

**patrick pound**

**GRANTPIRRIE**



# Soft ~ a real model world

Patrick Pound calls his major new series of photographs *Soft ~ a real model world*.

In these photographs the world is seen as if it were a vast, yet intricate, model. While each photograph seems to be of the real world this is something of a ruse. Each photograph is in fact a tiny detail taken from the daily newspapers.

This is a world view from the confines of the home. These are images of the world that have literally been delivered to our doors.

Pound has given each image the distinct 'look' of soft focus. This is at once spectacular, beautiful, and again, reduces the world to a model artificial state. Here everything is reduced to a toy-like world. The world is seen in detail copied close up.

Through the seductive mist of softness we focus in, sorting things out. We are drawn in. We have to circumscribe what is represented so vaguely. As always, we end up reading.

Here actual models of trees and houses and so on are inseparable from the real trees and houses. All are softened in the picturesque haze. The things of the world are separated like entries on a list, like pieces in a puzzle. In this soft focus version of the world an image of a model railway, a refugee camp, a caravan park, a zoo and a holiday resort become enmeshed, as one. They become a picturesque model ruin of details. The movie set and the terrorist's hideaway, the interior of a house for sale and the prison cell, all become each other's equivalent. The forest and the bonsai garden are grafted together. The soft focus makes the document, the real and the model indistinguishable.

Newspapers themselves systematically reduce the world. The real estate pages with their drawn houses, their outlines of land for sale and their model apartment blocks are a model system par excellence. The newspapers themselves present the world in microcosm, a version of events, scaled down, for the sake of reading.



*soft - a real model world (bridge), 2004*



*soft - a real model world, detail from installation, 2004. Inkjet prints*

*soft - a real model world (face), 2004*

*Soft ~ a real model world* is a world in which every single image is a "found" one. The viewer is drawn in to the haze to look for both the content and the meaning of these individual images. Then the viewer can't help but join the search for the narrative implications of the series.

These images have the air of a crime scene. They operate as the very evidence of life, a life in the background, out of focus, deep in the field and, inevitably, sublime. The lines (outlines) of the real and the modellic are blurred. These are the everyday images that saturate our lives.

This is a mediated world. Here is a flood of documentation, of mediated images each of which refers to the others with reality pooling just beneath the surface like a palimpsest.

The blur in these works isn't specific to the ground as in the pictures of Uta Barth or to the melancholy of Boltanski's faces or Sugimoto's architectural icons or to Richter's painterly haze, but, while taking these on board, the soft focus in this series deals in the modelism of the scenic, and the second degree nature of the documents themselves. Like Thomas Demand's photographs of his paper models these photographs are twice removed from the world. The resulting photographs are an archive of surrogates and exemplars of a constructed world. A world literally delivered to us. It is this mediated world of images which we all have to make sense of.





*soft - a real model world (two trees), 2004*

Perhaps these images are closest in approach to the work of Gerhard Richter whose 'Atlas' also offers an archival model that is apparent in so much of Pound's work. For several years Pound has been working with the daily papers taking cuttings and compiling files and scrapbooks filled with an avalanche of images. It is as if he is collecting towards a logic of documents. He has files carefully divided into numerous, and unlikely, categories. There are files of images of: people holding cameras, people holding photographs, people with outstretched arms, people in the air, people reading, before and after images, big and small comparisons, model worlds, microcosms, vessels afloat, interiors of houses for sale, outlines of land for sale, and so on. In his studio I shuffled through a scrapbook that was on top of a pile of other scrapbooks. It was filled with images cut from the newspapers. For a while I couldn't tell what they had in common. I couldn't find any pattern, then I realized flicking and flipping through the pages that in each image someone was holding something. Pound operates somewhere between the natural historian finding successions and resemblances and Italo Calvino's Mr Palomar. It is as if he is an artist who on trying to explain the world has been reduced to collecting it.

*"But it was on his newspapers that he gazed with special tenderness and respect. It was a collection that he had been making for years. Whenever he read at a café an article in a paper that seemed to him to express his own views in a satisfactory manner, he bought and kept the paper. He had thus got together an enormous bundle, papers of all sorts and all dates, thrown together without any kind of order." L'Assommoir, Emile Zola.*



*soft - a real model world (podium), 2004*

Collection is consumption lived. To collect images on this scale is to be consumed by them. Meaning is to be found in the accumulation of details. The hundreds of photographs that make up *Soft ~ a real model world* are in a sense also cuttings from these daily newspapers. They are fragments, from the daily flood of photographs, little documents, pieces of evidence blown out of all proportion. The world is posed as a puzzle. The viewers, like the collector, feel if only we could get all of the pieces together we would have the complete picture, an exact copy of the world, 1:1, like Borges' famous fictional map, itself lifted from Suárez Miranda, that covered the entire land it represented. The newspapers and the soft photographs are themselves also a fictional 'Flatland'.

It was Swift who observed that we draw fleas larger and elephants smaller. Like the photographer in Antonioni's film 'Blow up' Pound finds the devils in the details. He blows up pieces of these tiny documents in a system that produces new and startling images.

This is an art of shared information, of memory and remembrance. These images are touching and telling. They accumulate and hover like memories. These documents writ large as photographs take on suburban realities and worldly intrusions. A material reality lurks within their depths; a reality however, which can only be reconstructed as a palimpsest. This stream of data is at once shimmering and opalescent.

*Softly, softly.* Be aware, don't be alarmed.

**Anthony Tromp 2004**





*soft - a real model world (log cabin), 2004*



**Cover image:** *soft - a real model world (lamp), 2004*

**All images:** c type photograph,  
80 x 100cm  
edition of 10