Bruce Kirton lives and works in Winnipeg. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts (Hons) from the University of Manitoba in 1983 and his Master of Fine Arts from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1985. His work has been shown in several group exhibitions in galleries in Canada. As well as his solo exhibitions at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Gallery ICA (now, Plug In ICA) and the Floating Gallery (now known as PLATFORM: Centre for Photographic and Digital Arts), The Bunka-Canadienne Art Gallery, Niagara Falls, New York, The C.E.P.A. Satellite Gallery, Buffalo, New York and Plug In ICA (now, Plug In ICA) in Winnipeg. Bruce also worked as a sessional instructor in photography at the School of Art, University of Manitoba from 2000 to 2008.

Jeanne Randolph’s latest book is OUT OF PSYCHOANALYSIS: ficto-criticism 2005-2011, published by Artspeaks in Vancouver. Jeanne sequesters herself in her scriptorium to read and contemplate such topics as philosophy, anti-philosophy [a.k.a. advertising], visual culture, boxing, the history of infinity, consumerism and the life cycle of frogs.

List of Works in the Exhibition

Orleanna  colour photograph  4'x5'
Julia  colour photograph  4'x5'
Barb  colour photograph  4'x5'
Langdon  colour photograph  4'x5'
Thomas  colour photograph  4'x5'
Leah & Anatole  colour photograph  4'x5'
Bruce  colour photograph  4'x5'
Leonard  colour photograph  4'x5'
Linda  colour photograph  4'x5'
Sophie  colour photograph  4'x5'
Alison  colour photograph  4'x5'
untitled  colour photograph  7”x7”
untitled  colour photograph  7”x7”
untitled  colour photograph  7”x7”
untitled  colour photograph  7”x7”
untitled  colour photograph  7”x7”

Martha Street Studio gratefully acknowledges the generous support by its members, donors and sponsors.
Freud believed he could discern a pattern if he listened carefully enough to someone’s expressions, or looked closely enough at the objects they accumulated. The pattern would reveal the desires of super-ego, ego and id. Every word or gesture, activity or choice, action taken (even fumbling) would allude to the battle of ego against super-ego and id.

Freud may have had a good time listening to a person’s free associations. Freud may have been entertained by people’s descriptions of their dreams. He may have especially enjoyed toying with his own dreams. But Freud never admitted that psychoanalysis was as entertaining as Tarok or as invigorating as chess.

When he chose tints for the old tintype images did Bruce Kirton activate the power of what Freud termed projection (sensing in another person the urges one doesn’t recognize as really one’s own)? Freud would have said that each belatedly coloured tintype portrait bore emotional tones from Bruce’s psyche not those of “the girl,” “the family,” “the woman,” “the mother” or her “child.”

Marshalling this same projective power I could, if I want, react to the images of dresser tops as if each is a Rorschach Inkblot Test just for me. I would exclaim “Look at the anxiety! Over here the anality! Over there the lust!” Projections would gush from my own fascinating psyche. And I would form a Freudian psychoanalysis of these dresser top possessions the psychoanalysts must constrain themselves within a schema. They must be dedicated to the authorized interpretation, and present it as a discovery. The Freudian psychoanalyst would find a way to shove the dark Unconscious into the foreground, while sociopolitical circumstances are pale and far away. Everything would be in the shade of the Unconscious.

fun with psychoanalysis

In these documentary photographs shadows are slight. The belongings on display seem to have been documented as objectively as possible, unlike the colours and embellishments imposed upon the tintype images.

Orleanna’s crucifix does not cast a portentous shadow. Bah’s stodgy shoe doesn’t. There is no umbra beneath the umbrella of Langdon’s areca. Nothing is overcast beneath Sophie’s tiny triangles; likewise Linda’s letters and lace. Julia’s dead plant casts no pall. That cerulean cluster dangling above Hope is in the shade of Langdon’s areca. Nothe’s umbra beneath the umbrella of Langdon’s areca.

In the realm of culture, taking psychoanalytic theory seriously is not very different from taking painted, ink or photographic portraits seriously. Psychoanalytic theory is one more medium among media. It’s a type of camera you might say, and the lighting matters just as much. Psychoanalytic theory seeks out shadows. Psychoanalytic theory uses deep shadows to melodramatic effect. To compose a Freudian psychoanalysis of these dresser top possessions the psychoanalysts must constrain themselves within a schema. They must be dedicated to the authorized interpretation, and present it as a discovery. The Freudian psychoanalyst would find a way to shove the dark Unconscious into the foreground, while sociopolitical circumstances are pale and far away. Everything would be in the shade of the Unconscious.

What Reveals What?

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When I estimate the effort I would have to expend to find each classical Freudian pattern formed by each super-ego, ego and id an revealed by the stuff on each of these personal dresser tops, I feel very tired. Recreational psychoanalysis is a game of intellect: suppression of subjectivity is the rule; no surrealist mischief allowed.

Which object betrays a Freudian sub-conscious text? Is the Oedipus complex insinuated when Baby Lotion is set beside a Bible? What paranoid enigma does Bob’s playing card betray? Could there be rage behind the_barred eyes of baby and father in that curling photograph on Langdon’s mirror? If Bruce’s souvenir stone is shaped like a human skull is the death wish contaminating everything else? What erotic mutations will Leonard’s broken mirror reveal? Does masochism compel Sophie’s green swimmer to dive into dry debras? Does Julia’s dead plant signal an atrophied conscience? Does Leah and Anatole’s replica of the Golden Gate Bridge imply separation anxiety? Is all the pink and white on Linda’s vanity a symptom of denial? Psychoanalytic theory, like Otto Dix’s Wounded Man Fleeting (The Battle of the Somme) or Gin Alley by Hogarth, was not crafted to unearth Subconscious hope.

my opinion

Hope is in the eye of the beholders, those of us who notice Orleanna’s Joy of Cooking, the picture of blossoms like a noonsday sun above the plane of Barb’s spare display, Langdon’s handmade Happy Birthday card, Bruce’s brushes and pens readily at hand, Leonard’s tap shoes (Bring on the music!), Sophie’s clothing climbing out of drawers into the light of day, A Guide to Better Writing among Leah and Anatole’s books, Linda’s photo of a newborn.

There is no evidence for any of this. These are my proto-interpretations. None of these scenarios are founded on anything verifiable. I’m making all this up and I don’t know how relevant or accurate it may be. With no intention to injure the artist interpretation is a congenial and serious sport that anyone can play.

Jeanne Randolph
18.X.013