

**Pastoral Portraits:
Rob MacInnis and Geoff Fitzgerald**

Rob MacInnis' animal portraits are drawn from the series *Our Name In Lights*, which depicts barnyard animals "rehearsing" for a play. MacInnis describes the setting as an early twentieth century vaudeville stage, with the animals presented as sentient beings capable of making their own decisions. He says,

"The photographs locate and amplify the personality of each individual animal, and their narratives are thus made visible. By highlighting the behaviour of these farm animals through the photographic lens, I seek to draw attention to the inherent quality of the medium to imbue its subjects with a sense of heightened significance."



Geoff Fitzgerald



Rob MacInnis

Geoff Fitzgerald developed an interest in beekeeping in high school, although never actually kept bees. Eventually, apiculture became a compelling subject for his photographic work. While MacInnis applies a fictional narrative to his subject, Fitzgerald's approach, at first glance, seems documentary. However, his photographs also reveal a keen eye for colour, pattern and composition. By isolating a single bee in several images, he invites the viewer to consider the individuality of each insect, and not simply see an anonymous mass.

Both photographers bring beauty to their subjects. Yet there is also a sense of gravitas, as the images hint at larger issues. Fitzgerald's work seems particularly timely, as scientists attempt to understand the alarming drop in bee populations around the world. The loss of this crucial pollinator could have a devastating effect on food production. MacInnis' farm animal portraits capture the sometimes disconcertingly human individuality of each creature. The tableaux of sheep, goats and donkeys also serve as a reminder of the disappearance of the small mixed farm, in favour of monoculture and the factory farm. *Pastoral Portraits* not only reveals the narrative that each artist applies to his subject, but also inspires meditation on our increasingly disconnected and ambivalent relationship with animals and the natural world.

Part of the CONTACT photography festival.