



CAROLIN CASEY | JIM COOPER | KIRSTEN FERGUSON | RACHEL GILLIES | ANGELA LYON | CRAIG McNAB
JAMIE OLIPHANT | REBECCA PILCHER | JUSTINE WALKER | curated by Ana Terry

8 - 26 May 2007 | BLUE OYSTER GALLERY | DUNEDIN | NEW ZEALAND

double

double brings together emerging and established artists who work with self portraiture as a significant part of their practice. Various permutations of self portraiture have been adopted by artists to explore social concerns including sexuality, gender, ethnicity and more recently the plurality of identity through digital media. Underlying all self portraiture is the mystery of how an individual sees themselves as the other; when one objectifies one's own body creating a double.

The double performs through various scenarios in the works in this show. In some instances the double motif is adopted by the artist and is apparent in their re-representations of themselves. In other works the double occurs when the portrait operates like a mirror allowing the viewer to step into the autobiographer's shoes. However this doubling is not a closed circuit. The curatorial proposition for double asked each artist to entrust their avatar to be positioned with an 'other' in the gallery space. Some of these relationships may be obvious while others are arbitrary, as the viewer's position shifts to third party in witnessing the doubling between portraits.

Ana Terry, 2007

Jim Cooper

"if i was a dog i would hope people would be kind to me
i would visit homeless dogs at the SPCA smoke cigarettes with them and listen to their problems.
i dont think i would chase balls, cars or frisbes
i wouldn't have a penis because Dogs penises seem to often embarrass their owners
i would like to be a spaniel/lab cross because of the colour and they are very placid dogs - i'd like to be placid
i would also hope that i could sleep inside on the sofa as i like my space unless my owner was good looking then i would like to sleep on their bed. i wouldn't like to be in the room if he was having sex
i wouldn't be a good family dog i'd be a one owner kind of Dog."

Text from Jim's dog poster, "If i was a dog..."



Photograph by Brian Wood, Sawyers Bay, April 2007

Carolyn Casey

I am interested in this notion of the shadow: of hidden layers beneath what is seen, the connection of the emotional and the psychological to the real.

The shadow is a Jungian description for the darker part of the (unconscious) self. It is the passionate, impulsive and uncontrollable expression of the self. The shadow should not automatically be assumed to be negative however; it can be either good or bad, depending on the resulting thought/action.



lamp-post, 2006, hand-printed colour photograph, edition 1/1 diptych each 700 mm x 700 mm (framed)

Kirsten Ferguson

My work tends to look at the construction of characters/caricatures; subverted portraits, playing with head and body dichotomies, mixing them, distorting them. My drawing is a way of trying to 'see' - it is the core of my practice. The process of drawing, in and of itself, interests me. I also work with the medium of print and maybe it is the mediums similarities with drawing through the manipulation of black and light that links the two. In drawing I like the tactile contact with the drawing materials and the lack of the intermediate. Charcoal, conte, graphite and paper, the movement of the hand and the mark. I also utilise collage, this process aligned with drawing is satisfying. Tearing the paper and pairing it with an 'other', it also tends to loosen how I work. I use a mirror in the studio, constantly checking for balance and whether the characters I create sit well within its frame. Using a mirror has become an integral part of how I work - a kind of blind groping 'thru a glass darkly'.



Untitled, 2007, detail of installation of mixed media drawings

Rachel Gillies

We live in an increasingly technological world, where online communities and digital social networks serve to bring us closer together and make us feel part of a bigger whole. Photography can provide us a window to this world, allowing us to experience the scene we are excluded from, first-hand.

But what if these aids fail us? A global sense of alienation sets in as we search for a deeper sense of ourselves in our unending quest to reach out and connect.

The artist would like to thank Michael Nol and Ana Terry for their support in making this work.



I check my e-mails every hour, 2007, lambda print on metallic paper, 1470 mm x 650 mm (framed)

Angela Lyon

I wanted to create a self-portrait that meddled with my subjectivity and objectivity. Usually images of me confront me with the difference between what I appear to be and what I think that I am. This self-portrait conveniently offers me an escape from viewing myself by allowing me to safely switch between positions of self and other, he and me, when required.

In front of the camera, I idealised myself to look like Elvis. His image is so familiar that it overpowers my own. In post-production I had to blur my familiar skin beyond recognition so the real me could shamelessly hide behind a mask of otherness.

When all is said and done, I look at this image and reality is suspended yet still desired. A fantasy of truth surrounds my position as viewer where I question if I am the subject or is he my object of desire?



