

BRIGHT LIGHT, SOFT LAUNCH

**UXBRIDGE
MALCOLM
SMITH
GALLERY**



Russ Flatt, *When I Say Jump*, 2015.
Courtesy of The James Wallace Arts Trust

Contemporary art practice has expanded the genre of portrait photography past purely documentary or commemorative intention. Over the past few decades there has been an emergence of multiple strains of photographic practice and a variance in the ways artists construct and create an image; however, what remains constant is the desire to address the way in which we perceive ourselves.

Bright Light, Soft Launch brings together emerging and established artists exploring representations of the figure through image making.

The artists featured take a poetic and nuanced approach to portrait photography, teasing out characters and personas and presenting their subjects in a kaleidoscope of ways. Some intend to blur and muddle typical perceptions, for instance Yvonne Todd; others mix memory and melancholy with nostalgic narratives, such as Russ Flatt. Representations of the complexities of modern life are shown in the work of Tia Ranginui and Ashlin Rawson, while Stephanie O'Connor flips established ideas of beauty through the application of digital tools.

Stylistically these artists are diverse; yet all are connected through a contemplation of how we can be captured through a lens. As a group they speak to the distinctive values we ascribe to the individual, the body and to personal identity.

Presented as part of

Light, No Camera, Action

Explore analogue photography and create a photogram style print using just light and time.

Thursday 4 May: 4pm to 5pm

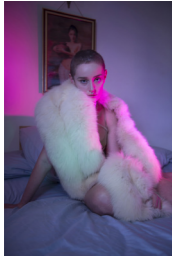
Suitable for children aged 5 to 10 years old. Free to attend, register via exhibitions@uxbridge.org.nz. Limited to 15 participants.

Photography Symposium

Young photographers are invited to a special evening event featuring guest speakers and product demonstrations to inspire your photographic practice.

Thursday 1 June: 5pm to 7pm

Suitable for students aged 15 to 20 years old. Free to attend, register via exhibitions@uxbridge.org.nz.



Jenna Baydee

Jenna Baydee's photographic practice centres on people – tender youth, loved ones, incidental acquaintances met on the suburban street. Baydee presents luscious images of bright young things, interlacing her love of fashion with contemporary urban and popular culture and highlighting the importance of the connections made during early adult life.



Kevin Capon

Kevin Capon's photographs have an "uncanny quality, a subtle and disturbing strangeness that seems inexplicable." Incorporating household objects and awkward figures, Capon's images illustrate his background in commercial advertising photography with rich colours and constructed compositions. *Tessa*, 2012, presents an absurd and perplexing portrait of an enigmatic character – the artist offering few clues as to the narrative of the image and his intended reading by the viewer.

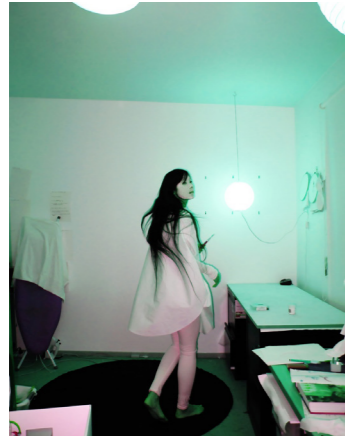
* Hurrell, J. (1970, January 01). Open Plan Bordello. Retrieved April 04, 2017, from <http://eyecontactartforum.blogspot.co.nz/2008/06/open-plan-bordello.html>



Russ Flatt

Russ Flatt was a competitive roller skater in the 1980s. Set in 'Skateland', home of the Mt Wellington Roller Skating Club, this image from the series *Nationals*, reimagines Flatt's adolescent experiences with nostalgic accuracy. The scenes are fabricated and fantastical – costumes are glitzy, expressions confirm the tension of the competition. Drawing confidently on his experience in commercial photography, Flatt sources 'talent' as one might cast extras in a film. The young actor on whom several of Flatt's photographic series are focused appears to be a stand-in for the artist himself* enabling Flatt to revisit, re-process and ultimately re-shape memory through the photographic medium.

