South Africa for over 30 years.

After graduating in Psychology at the University of California at Berkeley in 1972, Ballen began traveling and crossed Asia and Africa - by land - overland. In 1979 he published “*Boyhood*”, based on his travels.

In 1981 Ballen completed a doctorate in Mineral Economics at the Colorado School of Mines. He moved to Johannesburg as a consultant in search of new mineral deposits that took him to remote peripheral regions of the country. He traveled over 300,000 kilometers making images of Dorps, rural

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communities in South Africa published in 1986.

The tradition of documentary photography is clear in *Dorps* (1986) and *Platteland* (1994) but through the 1990s he developed a style he describes as “documentary fiction”. After 2000 the people he first discovered and documented living on the margins of South African society increasingly became a cast of actors in the series “*Outland*” (2000, revised in 2015) and “*Shadow Chamber*” (2005).

In 2002 he was named Photographer of the Year at the Rencontres Internationales de la photographie d'Arles in France. In 2003 the Galleria Sozzani hosted the first Roger Ballen exhibition in Milan.

The line between fantasy and reality in his subsequent series “*Boarding House*” (2009) and “*Asylum of the Birds*” (2014) became increasingly blurred and in these series he employed drawings, painting, collage and sculptural techniques to create elaborate sets.

In 2016 he released the book “*The Theatre of Apparitions*” published by Thames & Hudson.

In a departure from his existing oeuvre, intricately layered images occupy a space between painting, drawing and photography linking image-making and theatrical performance.

A major retrospective of his collected works “*Ballenesque, Roger Ballen: a retrospective*”, was printed by Thames & Hudson in 2017.

In his recent photographic series he has employed drawings, painting, collage and sculptural techniques to create elaborate sets. Ballen has invented a new hybrid aesthetic in these works but one still rooted firmly in photography.

The collaborative film *I Fink You Freeky*, created for the South African cult band *Die Antwoord* in 2012, has garnered over 125-million hits on YouTube.

He has taken his work into the realms of sculpture and installation, at Paris' *Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature* (2017), Australia's Sydney College of the Arts (2016) and at the Serlachius Museum in Finland (2015) is to name but a few. The installation at Les Rencontres d'Arles 2017, “*House of the Ballenesque*” was voted as one of the best exhibitions for 2017.

In 2018 at the Wiesbaden Biennale, Germany, the installation “*Roger Ballen's Bazaar/Bizarre*” was created in an abandoned shopping centre.

The work of Roger Ballen is present in the main institutions around the world and his photographs are included in many public collections including Museum of Modern Art, New York; Center Georges Pompidou, Paris; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Louisiana Museum, Denmark; Lacma, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

[www.rogerballen.com](http://www.rogerballen.com)

### **Fondazione Sozzani**

The Fondazione Sozzani was established in 2016 by Carla Sozzani and is dedicated to the promotion of culture through photography, fashion, the fine arts, and applied arts. The Foundation has assumed the patronage of Galleria Carla Sozzani and continues all relevant public functions that the Galleria has supported for the past 29 years.

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