

AMY CARKEEK

Winner of Contemporary Art Awards 2017

Collaborating with the Past

By Dr Julie Rees

Amy Carkeek (b.1980), a photographic artist living in Brisbane, looks to the past for inspiration to create contemporary works that are sinister in appearance. Receiving first prize in *Contemporary Art Awards 2017*, the winning artwork, *Little Boy Blue* (2016) is an archival inkjet print of a modified 1990s ceramic children's piece. Dressed in a clown's outfit, a boy sits on a perch with a small dog at his feet. To address her concerns, Amy adapted the pre-loved figurine by placing a blue and red handmade apparatus over his mouth. She then carefully removed the original mandolin between the boy's hands and replaced it with a red-tipped machine gun. Overall, Amy's art practice explores the impact of popular culture and consumer imagery and objects created in Western society. More specifically, the work examines the consequences of living by artificial narratives produced in a consumerist world. Amy suggests that simulated narratives created in a capitalist and profit-driven system can easily influence and shape our consciousness and beliefs from early childhood. Through the construction of a photograph, *Little Boy Blue* (2016) seeks to question the motivations of a system that promotes and accepts the continual commodification of all aspects of life.

In the process of transforming a discarded children's ceramic piece—a work of popular culture—into a state of absurdity, the sweet and compliant character is rendered dark and disturbing. The juxtaposition of an innocent looking figurine and a weapon creates an interesting paradox, suggesting that consumers need protection against pre-packaged narratives that advocate the accumulation

of wealth and material goods as a pathway to happiness. For many people, this sets unrealistic goals and expectations in life. Therefore, Amy's work reminds us that consumerism relies on us never being satisfied. Underneath the persuasive allure of the advertising industry's photographic images, objects and compelling slogans, this life view is about selling products and nothing more. Amy takes our familiarity with everyday imagery and objects and invites us to think about the artificial narratives that we have adopted throughout our lives. Amy's act of revamping pre-loved ornaments can be seen as a collaboration with the past to create new provocative work about her concerns surrounding consumerism today.

Amy has exhibited in galleries across Australia and internationally. She has been a finalist in various awards such as Moreton Bay Region Art Award, Clayton Utz Art Award, and Ulrick and Schubert Photography Award, and has won the open category of the Lord Mayor's Photographic Awards. Amy is currently undertaking

her PhD at Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, where she is a Lecturer in the Photography Department.

On this page, *Little Boy Blue* (2016), archival inkjet print, 100 x 66cm.

Image courtesy of the artist

Amy Carkeek's artwork can be viewed at:
<http://www.contemporaryartawards/finalist-exhibition-2017.com>

