

Pippa Wischer

You/Me

This project developed from my fascination with the cultural processes by which class, race, sexuality and gender stereotypes affect how we see ourselves and interact with others. During 1999, using a portable studio set-up, I photographed and interviewed people from three places in Australia – Nimbin, Goulburn and Canberra. The resulting body of work is a series of large photographic and video portraits in which I have tried to capture the character of each individual with a photograph describing their physical self and an accompanying video-based interview in which they describe their emotional self.

By systemising the visual portraits I have removed the individuals from their own settings while retaining cultural markers like clothes, hairstyles and body posture. The 'anonymous' images reference documents of social classification such as passport photographs. Audiences are permitted to stare in a way they would never be allowed in real life. While the images question the way in which visual codes translate into stereotypes, my work could also be read as a form of self-portrait. In the video, the interviewees 'speak back', so that here the viewer becomes the 'focus'. I asked my subjects 'How do you think of yourself, or see yourself?'

"I see myself as a normal teenage boy; I suppose. Average"; "I guess I see myself as a mother with two children..."; "... middle-aged now, and probably in need of a good set of teeth!"; "Worker. Easy going"; "A wife, a mother, someone who is overweight, but cheery"; "I'm not quite sure. I never really thought about it. I see myself as a bit of a jock, I think"; "I think I'm too skinny. That's how I see myself"; "Very contented at the moment..."; "Just an average person. Just average"; "...I don't think of myself. I think of other people..."; "I see myself as an ordinary person trying to make their way in life, not doing too badly but putting up with the occasional setback"; "I think I'm quite shy"; "I dunno. Average"; "Not a lot. A cleaner"; "A fairly competent person, intelligent and capable"; "Athletic, happy, normal person"; "I don't think about myself, to be frank".

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Pippa Wischer is a Melbourne-based artist who recently graduated from the Australian National University, Canberra School of Art.



Pippa Wischer from the series You/Me 2000, type C prints and video installation



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