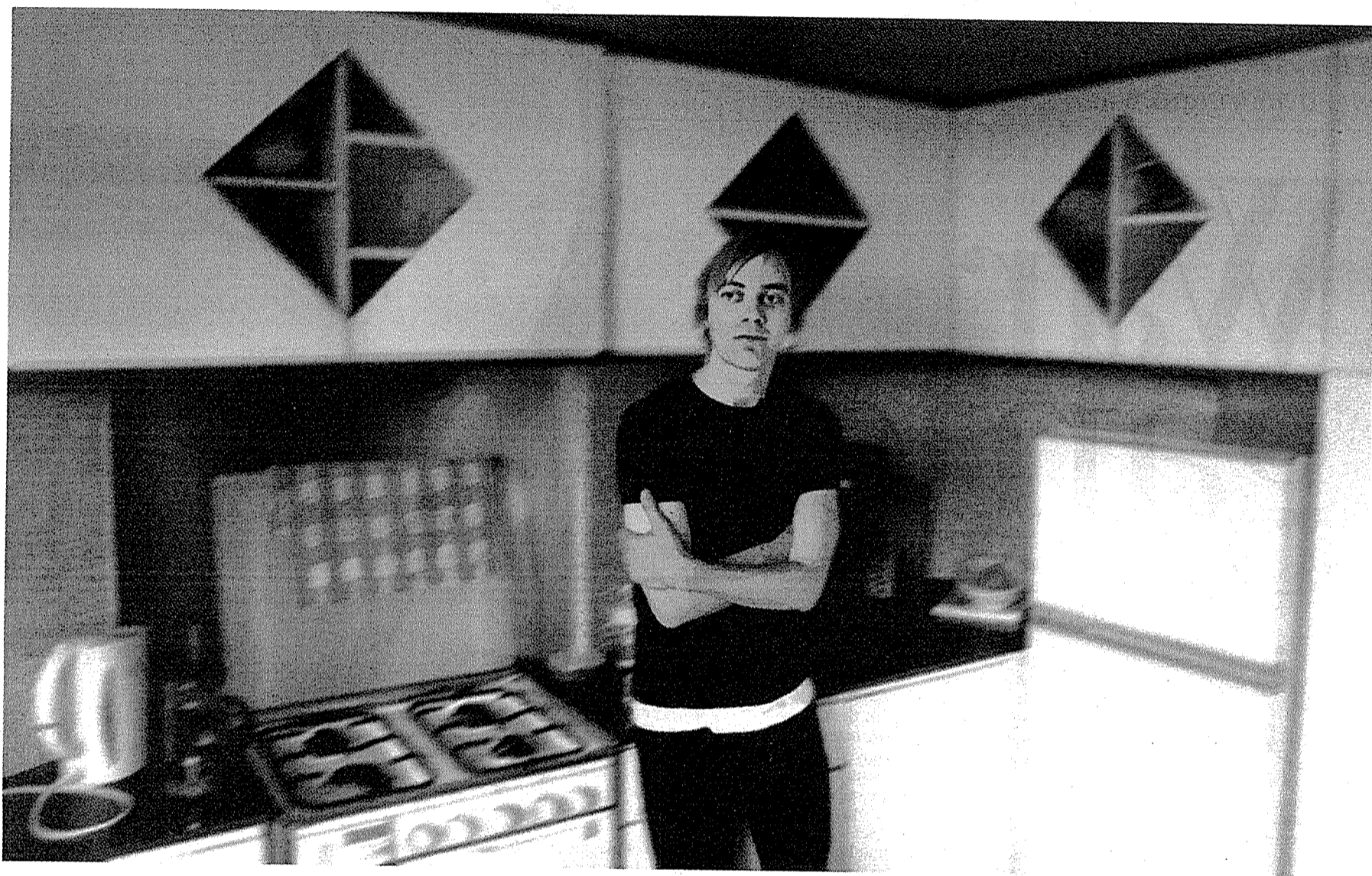


## Double Exposure Chris Beck



PICTURE: CHRIS BECK

### Darren Sylvester artist

**T**HE TRAGIC MUSICIAN Karen Carpenter, who died of anorexia nervosa, is Darren Sylvester's idol. He was touched by the way she lived with her pain and never complained.

"She didn't let it out, kept it all on the inside," he says, "I definitely try and do the same. Putting your emotions and feelings back into the work is incredibly therapeutic and it is a great outlet. I don't talk about my relationships or how I'm feeling with close friends."

Sylvester creates coolly composed photographic art about emotional states and relationships. His latest work is a video installation of his renditions of Kate Bush and David Bowie. He remade the '70s clips of *Wuthering Heights* and *Heroes* — songs about dying relationships — shot for shot.

"There is nothing else interesting to

talk about," he says. "Relationships are the common thing that links everyone together just as the dumbest kind of pop song does. I describe my art works as like pop songs. The glossier, the shinier and better looking it is, people find that really attractive — like I just love the sound of the Carpenters. But often the lyrics or the meaning of the work has quite an underlying sense of bittersweet to it. The clean bright production was a major influence on my artwork."

His photographs are prosaic images rich with enigma and imagination as models pose in a hyper-reality of stilted banality. Even so, relationships are about love, and emotion, joy and anger, heightened emotions. Where does his clinical approach come from?

"I guess I am quite an anal, clean person and I'll construct the photographs until there is that sheen and no personal involvement whatsoever by the end stage. I try and remove myself from it but still try and give it a sense of personal affection, possibly just through

the title. I'm a big drinker — drinking helps you make good artwork. (It) helps writing much easier — I write emotional short stories."

His stories are mostly written when he comes home at three o'clock in the morning drunk, after being out all night. They are vaguely about something that has occurred in his life or in a relationship, and then he'll slowly remove himself from it, give characters names, put it in a different setting and create a detached photographic view.

"I try and do it in an unromantic way — but I still think it is a highly romantic thing. A popular image of mine — *If All We Have Is Each Other That's OK* — is of teenagers eating KFC. I like to put fast food in the artwork because I see that as the signifier in the artwork that everyone can relate to. It's universal."

All this artwork and thinking about relationships and obsession with his art hasn't worked well for his personal life.

"I like the romantic notion of the ideal partner. Currently I'm single. I also

think that it's not going to happen (for me). I think relationships are really hard to maintain. I'm working all the time. I haven't had a day off in five months. I'm not involved in the outside world. I don't drive a car, I refuse to go to the beach. I don't like sand. It's truly disgusting. I refuse to eat ice-cream in public. I don't like anything that messes anything up. There are a lot of things I don't like doing so I guess that makes me feel different to other people."

**Another Face:** I loved the way Morrissey carried himself. He was iconic. I loved that he would do stupid weird things, like have a Band-Aid across his eye or wear a hearing aid. He was good at creating trademarks for himself.

**Mistaken Identity:** People have said I look like Jarvis Cocker from Pulp or early Beck.

New06, showcasing the work of young Australian contemporary artists including Darren Sylvester, is on at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art until May 14.