

COKE & POPCORN: THE IMAGE AND THE SERIES

Rachel Hope Allan

If you see a red flagged screen, just click Details and click VISIT this site. Its ok don't worry. We have none of those nasty things they say we do. We're trying to fix whatever is causing this issue. Thanks for understanding.¹

coke and popcorn Facebook status update, 2015



Figure 1. *coke & popcorn*, 2015, giclée print, 500 x 500 mm.
Finalist in the Arts Gold Awards, 2015.

Confined to a concrete ocean, I am compelled to visit you, concerned that if I stop, you will cease to exist.

coke & popcorn is an ongoing body of work shot on an iPhone camera using an application that replicates specific vintage film stocks and technical settings. A selection of works from the series was first shown at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2 July–24 October 2016, in the group show '*Ridiculous Sublime*' curated by Lucy Hammond.

While shooting for *coke & popcorn*, I adhere to decisions that mimic the constraints presented by traditional wet photography, elevating which might be perceived as a 'low' form of image production through enforcing historical constraints. In an attempt to negotiate the critical discussion around 'high' and 'low' forms of image-making in the contemporary context, *coke & popcorn* is embedded within a contemporary dialogue that explores the ritualistic act of photography in itself.

Unfortunately, due to copyright infringement [sic] notice, we had to remove all the live streaming websites from this page. If you wish to view the sites that offers live tv streaming, you can visit the following list.²

The title *coke & popcorn* directly references the file-sharing platform that allows viewers to illegally source films and television series. Often these files are corrupted, glitchy even, but we watch, we download, accepting their defects.



Figure 2. Rachel Hope Allan, *swimmers*,
500 x 500mm, giclée print.



Figure 3. Rachel Hope Allan, *red fish*,
500 x 500mm, giclée print.

The title is also a comment on what is still deemed entertainment and the speed at which we approach certain annihilation in this age of the Anthropocene.

Zoos, crowded beaches and statues reference early French photography and point to the chemical process mimicked by the code used in smartphone photography apps. The images are enlarged just to the point of distortion and then printed on fine-art Hahnemühle photographic paper, thereby altering the surface and history of the image.

Trapped within the layers of pigment and code are my memories. There is an apocalyptic feel to the works – the “what might be.” When I look at the finished images, my senses are almost tricked into smelling the chemistry and believing in the coded flaws. I see them for what they are, but only when they are printed do they fully reveal their true legacy: their digital origins.



Figure 4. Rachel Hope Allan, *dead like me*,
500 x 500mm, giclée print.



Figure 5. Rachel Hope Allan, *watching*,
500 x 500mm, giclée print.



Figure 6. Rachel Hope Allan, *tokyo is yours*, 500 x 500mm, giclée print.



Figure 7. Rachel Hope Allan, *umbrellas and glass*, 500 x 500mm, giclée print.

This series of works has two distinct lives. According to Jamie Short, “When we post an image on the Internet, we are not making claims to the authenticity of any given image, but rather leaving an index of our own digital presence, coded in concealed zeros and ones.”¹³ Online, *coke & popcorn* exists as a neatly packaged set of images that reveal the haunting moments spent looking into the eyes of a lonely, hot polar bear living out its days in an artificial environment, or the glance from a broken statue at a passer-by. The discrete data, the precious pixels, are only revealed when enlarged – akin to film’s relationship to grain. I am drawn in by the fakeness of the application, the repetitive signs signaling the handmade, by the lie that is sold. It is true that I could upload the images as slightly pixelated versions of themselves. But I resist. Fred Ritchin writes in *After Photography* that, “Photography in the digital environment involves the reconfiguration of the image into a mosaic of millions of changeable pixels, not a continuous tone imprint of visible reality.”¹⁴



Figure 8. Rachel Hope Allan, *riding in trains with boys*, 500 x 500mm, giclée print.

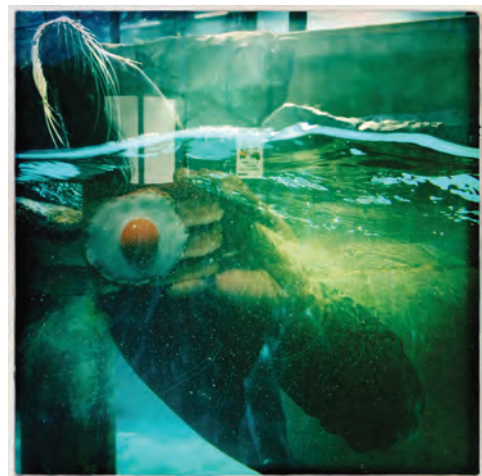


Figure 9. Rachel Hope Allan, *coke and popcorn*, 2016, 500 x 500mm, giclée print.

I am interested in the potential subterfuge, trickery and the alchemical magic of photography. *coke & popcorn* raises questions around the potential and expectations of image production in the twenty-first century, and the ability of an image to have two distinct lives.

When viewing *coke & popcorn*, either IRL or AFK,⁵ I experience a sweet spot reminiscent of the lens that the optician drops in front of your eye, then plucks away, or that perfect download stream.

By investigating the collision between the real and the simulated, this work explores the fetishisation of processes and objects by investigating the boundaries of memory and nostalgia.

You can never go home again, but I guess you can shop there.

Grosse Pointe Blank, 1997.

My Anne used to tell me stories about riding the horses that were going to be fed to the lions. She would use her cardigan as reins and whisper into their ears. I remember thinking about the logistics of it, thinking about how they would choose which horse to kill next, the finality of it all and the absurdity of hearing the lion roar as he sat astride his dinner.

Employing elements of subterfuge, trickery and the alchemical magic of photography, **Rachel Hope Allan's** photographic work raises questions about image production in the twenty-first century. Rachel holds a Masters of Fine Arts with distinction from the Dunedin School of Art, where she lectures in photography and electronic arts. Her research practice is wide-ranging and extends from traditional, darkroom-based processes through to digital and alternative liquid photography. She exhibits locally and internationally in public museums, art galleries, project galleries and artist-run spaces.

- 1 Coke and Popcorn Facebook post, 20 September 2015, https://www.facebook.com/CokePopcorn/?ref=page_internal (accessed 11 Jan. 2017).
- 2 Bilal Ahmad, *10 Free Websites to Watch Live TV Online on PC or Laptop*, 2017, <https://www.techmaish.com/10-free-websites-to-watch-live-tv-on-your-pc-or-laptop/> (accessed 11 Jan. 2017).
- 3 Jaime Schwartz, *Is a Photograph Still an Index if it's on the Internet? Indexicality and Art Photography Today*, <http://dismagazine.com/discussion/41736/a-discursive-mask/> (accessed 11 Jan. 2017).
- 4 "Photography in the digital environment involves the reconfiguration of the image into a mosaic of millions of changeable pixels, not a continuous tone imprint of visible reality." Fred Ritchin, *After Photography* (New York and London: WW Norton, 2009), 18.
- 5 AFK is an acronym for 'Away From Keyboard.' Essentially it is the same thing as IRL ('In Real Life'), but without the inferred prejudice against online life. See <http://www.codefuel.com/glossary/irl/>.