

● REVIEWS ART

# monica

august/september 1996 \$7.50 incl. gst



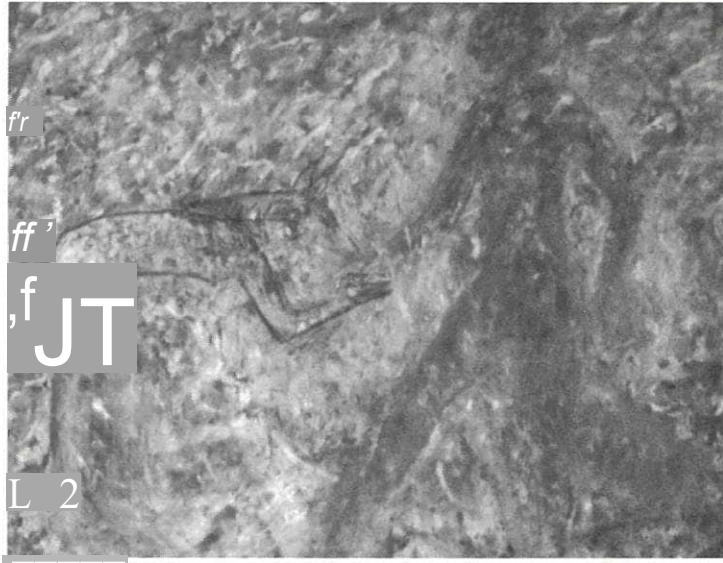
■ %

>1

/  
\* ; A  
.  
r  
Vi



August 6 - 24, 1996



**ALEXIS HUNTER**

*The Memory Series*

brooker gallery  
128 - 132 the terrace po box 11019 Wellington new Zealand  
ph 04 499 9124 fax 04 499 9789

qpotTLCtl[STC1Te] [A«v8B]

# Terrence Handscomb

Before information there were the Machines

July 31 – September 31

<http://www.spatial.co.nz/>

creative  
NZ  
ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND / TOI AOTEAROA

u q p o i u o s s a i d o r

andrew jensen

stephen bambury

September 10 - October 5

furness lane (off guinee >

Wellington

new Zealand

telephone (64 4) 384 1804

facsimile (64 4) 384 3195

# MIDH€5T

ISSUES

sexy TU ads

Terry Ur bahn

Rm O'Deill

water music

taxidermy

Fiona Pardington

John Zorn

Stelarc

David Watson

free new music CD

# PETER PERYER SECOND NATURE

6 September — 3 November

Organised by the City Gallery, Wellington.  
Supported by Creative New Zealand — Arts  
Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa

**Manawatu Art Gallery**

398 Main St, Palmerston North. Ph (06) 358-8188

## FLETCHER CHALLENGE CERAMICS AWARD 1996

*New Zealand's only  
International Ceramics  
Exhibition!*

**Auckland Museum Until August 25**

Regular Museum Hours plus Late Night Wednesday

# APPLE'S BLEND

THE DIVINE PROPORTION  
WITH ASSISTANCE FROM MILLER'S COFFEE

## FREE COFFEE AND CONVERSATION

**10-24 August**

@ [?®QD]p **Show**

**Monique Jansen  
Leigh Martin  
Violet Faigan  
Saskia Leek**

**27 August - 14 September**

[ **Golden Breed** ]  
**Ann Shelton  
David Scott**

**17 September - 5 October**

**23A Gallery** 23a Liverpool Street, Auckland Central  
Phone/Fax 64-9-3581488

P.O. Box 3047 Shortland Street Auckland 1

WITH THE SUPPORT OF CREATIVE NEW ZEALAND TOI AOTEAROA

### SUBSCRIPTION

I would like to collect the set of *monica* magazine 1996.

Name:

---

Address:

---

Phone:

Fax:

---

### GIFT SUBSCRIPTION

I would like to gift the set of *monica* magazine 1996 to the following recipient.

Name:

---

Address:

---

Individual NZ\$30, Institution NZ\$40,  
International add NZ\$10 postage.  
Send cheque or Money Order and this form to:

MONICA SUBSCRIPTIONS  
P O BOX 68-779 NEWTON  
AUCKLAND  
NEW ZEALAND

## Seen In All The Best Dreams...



Anna Mips

Collect the set!  
Five issues of  
*monica*, from  
the pilot issue to  
the bumper dou-

ble summer issue, for only \$30! Or, \$15 for  
issues Oct/Nov and Dec/Jan (you save \$2.50,  
plus post and packaging is free). Back issues  
are \$5 each. Hurry while stocks last.

August      Jaqueline Fraser  
                  new works

September    Valerie Neilson  
                  recent paintings

Peter McLeavey Gallery  
147 Cuba Street, Wellington

# monica says

on the cover

Peter Peryer, detail from  
*Ragnarok*, 1994

When *monica* thinks global, like Hipkin's portrayal of Peter Peryer as a "skylarking Noah," she provides a vessel for variety. Conversely, the range of views aboard, from the animal (Peryer), to the vegetal (*The Concrete Deal*) to the digital (*The World Over*), are characterised by their co-operative nature. So as Chance mourns the erasure of the collective by the individual in Redmond's *Spectacular Blossom*, critics have chosen the artistic practice of collaboration. And as *monica's* pages proliferate, the polyglottal becomes surprisingly univocal. The SNAP of the photographer's button has again entranced the opossum-like "ocular showdown" of the reviewer, affirming desire for information about ourselves, our others, and all that is around us.

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
Tessa Laird

**EDITORS**  
Anna Miles  
Anna Sanderson

**ART DIRECTOR**  
Miranda Dempster

**TECHNICAL CONSULTANT**  
Robert Hutchinson

Correspondence & Subscriptions:  
*monica*  
Po Box 68-779  
Newton  
Auckland  
New Zealand  
voice 09-378 7443  
fax 09-378 7027  
email [monica@spatial.co.nz](mailto:monica@spatial.co.nz)

*monica* is printed by Alphabet Soup Ltd

*monica* thanks the Auckland Art Gallery for their support of this issue.

  
ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND *TOI AOTEAROA*

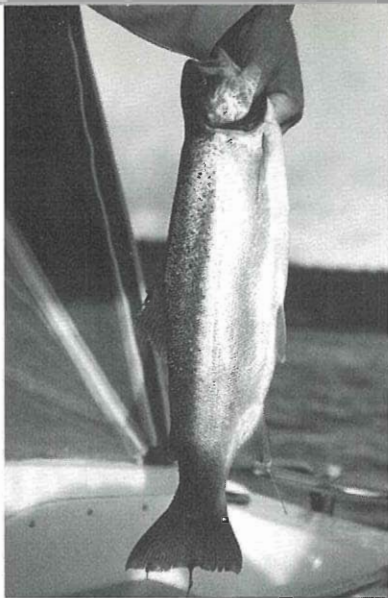
Chartwell Trust

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ximena Alvarez, Jenny Balle, Jim Barr and Mary Barr, BOMB Magazine, Gregory Burke, Chris McCafferty, Wystan Curnow, Dunham Bremmer, Mary-Jane Duffy, Jenny Gibbs, Hammer Graphics, Terrence Handscomb, Chris Hilliard, Gavin Hipkins, Amon Howard, George Hubbard, Alice Hutchison, Giovanni Intra, Vicki Kerr, James Kirkwood, Hamish McEwen, Justine McLisky, Magazzino, Magic, Brian Opie, Helen Parsons, Julie Paumer-Pengelly, Peter Peryer, Claire Regnault, Neil Rowe, Warren Sanderson, Greg Smith, Huhana Smith, Jane Strange, Caleb Stuart, Teststrip, Jill Winchester, Darian Zam

The views expressed in *Monica* are not necessarily those of the editorial staff.

- 6 **Pioneering Spirit**  
Gavin Hipkins on Peter Peryer's *Second Nature*
- 8 **Lookalike**  
Jennifer French and Stuart Sontier on *Identi-kit*, *Reviewing Photographic Portraiture*
- 10 **From Abundantia to Vigilantia**  
Anna Miles on Megan Jenkinson's *The Virtues*
- 12 **Are the victims always so beautiful?**  
Margreta Chance on Monique Redmond's *Spectacular Blossom*
- 14 **The Detail We Love**  
Terrence Handscomb, Michele Leggot, Jude Rae, Haru Sameshima, Anna Sanderson and Megan Tamati-Quennell on details from their favourite artworks
- 17 **Seeing Stars**  
Rachel Stone on *Magnum Cinema*
- 18 **Village People**  
Artists, writers, curators and commentators respond to *The World Over*
- 22 **Object Activity**  
Giles Reid and Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins on Gina Matchitt's jewellery
- 23 **On Nature and Concrete**  
Ben White on *The Concrete Deal*
- 24 **Toioho Ki Apiti**  
Professor Mason Durie, Eugene Hansen and Bill McKay give summaries of the *Toioho ki Apiti Maori Art Conference*
- 26 **Video Un-Ezy**  
Nigel Clark and Simon Rees on *Interdigitate 96*
- 27 **Three at CBD**  
Stephen Zepke on recent shows at the CBD Gallery in Sydney; Kyle Ashpole, Tony Schwensen, and Justene Williams
- 28 **Short Reports:**  
Tessa Laird on Dale Frank, Rob Garrett on public art in Dunedin, Allan Smith on Barbara Tuck, Gay Cusack on Auckland architecture, Gregory Adamson, Catherine Dale, Karma Percy and Brigid Shadbolt on the death of Gordon Wilson, Brett Levine on *Talking Pictures*, Anna Miles on Peter Robinson, Jane Gregg on CoCA, David Scott and Ann Shelton on Fiona Amundsen, Bryce Galloway on DARK, Gregory Adamson on *Nostalgic*, Gwyneth Porter on Anita Speijer, Robin Neate on *The Italian Film Festival*
- 40 **Museum without a Budget**  
Michael Harrison on the show of his dreams



## GAVIN HIPKINS

Peter Peryer,  
Trout, 1987,  
From *Second Nature*, 1995,  
Edition Stemmle AG,  
Switzerland and Germany

*Second Nature*,  
Peter Peryer, Photographer, New Zealand  
Co-curated by Gregory Burke  
and Peter Weiermair,  
City Gallery Te Whare Toi,  
11May - 4 August, 1996

# ploneermg spirit

After a brief tour of Germany, *Second Nature* has returned to its place of origin. During one of the opening speeches at Wellington's City Gallery, reference was made to 'the spirit' in Peter Peryer's black and white photographs. At this point, I began to wonder what type of spirit, or spirits, we were dealing with in this survey show. I'm convinced Peryer's Catholic upbringing, although it may affect, does not especially constitute the spirit-realm often perceived in his work. After all, the photographer discarded the doctrine long ago, seemingly liberating himself from the lure of Papal cajolery and turning to more pagan ends. It is in the animal kingdom that Peryer searches for special natural powers embodied in certain creatures. Quite the skylarking Noah, Peryer collects all sorts of beasts through his camera lens. His zoo, farm, backyard or beach studies perhaps catch some of this elusive spirit in animal form. As if in response to Peryer's earlier Catholic indoctrination, the familial triads of respective animal species in *Kangaroos*, *Deer* or *Ragnarok* become surrogate holy families, displacing the hitherto superlative Christian nativity scene.

For Peryer the juncture of formal portraiture and animal-snaps is pivotal in his continuing hunt for spirit entities. As he puts it in a recent interview, "If there is a political message in my work, I have a great respect for non-humans." These animal portraits aren't as cute as Telecom's sprightly audio-programmed ad-campaign participants. Peryer's creatures appear more dignified, reflective and vain; the animal's gaze often meeting Peryer's lens-vision in a prolonged ocular show-down. Peryer enjoys *looking at* animals, yet is hardly an animal liberationist. Recall the ritual killings: an opossum, the steer in a ditch, or a glistening dead trout seem to be sacrificially offered, perhaps as collective catharsis — at base level reminding us that ecstatic rejoicing follows grief in the animal slaying. I admit this is an optimistic reading of a few photographs featuring dead animals, yet there is a tribal flavour in Peryer's oeuvre that distinguishes how we view ourselves as a country. Roadside attractions such as *Dead Steer* certainly have novelty appeal; the puffed dead cow photograph is also a timely metaphor for inflated national pride. In the year of the centennial Olympics, in anticipation of the forthcoming America's Cup extravaganza, and in an election year when politi-

cal parties ask New Zealanders to think of their country first, nationalism is lurking in the undergrowth. Appropriately then, *Steer* the bloated bovine is used as figurehead for the show on posters, invitations, and graces the cover of the handsome accompanying Edition Stemmle publication. Other carcasses such as *Trout* are also held aloft, pictorially isolated — becoming icons. The corpses are trophied by Peryer, and betray his irrepressible zeal which certifies the photographs as the greatest trophies of all.

The sensuality and anthropomorphism in these animal portraits place humans alongside animal beings rather than above on the evolutionary scale. This animism in Peryer's work even outweighs his late twentieth century practice of nineteenth century panpsychism or animism. That's not to say his eerie ability to portray inanimate objects as though embodied by a stray spectre should be undervalued. *The Concrete Rabbit* is just one of these animated objects. A lone statuette rather dismally sits meditating on its fated courtyard isolation. The seer's job is to tap into the statue's stored energy, acknowledge the object's convulsive presence and ultimately transcribe this realisation into a compelling photograph.

The surreptitious marriage between these primordial schemes of animism and animalism in *Second Nature* helps carve the totem pole of the artist's extended clan. With the coexistence of these primitive philosophies the photographer assumes the shaman's role; like Robert Frank's *The Americans* or Joseph Beuys' *The Pack*, *Second Nature* as a ceremonial rendering of a nation and its pathological yearnings can be ascribed *The New Zealanders* as an alternative title. Perhaps we've become more self-conscious since Ans Westra or James Siers published their photographic versions of *The New Zealanders* back in the 1970s; now it looks as if the herd is in hiding. Peryer's *Street Scene*, *Oamaru* sits like a Hollywood facade waiting for the cast to grace the allocated studio lot.

In labelling *Second Nature* with *The New Zealanders*, I'm not suggesting the show is simply 'Kiwiana gone to sea'; unlike many curated shows that deal with postwar 'New Zealandness', this exhibition presents a dream-greyness with a tonally flat transcription of Peryer's early years. His photographs appear at first



The  
animal's  
gaze  
meets  
Peryer's  
lens-  
vision  
in a  
prolonged  
ocular  
show-  
down.

restrained and cool, produced it would seem, by a multi-talented specialist surveyor: the botanist, geologist, zoologist and occasional portraitist. Scratch the surface of this technician's vision and emotion emerges, in fact it bubbles over.

Certainly as Peryer notes himself, the angst of his earlier work has diminished, giving way, for me, to a lugubrious stillness or nostalgia. This nostalgia manifests itself strikingly in Peryer's 'toy photos.' The *Meccano Bus* is a not a contemporary model, but an edition from his childhood. Similarly, *Edward Bullmore's Launch* and *Engine Leaving Glen Innes Tunnel* are once again made manageable playthings rather than threatening vehicles — photography like selective memory, miniaturises so well.

What Zeitgeist does Peryer as photo-sorcerer and *Second Nature* — almost one third of which contains 'animal pictures' as impressive totems reveal? Is it the *wild* past of Peryer's autobiographical childhood farm days? Or the *simple* past of pioneer loyalties stemming from a faith in the regularisation of native bush? In searching for the spirit of our time, Peryer is attempting to understand history. More explicitly, the show presents a series of notable historical places: *One Tree Hill*, *Ruapehu*, *Pouerua* and *St. Bathans* are all visited during the pilgrim's photographic excursions. The various recordings of the sites in these photographs has helped shape the country's conflicting histories and current ideas of itself. The idiosyncratic array of documented geographical or historical sites in *Second Nature* could be asking: why photograph the place of this historical event and not that one? Whose historical site is it anyway? Accordingly, I presume these are Peryer's special or historical places. Here the photographs function as signs of moments or opportunities from which stubborn individuals are invited to recognise the cultural shaping and ideological state-nurturing at the root of their 'second nature'. While admitting this common moulding, *Second Nature* continues to long for that which is not possible: a primary nature.

Attempts are made to document nature per se. The close-up shots of friendly native plants such as *Kiokio* and *Piupiu* are the author's more overt nature studies. The significant proportion of Peryer's seemingly topographical landscape photographs included in *Second Nature* is also worth noting. It's a hard-edged rather than soft-focus pictorialism but in both cases nature is revered. Maybe it's this vitalist approach to nature that has led some commentators to label Peryer a modernist photographer. It is true that his photographs adhere to formal rules used by that arch-vitalist photographer, Edward Weston. Just as obsessive, Peryer's modernism is equally elegant, albeit technically

flawed; thankfully, the local cameraman is not much of a print-fetishist. This Weston-Peryer frames his subject matter with a seamless backdrop or overcast hinterland: *Janet's Hand* and *Tine* are fragmented limbs composed in pictorially flattened modernist manner.

Shapes are one thing. In *Second Nature* the 'depthlessness' of postmodernity is toyed with, readings of these images can oscillate between sardonic post-structuralist texts and Kantian transcendentalism or quintessences as Weston called them. And why not present such a range of philosophical positions that establish paradoxical agendas, that describe a less stable, more uncertain notion of self? Peryer, like Robert Mapplethorpe (who was also rather fond of Weston's picture style), has exploited the canon of photographic history with extreme precision, especially for Peryer, those intoxicating pioneering stages of the German Bauhaus and Russian Constructivist schools of seeing. From these movements Peryer extracts his pictorial devices of textuality, repetition, standardisation, spatial fragmentation and so on, all in a local setting. In correspondence with a contemporary German audience, historical (as happens sometimes) legitimisation of *Second Nature* surfaces from the archives of photographic ways of seeing emulated at the Dessau Bauhaus earlier this century. The mimicry of pictorial devices found in dusty science journals, postcards or amateur snapshots that co-curator Gregory Burke identifies in Peryer's work, is comprehensively illustrated and fiercely celebrated by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy in his book *Painting, Photography, Film* of 1925. Moholy-Nagy's oblique views (the bird's eye predominantly) are utilised by Peryer to etch from high above, for example, Auckland's yachts in *Westhaven*. Furthermore, Moholy-Nagy's 'exact seeing' is loosely adhered to by Peryer — becoming somewhat grainy — in his probing of objects and their 'heightened reality', yet another discourse of a vague scientific type from that ambitious time. Not surprising then, the other half of the curating team, Peter Weiermair and the exhibition's German audience in general, embraced (I am told) the work so easily. The style for this audience possesses a pedigree with the added seduction of motifs which are exported exotica from New Zealand.

*Second Nature* encourages us to interpret Peter Peryer's photographs as portraits, or more precisely, self-portraits. The opening image of the show is of Peryer himself, 'dressed to kill' in a farmers suit, a rooster in his hands; the artist presents himself as mythologised subject. His autobiography belongs to the nation that raised him, the same nation which his pioneering vision so willingly records. 4

# alike

# look



Ann Shelton,  
selected images  
from Redeye,  
1995/96, Photo  
courtesy Lopdell  
House Gallery

## Identi-kit

Lopdell House Gallery,  
Titirangi, Auckland,  
17 May - 16 June, 1996

As expected, *Identi-kit* came complete with its quota of notional identity dualities in the self/other vein, and a heady overlay of ideological bias: ethnicity, sexuality, culture, religion. Ten artists working primarily in the domain of the manipulated photograph apart from such classicists as Ans Westra and Glen Busch. Ten artists, and a hell of a lot of pictures. The uninhibited use of the multiple would seem to fix this show well and truly in the 90s, or at least indicate that photography in all its manifestations has well and truly democratised image-making. This is no bad thing, although the unique has become increasingly elusive these days.

