VITAMIN

MAY CONTAIN TRACES OF VISUAL CULTURE

EPISODE THREE NOVEMBER/DECEMBER/JANUARY 2004/5

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Slush Puppies

There are few foods that can't be improved by their being coated in batter and deep-fried. Consider the humble Frankfurter; already a tasty treat, there's no doubt about that, but when crunchy coated, steaming hot, and duly drizzled in a delectable layer of tomato sauce, it transcends mere food.

I'm talking about the Pluto Pup. For reasons unknown to me, these are sold in South Australia as 'Dagwood Dogs'. Up-market cousins to Battered Savs, hoist upon a handy pike, these pups are clear evidence that fried food is nature's gift.

And so it was, at the 2004 Royal Adelaide Show, I found myself enjoying nature's gift while around me all hell was breaking loose.

The 'Show', as you know, is where the country comes to town, and the town goes to Loopyland.

I love the laughing clowns, the sad man taking tickets at the Crazy Fun House, the implied danger of the rides, and the real danger of Side Show Alley.

The 2004 Royal Adelaide Show's mascot was a fictitious dog named 'Banjo'. Huh? Banjo!? Did you know, there more people who have pets named 'Banjo' than there are people who have *actual* banjos? Life is full of such

inconsistencies. And why do you suppose there are there no pets named 'Guitar'? That's a Master's thesis for sure. As I pondered these abstractions, I felt a crescendo of pain blast through my being as the brain freeze from my cola Slush Puppy finally took effect.

Living, breathing animals play havoc with my asthma, and so I avoided the living breathing cows, cats, dogs, goats, llamas, alpacas, rabbits, budgies, and gold fish - lovely as they are. If you are not allergic to these things, you could do a lot worse than visit them at The Show. The racing pigs, once seen, I'm told, are rarely forgotten.

Everyone knows The Show is mostly about *showbags* (racing pigs not withstanding). This year, I was able to purchase a 2004 Royal Adelaide Show Simpsons Showbag. New Simpsons showbags don't appear every Show and so this was a good year. I have all the Simpsons showbags since 1991.

I was only an urchin when I first saw S John Ross. He has been cutting silhouettes for longer than many people live. After I took his picture for this article, he insisted on taking my picture as well. He also kindly, and deftly, cut my silhouette. He cuts two at once, for ten dollars.

He motions you sit... "look straight ahead". Within minutes, his scissors slice through black paper as if it were only paper. He cuts as he sees. Soon enough the deal is done.

Nothing is left bar the dosh and a shake of John's hand.

S John Ross became apprenticed to a silhouette artist at age 13 and he has been cutting through paper for over 60 years. He does what he loves, and he does it with panache.

Cakes and jam, you may recall, are the stuff of happiness, and so it should come as no surprise that there are competitions for these pursuits. Cooking is no less creative than splashing paint around a canvas and, you know, it can come in pretty handy when you are hungry.

Photographs by Shaw Hendry
Silhouette by S John Ross

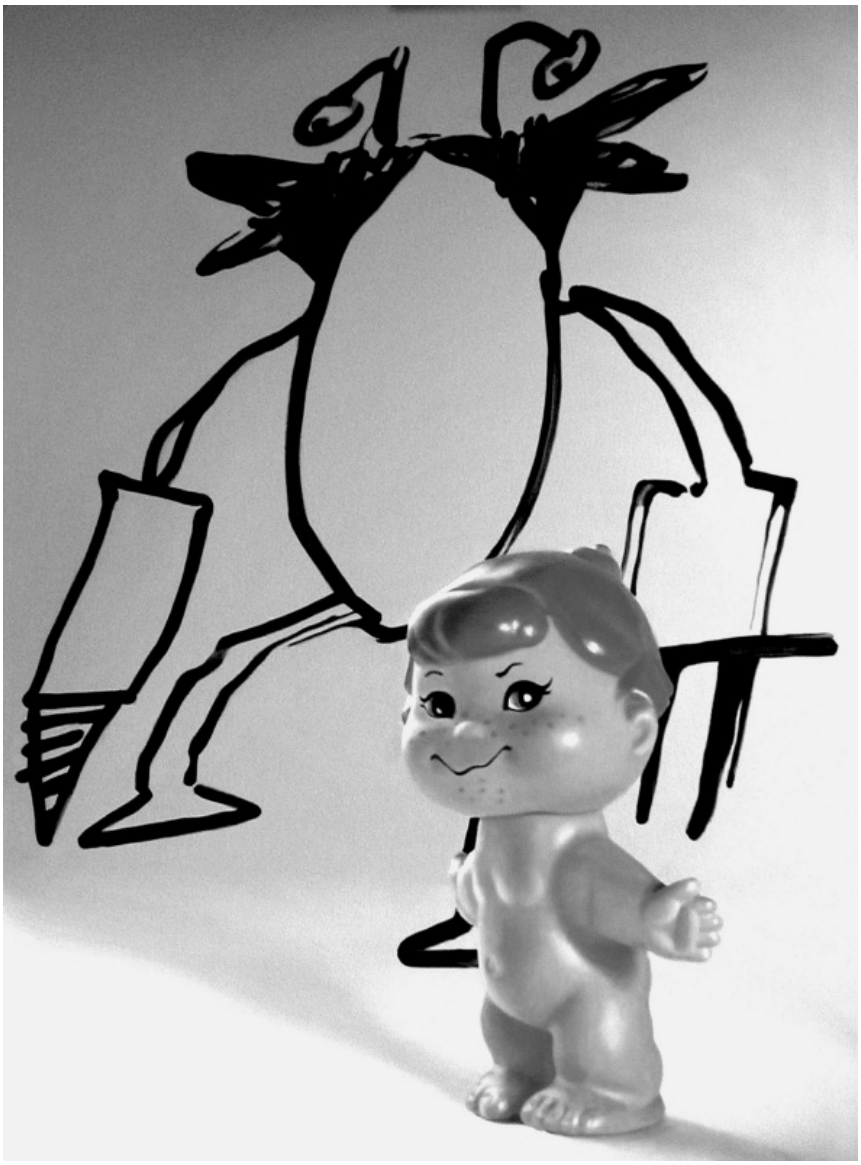
The kids' breakfast tray competition is my favourite event of The Royal Adelaide Show. This competition is sublime.

