

Renato Grome - solo exhibitions



Renato Grome, *DollyPop4*, 2007

Media kit

Byron McMahon Gallery, Sydney
Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne
Lipanje Puntin Arte Contemporanea, Rome

22 August - 22 September 2007
24 August - 30 September 2007
25 October - 8 December 2007

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MEDIA RELEASE

'Barbie takes a trip' in Renato Grome's vividly coloured and erotic photographic solo exhibitions featuring his *Dollypop* and *Seduce* series, in Sydney, Melbourne and Rome between August and October.

Italian born, British artist Renato Grome's work is electrically arresting and erotic. It "starts a fire" for the Australian actor Guy Pearce who "can't take my eyes off it."

Opening on **22 August** at **Sydney's Byron McMahon Gallery** and then on **24 August** at **Melbourne's Monash Art Gallery**, **Grome's wildly beautiful surrealist-inspired photographs** feature his ***Dollypop*** and ***Seduce*** series. His third solo show opens at Lipanje Puntin Arte Contemporanea in Rome, the city of his birth, in October 2007.

Dollypop is a new series of **12 large, electrically coloured, blurred photographs of undressed Barbie and Ken dolls** in various sexual poses – a playful articulation of the paradoxical illusion of reality and artifice.

"Dollypop wants to examine our perceptions," says the artist. "Although it looks pornographic, in reality the sex is impossible. The dolls are sexless eunuchs. Porn without genitalia is unachievable."

Showing alongside ***Dollypop***, **Grome's highly lauded and collected *Seduce* series** makes a welcome return. These works are striking in their simplicity and saturated colour, depicting highly sexualized flora – orchids, cacti and other flowers in his signature bold style.

"His works are modern day mandalas; deceptively simple, bold, graphic works which are a unique fusion of inspiration derived from sources as diverse as classical and surrealist painting, contemporary advertising campaigns, fine art photography and the natural world," says his Gallerist Sandra Byron, of Byron McMahon Gallery.

In the ubiquitous age of digital production of images, Renato Grome's artwork is intriguingly technically hand crafted traditional photography - in reversal - and not digitally manipulated. His process has evolved from many years of working with natural light and light absorption techniques, but when (frequently) asked by his viewers and collectors, Grome says that, "the process of creating this work engenders mystique, and like a magician or master chef, I'm not able to reveal my processes, that would ruin the experience for the viewer."

Named after his Sicilian godfather, renowned painter Renato Guttuso, Grome trained as fine art restorer in Rome working on Caravaggio and Raphael masterpieces. Having lived and exhibited around the world, his early photographic works developed from a surrealist style. With a 30 year career behind him, Grome has worked across photo-journalism, travel, portraiture, fashion and high-end commercial photography, but with the high demand for his work, he prefers to focus on his personal art photography.

Melbourne: 24 August to 30 September 2007

Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne, 860 Ferntree Gully Road, Wheelers Hill Victoria 3150
Tue-Fri: 10am-5pm, Sat-Sun: 12pm-5pm www.mga.org.au

Sydney: 22 August to 22 September 2007

Byron McMahon Gallery, 88 George St, Redfern, NSW 2016
Tuesday-Saturday 11-5pm, www.byronmcmahongallery.com.au

Rome: October 2007

Lipanje Puntin Arte Contemporanea, 10 Via di Montoro, Roma 00186, Italy www.lipanjepuntin.com

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Renato Grome, *Virtue*, 2006

Renato Grome - an insight by Christopher Gibbs

In Renato, born in Rome of British parents the day the Bikini explosion rocked the world, mingles the blood of artists and writers- his father, a painter descended from British aristocrats and the chaotic genius Sheridan, his midwife mother of British farmer roots.

He was named for his godfather, the Sicilian painter Renato Guttuso, reared among influential musicians and artists, he discovers the magic powers of photography early. Sent to school in cold grey England this rebellious boy, well whipped by his masters, escaped in his suit of crushed raspberry velvet to the sex and drugs and rock and roll mayhem of the '60s London, and taken under the wing of the late Alexis Korner.

From there he was first apprenticed in Rome as a fine art restorer, scraping and cleaning Caravaggios and Raphaels, fascinated by the world of allegory and symbol revealed to him, thence to Paris in the grip of student revolution and on to Stockholm where free love and high-minded socialism reigned, he worked as a fashion model and furthered his understanding photography assisting François Gillet.

His career expanded and blossomed in a place where he felt at ease and where he fathered the lovely Melody, always the joy of his life. Sometimes a raver, always a rover, he based himself in Stockholm, setting up a studio there and working with camera and wayward searching eye in film and video, beaming his creativity on projects both commercial and purely aesthetic.

Perpetually searching new horizons, in the mid '90s he moves to Sydney, where stunning nature, sunshine and sea and new freedom from the shibboleths of old European culture, brought forth a fresh tide of new work and building on beginnings in Stockholm, he held several shows of work which imagination and technical understandings are fused with a wild and beautiful surrealism.

Renato has used a camera all his working life, knows well the rich diversity of its possibilities, and in his long dalliance with the mystery of light, spiller of the life force, creates images beyond the merely arresting, memorable, erotic and electric. He cultivates a garden where a new flora flourishes, familiar yet drenched in light and aflame with colour, metamorphosed. These are not pictures of flowers in the botanical sense. Enigmatic and surprising, playing with the ambiguity of the magic medium of 'truth', photography.

