



LINDA RENZ

Re-inventing the Lolita Complex

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (FINE ART) EXHIBITION 24 August - 3 September 2016



FRONT COVER

Untitled (Look Back in Anger, 1956)

2016
digital print
100 x 75 cm

INSIDE RIGHT

Blow Up (detail)

2016
digital prints
32 x 1515 cm

INSIDE LEFT

Untitled (Blow Up, 1966)

2014
digital print
50 x 100 cm

BACK COVER

Untitled (Felicia's Journey, 1999)

2015
digital print
72 x 100 cm



Re-inventing the Lolita Complex

Linda Renz's graduate research poetically refigures the body in order to explore the uncanny yet socially perpetuated mysteries of gender and the human condition. Her PhD exhibition, *Re-inventing the Lolita Complex*, presents a series of film-stills taken directly from iconic twentieth-century cinema juxtaposed with an installation of over 200 'selfies' appropriated from the Internet. Together, these distinct sets of highly-charged images investigate the continuing role of feminine seductiveness in contemporary culture. Renz's portraits of young women – typically with an implied disquiet – are suggestive of a world of expectations and sexual initiation. The images seek to capture the enigmatic twilight zone between reality and fantasy in the construction of female identities.

Renz's interest in the human psyche and the historical influence of Surrealism manifests itself in the use of the photographic medium. By employing ready-made imagery in her work, she highlights the repetitive and technological potential of photography. At the same time, the use of film-stills makes explicit the intrinsic fictional possibilities of the photographic image. Renz's re-working of the archival footage – through cropping, distortion and dislocation – illustrates the ways in which disparate images can be easily extracted and re-amalgamated in order to construct new statements and connections.

The scenes are presented as a sort of aftermath, where what has taken place is not entirely certain; reality is found in their photographic quality, but concrete details remain forever out of reach.

The blurring of reality and fantasy that photography enables is further explored in Renz's compelling installation of 'selfies', titled *Blow up*. In recent years, the intoxicating combination of social media and the mutability of digital photography has seen the extraordinary rise of this new format, a phenomenon particularly embraced by young women. The presentation 'en masse' of these contemporary self-portraits, collected and gathered from the public realm, has an unsettling effect. Each image appears in an instagram-style frame, referencing the ways in which young women consciously frame themselves, positioning their images within a particular narrative. The framing device points to the internalisation of social expectations surrounding gender and also makes us aware of the standardization at play in the construction of feminine identities. Similarly, the anonymity of the faces refers to the empty signs of relatively universalised stereotypes of contemporary feminine sexual identities or 'tropes of Lolita'.

This kind of imagery reminds Renz of something once felt or known – the memory of herself as a blonde twelve-year-old girl, which still has the potential to unearth low level emotional triggers that advertisers, normative social codes and family expectations all play with and against.