The breakfast trays are exhibited in the old glass cabinets of Exhibition Hall for days on end. The "Certificates of Merit" get a name; the "Certificates of Registration" get only a number. The eggs and toast shrivel, the glass of milk congeals, the orange juice separates, but you know, the intent remains, and if your heart isn't touched, then it's because your heart is made from stone.

It is easy to be a Negative Narc - Adelaide is full of examples. Some people seem to have a big "NO" engraved upon their souls. But life, as the song says, is *fleeting*. You will have only a tiny taste even if you are lucky, and, either way, there's a big taste of nothingness coming up.

There's no reason to be hard-hearted. The sun is still shining. Maybe you should get out and live a little.

Shaw Hendry



Deidre But-Husaim, *Life in the Art Lane,*
oil on canvas, 138 x 102cm, 2004

visual delights

There is much to be said for the exploration of female sexuality in art. It is a popular and prevalent investigation in contemporary film, literature and visual art and tends to operate as an iconic translation of the psychological freedoms women have in the 21st Century.

In visual mediums, ideas surrounding sexuality and adolescence shimmy forthrightly to centre stage and capture some of the multiplicity and paradoxes contained in the human condition. To cite a few instances; the work of photographers Bill Henson and SA artist Emma Northey, and in film, directors Sophia Ford Coppola (*The Virgin Suicides, Lost in Translation*) and Australian Cate Shortland, with her recent release, *Somersault*. In these explorations we are poignantly reminded of our own experience or, of the sensation of vicarious/observed experience. The use of adolescent sexuality provides an unmatchable drawcard via its inherent drama and internal confusion: the beautiful idiosyncrasies of developing bodies and the ripening of opposing forces, fear and desire, are the special domain of the coming-of-age experience.

Emma Northey, *H14 Lightbox*, 2003

It seems that photography is a keen and formidable player in this game of 'representation' and, seemingly without effort, serves up visual delights. The camera and the eye being such similar machines, it is natural that the fluency of recognition pre-empts a more complex

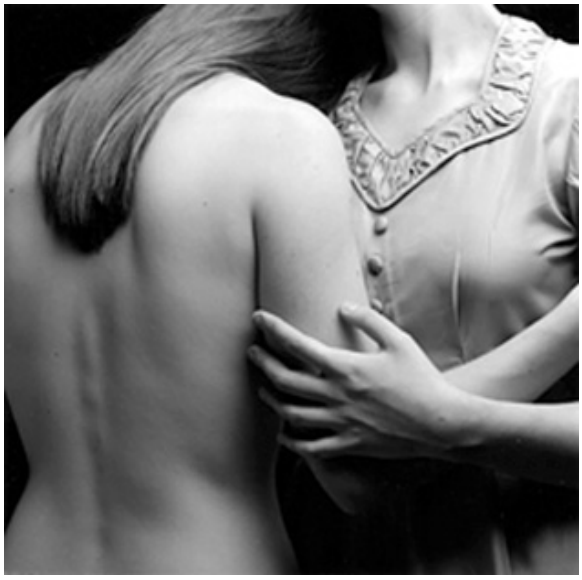
Deborah Paauwe, *Tangled Whisper*, 2003

engagement with the subject (think of how advertising capitalises on this). Also, not only is photography intrinsically seductive, but it is also enjoying enormous popularity in the art world and, as often precedes or follows this, commercial viability.

Enter, Deborah Paauwe. From the beginning of her career, Paauwe has consciously played with the seductive character of photography and cannily united it with the aforementioned themes. Initially ideas of cultural identity were blended with the portrayal of exclusively female 'goings on', apparently innocent, but with enough mystery to keep us watching. Their power owed to the sure-fire catalyst of autobiography and to a fairly classical annunciation of an interesting universal subject; vividly gift-wrapped in candy colours and evocatively titled.

Interestingly, Paauwe's photographs do not show the invisible, nor the unreal, but the mystery of the visible. They are increasingly nourished on ambiguity and double meanings. This is particularly evident in her most recent show for the SALA Festival which incorporated three new series of work. As Wendy Walker writes in her newly released book on Paauwe, *Beautiful Games*... 'Gazing at Paauwe's fastidiously framed and enigmatic images- wherein a lack of narrative resolution invites the participation of the spectator- we see a reflection of ourselves and it is this potentially unsettling confrontation that exists as her ultimate challenge.'

