

BRONEK KOZKA

Bronek Kozka: Melancholia and Memories

By Ashley Crawford

The Melbourne Review - August, 2013

For an artist who works in the field of photography, Bronek Kozka is something of a maverick. His work, quite simply, doesn't 'look' like photography. His subjects often border on the mundane; an office worker, a dishevelled retiree, a nosy neighbour, but somehow he imbues each and every one with a lingering sense of mystery, as though we have entered into a scene midnarrative or blundered into the midst of someone else's memories.

Kozka says that his work was once described as existing in a "half light," somewhere between reality and dreams and memories, a description that he says appeals.

"We are defined by our past, our personal histories that weave and overlap with other individuals, events, popular culture and a raft of individual but still collective experiences," Kozka says. "My intention is to connect with the viewer, to create an image or series of images that engage them and invite them to enter the image."

This, he says, serves as a springboard into his viewers' own recollections or memories. While some of his work clearly tackles the notion of manufacturing nostalgia, this is not his intention. "I believe that through the re-examination, re-framing and re-construction of memories and

remembered events we can shed light on who we are. While I believe this works on a personal level, I feel it is also true on a broader cultural level."

Kozka says that his approach is to "construct" a space, an environment, which best evokes the memory he is grasping for.

"I use the term 'construct' loosely," he says. "I may build a set or it may involve 'dressing' a location... either way what you see was not there prior, it was constructed for the purpose of making the image. I believe that this very intentional 'filtering' of what is in the image and what is not, and the fact things are often built specifically, partially answers the question of why my work has a different feel to other types of photography."

"Lighting is crucial," he adds. "Probably stating the obvious, but I don't just mean the lighting of my images, lighting is crucial to our lives, behaviour, well being and understanding. I use lighting to create an understanding that is at once familiar yet somehow removed. The colour, quality, tone, intensity are all-important in shaping the experience."

There is an extraordinary moment in the 1982 classic science fiction film *Blade Runner* when the main protagonist, Deckard says: "Memories, you're talkin' about memories." Kozka responds enthusiastically to the reference. "A brilliant film on so many levels. The implanting of memories (someone else's) in the character Rachel is interesting, as is the character Leon's attachment to his photographs. It is this small detail that really gives insight to his humanity and the tragic nature of these characters."

"As you suggest, my work is about illustration, more specifically an illustration of a memory, rather than, or in addition to an illustration of an event. I have no desire to make my images into something they are not, they are photographs, they are not paintings, nor do they want to be (no I'm not a frustrated painter)."

That said, Kozka does not shy away from a comparison with the melancholia of a painter such as Rick Amor.

"There is something very still and considered about Rick Amor's work. I think, in our advertising and signage saturated existence stillness can sometimes be confused with melancholy. In social circles if you not 'chatting' something must be wrong... comments like 'you're very quiet, is everything okay?' are not uncommon. While I see my work as very still, a stillness that holds a tension, I won't shy away from melancholy. There is a reluctance to allow one's self to be sad or melancholy or lugubrious, we must always appear to be happy (grinning idiots), this is a social expectation, however it is there, it is in me, its in all of us and, fortunately, art gives a 'socially acceptable' avenue for this expression. The fact that people connect with this work also, to me, suggests the need of the artists to express melancholy is equally matched with the viewers need/desire to consume it."



PEERING THROUGH THE BLINDS: STORIES FROM SUBURBIA

'Girl Peeping' 2013



01



02

Perfect: Synthetic

These mannequins have one goal, the to tempt and seduce. Perfect : Synthetic is an ongoing survey (on going) of the mannequins that occupy the windows of the strip shops and shopping centers I pass on a regular basis. The series is about consumerism and consumption, though, rather than focusing on the consumer I approach this by looking at the seductive gaze of the mannequin. A background in advertising has made me acutely aware of how we are manipulated as consumers, with that in mind I have chosen to focus my lens on the faces of these synthetic plastic representations of perfection and a perfect life.

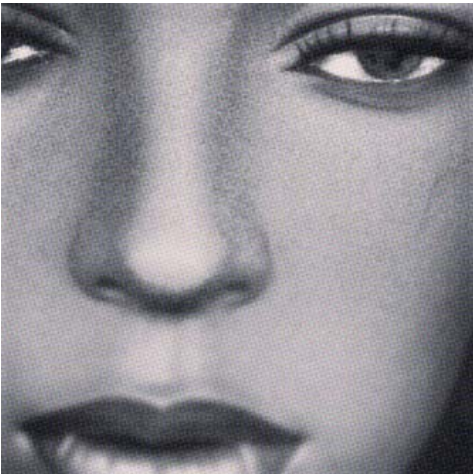
Through their fixed gaze, pouting lips and absolute attention to us, they seduce us and draw us in, almost offering themselves up to be consumed. The perfection though is flawed, the surfaces often chipped, discolored and marked some, to quote Shakespeare, are "...rudely stamp'd", poorly made or crafted. As it is said beauty is only skin deep, the synthetic veneer of these sirens is equally shallow. Still, there is no doubting their ability to catch our eye and our attention.



03



04



05



06

FRONT COVER

'Untitled 001' 2013 (detail)

WORKS:

PEERING THROUGH THE BLINDS: STORIES FROM SUBURBIA

'Girl Peeping' 2013 \$2,550.00
Archival inkjet print
111.5 x 100 cm
edition of 10 (framed)

PERFECT: SYNTHETIC

01. 'Untitled 001' 2013 \$2,550.00
Archival inkjet print
95 x 95 cm
edition of 10 (framed)

02. 'Untitled 002' 2013 \$2,550.00
Archival inkjet print
95 x 95 cm
edition of 10 (framed)

03. 'Untitled 003' 2013 \$2,550.00
Archival inkjet print
95 x 95 cm
edition of 10 (framed)

04. 'Untitled 004' 2013 \$2,550.00
Archival inkjet print
95 x 95 cm
edition of 10 (framed)

05. 'Untitled 005' 2013 \$2,550.00
Archival inkjet print
95 x 95 cm
edition of 10 (framed)

06. 'Untitled 006' 2013 \$2,550.00
Archival inkjet print
95 x 95 cm
edition of 10 (framed)

[MARS] MELBOURNE
ART ROOMS

418 Bay Street, Port Melbourne, Victoria Australia 3207
T: +61 3 9681 8425 F: +61 3 9681 8426 E: andy@marsgallery.com.au

www.marsgallery.com.au