

In the frame Louise Martin-Chew



## Art leaves no stone unturned

ON A recent drive outside Brisbane it seemed that many people had invested in tents and were hunkered down amid the bush, shrubs and trees.

This recreational trend has been popular for decades.

More people have taken to nature, the bush, for a closer experience of the Australian landscape.

The familiarity with our landscape means we could miss an image such as Julie Rrap's *Mark Bush* (2003) — or, conversely, its ambiguities could grab our attention. The strangely familiar shape, the skin-like qualities of the central rock, its dimpling cellulitic character

creates a double-take that has you immediately sceptical — that it can't be real. Well, no — it can't.

This image is one of a series of works by Rrap and 11 other artist-photographers included in *Twelve Australian Photo Artists*, a new book from Piper Press.

It makes the point that photography, like all art, is a way to see the world differently. These photographers are not in the business of benignly recording what they see — they manipulate their images to engage us with ideas. Sometimes these concern the way we live in a technologically driven world.

At other times they revisit history, well-known images of our past

and, in Rrap's case, they confront us with the vulnerability of bare skin in the bush.

Like other contemporary art it is not necessarily comfortable, but takes us outside the ordinary.

The authors of *Twelve Australian Photo Artists*, Blair French and Daniel Palmer, have chosen artists who create compelling photographs.

Bill Henson's moody and unsettling images look at the dark side of vulnerability.

Simryn Gill's images from a small town at the turn of the century are surreal and funny. She has subjects from her childhood home in Malaysia wearing exotic fruit

masks, eliciting responses about how we inhabit place. Anne Zahalka inserts myth into contemporary landscapes.

Rrap's *Mark Bush* is from her *Fleshstones* series, where human skin is wrapped digitally around a large stone photographed in the bush. Similarly, *Coogee Paul* (2003) places a torso-like boulder into a rocky expanse overlooking the sea.

The artists illustrate photography's unique place in society — using technological innovation to reset images that are part of our environment, culture and history.

*Twelve Australian Photo Artists*, by Blair French & Daniel Palmer  
Piper Press, \$99.

