

## Anne Collier

### *In her own words*

“My work – which often references film, music and celebrity cultures, as well as the hippie, new age and self-help movements – probably has its roots in my own exposure to the Californian culture and lifestyle of my adolescence.

I relate to Jack Goldstein’s interest in the potential of images. A lot of his work traded in what might be thought of as visual clichés, yet he somehow managed to make these often ubiquitous images his own. I also like the psychological and emotional intensity of his work, which was already evident in his early performative works, but persists throughout his life and his career.

I met Jack briefly in Los Angeles about ten years ago, when the renewed interest in his work was just starting. He seemed very shy, awkward even, but really endearing. I remember he was wearing a promotional jacket from one of the movie studios, which seemed very appropriate.

I was born in 1970 and the work of the Pictures Generation - that is the work of artists such as Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince, Louise Lawler, Laurie Simmons, etc - was effectively the first contemporary art that I was aware of. I understand their work as a generational reaction to the social and political landscape of the late 1970s and early 1980s. I was, and remain, influenced by their work. It is hard to imagine making any kind of photographic image now without negotiating their work and its legacy.

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Anne Collier, Sylvia Plath, 2008.  
Courtesy of Anton Kern Gallery, New York,  
Marc Foxx Gallery, LA and Corvi-Mora, London

I'm interested in depicting different manifestations of photographic imagery: how photography is employed in relation to everyday objects such as magazines, record sleeves, posters, etc, and how these mass-circulated things can absorb – and illuminate - our own narratives. I don't really think of my work as a form of appropriation, as the original nature of the things I document remains largely evident in my photographs.

I became interested in the depictions of women in professional camera magazines and journals from the late 1970s and early 1980s, and in particular self-reflexive images of women posed as if taking photographs. The resulting images were typically highly sexualized and often unapologetically sexist, and it was clear that the women were merely acting as photographers. As a female artist working with photography in the present tense these older, seemingly anachronistic images still exert a powerful charge.

At college I struggled with making more explicitly autobiographical work. I was always somewhat uncomfortable at my own presence – literally – in the photographs, and started to progressively distance myself from actually appearing in the work. At the same time I wanted the work to retain the emotional and psychological impulses that motivated me to make it in the first place. Consequently I started to document found, existing objects, such as the self-help cassette tapes or second-hand record covers, that I felt somehow resonated not only with my own history, but that could also operate independently of my relationship with them. This space, between the personal and the universal, is something I'm usually trying to negotiate in the images.

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Anne Collier, May/June 2009 (Cindy Sherman, Mark Seliger).  
Courtesy of Anton Kern Gallery, New York,  
Marc Foxx Gallery, LA and Corvi-Mora, London

I only work in the studio and use a large-format plate camera. It's a very laborious process that allows almost no room for improvisation. Everything has to be perfectly aligned and calibrated. I'm typically photographing things that are two-dimensional: book and magazine covers, record sleeves, film stills, etc or objects that have very little physical depth such as the developing trays or audio cassette tapes. I'm interested in this flatness. I'm equally interested in creating a sense of emotional or psychological uncertainty. This tension – between what is depicted and the nature of its depiction - is central to my approach.

Photography, by its nature, encourages various forms of framing –whether it's in the camera's viewfinder, the format of the film used, or the dimensions of the subsequent print, you are constantly made aware of how a photograph edits things.

At times I think I'm ultimately more interested in trying to establish a sense of melancholia in my work. Inevitably sentimentality, cliché, and nostalgia play a part in this idea, but in isolation these tropes often err towards kitsch. I've always liked how popular music can walk a fine line between sentimentality and profundity, in ways that visual art rarely finds an equivalent for. I'm very conscious about the tone of my work and a part of this process necessitates that I keep some of my own personal emotional and sentimental leanings in check. “

**Anne Collier, January 2011, New York**

*Interview by*

*Alex Farquharson, Director, Nottingham Contemporary.*

See our website for the full version of this interview  
<http://www.nottinghamcontemporary.org/art/anne-collier>



Anne Collier, *Double Marilyn*, 2007.  
Courtesy of Anton Kern Gallery, New York,  
Marc Foxx Gallery, LA and Corvi-Mora, London.