Irrational Behaviour

Susan Hawkins and Clare Rae

16th February - 10th March 2018

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Irrational Behaviour presents a collaboration between visual artists **Susan Hawkins** and **Clare Rae**, exploring themes of domesticity within space, the material object and its relation to the body. The uncanny is present in both of these artist's work; Clare Rae's photographs depict the female body in unusual formations often interacting with objects and/or the space around her; while Susan Hawkins' creates sculptures from domestic and cultural debris, repurposing them to be re-interpreted, and often anthropomorphised. The result is a collection of photographs and sculptural assemblages created through a call and response methodology, the call being Hawkins' sculptures and the response being Rae's interaction with them and her resulting photographs.
Irrational Behaviour challenges concepts of indexing, domesticity, the role of both object and body in space, and their subsequent histories.

The theme of recurrence and repurposing is prominent in Susan Hawkins' artwork. Her recent show at Metro Gallery considered the remnant, what is left behind physically and what can be emotionally embedded in an object. How can objects be subverted in order to grieve? Awaiting permission to repurpose these objects into sculptures and find deeper meaning and metaphor within them, Hawkins spends time considering what they need, and how they must come together. In Irrational Behaviour, Hawkins' sculptures are collaborators with Rae and her body, providing stimulus, movement and a different form of 'body' within these photographs. The traditional image of a woman and domestic object is subverted and each is given autonomy. By jarring the male gaze, these works cause us to confront how our minds are consciously and subconsciously sculpted by society, and in turn, how this influences our way of seeing.

"Small performative gestures take place, and the camera acts as both collaborator and viewer, co-conspirator and audience" [1] says Rae on her use of the photographic medium within her practice. These curious inspections of space result in a new way of seeing, objects become activated. The female body, which is so commonly reduced to an object, particularly within the medium of photography, is now animated and anonymous. One does not get the sense of the "surveyed female" as described by John Berger in Ways of Seeing, where "her own sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another."[2] Rae's photographs subvert the traditional male gaze and enable our imaginations to imitate her body's gestures, allowing us to project ourselves into this image alongside the space it is representing, instead of simply objectifying a female body. Its role as 'co-conspirator' is fitting, camera, body, object and space are all distinctly equal.

Despite the stillness of the image, movement is inherently present, both sculpture and body are equally active, each seems to have wandered into this formation, rather than Rae obviously manipulating the objects or composing the frame. They are partners in a frozen dance, continuing on only in our minds eye. That is the beauty of still photography; these moments could not exist in perpetuity within reality. The image prolongs these teetering states, which is compelling, and encourages us to ponder time and our place within it. An index of a moment.

This indexing is not as literal as the familiar Joseph Kosuth's artwork: 'Representation - One and three chairs.' [3] The presence of these sculptures in image form is activated and engaged. Given a new sense of agency and further personality, despite their already anthropomorphic facade. We are not presented with the same thing in a different 'view' so to speak. Photography has aided in presenting a narrative, seamlessly joining these disciplines to further abstract and reveal the happening they (Rae and these sculptures) all once experienced. An opportunity to see an aspect of an object's history, how they were interacted with at one point in time. A flicker of a role played once.

Sculptures from objects imbued with personal histories are presented with a snippet of a new history. The female body subverts the male gaze using the very medium used to objectify it. The domestic is recognisable but not as we know it. Indexing moments instead of reality. Prolonging forms of existence, be it time or physicality. Celebrating the absurd. Irrational behaviour.

Alex Walker, 2018

[1] Clare Rae, Artist statement for '20 + 9 + 5' at Sutton Projects, 2015, http://www.clarerae.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ClareRae_SuttonProjects.pdf
[2] John Berger, Ways of Seeing, 1973, Penguin Books, London, England.
[3] Joseph Kosuth, Representation - One and three chairs, 1965, wood folding chair, mounted photograph of a chair, and mounted photographic enlargement of the dictionary definition of "chair," https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/joseph-kosuth one-and-three-chairs-1965

Alex Walker is a practising visual artist, curator, and writer from Melbourne, Australia. Recently graduating Victorian College of the Arts, she completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) in 2016 and is currently working at the Margaret Lawrence Gallery. www.alexwalker.com.au

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Cover image: Clare Rae, *Untitled Action for Susan #2*, 2018 pigment print