

Huw Davies Gallery  
30 March - 23 April 2017

**FACE2FACE**  
**Emilio Cresciani**

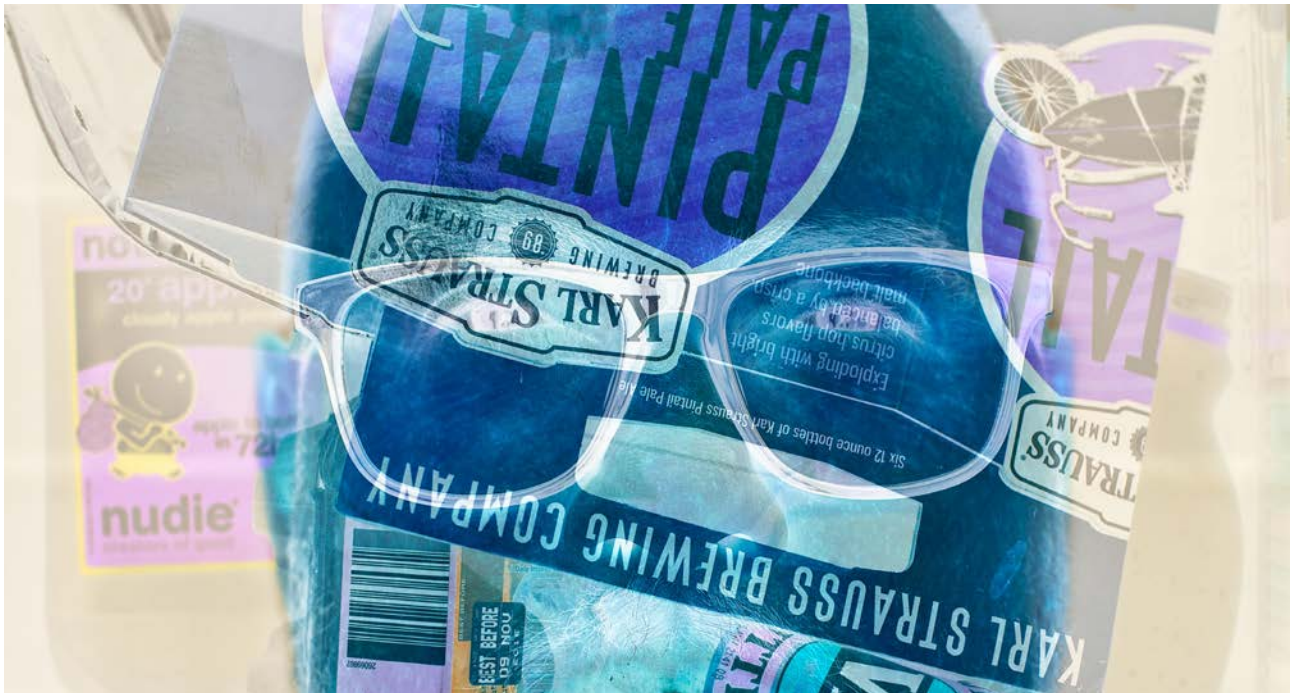


Image: Emilio Cresciani, *Lee* (detail), 2016, C type print, 44.5 x 29.7cm

‘One of the few relics of our civilisation guaranteed to be recognisable twenty thousand years from now is the potato chip bag.’ Edward Humes, *Garbology: Our Dirty Love Affair with Trash*<sup>1</sup>

FACE2FACE presents Sydney-based photographer Emilio Cresciani’s most recent investigations into the relationship between waste creation, consumption patterns and personal and cultural values and identity.

Influenced by Italian painter, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, photographer Vik Muiz and the ceramic busts of Ah Xian, FACE2FACE is an extension of Cresciani’s previous work, *Remains of the Day* (2012). However, unlike *Remains of the Day*, which depicted rubbish sites as sublime alien landscapes, this recent work focuses on portraiture and individual responsibility. Cresciani forces his subjects to come face to face with their own habits of over-consumption and waste, and reflect on how uncomfortable truths about ourselves can be gleaned by what we choose to throw away.

Much can be discovered from the waste we produce. Archeologists rely on middens – refuse sites – to uncover clues about the day-to-day lives of ancient societies. Just as an individual can be defined by what they choose to own and consume, so too can they be defined by what they choose to throw away. It is this relationship between waste and identity that Cresciani explores:

‘Waste is a portrait of our lives. Each week our garbage bins are emptied, and redundant, useless, broken, unfashionable or finished waste is collected. It’s the aftermath of life for that week. To throw away is to make your place clean, which gives you a feeling of being purified or sanitised.’

