

# SALT

**SALT** is a documentary film on photographer Murray Fredericks' extreme journey's to capture the heart of the world's most featureless landscape on Lake Eyre, South Australia.



**SALT** is the story of award winning and internationally renowned photographer, Murray Fredericks on his annual solo pilgrimage to the heart of Lake Eyre in the remote north corner of South Australia. It is a piece on the personal journey of the artist, the creative process and the landscape itself.

Alone on the most featureless landscape on earth, Murray's personal video diary captures the beauty of this bleak, empty and desolate environment – and provides the catalyst for an unexpected personal transformation.

Told with subtlety, care and gentle dry humour, **SALT** is the story of what emanates from emptiness. By combining the breathtaking imagery of this surreal landscape with the hauntingly delicate sounds of Aajinta's "Harmonic Sphere's, it attempts to identify what lies beneath the surface of our reality and how 'something' can be produced from 'nothing'.

**SALT** interweaves Murray's sublime pictures, with innovative time-lapse sequences, and illuminating and exposing video diary excerpts. Stripped back to its essentials, Murray's emotional and mind altering rollercoaster ride is told through a fusion of personally reflective sound bytes and satellite phone conversations with his wife and family at home in Sydney.

Totally isolated, with only the horizon line as his reference point, and thoughts as his only companion, Murray is forced to overcome the environmental elements of rain, mud plains, lightning, equipment failure and the ever intrusive salt. The resulting photographs are not just sublime pictures of a remote and surreal location – they are still points that punctuate a journey of the mind and spirit.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Photographer Murray Fredericks has been camping alone on Lake Eyre for up to five weeks at a time, every year for the past six years.

**SALT** is the name of the ongoing photographic series that these journey's to Lake Eyre have produced over that time. This series of photographs "seek to make representations of vast space and emptiness... allowing imagery to convey 'essence' over 'place'."

Three years ago, Murray took with him a video camera to record his working methodology on one of these remarkable expedition's. Upon his return, Murray showed me the footage he'd captured. I had never seen anything like it and was amazed that he had been able to film it all by himself.

Rather than being a literal documentation of Murray's work, I felt any documentary should be an extension of the processes and aims of the SALT photographic series. Therefore creating the documentary evolved over a number of subsequent expeditions to the Lake. In addition to his usual camera gear and camping supplies, Murray would take with him a small High Definition video camera and sound gear to record his experiences through all manner of conditions in this surreal landscape.

At the end of each trip we would review the footage and I would set new tasks for filming on the next one. Integral to the process was Murray recording his own thoughts, feelings and satellite conversations with his wife Franca back home in Sydney. I felt it was essential to the project that it was an honest and human portrayal of the artist. My aim was to create within the film itself enough space for a viewer to imagine and feel something of the experience for themselves.

Visually, this documentary rests on Murray's beautiful cinematic compositions. The video footage conveys the feeling of still images that move. The results are clear, intimate and true - with a sense of space and time in the action of the scene. This style coupled with the naturally occurring environmental changes of the clouds, sky, earth, wind and stars create simultaneously a context for the a man to co-exist within the framework of an evolving bigger picture.

From apocalyptic red Martian-like landscapes to the surreal hypnotic beauty of a limitless sky reflected on the lakes surface. As Murray goes about his daily routine with discipline and attention, these surroundings convey a simple and emotional story.

One man, alone on the surface of the earth, in the middle of the universe.

## **Michael Angus – Director and Producer**

SALT is Michael's 3rd major documentary project and first as producer/director.

Michael launched his career as a documentary film maker spending 4 years recording world champion boxer Danny Green's journey from obscurity to sporting hero. The Fight Game was an honest and emotional portrayal of a devoted father and son wrestling with ambition whilst becoming increasingly aware of the impact of his obsession on himself and those around him. Grantley Kieza of the Daily Telegraph described it as, "the best sports film I've seen and the best study yet on the unique profession that is the fight game."

Following the success of the Fight Game, he was commissioned by the ABC to write and direct the documentary Ooldea. Here he worked with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra resident composer Ian Grandage, documenting his collaboration with the Spinifex Elders of the Great Victoria Desert. This film has been sold to numerous television stations throughout the world.

Fundamentally Michael views the world and constructs his narratives through the prism of relationships. Be it a boxer and his family, an artist with the landscape, or the collaboration of two diverse cultures, he is interested in what drives people and how that relates to the world around us.

