

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art Dallas Brooks Drive South Yarra Victoria Australia 3141  
Tel+613 9654 6422 Fax+613 9650 3438 [acca@connect.net.au](mailto:acca@connect.net.au) [www.artnow.org.au](http://www.artnow.org.au) Tues-Fri 11-5 Sat/Sun 12-5

**ARTS  
VICTORIA**



**MONASH  
UNIVERSITY**

Gentle  
**Pat Brassington**  
9 June to 15 July 2001  
Opening 8 June 6-8pm

 **CORPORATE INITIATIVES**  
*Audio Visual Specialists*



## Pat Brassington **Gentle**

These photos are slightly dizzying; maybe even a little bit nauseating. But not only because the content is occasionally abject or sexualised or eroticised: thinly veiled or unfocussed nudity, intimate views of the crotch and spreading legs, hitched skirts and parting lips, a nipple seeming to penetrate an unrecognisable orifice.

Nor just because it's difficult to discern what we are looking at. For while we might recognise a texture (satin, velvet, plastic) or part-object (doll's body, real human anatomy), they appear in such mixed up, altered contexts that the view is beguiling to say the least, more often disorienting.

But also because there is no certain vantage point onto each subject; it's as if the ground beneath us has dropped away, like a car leaving the road momentarily; our sensibility gently heaves upward then downward seeking a firm foundation. All of these are effects of the artist's expert, subtle, digital manipulations.

Analogue photography (read 'old fashioned') established a physical, relationship between the world and the image; the world impressed itself upon the film, a direct record was left behind, hard physical (photo-chemical) evidence, arguable in a court of law until twenty years ago. Roland Barthes (among others) famously reckoned we intuit this physical connection every time we look at a photograph. There is a subject 'there' just as there was a camera in front of it; a subliminal geometry replaying the events in our minds as if we were 'there' too taking the photograph.

The allure of pornography or war photography was the same in establishing our virtual presence in forums we would never usually be allowed to enter. No matter that we would never get on the film set or go to war; the camera, geometry and chemistry proved events for us in reconstructing the exact spatial arrangement of things.

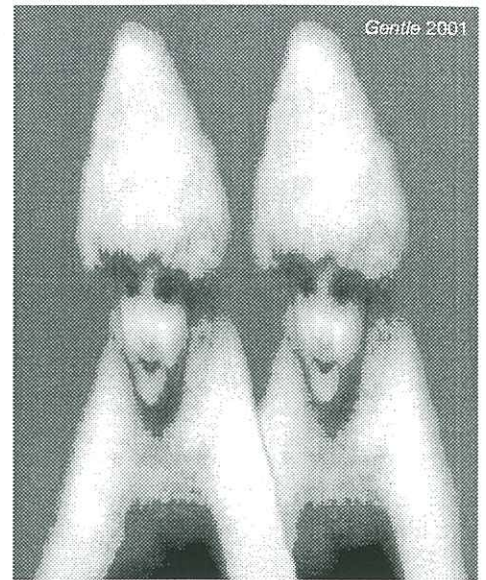
In contrast, contemporary photography is characterised by rampant digital speculation, totally unhinged from physical reality, which substitutes locales, events and people in fantastic and startling configurations. While these may be banal comments to make about the potential for digital imaging, the consequence for viewers is profound (and very different from Barthes' weary phrases); no less than a groundless vantage-point, which no longer conforms to physical conditions – as if we were 'there' – but which may be purely, digitally, hypothetical.

Even so, for the moment we still find ourselves asking 'where' photographs are taken. It's really a pointless question in the light of the digital chimera but we're still on the verge of this profound change to photography; that is we're still getting used to it. Which is why Pat is such a great image maker, because she sits her pictures on the same verge between analogue and digital – between recording things and making them up, between proof and fiction – so that they rock gently back and forth between the two conditions.

In her work it is hard to tell one layer from another, one source material from another, one period from another. Though indebted to surrealist collage, her technique is seamless; there is no obvious torn paper edge or radical shift in colour, texture and tone between materials (which rhetorically signals invention or fantasy). The portent of her symbols is released within a smooth continuum of digital time and space, perceived as a caste or hue across the series, a suffused sexuality which we take alternately for reality *and* fantasy.

