

Gallery 2

Francesca Rosa *Car Bodies*



Impermanence and the everyday

Cyclic forces are at play in the universe, acknowledged or otherwise. They permeate all aspects of contemporary life; the climate change debate and the global financial crisis being two of the more popular in the media at the moment. Truth be told, everything can be defined by impermanence – some things less obvious than others. As conscious intelligent entities, humans are obsessed with these cycles of change – technology only making this more pronounced. One answer as to why this obsession exists, may lie in being the only known species aware of its pending demise.

This demise has an analogous hand at work in the photographs of Francesca Rosa. By her own admission, Rosa approaches her subjects with a 'forensic fascination'. The series forming the basis of this exhibition is 'Car Bodies'. Ten photographs drawn from a collection of one hundred or more, depict derelict vehicles of numerous makes and models 'found' in the rural and suburban landscapes of Far North Queensland. Although originally objective in intent, Rosa acknowledges her somewhat "obsessive quest to document as many cars as possible" as a "sympathetic response to the demise of each car".

Importantly, the value of these works don't just lie in their aesthetics, or the formal elements of the photographs. They act as stand-ins for their forgotten drivers, passengers and admirers. Just as these cars are in a constant state of change (only halted for a moment in the photograph), the metaphor for this entropy in a broader sense and the inescapable truth of existence cannot be overlooked. Their stories are not their own.

They speak to the experience of their passengers, of the triumphs and the failures, the break-ups after a date, the tentative fondling of newfound love in the back seat. It is in their forgotten histories that the true value of these objects lay. And it is in this found state of disregard,

one that sits in stark contrast to the mobility they once afforded, that they become markers of history – both the collective and individual.

Transcending the individual they equally speak to Australia's odd affinity with the automobile. The car is an icon of Australian identity, depicting class, status and even a set of beliefs or aspirations. They are more than utilitarian objects. They are statements of intent, ritual objects used in bizarre initiations, a means of escape and objects of desire. Rosa's 'archive of experiences', depicted through images of cars in the landscape, beautifully captures and repositions these objects in relation to our own memory. Of your family, friends and life told through a cultural relationship to the auto, these photographs embody endless stories and associations.

It is clear that Rosa is a skilled technician whose lens frames her subject with empathy, instilling a sense of forgotten beauty and newfound life into these off-casts of contemporary life. But it is in her approach informed by ideas of the forensic that allows the viewer to see through the image, locating them as historical objects – part of an ongoing cycle of change.

Tony Stephens

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G/2: 01. *Holden Ute, ETTY Bay Road 2007*
Lambda print 60 x 60cm Edition of 5 + 2 AP

G/2: 02 *Chrysler Valiant Ute, Silkwood Japoonvale Road 2007*
Lambda print 60 x 60cm Edition of 5 + 2 AP

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