

# ROBERT STEELE GALLERY

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*Gretchen Mercedes, Utopia no4, 2001-04.*

## Press Release

### Gretchen Mercedes

#### *Photographs from Utopia*

21 June – 21 July 2007

The **Robert Steele Gallery** at 511 West 25th Street between 10th and 11th Avenues in Chelsea is pleased to announce the opening of ***Photographs from Utopia*** by Australian photographer and filmmaker **Gretchen Mercedes**, opening on Thursday, June 21st through July 21st, 2007. The exhibition, in the Gallery's **Project Room**, will run concurrently with ***New Work From Utopia***, a large survey of contemporary Australian Aboriginal art. A reception will be held **Thursday, June 21<sup>st</sup> from 6 to 8pm**, and the artist will be present. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 11 to 6pm and by appointment.

This exhibition will be in conjunction with the **DACOU Gallery** (the *Dreaming Art Centre of Utopia*) in Adelaide and will have a partnered exhibition at the **Embassy of Australia, Washington, DC** from 19 July to 1 September 2000.

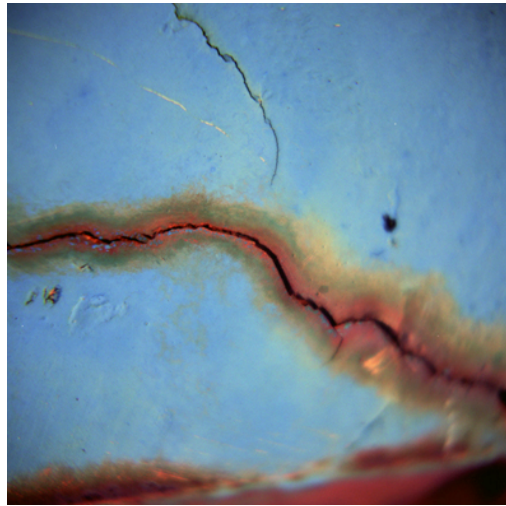
A native of South Australia whose love of the coast and ocean has informed much of her work, Mercedes has long explored rough terrains, both of physical geography, and of the spirit. In the large chromogenic prints currently on view, she gives us vivid photographs of the North Country whose terrain (perhaps not so incidentally) is the source of much Aboriginal painting. Far from an idealized cliché, these are images of a **Utopia** much more in line with the *no place* of the literal Greek word, a **Utopia** whose detritus – an upturned auto; bullet holes in rusted steel; a line of cord meandering across an Indian red expanse of earth - sets us on the edge of a place/no place or, as Mercedes has written, “*existence within the space between the world of the living and the dead.*”

In her film **Blue**, a project for the **Australian Film Commission**, Mercedes says of her central character: *Her existence and thoughts exist in a space that can only be described as edge of the earth, and the edge of human psyche*; and in these still photographs there are echoes of a quiet and still tension. **Glenna Jennings** writes: *"Gretchen Mercedes' photos and moving images are cacophonous with silence – the kind of silence that can be heard through the alchemy of motion in motion and time in time ... photos ... which transport the audience not to a fixed destination but to a mobile point of departure from which a number of escapes can be made."* Or arrivals.

The **Robert Steele Gallery** continues in its mission to present work that will engage, provoke and stand up over time. Times such as ours demand an art that can touch the soul.



*Utopia no.1, 2001-04*  
Chromogenic print, 29x29in



*Utopia no.1, 2001-04*  
Chromogenic print, 29x29in

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