It is why looking at Pat's pictures feels like the onset of vertigo as we reflexively still look for certainties in subject matter and perspective. Pat leaves just sufficient and believable traces to progress our search but it's profoundly futile; we don't know where we are, although the giddy motion of looking is a perfect symptom of these changing times. It requires a gentle touch to keep appearances teetering in this way; a gentle push or force upon us which starts a gentle, dizzying and not unenjoyable whirl.

Stuart Koop



### Select Solo Exhibitions

- 2001 Gentle, Stills Gallery, Sydney
- 1999 Default Blue, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney
- 1996 This is not a love song, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne
- 1993 Incorporal 2 - 'Brassington: Book of Jonah, 1932', The Basement, Hobart
- 1991 Maybe you've seen it all before, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne  
Things will tell you their names, Darwin Contemporary Art Space

### Select Group Exhibitions

- 2000 Telling Tales: The Child in Contemporary Photography, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne  
Fotokunst Aus Australien, Neue Berliner Kunstverein/NBK and touring  
World without end: Photography and the 20th Century, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney
- 1998 Telling Tales, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney and the Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum, Joanneum, Graz, Austria  
Shell Fremantle Print Prize, Fremantle Art Centre  
Respond Red or Blue, Royal Melbourne Hospital
- 1997 The Enigmatic Object: Photography and the Uncanny, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
Geelong Print Prize, Geelong Art Gallery, Geelong  
Launch, Stills Gallery, Sydney
- 1996 Photography is Dead! Long Live Photography!, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney  
Hobart City Art Prize, Carnegie Gallery, Hobart
- 1995 Half Light, Arts Council of Tasmania venues  
Bad Light, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Bond Store, Hobart, and touring  
Colonial Pastime to Contemporary Profession, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart.  
Home Made (in collaboration with Geoff Parr), Plimsoll Gallery, Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania, Hobart

### Select Publications

- Anne Marsh, *Light writing desire and other fantasies, Telling tales: the child in contemporary photography*, Monash University Gallery, 2000
- Bernice Murphy, *Fotokunst Aus Australien, Neue Berliner Kunstverein/NBK*, Germany, 2000
- Judy Annear, *World without end: Photography in the 20th Century*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2000
- Diana Klaosen, *An Interview with Pat Brassington*, *Inprint*, Vol. 33, No. 2, Winter, 1998
- Deborah Hennessy, *This is not a love song, Broadsheet*, Vol. 26 No. 1, Autumn, 1997
- Jennifer Spinks, *Out of the Dark, Art and Australia*, Vol. 325, No.1, 1997
- Edward Colless, *This is not a love song*, Monash University Gallery, 1996
- Geoff Batchen, *Touche: Photography, Touch, Vision, Photofile*, No. 47, March, 1996
- Ian McLean, *Home: body, Art and Australia*, Vol. 33, No. 2, Summer, 1995
- Edward Colless, *Pat Brassington, The Error of My Ways*, Brisbane, 1995
- Catriona Moore, *Indecent Exposures: 20 years of Australian Feminist Photography*, Allen and Unwin, 1994

Published by Australian Centre for Contemporary Art.  
Copyright artist and author. Images copyright the artist.  
No material, whether written or photographic, may be reproduced without the permission of the artist, author and Australian Centre for Contemporary Art  
Director Jenepher Duncan  
Curator Stuart Koop  
Gallery Co-ordinator Vikki McInnes

ACCA is supported through the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria – Department of Premier and Cabinet. ACCA is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Printing by DI Print. Audio visual by Corporate Initiatives and Pioneer Australia.

Pat Brassington is represented by Stills Gallery, Sydney.

ARTS VICTORIA  
MONASH UNIVERSITY  
Australia Council for the Arts  
Major Media Partner  
RRR  
ACCA is a member of  
caos  
Program Sponsors  
Pioneer  
DI Print