Imagine stepping inside an artwork. Imagine stepping inside a camera. Imagine seeing your world turned upside-down.

Welcome to Museum of Brisbane’s photographic exhibition, Robyn Stacey: Cloud Land.

Robyn Stacey reveals some of our city’s most familiar places, buildings and landmarks in a completely new way.

Robyn Stacey is one of Australia’s most acclaimed photographers. Her large and striking images have been exhibited widely in Australia and internationally since the mid-1980s.

Museum of Brisbane explores our city through the eyes of artists. Cloud Land shows Brisbane through the eyes of Robyn Stacey.
What is a camera obscura?

Camera obscura is Latin for ‘dark room’. A camera obscura is a dark room or box with a small hole on one side that lets light through.

In 1668 Sir Isaac Newton discovered that light travels in a straight line until it meets another surface when it will change direction but continue moving in a straight line.

Therefore, because light travels in a straight line, the light rays travel through the tiny hole in the room or box and the image outside is projected upside-down and back-to-front onto the wall inside.

FUN FACT
Sir Isaac Newton was an English philosopher, astronomer, physicist, scientist and mathematician who is known for many scientific discoveries including his Theory of light and colour and Newton’s law of motion.
To create the photographs in this exhibition, Robyn Stacey turns a room into a camera obscura and then takes a photograph of the room. To get a bright and clear photograph Robyn must use a long exposure time, which means the people in the photograph have to stand still for up to five minutes! Any movement could result in the photograph being blurry. This is why so few of the people in Robyn Stacey’s photographs are smiling. You will notice that some of the clouds projected onto the walls are blurry because she can’t stop them from moving.

**ACTIVITY:** Imagine you are having your photograph taken in a camera obscura. Using a smart phone, film yourself standing still for one minute. Try filming yourself in different positions: standing, sitting, smiling, not smiling. Which position is the easiest to hold for one minute, which is the hardest?

**FUN FACT**
Exposure time is the length of time a camera’s shutter is open when taking a photograph. The amount of light in a photograph is linked to the exposure time of the camera.

**EXTRA**
Early photographic processes also had long exposure times, this is why people in old photographs are rarely smiling and appear so serious.
Recognising Brisbane

*Cloud Land* captures Brisbane’s changing landscape – the atmosphere, new and old buildings and construction.

**ACTIVITY:** Can you find the landmarks below within Robyn Stacey’s photographs? See how many you can spot!

- Story Bridge
- City Hall clock tower
- The Windsmill
- Anzac Square, Shrine of Remembrance
- Aeroplanes (Bonus object)
- Boats (Bonus object)
- Cranes
- Anzac Square
- The Wheel of Brisbane

**HINT**

Robyn Stacey’s world is upside-down!
Upside-down and back-to-front

Answer the questions below:

Light travels in a: wavy line zig zag straight line (circle correct answer)

Who discovered how light travels?

The projected landscapes in Robyn Stacey’s photographs are:
the right way up upside-down upside-down and back-to-front (circle correct answer)

ACTIVITY: Join the dots below.
Once you are finished, turn it upside down to see the final image.
Time

Time is a very important factor in *Cloud Land*.

Each photograph relies on the weather and the position of the sun. Robyn Stacey spent many weeks investigating and testing sites to find the perfect locations and right time of day to catch the full effects of the sun.

To get a bright and clear photograph Robyn must use a long exposure time, which means the people in the photograph may have to stand still for up to five minutes. However, Robyn can’t stop the outside world from moving. In her works the passing of time can be seen in the blurred motion of clouds, people and traffic.

**ACTIVITY:** Find this work in the exhibition. Do you think the school students are moving or standing still?

**ACTIVITY:** Look at the image above, one of the planes was moving when Robyn was taking the photograph. Can you tell which one it is? Circle the plane that you think was moving.
Camera obscura experience

In the exhibition you will discover an experience that recreates the camera obscura technique.

ACTIVITY: Enter the camera obscura in the exhibition.

What could you see when the lights turned off?

What could you see at 2 minutes?

What colours did you see?