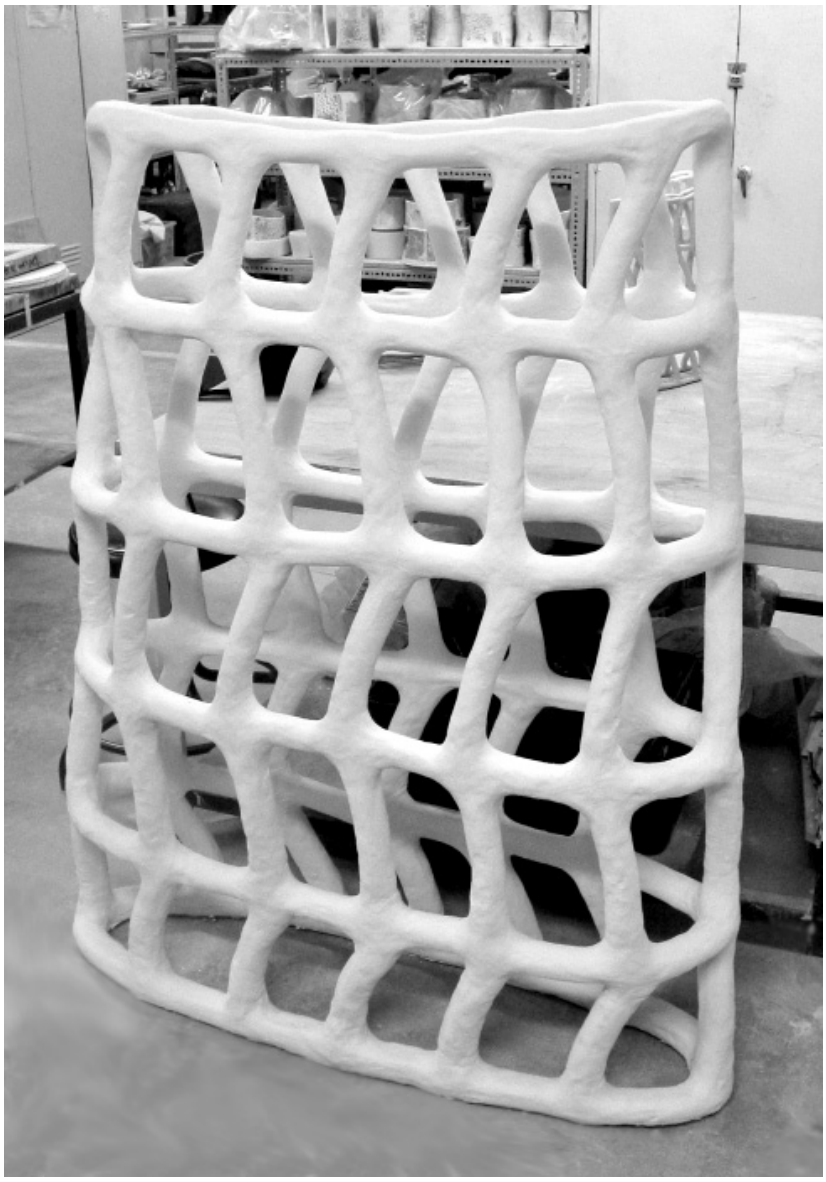
In the latest work, the critical mass of meaning is tensely suspended between the fugitive world of supposition and the motionless, steel-trap delivery of the medium itself. Combined with this are the familiar concessions to ordinariness- blemishes and neglected fingernails, so that the viewer is faced with the conundrum of a partially accessible world, but perhaps one that if penetrated, would provide little oxygen. These highly orchestrated compositions situate the viewer as voyeur. Not simply because one bears witness to an implied intimacy (innocent or not) but because the cropped, close-up theatre of it all leaves you in no doubt that you are an outsider. You are not invited to play, but you can watch (and be watched watching)



Deborah Paauwe, *Foreign Body*, 2003

It is predictable that Paauwe's photographs increasingly plumb the darker and more complex regions of sexuality - where else could they go? - and ambiguity is the major currency of most visual art made in the post-modern era. So, I wonder, next time I walk past these shop-front windows of feminine antics, what will I see... Have all the beautiful games been played (and seen to have been played) or is there still more to come?

Chelsea Lehmann



Leo Neuhofer, *Moire*,
paper clay, 126 x 112 x 34 cm, 2004

Pre-packaged Windows

People in the 80s seemed to have an unusual fasciation with the 'window display'. The daggy 1987 movie 'Mannequin' (I'm sure it was *grouse* or *rad* in its time) was centred around this fascination and starred Kim Cattrall (Samantha from 'Sex in the City', also in another 80s favourite; 'Police Academy'). Cattrall, as inert mannequin by day and living miracle worker by night, helps her dream lover and window artist, Jonathan Switcher, make his original window displays a triumph. Of course, as it goes in such movies, the department store is crowned a success due to the miraculously huge crowds that these stunning window displays attract. In this 80s movie, it was not your run-of-the-mill formulaic window displays that attracted attention, but the original and inspired work of art arrangements. This was the era of window display art.

