

Ubiquitous Symbols of Modern Life

This was the theme of the 2005 exhibition of the Contemporary Division of APS. It was exhibited around three walls of a meeting room at Highfields Cultural Centre, Highfields, Queensland during Apicon 2005.



exhibition photographed by Kay Mack



The catalogue is reproduced below.

Ubiquitous Symbols of Modern Life

a group exhibition
by the Contemporary photographers
of the Australian Photographic Society

presented in association with Apscon 2005

Highfields Cultural Centre
Highfields, Queensland

15 – 21 October 2005

Ubiquitous Symbols of Modern Life

a group exhibition by the Contemporary photographers of APS

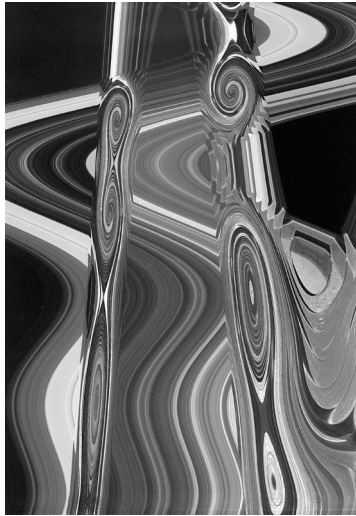
This is the sixth group exhibition presented by members of the Contemporary Division of the Australian Photographic Society.

This year we have explored the theme “ubiquitous symbols of modern life”: those ever-present items that have significance on a general or personal level for each of the exhibitors.

In investigations ranging from bar codes to our genetic structure, from tea bags to medical delivery systems, from the alphabet to green bags, and more, each photographer has approached the theme in his or her own unique way.

The members of the Contemporary Division of APS are photographers who have come together to encourage and support each other in our endeavours to pursue our own individual photographic development. We seek to exhibit our images in a meaningful way either in group showings such as this one or in our own solo exhibitions.

Kay Mack
Chairman, APS CDiv.



LASERS

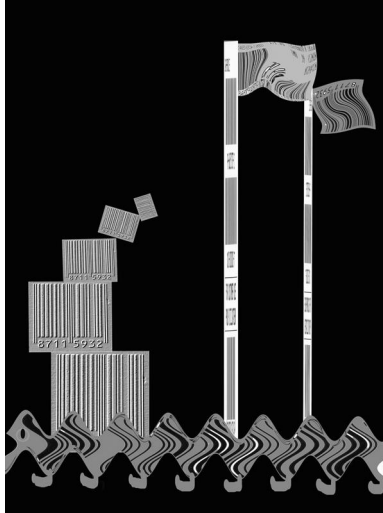
A laser produces a thin beam of light that can burn a hole in a diamond or carry many different television pictures at the same time. It is sometimes used to form a hologram, a 3-dimensional pattern or image with vivid and ever-changing colours often used in advertising.

&

MOODS OF POLY

Expanded polystyrene – a very useful, cheap, light and strong man-made material which has been used and abused by the modern world. All too often we see take away food and drink containers, packaging for our new TV or furniture, used once and discarded, filling up the world's tips or floating in the ocean after a fun picnic or day at the beach.

Whatever happened to the brown paper lunch bag and the china mug?



Bar Codes I

BAR CODES I & II

Everything now has a bar code attached so it is one of the most ubiquitous of modern symbols. Using this as one theme has enabled me to literally stretch the boundaries and have some fun.

CONNECTIONS I & II

With modern technology, earphones connections and plastic packaging are part of everyday life. I have tried to humanize them and add some whimsy.

RADIO TOWER

Within a short walk from home is a hideous radio tower which dominates the skyline. I hope I have added some drama to its image.

& BOOSTER AND SPRINKLER

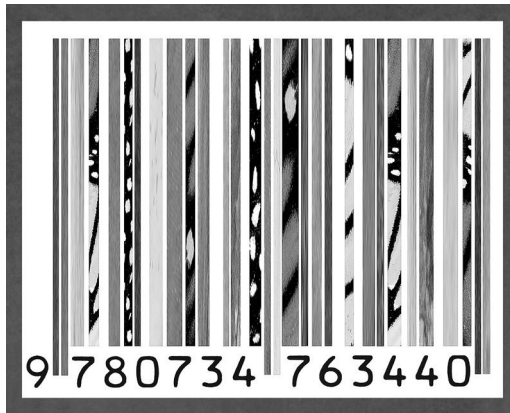
Every street has water hydrants and sometimes boosters for extra pressure. Do they make an image?

Bert Hoveling

My exhibit is based on a pyramid-type structure with images and articles which are commonly exposed to us in modern society. It is not possible to be too ambitious in trying to cover too many of the icons, as there are so many!!

BAR CODES

Carol Drew



The Ubiquitous Symbol I chose was bar codes, that I photographed then replaced the black stripes of the bar code with stripes of photograph. 98% of these were organic matter, mostly flowers as these gave me the spectrum of colour I desired. There are also leaves, trees, butterfly wings, feathers, rocks and skies.

