

KIM GUTHRIE

TO THE REST OF THE WORLD, Australia is exotic and “other”. I celebrate the uncelebrated as culturally significant.

Most of my career has been spent in obscurity – overlooked, ignored and with no gallery representation. I am convinced that being a serious artist is about exploring personal truth and authenticity. It’s not necessarily about dazzling technique, or producing meaningless, pretty wallpaper, or clinging to the latest technology. I feel, as an artist, it’s my job to report what I see.

Contemporary life appears to be driven by the instant, empty, self-gratification of social media and an obsession with popular culture and fatuous celebrity. My work offers an antidote to this consumer-led horror. I record things the general population don’t usually aspire to, or are used to rejecting. I have an empathy with the “ignored” people and the honesty and resilience of ordinariness.

I’m from working class stock. I had hardworking parents and a loving home environment. I was a rebellious child, dismissive of authority. From the late 1970s and through most of the 1980s I was addicted to heroin and living on the margins of society. Through this I developed an enormous respect for outsiders and the marginalised. The dual forces of parental love and street life taught me the beauty and honesty in the everyman, and fostered a fierce resilience in me.

All my photographs are informed by the instinctive, “light bulb” moment, not the decisive one. It is informed by my own aesthetic filter, which encompasses composition, art-historical references, colour relationships and my personal history, in rapid-fire decision-making. It’s low-fi, with



01

no Photoshop gimmickry – just the trust of strangers who I encounter and things as they present themselves. I recognise in people, and things, a particular magic which compels my image-making.

In March, 2015, with my partner, painter Lisa Adams, I made a road trip which circumnavigated spectacularly beautiful Tasmania, clockwise from Hobart. The work presented here is a selection from the resultant body of work – *Map of Tassie*.

‘Andrew with his car’ is a study of customised car culture. Andrew is rightfully proud of his artwork – a 1977 HZ Holden Kingswood SL sedan, powered by a 355 stroker motor with L34 Heads, a Turbo 400 transmission and a superbly coloured paint job. Andrew works at his father’s garage in Swansea. He shifted his car to where I wanted it and was happy to pose for me. I’ve always loved the combination of green and purple, but what really makes this image for me is the sliver of yellow at his feet, which complements everything.

‘Bust me balls hill’ at Runnymede is a fabulous example of larrikin customisation, suffused with the irreverent, laconic, Australian sense of humour. I see this as a rebellious nod to Tasmania’s convict past.

‘Conglomeration’ is a home in the mining town of Queenstown, a surreal outpost which resembles the set of a David Lynch film. We arrived after winding through the unpopulated, forested mountains; through drizzling rain, punctuated by low cloud. I love people who wear their heart on their sleeve, as the owner of this property obviously does. A fascinating frustrated artist compelled to populate their yard with bullshit-free generic statuary. Folk-pop-art.

‘Like’: I was instantly drawn to this piece of local public artwork, in Scottsdale. I briefly read the didactic text on the pink plinth. It was fashioned from a storm-felled tree in the artist’s front yard. He had envisioned this “thumbs up” hand within, and set to revealing it with his chainsaw. The irony of its social media ubiquity repurposes an otherwise ordinary object into a photographic, Duchampian readymade.

We arrived in Sorell on a Saturday, just as the local market was winding up, so we had a quick look around. ‘Craig’ was running a stall selling heavy metal knick-knacks. I spoke to him for a while, during which he told me he drives a hearse. As a fan of the art of the automobile, I was impressed. I couldn’t help noticing his neck tattoo “Only god can judge me”. It perfectly illustrated how contemporary culture is so hung up on appearances. The proliferation of the mindless selfie, botox, liposuction, fake tits, six-packs and steroid abuse among young men – in short, the superficial. Craig proudly subscribes to none of these.

‘Number 22 Selby Street, Queenstown’: I have a weak spot for fake-brick cladding, and the number 22 (it’s my date of birth). Huddled together in the doorway out of the dismal, grey drizzle are a Border Collie and a cat, obviously good mates. Surrounded by junk and a pane of glass emblazoned with the cryptic message “Happy B-Day” – to whom – perhaps me? In another Lynchian juxtaposition, an equally obtuse sign posted on the front door announces “There will be a \$5 Charge for Whining”. ■

kimguthrieaustralia.com



02



03



04

“ I have an empathy with the “ignored” people and the honesty and resilience of ordinariness.



- 01 Like, Scottsdale, Tas, 2015, giclée print
- 02 Tim having a beer, Binalong Bay, Tas, 2015, giclée print
- 03 Craig Sorrell, Tas, 2015, giclée print
- 04 Number 22 Selby Street, Queenstown, Tas, 2015, giclée print
- 05 Andrew with his car, Swansea, Tas, 2015, giclée print

Courtesy of the artist