That the photograph can provide an accurate

record has always been in doubt. Long before *The National Geographic* digitally shifted the pyramids for a cover shot, the photograph's veracity was dubious. But deep down, even with the knowledge of Photoshop manipulated faces, we all still feel that there is some truth there. In portraiture it has been photographers themselves who have burdened their work with the mystical notion of showing personality. Commercial portrait photographers needed the public to believe that they could pierce the surface and pull out true personality. Jennifer Gillam recycles the found image to create an austere formal composition in three parts. Clifton Firth — deceased mid-twentieth century portraitist, whose collection is housed at Auckland Public Library — has inadvertently donated eight of his studio portraits as compositional elements in someone else's picture. Image and identity as conventionally portrayed are discarded in this recombinant collage. Individuals star in a crafty composition that has subsumed their identities. Reading from left to right on three pages, a parade of anonymous strangers builds the tonal structure. What's black and white and red in the middle? A monochromatic blood-red Ilfochrome print, in which Gillam avails herself of the serendipity of technical process, and a fellow becomes a shadow in some sort of hue of the subconscious.

What can a two dimensional impression of face/body/hands tell us about the ever-changing, malleable personality? This very idea seems to be embedded in our way of looking at other humans. We feel we can sum up others by their various physical attributes. Here's the basis for racism, bigotry and cultural superiority. The reputation of photography was sullied last century when it aligned itself the quasi-science of physiognomy. Measurable characteristics of the malevolent, the insane, and various criminal types were documented with the intention of classification. The quantified visage became a signifier of social worth.

*Identi-kit* touches on a number of these points. Stephen Roucher presents 100 faces for comparison. Each holds a colour correction chart across the chest. We could, as those pseudo-scientists did, get out our callipers and measure the height of the forehead, the width of the nose, the distance between the eyes. But notice the composure of the people. Many seem rivetted, or uncomfortable. The lighting is bizarre; two or three unflattering lights that give pinpoint pupils and unhealthy highlights on the temples and cheeks. There is a certain quality of impending disaster - a fear about them which the cold blue background intensifies. The pasty, sterile research laboratory is doing its cataloguing with a sense of metered discordance.

## JENNIFER FRENCH AND STUART SONTIER

“I always  
thought of  
photography  
as a naughty  
thing to do” —  
Diane Arbus

Marie Shannon, in a deft negation of her traditional medium, has resolved to draw this time - if not to draw with light. This subversion of type fits very snugly within Sameshima's *Identi-kit* premise and doffs its cap in the direction of Dashper's Big-Bang theory. Shannon tidily denies her own categorisation as photographer, while taking a swipe at the brand identities of her art contemporaries. Having dealt with the dealer, remember Gregory Flint as pipe-cleaner homuncule engaged in *flagrante* in telephonic reverie, Shannon directs her attention at the Artist. So in an equation of genus, if Brand A = Tony, can Brand C be anything but Mary-Louise? We're on first name terms down at the Salon. Shannon defines the art game by its own artifice.

Ann Shelton shows her ongoing diaristic collection. Here's Ann talking about her own lifestyle by looking at those she shares it with. It's certainly not the diary of Anne Frank. To quote Arbus - "I always thought of photography as a naughty thing to do - that was one of my favourite things about it". And looking at Ann's photography always seems like a naughty thing to do. Her best collections question the gaze. Do you need to be out of the scene to be voyeuristic? Does she spend all her time partying with the seedier part of Auckland's elite? When do they cook dinner, go to the bank? Why do these people like that stuff? There's an uneasy feeling about the motives driving it. There's always perversity being the onlooker, and that's both the interest and the dilemma in Ann's work. In the end most of us will just play the voyeur.

The inscrutable Anna Sanderson is wearing her poker face again, and gives little away. There is an apparent join-the-dots simplicity about this work, after all, she hands us the context of her appropriation on a plate - French glossy magazine, full page spread - with the extras piled high by way of some lavish titling. *The Untroubled Mind* sounds like a good place to start, but belies a visual non-sequitur. In the bid for clarity the only clues are two Buddhas and a Hermes scarf. Here perhaps lies the crux: the progress towards enlightenment through self-

knowledge is the Buddhist quest, while in the West we gather about us a more external inventory in our definition of identity. Thus, the fashion scarf becomes retail equivalent to the devotional iconography of the Buddha. The old East/West dichotomy; the Hermes of mythology is associated with Western transcendent thought through alchemic philosophy, so the symbolism is heavily laden.

Funny how out of place the older, classic documentary works seem here. Significantly, the black and white work is the only work concerned with identity of the Other, rather than the Self. But somehow, in this context, Glenn Busch's three *Working Men* images seem more artificial than all the other artifice. Similarly with Ans Westra's work. Ans has fielded criticism for her working method, but people constantly — 20 years down the track — search out reprints of now important documents. She stands above most others as the documentor of hidden parts of New Zealand culture, looking intensely at cultural identity. But to excerpt images from both artist's collections, and place them in the context of this review of portraiture comes close to invalidating their work and those styles. Like — here are works of historical interest; but passe, fraught with problematic interests, and unburdened by theory.

Judy Darragh speaks of acquired identity through the trappings of monarchy, in her lightweight, rakish display of faux royal memorabilia on paper plates. Another hack at the subject/object discourse, of course. As in Megan Jenkinson's piece. A customised cup and saucer set, in two part display; Jenkinson contrasts fact with fiction. *Fama* is the classical allusion du jour from the Jenkinson pantheon, and while her aesthetic edge is impeccably refined, there is a heavy Eurocentricity to contend with. In fact, there is a curious tandem Zeitgeist to this show: Darragh/Jenkinson, Jenkinson/Shannon, Westra/Busch, Gillam/Sanderson — could this be the curatorial prerogative at play? Perhaps this cohesion arises less from conscious pairings and far more by chance. But then, chance can be a fine thing.

Photographers can be a secretive bunch, unwilling to put themselves straightforwardly in front of their own device. A highly polished piano held ten extra images to reveal a little more of each artist's identity. Connections between the identities and the piano photographs are tenuous. Is the need to appear clever, obscure, or post-modern a dominant factor? How much did this unwillingness to divulge identity pass over to the work on the wall?

Haru Sameshima's essay refers to the diversity of approaches to portraiture on show. Another view could be: how similar it all seemed. Labouring some already flagging issues and virtually ignoring others, it was the white middle class talking to itself. Are the only serious issues of identity in NZ so esoteric? There was no hint of the upheavals in social and economic policy; of how the cultural mix has dramatically changed; that the media is ever more intent on steering our view of the world. Should an exhibition deal with the politics of socio-cultural flux? When the first paragraph of the catalogue starts "Identity, a notion which is said to represent the inherent character of an individual, or a group of people within a society..." and refers to a community in transition, then perhaps it should. *it*

# from abundantia to vigilantia

Megan Jenkinson has been working on the *Virtus Moralis* series since 1986 and the monumental dimension of the project is fascinating. *The Virtues*, her new exhibition at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth presents the staggering figure of forty virtues in one room. Initially there is the question of who makes it on to Jenkinson's list. It is emphatically a question of who rather than what, given it is female allegorical incarnations of abstract ideas that concern her. The conventional Christian cast of seven includes some familiar sounding girls' names — Faith, Hope, Charity and Prudence. But it is the extended cast of 33 that promise to reveal most about Jenkinson's particular interpretation of virtue. The wall panel at the Govett-Brewster describes the "new" virtues as reflecting the dilemmas of contemporary society. Patience and Victoria sound familiar, while unfamiliar in this context are Beauty, Britannia and Oceania. In the manner of moralising it would be easy, noticing these "new" virtues, to jump to conclusions about Jenkinson's concepts of contemporary society and morality, but possibly the selection of virtues is less significant than the predicaments they are placed in.

*Britannia-Britain* pictures Jenkinson draped in a Union Jack on a deserted, cold looking beach with the caption "*Britannia weeps for the loss of her colonies*" and "*we are under no king, we must each look to ourselves*". Jenkinson does not present herself as the familiar victori-

ous Britannia with great posture. Slumped into the Union Jack, she could be a survivor of the Wahine disaster waiting for a cup of tea. Perhaps Jenkinson is alluding to images of Britannia portrayed as a captive, a sign of Roman conquest rather than British patriotism. Britannia's career as coloniser began when she was colonised, but framed by the two selected texts, this Britannia is more absorbed in nostalgia than contemplation of the unmistakable impression she has left on her colonies. Like many of *The Virtues* the composition is highly centred and this intensifies the monumental stillness of Jenkinson's impersonation. It is as difficult to interpret the tone of this stillness as it is to discern a body beneath the concrete drapery of many female monuments.

*Fama-Fame* is another of *The Virtues* which suggests Jenkinson perceives the negotiation of our colonial past as a dilemma facing contemporary society. In the com-

pany of so many female virtues, *Fama* appears slightly naive about the piling on of iconography; she makes only a modest claim for herself. While Elizabeth I propelled herself into celebrity by calling on the combined allegorical power of numerous female goddesses and virtues, *Fama* domesticates her representation on a teacup and limits her illustrious relations to the family of the gym-going 'Queen of Hearts.' In the interests of self promotion, *Fama* disclaims republicanism, and makes no reference to the Maori Queen. The title "*Fama seeks immortality in the company of the illustrious*" produces an uneasy irony. Is it virtue, fame, social connections, immortality or the British Royal family that is parodied in this scene reminiscent of the big teacups at Disneyland.

The resuscitation of female allegorical figures has a conduct-book prescriptiveness about it, but the shifting situations Jenkinson poses her virtues in, shroud the potential didacticism of the project in ambiguity. Jenkinson's female incarnations of virtue are no longer perfect containers of moral certainty, but that they reflect the fluctuating reality of a real female body is unlikely. Pointing to the way Jenkinson and other

women artists have presented their bodies to become both bearers and makers of meaning has become a mainstay of feminist criticism — but has the case been overstated? It is readily argued that this type of strategy grants the allegorical female body subjectivity, but you wonder about the reverse scenario and the mask of allegory overwhelming the particular female body. It is a double bind much like that presented by the method of photographic collage Jenkinson uses - is the picture dominated by the severing of



fragments from photographic contexts or the joining of them back together?

Seeing so many of Jenkinson's images at once possibly alters the way you read her process of assemblage. The degree of collage is often understated in these works and the similarity between all the works can mean you start to view their complex make-up as a given. The coherence and control of these compositions becomes extremely powerful. This is emphasised by the orderly installation; each meticulously framed work is topped by a smaller frame containing a cartouche, shield or emblem shaped image which displays the title of the virtue, in Latin and in English. The names, the chosen forms of the images and the way each of these signs is framed above the main body of the work make them like headstones. That the gallery becomes analogous to a cemetery is in keeping with the

**ANNA MILES**

Megan  
Jenkinson,  
*Fama-  
Fame*,  
Photo  
Courtesy  
Govett-  
Brewster  
Art  
Gallery

reverence and nostalgia for the past Jenkinson manifests in the images. At the Govett-Brewster, the alphabetical hanging of *The Virtues* formed a figure eight or infinity sign across the rooms on either side of the stairs, lending this highly controlled installation an air of claustrophobia.

Jenkinson has commented on the sense that her work registers the lack of certainty implicit in contemporary moral values, and cites the unpredictability of *Vigilantia* falling asleep as indicative of this. *Vigilantia-Vigilance* with eyes closed is positioned on the opposite wall to *Pulchritude-Beauty*. The decorative lushness of these two images mirrors each other. The composition of sleeping *Vigilantia* reclining on heavily patterned velvet couch surrounded by over scaled poppies and birds suggests textile designs like William Morris' *Strawberry Thief*. Opposite stands *Pulchritude* gazing in a hand mirror. Behind her a curtain of orange Chinese embroidered satin reflects Victorian aesthetic predilections and a taste for Chinoiserie that was contemporaneous with the medievalism of Morris.

*Vigilance* and *Beauty* suggest powerful narratives of acquisition; their two well-furnished parlours portray a knowledgeable and cultivated materialism at the centre of the moral universe. Taken together they hint at the incredible transport of styles occurring in nineteenth century Britain. In a number of the Virtue works the texts locate the present as inauthentic, tarred by a greedy commercialism or somehow polluted: "*Comprehensio reaches for the foundations of certainty in the elusive world of virtual reality*"; "*The Jewels of Antiquitas become charms for the tourist industry*"; "*Natura in the face of extinction opens a sponsored theme park of unnatural selection*"; but contrary to this, the Victorian embellishments of *Vigilance* and *Beauty* are a visual affirmation that impurity is not limited to late twentieth century culture.

As passive figures situated in comfortable interiors, *Vigilance* and *Beauty* seem disinterested in the world. I wonder where their representations depart from precedents like photographer Madame Yevonde's 1935 portraits of society clients as *Goddesses and Others*. Probably inspired by an Olympian theme charity ball, this project of impersonation allowed Yevonde's subjects a licence to play with glamour and sexuality that straight studio portraiture restricted. Yevonde's portraits like Jenkinson's *Virtues* locate thinking about female representation in a world of leisure and affluence, but their fantastic aspirations are also present in a more humble contemporary genre. I have noticed newspaper and magazine advertisements with titles like "Become your own fantasy". Aimed at the female portrait market, these all inclusive deals promise a sitting, hair and make-up styling and airbrush-

The Virtues,  
Megan Jenkinson  
Govett-Brewster Art Gallery  
New Plymouth  
4 June - 31 July, 1996

ing. The advertisements borrow the before and after logic of other self improvement marketing, but in this case all the photographic tricks which distinguish the after image from the one before, add to the product rather than giving it false hope.

Like Jenkinson's *Virtues*, these make-over portraits do not appear to record any amusement related to the self-aggrandising aspect of their project. They wear their decadence very seriously, and lack the irony of Yevonde's *Goddesses*. The trajectory they promise from 'ugly duckling' to 'swan' is as firmly aesthetically linked to the 1980s as Melanie Griffiths in *Working Girl*. The *Virtues* are also aesthetically locked into a particular period. Although Jenkinson's collage has

Slumped into the  
Union Jack, *Britannia* could  
be a survivor of the  
Wahine disaster waiting  
for a cup of tea.

often been related to post-modern art practice, the overwhelming visual impression is Victorian. Yevonde's portraits by contrast are mysteriously timeless and the fantasy they offer becomes all the more captivating for this. Looking at Jenkinson's sleeping *Vigilance* opposite *Beauty* and her mirror, it is clear that the vigilance they register is that exercised over the appearance of the female body. This is a chilling aspect of *The*

*Virtues* reinforced by the presence of *Castitas-Chastity*, "*tempted by the Angel of abstinence, who offers redemption in return for the key to her emotions*". I find an uneasy tension between these images which portray the female body as a prison and the mythology which has grown up around Jenkinson's works based on a positivist feminist reading of the photographs.

The effect of this grouping of so many of Jenkinson's work is startling. For me what was constantly brought to mind was the gulf between these works and the ideas that have circulated around them in the past. Displayed together the orderly nature of the works made itself felt more strongly, the symmetry and similarity of many of the compositions became apparent and the odd and quirky aspects of their decoupage seemed lessened. The laborious shaping and re-shaping of virtue over time, whether fuelled by artistic or religious concern, is a barometer of political as well as moral consciousness. In revisiting a programme of indoctrination, Jenkinson has created an ambiguous moral world. Among the more pressing questions *The Virtues* raises is whether moral uncertainty may also mean political indifference. As feminism has demonstrated perhaps to the glee of its detractors, political movements tend to be underscored by a moral point. Elegance may be refusal in the world of fashion but is it equally palatable in the realm of female representation? *ri*

# “Are the victims always so beautiful?”

Monique Redmond  
*Spectacular Blossom*  
14 May - 30 May, 1996  
ASA Gallery, Auckland

## MARGRETA CHANCE



Installation view, photos Haru Sameshima courtesy Monique Redmond

“Are the victims always so beautiful?”, is a question that Allen Curnow poses at the end of the first stanza of his poem “Spectacular Blossom”. It is the “spectacular blossom” of the pohutukawa tree which is so beautiful, and which falls victim to the “slaughterman December”, when her petals fall like blood onto the beaches and sea. However Curnow is not just describing the dying blooms of the pohutukawa, he is also referring to the dying of an unknown “girl”. “These dying ejaculate their bloom.” It is a bitter poem that aligns the death of summer blooms with the youthful death of a beautiful girl, a “spectacular blossom”.

*Spectacular Blossom* is the title of Monique Redmond’s latest one-person show, and was taken from Allen Curnow’s poem. This poem is one of three literary texts that Redmond chose to have sandblasted onto a total of 623 jars of home made jelly, which are exhibited on three sets of vertically hung white shelves. The other two extracts are pieces of prose. One by Bruce Mason and one by Katherine Mansfield.

In this exhibition Redmond has ‘collaged’ text onto object, and in so doing, she has juxtaposed two different realities to create an unexpected new reality. This physical layer of text over object has created a visual and verbal metaphor which is complex, compelling but ultimately very confusing and unsatisfying.

The texts have been carefully selected. Their importance to Redmond is marked by the fact that she has had them carefully reproduced on a handout for the public to read at the exhibition. There is no sense of the ironic in her use of these texts. Each of her selected literary quotations is treated with equal seriousness and reverence.

What we have here, is a reverential homage. Firstly, it is an

honouring of the home-making skills of Redmond’s grandmother, and of the extraordinary time-consuming and unrecognised preserving processes that generations of women have poured into their families. Secondly, it is an honouring of the texts and their authors, each of whom evokes a tribute to the natural beauty of New Zealand during the summer season.

The wonderful array of clear colourful jellies celebrates the giving way of summer flowering to autumn harvest, as well as the labour needed to distil the unclouded essence of many of nature’s fruits. However, the text intrudes, and the physical clarity of the jellies is clouded by a sandblasted word which marks every jar.

The dissonance between text and object becomes more apparent the moment you stop looking and start reading. This dissonance became explicit when Allen Curnow let it be known publicly that he would not have given permission to Redmond to have his words inscribed onto jars of jam, had he been asked. While he gave no further explanation, his attention highlights a need for an exploration of some of the issues that provoked his reaction.

Redmond made Curnow’s text central in her hanging of the installation. The jars with his text were placed against the back wall of a bay, while the other two texts were hung on the side walls. This centring of the text gave it more weight than the other two, yet it is the most troubling of the three texts. Curnow’s poem is an eulogy which draws a very powerful alignment between female, nature and victim. Much of the poem’s power comes from using the traditional Western dichotomies between nature and culture, female and male, victim and persecutor. This dualistic aesthetic divides and separates, creating hierarchies and dominance.

Yet Redmond has chosen a visual aesthetic which is the antithesis of this. It is autobiographical, co-operative, feminist, and impermanent. It is an aesthetic which has its roots in the 1960s, when the feminist, civil rights and gay movements were spawning an experimental art that was devoted to breaking down the very political, institutional and aesthetic boundaries that Curnow espouses. For the viewer then, text and object are in contradiction.

