



Reflections

Max Creasy

17th June - 7th August 2011
Centre for Contemporary Photography

What can one write about a photographic exhibition when the photography is the least of the enterprise? During Max's explanation of this endeavour, the act of taking each photograph was barely mentioned. Despite lengthy conversations with Max, I have no idea of the details of the camera, its lens, whether film or digital process was used or the set-up of the studio. The photography is the recording of a larger set of ideas and a sequence of meticulous constructions.

The photographic process so often provides us with a true representation of its subject. Its conveyance of accuracy gives it authority. Light is recorded; reflections and shadows describe surface and form rendered in the flat surface of photographic paper. Max has with this work, subverted this convention. He has created facsimiles of rudimentary objects and rendered them in plaster and paint, then constructed the circumstances of their representation. The shadows, finely drawn in pencil on paper suggest a light source that does not exist. The painted surface of each is intentionally an approximation, expressing both the colouration and the effect of light on the surface but allowing the texture of paint to suggest its fabrication. The precision and purpose in this case is in the meticulous making and then rendering of these objects and in doing this, the nature of representation is brought into question.

There are further clues to this process intentionally set in place; the small bubbles and seams from the plaster casting process, that could so easily be removed in either the making or photographic processes, have remained. They engage with our curiosity.

The objects themselves are interesting though intentionally common place. They are featured individually, centrally composed and without any context. In doing this, Max has brought into the foreground items usually in the background by the circumstances of their use and appearance. Never has a 'highlight marker' received such status. The purpose of each is certainly not glorified or enhanced in any way, in fact on centre stage and alone each appears mute and slightly awkward. The object is not revered or enhanced or 'shown in its best light' as is a common purpose of photographic recording. Its sole purpose is to provide evidence of its fabrication for us to question the objectivity of photography and its authority in faithful representation.

From the time of its ancient origins, the simulacrum—the representation of a copy's copy—was maligned as an inferior attenuated image of the original. It has returned as an interrogator of theories of representation in a world saturated with images. This is at the centre of Max's enquiry.

There are no originals of Max's commonplace artefacts. There are only copies, which by definition infer an original. In a poetic paradox the copy is reborn original and represented in the tradition of the still life.

The other aspect of the photographic images brought into question in this series of works is time. Photography is frequently the act of 'catching a moment' and recording its character. We can, at times, share in the experience and imagine a whole series of circumstances evoked by a frozen moment. Max has removed all of this from the equation and from our experience. The moment recorded here is the duration of time devoted to these tiny constructions. Only the hand drawn artificial shadows suggest a source of light that we know bears no relationship to the path of the sun. Time is not a dimension of these recordings. His intention is not to distract us from the lifeless status of the inanimate object.

Although its veracity is often questioned, as it will be here, the photograph continues to assert its authority as the medium that represents what is real. However, the falsehoods (perhaps it's better we say artifice) of Max's contrived shadows and highlights betray the photograph. The real is made surreal. Our cognition is frustrated as the shadows make their own impression of reality.

John Wardle B Arch M Arch FRAIA
Principal, John Wardle Architects

John Wardle established John Wardle Architects in Melbourne in 1986. He has led the growth of the practice from working on small domestic dwellings to university buildings, museums and large commercial offices. John has formed strong links with both artists and public art galleries and as a practicing architect and board member of both The Ian Potter Museum of Art and Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art has contributed to important public art programs.

Max Creasy was born in Adelaide in 1976. He studied at the Photography Studies College from 1996-98 and in 2009 completed a Masters of Art at the College of Fine Arts, UNSW. This is his second solo show at the Centre for Contemporary Photography.

Max would like to thank Paul Rushworth, Gary Sangster, John Wardle, JWA, Anna Creasy, Micah Hamdorf, Colour Factory, Charlotte McInnes, Peter Revelman, Georgina Morgan, Karra Rees, Daniel Palmer and the CCP.

(image overleaf) *Constructed Form (yoghurt container)*, 2011



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Centre for Contemporary Photography is supported by the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria and is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Centre for Contemporary Photography is supported by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, state and territory governments. CCP is a member of CAOs Contemporary Arts Organisations of Australia.