With movies such as 'Mannequin' and dated 80s collections of window display books filling our libraries, it's easy to suppose this fascination was exclusive to the time of acid denim, ra-ra skirts and bold angular earrings. Not so. The essence of the window display can be traced back to the expositions of the nineteenth century where themes such as Egyptian or Greek would be employed to enhance the appearance of new

Photos by Sera Waters

and popular merchandise. These methods have carried through to the modern department store and other smaller shop windows (at least until the 80s) with window artists using thematic displays to exhibit the shop's character. 'Mannequin's' big finale window display was based upon a dusty Egyptian tomb interior. And like all good displays, the clothing modelled by Cattrall and her dummy friends was secondary to the impression the ancient theme created. In these artful displays the saleable items become associated with the image the store is projecting, rather than for their own value as objects. In more recent times, this seems to have happened to the window display itself, becoming secondary to other more effective means of display.

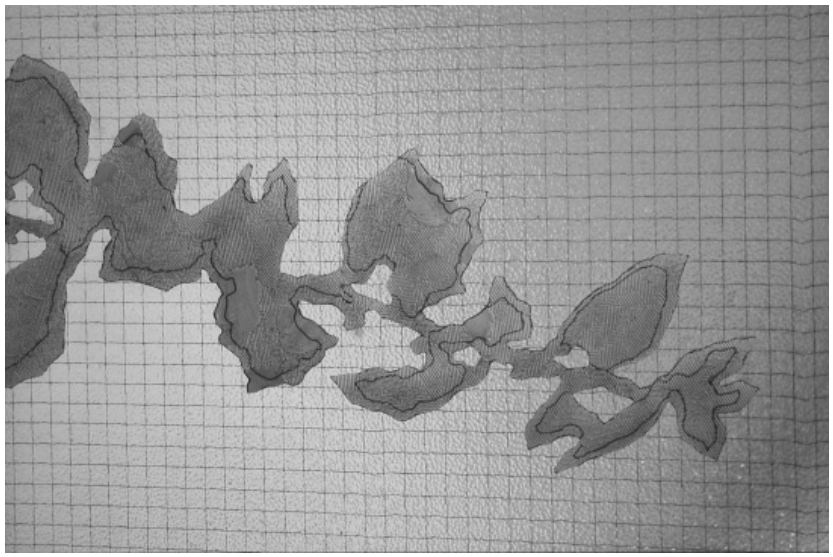
In a frightfully accurate prediction, Barry James Wood in his 80s book on the art of the window display, *Show Windows: 75 years of the art of display*, projects the future of window displays to be threatened by corporate control and the tendency toward formulaic design. A stroll down Rundle Mall will show you a great range of fashion on dummies, but the art of the window display these days seems a little pre-packaged: hang the poster from head office as a backdrop, a little vinyl lettering on the window and then position mannequins with the latest fashions... voila, a window display. The displays seen in 'Mannequin', or any of the dusty library books on the subject, show specialists in their field creating ephemeral masterpieces. Has the art of the window display lived its last days?

from *Show Windows*, Barry James Wood

With most of Adelaide's fashion stores showing their basic formula window displays, it is obvious the idea of a window display hasn't entirely died, but the emphasis has most definitely shifted. This is probably because most of us now have a new little window in our lives, a window that wasn't available in the nineteenth century and a window that new technologies are allowing to showcase moving, narrated and music accompanied displays – the TV. Television advertising is in many ways the contemporary form of the window display. This is also true of magazine advertising: glossy images of bikini clad girls and topless guys with their bottom halves plastered with denim, are portable window displays communicating the promise of a new way of life should you purchase these man-attracting pants. There is an incredible amount of time and money pumped into advertising yearly, as opposed to the decline of money dedicated to shifting dummies in shopfront windows.

New technologies have enabled higher quality images for magazines and TV advertising and both reach a much larger audience than a window that relies solely on passing traffic. Now overshadowed by these other forms of advertising, window displays are mere echoes of their richer cousins. Their formulaic layout conjures TV jingles and magazine spreads in the heads of those who walk by. While shopping in Adelaide there are still some arresting and fun window displays, but sadly there are not too many of the original and artful displays that captured the attention of the 80s. For now at least, Cattrall, her mannequin friends and consumers will have to enjoy the art of window-shopping from TV and magazines, rather than the windows themselves.

Sera Waters



Leigh Corrigan, *Variation no. 3 slanting moribana (reversed), (detail at top*), Dust, wallpaper, 2004

A Box of Tea

When I was asked to provide something representative of my work, for a recent exhibition titled *'Boxed'*, I presented a found/constructed object—something which is *not* representative of my work. An old photograph placed in an empty box of tea bags. Initially I thought that this was probably about as far as I could get from being representative, and it forced me to sit down and ask myself lots of questions about what *did* represent my *'work'*? How is anything that we do representative of what we do? How is anything we do, representative of us?

* * *

When I was four years old, my mother developed agoraphobia, and subsequently never travelled further than the end of the street. I don't know how it developed; it could have been as a result of her father dying, or stress in her marriage, who knows. As I grew up I never saw her leave the house, interacting with other people, shopping, paying bills, etc. Groceries were delivered in boxes from 'Mr Gale' who owned a local shop. When I was little, I used to jump around, whenever he came, saying 'Can I keep the box Mr Gale... Can I keep the box?' I'd be given the box, and then I'd make something out of the cardboard with sticky tape. I have blurred memories of my mother in other places before I was four. Down at the beach, or on a caravan holiday, but that is about it.

That she never went anywhere didn't seem strange. There are some things that people do, and some things that people don't do, and for the most part, we don't question why – I never thought it strange. I still don't. It was an *is*. My parents split up in 1973, and so she

brought up four kids on her own—house bound. She did dress making to pay the bills until she was able to get money from Social Security. It was a pretty Spartan existence.