While it is clear that Redmond's intention is to honour her female lineage, Curnow's literature invalidates her intention, and the preserves become objects in a male drama. The red of the jelly becomes a metaphor for the blood that has been spilled on the beach, invalidating its original intention to affirm women's life-giving blood and nurturing strength. If we examine Curnow's poem, we find the same pattern emerging. His powerful poem is about the author coming to terms with death — his own. The death of the young woman on the beach is an object in the author's drama. We learn nothing about the young woman, but everything about the author's feelings. Curnow appropriates her body to represent his grief, not her life. So too have the jars of jelly become objects in the drama of the poem.

Another contradiction lies in the way Redmond intends to honour her Maori heritage, but invalidates this through the materials she selected. The texts celebrate the indigenous flora of New Zealand, particularly the Pohutukawa, which is the middle name of Redmond's grandmother. By quoting texts that honour her grandmother's name, Redmond enacts a homage. However, the jellies celebrate the flora of our colonial heritage. Every fruit used for this installation comes from other conti-



nents as far afield as China, South America and Europe, and while this celebrates cultural heritage that our Pakeha/Tauiwi foremothers brought with them to this land, it fails to honour the indigenous "natural beauties" alluded to in the Mansfield text, and mentioned specifically in the texts of Curnow and Mason.

This lack of acknowledgement of the biculturalism of Aotearoa/New Zealand in the installation materials is further reinforced with the last two lines by Mansfield, taken from her Journal 1907, which asserts, "When New Zealand is more artificial, she will give birth to an artist who can treat her natural beauties adequately. This sounds paradoxical, but it is true."

This is a denial, or at the very least a failure, to acknowledge the art of the indigenous Maori people, and in particular her Maori foremothers.

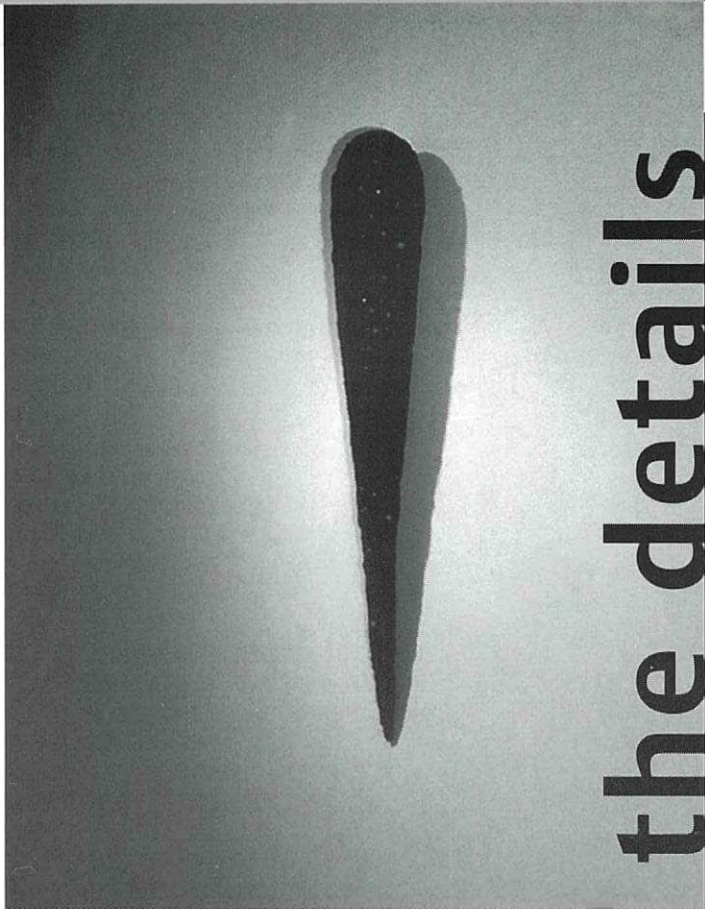
Much is made of the collaborative effort to produce this installation. The names of the many people who made the jellies are listed on a handout, as well as a card which has a crab-apple jelly recipe on its reverse. However, this co-operative experience is not integrated into the visual language of the installation. Instead the linear form of the written script is allowed to dictate the hanging of the jars, provoking a left to right, top to bottom reading. Again, a hierarchical aesthetic is laid over a collaborative one.

As one reads the jars left to right, they change in colour from dark to light. However, as Bruce Mason says, the reaping of nature's fruits marks "the End of the Golden Weather", and as we move from summer into winter we move from light into dark. Mason's text in particular emphasises shifts from youth to old age, joy to pain, day to dusk. Again there is a contradiction with the seasonal/nature aesthetic of the objects, and in the hanging of them. Redmond had an opportunity to highlight the dark in a positive way, for surely these objects are a metaphor for that which prepares us for the dark and carries us through it.

The point of this exhibition was to explore female subjectivity. Its intention was to make the female, the Maori, the domestic, a central focus, and to explore them in relation to today's culture. However when Redmond inscribed these poetic texts over the collaboratively made jars of jam, she created a mixed metaphor which layers the dualistic over the holistic, the colonial over the indigenous, the linear over the cyclical, the individual over the collective, and the male over the female. Redmond has the beginnings of a visual metaphor that could help us forge a dialogue between the divisions in our culture; instead she allowed the powerful language of Curnow, Mansfield and Mason to subvert this process.

"Are the victims always so beautiful?" Curnow's answer to this question is yes. In regard to this show, unfortunately, the answer is also yes. These beautiful jars of jelly have fallen victim to literary texts that ill-befit them, and the texts hold the jars in the grip of an old aesthetic that ill-befits a rapidly changing culture. Redmond needs to consider, not just what it is that she is wanting to preserve, but what kind of dialectic she is wanting to create. 4

the preserves become  
objects in a male  
drama



the details

From the duotone reproduction of Thomas Struth's photograph *The Loop/Towards Dearborn Street, Chicago 1990*, I can see the nine blades of the carpark building's extraction fan and each single fluorescent tube glowing distinctly in the ceilings of the dark glass office block. A blind is three-quarters drawn over a high window opposite. The word SHOPS has been scripted along the top edge of a more remote building. Further back a thin puff of smoke from the black chimney casts a light patch on the vast gridded side of a highrise. The fine detail seems limitless so in the spirit of *Blow-up* and *Bladerunner* I take a magnifying glass to it. With this degree of scrutiny, the finer text above SHOPS, the murky shapes behind the reflective glass of the office blocks, the promising blurs through window frames edged with broken glass, break up into the dot screen. I am reminded that I have heard Struth's work described as urban, in the sense that it sees its subjects at close range and in clear, immense detail without attempting to 'go deeper.' For all *The Loop* reveals, the city is still granted its opacity. If Struth's other images are read through these photographs of urban architecture, then even the portraits which take a more 'expressive' style, or the flower details which seem to hardly differentiate themselves from that very sentimental genre, are also granted this - they are 'seen but not known': *The Loop, Chicago 1990* is as impenetrable as *The Hirose Family, Hiroshima, 1987*, is as inscrutable as *Yellow Lily, Winterthur, 1992*.

The fake red gems in Peter Robinson's work known to me as *Everyone a Gem*, also known as *Shady Deals*, is the detail that I love. The elegant sculptured form abstracted from a wananga, coloured chocolate-brown with flecks of red, appealed to me not only because it was visually stunning but because it contained a twist, a sharpness, a painful truth. The fake red gems combined with the wananga form talked to me about trade and exchange, old for new, false for true...trade and exchange between Maori and Pakeha. The fake red gems, symbols to me of the false exchange of blue glass beads, shiny mirrors, red wool blankets for Maori land...The colour red suggested to me bloodlines, intermarriage between Maori and European, whakapapa...exchange again for Maori land...The gems, a cynical reminder of 'little gems', taru tawhiti — measles, small pox and other disease — brought and given to Maori people. This detail not only added to the elegant beauty of *Everyone a Gem* but moved it out of the realm of 'aesthetics and style' and added a depth and dimension that could be seen but also felt. Mihi aroha.



Thomas Struth,  
The Loop / Towards  
Dearborn Street,  
Chicago, 1990

we love

MEGAN TAMATI-QUENNELL

ANNA SANDERSON



## HARU SAMESHIMA

Mark Adams, *View from Waikakahi* Pa site (looking East),  
from *Land of Memories*, Text by Harry Evison,  
Tandem Press, Auckland, 1993



A photographic image stands for a retinal perception of details of the world. All photographs are made out of personal and cultural fetishes, sometimes under the guise of science and art but most emphatically, to lubricate the erotic desires of the industrial expansion which characterises the 150 year history of the medium.

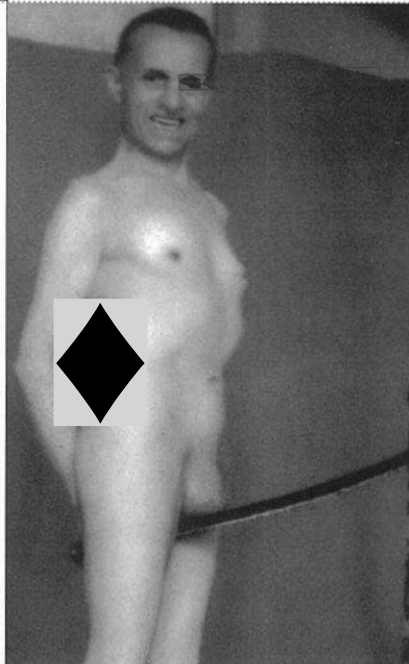
The method Mark Adams employs for his book *Land of Memories* resembles that of the 19th Century expeditionary photographers commissioned by government and industry to create views of colonial 'progress', for his images gaze over the continuance of this same 'progress' today. The hyper-detail that allured the 19th century viewers to the glory of mechanised industrial achievement are present in Adams' photographs as an invitation to wary scrutiny.

Combined with specific histories of the sites by Harry Evison, the resulting narrative is capable of revealing diverse, sometimes frightening factors embedded in the 'appearance.' Focusing on the economic exchange between cultures, the narrative frankly admits to the paradoxical double edge of industry; a means of survival, but inherently violent to those outside of its interest. If the aim of humanist art is to illustrate truth in the human condition, in a society where art is valued for obscurity and mysticism and the cult of the individual, it is sobering to find art work which reminds us that the greater experience of mystical obscurity often derives from "dispassionate observation, bordering boredom," of the details of cultural mores.

On March 3, 1976 Pierre Molinier choreographed his own death with a bullet into his head. The bullet, entering just beneath the jaw, brought to a close one of the great photographic campaigns to define individual identity. Molinier was associated with the surrealists, Breton and Bellmer and surprisingly, with the Tibetan Dalai Lama. In December 1994 the situationist Guy Debord 62, shot himself to death in his Paris home in what appeared to be a triple suicide pact with other associates, and in 1995 philosopher Gilles Deleuze was killed when he threw himself out of a window.

I love this detail because I am reminded, that it's unnecessary to believe that men invented the machines, but rather men have become the fascinated captives of technology. The old feminist allegories of production and power that presuppose the tool to be the corrupt, phallogocentric site of male power, today remain specious and dated. On November 28, 1947, Artaud declared war on the organs ... "for you can tie me up if you wish, but there is nothing more useless than an organ". The mythological origins of technology remains thoroughly concealed by the campaigns of blame and retribution that dominate gender politics.

I especially love this detail because I am reminded that the failure of modernism has resulted in the construction of a subject whose only terms of reference are it's own fetishes and the knowledge of it's own hopelessness. I like that.



Detail of Pierre Molinier's  
*Autoportrait, L'homme au  
sabre*, 1971

TERRENCE HANDSCOMB

## MICHELE LEGGOTT

"The", "Sooty", and "Altars" from  
Monique Redmond's Spectacular  
Blossom, Drawing Robin Frye.



In this house by the sea we are eating the detail. It sits on top of the fridge waiting for a shelf that was dropped by to be put up. Too late though for *the* which lasted a week then (by election) the knives went in as the scones came out and a story about a girl who killed herself on Takapuna beach came floating down the road. Art is war. *Metrosideros excelsa*, you stand-out, what does detail do but cut out, it eats connection. Plum and apple jelly made n April 1996 by Juliet Collins. Emma writing *girls* on her own jam jar. The girl on the fridge throwing herself into the magnetic letters again. Not that time but this one. Robin doing the drawing in pencil and feeling hungry when he finishes. What does detail eat, it eats connection. Now how hard would you push an excellent bloom? There were two drawings and she was given the second. If you have meant the flesh-locked fires burning out of those upward strokes. The Greek for heart and iron will get us to the beach, that one not this one. I thought I'd get the details as they came to light.

Not so long ago we moved into a house reminiscent in some ways of the house where I spent my childhood in Sydney. It was built in the 1950's — white weatherboard with wooden floors, a largish yard with the mandatory grapefruit tree, camellia and a garden shed. The suburban dream. It's a long time since I lived far from an urban centre where constant noise and street lights give one a sense of at least immersion, if not community. The prospect left me a little apprehensive. There is a kind of midday silence broken only by intermittent birdsong and the muffled sounds of retired neighbours. All the kids have gone to school and the streets are populated by a scattering of solitary figures on their way to or from 3 *Guys* up the road. In an environment like this my mother battled the depression of ill health and isolation with two small children. The 50's nightmare...

The house is not ideal but there are features I enjoy nevertheless. The sunroom is far too small but I am partly compensated by a view of tree ferns and a hedge. The windows extend along two walls, folding open to make it more like a verandah. The door and window trims are only as wide as the palm of my hand, painted white except in the hall which must have called for the more formal touch of dark brown stain. A single bevelled angle slants inward from the frame to a sharp little right angled indentation which meets the inner margin — forms just complex enough to catch and reflect the light in a modest way. The solid and unpretentious trim of a



Photo Jude Rae

state architect. As the day progresses shadows travel and alter in now familiar ways. Lately the weather has been quite changeable. Light is refracted through droplets left on the glass by frequent sun showers — tiny points of intensity on briefly sunlit walls or the longer striated shadows of heavier rain. Clouds pass by so fast that the edges between light and shadow gain and lose definition in a matter of seconds. The penumbra widens, passing through a series of warm and cool greys which seem to require definition or at least interpretation.

You never quite lose the desires and fascinations of childhood. I recall wanting our house to have the sort of glassed-in turret you find in seaside places, commanding a view of weather in all directions. I suspect that even had I got my wish (I may yet) my strongest memories might still depend on the momentary impression of sunlight on a window sill. 🌻

## JUDE RAE

Magnum Cinema, Auckland  
Art Gallery  
28 June - 18 August, 1996

## seeing stars

The *Magnum Cinema* exhibition at the Auckland Art Gallery has been promoted as "A private view of public property". It doesn't take long, however, to realise that the show is also an extraordinarily *public* view of extraordinarily *private* property. The simultaneous appearance of the Film Festival brochure was timely, and there *is* a similarity between the acts of gazing at the exhibition photos and the singularly July occupation of browsing the festival catalogue. It is a personal, self-absorbing act, and delicious because combined with the process of selection. (Although I confess the double function of the festival stills has always both intrigued and irritated me: they seem to tell so much, and so little, about the films themselves.)

*These are stars on film sets*, and one is aware of a kind of double or triple vision when regarding them. The accoutrements of film-making are often part of the picture: objects which cast shadows, are visible. More than one lens is involved: I look, the photographer looks, and the subject is also being filmed by another type of camera. Details give me pleasure: I love Eve Arnold's photo of Marilyn taking a nap, but it is the exquisite fabric of her dress that captures my attention. I think that Elia Kazan's shot of Eve Marie Saint in *On The Waterfront* is my favourite, probably because of the lyrics of a much-loved song in which the object of the crooner's attraction looked just like her. I remember watching the film just to see what she did look like! I enjoy the small things, — her hair-clip, the buttons on her woollen coat, the way that the vertical lines of the building behind both support, divide and mimic the trio. *She* is a knockout!

Dennis Stock once lamented that he became "fed up with people only looking at the stars and never at the quality of the photograph itself — 'Oh, there's so and so!'" But this is the way in which the exhibition works: *Oh, there's so and so!* I am reminded of Barthes' assertion in *Camera Lucida*: "the Photograph is never anything but an antiphon of 'Look', 'See', 'Here it is.'" Roland Barthes would have liked this exhibition. He doesn't believe in 'lifelike' photographs, he cannot abide to read about the technicalities of Photography itself. Certainly images of these people have been much-duplicated, and successfully: Seeing Stock's famous *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* recalled the moment when I saw a beefeater in London for the first time — a little disappointing. *I had seen it before* — and the 'copy' had been just as good as the

original.

I like the way in which John Huston's film, *The Misfits*, is treated in *Magnum Cinema*. The presence of Eve Arnold's 1960 photo of Marilyn Monroe in the first gallery room immediately gives a sentimental and nostalgic tone to the exhibition which is not at all unattractive. This photo intrigues me because for the first time Monroe looks strangely contemporary. There are hints of 1950s Marilyn — the eyebrows, the hair, the mascara. But here she is dressed in denim, standing 'alone' in the Nevada Desert against a mountain range. I think she is warming her hands. Transitional Marilyn, caught between two decades.

Stars shine, and on the gallery walls satin, lips, jewellery, hair, eyes and cars gleam. Monica Vitti's long satin slip in *Modesty Blaise*. Beatrice Dalle's Milwaukee wagon. The light meter is working overtime. Audrey's face in the window of a car so shiny that it reflects passers-by and onlookers. The shine creates intimacy and exclusivity at once: I look at the photo and reflect, Audrey is in 'reflective' mood, but the car does not reflect me. I feel distant and begin to understand the privacy of such an image. This is the very nature of the Hollywood star-system; a 'shine' that both attracts me, draws me in, and leaves me out. In a similar way, by 'locating' filmstars in a particular (albeit high up) place, Barbey and Depardon actually increase the exoticness and inaccessibility of their subjects. Ingrid Bergman, on a video screen at a Shinjuku intersection, could be from another planet. Michele Pfeiffer in a Berlin theatre poster for *The Fabulous Baker Boys* has never seemed so glamorous.