The border colour that surrounds each bar code comes from the item as photographed.

I wanted to take something that was ugly and make it into a celebration of colour.

PANEL 1: (reading from left to right, top to bottom) Salada original; Spring flower book; Keens mustard; DVD Imation; Tetsuya oyster sauce; Margaret Preston book; Scuba smurf; Kodak E100G film

PANEL 2: Weet-bix; Swiss Arabian perfume; Post Office envelopes; Mersey Vale cheese; Milo; Yalumba merlot; Lucky Dog biscuits; Villeroy & Boch colander

PANEL 3: Indigenous art book; Heinz baked beans; Bombay Sapphire gin; Sealord tuna; John West tuna; Sensodyne toothpaste; Pura light start; Fybogel orange

Influences: Bridget Riley, Melinda Harper, Henri Matisse.

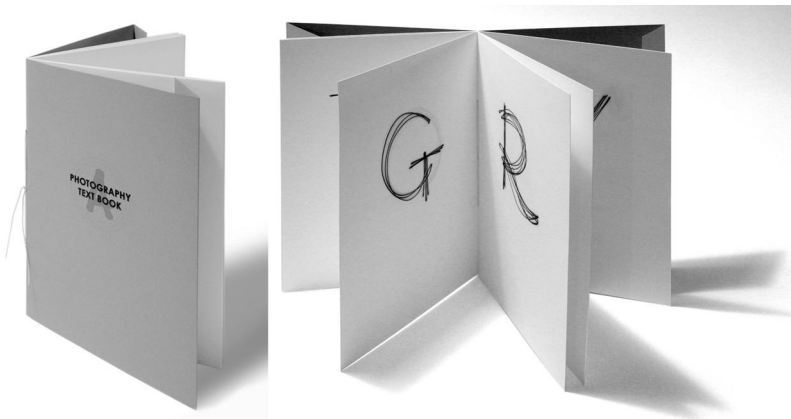
A PHOTOGRAPHY TEXT BOOK

Doug Spowart

The most ubiquitous symbols of all are those that form the letters and words of our language. Letters and words are taken for granted and yet we cannot live without them.

The word photography is derived from the Greek roots *Phos* and *Graphos*. The word photography literally means drawing with light and was first used by a German journalist commenting on the announcement of the discovery of the Daguerreotype in 1839.

In this small artists' book I investigate the text that forms the word *photography* captured using the description of the process embedded in its own name. In a darkened room I have employed a torch to draw in light the individual letters P H O T O G R A P H Y. The imaged letters are tone reversed paying homage to negative of black metallic silver from which all true photography is derived.

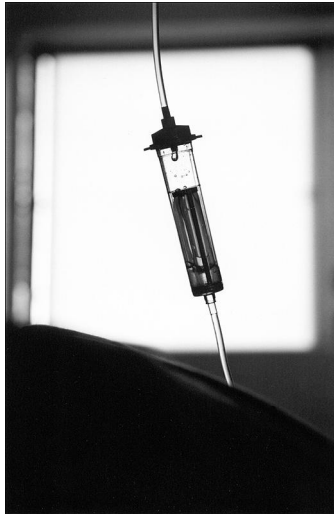


Pamphlet style Artists' Book

Made in August 2005

Size 21 x 14.7 cm

Media: Epson UltraChrome pigment inks on Epson Double-sided inkjet paper, book paper and waxed linen thread.

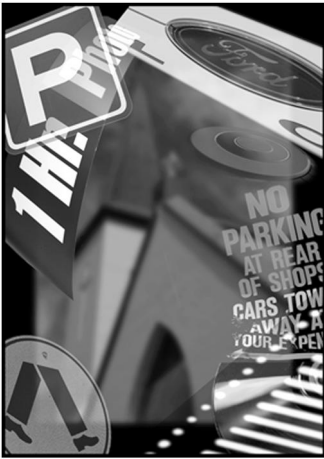


A 'ubiquitous symbol of modern life' to my invalid mother and myself, her carer, is the daily subcutaneous hydration received by her in the form of a slow drip of salt water. Through such medical advances, the health of sufferers such as my mother can be improved and life expectancy increased, but subsequent moral issues are now raised regarding the choice to prolong or not to prolong life.

In several ways, the significance of time for end-stage patients is explored through these photographs of my mother's drip. The measured frequency of the drip is used as a metaphor for the relentless passing of successive units of time. A sense of approaching night is provided by the dark, silhouetted appearance of the represented drip. Another metaphor for the running out of time lies in the way the natural, waning light of late afternoon is the only type of illumination used in this photography. The resultant green cast to these images is employed to evoke the unwell.

A PASSING WAY OF LIFE

John Teague



My approach to the subject “Ubiquitous symbols of modern life” has been to link it to 'visual pollution' and generational change.