The photograph in the box of tea was taken and printed in about 1980 in the kitchen at home, before I moved out of home. It is of her old fridge, which is now mine. I keep the photo stuck to the fridge in my kitchen. It is an image of itself in another time and space—a thought bubble—a remembrance.

In 1998, my mother began making small journeys. I don't know how it happened; it could have been as a result from her mother dying, who knows. She wanted to be able to be more self sufficient, to be able to go to the nearest shops, at least. Her life changed. Now she walks for miles. She walks to shops further and further away, and catches taxis home.

At about that time, I opened the letterbox one day to find that she had sent me a birthday present of a box of tea. She had bought it from the local shop, and posted it herself. I could never have comprehended her doing such a thing - being somewhere uncontained/unrestrained. Of course I kept the box.

* * *

When I selected the box of tea and the photograph for the exhibition there was no intentional conscious thought of a narrative behind it. It was an automatic act - a half arsed act of *'Here's one I prepared earlier!'* For having said all that, though, perhaps as a piece of artwork, it's more representative of me than all the other things I produce. Perhaps it says more about me than anything else I have 'created'. But what *is* me?

Andrew Dearman

blind ambition

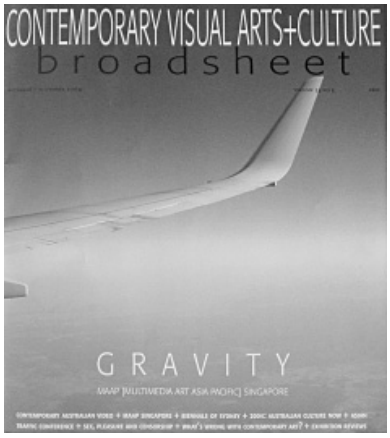
In a recent *Broadsheet* article, Jacqueline Millner critiquing the Biennale of Sydney, used the phrase 'intellectual sluggishness and lack of ambition' to slag off the artists as well as curator Isabel Carlos and her apparently unfulfilled premise. Annoyingly, Millner kept using this leaden phrase over and over. I counted five time plus a few variations.

As with many desires, upholding intellectualism involves positing a rarefied ideal of what that might mean. There is a kind of perverted (and patronising) assumption within this kind of writing that somehow artists aren't really trying hard enough and that, in this case, the curator just didn't try. The works in *On Reason and Emotion* seemed to frustrate Millner (and other critics) through their lack of intensity. Ennui, inertia, lassitude were some of the descriptions used. The works were too slow, too quiet and/or too banal (i.e. intellectually lazy). Although I did not see any of them, I am fascinated by the indignation these kinds of works evoke.

In the recent Federal election, over six hundred thousand of the votes cast were deemed informal whereby voters deliberately or unintentionally rendered their votes as mute and/or irrelevant. Of course, by saying nothing these people were saying something. Political apathy, torpor, languor, boredom induced by superficiality; these responses are endemic (globally as well as locally) and disturbingly provide evidence of intellectual retreat.

Anaesthetised as we are by the manufactured intensity of televisual realities and consumer satiety, perhaps artistic investigation of this kind of emotional zeitgeist should be difficult and not so easily engaged with. Quite often, internalised anxieties seem banal when acknowledged to oneself, but can evoke an empathetic and generative response when disclosed to another. Perhaps it is fear that disallowed some of the Biennale works to be treated with affinity. Was it easier to chastise authoritatively like a rigid parent who has a clear sense of ambition for their child. Art is a cultural show pony after all. Perhaps idealistically, I feel that considering works that are difficult,

quiet, awkwardly unresolved, and risky, might be equally as meaningful and important as praising those works that are tricky, stylish, profound and/or push the right popular culture buttons.



Given the complex and at times, compassionless political and economic environments we live in, I feel uncomfortable with the relentless pursuit of ambition, particularly when it negates the subtleties and complexities of personal and cultural relationships.

Broadsheet, being assisted by ArtsSA funding, appears to have been ambitiously converted into a vehicle for obtaining glossy and global 'art mag' status. Unfortunately, local content has been rather coldly excised from the picture and significant opportunities have been curtailed in an editorial fell swoop that prefers status to community. The "not very B*roadsheet*" has infamously played a vital role in facilitating career pathways for South Australian artists, writers and curators and importantly provided credible exposure for SA galleries and artist-run spaces. Its new guise, while coolly professional clearly disadvantages the local community. No longer can readers locally and nationally look to this publication for the lowdown on the best and brightest of Adelaide arts talent. Given our isolation from the 'arts buzz' of the eastern states, how did this transition occur without an angry artist backlash? Or is this yet another case of overbearing father knows best and like sullen teenagers we're all sulking in our bedrooms.... Dreaming of starting up cool arts magazines of our very own.

PS A more succinct and pithy Biennal critique by Millner appeared in the Aug/Sep issue of *realtime*

Katrina Simmons

Hourly Daily:

Scrutinising Karina Grundy's Snap-shots

In her latest exhibition *Snap-shots*, at Greenaway Art Gallery, Karina Grundy investigates what she calls the "*culture and psychology of the 'snap-shot'*". That is, the role family photographs play in the construction of individual and collective mythologies, their detachment from the continuity of time and space, and their ability to conceal the dramas behind their construction. In doing so, Grundy endeavours to convey the fragmented character and lack of 'truth' in snap-shots, and accentuate the habitual and psychological responses of subjects to the camera.

