

# Clare Strand

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## **Enigmas of the Ordinary, Clare Strand's Photographs.**

Clare Strand's images are conceived, researched, developed and resolved from within a highly unusual and personal sensibility, using a clear and decisive method of production. She belongs to the Everyday, yet her images evoke the mesmeric, the talismanic and the unsolvable. Solutions proposing the Ordinary reveal further layers of complexity and configure problems as yet un-glimpsed.

The hinterland to her image-making is provided by a childhood upbringing where a family life in a suburban cul-de-sac was confounded by the rich torments of True Crime magazines, ominous supernatural events breathlessly documented on the news stands and the capacity for a single photograph to contain global conspiracies or nothing. Behind the surface was a layer, and then others beyond and beneath.

Areas of subject matter dominate her work - photography the means by which it is mapped. The guides to this spirited world? Dickens, Ionesco, Colin Wilson, Frank and Elspeth Gilbreth. The filters for her impulses and discoveries are provided by teenage horror and detective movies, forensic insignia at the crime scene, and unlikely gymnastics during the emanation of ectoplasm. Above all, in the dark spaces off stage, we sense supervening and mysterious presences - the white gloved hands of the Conjuror, the guileful ways of the Escapologist, the reveries of the Mystic, and even the baleful threats of Revenge.

Her working systems are arduous, with intensive research and much deliberation as layer after layer of the superfluous are peeled away. She writes, "Most of my research is quite fanciful and relies, to an extent, on serendipity but is always relevant and never a task. The whole process reminds me of the bubble gum machine in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory - in that it's a big machine that has a lot of action and with much spluttering noise churns out a rather small, perhaps anticlimactic stick of gum."

What gives her work a compelling power is that she adopts at will, even wilfully, the various conventions within the medium of photography to elucidate or conflate. "So if you look back on my work I have no one photographic style as I tend to manipulate the process to directly respond to the subject. Throughout my work I have appropriated existing photographic conventions to suit and embellish the subjects. The majority of the conventions that I 'borrow' are sourced from the utilitarian applications of photography."

This collection of images allows us to see forthcoming convergences possible in her various projects, working towards the perfectly balanced photographic proposition - half nostrum, half counterfeit - revelations of a world held in sway to the Ordinary.

Dr.Chris Mullen 7.11.2006