

Jacky Redgate—HOLD ON

Jacky Redgate is critically acclaimed as one of Australia's leading contemporary artists, with a practice spanning four decades. Redgate's career evolved in the late 1970s through the dual legacies of feminism and late modernism. She was trained in sculpture at the South Australian School of Art under lecturers who were predominantly formalists, and she also studied photography and cinematography. In the early 1980s, she moved to Sydney and became well known for her 'appropriated' found photographic series *photographer unknown ...* (1983) and her staged photographic series *Naar Het Schilder-Boeck* (1984–05) and *WORK-TO-RULE* (1986–07). Her work was associated with a generation of artists that utilised appropriation and montage to reveal the constructed nature of images.

After a period working in Berlin in the late 1980s, Redgate returned to Australia and worked almost solely in sculpture. She questioned photography as a representational system and its translation of three-dimensional space into two-dimensional images. She found a way back to working with photography in the series *Life of the System* in 1998. This led to the photographic series *STRAIGHTCUT* (2001–06), images which were, as Ann Stephen observed, 'contaminated' by retro domestic kitchenware. Since this time, she has worked almost solely with mirrors.

In 2003–04 Redgate was the subject of a major survey exhibition at the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia (CACSA) and Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), which led to the solo exhibition *Visions from Her Bed* at the Institute of Modern Art (IMA) in 2008, curated by Robert Leonard. The exhibition highlighted for the first time her early and little known personal works. In 2009 Redgate began a new, experimental and now seminal photographic series titled *Light Throw (Mirrors)* that rebounded and recorded light from a battery of mirrors.

HOLD ON is a series of twelve new photographic works presented as part of *PHOTO 2020 the International Festival of Photography* occurring in art spaces in Melbourne and throughout Victoria. The broad thematic underpinning of the Festival is 'Truth'. Redgate's carefully arranged *mise en scènes* are staged in the backdrop of her seemingly objective, coloured *Light Throw (Mirror) Fold* works most recently shown at ARC ONE Gallery, Melbourne, in 2019. In *HOLD ON* Redgate 'contaminates' the objective geometries of these formal mirror works with dolls, stuffed teddy bears and small animals in every day and hallucinatory scenarios, some drawn from earlier personal works in the artist's oeuvre.

In *HOLD ON* Redgate draws on her interest since 2003 in the American photographer Dare Wright, who in her 1957 book *The Lonely Doll* also made emotionally intense and unsettling tableaux through text and photographs, telling the story of a doll called Edith and two stuffed bears that befriend her. Redgate first discovered Dare's book at the time of her CACSA show in Adelaide when she was revisiting her archive and early work.

Redgate says that the reference to Wright is more analytical than expressive. In *HOLD ON* there is a tension between Redgate's long-standing interest in visual storytelling through images, window display and product lighting. The work speculates on how we negotiate and construct memories and images. Redgate's photographs engage in a kind of visual trickery, offering a mixture of recognisable and re-imagined objects and images, spatial and visual cues to draw our attention to the very act of looking.

It is tempting also to see *HOLD ON* as a form of auto-ethnography, where the autobiographical and personal connect to wider cultural, social, and political histories and contexts in which the works might be seen and understood—such as the artist's childhood in the domestic environment of post-war London in the 1950s.

Embodying a cathexis on emotionally laden subjects, the photographs in *HOLD ON* tease with a combination of abstraction and autobiographical mirroring. In this work, any form of absolute truth in their alternatively playful or dark narratives is kept at bay by the entire installation's *gestalt*—that striking feeling that the whole is greater, more mysterious, more complex, than the sum of its parts.

Jacky Redgate is represented by ARC ONE Gallery, Melbourne, and Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Sydney.

Official exhibition

PHOTO 2020
International Festival
of Photography

Exhibition partner

The William Angliss
(Victoria) Charitable Fund

In the creation of new work, Jacky Redgate was supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW and University of Wollongong

