

Huw Davies Gallery
3 - 27 May 2018

(I'm) Warpped (Up) In You
Elizabeth McCrystal



Image: Elizabeth McCrystal, *Throwaway Society*, 2018, archival pigment print on cotton rag

Consumer Society: Are We Products or Consumers?

Elizabeth McCrystal is an emerging artist whose practice concerns themes surrounding the human condition, such as isolation, intimacy and 'the self'. McCrystal is primarily a photographer and uses a variety of techniques that include alternative printing processes, digital photography and photo-based installations.

(I'm) Warpped (Up) In You is McCrystal's first solo exhibition. It uses both photography and installation to critique socioeconomic divisions and beauty standards by raising questions about overconsumption. Through McCrystal's playful images and installation of photographic objects, pieces of fruit and cardboard boxes, she brings the way we consume to the audience's attention while also commenting on how we view ourselves. Tackling consumerism and overconsumption in multiple ways, each artwork strikes a different chord; from food packing and drinking water, to wealth and online socialising, McCrystal attempts to look at many aspects of contemporary life under the canon of consumerism and the human condition.

The absurdity of plastic packaging is most pronounced in the works *Juicy Sweet and Fresh to Eat I* (2018) and *Juicy Sweet and Fresh to Eat II* (2018) which references leading supermarkets and their excessive use of plastic packaging to beautify and sell fresh produce. McCrystal attempts to question the status of packaging, suggesting the importance rivals or outweighs the product. Additionally, the installation of these

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artworks delves into a deeper reading as one photo on top of an identical counterpart separated by a single piece of fruit references the psychologic tactics used by marketers when displaying fresh produce. Supermarkets use mirrors to trick the consumer into thinking that there are copious amounts of food, causing us to overconsume.

(I'm) Wrapped (Up) In You also explores consumption and social interaction in the artwork, *Flat-pack Love* (2018). McCrystal tackles this by referencing the popular dating app, Tinder. The artwork depicts faceless Tinder profiles on cardboard boxes that sit in front of a large mirror. This work packages a person in the same way we would products, while the mirror suggests we are looking for a reflection of ourselves in our purchases, which in this case is a partner. This work also suggests that the reduction of a person to a 6-point profile has questionable effects concerning identity, morality, representation and expectation.

Enemy Landscape I (2018) and *Enemy Landscape II* (2018) shines light on the main culprit in this exhibition; plastic, represented here as a plastic grocery store bag and plastic netting found around fruit and vegetable items. When McCrystal frames these objects, she brings them to the foreground of the conversation, confronting the audience while commenting on how far removed the public is from the plastics they consume daily. The detail and almost aerial landscape aesthetic, coupled with the artwork titles suggest this is the face of future battlegrounds; the war on waste.

It is the material of her works and how they are installed that create the questioning of our consumer society and how we view ourselves through the thin veil of plastic packaging. The works are tied together with a running motif of disposable plastic, but it is what this plastic does to the products that is of interest. McCrystal's work raises many questions about how we consume and are marketed towards. But, it is the connection that can be drawn from this reading of her work that is translated into raising questions of how we market ourselves and consume others online that makes this exhibition get to the core of existing today.

(I'm) Wrapped (Up) In You leads us to wonder, do we package ourselves in the same way we package products? Does that mean more packaging makes us a better product? Do our online personas serve solely as a marketing tool, highlighting only our best assets? Do we consciously or subconsciously browse people in the same way we do products? And how does this echo sentiments of the human condition and our understanding of how and why we exist today. The hero image of this exhibition, titled; *Throwaway Society* (2018) shows our globe, tied up in a garbage bag neatly encapsulating the concepts of the exhibition and the questions it raises.

James Rhodes, April 2018

James Rhodes is a freelance Newcastle-based art/academic writer

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Elizabeth McCrystal | Artist Statement

Exploring the fundamental and insidious traits of our throwaway society, *(I'm) Wrapped (Up) In You* playfully questions the interplay between consumerism, overconsumption, socioeconomic divisions and beauty standards. This exhibition looks at the way our society currently consumes products and precious commodities, by deciphering existing trends around fresh food, plastic packaging and online socialising. The results are mixed media artworks that repackage these trends in honest and absurd ways, while highlighting our lifestyles of convenience and compliance. This exhibition gives no answers, but rather hopes to engage thoughtful introspection about our common place practices and obligations as consumers, while also highlighting the accountability of business and government.

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Elizabeth McCrystal | About the artist

Elizabeth McCrystal is an artist based on the NSW South Coast whose practice explores themes of isolation, intimacy, anxiety and 'the self' through the theoretical framework of the human condition. Experimental in approach, Elizabeth uses photography, installation, sculpture and video to deconstruct auto-biographical, topical and philosophical topics.

Elizabeth McCrystal completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts (First Class Honours) at Sydney College of the Arts in 2009 and has been consistently exhibiting since. Elizabeth has worked in the arts since completing her degree holding notable positions including; Public Programs Manager at the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre and Gallery Manager, Co-Curator at Gaffa in the Sydney CBD.

Image List

1. Elizabeth McCrystal, *Juicy sweet and fresh to eat I (grapes)*, 2018, archival pigment print on cotton rag, 85 x 45cm \$800
 2. Elizabeth McCrystal, *Juicy sweet and fresh to eat II (mandarins)*, 2018, archival pigment print on cotton rag, 85 x 45cm \$800
 3. Elizabeth McCrystal, *Enemy landscape I (plastic bag)*, 2018, archival pigment print on cotton rag, 75 x 50cm \$800
 4. Elizabeth McCrystal, *Enemy landscape II (plastic netting)*, 2018, archival pigment print on cotton rag, 75 x 50cm \$800
 5. Elizabeth McCrystal, *House of Cards*, 2018, vinyle on MDF, dimensions variable POA
 6. Elizabeth McCrystal, *Clean drinking water*, 2018, archival pigment print on cotton rag, 38.5 x 87.5cm \$1000
 7. Elizabeth McCrystal, *Flat-pack love*, 2018, cardboard boxes and mirror, dimensions variable POA
 8. Elizabeth McCrystal, *Throwaway Society*, 2018, archival pigment print on cotton rag, 67 x 87cm \$1000
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Image: Elizabeth McCrystal, *Juicy sweet and fresh to eat II (mandarins)*, archival pigment print on cotton rag, 85 x 45cm

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