

Andrew Tenison

Let Me Imagine You

MURRAY ART MUSEUM ALBURY

546 Dean Street
Albury NSW 2640

mamalbury.com.au

Monday to Friday, 10 to 5
extended hours Thursday to 7
Saturday, Sunday and Public
Holidays, 10 to 4

15 February —31 March
2019

Brindley Family Galleries

MAMA



Front

Let Me Imagine You, Found AGFA
Isopan F Negative (circa 1933 - 1945),
Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Baryta,
Unknown Photographer
image courtesy the artist

 **Create NSW**
Arts, Screen & Culture

In *Let Me Imagine You* Canberra-based photographer Andrew Tenison responds to a negative he found whilst rummaging through a second hand shop in Berlin in 2014. The negative depicts a Luftwaffe serviceman from the Second World War. Captivated by the idea of who this person could be, Tenison indulged his imagination and created a group of photographs that explore possibilities surrounding the person in the found negative.

Using the silver gelatin medium (the same medium used to make the original negative) and a mixture of built and found environments with meticulously selected 'props' (actual pieces, contemporaneous with the person in the negative), Tenison created a set of hand-printed photographs. The result is a view into an uncanny reality.

Located within the genre of staged or constructed photography, each work presents a distinct perspective on the imagined character. The photographs do not read in a sequence, but provide a momentary insight into the man in the negative. Various objects are presented 'in situ', evoking something about the character. The mystery surrounding the subject of the photographer's inquiry begins to take form. It is this aspect – the

mystery and its connection to memory and myth-making – that is being presented for our consideration.

Tenison's practice comments on photography's relationship with history, in particular how photographs shape our understanding of past events. The history of photography has been accompanied by the troubling idea that a photograph's apparent veracity is no guarantee for its truthfulness. The photographer can choose which side of the coin he will commit to in his process. Will he work within the tacit agreement between the audience and himself regarding the trustworthiness of the photograph, as photojournalists do? Or will he draw attention to that unconscious disposition of belief we have towards photographs by making a work of fiction with the medium?

Tenison's preoccupation with archival photographs and how they are read or experienced comes through the work as he relies on the aura of each photograph to fabricate a 'history' around the found negative. Instead of telling a distinct story through a visual narrative, he highlights the ambiguous nature of archival photographs. The space between each of the images allows

the viewer to experience something of the aura that all historical photographs have: a mediation of the past.

An underlying influence on Tenison's practice is the use of research. The primary archival object, the negative, provided small but specific details that allowed further research into the serviceman's historical situation. Further research led to learning about Germans who had served, particularly in the Luftwaffe, and had later migrated to Australia during the post-war period. Additional research led to learning about Bonegilla Migrant Reception and Training Centre, which Tenison grew up near and used as a setting for some of the photographs.

Tenison, when asked about the role of research in his process states that 'everything must fall behind the drive to make an interesting and engaging set of photographs.' This immersion into historical objects and writings cultivates a sense of time and place particular to the found negative. It is with this cultivated sense-of-the-subject that Tenison embarks on the process of seeking out locations or making sets, collecting historically authentic objects and making photographs.

List of works

main wall, right to left:

Let Me Imagine You (Untitled 4)
Let Me Imagine You (Untitled 8)
Let Me Imagine You (Untitled 10)
Let Me Imagine You (Untitled 6)
Let Me Imagine You (Untitled 9)
Let Me Imagine You (Untitled 2)
Let Me Imagine You (Untitled 11)
Let Me Imagine You (Untitled 5)
Let Me Imagine You (Untitled 3)

all works 2017, silver gelatin photograph - hand printed by the artist

except,
Untitled 4, hand printed by Chris Reid, and
Untitled 5, Hahnemuhle photo reg baryta

end wall:

Let Me Imagine You, Found AGFA Isopan F Negative (circa 1933 - 1945)
printed 2017, Hahnemuhle photo reg baryta

vitrine:

original found negative in slip, ephemera