

Lisa Gipton

Commercial/advertising photographers are often not recognised as being artists. Although they engage their imagination, formidably exercise their wits, and often take stunning photographs, they are in some people's opinion nevertheless tainted with a vulgar purpose – the banal motive of selling someone else's wares or services.

For all that, there are many younger photographic artists who are taking to the language of commercial photography with a vengeance. Slick shoots, lifestyle ambience, charming looks, sharp images, medium format, shameless spectacle, dubious values. Their reasons are various.

Sometimes they have a critical purpose: they undermine and ridicule the pretensions, anti-ecological consumerism, agism, sexism and moral superficiality of advertising.

But others seem to infiltrate the commercial sphere with morbid

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delight in its scandals. They dance with the devil, toying with the profitable premises that prove so seductive to the world of consumption at large.

One of these artists exercising such cross-over is Lisa Gipton. Her images of perfume bottles and cosmetics in the series *Touch Me, Hold Me, Love Me* appropriates the language of commerce so successfully that there is something unsettling about their very attractiveness: they seem to be too slick, too sexy; they make the eroticised desire of the consumer goods rather too obvious; and you experience in your lust for the object an uncanny provocation.

Gipton exaggerates the subliminal imagery and snobbish seduction of fashion magazines in a subtle way. She presents cosmetics in front of a small, symmetrical, folded curtain of satin texture and sometimes rich, sanguine colour. The little labial diorama is fashioned to reveal the inside all too well: voilà, the lipstick assumes a clitoral presence, its shiny perfection audaciously promoted to the treasury of sexual pleasure.

The works have an artistic ambiguity that makes you unsure of Gipton's purpose. She could be teasing everyone in a genuine identification with a cheap myth; alternatively, she could be teasing us with a psychoanalytical perversion, as if her dioramas represented the phallic woman, the archetype of the girl who best satisfies and flatters the penis.

Other readings would be possible: you really have no idea, amid the rush of naughty feeling that overcomes you on first encounter.

- Robert Nelson



Lisa Gipton, *Untitled #6*, from the series *Love Me*, 2001, Type C photograph and custom-made lacquer frame, 27x18cm. IMAGE COURTESY: THE ARTIST

Born 1967
Price range \$350 – \$900
Contact the artist: aliasx@our.net.au