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EXHIBITION PROGRAM 2014
EVERYTHING IS A DISTRACTION
MARNIE EDMISTON
19 MARCH - 5 APRIL

Metro Arts

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IMAGES

- Cover *Ideas for living*, 2014. Set of 5 digital photographs.
1 / *Untitled*, 2013. Digital photograph.
2 / *Conversation with urself* (detail), 2013. Pine, bolts, video, rocks.
3 / *Something/nothing* (detail), 2013. Digitally printed fabric, wooden rod, hooks.

VOTE OF THANKS

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**Queensland
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PROJECT PARTNER



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METRO ARTS // EXHIBITION PROGRAM

EVERYTHING IS A DISTRACTION
MARNIE EDMISTON





MARNIE EDMISTON EVERYTHING IS A DISTRACTION

Everything is a Distraction is Melbourne-based Marnie Edmiston's first solo exhibition. The show includes a banner, a wall work, three cut out wooden 'props', two suites of photographs and a video installation, all loosely bound by her penchant for the tragicomic. The artist's oeuvre typically includes found imagery and video, repurposed through perspectival distortions and clever editing to confront or confuse the viewer with works that convey a self-described "mixed-message infinity of possible meanings".

Everything is a Distraction contains a suite of work called *Untitled* (2014) - a series of five excessively pleasant photographs that contain found imagery of cherry blossoms and well-manicured trees lifted from 1960s American gardening publications. Describing this source material, Edmiston stated; "The scenes themselves seem so unrealistic, as if staged. So perfect, they're dull. I liked the idea of someone being sent out to take such emotionless photos." Her resulting photographic collages present a double layer of almost unsettling suburban restraint.

Untitled (2014) continues the same process of "physically layering objects and then documenting them as flat things" first realised in *Untitled* (2013). *Untitled* (2013) consists of a pair of seemingly identical photographs that are cloyingly sweet on first glance too. The source material is a found image of a young woman gazing adoringly at an anonymous male. In the first photograph, the base of a glass sits atop the reproduction of the woman's face, accentuating one slightly crooked tooth and disrupting her dewy visage. In the second photograph, the glass distorts her face completely, so that her features are elongated and ugly. This is true love gone horribly wrong.

This sense of the tragicomic is also apparent in Edmiston's wall work and banner. Their respective titles - *Something/Nothing* (2013) and *Enjoy the ultimate pleasures* (2013) - recall the absolutes of advertising and self-help clichés. But the latter banner just doesn't live up to its sybaritic catchphrase. Presented propped against the wall, the work's fabric sags morosely, partly obscuring this flaccid promise of pleasure.

In contrast, the inclusion of a suite of cut-out *Props* (as titled - 2014) within the exhibition may initially seem obtuse. Edmiston has rendered a glass, a hat, and a shrub into poppy, comic book style sculptures. The front of each prop bears the image of an immediately identifiable object, but these signifiers have been pushed into three dimensions, revealing the pine struts beneath the shiny MDF of each facade. In their materiality, like her layering and re-presentation of found photographs, Edmiston draws our attention to the surface of things. She says; "because the sculptures show fairly boring and conventional objects, the purpose becomes less straightforward than just representation. It starts to then become a question of purpose. If we're used to easily interpretable objects, with discrete reasons to exist, what is it like to be confronted by things that are seemingly disjointed?"

This sense of disjointedness is amplified in the video installation *Conversation with urself* (2013). A viewing booth, also made of pine, is embedded with a screen upon which a range of characters utter seemingly arbitrary phrases like "You had quite a busy life" and "Around three or four days. Hmmm." The footage is gleaned from an English language instructional video and edited so that its original purpose is entirely obscured. Thus, the work becomes emblematic of miscommunication. The speakers' absurd language and the earnestness of their delivery is at once comical and disquieting.

Edmiston's minimal aesthetic and careful selection of only the most essential objects has resulted in an exhibition defined by a slow and confident rhythm. The artist affords us cleverly constructed breathing space. Accordingly, we wander through Edmiston's candid musings on perfection and disappointment, cautiously anticipating a punch-line.

SERENA BENTLEY