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A LITTLE MORE MAGENTA

Mark Bolland and Rachel Hope Allan

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A LITTLE MORE MAGENTA

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PHOTO Alumni Show
DUNEDIN SCHOOL OF ART GALLERY
ŌTEPOTI
20 September – 1 October 2021

Exhibiting artists: Alysha Bailey, Robyn Bardas, Emily Crooks, Lucy Fulford, Emily Hlaváč Green, Thomas Lord, Alex Lovell-Smith, Kevin Miles, Kristin O'Sullivan Peren (KOP), Dallas Robertson, Jessie-Lee Robertson, Kate van der Drift, Hayley Walmsey

Curated by: Mark Bolland and Rachel H Allan

WORKING: AGAINST THE GRAIN

"A Little More Magenta" was born on the floor of a windowless office, coffee in hand, a global pandemic at our door. It was to be an alumni exhibition, symposium and workshop series that showcased the many and varied talents of our photography graduates.

The original working title was "Against the Grain," and the brief was open, our only stipulation being that the work had to have been completed after graduation. We received proposals from New York, Auckland and Gibston Valley, Otaki and Ōtepoti Dunedin.

While it was obvious from the outset that we had a show, the prospect of holding a symposium and conducting public workshops quickly became another casualty of the global pandemic. In our 'photo bubble,' we pushed photocopies of the submissions around the table, grouped them into piles, separated them and then regrouped again. We did this in our coffee breaks, between online supervision sessions and, finally, by video call.

With the installation date rapidly approaching, we crossed our fingers, hoping that works stuck between islands or at framers would miraculously show up. Our back-up plan was to print the works that failed to arrive in-house ourselves.



Figure 1. Catalogue for "A Little More Magenta." Published by MRT Press, Dunedin, New Zealand, with support from Otago Polytechnic.

All the images in "A Little More Magenta" highlighted the importance of looking, the importance of time, the importance of light. From darkrooms and scanners, polaroids and photograms the poetic character of image-capturing reverberated. So too did the importance of just a little more magenta ...

IN UNDER ONE HUNDRED WORDS:WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT MAGENTA? OR,AN ODE TO TRIAMINOTRIPHENYL CARBONIUM CHLORIDE

There is no wavelength of light
That corresponds to purplish-red, reddish-purple or mauvish crimson,
so loved by Gauguin and Matisse.
And technically speaking,
That colour of a flamingo,
The Odeo line,
And arguably the best character in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*,
doesn't actually exist.
But there is always room for a little more magenta.
My Fuschine friend,
Baptised in blood,
Seen as #FF00FF on our screens.
That peculiar physiologically and psychologically perceived hue.
The big M in cMyk.
The R & B without the G
Oh, how we would be lost without you.
Magenta.

Rachel H Allan

MAGENTA

When I was a photography student, I learnt how to recognise colour casts in prints. I was lucky enough to have a friend in my class who had been a professional printer. We would take our prints from the darkroom to the window at the end of the corridor and he would say "It's a little too magenta, put three green in it," or "It's too green, put a little more magenta in it." Photography students learn how to see 'photographically'. They see like the camera sees – the world flattened, framed and cut up into segments, always from a single, stationary, vantage point. They see how to draw attention to something by bringing it into sharp focus, and how to move attention away from it by blurring. They may even start to see everything in shades of grey or in cyan, magenta and yellow.

When you study photography, you start to see how different photographs are from the way we see and experience the world, but also how individual and subjective a photograph can be. You learn how routine, similar and prescribed most photographs are, too. And you learn to try to get as far away from those everyday photos as you can. As a photography student, you will frequently encounter incredulity. People will stare aghast when you tell them what you are studying. As if to say, "Everyone does that all the time, without a degree or even trying," or "Have you seen my Insta?" Photography students try to find more and more creative ways to politely say, "But most photographs are sooo boring. Mine aren't."

Capture and Release

Photography is always a two-part process, input followed by output, capture and release. Curating and installing an exhibition of alumni work brought new meanings to these ideas, whilst also feeling like a not-too-distant echo of the exercises and conversations shared by photography teachers and students. Photography teachers spend a lot of time encouraging students to make images more carefully, to slow down and pay attention to the details. Equally, editing and sequencing are something that photography teachers and students spend a lot of time on. Here the first part was already done and, with the students already gone, it was left to the teachers to concentrate on the second part. Some images needed printing, with all the considerations of scale and material that entails, and this was often done as a negotiation, with an absent artist specifying their requirements by remote control.

The real joy, though, was in the curating and sequencing of the show. Images that had no connection to one another; beyond their makers' status as 'alumni,' were introduced to each other and asked to become acquainted. Like matchmakers, we tried various pairings and combinations, hoping that some would spark. The work of syntax is frequently overlooked by both art and art history, where the emphasis is often on the single image, and also by popular culture and media, where images are often grouped chronologically, algorithmically, thoughtlessly. Syntax is essential to meaning making in photography, as it is in curation, but sequencing is also a balancing act, a negotiation between prose and poetry. Here we lent more to the latter and were inspired by the preponderance of fluid forms and the focus-less-ness so beloved of the camera-eye to create a wobbly skein of pictures. Free birds flying briefly in formation.

Mark Bolland



Figure 2. "A Little More Magenta," installation view. Photograph: Thomas Lord.

