

January 14 - February 20, 2010

Opening Reception: Thursday, January 14, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

## Lisa Turner *Shelf Life*

**Lisa Turner**, a print-based artist in Red Deer, AB, holds an MFA in Printmaking from the University of Alberta and a BFA from NSCAD University. She has exhibited in Canada, the US, Europe and Korea. Upcoming exhibitions include the solo exhibit *Strange Form of Ordinary* at Martha Street Studio (Winnipeg, MB) and the group exhibits *International Printmaking Exchange between Canada and Japan* at the Embassy of Canada Prince Takamado Gallery (Tokyo, Japan) and *Contexture: New Directions and Intersections in Printmaking* at the Untitled Arts Society Gallery (Calgary, AB). Recent solo exhibitions include: *Plastic Passions*, Artist Proof Gallery (Calgary, AB); *This Modern Love*, FAB Gallery (Edmonton, AB) and the group exhibitions *Prospectus* at SNAP Gallery (Edmonton, Alberta); the *Internationale d'Estampe Contemporaine de Trois-Rivieres* (Trois-Rivieres, Quebec); *WAVE 2008: Blurring Boundaries* at Camberwell College of Arts (London, UK); and *Edmonton Prints* at SNAP Gallery.

Lisa has received numerous awards and grants including a Canada Council for the Arts Production Grant, an Alberta Foundation for the Arts Production Grant, a SSHRC Canadian Graduate Master's Scholarship, and the Walter H Johns Graduate Fellowship. She is currently an Adjunct Professor at Red Deer College.

**Sally Frater** is an independent curator and writer. She holds an Honours BA in Studio Art from the University of Guelph and an MA in Contemporary Art from The University of Manchester and Sotheby's Institute of Art. In her curatorial practice she is interested in exploring issues of identity, history, memory, environment as well as issues of representation and equity in gallery and museum practices. She has curated exhibitions for A Space Gallery in Toronto (2006, 2008) and the McMaster Museum of Art in Hamilton (2005, 2006). Her writing has appeared in *Prefix Photo* and *Women and Environments Magazine*. In 2010, she will co-curate an exhibit of Toronto-based artist Dionne Simpson's work at the Art Gallery of Peterborough.

**Open Studio**, Canada's leading printmaking centre, is dedicated to the production, preservation and promotion of contemporary fine art prints.

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EDITING Heather Webb  
TYPESETTING Sara Kelly  
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*The Right Profile*, screenprint on canvas, 57" x 36" x 1 3/4", 2008



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## The Work of Art in The Age of Mass Consumption

by Sally Frater



During the past five years, my artistic practice has been concerned with using popular imagery to examine mass media, material culture and consumerism. In particular I am interested in the vast number of products available for purchase online today and the contemporary buying behaviour of that results from computers offering a 24-hour shop window.

Lisa Turner, Artist statement, 2009

In his seminal work *Simulacra and Simulation*, French theorist Baudrillard wrote of the ways in which contemporary media, which included the television, the Internet and other forms of mass communication, had made it almost virtually impossible to distinguish between needed goods and wanted goods.<sup>1</sup> In response to this observation, Lisa Turner has created a body of work based on a series of unidentifiable products, entitled *Shelf Life*. Each object that she has constructed is the sum of multiple images, amassed by the artist solely from extensive searches of the search engine Google™ Images. With each final object's origin lying in numerous photographic reproductions of different items, the resulting products are difficult to categorize. For if we are unable to identify what an object is, then we are at a loss in deciding what its function or purpose is. The items presented in *Shelf Life* are at once absurd and nonsensical, amalgamations of several photographic images that have been collected, collaged, and otherwise digitally altered before ending up as screenprints. Turner's products lie in a liminal space—they represent a combining of organic and inorganic matter, and they are made in a way that they can perform more than one function. Furthermore, the products are confounding as their names provide no further clues as to what their form or function should be. The subject in *The Right Profile* (2008) could just as easily be a type of hardware tool as a cooking utensil belonging in the kitchen. And the object depicted in *Strange Form of Ordinary* (2008) while appearing to resemble a baking tray has matter affixed to it that does not seem to be food. Their appearance leads one to reflect on their aesthetic and formal qualities

yet it is difficult to divorce them from the social commentary that they provide irrespective of however latent or muted it may seem.

Turner has stated that she purposefully composed the objects so that they would be visually appealing as this is a key tactic in product sales and advertising: companies design products in a manner that will suggest a “bodily relationship” as this will make the products more saleable and desirable. What is equally seductive is the way in which Turner's product lends itself so well to the phenomenon that she is commenting on. Not only has screenprinting been long employed in the field of advertising but the ability in printmaking to produce multiples shares similarities with the mass production of products in commercial industries. As seen in the installation image of the work *Plastic Passions* (2008), with each print lined up in a grid-like formation, the works resemble products lining the shelves in a grocery store. In fact, Turner's entire project appears to operate in much the same way that the 24-hour virtual shopping marts do.

Ultimately it would seem that Turner's futuristic products are simply more of the same; pretty objects that offer no real use or needed function that will simply become more refuse that will clutter and pollute our lives. However, Turner's project is different. To begin with, the images that she produces remain on paper as prototypes; they are not realized as actual objects that will take up space adding to the already infinite amount of disposable products that have flooded the earth. But more importantly, because the products use or purpose eludes us then it is up to us to decide on what these products actual purposes are. It is in this manner that Turner breaks with traditional cycles of production and consumption. The artist does not offer a means of exchange in which she as the producer presents us with products swathed in rhetoric that dictates to us that we are somehow incomplete or inadequate without the addition of said product in our lives. The viewer becomes perplexed in viewing these objects; as consumers we must actively make sense of them and figure out what either their purpose or function is. It is up to each of us as individuals to decide how we will process them and whether or not we will incorporate them into the rituals that pattern our daily lives.

Turner has stated that she hopes that her work will “encourage viewers to question their own relationship to consumerism.”<sup>2</sup> In leading us to consider the role that her imaginary products would fill in our everyday lives one can only hope that her unusual creations will in turn give us pause to reflect on our affiliation with the glut of bizarre and strange gear that we already surround ourselves with.

<sup>1</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford University Press, 1998, pp.166-184.

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Turner, Artist Statement, 2009.