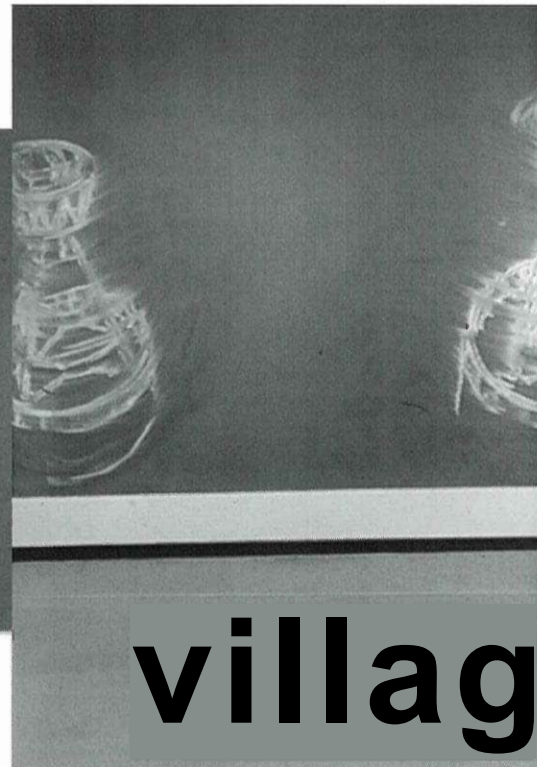
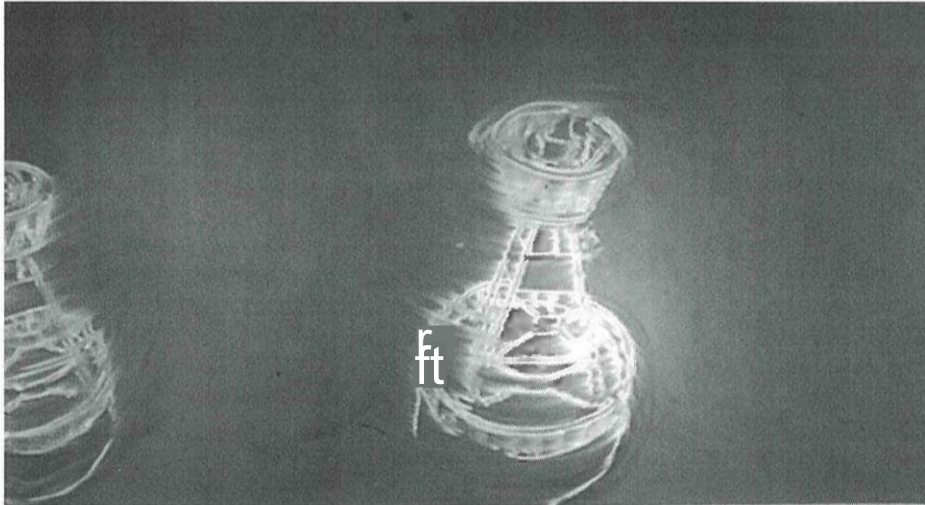
*Magnum Cinema* is lots of fun. It could just as easily have been called *Transformers* and it is a good deal more interactive. I am pleased with what I find, be it the curious symmetry of Morath's photograph of Ingrid Bergman, Yves Montand, Francoise Sagan and Sacha Distel, or the fact that what strikes me about David Seymour's delightful shot of Bergman with baby twins Isotta and Isabella (each in a carry-bag) is the pair of rather impractical sandals she wears, and the little padlock which fastens the belt on her patterned dress.

Finally, *Magnum Cinema* becomes for me a *private* view of *private* property. Acknowledging firmly to myself that stars are, after all, in the eye of the beholder, I walk out on to Kitchener Street, my head spinning. 4



Dennis Stock,  
Audrey Hepburn, 1953,  
courtesy Magnum Photos  
and the Auckland Art Gallery

The World Over / De Wereld Bollen,  
Art in the Age of Globalisation,  
 Under Capricorn II,  
 Curated by Wystan Curnow and Dorine Mignot,  
 City Gallery Wellington 8 June - 11 August 1996,  
 Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam 28 June - 18 August 1996



We asked those with connections to The World Over - as curators, as artists, or as viewers of the show, to respond to our questions. Here is some of what they said:

villag

**The word ‘global’ seems inflated beyond any clear definition in the culture of the late twentieth century. What kind of light is shed on the amorphous notion of globalisation through this curatorial selection?**

Jim and Mary Barr — The big ‘isms’ and ‘ations’ don’t seem to be coming to grips with much any more except corporate power. So if you like the idea of the globe from a longer view, try <http://hum.amu.edu.pl/~zbzw/glob/globi.htm>. Otherwise, memes are probably more useful for shedding light — a contagious idea that replicates like a virus, passed on from mind to mind. See <http://www.reach.com/matrix/> for still more.

Judy Darragh — (Artist) A huge task to take on the world and only through two curators and two countries. Surely global means everyone, just like the Olympics, The Global Art Olympics? Technology tricks us into thinking we are in touch and the world gets smaller, I think a phone company told us that! In fact the more we know the less we know what to do with it.

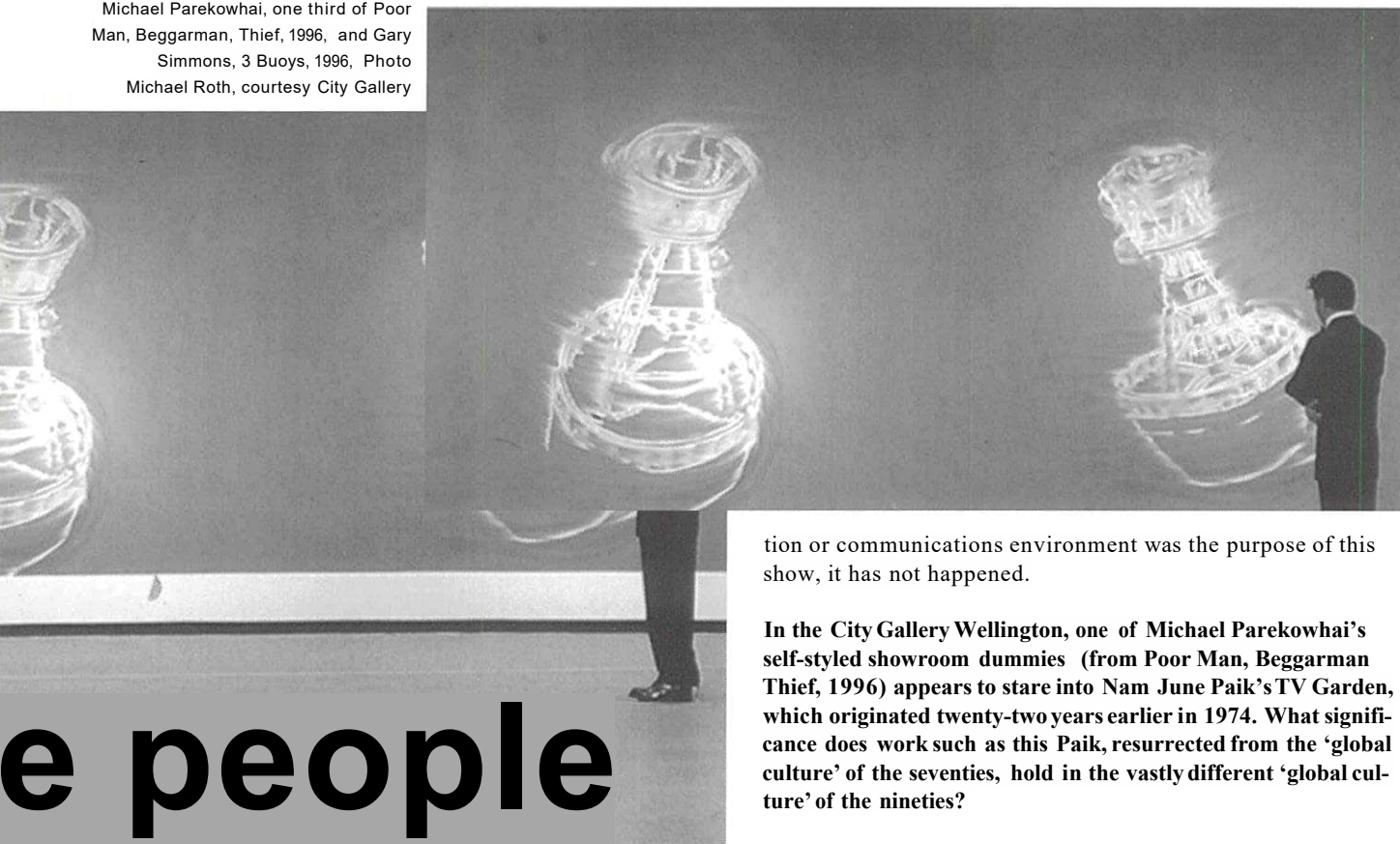
Maddie Leach — (Artist) At the institution I work in I see mark sheets that mention “a global overview” as part of the assessment process. And I’ve never understood what exactly this is supposed to be referring to other than some eye-of-God kind of process. Somehow, I’m supposed to feel interconnected because I know that I live in an age of instant communication

systems, I can get to LA overnight, I can be happy knowing that live satellite linkups make sure that I don’t miss out on *State of Origin*, the FA Cup Final, the Atlanta Olympics. But it’s the smaller things like the voice delay when I talk to my brother in Canada, and reading *EarthWeek* in *The Dominion* which tells me of floods and earthquakes, looking for the source of the Nile river in my new Atlas, that make me realise I still live at the goddam end of the earth and I don’t feel global for a minute.

Tina Barton — (Writer and Art Historian) *The World Over* conceives itself in various spatial gestures, but what seems to be a less developed subtext is the temporal connection to an earlier version of this fascination for the global. I’m thinking in particular of Marshall McLuhan’s notion of the ‘global village’ which spurred much conceptual art practice in the late 60s and 70s (the ‘dematerialisation’ of the art object facilitated the more ready traffic of art across boundaries). No doubt there is a connection to be made here with earlier work — and certainly a number of artists span the gap — but it isn’t acknowledged or exploited. I wonder how much further the show takes us in an understanding of contemporary conditions? I detect a similar refusal to engage either with the ongoing cultural hegemony of the west or with the financial, military and communications systems which have developed and used the technologies so much better than artists (to date).

Ian Wedde — (Curator and Writer) The channels through which information is exchanged in trading relationships are

Michael Parekowhai, one third of Poor Man, Beggarman, Thief, 1996, and Gary Simmons, 3 Buoys, 1996, Photo Michael Roth, courtesy City Gallery



# e people

'global' in an easy-to-understand sense. People researching markets think 'globally' when they want to know who likes fatty lamb and who feels sick at the thought. The offshoots of this kind of 'globalisation', like interest in 'regional' rather than 'national' cuisine (how many kinds of regional olive oil can you name, where does \$200-a-bottle balsamic vinegar come from, etc?) are direct results of the trading world's familiarity with the 'global'.

In the art world there are plenty of people who have given the matter some serious thought and whose understanding of 'global' is not so different from the trading world's. Wim Delvoye's concrete mixer is evidence, so is Ruth Watson's piece. But there's not a lot more in this show. What's more, to function as a concept, 'global' has to function as an effect, if it is to be an art project. This show does not function as effect at very many levels at all. The selection of work is interesting to have but does nothing with any concept of the 'global'. The division in two of the world does not effect anything. The on-line linkage is almost irrelevant as an effect. I get a better version every night when I look at international news on television. As a concept, the on-line link is already redundant in a trading or even simple informational world, where such tools as videoconferencing, the impending accessibility of cable modem video links, and the almost instantaneous bulk shifting of huge amounts of data 'globally' are taken for granted. If an analysis by or in art of the consequences of this informa-

tion or communications environment was the purpose of this show, it has not happened.

**In the City Gallery Wellington, one of Michael Parekowhai's self-styled showroom dummies (from Poor Man, Beggarman Thief, 1996) appears to stare into Nam June Paik's TV Garden, which originated twenty-two years earlier in 1974. What significance does work such as this Paik, resurrected from the 'global culture' of the seventies, hold in the vastly different 'global culture' of the nineties?**

Ian Wedde — Paik's superb vision in the early 70s was in many ways prophetic. Now the technological world has caught up with him, making his vision come true but his multi-screen work become redundant. Data video-cubes with software control systems like Imtech are commonplace in hotel lobbies, sports arenas and, most spectacularly, in stock exchanges. It is now Paik's work with Fluxus that looks interesting, and his current interests in systems beyond video. His own return to performance-related work in the 90s says a lot about his own sense of the 'global' — rethinking the body yet again, as does Stelarc for example. The presence of the Paik work in City Gallery provincialises us. The work, despite its announcement in the press as the next best thing to a site-specific commission, has been round the traps.

Tina Barton — I have no problem with Paik being here if his work is conceptualised historically. Parekowhai does not seem to me to be critiquing Paik, but rather the show and its framing agendas. I'm more interested to know what the security guard (also Maori, and with equally glazed expression) thought of the Paik.

Helen Burgess — (Student of Media Arts) What has changed between the 70s and the 90s? The level of technological media interactivity has increased, and with it the sense of passive comfort for the user has decreased. The popularity of the *TV Garden* may have represented a nostalgia for the comfortable space of the living room and passive television viewing, as opposed to the uneasy interactivity of the computer room

next door with its implied techno-literacy.

Judy Darragh — Paik's work seems to be ageless, maybe he has been mimicked so often because his influence in the areas of technology and TV are so visionary or so true. The Parekowhai is an oddity in this room. I first saw Hori without the other two mannequins in context and I thought it was the security guard, "hmmm new uniforms".

Maddie Leach — Paik's *TV Garden* is cool. Even though it's only TVs and it's twenty-two years old, it's technology plus. It's also nostalgia plus, the seventies tap dancer and the rock 'n' roll, pink and orange, big flowers, plastik, and over-manicured plants. The phrase I've seen flashed pseudo-subliminally while dancing and transfixed by video screens 'HYPNOTECH,' reverberated in my mind. Parekowhai's dummy is a wonderful combination of bemusement and quartet-style hip, kind of like a dark Elvis on the fringes. Mixed in with the perfectly potted native plants of *TV Garden*, it perhaps comes closest to the concept of hybridity that *The World Over* lays claim to.

Trish Stevenson — (Media Strategy Specialist) While the juxtaposition of diverse images from various parts of the globe highlight similarities, the short intercutting videos accentuate one of today's media ironies, i.e.. the loss of voice for those without access to the power behind the screen. Encountering the subservient 'Hori' immediately after made me feel physically ill.

Jim Barr and Mary Barr — Without so much as a word Parekowhai's unworldly characters say it all: 'Global art? — don't be a dummy.'

Brendan Mosely — (Cultural Studies Critic) The concept of the cyborg is accepted much more readily than it was in 1974. I think we are probably much more able to view *TV Garden* with relative ease in 1996. With the knowledge this piece is 22 years old, we can now appreciate TV as having a history. TV at its inception carried many of the same promises as the internet does today — a 'decentralised' medium, disseminating choice to the viewer. TV was meant to bring to fruition Marshall McLuhan's "Global Village" while at the same time developing into an inexpensive technology which would eventually allow each household the ability to broadcast as well as receive TV signals, following the developmental trajectory of the telephone rather than the book (this was also said of radio). Cable TV aside, broadcast media is still hegemonic, but our hopes are now focused on the internet.

**The Internet is the conceptual cornerstone of *The World Over*, but exists as a poor cousin in the Wellington exhibition space. How does this internet set-up stimulate your thoughts about art in the age of globalisation? Conversely how does the art on offer affect your perceptions of the internet?**

Ian Wedde — The internet component of the show is almost dysfunctional. In a trading world where the effectiveness of such a simple device would be a performance measurement, someone would have got the sack by now.

Trish Stevenson — A non-event for me but a highlight for my son who quickly found the Disney shop!

Helen Burgess — Where was the URL of *The World Over* website advertised? Why wasn't it printed on the documentation accompanying the exhibition, or even written on the wall of the computer room? Web access is difficult enough to disseminate to the public as it is, without providing active discouragement by installing inadequate first-contact points to an audience who is still basically Web-illiterate because of (educational and socioeconomic) access issues.

Jim Barr and Mary Barr — We tried to get into the site set up for the show <http://art.cwi.nl.stedelijk.capricorn> from home but they didn't seem to be able to get it up.

Brendan Mosely — What I did see were 3 terminals connected to the Wellington City Council's limited access internet browser. Through this I managed to view some postage stamp Cezanne portraits at The Paris Museum. I suppose this is a statement itself — that there is often little more than 'hype in hyperreality'. The panorama section of the exhibition is described by the gallery as "the virtual reality of the nineteenth century." We need to follow up on statements such as this by exploring ways in which the internet provides us with a 'new' medium, and ways in which it may simply represent the colonisation of imaginative domains in the name of technology.

Judy Darragh — Giovanni Intra did the only thing that artists should do with technology and that is smash it and reconstruct it from the pieces.

**Have you ever had a revelatory experience with 'internet art'?**

Terrence Handscomb (Artist) — No.

Helen Burgess — The biggest revelation I've experienced with regard to Internet art is that because the technology can't keep up with the incessant hype (unless one has access to cutting-edge — read 'expensive' — hardware), I'm constantly being both disappointed by and made aware of the bandwidth and equipment limitations on visual and audio art in an electronic environment. Perhaps that's the whole point.

Judy Darragh — I've decided to be lo/no-tech and have reverted back to a needle and thread — old technologies. It is interesting to note that the curator of the 1996 Sydney Biennale Dr Lynne Cooke "came to the conclusion that at the end of the twentieth century some of the most interesting work is being created with older technology". Hence *Jurassic Technologies Revenant*. Maybe science and art will part company as the next century rolls into view.

Ian Wedde — Very little 'internet art' has matched design to narrative structure. Much of the World Wide Web is overdesigned, overdetermined, and tedious. A lot of the 'art' on the Web is simply pictures of art dumped there. ARTHOLE is not a bad example of a bad place to look at pictures. SUCK currently offers the interesting information that no filmic or TV images now last longer than 20 seconds, a little review of Kruger, Piper and Kelley in *Ciphers of Identity* at USF Contemporary Art Museum, and so on. There are thousands of places to go ... but the majority of these are not art experiences as such. I appreciate the *Fine Art Forum*, the *Piazza Virtuale*, *FIVA Online*, and many others as they come and go. Perhaps the only project that

has convinced me has been Antonio Muntadas' archive project. Like Paik, he seemed prophetic at the start of something which he has since gone on to bring about. I also like the chuck it together quality of stuff like *Geek Girl*.

Maddie Leach — No.

Trish Stevenson — No!

Tina Barton — No, I've never had the patience to wait for the material to download.

Jim Barr and Mary Barr — Aren't revelations of any kind enough? <http://www.revelations.co.uk>

<http://www.kaiwan.com/lehigh/jb2/heads/br30ryinh.html>

**Ruth Watson and Suchan Kinoshita and Janet Shanks are the only women appearing in the City Gallery exhibition which features twenty-nine artists in total. How do you interpret this gaping statistical chasm?**

Jim Barr and Mary Barr — *Putting the land on the map: art and cartography in New Zealand since 1840*. Curated by Wystan Curnow 1989. Boys 13, girls 2 (girls 13.3 percent). *The World Over*. Curated by Wystan Curnow 1996. Boys 26 girls 3 (girls 10.3 percent). Our interpretation? Going down.

Trish Stevenson — The under-representation of women artists didn't register as an issue. What I did notice was the large number of young male adults attending the exhibition.

Helen Burgess — I interpreted the 'statistical chasm' between female and male artists in the exhibition as having something to do with the misconception that 'globalisation' means technoculture, which is still under-represented by women for reasons that have been analysed repeatedly but not actioned adequately. I'm sure technology is not the only reason globalisation is perceived to be occurring — for example, the increasing domination of global capitalism would suggest that a commentary upon shifts in working, spending and consumption patterns would have been an equally good approach.

Judy Darragh — Where are the Guerrilla Girls when you need them? This is also apparent in *Transformers* — there are five women artists out of twentyish. Does this mean women artists don't use technology? See, you just can't relax for a moment, post-feminism doesn't mean post it! This has been a worrying trend in such group shows, not to mention the casino commissions. Have all those stropky ladies from the seventies and eighties retired?

Maddie Leach — Maybe other artists who were women just didn't have the same good, keen interest in the fall of communism and the triumph of international capitalism, space exploration and the development of satellite and computer technology. When we need to know about these things we need Imants and Matt and Lothar and Colin and Nam and David and James.

Ian Wedde — Because women have often been cast as technophobes, it has often been women like Sadie Plant who have poked the sharpest sticks at the myths of technology and the globalisation technology is party to. It has been performers and artists like VNS Matrix who for some time have had the most fun thinking what art might be or do in there. They are

missed in this show which, while not 'about' technology, cannot avoid the implications of information and communication systems on the definitions of 'global'. Ruth Watson's piece as usual has an acuity in this regard, and stands out for that reason.

