The Obscure Camera: photographic mavericks at Adelaide Central Gallery

The Obscure Camera at Adelaide Central Gallery (20 March – 20 April) is a curated group exhibition of exciting and experimental photographic work by a range of maverick photographers: Andrew Dearman, Dan McCabe, Cassie Thring and Justine Varga. Printing images on fabric, constructing their own cameras, or abandoning the device altogether, these artists shun typical photographic processes.

Dan McCabe’s Shadows on the Hill is a remarkable simulation of a 1980s station wagon; what appears to be a car parked in the gallery is, in fact, a tent constructed from photographic images. In this work, the photograph bursts out from the confines of its accustomed two dimensions and becomes a sculptural habitable object. Shadows on the Hill engages with ideas of urban camouflage, tactical photography, the housing crisis and homelessness.

Cassie Thring’s The Where (map with key) uses the cameraless process of cyanotype, in which the photograph is developed from direct exposure to sunlight. Combining antiquated techniques with modern technology, Thring’s installation deals with a history of navigation and seeks to convey a sense of overwhelming oceanic vastness.
Also included in the exhibition are Andrew Dearman’s hand-built recreations of the traditional Afghan Box Camera, an antiquated form of ‘instant’ camera designed for street photography. This mechanism allows the photographer to both take a photograph and develop it within the body of the camera. The installation of this work includes a reconstruction of Dearman’s portrait studio, complete with camera, hand-painted scenic background and examples of the resulting images.

Justine Varga works directly with the film negative, scratching and otherwise marking the material to produce stunning, large-scale, non-representational prints. In July 2017, Varga was awarded the Olive Cotton Award for photographic portraiture for her work, *Maternal Line* (2017), in which a piece of film was marked with saliva and scrawled lines by the artist’s grandmother. Varga’s process reminds the viewer of the physical and chemical processes of photographic art, a property often elided by digital technology.

“The program of the Adelaide Central Gallery is designed to introduce our students, and our wider community, to exciting, cutting-edge contemporary art practice,” says Andrew Purvis, Curator - Exhibitions. “This exhibition demonstrates the range of what is possible in a photographic practice. As photography grows increasingly ubiquitous and disposable in the age of digital devices, it is up to artists to refresh the medium and compel audiences to look again.”

*The Obscure Camera* opening event is on Tuesday 20 March from 6 – 8pm at Adelaide Central Gallery. Drinks will be available for purchase.

Justine Varga is represented by Hugo Michell Gallery.

**MEDIA CONTACT** Claire Robinson, Marketing and Events Coordinator, Adelaide Central School of Art  
E claire.robinson@acsa.sa.edu.au | T 8299 7300 | H Mon, Tues and Thurs  
**IMAGE** | Dan McCabe, *Shadows on the hill* (2016), photographic print on synthetic fabric, aluminium frame, steel, polyester mesh and fixings, 140cm x 164cm x 450cm (Perth State Library)