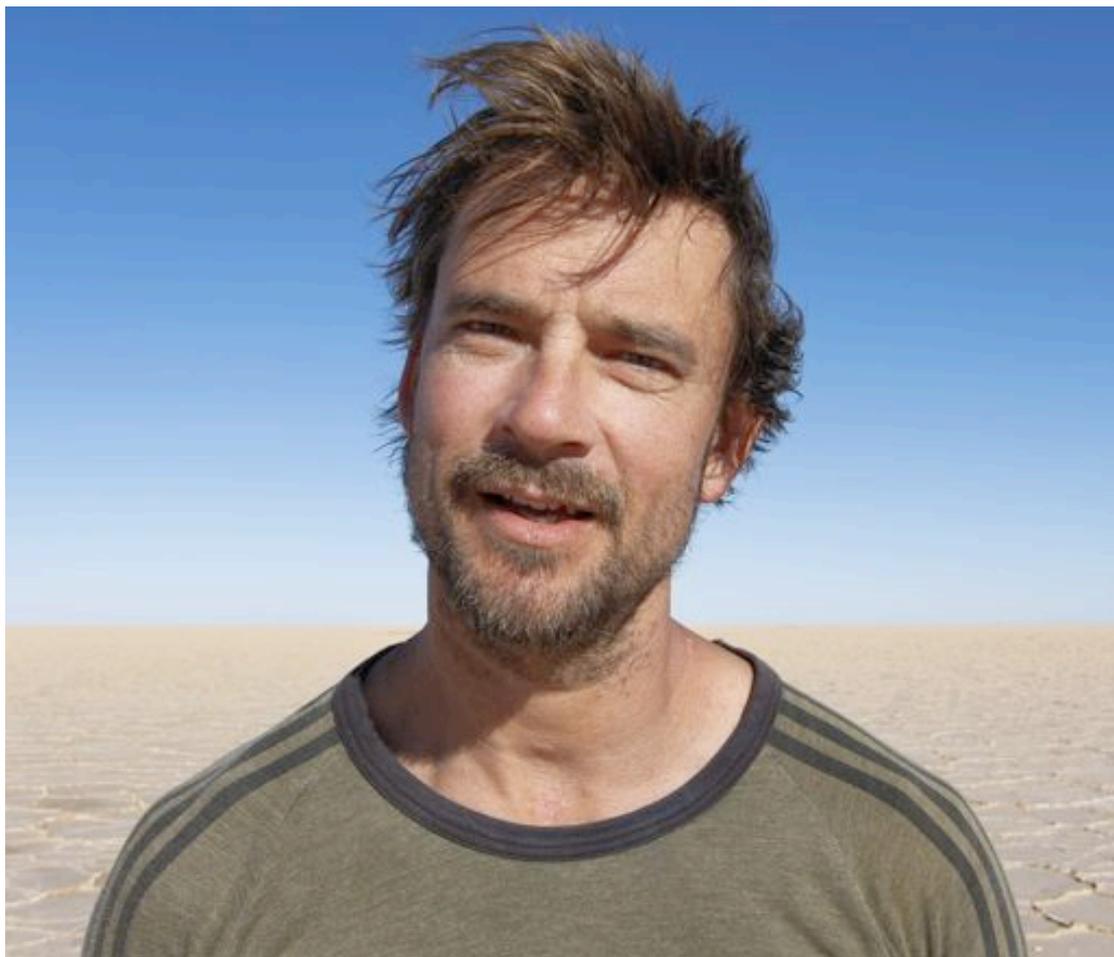


## **Murray Fredericks – Director and Camera**

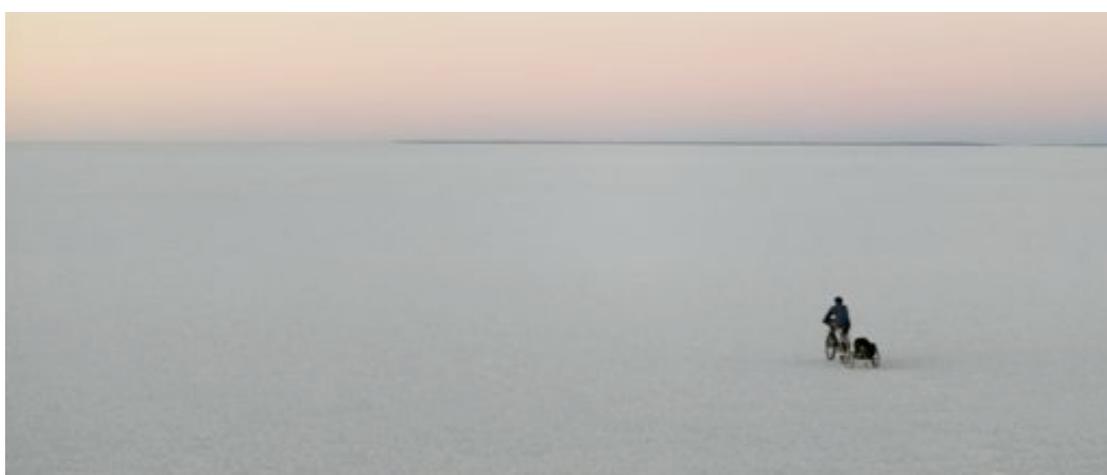
SALT is Murray's first project as a cinematographer and director. As a photographer, his major bodies of work have been produced in the Himalayas, Patagonia, Tasmania and, most recently, Lake Eyre.