In his eyes she could see no other, 2007, digital print, 1200 x 850 mm

Craig McNab

I once read an account that in the earliest commercial photography studios of the late nineteenth century, clients collecting their portraits would frequently refuse to accept the images being handed over, claiming that they were not pictures of themselves but instead of some other sitter. Although adamant in their opinion these subjects were in fact wrong, being, perhaps surprisingly, unable to identify themselves from the photographic likeness provided.

Recently I came across the following:

Just imagine living in a world without mirrors. You'd dream about your face and imagine it as an outer reflection of what is inside you. And then, when you reach forty, someone would put a mirror before you for the first time in your life. Imagine your fright! You'd see the face of a stranger. And you'd know quite clearly what you are unable to grasp: your face is not you. (Milan Kundera, *Immortality*, 1991.)

Looking back through my photographs I am surprised at the number of self-portraits I have taken. These private images, never shown, seem to figure a significant but suppressed aspect of my work. They exist only as contact sheets – a type of reduced gesture in my work-book. I am not sure why I have taken so many, but I guess it became important to identify how I appear.



Then and now – two self-portraits, 2007, left-hand panel: Untitled, March 2006, right-hand panel: The large contact sheet, approx. 1500 x 4000 mm

Jamie Oliphant

Goya's series of etchings, *los caprichos* (1799) deals with what happens when reason has abandoned humanity. They show us madmen, convicts, prostitutes, and gluttonous monks who are overwhelmingly horrible. They are pictures of individual human follies and corrupt social customs. The parade of characters are mindlessness and their behavior is animalistic. Goya was influenced by his surroundings, individual human follies and corrupt social customs. Spain in the 18th Century was a time where madness was not only a curiosity but a spectacle, entertainment before TV. In *Madness and Civilization* Michel Foucault tells us how for a few coins you could see the mad perform. "The monster in the madman was no longer suppressed inside oneself, but paraded like some kind of circus animal."¹

In contemporary times we still pay to view the mad.TV documentaries on serial killers, like John Wayne Gacy or Spike Lee's movie Summer of Sam often re-run late at night. What drives our fascination with CSI and crime stories is a desire to be scared, through which we judge our 'normality'.

In Stanley Kubrick's film The Shining (1980) a man descends into madness. Through the film, the audience can follow the transformation of the human being sinking into lunacy. When Jack chops down the door, saying "Daddy's home", the audience fear is palpable, and not simply for his son, but for themselves.

From across the room the glare from an oversized bust beckons. Its cold eyes and smile of insanity both repulse and seduce. In our comparatively small stature, we become meek and vulnerable prey to the oversized portrait. We are amused and terrified at the same time. In this carving piggy piggy, let me in, Jack's iconic grin is ferociously chiseled into a permanent fixture. Jack's mad and contorted face is mingled with the artist's own. The aggressive action of carving wood, with chainsaw, axe and chisel evokes a sense of intensity that reflects the actions of a madmen hell bent on chopping up his victims.

I. Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization, Tavistock Publications, 1967, p70



piggy piggy, let me in, 2007

Rebecca Pilcher

My twin sister Rachel and I have a close bond that is different to any other relationship I have. To some people this understanding we share is hard to comprehend.

The Twin Tests examines the distance between others and one's own individual subject-hood. The Twin Tests document the artist and her identical twin sister as they undergo a number of basic clinical tests exploring telepathy – which include moving eyes from side to side and bringing their hands slowly up to their faces. This footage was filmed without a choreographer to help co-ordinate movements and the sisters rely on the relationship they share to sense and time their movements in

tandem. The Twin Tests alludes to both the practice of photography as a diagnostic tool for psychiatric disorders in the late nineteenth century and traditional Western suspicion towards twins.



The Twin Tests, 2005, DVD, duration 7.41 min, image courtesy of artist

Justine Walker

Untitled comes from a body of work examining the often conflicting pressures that society puts on its members. Not only dictating and defining modes of living, whether that be having children, a career, getting married or all of the above, but also dictates and defines how we will present ourselves while doing so. An obvious source of these pressures is the media and advertising, but more sinister and less expected comes from family and friends. How are we living up to these expectations?

Although Untitled was not intended to be a self-portrait I have drawn on my own experience of the world and used my own image as a resource. The larger body of work includes video and audio pieces that come together in installations, invoking institutionalisation, the uncanny and woman alone.



Untitled, 2005, digital Image, 941 x 1116 mm