Included are: a background layer of a familiar Shepparton church – diffused, dark and bluish to suggest a past era. Foreground layers of varying degrees of opacity include advertising logos, signage, advisory signs, typography and in the bottom right corner a suggestion of changing media. These are presented more forcefully, discordantly, hard edged and with stronger hues and saturation.

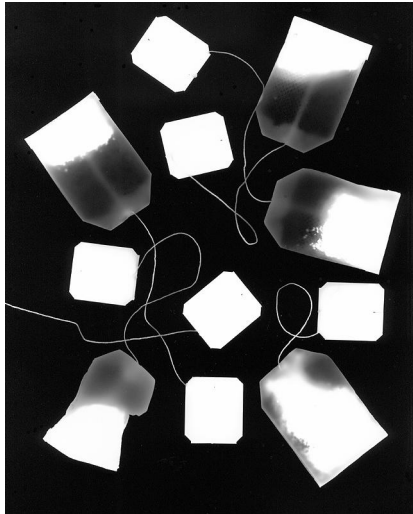
They intrude on our consciousness, competing for attention – as is their function.

The background layer also represents values other than the secular whilst the foreground suggests commercialism, regulation, and the complexity of modern life. There is the inference too that in a country town there is only so much money which everyone seems to be competing for. A lack of compassion and feeling for citizens' needs. Maybe too a suggestion of being trapped in a cycle. Definitely some alienation.

At another level I/we decry the destruction of our streetscapes with billboards, hoardings, and inappropriate development: the mix of people, vehicles and parking, and retail is not great – not that there are many places which are.

Parks and gardens are under pressure from commercial exploitation – the renowned International Village has had most of its cultural buildings demolished (obtained at great difficulty and expense from many countries) – why would we provide land and profits for a Melbourne housing developer? Answer – more revenue for council and less maintenance of the site.

Values also seem to have changed ... but that's a further picture essay.



So many of our foods today come prepared and pre-packaged in individual serves. Others are sealed for our protection. Or individually labelled. Excess in the extreme.

I have collected a selection of items that symbolise this trend: tea bags; the tags and ties that seal the plastic bags containing sliced bread; the cellophane-wrapped straws from tetra pack fruit juice drinks; the extra ring that seals up plastic bottle tops; plastic mesh bags containing fruit, each piece still labelled with those pesky sticky labels that will not compost; and the plastic fish that contain individual serves of soy sauce when you buy your take-away from the sushi shop.

These have formed the basis for photograms made in a traditional wet-process darkroom.

HOW GREEN IS YOUR BAG?

Maggie Smith



There are at least 10-15 million circulating in Australia – probably many more. They come, mostly, in the sort of bright, unnatural green that looks good on no one. Yet two years after their appearance, they are apparently Australia's favourite accessory.

One newspaper columnist claims the green bag as a new Australian icon: “In 2005, we proclaim we are one nation with green bags just as we proclaimed we were one suburb of a nation with Holden cars, Hills hoists and the backyard barbie.”

“Forget the little black dress,” declares a Sunday newspaper. “The hot new item around town is the little green bag.”

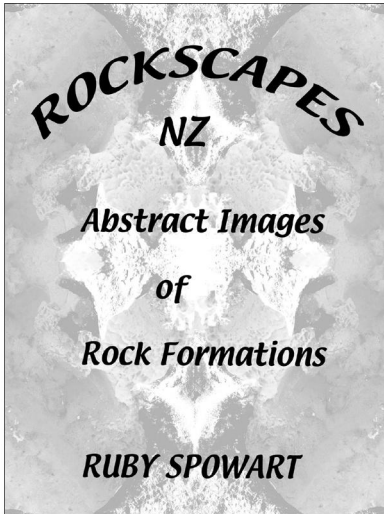
A reader from the Age newspaper wrote “Doesn't anyone realise these bags are made from the same 'almost indestructible' materials used in car bumpers and wheelie bins? These bags replace the plastic bags, which were in the throes of changing to a safe cornstarch biodegradable form ... what happens when these 'cool' bags reach their use-by date? Will there be millions of them in circulation?”

From an article by Margot Saville, Fairfax Digital, 5th April 2005



It's surprising how often you see 'bar codes' in daily life: a shadow of a curtain; the grain of timber; a row of CD cases; a cluster of display cabinets.

Is it a case of life and nature imitating technology rather than the other way around?



Artist book - "Rockscapes NZ – abstract images of rock formations."

These images were photographed on a recent visit to the South Island of New Zealand.

This book consists of a series of digitally produced abstract images of rock formations in a cliff face.

The original photograph is presented opposite each page to provide viewers an opportunity to witness the image transformation.

The original photo was taken on a Fuji 6700 camera, and created in Adobe Photoshop with an eMac computer and printed on an Epson R800 printer with Epson double sided digital paper.

All aspects of the book, the design, printing and binding have been carried out by the artist.