Murray's photographs from the Salt series were first exhibited with Andy Goldsworthy's work at Boutwell Draper Gallery in Sydney. The series was then shown in Shanghai, in London at Hamiltons Gallery, and at the Louvre as part of Paris Photo. Now exhibiting with ARC 1 Gallery in Melbourne, many of the editions of the photographs have sold out and his work is in high demand.

Murray devotes years to each project, time that is necessary to move past the exotic surfaces of the environments he works in. Ultimately though, the vast scale and power of these locations dwarfs his sense of self, providing a fertile platform from which to produce work.



## PRODUCTION STILLS



# SALT - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please go to [www.saltdoco.com](http://www.saltdoco.com) for more information and video examples in the making of SALT

## The Photography

*"They are literally pictures of nothing, but nothing has never looked so good."* John McDonald, Art Critic, Sydney Morning Herald

The 'SALT' Project is in its 6th year in 2008 and has involved around 12 trips to Lake Eyre. Each year at least one 'long' journey was made where a month was spent living alone in the centre of the Lake.

Murray's impetus for the 'SALT' series came from a visit to a salt flat in Bolivia during a previous project. The experience of being overwhelmed by the space of the 'salar' was so powerful that the memory of it sent him searching for a location closer to home.

Murray was determined to break with the language of 'conventional' landscape photography. Lake Eyre is devoid of the 'traditional' forms and features of landscape imagery. The absence of mountains, trees, rocks and rivers made the salt flats a perfect location for the project.

Landscape Photographs 'tend' to be about representing 'place'. In this series, however, Lake Eyre is just the setting. The Salt Series is about conveying 'essence', not 'place'

## Living on the Lake

Murray has spent years of his life living alone in remote areas while photographing. He has a deep respect and affinity for the places he works in and keeps his impact on his surroundings to an absolute minimum.

Throughout this series, all waste (including human waste) was carried off the Lake in a plastic bag. Only expedition stoves (no fires) were used to cook food. Apart from the proverbial footprints, no trace of his visits could be found on the Lake.

## The Traveling

All supplies are transported to the Lake from Sydney which involved 2-3 days of desert driving. Water was generously re-supplied from Trevor and Cindy Mitchell, the farmers whose property borders the Lake at Muloorina Station. This water is not publicly available and visitors must bring their own supplies). The Muloorina driveway is 55km long starting just outside Marree in the North East pastoral district of South Australia. Murray accessed the Lake through a private road about 100km further on from the homestead.

Access onto the Lake itself was by foot or push-bike and trailer. The trailer was loaded with 90kgs of equipment and supplies, including 50kgs of water, an 8" x 10" field 'plate film' camera, a DSLR camera, a video camera and 3 tripods. Usually the bike travels slightly slower than walking pace when fully loaded. With a howling wind

from behind, the bike can reach speeds of up to 20km per hour. When it's wet it's difficult to move at all and a 200m section of mud may take hours to traverse.

## **ABOUT LAKE EYRE**

Lake Eyre (pronounced "air") is the lowest point in Australia, at approximately 15 m (49 ft) (AHD) below sea level, and, on the rare occasions that it fills, becomes the largest lake in Australia. It is the focal point of the vast Lake Eyre Basin and is found some 700km north of Adelaide.

### **Location and Size**

Lake Eyre sits surrounded by deserts in the remote North of outback South Australia.

Lake Eyre is Australia's largest Lake and covers an area of 1,349,251ha.

The drainage basin for Lake Eyre covers 1/6th of Australia and is the size of France, Germany and Italy combined.

### **Geography**

The Lake is a giant salt sink, an evaporation basin that sits, on average, 15m below sea level.

The Lake receives water from either the massive river systems that feed into it, or local rainfall that falls on, or in, the Lake surrounds. The 'phenomenon' of water reaching the Lake is categorized into 'major' and 'minor' floodings.

Major floodings are declared once both Lake Eyre North and Lake Eyre South are filled with water flowing through the Goyder Channel that connects both lakes. In the last 200 years there have been only 3 major floodings, the last of which occurred in 1974. A major flooding requires exceptional rainfalls along all the river systems that feed the lake and also high rainfall in the local area.

Minor floodings occur when the Lake fills to the edges and occur around once every ten years.

When significant rain falls in the area (a rare occurrence) water forms pools on the Lake which can remain for some weeks. Murray was lucky enough to be at the Lake for some of the only significant rain in the last few years, and much of the exhibition work was produced while living in the giant puddles out on the Lake.