* McAvoy, E. (2015, August). Nationals. Retrieved April 04, 2017, from <http://www.russflatt.com/260173-nationals>



Liyen Chong

This self-portrait by Liyen Chong comes from a series, made in 2010, exploring human form – specifically the artist's own. The works incorporate swirling images of Chong, printed on ceramic bowls and plates, combined with gestural painting and geometric forms. The dynamic energy of the series is shown in this image also. The artist is captured in her studio in motion, frozen mid-flight, suggesting change and transformation. An artist of Malaysian-Chinese descent, Liyen Chong boldly negotiates Eastern and Western art forms, motifs and languages to create works that are conceptually rich and visually immaculate.*

* Liyen Chong. (n.d.). Retrieved April 04, 2017, from <http://melanierogallery.com/stockroom/liyen-chong/>

Richard Orjis

Richard Orjis counts Anthony Goicolea and David LaChapelle as teachers and friends. These mentors, and a background in commercial advertising and fashion photography, combine to influence the sensuous, glossy portrait, *Flower Idol*, from the series *My Empire of Dirt*. *My Empire of Dirt* also includes drawings on paper literally made from mud, and, combined with further portraits of figures smeared with dirt and surrounded by cascades of lurid flowers, seem to capture the iconography and activities of a pagan cult. They are dark, organic and beautiful, much like the fecund ripeness of nature, invoking both fertility and decay.*

* Clifford, A. (n.d.). The University of Auckland Art Collection. Retrieved April 04, 2017, from <https://artcollection.auckland.ac.nz/essay/68695>



Di french

Over a period of some 20 years, french made an idiosyncratic and long-lasting contribution to New Zealand art as a sculptor, performance artist, photographer, filmmaker, theorist and arts educator. Her practice was diverse yet interconnected by theme and a refusal to adhere to conventional solutions.* These works from two different decades show the artist's preoccupation with the body. This preoccupation spanned not just her lens based artworks but filtered into every aspect of her oeuvre, relating to the wider issues common with other feminist artists through challenging the prevailing notions of gender and providing new conceptual frameworks for viewing the female form.

* French, D., & Kirker, A. (2009). *Activating ideas: a survey of selected works 1977-1997*. Dunedin, N.Z.: Dunedin Public Art Gallery.



Solomon Mortimer

Solomon Mortimer recently completed his MFA at Elam School of Fine Arts. His practice has developed from primarily documentary based photographs – subjects captured randomly through encounters on the street – to carefully constructed portraits of himself, loved ones and his surroundings. Fiercely protecting the traditions of analogue photography by solely using a medium format camera, Mortimer pays careful attention to how light, form and colour harmonize in the construction of his images.



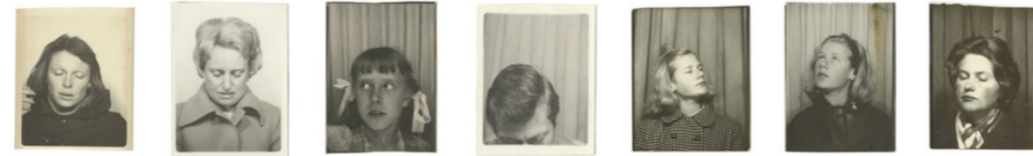
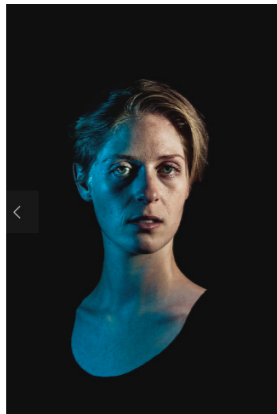
Yvonne Todd