Tina Barton — The lack of women in the show is a concern. To me it suggests that the show is being driven from Europe where these matters are of little concern. Despite this, however, Suchan Kinoshita's work is a high point in the show for me. Its invisibility wittily implies the ephemeral nature of the task set by the concept of the show. It is also a brilliant use of the space, taking the viewer out of the gallery and into the city — any city large enough to have a rail system: New York, London, Paris, Tokyo (the 'anywhere but not here' which much of the show implies).

**As much as it focuses on the globe as a 'singular system', from a New Zealand perspective *The World Over* functions as a measuring device for its own art production, showing that we have never relinquished our mythical neurosis about isolation.**

**Judging from *The World Over*, what is the current state of the national self-image?**

Ian Wedde — Still thinking within the old provincialising paradigms.

Helen Burgess — I would suggest that the current state of the national self-image has been sucked into believing that internet access will break down geographical barriers. If anything, the inadequacy of the Internet section of the exhibition pointed to the very opposite conclusion: the isolation of New Zealand is still having a wide effect upon the amount and quality of hi-tech equipment available, since population means market-share, which is not something New Zealand has on its side.

Terrence Handscomb — We cannot buy international cultural credibility by developing curatorial links that stretch the world over, nor will our wholesale inclusion in electronic culture provide us with an enduring substitute. Our mythical neurosis about our own isolation is, judging by *The World Over / De Wereld Bollen*, in a state of healthy indulgence. I suspect that we prefer it that way.

**Which artists would you most like to see in a show about art in the age of globalisation?**

Jim Barr and Mary Barr — <http://www.diacenter.org/km>

Judy Darragh — A truly global art show would be just that, it would be so expensive no one could do it.

Ian Wedde — No thank you to this one. I congratulate any curator with the will to get something on this scale together. This time, for me, the initiative was conceptually flawed and disappointingly realised, but I remain glad it happened and don't want to pretend I could do any better even in my wish-lists.

Tina Barton — Every show today addresses these issues so the question is academic. Some inclusions might be Rem Koolhaas, Bob Geldof, On Kawara, a whirling dervish or two...✻

# Object Activity

Douglas Lloyd-Jenkins and Giles Reid introduce *monica's* new column on Craft and Design.

## Nga Whiriwhiri

Jewellery by Gina Matchitt with Kite by Chrissy Kereama and Piupiu by Bubbles Turei  
Fingers

28 April - 18 May 1996

This column addresses an absence of critical writing on young, predominantly urban crafts people and designers. Gina Matchitt graduated from UNITEC Design School in 1994 and is currently aligned to the *Workshop 6* fold of jewellers in Kingsland. This is her first solo show.

*Nga Whiriwhiri* can be translated as 'a plaiting' and has connotations such as tying, joining and bringing together. The inclusion of kite and the piupiu reference a tradition of craft knowledge passing through female lines. Each generation asserts its own needs in response to formal and ritualistic imperatives. Of significance are the continuities or disavowals, empathies or subversions that can be traced.

Three distinct groups of jewellery are displayed. All employ a similar set of basic elements - flax, silver and copper cylinders. Differences between Matchitt's work and her precursors as well as differences within her own work are constructed in terms of the ways that these elements are connected. Some flax cylinders remain undyed. Others are dyed quickly so that the end fibres and not the shaft take up colour. These resemble a segment from a piupiu. Traditionally, the banding down each flax tube is formed by the removal of the top layer at selected intervals, exposing the inner fibres to the air and causing them to shrivel and darken. In the contemporary pieces, each silver or copper cylinder is formed by repeatedly rolling the metal in one direction until it is induced to curl upon itself. In some cases when the metal is at its most soft and malleable it goes through the roller with a heavily textured material and takes up its pattern.

Immediately adjacent to the traditional weavings are three chokers. The cylinders are threaded end to end along a flexible dark brown pvc fishing tackle, each end terminated with a clasp. The chokers are reworked as a simple visual response to the piupiu rhythm. However, there are fundamental departures from traditional work. The piupiu and the kite (as displayed) hang, thus expressing the weight of their own material. But Matchitt's chokers lie flat, they are pressed against the surface of



Gina Matchitt,  
Necklace, 1996,  
Photo New  
Zealand Herald

the display cabinet or the throat. More obviously foreign is the introduction of the clasps which connect the two ends of the line. The clasps make this work jewellery because it is now able to be worn but they handle the issue of wearability as if it were merely a pragmatic consideration. Matchitt's stainless steel or nylon threaded necklaces demonstrate more effectively the significance of the joint to the piece as a whole.

With the necklaces, the cylinders are used again, hanging from silk threads dyed bright red. These pieces, said by Matchitt to represent a new direction in her thinking, are problematic at a number of levels. The very colour (red), the technology (plaiting) and the limp forms (a loop tied at both top and bottom, dissipating energy) all conspire to produce a handcrafted, almost touristy image of Maori motifs. This direction will remain naive unless the inherent difficulties of kitsch appropriation are recognised and explored.

The final group under discussion carry the most conviction. The cylinders are threaded along either a single nylon or stainless steel wire. They possess a limited freedom of movement up and down the wire, checked at regular intervals by tiny copper cheniers. The wire is cut and the ends are crossed over each other. A chenier marks the crossing in place. The looping reveals the potential tension of the wire. But the piece resists becoming springy enough to unsettle Matchitt's desire for composure. Matchitt demonstrates that the art of the joint (the moment of ornament and the construction of significance) originates in the binding of elements, that is, in weaving.

Looking around the rest of the gallery arouses the suspicion that most of Fingers' stable are engaged in the manufacture of heavily signatured, high impact, high resolution jewellery. Matchitt's knowing understatements are in contrast to this pursuit. She utilises a number of commonplace materials requiring a low level of energy and technology. The materials are left with the stamp of an immediate and identifiable action — copper is clamped, silver is rolled, nylon is clipped. 4



# on nature and concrete

A bunch of folk dream up a project whereby the stunning spiral exit-ramp of Wellington's James Smith car park building is used for a series of installations. Creative New Zealand gives them some cash. International art festivals come and go. And finally on a lugubrious Sunday, Wellington's gallery glitterati is transplanted to the sixth floor of a car park building, struggling to stay warm. We are encouraged to reflect, people are thanked, public art extolled, and *The Concrete Deal* is born.

Jim Speers kicks off the project with *Little Birds*. I am surprised to see the bottom of the atrium transformed into a pool fringed with flax, contrasting with the tawdry grandeur of several oversized chandeliers above. A month later I am similarly taken by surprise. Simon Endres has adorned the exit ramps' pillars with trellis-like cladding and images of trees being felled and plants grafted onto severed fingers. It's called *Transplant* and I'm beginning to wonder if there has been a kind of radical 'greening' of the art posse. Maddie Leach's *Memoirs of a Spacewoman*, sees a continuation of themes organic — a (re)created land/sea/sound-scape. . . But why my surprise?

I'd developed a sense that engaging with the organic was somehow unhip. I saw younger artists rejecting earlier attempts at realising a national aesthetic through the contemplation of our 'natural' landscapes — the idea that representations of our topography were means to a Pakeha identity. I perceived a spurning of the recent phenomenon of 'world saving', ecology being conceived not as a resistance to modern narratives of mastery, but as a nostalgia for a totalising metaphysic. Somewhere in this reluctance to engage with the natural, I located a recoiling from things 'hippie' — epitomised in artistic vernacular by such things as spirals and muslin.

Endres' work suggests that landscapes do not exist as uncontested sites which can function un-problematically to inform 'authentic' notions of self. *Transplant* captured the idea that landscape cannot be viewed in isolation from such things as history — the cultural forces that shaped the landscapes in much of McCahon's work, for example, are inseparable from the colonial imperatives that functioned to 'civilise' Maori. 'Natural environments' do not stand alone as neutral capital in an economy of identity. The exclamation "OOPS" on several of the images in a



Stussy-style font pokes fun at earnest ecocidal soothsayers making reference to the potential of environmental problems as marketing capital.

Although driven more by formal concerns, *Little Birds* is also considering the notion of nature as capital. The indigenous flax conveys the attempt by those that plan our urban environments, to add a New Zealand element to a cityscape otherwise internationally concrete in character. While the troubled relationship between pool and slowly circling chandeliers was a formal failing of the work, it drew my attention to how functionally irrelevant such 'indigenising' endeavours have often been.

In terms of engaging with the public of Wellington, Leach's installation is perhaps the most successful of those discussed here — although having the sound component of the work sabotaged by an irate inner city resident is a form of public involvement one could probably do without. Segments of hard trance, dub, Tibetan bowl music and the ubiquitous Radio NZ bird calls, play continually through speakers suspended in the atrium. The resonance created by the soundscape successfully fuses the vertical space with that of the floor, which is transformed into a lake-side diorama. A certain surreal but cliched quality suffuses the space, an archetypal 'weird' dreamscape.

Attention is drawn to tensions between international cultural forms such as 'techno', and indigenous phenomena like the song of kokako. In juxtaposing organic sounds with dance beats, Leach employs an ironic angle on phenomena such as *Deep Forest*. The commodification of nature as engendering senses of trans-national connectedness, is to me more disturbing than the denial of difference the nationalists of our past were engaged in. But as techno can be enjoyed in spite of ideological reservations, standing upon Leach's jetty peering into the phosphorescent surface below is an uplifting experience. In terms of this experiential aspect of Leach's work, she succeeds in engaging with publics outside of the 'fine art' racket.

That's what *The Concrete Deal* should be about: driving through the car park catching glimpses of fucked-up chandeliers, fanging down the exit ramp on a skateboard to the sound of pounding drum and bass, marvelling at the ramp's design, seeing the work engrimed by rubbish and birdshit. Dreaming in concrete.

The *Concrete Deal* has featured the installations of Jim Speers, Simon Endres, Daniel Malone, Maddie Leach and Joyce Campbell to date, with Yuk King Tan, Anthony Sumich, Saskia Leek and Gavin Hipkins yet to exhibit. J

**BEN WHITE**

Maddie Leach,  
*Memoirs of a Spacewoman*, 1996  
Installation view,  
Photo Gavin Hipkins

# toioho ki apiti \_\_\_\_\_ a question of \_\_\_\_\_

*The following are excerpts from the summary of Toioho Ki Apiti, delivered by Professor Mason Durie.*

In attempting to define the essence of Maori Art, the views of the conference eventually converged on a single reference point — a Maori wairua. How to define the wairua, is, however, not so easy. Arnold Wilson described a Maori belief system as his framework for Maori art- te reo, mauri, wairua, toi whakairo, whenua, whanaungatanga. But he saw this as a starting point, and advised artists to leap out of the box to discover other values, symbols and expressions.

In contrast, Hirini Moko Mead thought there was a need for some artists at least, to jump back into the box. He distinguished Maori artists from artists who are Maori “Maori art is art that looks Maori, feels Maori, is done by Maori following Maori styles, canons of taste and values.”

Convinced that change itself is a tradition, Rangihiroa Panaho compared the ringaringa plant with layers of culture, periods of

romancy and flowering, never staying the same. Darcy Nicholas drew a distinction between art and taonga, but conceded it was easier to define being Maori than to define Maori art, and as Cushla Parekowhai richly illustrated, Maori have more in common than they have in difference.

Identifying Maori art as a separate endeavour places challenges on the exponents to define themselves. Nor should that definition use colonial symbolism to include some but exclude others. Ngahua Te Awekotuku made that clear when she reminded us of the stereotyped roles afforded to Maori women artists over the past 150 years. Self determination had several meanings, including the right to more equitable funding, the application of articles two and three of the Treaty of Waitangi, and the use of art as a vehicle of protest against political abuses, land alienation and imperialist designs. Bob Jahnke and Ngapine Allen were critical of western interpretations of Maori art, regarding colonial theoretical frameworks as continuations

My taxi driver thought Palmerston North a funny place for a Maori visual arts conference. But Palmerston North has a university, art gallery, museum, marae and pubs, and Toioho Ki Apiti encompassed all these locations in addressing what seemed to become the conference issue - What constitutes Maori art? Is it customary practise or is it anything produced by Maori?

Hirini Mead was certain of the difference between Maori art and the rest. His appeal for a more collective agenda and “fence around our culture” generated debate but not agreement, as most of the audience of young Maori artists seemed to find themselves on the other side of that fence.

Ngapine Allen suggested Mead’s approach was flawed, that Pakeha definitions polarised debate, trapping Maori into western constructs involving notions of authenticity such as the absence of change in “traditional” cultures. Ngahua Te Awekotuku queried Mead’s framework, asserting it allowed no place for risk and response to changing circumstances.

As a third generation, urbanised, detribalised Maori who produces art, you can imagine how surprised I was to find that it was precisely my contemporaries and the activities that we engage in that was the focus of the *Toioho ki Apiti* debate. And believe me, the debate raged.

For me, the crux of the matter seemed to be the essentialist vs the postmodern, presented as that old chestnut ‘what is Maori art?’ Who should be legitimised as Maori artists? Or, who is controlling this thing, Maori art, and to a lesser extent, who controls Maori culture?

The hard line essentialist argument (that Maori Art is a visual language/style or is constituted of korus by the tribe and for the tribe) was principally, but not solely, put forward by one of the keynote speakers, Dr. Hirini Moko Mead. This is a position he has long held. He maintains that there are a lot of Maori artists out there making art that isn’t.

This debate over what constitutes Maori art is 200 years old, if not 700. If we were going to continue arguing about painted murals and kowhaiwhai, when could we talk about the generation staking a claim in the dealer galleries and international scene?

Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, in a chronology of Maori appearances in galleries over the past few decades, located a diversity of Maori in the cosmopolitan art scene, but considered some merely “darlings” of the establishment.

Ngahua Te Awekotuku broadened the boundaries of Maori art, establishing a wider role historically for women in all aspects of Maori arts. Rangihiroa Panoho delivered a thoughtful paper tracing the distortion of Maori art in the lens of western art history and notions such as classicism, progress and renaissance. Robert Jahnke provided a useful paper for Maori artists grappling with institutions, on the necessity to carry-Maori cultural beliefs as well as artworks into institutional spaces.

The evening at Te Taumata O Te Ra meeting house provided a

I began to feel uneasy when I realised the implication was that because these activities have nothing to do with things essentially Maori, they are somehow less authentic, less valid for Maori. Or, was I uneasy because as a Maori who no longer makes art with korus in it, I was to be placed outside the definition?

So who’s on the inside? It seems what became known as the customary or traditional arts extended from pre-contact activities to include the first generation of ground breaking Modernist Maori Artists (my art heroes), a lot of whom were present. This inclusion indicates the problem of closing a definition by proximity to an historical period. It doesn't matter if it’s 150 or 40 years ago, how can we make claims to that which is authentic based on a view inherently coloured by colonisation?

The argument for a more inclusive definition was made when discussion moved from what exactly constitutes the

## definition, Maori Art Conference at Massey University,

of the colonising process. Leonie Pihama urged us to dispel the myth of the post-modern Maori who could co-exist, with little distinction, from other New Zealanders.

Similarities between Maori and other indigenous peoples was a related theme, with Rangihiroa Panoho observing that all first nation peoples are now passing through “the winter of colonisation.”

The art establishment, galleries and museums, was recognised as part of that colonising force. Their cultural practices and use of ritual are seen as increasingly remote from Maori creativity and symbolism. Diane Prince rejected formal galleries as being inhibiting and distorting. Instead, active participation within communities was more relevant to her philosophy. Jonathan Mane-Wheoki argued for Maori commentators and curators, saying conventional galleries were unable to respond appropriately to Maori icons.

Mina McKenzie and Cliff Whiting saw the emergence of Te

metaphorical resolution to the debate, taking place within an architectural structure of traditional front and end walls and contemporary” side walls. In the concurrent exhibition *Kote hapai oki muri. ko te Amorangi ki mua* at the Manawatu Art Gallery, one work crystallised for me the evolution of Maori in the contemporary world. Paroa Awatea Alien’s *la Rd, la Pd*, with its suspended kete and lure rotating continuously in darkness revealed observers frozen in snaps of a strobe light. I don’t know if Hirini Mead or the taxi driver would consider it properly Maori but it was certainly potent and poetic art.

Paora Awatea Allen,  
*la Ra, la Pd*, 1996,  
from *Ko te hapai oki muri, ko te Amorangi ki mua*  
at the Manawatu Art Gallery,  
26 June - 1 September, 1996

essential, to the political ramifications of how we are represented.

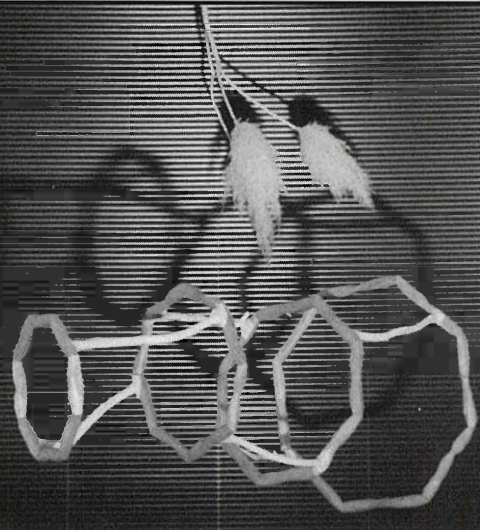
In her address, *Sex and Power* (where sex was defined as empowered gender), keynote speaker, Dr Ngahuaia Te Awekotuku argued that control over the depiction of Maori has been, and is being, used as an effective tool of colonisation. Her contention that Maori women have been written out of our history was made more than obvious. It was the type of argument that leaves an audience stunned, not least because as Maori males, we have bought into the divide and rule tactics of our colonisers.

So how does this equal inclusion? It does because this address talked not only about history, but asked two all important questions, where are we now and where are we going? I read this as owning the contemporary, that which challenges and changes from the customary. A call for the empowerment

Papa Tongarewa as a bicultural reflection of the heritage of Aotearoa. Both implied that although the philosophy of museums had been built on colonial aspirations, with appropriate leadership, museums could accommodate Maori interests. Ngahuaia Te Awekotuku was less confident, commenting on the very few Maori in permanent curatorial roles.

Reclamation by Maori women of their expertise in aspects of art and whakairo was introduced by Ngahuaia Te Awekotuku. In the final conference session, she spoke of the need to cross over imposed boundaries, to avoid false dualities, and to learn from nga manu ngangahu who move with confidence between the metaphysical and the physical, from one plane to another.

Much of the conference was devoted to discussions about transcending the traditional/contemporary interface. Whetumarama Kelly Kereama of Te Taumata o te Ra Marae, in Halcombe, provided an apt summary: “What is contemporary today will be traditional tomorrow.”



of those who move beyond the ‘perceived’ tradition.

Cushla Parekowhai’s address for me was the high point. She went one step further by proposing an inclusive definition connected with the idea of a transaction. She stated that Maori art is art where we can see ourselves in the picture. Whether we see ourselves included by virtue of the historical, the visual, the conceptual or by association is irrelevant. If it talks to us, of us, it’s ours.

So what did I think? I loved it, I’ve only scratched the surface, there were exhibitions and artists presentations, conference events and lots of addresses. All credit to Massey University. The fact that there is public debate about these issues, and by people of such standing, must be a good thing. Finally, to my contemporaries who make work about this stuff, if you weren’t there shame on you, you were conspicuous by your absence. ♣

interdigitate

3-7 July  
Interdigitate

Aotea Centre,  
Auckland

unezy

At first it seems faintly nostalgic that we should be facing centre stage in a darkened room, deprived of our remote controls, waiting ... We have come in from a landscape already dense with screens, to consign ourselves to an alternative arrangement of sensory saturation. While the wall of 36 monitors stands in for the chaotic universe of audio-visual media, its challenge is also to stand out from it. What *Interdigitate*, offers the artist is a receptive audience and the opportunity to wrest seven minutes of significance from the same armoury of effects that we charge with the razing of meaning. The imposing video bank before us is a repository for a century of moving image culture, its power lying in the fact that imagery resonates even when reduced to a flicker or fragment.