In Wisdom, echoes the allegory of the blinded Santa Lucia, patron saint of vision and light, absorbed in youth on Old Italian Masters. Surrender then to the blue embrace of his Pure, worship the red hot Virgin, let his vision invade your consciousness, disturb, awake, delight, transform and seduce.

Christopher Gibbs, mentor to Renato Grome, is Trustee of The Edward James Foundation, prominent London antiquarian, writer and co-Art directed cult films Performance and Blow Up.

EXHIBITIONS

- 2007 Solo exhibition, Lipanje Puntin Arte Contemporanea, Rome.
Solo exhibition, Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne.
Solo exhibition, Byron McMahon Gallery, Sydney.
Group show Byron McMahon Gallery, Sydney.
- 2006 Group show, Sandra Byron Gallery, Sydney.
Group show, Sandra Byron Paris Photo 2006.
Group show, Sandra Byron The Armory Show New York.
- 2005 Solo exhibition, Sandra Byron Gallery, Sydney.
Group show Sydney Art Fair Sandra Byron .
- 2001 Solo exhibition, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne.
- 2000 Group show Zinc Gallery, Stockholm Art Fair.
Group show Byron Mapp Gallery, Sydney
- 1999 Solo exhibition, Zinc Gallery at the Centre for the Arts, Boston, USA.
Group show Byron Mapp, Paris Photo 99, Paris.
Group show Byron Mapp Gallery, Sydney.
- 1998 Solo exhibition, Byron Mapp Gallery, Sydney.
Group show Byron Mapp Gallery, Sydney.
Group show Byron Mapp Gallery Paris Photo 98, Paris.
Group show Byron Mapp, Australian Embassy, Paris.
Group show Zinc Gallery, Stockholm.
- 1997 Group show Byron Mapp Gallery, Sydney.
Group show Fuji House, Tokyo.
Group show Art House Gallery, Sydney.
- 1996 Solo exhibition, Art House Gallery, Sydney
Group show, Sub Culture, tours Australia and New Zealand.
Group show ACMP, Collection II tours Australia.
- 1995 Solo exhibition, Art House Gallery, Sydney.
- 1990 Group show at The Image Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden.

Using the universal language of eroticism, I want to seduce the viewer into a playful sensual world.

My images celebrate the miracle of life. The strange organisms that inhabit my work are designed to charm into a surreal universe of hypnotic colours and intriguing textures. I consciously use paradoxical elements to create tension. The work's complex layers and patterns, which radiate out from the core of the images, intentionally attract and repel the viewer's gaze... By abstracting the everyday I wish to investigate and challenge the illusions of reality and the reality of illusions.

Renato Grome

Dollypop. Artist statement

(Barbie takes a trip and goes to the San Fernando Valley)

Dollypop has several layers.

Dollypop was shot as if we are in a porno Alice in Wonderland dream / nightmare set in an intimidating, electrifying S&M raunchy sex club. A mechanised sexual orgy.

Dollypop wants to examine our perceptions. Although it looks pornographic, in reality the sex is impossible. The dolls are sexless eunuchs. Porn without genitalia is unachievable.

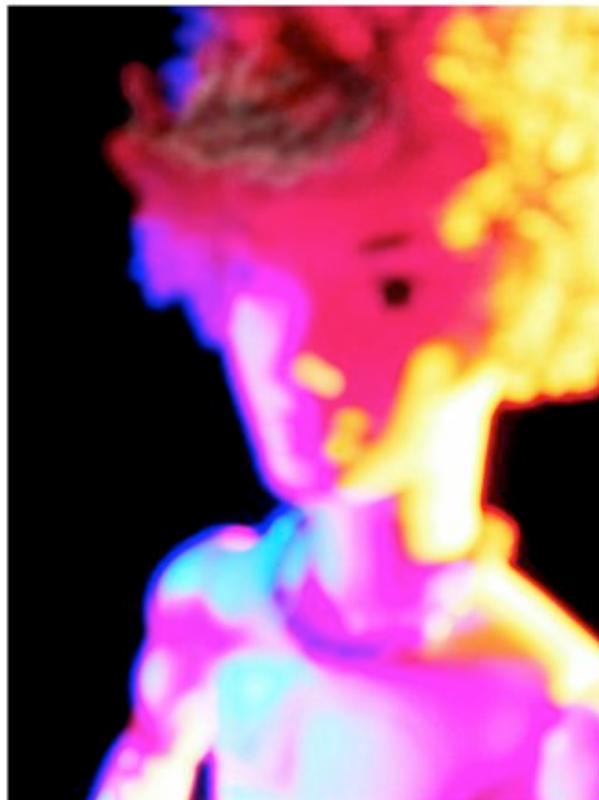
Dollypop was conceived as fantasies seen through an adolescent's imagination, the journey from innocent childhood to the sleazy reality of the adult world.

On a personal level this came about through observing my teenage daughter's transition to becoming an adult.

In Dollypop there are parallels to my other bodies of work, where I challenge the uncertainty of certainty, and investigate the illusions of reality and the reality of illusions.

And again I am using the universal language of eroticism to create ambiguous, haunting and beautiful imagery where the visual and technical aspect is also ambiguous.

Dollypop is photographed using a "kiddie" 3 MegaPix point and shoot camera



Renato Grome, *Dollypop*, 2007



Renato Grome, *Calm*, 2006