

Andrew Browne *'A kind of skin'*

Photography is a process of transformation. Under one accommodating term, countless methods allow the camera's seeing to be transmuted into realms almost unrecognisable. Here, Andrew Browne gathers dye-sublimation photographic prints on brushed aluminium; photopolymer gravure; and a unique cast aluminium sculpture. These might be thought of as three versions of photography—though the term may need to be held with a loose grip. Before tracing their connection to the medium, it's worth stepping back to the beginning of this chain of processes.

That first step is about looking—seeing something that might appear lowly, something many would pass without a second glance—but which, for the artist, prompts a leap. A passage of concentrated attention begins. Walking through Melbourne, we all recognise those ratty urban surfaces that make up the city's fabric. These crazed, grimy skins are uneventful, a little abject. In this context, the act of taking a photograph becomes less about the camera shutter than about a shutter snapping inside the artist's mind. Synapses connect; an image is gathered. The process of translation begins as a series of risks and experiments, manipulations through which the composition is reconsidered with a painter's sensibility. From there, the image is rebuilt into something only tangentially related to its original encounter with the world.

Perhaps because of these humble beginnings, there's an air of delight in the arcane services of photographic technique that binds these works to a web of formalist objectives and art-

historical echoes. The translation is underway, shifting from captured image to three-dimensional object.

A suite of works has been realised as dye-sublimation prints: a process of heat, pressure, and saturated pigment that renders images indelibly onto brushed aluminium. The metal's lustre radiates through the translucent dyes, somehow elevating the city's unprepossessing fabric into slippery visual impressions. Fields of colour turn diaphanous; cracks in forgotten surfaces become fissures in ice, or the cellular membranes of leaves, elastic in their associations, treasures behind glass, warmed and buffed by light and movement.

Photographs are, of course, copies—impressions of what a lens receives, even when unbuckled from reality. A cast sculpture takes that logic one step further: a form is made, a void is filled, and a new medium establishes itself as the original. Much like a photograph re-forms a scene. In his conceptual dance through the studio, Browne begins with a photograph, uses it as the basis for a painting, and then transforms that painting into a cardboard sculpture. Dreadfully nice in its allusion to movements such as *Arte Povera* or *Matterism*, the cardboard form is cast in molten aluminium—aluminium again, but not as you know it on the wall. Reworked and even painted into new life, it becomes something like a mute bust.

The final work is a photopolymer gravure. This is a process among the most beautiful and complex in photography. An image is transferred to a prepared plate, coated in ink, buffed

back, and pressed onto rag paper. The result is a contact print: austere, highly detailed, an unreflective monochrome shadow of the original.

Pippa Milne

Melbourne based writer and curator