Perusing the prints that comprise *Snap-shots* is like cruising through someone's photo album: subjects of varying ages and dispositions are frozen in a range of *mise en scenes*: testing a beverage in the kitchen, toasting the camera in the living room, tending the till in a pub, manoeuvring a ride-on mower-in a farmyard. You'll see others traversing an airport car-park, tidying up their front yard, renovating the roof of their abode, proudly posing with their beloved wheels, or intently inspecting a piece of fruit. Some of the folks in these photographs confront and return our gaze with a smile or a cool air of indifference. Others turn away, gazes averted, immersed in their work, transfixed in thought.

I find the itinerary of subject matter in Grundy's images familiar, mundane, even mediocre: the sites and activities arrested by her camera are not foreign or remarkable to me. *Hannah* (2003) is a case in point. Here, a young girl basks in the harsh luminescence of the glaring sun, standing with her hands propped behind her back, her eyes closed. Her posture and facial expression seem at once elegiac and grandiose, stoic but syrupy. But it's not 'Hannah' who hooks my interest, but the scenery behind her: the chic and shiny *Holden* and *Toyota* sedans; the house with its scorched, crimson bricks and dusty-grey roof-tiles; the slanting *Hills* hoist in the backyard. I project a web of associations: Sunday afternoon barbecues, drag-races, streets named *Pleasant Avenue* and suburbs called *Happy Valley*.

The scene captured in *George* (2003) ensnares me. A scrawny employee tends the cash register at a pub whose shelves are littered with memorabilia. An impressive plethora of pop paraphernalia clutters each shelf: figurines, statues, novelty merchandise, ethnographic kitsch, photographs, posters, decals, fancy lights. Studying the eclectic décor preserved in this photograph, I speculate: which of the local bars in Adelaide flaunt such gorgeously gaudy furnishings, the *Grace Emily* or the *Crown and Anchor*? *The Cumberland* perhaps?

Interestingly, all of these images are carefully staged re-enactments of snap-shots that Grundy has sampled from each of her subjects' family albums. In reproducing her associates' snap-shots and directing the individuals to return to, and reconstruct (physically and psychically), the previous instance when they were photographed, Grundy endeavours to subvert photography's claims to objectivity. Her major agenda: to convey the staged and overtly positive character of her chosen snap-shots and highlighting "*the psychological reaction people have towards the camera and the performances they give*".

James, 2003

Take *James* (2003), for instance. Here, a grinning, goateed musician is photographed whilst hauling his luggage through an airport car park. The calm, smile-and-sunshine expression carved out on James' face, masks the more sombre and awkward narrative of separation and reunion that took place during the shooting of this happy-snap.

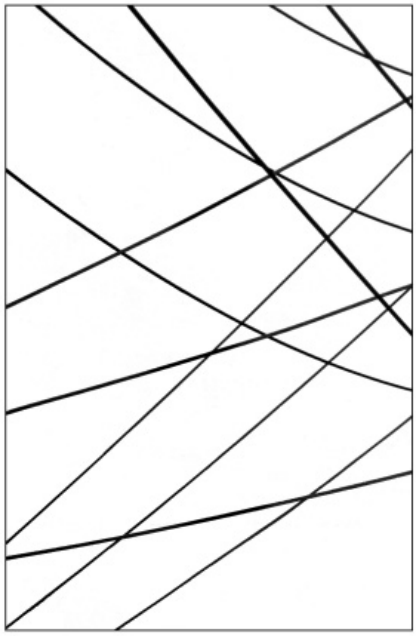
Yet I wonder if *James* (2003), and Grundy's other works actually visualise her motivations. Approaching Grundy's *Snap-shots*, I know nothing about the narratives behind these images, nor can I glimpse any insight into the lives of her subjects and decipher that they are re-enacting previous scenarios for the camera. This may be Grundy's point regarding the dislocated and fictive character of photographs, but I find myself asking 'how one can accentuate these attributes through a medium that confounds or conflates distinctions between veracity and fantasy, presence and absence?' Incidentally, my understanding of the rationale and process behind Grundy's imagery did not transpire upon viewing her images, but alternatively through other discourses: theory, conversations with the artist, access to her 'project notes'.

If Grundy seeks to illustrate the artificiality of snap-shots, one can, ironically, discern the manufactured élan of her own accomplishments. *Michelle* (2002) is a case in point: seated before her trusty laptop, a young woman with bouncy, ebony-tinged ringlets pensively studies a green apple clutched in her left hand... her right hand casually perched on a mouse that is not even connected to her computer! As a fabulous flaw, an alluring anomaly, the severed mouse discloses the theatricality of Grundy's *Snap-shots*. The inoperable mouse is, for me, that arresting, accidental (unintentional), and disturbing (prickly) detail that Roland Barthes calls the *punctum*.

If Grundy's photographs captivate me it is on account of their relationship to a certain notion of beauty – not because they reveal the speciousness of snap-shots. I find a strange, bitter-sweet beauty in Grundy's photographs: in their ordinariness, their banality, the seemingly blissful, ambient vision of suburban and rural life they appear to conjure.

Scrutinising Grundy's simulations, I ponder Susan Sontag's insight that beauty – since the advent and proliferation of photography - has been found to reside everywhere and in everything, not only in those who vamp themselves up for the camera, but "*also in what everybody sees but neglects as too ordinary*".