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Unfortunately, the waste we create and then expunge from our lives does not magically disappear. Instead it remains part of a large-scale cycle of over-consumption and pollution, with devastating environmental, economic and humanitarian consequences. In 2016, Australians created an average of 2,000kg of waste per person, or just under 5.5kg per week<sup>2</sup>, with waste production growing at a compound rate of 7.8% per year<sup>3</sup>. Approximately 42% of this waste will end up in landfill, where it may take decades, centuries, and even millennia to break down. Disturbingly, our rubbish can end up all over the world – items such as plastic bags and bottle caps break down into tiny pieces, known as microplastics, which contaminate the soil and waterways. It was also recently reported that Australian computers had been discovered in a 'toxic e-waste dump in west Africa, being pulled apart by children as young as five', despite the fact that it is illegal to ship broken or redundant computers outside of Australia<sup>4</sup>.

To create the works presented in *FACE2FACE*, Cresciani asked his subjects to save their rubbish over a period of a week. In the studio, the artist photographed the piles of waste and superimposed the image over a portrait of the subject. The resulting images are colour inversed, and heavily processed to the point of abstraction. The subjects themselves appear unrecognisable beneath a layer of the detritus of their week, and the small, sometimes embarrassing, minutiae of their lives are thrown into high relief.

Printed on metallic paper reminiscent of foil wrapping, the photos are at once both anonymous and intimate. In *Isobel* (2016), Isobel's physical appearance is obscured, but the packaging for Betadine sore throat medication and Olive Leaf drops which appeared in her waste items indicates that she was recently unwell. Similarly, in *Louise* (2016), Louise's lifestyle choices over the week suggest she values convenience over sustainability, as evidenced by the takeaway coffee cups and disposable, single-meal food containers.

Cresciani says, 'When rubbish is out of sight, it's easy to forget about it. Saving one's rubbish for a week becomes a burden and forced my subjects to acknowledge another side of their behavior. Many people I photographed were surprised at how much waste they were creating.'

In western consumer culture, it is difficult not to create waste. When even necessities such as food items are sold encased in unnecessary packaging, waste becomes the end-product of day to day behaviour – its consequences shielded by the thoughtlessness that accompanies normalcy.

*FACE2FACE* is an unflinching series of portraits of consumption and waste. Cresciani forces both his subjects and the viewer to face uncomfortable truths about our own individual patterns of consumption. Our actions define us more strongly than our words, thoughts or intentions; and we are all active participants in a consumer culture that is creating one of the most widespread, urgent, and destructive crises currently affecting the modern world.

Jessica Oliver, March 2017

*Jessica Oliver is a freelance Canberra-based arts writer and co-presenter of Culture Space on 2XX FM*

<sup>1</sup>Humes, Edward. *Garbology: Our Dirty Love Affair with Trash*. New York, NY: Avery, 2013

<sup>2</sup>Blue Environment & Randell Environmental Consulting 2013, 'Waste generation and resource recovery in Australia P321 Final report'

<sup>3</sup>National Waste Policy 2010. Federal Government

<sup>4</sup>Rebecca Le Tourneau, 'Australian e-waste ending up in toxic African dump, torn apart by children', ABC News, 10 March 2017

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## **Emilio Cresciani | Artist statement**

Garbage doesn't lie. Wrappers, cans, bottles and cigarettes contradict what we tell ourselves, and what we tell others, about how we live.

Italian author Italo Calvino suggests that we are all defined by what we throw away. We are what we dump.

In *FACE2FACE* I take my interest in waste to a more personal level, making a connection between our public face and what is privately discarded.

Portraits usually focus on someone's appearance or character but this new series focuses on our private face, that which is hidden to others. Is our true identity found in the rubbish we throw out each day?

I asked my friends to collect their rubbish for the week. I superimposed close ups of this waste onto a photo of their face. I then turned these into negatives. As an x-ray points out the weakness or disease in our body, so these expose our waste as being a hidden side of our lifestyle.

Many people found it confronting to come face to face with the volume of waste they accumulated over a week. Our consumerism leads us to think of rubbish as a necessary evil – provided it can be removed far away to a landfill or washed down the drain.

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## Emilio Cresciani | About the artist

Emilio Cresciani is an emerging artist working in photography and installation. His artwork explores redundancy and urban change.

His interest is in objects, structures, buildings and the urban landscape, and in particular the increasing number of 'non-places' that fill our environment. Waste centres, derelict service stations, road works, car parks and abandoned factories. Beauty is found in these places and objects of repulsion, neglect or obsolescence.

Cresciani holds a Bachelor of Visual Arts from University of Sydney College of the Arts, and has exhibited nationally including at Carlton Project Space, Sydney; Mars Gallery, Toowoomba; The Incinerator, Willoughby and the Australian Centre Photography, Sydney. Cresciani is represented by The Photography Room, Canberra.

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1.	Emilio Cresciani, <i>Alex</i> , 2016, C type print, 44.5 x 29.7cm, edition of 3	\$110 unframed
2.	Emilio Cresciani, <i>Louise</i> , 2016, C type print, 44.5 x 29.7cm, edition of 3	\$110 unframed
3.	Emilio Cresciani, <i>Jono</i> , 2016, C type print, 44.5 x 29.7cm, edition of 3	\$110 unframed
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Image: Emilio Cresciani, *Alex*, 2016, C type print, 44.5 x 29.7cm