Once we have learned to read bodies as a succession of framed parts, a whole body can act as a decelerant. Some of the live performance elements of *Interdigitate 95* added little to exploration of the human-machine interface and were not necessarily consonant with the recombinant possibilities of digital screen technology. In 1996, we saw more selective juxtapositions of stage and screen, divested of the doubling-up of live and mediated action.

Mika's polished and vibrant performance was entertaining without being demanding; a mildly transgressive cabaret version of the standard rock concert format of live singing in front of moving images and a relay camera. Indigenous landscape imagery spliced with gay iconography created an emblematic fusion in a phallic and excremental mud-pool sequence.

With regard to its background deployment of screens, Lynda Chanwai-Earle's *Yum Char* was technically similar to Mika's *Lava Lover*. Her narrative embellishing of 'on camera' cooking presented an ironic re-reading of television's tendency to reduce entire cultures to their gastronomic signifiers.

Moving further into the human-machine dialogue, Michael Hodgson and Ross George's *The Switch* featured a live percussionist interacting with depictions of digitally-fractured bodies which writhed on screen to an industrial soundtrack. While the velocity of the event made it difficult to assess the level of human agency, the drummer was in fact composing the piece in real time. After he left the stage, the sequence was played back to us as it was transmitted from the confines of the theatre into the expanse of the Internet.

J. S. Sumich's *Making a Song and Dance* offered an edgier intrusion of the live performer into the visual field. Mirroring the preprogrammed environment of karaoke, the piece depicted a world in which glib, ready-made utterances circumscribe the possibilities of communication. The question of whether the 'singer' would find voice to participate in this circuit, and whether or not this intervention would transgress the given

codes, was held in suspense until the last moment.

Like *City Group*'s sparse but haunting *Recovered Memory* from last year, Rachel Davies' *Portrait of Lou* exempted itself from the more familiar rapid-fire visuals of multiscreen video art. An animated collage of holiday snapshots, Lou's dissected body evoked the condition of fragmented memory in the video age. Despite the attraction of its arresting temporality, the piece could have pushed beyond its photographic referents.

Of this year's selection, Paul Swadel's *Pump Action Boundaries* and *Critical Mass*, by *Popular Productions*, best realised the multivalent possibilities of the 36 screen aesthetic. Both works used the available screen space to activate past moments of moving image culture, feeding off this century's profound ambivalence towards the machine. *Pump Action Boundaries* constructed a retro big-brotherism by revisiting the paranoia that accompanied the emergence of the Age of Information. A high-speed montage of early broadcasting and computing icons, images of criminality and surveillance, and a ubiquitous handgun suggested both a propagation and an atomisation of phallic power in the new networks.

After *Pump Action*'s threatened violence, *Critical Mass* delivers us into the achieved atrocity of machinic systems. The introductory quote from Heidegger and a closing still from Resnais' *Night and Fog* indicates the theme of complicity between art and technology in the domination of the social body. *Critical Mass* juxtaposes a range of references to systems of regulation that prioritise smooth functioning over the messiness of humanity, a reduction which can have horrific consequences. Its deft combination of reel to reel and digital technologies suggests the continued implication of moving image in processes of repression.

Along with other significant moments in *Interdigitate 96*, *Critical Mass*' reflexive encounter with the mediascape attests to the possibility that video art can make a critical intervention, and that this may be achieved without the grounding presence of the performing body. ✽



A still from Popular  
Productions' *Critical Mass*,  
Photo Richard Douglas

**NIGEL CLARK  
AND SIMON REES**

If I can start in the middle I will. Tony Schwensen's *Australia A (Hate Reading Love Letters)* is a simple yet stunning juxtaposition of forces. On the floor run parallel lines of timber posts perhaps two metres long and pleasantly green (tanalised). At the far end of each stands a white plastic bucket, holding domestic-strength concrete set around a black metal fencing post, the type thrust into earth and strung with wire. These vertical-horizontals lightly recast in a suburban vernacular cleverly capture a fencing ambience not through metaphor, but through their materiality. The weighty settled horizontals are wooden and grave in a way almost generic to minimalist monuments. And yet the laid back sexiness of a suburban backyard is found in their hefty spread. The buckets and their metal stakes give a forceful contrast. Not weighty but sharp, a bitter danger in counterpoint to the wooden funkyness. A concrete clench around the cold penetration of the stake. But too much shouldn't be made of an opposition between these relaxed and clenched sexualities. They must be thought together. A diagrammatic

to the ball of yellow electrical cord. If the track racing fast but going nowhere (another suggestion: a metaphor for drugs) is art's collaborative product, then the ball is a knot of energy, a confluence of formal beauty preceeding but driving the racing cars. In this perhaps schematic reading, this ball is the artist, or the creative moment, the unknown becoming, the impossibly complex ball of power previous to that banal and pointless object art. The ball, faultless and inaccessible in its formal muteness is what it's all about. The uncompromising beauty contrasts the buzzing boredom of the track. A moral piece. Cool.

Justene Williams' show *Downstage* was a single, large, unframed, photograph hung on the back wall of the gallery. "Enigmatic yet beautiful" seems an obvious cliché to write about it, except that the work occupied this description in an odd way. It showed, up close, part of the mural painting on a cheap rivetted tin curtain wall hiding a new development on the beautiful Gold Coast. It was a trompe-l'oeil masterpiece. There was real pebblecrete ground at the bottom, and then a real

## three at cbd

Kyle Ashpole,  
Tony Schwensen,  
Justene Williams,  
CBD Gallery, Sydney.

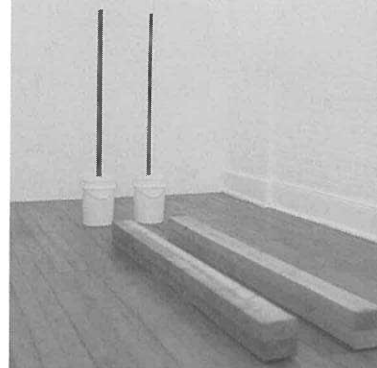
exclamation point, a fence which goes with the flow, perhaps directs a bit, I'd suggest. A confluence of forces up and along, inward and out, to grasp and to spread. Maybe some sex.

Kyle Ashpole's untitled show preceded with an electrifying circularity. It was a viewer activated circular slot-car track with two cars; and the long yellow power cord was intricately knotted into a large ball beside the track. The conceptual, metaphorical and sculptural elegantly meshed into an installation of diverse affects. You walked into the gallery and up to the piece which was on the ground, the cars stationary on a track about a meter in diameter. You tripped an invisible beam (although the small generating device was visible) and the cars started racing around the track, the inside one much faster than the outer. Already a line of connection seemed to suggest itself. The viewer walks in and activates an endless circularity. Certainly the art pre-exists a viewer, but to make it work, that viewer is required. This is the viewer's function, literalised by the work, but the co-operative product is this ultimately dull circularity, an endless repetition where the inside track goes the furthest but still ends up going nowhere. A kind of conceptual nihilism. This is in contrast

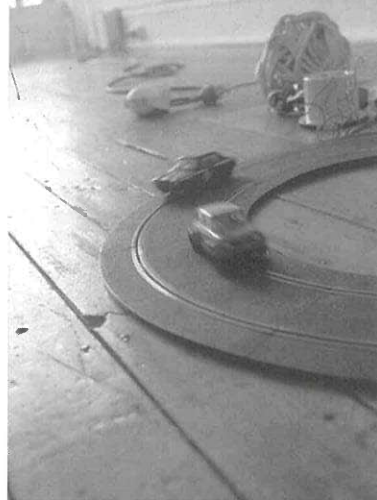
step of blue and terracotta tiles, and then the wall with its painted continuation of that step expanding into a painted tiled space of uncertain depth and structure. Shadows played around inside its space, along with surprising perspective decisions. And yet it was convincing. This made the photo engaging on a purely descriptive level. I mean, like what the fuck was going on here? But then again not even that because it had a kind of visual beige-ness to it that was completely satisfying, that held no secrets and told no lies. It had figuration and narrative thrust, but it was abstract and formally sweet too. Heteroclitite. This was all Williams' doing. It was in the framing no doubt about it. I mean the wall, as I have said, was a bizarre trompe-l'oeil masterpiece but the photo mixed in enigma to give it a beauty that was arty, but only because it managed to somehow dispel the trashy, which could still be felt, and was there as a necessary absence even. This does not express what I want to write about this photo. I want to capture how its beauty worked both ways. Its moment captured and dispelled the trashiness that was its opposite and yet was its condition and the very source of its genius. This has got a little personal. It was tops. 4

## STEPHEN ZEPKE

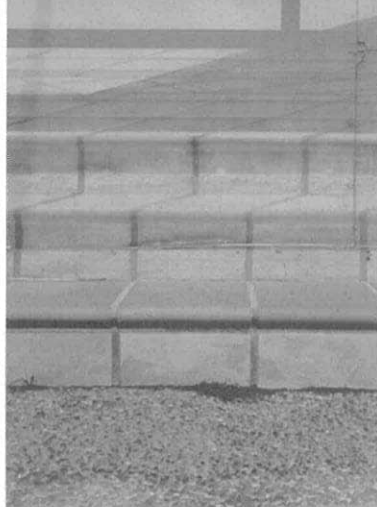
Tony Schwensen, Australia [A](#) (*Hate Reading Love Letters*) 1996



Kyle Ashpole Untitled 1996



Justene Williams, *Downstage* 1996,  
All Photos Darryl Chapman



# Short Reports

## TESSA LAIRD

Frank and Redford (Social Realism) Dale and Scott  
Co-ordinated by Chris Chapman  
Teststrip, 30 May - 15 June, 1996

Chris Chapman, curator of the Art Gallery of South Australia, initiated a mail-art improvisation between Dale Frank and Scott Redford. Redford kept a lackadaisical bargain, sending Frank a work to 'evolve.' Frank, after deliberation, discarded Redford's work altogether, instead couriering Teststrip a selection of videos and several boxes of chocolates. Frank's firm instructions were that visitors controlled their own video viewing, and were to be ceaselessly exhorted to eat the chocolates.

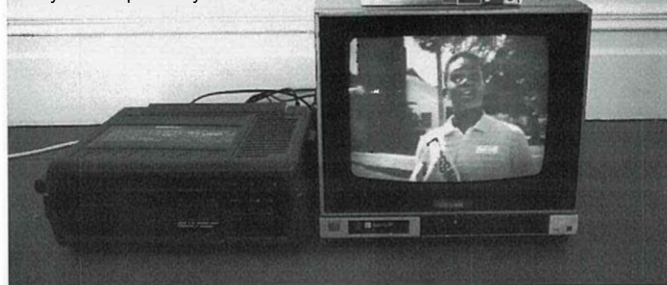
This guerrilla generosity was a wilful inversion of the chestnut 'chocolate box art,' and a resistance to the opacity of 'art-making'. Frank acknowledges that artists and critics construct what Kruger coins as "intricate rituals" in order to gain the requisite human touch, just as any sports player or freemason might. Frank's encouragement of self-indulgence was complicit with the social underpinnings of this given 'art scene,' and it was striking how quickly visitors relaxed into their roles as chocolate-stuffing scene-surfers, and into treating the gallery as a domestic zone. There was a marked deficit of chin-scratching, and the relief of being off-duty as amateur critics was virtually audible.

With time, boxes and wrappers began to proliferate the floor. Like Frank's *Dale, I'm Only Dancing*, 1995, in which a nominal dance party was staged at Roslyn Oxleyq Gallery, the detritus of social interaction was foregrounded, creating a midden of (sub)cultural activity.

Frank's videos also reeked of the archeological dig. The titles were screamingly "seminal", *Altered States*, *The Music Lovers*, *Child's Play*, with light relief from National Lampoon. Like the show, fun on the surface belying the discomfort of being forced. *Child's Play* is notorious for being an inspiration to serial slashers, while *The Music Lovers*, a tortured dramatisation of Tchaikovsky's life is full of awful het sex scenes, creating a bizarre synaesthesia with the sickly sweets.

My introduction to this show came via the window, where Ronnie van Hout's latex bubbles oozed "Deviant Scum" from under a portal emblazoned "Do not open this door". Yet it had been left ajar, revealing the stairway to Teststrip. Although accidental, (the door was later closed), I experienced a brief elation to do with "openings". I thought about how Erik Satie's instruction to his pianists to "Ouvrir la tete" was a precursor to Leary's imperative, "Turn on, Tune in, Drop out." Frank created an 'altered state', just as chocolate releases a chemical in the brain

Dale Frank, Social Realism, 1996,  
installation view featuring Loaded  
Weapon, Photo Ann Shelton cour-  
tesy Teststrip Gallery.



which counteracts depression. Frank palpably *gave* something to his public, the gallery becoming an arena for the rare gem of unabashed entertainment, and each individual's enjoyment being the work. ♡

## ROB GARRETT

Well, can you feel it? Rob Garrett looks at public  
performance in Dunedin, June, 1996

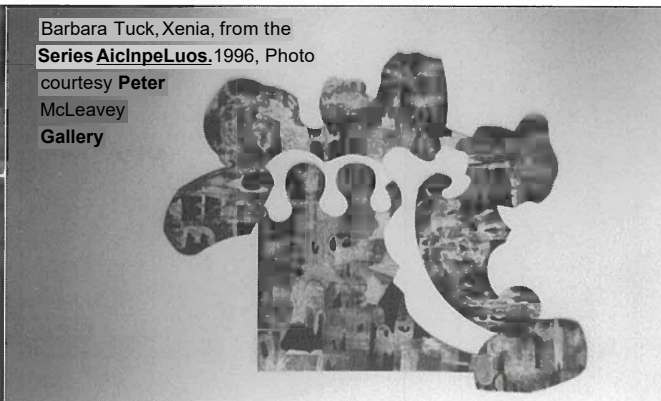
Last month a small group of Dunedin art students staged a playful media stunt. Their star performer: a rug-sized 70s sculpture by Marte Szirmay. With a pleasing lack of culture-of-complaint rhetoric this Sculpture Action Group tethered Szirmay's aluminium panels to the Dunedin Medical School and Public Hospital with lengths of red hose as if to suggest the ageing piece could benefit from a transfusion. What were they playing at? Maybe they were thinking about that Chase Plaza Rugby Hall of Fame thing and Marte getting fucked and all? Tired of apathy, but way too cunning to rant.

Since Dunedin's council ratified a "Sculpture in Public Places Policy" in 1994, various interests have been vying for a foothold in its implementation. A town clock has been suggested for Mosgiel by someone who has either missed the point, or seen it only too well. But there are those who would prefer the community-serving rhetoric be shepherded down conceptual art tracks rather than down a rut towards yet another monumental blunder. Instead of once-for-all erections that consistently fail to deliver the democratising goods, they are after sustainable civic commitments to participatory experiments in aesthetic publicness.

It was at this nexus the student Action Group interposed itself. Understanding the values communities ascribe to public art necessarily shift, organiser O'Kane asked, "if there is a commitment to "new" art in the so-called public arena, shouldn't we also re-evaluate our attachment to existing, perhaps neglected art in public places; and attend to how decisions are formed in those arenas?" Their action pertinently addressed the rhetorical conventions of urban renewal wherein corporeal metaphors circulate to neutralise processes of change, and wherein art colonises city space alternately as an agent of dereliction or restoration.



Playing with Marte Sirmay's sculpture, Dimedin, June 1996, BTipto-Angus Colling



Barbara Tuck, Xenia, from the Series *AiclnpeLuos*, 1996, Photo courtesy Peter McLeavey Gallery

Prior to assembling before the media and lunchtime wanderers with red hose, white arm bands and latex gloves, various stakeholders were consulted: from Szirmay and the DCC arts officer, to property supervisors and fellow students. O'Kane's objective was for the performance event to circulate as mnemonic of the processes of consultation and debate, and as stimulus to action. The performance demonstrated the possibility of recycling the city's ideological spaces of meeting and decoration. Most potently this arose in the unrehearsed, but scheduled, arrival of a St. John's ambulance and crew to attend the recumbent body of art. Knowingly or not, they had opened a space of becoming by giving the performance over to the unpredictable intervention of a pair of medics. As the St. John's officers played at re-animation, ran an ECG, draped the metal sheets with a blanket, and played let's pretend with the fibrolater, there was incredulity and delight.

The medics' light-hearted spirit, when coupled with the knowing and strategic political commitment of those who orchestrated the event, demonstrated what is at stake in ensuring spaces of publicness are opened. Namely, the survival of positive renderings of unexpectedness and unassimilated difference. By being prepared to reveal that they were never really in control of what they were doing, the students pointed to the sensually pleasing logic of understanding publicness itself as episodic self-realisation through action, or through those events which disrupt the ordinary sequence of things. Going public is self-surprising. 4

## ALLAN SMITH

Barbara Tuck,  
Recent Paintings from the series *Archipelagos*,  
Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington,  
June, 1996

Barbara Tuck's recent painting is the most intriguing that I have encountered for some time. Tuck's present work is about not taking the practice of painting for granted. It is full of painterly explorations; examinations of the languages of shape, gesture, texture and colour. This may all sound fairly familiar, any variety

of cosy abstraction, patinated organicism or lyrical brushwork coming to mind with such terminology. But it is precisely the hesitations of materiality that Tuck is concerned with.

The intricacy of improvised shape and the nervous, tessellated patches of paint catch the eye first. There seems to be a speed of configuration and shape-shifting, as a pseudo-scripting or mobile camouflage pattern spreads itself across the surfaces of Tuck's aluminium cut-outs. The thinness of a smooth metal support is ideal for the quickness of touch and flicker of colour. But Tuck is not offering the "countable multiplicity" and effervescence of Richard Killeen's proliferating cut-outs. Tuck's involutions of contour (both littoral and micro-biological in their affinities) and the instabilities that occur between these profiles and the twisted nets of surface pattern, are signifiers of an incompleteness. In her own words, one of Tuck's concerns is "how to perturb painting."

The surfaces of this batch of paintings which are variously smoky, waxy, milky, granular or crystalline are particularly arresting, reading as signifiers of inwardness, of slowness of reception and absorption. They are evidence of temporalities quite different to the speed that at first sight seemed so characteristic. They give the work its philosophical as well as poetical feel. Each part of paint which indicates a shift in pressure, a change in direction or density, seems to pose itself as aware of its own provisional status, while at the same time, offering itself to be savoured as an unrepeatable occurrence.

The capacity of Tuck's paintings to move between their micro-biological, landscape associations and a sceptical rigour that eschews such romanticising calls up memories of Robert Smithson picking his way over the terrain of a *Geophotographic Fiction*, moving between rhapsody and doubt as he itemises: "Elastic stress in polycrystalline aggregate", "A doubt which turns to negation", "Uplift in the midst of the most complete blindness", "Photomicrographic studies of fossil frost", "obscure traces of life."