Varga Hosseini



Lee Salomone, *Untitled Power,*
digital image, 2004

Life at the top

In September Andrew Best and I exhibited *Crimes Against Wisdom* at 24HR Art in Darwin, NT.

The first thing I saw when touching down at Darwin Airport was the military planes. Huge wasp-like fighter jets and bumbling, lead grey troupe carriers. It was all sinking in, Darwin; it's at the top of Australia. I know this sounds like a dumb statement but the Latitude makes quite a difference. Darwin is at once hyper Australian, in the coo-ee cobber, crocodile hunter type of way and such a different place from the southern states – part of tropical Asia with butch aussie overtones. It smells different, honey like and damp, the smell of wet dust. The paranoia of border protection is at its height here. In Darwin is the wharf where the naval vessels that turned back the Tampa docked, the personnel who worked on those ships live here.

Walking and driving around, we were surprised to see fires burning unchecked along median strips, in reserves, and on vacant blocks of land. In Litchfield Park we drove through a huge bushfire. Worried, we pulled over to a police vehicle. Our safety advice? Oh, you might want to just put your lights on. This attitude was explained by the low levels of volatile oils in the vegetation (unlike the South). Fair enough – but it still is freaky frontier stuff. Imagine a fire cheerfully burning in the vacant land over the railway tracks on North Terrace, no fire engines and people cycling along the river near by. They are just a bit more layed back up there.

24Hr Art is a great gallery and we were supported by all the staff – people were so helpful and friendly we nearly died from shock (coming from Adelaide, home of the snub). I would recommend showing outside the Syd/Melb centres for friendliness and a real sense of welcome from the arts community.

The population of Darwin is around 80,000, and so the arts tourism checklist is not that big. The Museum had the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards on, which was very enjoyable and such a brilliant standard it put the *Beyond the Pale* Adelaide Biennial to shame. There is an artist-run-space called DVAA (Darwin Visual Arts Association). Through meeting people involved in DVAA, we have started thinking about all kinds of projects between Downtown in Adelaide and Darwin, Alice Springs and even Asia.

By the end of the week I was feeling trapped. Stuck in a hot, humid place that did not seem to take public transport very seriously. The only thing to do is hire a car. There are two spots to visit a few hours drive from Darwin that are so joyously idealistic it feels slightly surreal. Litchfield Park and Berry Springs are fantastic, even to blasé and coolly ironic (excuse me?) Australians like Andrew and me. At these places you can swim in freshwater swimming holes with trees growing down to the edge and waterfalls – yes just like on the packet.

Darwin is a great place to visit and will make you amazed at the beauty of your own country. But don't go to the Casuarina shopping centre or you will experience the fear: The fear that life has as its blueprint the Marion Megaplex.

Bridget Currie

Glenys Hodgeman, *Fool* from the *Greetings* series,
Recycled greeting card papercuts, plastic, wood,
variable dimensions, 2004

VITAMIN SHOP

Imagine the joy on your loved one's face, on Christmas Day, when they open a parcel from you containing a Vitamin T-shirt, or a Vitamin Mug (or both!)

The Vitamin Mug (suitable for both coffee *and* tea) was fashioned from the finest ceramic material by the finest craftspeople in the People's Republic of China (ceramic decals applied by monkeys in Adelaide). Produced in a strictly limited edition, this is an heirloom quality collectible.

The 100% comfortable Vitamin T-shirt comes in a special shade of black designed to be compatible with all art practices currently undertaken in South Australia. Available in Unisex and Women's styles (please specify). Unisex sizes small, medium, large, and x large. Women's sizes 10, 12, and 14.

Stocks are limited. Don't miss this rare opportunity to own a piece of Vitamin History. All profits will be used to fund Vitamin related activities such as launches and postage.

Vitamin Mug : $18 including postage.

Vitamin T-Shirt $22 including postage.

Special Package Deal - Vitamin Mug and Vitamin T-Shirt : $38 including postage.

Send money order or cheque payable to me to:

Shaw Hendry

PO Box 373

Hindmarsh SA 5007

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(email me for bank details)

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DISASTER MODE

As I write, the last and biggest in an extraordinary sequence of world wide volcanic eruptions is predicted to take place any day now. In the beginning scientists were telling us that such volcanic activity was not an unusual occurrence but it has been the synchronicity of these eruptions that has been alarming most people. It is almost as if it was a planned attack. What began as a series of deep underground nuclear explosions may have triggered off a chain of events that will have the direst consequences for life as we know it on this planet.

Fact or fiction? What follows is a bit of both.

In a recent documentary on the ABC, *Tuvalu - The Disappearing Nation*, scientists were predicting that this tiny Pacific island would be entirely engulfed by rising sea levels, that it was already happening and it was due to global warming.

I was reminded of the film *The Day After Tomorrow* which I'd only just seen on dvd. I have always had a fascination with Tidal Waves and this was my main reason for watching this film. I wanted to see New York engulfed by a Tidal Wave. The same sort of Tidal Wave (I hoped) that rose terrifyingly as a result of the giant meteorite crashing into the Atlantic Ocean in *Deep Impact*.

Special effects revealed the Statue of Liberty broken and floating in a vast beneath-the-sea world that was once New York City. This wave was aggressive, it pursued the fleeing New Yorkers out of the city, beyond the freeways up into the mountains (there was no mercy for those stuck in traffic). But this destruction wasn't our fault, it was the result of an act of God.

