

CAKE BOYS: PHOTOGRAPHS IN TWO SERIES

12th-28th June 2008

Opening Thursday 12th June 6-8pm

Closing Saturday 28th June 4-6pm

by Drew Pettifer

Cover image: *Untitled (Ford Undressing)*

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Australian Government
Visual Arts and Craft Strategy
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Australian Government



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Julian White, Natalie Kazakis,
Dan Huppatz, Clare Needham, Roger
Nelson, Tessa Hildebrand, Ford
Thomas, Been Delahunty, Phillip
Marshall, Conal Thwaite,
Dom Richardson, his family and
friends and, as always,
Benjamin Creek.

List of works

1. *Untitled (Ben on the train to Munich)*,
50.8 x 70.2cm,
digital print from negative, 2007
2. *Untitled (Dom watching the cricket)*,
50.8 x 70.2cm,
digital print from negative, 2005
3. *Untitled (Ben, Jokulsarlon)*,
50.8 x 70.2cm,
digital print from negative, 2007
4. *Untitled (Phil underwater)*,
50.8 x 70.2cm,
digital print from negative, 2007
5. *Untitled (Selfportrait with Ford yawning)*,
50.8 x 70.2cm,
c-type print, 2008
6. *Untitled (Ford undressing)*,
approx. 25.4 x 30.5cm,
digital print onto cake icing from Polaroid, 2008
7. *Untitled (Conal standing)*,
approx. 25.4 x 38.1cm,
digital print onto cake icing from negative, 2008
8. *Untitled (Phil and I in the bath)*,
approx. 25.4 x 38.1cm,
digital print onto cake icing from transparency, 2007
9. *Untitled (Been on the ladder)*,
approx. 25.4 x 38.1cm,
digital print onto cake icing from negative, 2008.
10. *Untitled (Conal and Ben at Somers)*,
50.8 x 70.2cm,
c-type print, 2008.
11. *Untitled (Conal in my bed)*,
50.8 x 70.2cm,
c-type print, 2008
12. *Untitled (Conal on his bed)*,
approx. 25.4 x 38.1cm,
digital print onto cake icing, 2008.
13. *Untitled (Ben skinnydipping)*,
approx. 25.4 x 38.1cm,
digital print onto cake icing from negative, 2008



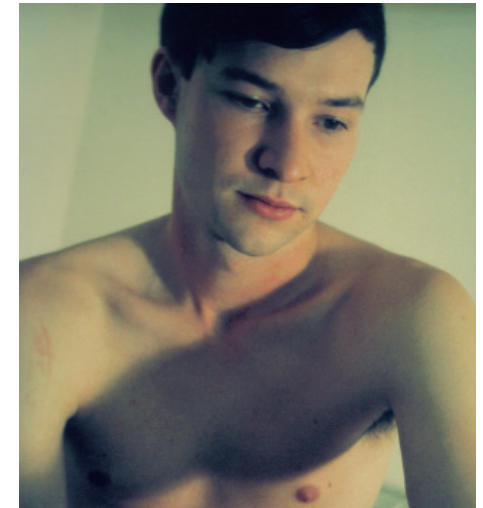
CAKE BOYS:
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Untitled (Ben, Jokulsarlon)



Untitled (Self with Phil)



Untitled (Conal in my bed)

CAKE BOYS:

PHOTOGRAPHS IN TWO SERIES

Cake boy [keɪk bɔɪ] (n)

1. Early 90's slang for what is now termed a metrosexual.
2. A male that is often confused for being gay, but is really straight.

- UrbanDictionary.com

Drew Pettifer has been described as evoking “a well-known photographic tradition, spanning legendary photographer Nan Goldin, through to contemporary artists such as New York-based Ryan McGinley.”¹ The two new series exhibited here feature intimate moments with the artist’s friends and lovers. One series is printed directly onto cake icing.

¹ Jeff Khan and Mark McDean, *Room to Move Gallery Notes*, 2004.

Five large cakes have been adorned with sexualised images of young men in varying states of undress. By printing the images onto cakes the artist creates a cheeky pun on the term “cake boy,” since all of the subjects are indeed slim, attractive and somewhat feminine, pictured in enticingly erotic poses. Curiously, none of these “cake boys” identify as gay.

More than just a pun, however, the artist’s decision to print the most salacious images in the show onto cake icing is intended to prompt the viewer to question issues of consumption and deterioration, death and decay. The materiality of the works has an ambiguous relationship with the process of consumption, as the cakes’ heightened consumability as edible objects paradoxically curtails their ability to be consumed as art objects. The question of having a “use-by date” is extended also to the young men printed on the cakes: how soon will their beauty fade? When will their virility decline? The deterioration of the cakes serves to highlight the often fleeting nature of physical beauty.

On the walls of the gallery hang a series of framed images featuring some of the same young men. These photographs are innocent images, expressions more of a “pure” desire and contemplation of beauty, rather than of lust. They are the “Picture of Dorian Gray” to each cake’s decaying reality.

In celebrating and “capturing” a man’s youth, do the works slow its decline, or accelerate it? The differing imagery and presentation, in contrast to the cakes, draws out the distinctions and commonalities between different forms of desire, and between the art object and the consumer item.

All photography, and in particular documentary photography, may be described as an attempt to capture what Henri Cartier-Bresson called the “decisive moment”. The “decisive moment”, he said, was “the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as the precise organisation of forms which give that event its proper expression.”² Intrinsicly linked to this concept is the idea of memory, as the photograph in a sense both represents and recreates a particular moment. At celebrations and other “memorable” events, the camera is as ubiquitous as the cake. Drew Pettifer’s two series prompt us to wonder whether by preserving an image, we can halt the loss of innocence and the withering of desire.

Roger Nelson and Drew Pettifer

² Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment*, 1952.