Tuck's wayward striations and ragged patches of colour also remind me of the paranoid morphologies in Bill Hammond's work. Hammond's complexities of pattern can set figures into manic life but can equally threaten to dissolve them into cavities of formlessness. And as the shaggy textures of some Hammonds suggest a primeval psychic landscape so too Tuck's aggregations suggest strange and intimate worlds of indeterminate scale. 🐛

# Short Reports

## GAY CUSACK

Gay Cusack reports on some of Auckland's inner city architecture.



The Palace, Victoria St. West, Auckland, Photo Gay Cusack

Neil Gordon Wilson in one of his prototype fish suits. Photo courtesy Coroner's Court

The blocks between Albert and Victoria Street used to be full of second-hand shops, with all their possibilities of discovery. But the transition to an area dominated by apartment blocks and the Casino has its own pleasures.

How did the Casino come to dominate the identity of the area? TVNZ could have been an equivalent cultural presence, but there is a “Casino Copiers” rather than a “Television Takeaways”.

PR started the process. Initial reports focussed on the jobs and money the Casino would bring to the city. Then came the transformation into a small boy's fantasy. Entire families would come to town to watch the giant working model of prosperity through the viewing windows provided. News reports reminded us of scale — the number of cubic meters of earth to move, the number of storeys down they would be digging and up they would be building — the heroism of working in all weathers to meet the deadline. As the building itself emerged the site lost its cultural accessibility — it was coloured, fortress-like and a bit arty. Finally the opening ceremony and the celebratory cover of the *Herald* reclaimed it for the moneyed classes — though of course the less privileged could come to spend their money there.

Meanwhile on the street something liberating was happening. Two days before the Casino opened it was upstaged by a two-storeyed pub over the road. In terms of style, spectacle and

wit, The Palace came out Queen of the Block.

Unlike the general dolly-ups with fairy lights or the “Casino Copiers” phenomenon which are complicit with the domination of the Casino, the design of The Palace disrupts the new economic hierarchy of the street. Superficially, it doesn't make sense to put a 1930s-style animated logo onto a Victorian building, but the integration happens through design detail (colours that match the paintwork; repetition of the railings and ladder grids in the grid of the neon skyscraper; the skyscraper's top curves match the arches of the lower storey windows) so that the whole structure becomes a single sign rather than a building with a neon tacked on.

More crucially, the integration takes place on a conceptual level. The neon is an allusion to America, to Hollywood (look at the typeface and the star) — it is our concept of what a casino *should* be like. The Palace emphasises the distance between the concept of the Casino and what we actually have. Of course Victoria Street is nothing like Las Vegas, and the Casino is more Kafka-esque with its escalators descending into darkness, strange rituals of officialdom, games with non-verbalised, invisible rules, and watchers being watched, watched in turn by hidden watchers. By making a statement about where it is and in the conceptual sophistication of its design, The Palace holds its own amongst much larger buildings on Victoria Street. It is witty and camp and represents a stylistic coming of age. ♡



# CATHERINE DALE, GREGORY ADAMSON, KARMA PERCY AND BRIGID SHADBOLT

## At The End of The Line; a Melbourne report

One of the better publicised performances in Australia recently has been Neil Gordon Wilson's appearances in the guise of a fish. Wilson has been performing around the banks of Lake Toolondo for over a decade now. Despite his reticence towards the public, Wilson's final act has brought his brief notoriety. Early in November last year, Wilson arrived at the lake with a wheelbarrow containing some plastic material and a container of cream-coloured liquid. He undressed and slowly climbed into a thick bodysuit complete with mittens. Then he placed his feet into a black plastic bag and smothered himself with lubricant before sliding into a khaki plastic suit with a black rubber tail attached. In a complicated manoeuvre, made cumbersome because of the mittens, Wilson used a number of chains to zip up the back of the suit and to secure the quarters of a hood. Finally, he joined all the zips together with a padlock. Unlike an escape artist, he took measures to ensure that he could get out. He pinned the key to a small red flag and staked it beside the wheelbarrow. He got up and hopped toward the water. About halfway down, he fell onto his front and lay there motionless. A week later Wilson's body was discovered by police.

His bizarre death has sparked intense interest in Wilson's work. Aside from a detailed report conducted through the coroner's court, Wilson has appeared in the *Melbourne Age*, *Who Weekly* and *Herald Sun*. Identified by his death, he has since been known as 'the fishman'. There is evidence to support the claim that the suits are part of an extended preoccupation. An early self-portrait documents the prototype of an orange plastic suit, proving that he invented a series of outfits. There are at least two eye witness accounts of Wilson's fishy behaviour. A neighbour once came across Wilson naked and sporting a bandito of coke cans in a field. An old police file contains a report made by a tourist who pulled Wilson out of the Toolondo channel where he was hanging by a rope attached to a bridge railing. Unphased, Wilson explained that he was "playing a fish at the end of the line".

When found last year, Wilson was unrecognisable, having lost most of his body to "masses of maggot activity". In the absence of his physical body, the suits have become the metonym for his life. Already an offer of a thousand dollars has been made for a pale peach garment discovered amongst scraps in his sewing workshop. In this patchy retrospective, Wilson's career is difficult to address without also positioning him as deviant. Wilson is strange but what is even stranger, is that his everyday acts are regarded as strange, while publicly recognised performances, ones which deliberately solicit attention, are not. \*1

# BRETT LEVINE

## Talking Pictures,

Los Angeles County Museum of Art,  
March 14 - June 19, 1996

Pictures may be worth a thousand words, but hardly anyone speaks them. George Strock's *U.S. Marines ambushed on Buna Beach*, 1943, leaves one with the impression that the horrors of war speak for themselves and words will trivialise the message. This belief in the absolute authority of the image compels an alternative interpretation — through voice, which is the 'other' of the picture. The desire to rupture the tension between the viewer, who wishes to speak, and the photograph, which should, if one believes the cliché, compel silence, is the motivation for *Talking Pictures*, an exhibition organised by the International Center for Photography in New York. The curators, Marvin Heiferman and Carole Kismaric, write that "*Talking Pictures* demonstrates people are smarter about pictures than they are given credit for. Consciously or not, as we navigate a daily avalanche of pictures, we learn what images have to say." Heiferman and Kismaric have curated a show allowing others to choose a meaningful image within it, and to speak, through headphones, about it. Whereas exhibitions are often, to use Robert Smithson's terms, sites of "cultural confinement" where "a curator imposes his own limits on an art exhibition", *Talking Pictures* states that curatorial authority is not its intention.

Few of the images are 'art', although this term seems meaningless when placed among family photographs and documentary works. The stories which surround the photographs are mostly enticing and intoxicating. Jay Chiat explains how he mistook a 'portrait' of a blow-up doll for a photograph of his wife. David Levinthal's *Untitled*, a blonde doll on its knees, does have a visual ambiguity. Perhaps the doll is a 'hyperreal' wife, male fantasy object without an original until Levinthal, obligingly, creates one.

*Identification Photographs, Auschwitz Concentration Camp, 1940s*, is utterly macabre. Shorn heads, uniforms and the smiling expression of one of the victims contribute to an installation distinct within the exhibition, showing despair and little else. Diane Keaton's shadowy enlargement of her dying father, Jack Hall, transforms the family snapshot into a late twentieth century death mask, and shares these same resonances.

Perhaps the single most repeated image is that of mother and child. Prison inmate Aida Rivera's loan shows a family sitting in a wicker chair, its unintentional cropping dismembering a pair of toy poodles. Judge Phyllis Gangel-Jacob's inclusion of a courtroom evidence photograph of eleven toothbrushes in separate cups, shares this documentary immediacy.

*Talking Pictures* does little more than suggest more complex implications of photography. Still, the expression of pictures through spoken words, scripted with indifference to the "institutional/museological experience" of viewing is a welcome addition to the language of photography and the practice of art. ☛

# Short Reports

## ANNA MILES

New work by Peter Robinson

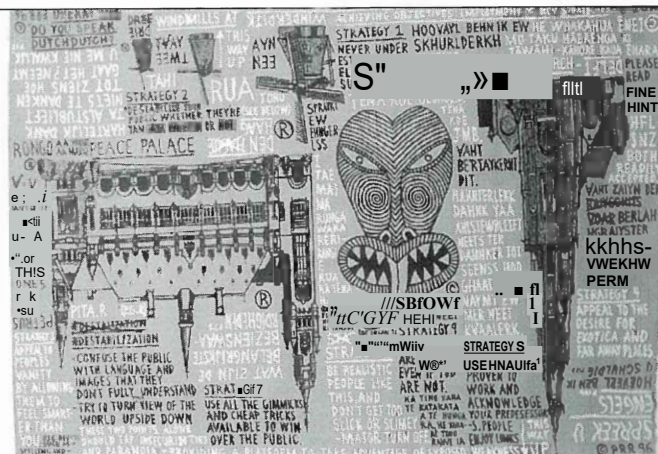
Anna Bibby Gallery

18 June - 5 July, 1996

For me, Peter Robinson's new work has all the noisy charm of newspaper. The visual pleasure of these networks of words and architecture is powerfully ornamental. They have the satisfying all-over pattern of Celtic manuscripts, Persian carpets and Maori art, and are equally crowded with significance. I read Robinson's new work as a form of restless reportage. The editor favours indiscretion and the pattern that emerges, like the most interesting geometric ornament, is powerful for its complexity as much as its coherence. Robinson is circulating irreverent messages and labelling them 'strategies'. Broken up into breathless 'bullet-points', the economy of these phrases is fantastic and ghastly. Is this the newspaper we never get to read or just the one we hate to admit subscribing to? Robinson covers Antipodean domination of the world, Europe on \$5 a day and a rough artist's manifesto. Like the evocative miniloquence of tabloid headlines, this galling economy makes you laugh. Is this the underbelly of the relentlessly polite tone of most of our daily papers and daily dealings?

Robinson distrusts the solemn tone dominating public discussion of cultural contact. He suggests frankly the debate is going on elsewhere, and we are as likely to think about cultural identity in the role of tourist or marketeer, as academic. Perhaps this and the perception that Robinson's irony or second guessing is somehow ingenuous is the source of resistance to it. The irony of divulging a strategy like "Use all the gimmicks and cheap tricks available to win over the public" might mean Robinson exempts his work from criticism. But I prefer to think, that like the cynicism anyone experiences in response to the incessant dumbing-down of issues by the media, this indicates a desire to open issues out rather than close them down. It amuses me in fact that Robinson is not more of a darling of the critics than he is already, given he caters so formidably to a taste for text and that the reportage aspect of the work so clearly mirrors what a critic sets out to do.

Robinson reserves the same scepticism for his reaction to the drama of European monuments that he expressed in *Tongue of the False Prophet* toward the eager reception he received as a young Maori artist. The tipping upside down of European archi-



Peter Robinson, Do You Speak Dutch Dutch?, 1996, Photo Haru Sameshima, courtesy Anna Bibby Gallery

ecture is as blatant a strategy as many of those that surround it but I can't help admiring the way Robinson appeals to the monument to set off and then let down the grandiosity of his propaganda pieces. The buildings revisit the imagery of Antipodeans walking around with heads and feet pointing in the wrong direction, and refer to New Zealanders walking around Europe feeling disconnected. Like his percentage paintings, these works look at the mythology of belonging. This time Robinson is not talking about the complexities of identifying with his Maori culture, so much as Pakeha culture. Robinson is looking at the similar predicaments of trying to connect with Maori culture and encountering European history.

As the deadpan "people like connections" in *Do You Speak Dutch Dutch?* suggests, Robinson seems less interested in belonging than in the difficulties of fitting in. 🐕

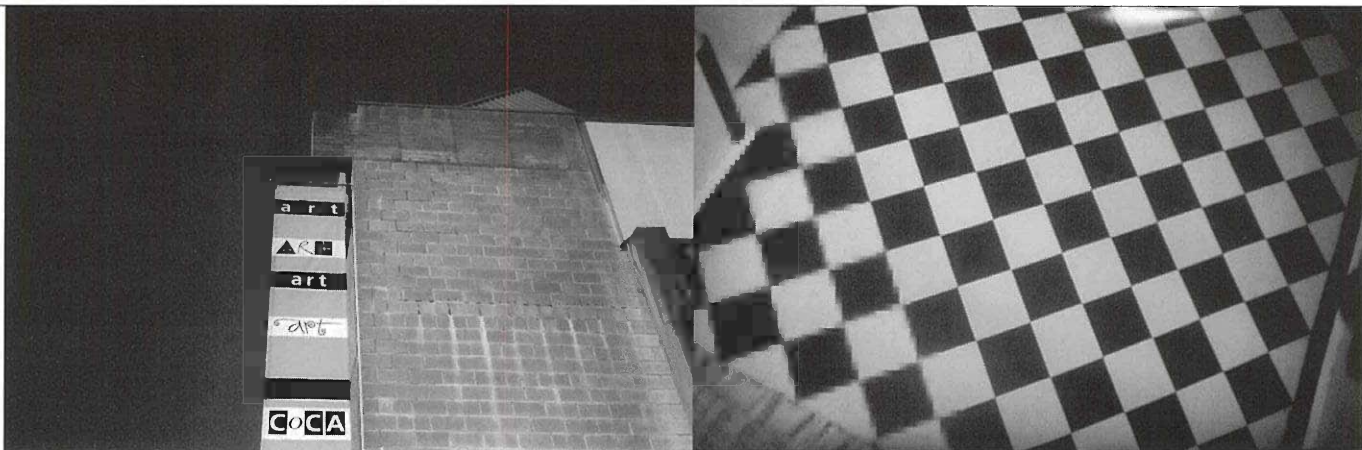
---

## JANE GREGG

Instant refurbishment: Just add art:  
A Christchurch Report

"Then...and now" promises the cover of COCA1, the new, improved quarterly magazine for the new, improved Canterbury Society of Arts gallery. Like other public art sites around the country, the CSA is in the process of responding to the 'groove factor' inherent in the corporate-style agenda of Creative New Zealand. Seeking relevance and increased audiences, organisations like the CSA are casting aside their old names. Historical ties are re-imaged in a bid to delight the new hand that feeds.

Established in 1880, the CSA has frequently subverted Christchurch's conservative reputation. *The Group* shows of the mid-century brought modern art to unfamiliar audiences dutiful in their desire for Sunday afternoon instruction. Far from the



Above: CoCA signage, Photo courtesy Jane Gregg,  
 above right: Fiona Amundsen, Detail from *Argus*, Photo courtesy the artist

## DAVID SCOTT AND ANN SHELTON

*Argus*, A photographic and sound installation

by Fiona Amundsen

Project Room, Artspace, Auckland,

26 June - 18 July, 1996

aesthetic bustle of Paris, New York, Auckland or Wellington, some of the dominant European and American ideas about art entered South Island homes. But that was Then. Now is about accountability. High minded urges to challenge viewers have been altered to include a nod at the market and a bow to notions of competition.

The newly-erected banners outside the former CSA gallery on Gloucester St. encode the ideology. "Art", they announce to passers by, in a number of hip fonts. The postmodern grazer is grateful for the clue. For upon entry, CoCA looks strangely like the CSA with a paint job. Even the art looks familiar. *Drawing out of Context* is on the relined walls, along with *Two Hands of Desire* by John Pule. Both shows are not exactly new to CSA audiences. *Drawing out of Context* continues the CSA's attention to drawing seen in the 1995 exhibition *Drawing from Experience*, while Pule's presence reflects the fact that he is currently a resident artist at The Ham School of Fine Arts.

Presumably, *Drawing out of Context* and *Two Hands of Desire* were exhibited in accordance with Director Nigel Buxton's commitment to "contemporary arts and design events of quality" (COCA1, p6). This common-sense approach to value-laden terminology elides the power relations inherent in establishing measures of meaning. Obviously the community is by no means homogenous. The two shows on offer at CoCA reveal this. One, a largely Pakeha effort, gestures towards traditions within art practice, focusing on the process behind the product. The other reflects the more recent struggle to establish a context for art outside European traditions. Both suggest the presence of diversity and difference, but the banner of "quality" tends to obfuscate, rather than reveal, the specific contexts of each.

The notion of "quality", enshrined in corporate-style vision statements, cannot define diversity or foster community participation and access. Nor can the mounting of flashy signage guarantee art within. Conversely, when the packaging of institutions becomes paramount, the community's attention is focused on art-as-commodity, rather than art as a site for social and cultural negotiation. 🐾

*Argus* (to be vigilant, watchful) is, we are told, a demonstration of "the relationship between digital technology, elements of control, censorship and surveillance." Pixelation is used, akin to that often seen in the tabloid press to conceal identity. The imagery we are offered is that of environments and urban landscapes; bathroom tiles, windows (shattered in iconic spiderweb form), back alleyways and public houses, ie types of spaces usually subject to petty crimes and juvenile vandalism. Within these landscapes the artist's 'censorship' becomes as much a defacement as any graffiti or detritus would be.

*Argus* rebukes the digital rebellion lamented recently at an Auckland Art Gallery talk where Magnum photographer Dennis Stock expressed his gravest concerns for the computer age. According to Stock, each digitally manipulated image should be labelled as such. When photography is securely fastened to its status as a highly manipulative medium, surely digital adjustments are merely an extension of the subjectivity of the author? Converse to Stock's fear of being conned, Amundsen concedes her viewers' knowledge of the digital medium's inherent tropes.

Amundsen appears as a trespasser attempting to cover her tracks, upturning preconceptions of trust and truth through varied degrees of electronic manipulation. She aims to create an uncomfortable space for viewing through the naive dictaphone recordings of radio and computer generated voices. "No no enter" an electronic voice repeats, almost tempting us to engage in similar delinquencies in the space. The blatantly amateur execution of this digital vocal and its infuriating repetition gives the impression of cheaply made security equipment, now malfunctioning, and having lost any of its former effective authority. The installation takes on the appearance of a camped-up reenactment or sample of video 'evidence' from a 'in' documentary-style cop show. We become increasingly cynical about that which claims to be a detached, objective eye. f

# Ejwfr Rood's

## GWYNNETH PORTER

Anita Speijer

Paintings

Galerie Dessford Vogel, Dunedin

May - June, 1996



Above left: Judy Darragh, Piu Piu and Poi, 1996, Photo Haru Sameshima, courtesy the artist



Above right: Anita Speijer, Untitled, 1996, Photo John Reynolds

In March the Galerie Dessford Vogel woke up in another new house, this time in Port Chalmers. The GDV started in 1994 and has two directors, Danny Butt and Michael Morley, and two departments, a physical gallery space and electronic gallery space come publishing house (<http://www.gdv.org.nz>). Giovanni Intra had the first show in the more traditional, but no less forward thinking of the two departments — that is, the gallery. It was called *Jesus hates the world side web*.

The second and third shows have both featured the work of visitors from Holland: Anita Speijer and her travelling companion Jan van der Ploeg. He went first. His show opened with both artists present in April.

When asked about her own work during Van der Ploeg's opening, Speijer said she was looking at tattoos while she was here. Here is a woman who knows what she likes. Adding to the mystery (her work was not yet unveiled) was her exotic speech — very good, Euro-textured English with all its built in poetry. When asked when she had arrived in Dunedin, she replied, "The day before tomorrow."

Double Dutch at the Dessford Vogel? Hardly. Anita Speijer's four works started from historical records of tattoos copied onto milar. Pinholes were pricked into the film at small intervals through which dark pigment was blown onto ratty pieces of buff board. The resulting images (arrived at with no small risk to her health, recounted gallery personnel) were very beautiful — soft and tactile, they looked like flocking.

