

SARAH GOFFMAN

Sarah Goffman is a slave to her materials. This is her intention and this is how she likes it. She takes the stuff of everyday life as it finds her and rearranges it, layering and embellishing the flotsam and jetsam of consumer culture, the ordinary, the discarded and what we take for granted – what we don't notice because we see it all the time. As a reclamation artist, Goffman makes us look at the ordinary with our own eyes invigorated by her artistic interpretive process. Her gift is an ability to reveal the special life of objects: familiar quotidian artifacts are lovingly reclaimed, recrafted and reendowed with the value of a common cultural significance – something we can all relate to, something we all have in common, or we'd like to share.

Goffman's works for the *Our Lucky Country* project link a process involving the autobiographical and community engagement. The surfaces she presents address us in ways that take us deeper into ourselves and yet, simultaneously, draw us out of ourselves towards each other. In the first exhibition, a cardboard installation of a police car remade (tweaked) became a polite car, a wistful, hopeful yearning for manners, understanding and empathy. The adjustment of one letter, a simple thing, makes all the difference in our attitude to the police, sorry, the piece. It's also a well-mannered, discreet and subtle kind of graffiti; although, if this were a real police car Goffman's alteration would be an illegal act, a protest, and she would be an activist.¹ Goffman's watercolour self portrait as bearded lady was disturbing in the same way. Disruption in a non-confrontational manner, raising ideas about disguise, identity, gender, vanity, appearance – who we are on the outside, as we appear to others, who we are on the inside and is it safe to let others see and know.

Her *Brand identity* mural of plastic bag logos and brand names elevated consumer

packaging to art materials. Rearranged, out of context, text and symbols become signs infused with meaning beyond their advertising purpose. Shopping bags are a record of where we've been, what we've done, resonant with the memory of experiences good and bad. There are always two sides to the story, a counter-narrative: consumer culture is both a leisure activity (play) and work, it's how some of us make a living, so the sight of a shopping bag means we've done our job well.

Goffman's artist residency at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery in August 2007 is reflected in her work for the second *Our Lucky Country* exhibition. The gallery visitors she invited to make their own white clay ceramic sculptures, produced a decorative array of the brand names that construct our consumer selves. For Goffman, Westfield Miranda shopping town was an inspiration, a site and a sight ripe for pleasure and appropriation. Remodelling this much-loved attraction in her own playful way as *My Store* infuses a sign of local cultural identity with the trace of personal experience and the self, as individual and artist, as herself.

Marise Williams

NOTE

1. As I write this I am reminded of television news coverage of APEC 2007 which showed a policeman (not 'politeman') excessively, forcefully pushing a female photographer backwards so hard that she flew through the air and hit the ground on her butt with a thud. The visual accompanied by the sounds of "Wooaah" from the shocked (mostly male) onlookers (protesters) is difficult to forget. Every time the footage was broadcast I felt the same way. Were we more affected because it was a woman who bore the brunt of such physically charged offensive behaviour?

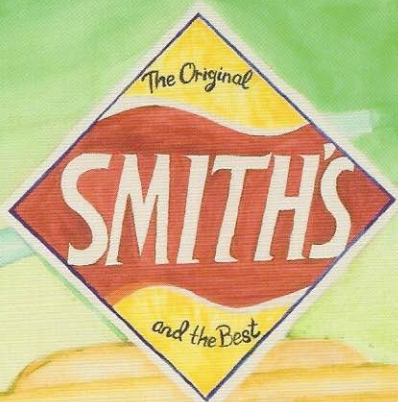
Self portrait in junk food, 2007
watercolour painting, cardboard,
perspex, plastics
1200 x 880 cm

PHOTO: SILVERSALT PHOTOGRAPHY

RESTAURANT

07 DEC 07

4FC 03:15



**THICK
CUT**

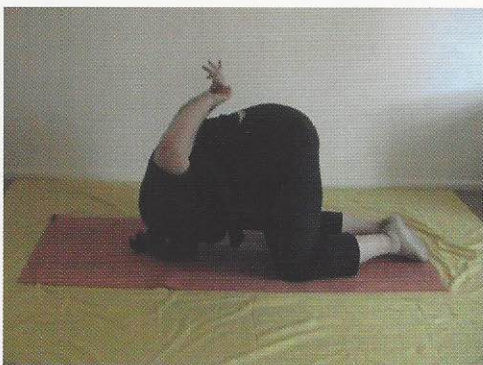
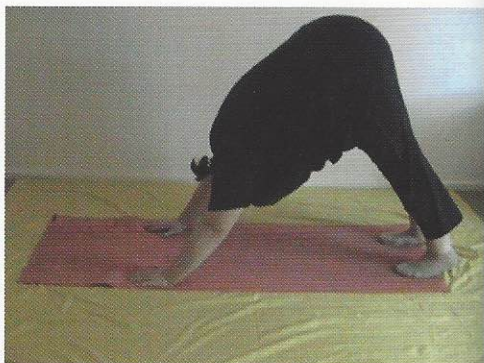
THE WORKS

SOUR CREAM & BACON, SEASONED WITH ONION,
PEPPER & GARLIC, TOPPED OFF WITH CHEDDAR CHEESE



185g NET

inter-sport light
MUSSTE NEAS
GASTRONOMIE VERONIK
GUES DAVID
ES BUCH STRONG
REPUS HOUSE
RALPANTS BOOKS
MAGGIE SWEET B
SECRET THE WIN
WITCHERY BONDAGE



pp. 68-69
 My store 2007
 hot glue
 1.5m x 700
 PHOTO: CRAIG BENDER

above
*Do I have the guts to video the fitness
 places at night, through the windows,
 all those people burning their fat off
 and making their muscles stronger?,
 2007*
 stills from DVD, 15 mins



BRAND NAMES IN CERAMICS

Sarah Goffman would like to thank the following participants of the ceramic component of her residency at Hazelhurst:

Gabrielle Murphy
 Brennan Honey
 Eleni Kinnear
 Chris Warten
 Natalia Rust
 Alex Wright
 Lorraine Leong
 Melissa
 Emily
 Nona 'Superstar' Hayes
 Maeghan
 Denise Anderson
 Natalia
 Janet McCawley
 Jessica Syed
 Elizabeth Bourikov
 Ashlee Hill
 Cassandra Ma
 Lana Kraichuk
 Raymond Wang
 Paris Langtry
 Jahnaui Harris
 My Nguyen
 Grace Goodhew
 Jenna Peacock
 Phillip Ricao
 Anne Marie Jukic
 Claire Glover
 Jane Polkinghorne
 Nana Ohnesorge
 Jamyka
 Evie

right

Stills from the *Our Lucky Country (still different)* DVD, which documents 16 artists working in and around the Sutherland Shire and at the Hazelhurst Arts Centre in 2007. Directed, edited and produced by Lisa Andrew. DV PAL (1.067) 4:3, 60 mins

