

**REBECCA ROSS**  
**DREAM SEA MOVIE WATER**  
**Boxcopy Contemporary Art Space**  
**5 - 26 November, 2016**

# MAXIMUM THRILLS

There are very few places like Australia's Gold Coast. What other city has five theme parks and abundant sandy beaches? Like its big American cousins, Orlando and Los Angeles, home to multiple amusement parks, the Gold Coast is a city matrixed around promises of adventure and escape.

For many, the amusement park is the ultimate expression of the culture industry. The theme park trades in simulations of reality - Baudrillard's synthetic universe of the unreal or Eco's abundance of the reconstructed truth. Theme parks are nothing but desire machines, relentlessly churning out a crude but thoroughly ticketed imaginary of reconstituted childhood symbols.

Yet in those reconstituted realities is also a historically important expansion of the scope of freedom and shared experience that critics of mass culture may overlook. For the hyper-real is also at once the site of the real: real generator of real emotions, real thrills, real connections and real memories. The memory machine is a work of extremes.

DREAM SEA MOVIE WATER takes as its coordinates the four 'worlds' - Dreamworld, the troubled giant, and its offspring WhiteWater World; Seaworld; and Movieworld. This orientation is less geographic than it is psychic. The worlds are clustered in the very far northern reaches of the outer Gold Coast; miles from the famous beaches, they serve to anchor and construe a growing coastal city around the structural fact of tourism as its economic *raison d'être*.

The worlds offer the artist a potent method of orienting herself in the particular boosterist landscape of the Gold Coast, in a unique space between poles of leisure and adventure, community and commodity. In her first major body of work in the medium of animation, Ross' work negotiates a dialogue stemming from an elemental reading of their trademarked thematics - dreams, movies, water and the sea.

## Marina/Marina

In a landscape as iconic as the Gold Coast's, insider knowledge takes on special potency. In Marina/Marina, the viewer's interpretive labour is rewarded with humour, as Gold Coast icons great and small are contrasted with icons of art history. The wordplays draw on Ross' experience as an academic, and deep artistic connection to Italian art history, to develop a conceptual work in which text, though central, is only implied.

Yet Marina/Marina is more than a vernacular spectacular. In her isolation of specific places of local significance, Ross exerts a subtle but determined horizontalising pressure between the the classical and the everyday, elite and everyday, the urban and the bogan - between Marina Mirage and Marina Abramovic. Rather than simply re-inscribing the power of Old Europe as the perpetually absent or distant Centre, Marina/Marina's effect is one of slight repositioning, via a playfulness that is simultaneously knowing and carefree.

## Surf Sequence (Left and Right)

Art that is excessively local can be closed to outsiders, like those infamous surf breaks guarded aggressively by hyper-territorial local surfers. For all its situatedness on the Gold Coast, Ross' work is also porous and deliberately open. The surf breaks in Surf Sequence may look like they are all Gold Coast beaches, and some definitely are, but, highlighting communality of the crystal voyager dream, the waves in these images are ridden all around the nation, taken from the 1988 Atlas of Australian Surfing. Ross has a highly developed collage practice involving the dissection and collage of maps and atlases. Here, that practice is reconsidered in playful motion, as collaged images drop in like a surfer dropping in on another's wave, while coloured blocks, harking the artist's earlier abstract practice, shuffle and trade places like boardshorts in a lineup, or pixels in a simulacra. Across time and space, Ross seems to be suggesting, the dream of glassy waves and pumping barrels is the same the world over.

## Slogan Sequence

Where Ross' interest in word play and associations is the reward for the viewer's decoding work in Marina/Marina, Slogan Sequence doesn't want you 'read' it as text. The T-shirt is worn everywhere, but is an especially essential object in a beach town, where it frequently does double duty as souvenir and index of leisure. In Slogan Sequence, Ross gathers T-shirt slogans, sans brand names, composing them into an ongoing concrete poem. Like driving down the Gold Coast highway at night, roadside attractions flashing by in the empire of signs, collectively the experience of the slogans as a sequence start to suggest a significance absent in their singularity, a kind of subconscious meaning.

Ross's methodology is one of reduction, consideration and analysis. Under her processing, the Gold Coast and its worlds are stylised into elements to be recombined, a set of symbols like the language of dreams; a Gold Coast unconscious.

Danni Zuvela, Palm Beach, 2016

boxcopy