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Excerpt:

*We come too late for the Gods
And too early for Being.* Rainer Maria Rilke.

The first thing to say about Derek Kreckler's *Holey 1* is that it feels like an altar piece. The plinth at the foot of the two photographs gives the impression of a Communion table while the spheres rolled out onto its surface seem like offerings. There is something placatory, elegiac about the relationship between the "planets" lodged on the white floor plinth and the holes that the artist has cut into the photographs above.

The second thing to say is that the piece also feels "scientific", as though the artist was preoccupied by some kind of system, perhaps an outmoded Keplerian diagram of the solar system and the relationship between the parts of the piece aggravates this sense of absorbed calculation. At this level the work seems deliberately synthetic. Our awareness of this imposed dualism eats at the naturalism of the photographs. We peer

at the photographs through the wrong end of the telescope as it were, straining after affects lost in time, lost in memory, exacerbated by the work's system. In fact there is something of the magician's sleight of hand about all this. The glaring omission of the holes and their reappearance as other worlds on the floor plinth distract us from seeing the photographs comparatively, conceals the disjunction between them. Something is being hidden in the full light of day, like Lacan's purloined letter and it makes the sacramental sense of the piece faintly derisive, comical.

Faintly [because declaration and retraction seem to me to be the key to Kreckler's work].

Let me describe something of these photographs. Not Bondi, not Coolangatta but an anonymous stretch of coast beyond the urban sprawl. The New Year has just begun [the lassitude and the light remind us of an Australian Christmas]. Small, isolated family groups are lolling in the sun. A woman in a black, one piece swimsuit and a man in a pink shirt and white shorts stand out in both pictures. In the left hand picture a man is bathing his young daughter in shallow water while in the right hand picture the same man strides from the water with his toddler on his hip. In both photographs, the central figure of a man, with his lower body wrapped in a turquoise towel, looks out to sea, unmoving, large, a sort of *oogmerk*. In all a signal effect like the White Australia Policy or the Anzac tradition, because these Australian Beach scenes generically deliver our White tribalism, our White Supremacy. Deliver it and then take it away again. Make it vulnerable, small, isolated, aching with loss, unattainable, irrelevant. The blind Eye of God, the son fallen out of the picture. *The boy evidently splashing through the water in the foreground of photo 2 is not in photo 1 and even then he is not in photo 2 but on the surface of another world that sits dimensionally estranged on the white plinth at the foot of the photographic diptych on a kind of Magrittean rock in the wrong orbit...*

So, North shore of Lake Conjola, Cunjurong Point on the South Coast of NSW, about 1 o'clock in the afternoon, sometime in early January, 2003. The beguiling tribalism of these photographs is important, because it is exactly nostalgic specificity and the benignity of our eye that the white holes appear to target. *Luxe, Calme et Volopte* Australian style or less adventurously Arthur Streeton at Coogee in 1895 [sic].

It takes us some while to notice that time has passed between the taking of the two photographs and that from photograph 1 to photograph 2, the scene has been slightly reframed with camera movement from left to right. People move, people disappear. Cracks appear in the emotional wallpaper. What seemed identical, imperturbable, fixed in memory [because iconically these photographs are all memory] has become different. A gap has opened and it is exactly the inevitability of this photographic gap that Kreckler elaborates as the subject of his work.

Elaborates is the right word, because the naturalism of the photographs is measured, transfixed by the detail of the work as whole and the work as a whole is a process of unshakable metonymic transposition, from the Duchampian *inframince* of photographic detail, to the displaced "eye" of the camera to the "cosmology" of the spheres rolled out on the plinth/Altar like marbles. An Altar piece set up to photographic transience, to the *peculiarity* of photographic loss, to the tricks of memory and to a notion of photographic Realism that seems hubristic, absurd.

This paradigmatic dualism is strangely conspicuous. The slight shift between the two photographs [as people come and go or we jump cut between activities] is magnified by the form of the work as a whole, as if the artist wanted to immediately declare the bathetic incommensurability of science and art as Malevich's "zero of form". Disjointedly, both poles of the piece immediately compete for our attention and expand their metonymic exchange on this basis. It is a work that splits our attention from the outset and from the outset we want to address this double nature of the work as its message. Photographic simplicity has been struck by an idea like a bird flying into glass. As a consequence photographic naturalism is revealed parenthetically and photographic repetition sets this sense of parenthesis in motion. "Repetition is not reproduction" as Lacan reminds us and photographic repetition bears this out, because photographic repetition makes the photographic subject awkward and it is this slight awkwardness of loss, displacement, amnesia that Kreckler exploits as the conceptual dynamic of his work.

I think we accept this as reasonable, indeed we may even relish it as the work's declared negotiation of style, as though the "real" of the photographs is proposed hypothetically and indeed the portentousness of the white holes and their fallen form as God's "lost marbles" can seem both ironic and ineffable.

It is this parallelism that invites us to think about the work beyond what it seems and what it isn't and we take this disruption of the photographic to be emblematic of some lack in the procedures and effects of photographic representation as such, because the picturing of the work is so resolutely fissionable and incommensurate.

However, Kreckler's work is very different from iconic Conceptual art. Kosuth, Baldessari, Haim Steinbach and even John's bronzed Ballantine beer cans are all improbably dragged in the wake of this work. In conversation Kreckler specifically mentions Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* of 1965, which presents a photograph of a chair, a definition of a chair and a real chair as a kind of measure of "thingness" [of "thingness" displaced by representation]. While Kreckler's work can look like Conceptual art it isn't, if only because it assumes Conceptual art as a convention. Kreckler's metonymy relentlessly induces a lack of equivalence, disavows the coordinates of definition, opening thingness out as a "missed encounter with the real", to a melancholy, unlocatable emptiness of picturing as such. In the throes of unassuageable loss Kreckler gives us the haunting touch of artisanal craft and a spatial precision and beauty of placement that is redemptive.

**Mike Parr,
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