

## Artist's Statement

### SHALL I KNIT YOU ONE?

Rachel H.Allan

*I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object.*

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (14)

Photography is always changing. A state of flux is ongoing. How we as photographers choose to present our work has powerful ramifications for the final reading.

"Shall I Knit You One?" was exhibited at Dunedin School of Art Gallery in April 2013. The exhibition consisted of 1120 digital chromogenic prints, nine electrophotographic books, six black-and-white Polaroids, three donor Polaroids, five tintypes, three digital four-colour prints, three colour Polaroids, one digital tintype, one digital Polaroid and one chemical-digital tintype hybrid that combined to create an auto-fictional narrative that explored the melancholic relationship between that which is being photographed and that which is viewed, what is shown and what is hidden.

"Shall I Knit You One?" was an exercise in time and in mechanics. It sought to delve into the place where fetishistic compulsive wants implement obsession, and love and death prosper:

Embedded within a dialogue where photographic history and processes are common currency, I find myself inevitably speaking about the mechanics of what I have made and how it relates to or effects my contemporary process. I am aware that I produce melancholic works tinged with nostalgia – but by amalgamating the antiquated with the app, my work speaks to contemporary discourse on the use and integration of new media within photography.

The Polaroid can be thought of as a modern interpretation of the tintype. Both are unique forms of photography that produce no discernible negative. However, the Polaroid process is more recognizable today than its predecessor. Recently, both these relatively instant forms of photography have been transformed into hipstamatic applications. By engaging with obsolete technologies and placing them alongside modern interpretations, the works in this exhibition point to the ever-changing world of photography.

Anxieties about new technologies are frequently abated by engaging in time-honored chemical-based photography, but something new is created by combining the two. Something distinct. Historical and contemporary processes amalgamate and become something different, something not easily recognisable.

Discrete and analogue sit side by side and meld together to create a chemical-digital Polaroid-tintype, with a physical ground that is anchored in historical processes yet producing a final image that is digitally acquired. A simulated tintype and remixed Polaroid confuse the viewer further by mimicking or pretending to be something they are not.

The *Ladydrive* series consists of 1120 digital chromogenic prints. The term 'ladydrive' refers to a motoring trip undertaken by two women. A ladydrive has no set destination. It is an exercise in modern-day wandering. All that is required is a full tank of gas and a willingness to explore, albeit from the safety of a vehicle. Ladydrives also demand a soundtrack and cigarettes.

Through time and with subsequent reproductions, all images, like our memory and recall, become somewhat distorted. There is a fondness toward the past that is perverted by incomplete recollections. In *Ladydrive* I employed particular 'film' applications that produced hues similar to those in Kodacolor prints, particularly when the couplers and thermal dye were unstable. Then the weakest dye, cyan, produced a reddish tone as it moved towards its complementary hue.

When viewing *Ladydrive* as a whole, the images merge together and become waves of colour. This directly references the progression of Kodacolor prints into stable images. However, the images are not nostalgically driven. Although they allude to the past through their colours, their creation is entirely contemporary photography.

*Ladydrive* has been exhibited in a number of ways, with each variant producing a specific response in the audience or viewer. An impetuous 10-year-old boy saw the work as relating to spectrums, radio waves and channel surfing. There was no mention of Polaroids or nostalgia. This critique, and others by the under-thirties, has led me to believe that the work has a generational aspect. It seems that the youth see it for what it is – they don't insist that it be about modes or method. They don't see nostalgia. They see the images.

"Shall I Knit You One?" was ultimately an ode to photography. It asked viewers to become invested in a dialogue about the photographic process by encouraging them to inquire into the origin of the prints they were viewing while providing a discernible narrative within a non-specific framework.

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Andrew Beck

A displacement of space and volume through the photograph.