Draw what you saw in the camera obscura below:
If photographs could talk

The people in Robyn Stacey’s photographs represent the many people who live in and visit Brisbane.

They represent people who have lived here for generations, recently arrived from overseas or have visited for a weekend.

DISCOVER: Look around the exhibition and pay special attention to the people in the photographs. Are they young or old? Are they at work or visiting Brisbane? Do they have a special connection to the place where the photograph was taken?

ACTIVITY: Who is your favourite subject in the exhibition?

Why?

HINT
The names of the subjects are in the titles of the photographs.
The photograph to the right features a young woman called Rena, she works at the Boggo Road Gaol. We asked Rena a few questions about Brisbane, here are her answers:

**Name:** Rena

**Where are you from?** Brisbane, born and raised.

**Why are you in Brisbane?** I love the weather and my friends and family here.

**Do you call Brisbane ‘home’? Why/why not?** I call Brisbane home because I have never lived anywhere else.

**Are you ever planning to leave Brisbane?** Why/why not? I have no plans to leave Brisbane permanently but I am certainly a fan of travelling and experiencing other cultures.

**Have you changed since arriving in Brisbane?** If so, how? Seeing as I was born in Brisbane I have certainly changed a lot. I’ve grown from a child into a relatively responsible young adult. Who knows how I would of turned out if I was raised in a different city.

**Have you seen Brisbane change in that time? If so, how?** The population has grown incredibly, and there is so much more infrastructure. The roads are much better than what I remember as a child. I’ve noticed Brisbane becoming much more multicultural in recent years.

**What do you love or dislike about Brisbane?** I love the weather, the natural beauty and the food! There’s nothing I particularly dislike.
If photographs could talk

ACTIVITY: Tell us your thoughts on Brisbane by answering the questions below. If you would like to share your answers with us, hand this page to a Customer Service Officer at our reception desk.

Name: ......................................................................................................................................................... Age: .................................................................................................

Where are you from? ..............................................................................................................................................

Why are you in Brisbane? .............................................................................................................................................

Do you call Brisbane ‘home’? Why/why not? .............................................................................................................

Are you ever planning to leave Brisbane? Why/why not? ........................................................................................

Have you changed since arriving in Brisbane? If so, how? ....................................................................................

Have you seen Brisbane change in that time? If so, how? ......................................................................................

What do you love about Brisbane? ............................................................................................................................

What do you dislike about Brisbane?
ACTIVITY: Draw what you love about Brisbane
Family history

Find the photograph to the right in the exhibition.

The woman in the photograph is Maroochy Barambah Song woman and Law–woman of the Turrbal People.

In this photograph Maroochy is wearing a kangaroo cloak and two grass skirts. In her hands she is holding clap sticks. Clap sticks are musical instruments that are used to keep the rhythm when singing and dancing.

The name Maroochy means black swan. The painting on Maroochy’s face represents the face of a swan. Maroochy has also painted the tips of her grass skirts white to represent the white feathers that can be seen under the wings of a black swan when it is flying.

The landscape appearing over Maroochy is called Mianjin, also known as the City Botanic Gardens. This area of Brisbane is special to Maroochy as this is where her ancestors grew up.

The cloak on the table behind Maroochy was her mother’s cloak. It is also a kangaroo cloak and was handed down to Maroochy when her mother passed away.

ACTIVITY: Do you own anything that has been passed down to you from your parents or grand–parents?

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ACTIVITY: Draw a picture of the item to the right or draw an object that reminds you of your parents or grand–parents
Robyn Stacey talks about the subjects in her photographs as the inhabitants of Cloud Land.

“They are workers, young couples and solo travellers who all become actors in these dreamlike scenarios.” Robyn Stacey

Imagine the photographs are taken from a scene in a movie. What do you think is going to happen next?

Room 13 Cartwright, Michael and Katherine

Do you think the people look happy or sad?

What might have happened for them to look this way?

Where do you think they are?

What do you think they are about to do next?

COMPETITION: Museum of Brisbane is running a short story competition for high school students. To learn more visit museumofbrisbane.com.au/competition for details.