Mark Bolland (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5647-1683>) is a principal lecturer in photography at the Dunedin School of Art, Otago Polytechnic. Originally from the UK, he is a teacher, writer and artist. In parallel with teaching and exhibiting artwork, he has written essays for books and exhibition catalogues, as well as many articles for journals and magazines.

Rachel Hope Allan (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1624-6457>) is an artist, educator and writer based in Ōtepoti. She has a Master of Fine Art (Distinction) from the Dunedin School of Art, where she is a principal lecturer in photography. Rachel exhibits nationally and internationally, most recently in "Postcards from Europe" at Cambridge University, UK (2022), "Gift" at Ashburton Art Gallery (2022), and the Auckland Festival of Photography (2021). Allan's photobooks are held in public collections in Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

Figure 3.
Alysha Bailey,
Heartsease, 2021,
digital ink-jet print on
Epson Hot Press Bright,
1016 × 711.2mm.



Figure 4.
Dallas Robertson,
Work #2, "*Candid*", 2021,
concrete, resin, screenprint,
200 × 255mm.

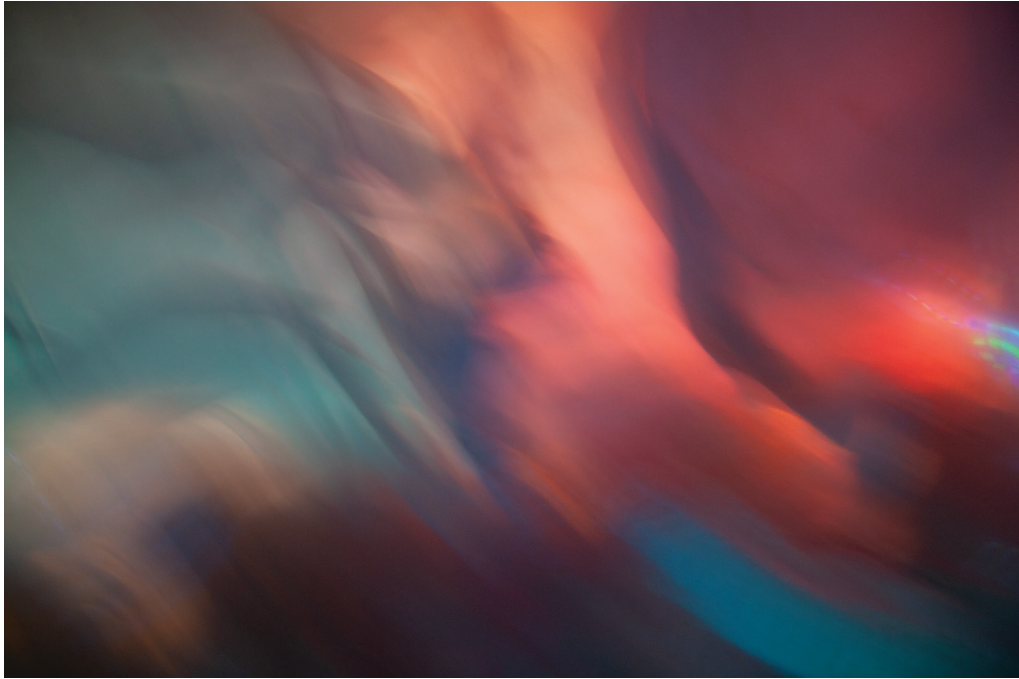


Figure 5. Kristin O'Sullivan Peren, *Places of Trauma: Clouded*, 2021, digital ink-jet print on Epson Hot Press Bright, 1000 × 680mm.

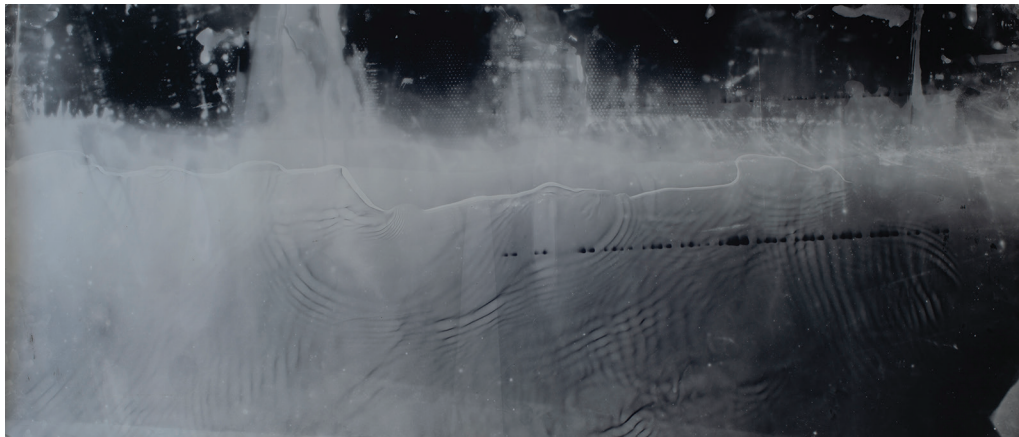


Figure 6. Kevin Miles, *Procession #2, Te Whanganui-a-Tara*, 2021, gelatin silver photogram, 460 × 1060mm.