With a background as a commercial photographer and shop assistant in a wig salon, Yvonne Todd is well versed in artifice and masquerade.* Her oeuvre features familiar yet unsettling portraits, primarily of young women. In Todd's *Approximation of Tricia Martin*, 2000, the subject is a fictional character – a forgotten actress from a 1980s soap opera, or a model from the cover of a romantic novel or a clothing catalogue selling cheap demure garments. As quickly as you recognise it as a studio portrait, replicating the classic oval shape reminiscent of the vignette-style portraits produced in commercial photographic studios, you also become aware of its sickly perfection. Through images like this one, Todd examines changing ideas of femininity and beauty, and questions our collective obsession with celebrity.**

* Tyler, L. (n.d.). The University of Auckland Art Collection. Retrieved April 04, 2017, from <https://artcollection.auckland.ac.nz/essay/68731>
** Van Wyk, S. (2014). *Yvonne Todd: Approximation of Tricia Martin*. Retrieved April 04, 2017, from <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/yvonne-todd-approximation-of-tricia-martin/>

Stephanie O'Connor

These two portraits by Berlin-based photographer Stephanie O'Connor are from her 2015 series, *Release the Hounds*. The series seeks to challenge the way femininity, identity and beauty are represented and perceived through a series of intimate portraits of a diverse selection of women. Rather than employing retouching techniques to create 'perfect' images, O'Connor utilizes post production techniques to accentuate facial 'flaws'.



Patrick Pound

An avid collector, Patrick Pound playfully and poetically explores the art of collecting, and the ways in which things can hold and project ideas. Scouring his vast stockpile of found photographs, New Zealand-born, Melbourne-based Pound teases out visual connections, many of which accentuate the blunders of the amateur photographer. Repetition found by connecting the orphaned images proposes a new logic or narrative, created for the viewer to unravel or identify.



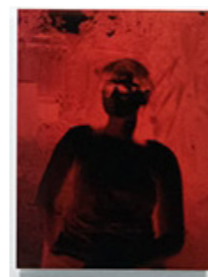
Ashlin Rawson

Focusing on psychoanalytic theories behind developing self-identity, Ashlin Rawson uses portrait photography to convey the concept of an alternate self. Rawson's practice explores the loss of autonomy one experiences once situated in front of the lens, creating lens based works that study the idea of the alter ego and narcissistic tendencies prevalent in modern life and digital expressions of self.