The Tidal Wave in *The Day After Tomorrow* was more of an ocean surge due to rising sea levels because of global warming. It was our fault, just as it is our fault that the people of Tuvalu must leave their island home and scatter to other countries, disappearing forever as a nation.

There have been many such disappearances over the centuries as giant waves have come surging inland taking people by surprise (sometimes not – in Japan they have Tsunami warnings) and sometimes they have been predicted, like the Tidal Wave that was meant to swallow Glenelg back in the 1970's.

Don Dunstan, then the Premier of South Australia, went down to Glenelg on the appointed day (to hold back the wave like King Canute some said) in order to prove to the citizens of South Australia that the prediction was a load of old rubbish. Still there had been panic and some businesses had closed up shop for the day (just in case) and some people were rumoured to have fled the state already.

I caught the Bay Tram and went down to Glenelg that day too. I thought I might be tempting fate, the sky was the same bright unbroken blue I had seen many times before in my recurring Tidal Wave dream from childhood. In that dream I found myself with many others clinging to the face of a rocky cliff overlooking the beach as a giant wave rose up and arched ominously towards us.

Gerry Wedd's humorous version of the events of that day at Glenelg in his *Don Tempting Fate Tea Pot* (ceramic mementos exhibition at the Bay Discovery Centre) sums it up nicely. It was all a bit of a laugh and the newspapers and television news reports had a great time with the story ... but what if the predicted event had come true?

Gerry Wedd, *Don's Teapot*, ceramic, 2004

In *The Day After Tomorrow* the survivors huddled in the massive old library building and spent their time burning books to keep warm in the instant ice age that had engulfed them. One of the

Christine McCormack, *Tidal Wave*,
Coloured pencil on paper

characters wanted to save a book, the Guttenberg Bible. As the very first printed book, it was for him the irreplaceable symbol of our civilization's combined inventive genius and faith. In the face of total destruction he thought about what was being lost to us.

How ironic that the increasing pursuit of wealth by our industrial nations and our own relentless pursuit of a superior 'lifestyle' is leading to the destruction of that which is of most value – our life on this earth.

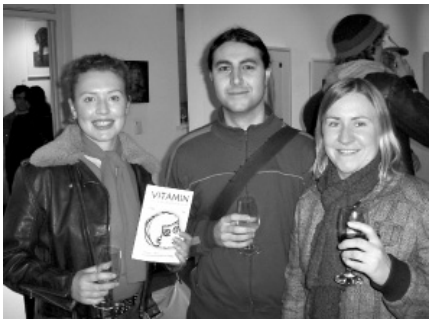
In *Deep Impact* the informed governments had enough time to squirrel away supplies, people and art works into underground fortresses before the devastation occurred. Where do we put our objects of value, our cultural heritage, our dearest icons from the never ending lists of 'best of' and 'must have' when things start falling apart for real? What place will be safe? How much time will we have?

Absurdly now, I have that song in my head, *Oh Sinner Man where you gonna run to, all on that Day!*

Christine McCormack

Episode Two Launch

5th August 2004 - Adelaide Central Gallery



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VITAMIN

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MAY CONTAIN TRACES OF VISUAL CULTURE

2004/5

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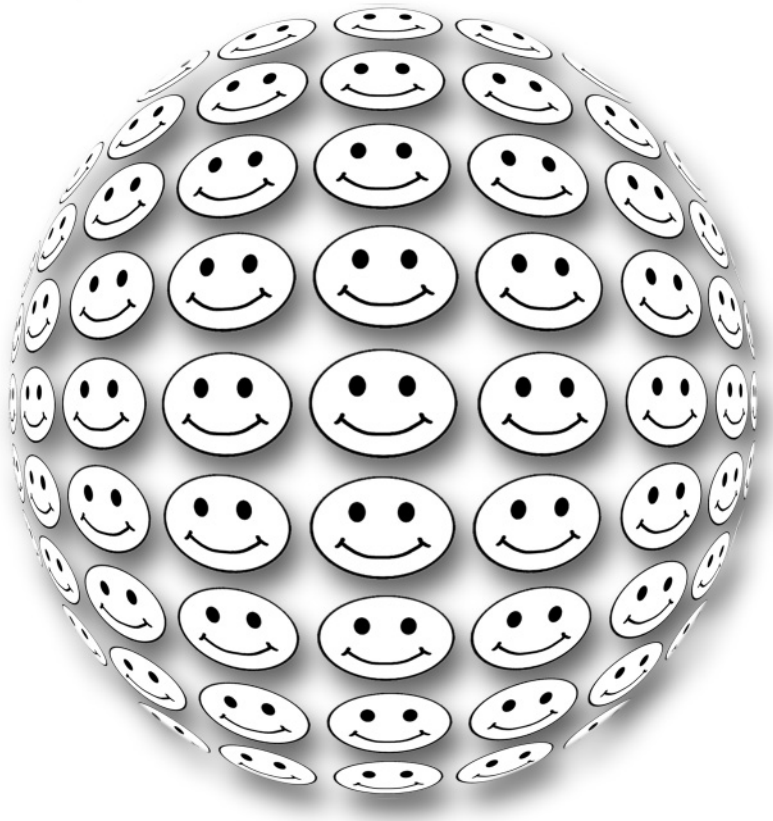

EPISODE THREE -
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