

OPEN HOUSE

Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne, 4 September – 30 September, 1995

These photographic transparencies expose the private interiors of a particular social milieu, examining the relationships and living situations of the occupants through the small rituals performed within daily life. They draw on the language of documentary photography, genre painting, T.V sitcoms and parody these genres in an ironic and critical manner. Although the tableau is staged, the interior is "real" - a kind of ready-made set in which the sitters present themselves. They are reminiscent of seventeenth century Dutch genre scenes with their attention to detail and their depiction of everyday life. The authenticity of these contemporary situations however depends on the credibility of the sitter's performance and the familiarity of the scenes enacted.

Within each scenario the figures engage in subtle plays of social interaction, or appear caught in their own internal dialogues. Their frozen gestures and directed points of view allow narratives to be constructed around these seemingly conventional scenes. They are defined as much against their surroundings as they are through the collections of objects that gather on available surfaces. Appearing in the set they have carefully constructed the sitters collude with the photographer in their own representation. The facades they present however are both opaque and translucent: what they project is limited by pre-existing codes of self-presentation.

Presented in large light boxes, a technological product of the times, they expose the intimacy of contemporary living spaces within the public domain. They manifest the private as public by bringing the inside out. Each image projects a moment tinged with tension, intimacy, banality or passion and displayed as a tableau vivant. They materialize different times within the presentness of the picture to enclose and disclose the contingencies of contemporary life. The camera plays privileged viewer peering into the lives and homes of these subjects. The viewer is drawn into these saturated pictorial spaces and encouraged to examine all the objects that the photograph makes visible. This viewing process becomes revealing not only about those observed but about the audience who is compelled to look.

Anne Zahalka

LIST OF WORKS

1. *Sunday, 11.08, 1995*
173cm x 125cm x 25cm
2. *Saturday, 9:15pm, 1995*
165cm x 125cm x 225cm
3. *Wednesday, 10:23pm, 1995*
165cm x 125cm x 25cm
4. *Monday, 11:48am, 1995*
125 x 176 x 25cm
5. *Saturday, 2:48pm, 1995*
125cm x 173cm x 25cm
6. *Thursday, 8:33pm, 1995*
125cm x 190cm x 25cm
7. *Wednesday, 8:40pm, 1995*
190cm x 125cm x 25cm
8. *Tuesday, 9:10pm, 1995*
178cm x 125cm x 25cm
9. *Saturday, 5: 18pm, 1995*
125cm x 162cm x 25cm

\$4,500 each, Edition of 3
Duratran and light box

10 - 18 *Untitled* , 1995

\$300 each, edition of 20

Dye sublimation print, face mounted on Perspex, wooden frame
36.5 x 29 x 6cm

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Anne Zahalka's lightbox transparencies expose the private interiors of a particular social milieu, examining the relationships and living situations of the occupants through the small rituals performed within daily life. They draw on the language of documentary photography, genre painting and T.V sitcoms but parody these genres in an ironic and critical manner. Although the tableau is staged, the interior is "real" - a kind of ready-made set in which the sitters present themselves. They are reminiscent of seventeenth century Dutch genre scenes with their attention to detail and their depiction of everyday life. The authenticity of these contemporary situations however depends on the credibility of the sitter's performance and the familiarity of the scenes enacted.

Within each scenario the figures engage in subtle plays of social interaction, or appear caught in their own internal dialogues. Their frozen gestures and directed points of view allow narratives to be constructed around such seemingly conventional scenes. They appear in a set they have constructed with the artist and thus collude in their own representation. They are defined as much through their surroundings and the arrangement of objects and possessions as what might be assumed by their outward appearance. The facades they present are both opaque and translucent: what they project is limited by pre-existing codes of self-presentation. These ordinary moments with their mix of tension, intimacy, banality or passion are displayed as a tableau vivant. They materialise different times within the presentness of the picture to enclose and disclose the contingencies of contemporary life.

These images manifest the private as public by bringing the inside out. They are presented in lightboxes, a technological product of the times which expose us to the intimacy of these interiors in a public domain. The camera plays privileged viewer peering into the lives and homes of these subjects. Our vision is drawn into saturated pictorial spaces, our eyes free to wander over the surfaces of objects depicted and encouraged to examine details that the photograph makes visible. As the viewer becomes voyeur, the desire to scrutinize the scenes is revealing not only about those observed but about those compelled to watch.

ANNE ZAHALKA

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Exibited

ANNA SCHWARTZ GALLERY, MELBOURNE
1995

Selected works exhibited

AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, MELBOURNE
The Object of Existence
1995

FRANKFURT KUNSTVEREIN
PROSPECT
Photographie in der Gegenwartskunst
1996

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SYDNEY
Phototography is Dead! Long Live Photography!
1996