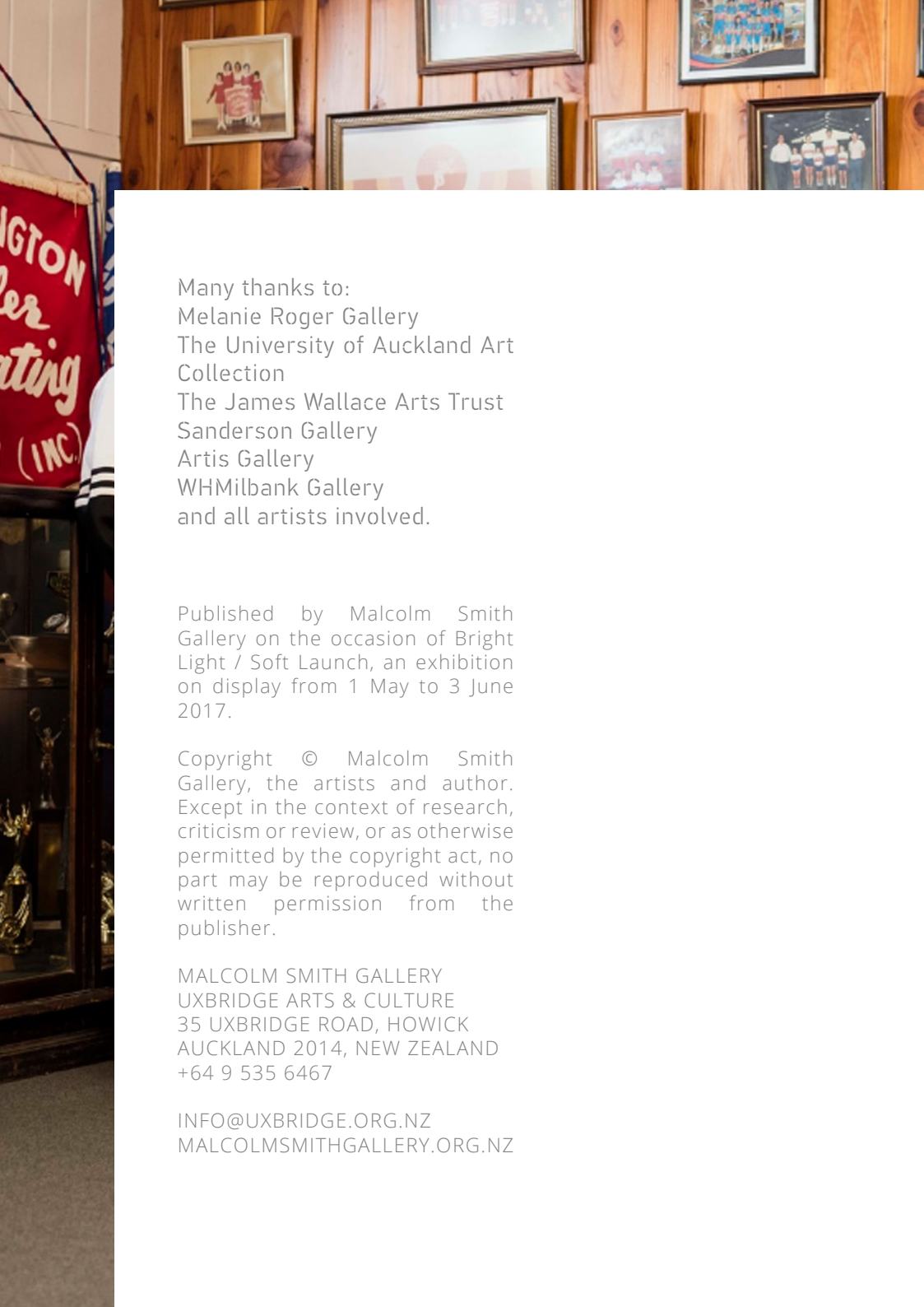
Tia Ranginui

The two works here by Whanganui artist Tia Ranginui come from a series entitled 'Hours Between Sleep'. The series features scenes familiar to domestic and suburban life – an abandoned couch, a modest bungalow, an empty parking lot – all captured in the dead hours of the middle of the night. Linking the works is the use of a single spot of artificial light, illuminating each subject in an eerie yet intimate way. The series reflects Ranginui's personal dealings with anxiety and unease, reflecting a dark period in the artist's life where she battled with insomnia.



Mish O'Neil

Captured using a large scale pinhole camera, these portraits by Auckland based artist Mish O'Neil draw our attention to the fundamental elements of photography – light and time. O'Neil builds huge cameras in the tradition of camera obscura. There is no lens, no automatic shutter or delete button. She requires her subjects to sit painfully still while the magic of this most basic of cameras captures a projected image on light sensitive paper. Relinquishing the modern controls of digital image making and leaving much to chance, her practice examines the romantic idealism of analogue photography.



Many thanks to:
Melanie Roger Gallery
The University of Auckland Art
Collection
The James Wallace Arts Trust
Sanderson Gallery
Artis Gallery
WHMilbank Gallery
and all artists involved.

Published by Malcolm Smith
Gallery on the occasion of Bright
Light / Soft Launch, an exhibition
on display from 1 May to 3 June
2017.

Copyright © Malcolm Smith
Gallery, the artists and author.
Except in the context of research,
criticism or review, or as otherwise
permitted by the copyright act, no
part may be reproduced without
written permission from the
publisher.

MALCOLM SMITH GALLERY
UXBRIDGE ARTS & CULTURE
35 UXBRIDGE ROAD, HOWICK
AUCKLAND 2014, NEW ZEALAND
+64 9 535 6467

INFO@UXBRIDGE.ORG.NZ
MALCOLMSMITHGALLERY.ORG.NZ