

## Inside Australia - Distributors' Notes

On a vast salt lake surrounded by red earth, renowned British sculptor Antony Gormley embarks on a sculptural installation that awakens a small Goldfields town in remote Western Australia. Near the tiny outback town of Menzies, 650 kms from Perth, Western Australia, lies the vast Lake Ballard. This timeless place has become home to Gormley's most ambitious work to date, Inside Australia. Fifty-one sculptures stand silently in the hot desert wind, capturing a moment in time. The installation celebrates Menzies - a community that has taken this journey with an artist willing to break the mould of tradition. It also celebrates an extraordinary place.

Antony Gormley describes discovering the Lake: "I'll never forget that first approach when you come the edge of the salt lake, it is absolutely magic. The feeling of being at the edge of endlessness - being on the lip of the edge of the world."

The Perth International Art Festival commissioned Gormley to create the installation; but it was Gormley who chose to make this new work in one of the remotest and harshest regions of the world.

The film follows Gormley into the Menzies community, into the western desert, and shares his passion for all aspects of this hard land. Gormley says: "Having discovered this extraordinary place, which I thought had such a strong mythological feeling, I couldn't believe it wasn't strong dreaming to the original people - I then had to find the today people."

So the film discovers the mining giants and the self-made prospectors, the pastoralists running thousands of sheep on their million acre properties, and the original inhabitants, the Aboriginal people for whom Lake Ballard is part of an ancient homeland. Lake Ballard unravels as a complex and contested space.

Gormley says in the film: "I didn't know anything about the geology of Western Australia when I first went, you feel immediately here you are flying over a very ancient continent. It's almost like your heart starts beating slower, everything slows down and you're close to something that is close to the beginning of things." The documentary captures a physical, creative and spiritual journey. It explores the nature of landscape and of sculpture, rocks and the reason human beings make art.

Gormley calls his sculptures on Lake Ballard 'Insiders', for they are his attempt to capture the essence of the human body and the traces – minerals, memories, history – that each body carries within it. But this film also reveals some of the challenges an outsider faces when exploring Inside Australia. He gives an answer to the challenge that he has no business to be there: "I can accept that very deep sense of suspicion that somebody who is unfamiliar in a very, very real way with the territory should seek to interpret it. In a curious way, I don't think I'm doing any interpreting. I'm trying to allow things that are already there to be seen more clearly. I hope what it represents is an open attitude as to what art can be."

This documentary reaches under the surface of an isolated yet complex community. It makes a journey through one of the most ambitious art projects of recent times, going from the concept, through scanning, casting, transportation, to installation – all the steps that take an artist from idea to creation. And we hear the response of the people to the work. This is a film that indeed reaches Inside Australia.

The sculptural installation Inside Australia was commissioned by the 2003 Perth International Arts Festival.