The tattooed man in two of the four works was so densely decorated he looked flayed. Tattoos do tend to lay bare the affections of the individual — wearing your heart, or whatever pulls your chain, on your sleeve, or rather, under it. There was also an Endeavour-like sailing ship, and an Elk-like antlered head.

Why the imagery? I didn't ask, and she didn't say. She wasn't the gifted spokesman her travelling companion was. Hazarding

a guess, the imagery here seemed very much the yo-ho-ho-and-a-bottle-of-rum variety. Rum is a Dutch specialty. The Dutch were great navigators, and New Zealand was first discovered in the European sense by Tasman, who was Dutch. The country was named for Zeeland, prov. The Netherlands. Many reportage drawing studies were made back then of moko by fascinated European explorers. And Port Chalmers is indeed a Port with quite a past, replete with sailors (presumably tattooed, although who can tell under several jerseys and a coat), shipwrecks, and more than enough drinking establishments. What more reasons could she need?

Her work was close enough to its sources to be as impure as Van der Ploeg's work was not. Mysteriously good ink it was, and more than a touch Romantic, if you take this term as the poet Novalis defined it way back then; to mean "making the familiar appear strange, and the marvellous appear commonplace". ☘

---

## GREGORY ADAMSON

Nostalgic

Monash University Gallery,

Melbourne, 25 May - 29 June, 1996

Nostalgia is literally the desire to return home. But the home it evokes is usually more ideal than real and for this reason many leave home in order to appreciate it. For example, the nostalgia that besets many New Zealanders enduring their mandatory stay in London weaves an island paradise of amiable colonials peacefully cohabiting with their native cousins. This nostalgia is physically invested in any 'genuine' object whatever: buzz-bars and buzzy-bees, the goodnight kiwi and kumara become symbols of this spatial-

## BRYCE GALLOWAY

Dark

Relay 3

Artspace, 20 June, 1996

ly distant although sentimentally present utopia. Consequently nostalgia as an ideal impression, or generalisation of place, is pervasive in the determination of national identities. Reviewing the group exhibition *Nostalgic* at the Monash Gallery in Melbourne given three of the eleven artists, Gavin Hipkins, Judy Darragh, and Ronnie Van Hout, along with myself are from New Zealand, seems 'nostalgic' itself, implying something common to us all.

Curator Zara Stanhope notes the term nostalgia is derived from the Greek 'nostos' meaning place, at once denoting the return to an idealised past and the melancholy due to alienation from that ideal. Stanhope believes the protean nature of the term is echoed by the works in *Nostalgic*. Judy Darragh's *Pania on the Reef*, 1991, and *Piupiu and Poi*, 1996, in the context of an overseas exhibition appears to confirm this and highlights affiliations between nostalgia and irony. The incorporation of 'souvenirs' procured from the Maori into quasi-icons is suggestive of a Catholicism in taste and in the surface investment of religious imagery. The haka and Kiri Te Kanawa, for example, offer an authenticity to the name 'New Zealand' that in themselves rugby and opera lack, operating purely symbolically as tokens of difference to trade for international recognition.

Stanhope also suggests that nostalgia functions on an individual as well as collective level. Exemplary is Mikala Dwyer's *Sad Songs*, 1995/6, a number of tape recorders on pedestals each playing a different style of music, from techno to country, at a barely audible level, suggesting a link between music and the particularity of individual memory, time and place. Music has an uncanny ability of provoking nostalgia for a past one was not actually included in. The Sex Pistols can transport you back to the seventies and punk when in fact you were at that time listening to Abba and avoiding punks on Friday night. 'Sixties' music can evoke a time to those who were then at kindergarten if alive at all. The marriage of infancy and Elysium on the wallpaper of Gavin Hipkins' *Bridal Path*, 1994, seems to emphasise this idea of nostalgia as a place without others; where the possibilities of childhood are projected onto a past of the dead.

L. E. Young's *Elvis and Jesse (the stillborn twin)...further stories of contemporary families*, 1996, consists of two child-sized sequinned satin body suits, one black and one white. These little Presleys lie in wait, ready to entrap any body at all. The vacant suits lay bare the antagonistic struggle between the past, the present, and what might have been, exposing the empty image as the embodiment of nostalgia.

In Ronnie van Hout's *I forget*, 1995/6, which is comprised of *Father/Son relationship*, *Mother/Son relationship* and *Manson/Son relationship*, memory seems to leave the image altogether and open onto a less comfortable sense of time. The past of *I forget* is neither anybody's nor dead; its as 'uncontrollable' as our ability to choose what and when we remember. There is a humour in *I forget* which releases a memory without a place, translatable only into a laughter without words, v

There is a sense of bewilderment as we mingle in the fug of the Artspace foyer. 'In the dark', literally and otherwise. This is the third *Relay*, a surprisingly 'come-all' sound-based performance series.

Now in the main space, the house lights go out and a slide projection introduces the first piece, Cushla Donaldson's *Untitled*. What we get is the New Wave hit *Turning Japanese* by *The Vapours*. Plus, this is a fairly crappy recording. Plus, now my pupils have dilated I see light spilling from gadgetry on the mixing desk. Not only that but the dancing ember of a cigarette becomes some drunk dangerously close to all that expensive equipment. The song finishes and the crowd roars. I find that the ember was the tracery of Cushla's air-guitar solo and that "turning Japanese" is slang for masturbation. I'm sold. Our opening number moves towards achieving what most seemed to ignore: reference to our personal experience of performance with the lights out. Elsewhere in the evening's programme, artists take advantage of our supposed heightened sense of hearing, playing various soundscapes to our captive ears without further motivation. The fridge light snaps on and we grab a cold beer. Now treated to *Big H/ Phones* by Tabatha and Marc: surround sound; not just the quadraphonic variety but the beneath the floorboards, in the attic and outside your window variety. Now spooked like Anne Frank and her extended family, the sweaty, itchy, bum-shifting discomfort of it all is capitalised on.

The third set opened to *Art Beko* by Francis, Adrian and Chip. Three men expounded a sloppy virtuosity of hockets, falling full-moon-side of *From Scratch*. My initial reading that this was an audience of 'cosmic-ravers' was consolidated when their performance finished with the crowd rocketing the clap-o-metre off its scale. Greg Wood utilised the quadraphonic set-up to its best advantage in *Floating Co-Processor*. Barking gave way to a chilling doggy-slobbering physicality, then abstracted into unidentifiable noise that had me wondering when the alien baby would burst from my chest. The clarity of sound was superior to anything else on the night.

Megan Vertelle's phone rang. And rang and rang and rang. The piece succeeded on similar terms to Cushla Donaldson's; a recognisable domestic condition, however the title *Please Answer* gave too much away. Audience participation reared its scabby head in the work of *Agraffe Orchestra*. Each of us was issued with a glass of water, and instructed to drink at intervals between running our moistened fingers around the glasses' rims. The pitch approached its shrill climax, and in my head I heard Jim Jones saying, "Drink the cordial." Impressive in its communion.

Dark fell short of realising its basic technical premise, ie pitch black. *Relay* nights have the work-in-progress gutsyness that makes me forgiving, but I wonder if its raggedness is a necessary flaw. 🍷

# Short Reports

## ROBIN NEATE

### Italian Film Festival

#### Rialto Cinemas

#### May/June, Auckland/Wellington

The *Italian Film Festival* was like a long awaited sea breeze on a hot summer's afternoon. An inspired move, the first ever local festival of Italian film was scored around a tribute to the neo-realist director Vittorio de Sica (1902- 74). With a selection of films from 30 to 50 years old, de Sica's vision lays bare what is lacking in much of today's cinema. Contemporary cinema with all its techno-wizardry is rarely capable of matching the simple enduring magic of de Sica.

While generally agreed to fit within the social concerns of the neo-realists, de Sica's own view of his art is more telling. He once stated that he felt his work reflected "reality transposed into the realm of poetry." His films sing, creating aria-like images that resonate with emotion; the gracefulness of a slow pan across the rooftops of Naples or the brilliant colour of oranges tumbling down a cobblestone street (*Ieri, Oggi, Domani / Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, 1963); the beauty of Silvana Mangano hesitant on a street corner, suitcase in hand, as she makes the decision of a lifetime (pre-Warholian in its immaculate stillness); the sensuality of Sophia Loren who reveals more with a sly look than a roomful of Pamela Andersons; the black and white melancholy of following the funeral of a child, its small white coffin on a horse-drawn hearse (*L'Oro di Napoli / Gold of Naples*, 1954).

Tragedy and humour are often skillfully played against each other, as in the sublimely sad final scenes between the pensioner and his pet dog in *Umberto D*, 1952. The image of the dog is a masterful use of cinematic symbolism, as is the horse in the dreamlike *Sciuscià / Shoeshine*, 1946 and the bicycle in *Ladri di Biciclette / Bicycle Thieves*, 1948. This is symbolism at its simplest and best, unlike the affected lumberings of recent directors like Peter Greenaway.

De Sica's simplicity is deceptive and clever. His films are carefully orchestrated to appear unstructured and flowing. His characters appear as if they have been briefly interrupted to tell their stories then left to blend back into the urban environments



Vittorio de Sica,  
Still from  
*Ieri, Oggi, Domani*,  
(*Yesterday, Today,*  
*Tomorrow*), 1963,  
Photo courtesy Robin  
Neate

they have emerged from. This feeling is conveyed by his regular use of non-professional actors and the so-called "episodic" style of film making. Quentin Tarantino brilliantly developed this stylistic device in his recent *Pulp Fiction* although he used it disastrously in the co-production *Four Rooms*.

The few films included in the festival that were not de Sica's largely served to describe developments of and beyond neo-realism. Remaining sympathetic to neo-realism Mario Monicelli's tragicomedy *La Grande Guerra / The Big War*, 1959 must be among the best anti-war films ever made. Whereas for Federico Fellini the road (*La Strada*, 1954) leads to Rome and the humanity of de Sica's Neapolitan back streets gives way to the decadence of the early '60s jet-set (*La Dolce Vita*, 1960).

Watching the films presented in this festival you realise how small and quiet a masterpiece can be. How many films being made today will have the simplicity to be as evocative in 50 years? 🍷

## Letters

Dear monica,

I liked the way Tim Renner hung my retro at the Fisher Gallery. Often, you know, it is difficult to perceive why an exhibition succeeds. What gives it momentum, impact.

Bunging it in like that, Victorian style, warts and all, suited my curious nature.

It would not have had that power if it had been laundered, cleaned up for the public, genteelly curated, reconstructed for some 'good taste' audience. I said all this in the address at the opening. Think about it.

Jacqueline Fahey

## ART

## SPACE

**Artspace is a non-profit making visual arts organisation with a cross disciplinary focus, dedicated to the promotion of contemporary art practice. Artspace is seeking a Director for a three year term, commencing on November 1996.**

*The Director is responsible for the development, management and promotion of all aspects of the gallery's annual programme in conjunction with the Board.*

**The successful candidate is likely to have the following attributes:**

- commitment to contemporary art practice
- relevant tertiary skills
- strong organisational skills
- self-motivated
- basic understanding of book-keeping and budgeting
- knowledge of new media and emerging developments in New Zealand and International art practices
- art administration experience
- current license and own vehicle

*Applicants can request information and a job description by contacting Artspace, ph 09 303 4965, email [artspace@iconz.co.nz](mailto:artspace@iconz.co.nz), or The Chair, Delia Browne, ph 09 373 7599 ext 7444 or 09 373 3110, email [d.browne@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:d.browne@auckland.ac.nz). Applications should be addressed to: The Chairperson, Artspace Trust Board, PC Box 4506, Auckland 1.*

**Applications will close on Friday 27 September 1996**



# LUNCH

**Monday — Saturday**

July 23 – August 10

**Kathy Temin + Denise Kum**

August 13 – August 31

**Stephen Bram + Kerrie Poliness + Dion Workman**

September 24 – October 12

**Anton Parsons**

**HAMISH  
MCKAY** CONTEMPORARY  
NEW ZEALAND ART  
GALLERY

# THE CONCRETE Deal

April - December

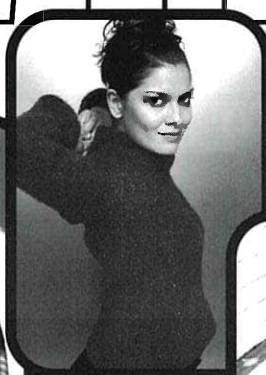
# Deal

James Smith Council Carpark Wellington

Jim Speers  
Simon Endres  
Daniel Malone  
Maddie Leach  
Joyce Cambell  
Yuk King Tan  
Gaum Hipkins  
Anthony Sumich  
Saskia Leek

creative  
vz  
ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND TOI AOTEAROA

# PAVEMENT



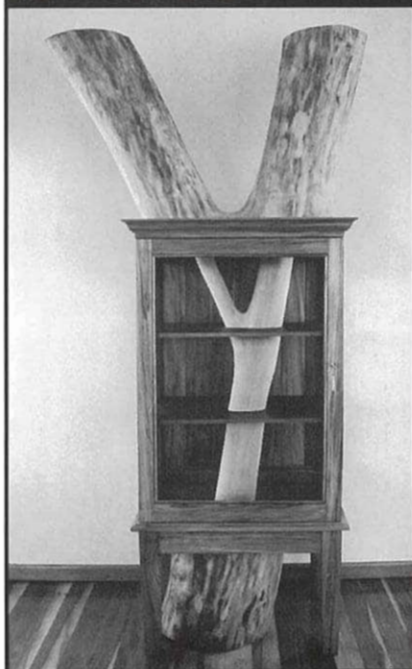
LATEST ISSUE OUT NOW



# GREGORY **FLINT** GALLERY

1ST FLOOR, 28 LORNE STREET, AUCKLAND  
TEL 377-8142, FAX 377 8170

*HOURS Mon - Fri 10 am - 5 pm  
Saturday 10 am - 2pm or by appointment*



## SPACE MATTERS

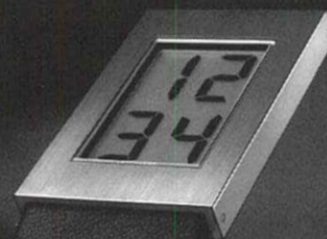
Sculpture by  
**ANDREW  
DALBETH**

September 7 - October 6  
Rotorua Museum  
of Art & History

Open daily, Government  
Gardens Rotorua

## THE VAULT

DESIGN STORE GALLERY CAFE



*...simply ahead  
of its time*

NOW AT 50 WILLIS STREET WELLINGTON

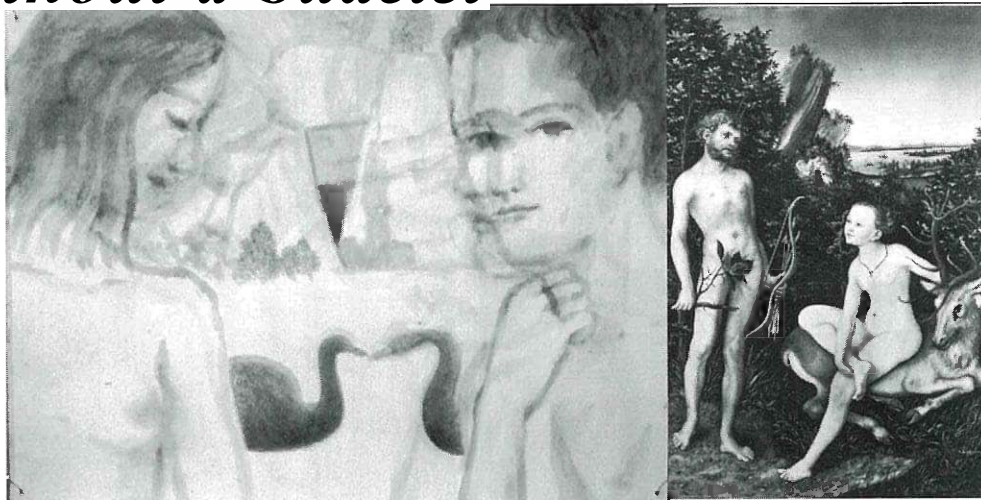
*Our Wellington clothing store opens August 3rd  
stocking New Zealand designers including "State of Grace"*

AUCKLAND 13 HIGH STREET • CHRISTCHURCH 82 CASHEL MALL

# Museum without a budciet

In this new regular column, *monica* invites artists, writers and curators to talk about the show of their dreams

## MICHAEL HARRISON



Above left: Michael Harrison, *Swan Lake*, 1990-92, photo courtesy the artist. Above right: Lucas Cranach, *Apollo and Diana*, 1530, from Lucas Cranach, Max J Friedlander and Jakob Rosenberg, Sotheby Parke Bernet Publications, London 1978

What would constitute my ‘perfect show’? I think perhaps it has been running for years hidden away in the voluminous contents of the Fine Arts Library at Elam, with satellite events at the Auckland Public Library and assorted book stores. I have spent many hours of my life browsing for new pictures and the ‘hit’ that goes with the best ones.

Do I need real paintings, photographs and objects? To meet the stars would be illuminating, but to have ready and unlimited access would no doubt spoil the mystique. I'm happy to live in a simulated international art world, while continuing to physically participate in the local one.

Along with many other artists I would like to become more conscious of my cultural origins, rather than avow to any psychic rootlessness. For me, this means going back some way, in order to avoid the confusions in the last half century. I have recently made a special analysis of my art historical preferences, purely as an exercise in self-awareness.

From age 12 my bias has been towards French and German culture, perhaps by virtue of temperament, perhaps for other reasons still. It seems to be a handicap to grow up in New Zealand with these interests, but circumstances have been such that I've had to stay put. My life has also coincided with a strong anti-English strain in New Zealand life in which I have actively participated.

A crucial, if elementary, realisation for me was that European history is as much mine as any person's in Europe up until the time my (misguided?) forbears left — in my case Germany to 1843 and England up to about 1928 — it seems foolish to forget this history.

My list of favourite (deceased) artists yield 25 names. They were all figure artists at some stage in their careers and they all worked in France, Germany or Austria with 3 exceptions — a fairly clear result, beginning with an obvious avoidance of English and American art. Two New Zealanders of personal relevance are included as a slight counterweight — Frances Hodgkins and Colin McCahon.

Furthermore 12 of the 25 were German-speaking. All except 2 were born after 1862. And so I come across the strange chronological pairing of Albrecht Durer (1471—1528) and Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472—1553).

I can remember choosing Durer ahead of Raphael in seventh form art history at age 17. My first clear memory of looking at reproductions of Cranach comes from when I was a 26 year old art student at Elam. I cannot recall how the discovery came about — I think the work of this artist became part of my life by stealth. In any case, Durer is taught in schools, whereas Cranach is not. Durer is technically superior and ‘safer’ (Durer as Durex?) even if he did not appear to be having much fun. Cranach is something of an oddity, much more trashy, especially as a painter of far too many ‘mythological subjects’. How could we ever take his art as seriously as Durer's?

If we look at his life, it is clear that Cranach worked his way up to be an ‘establishment’ painter. This was in a provincial German court, but an enlightened one for the time. What he managed to retain, while being ‘the swiftest of painters’, was a sense of playfulness combined with a relentless curiosity as regards the appearances of the world.

And so, I would like to propose for my perfect show of the moment, with an unlimited budget to transport aged and fragile painted wood panels, a selection of paintings by Lucas Cranach and assistants. These will encapsulate most of the themes of interest for me that can be found in the work of the rest of my ‘Top 25’.

Essential inclusions are *The Stag Hunt of the Elector Frederic the Wise*, 1529; *The Garden of Eden*, 1530 (both Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum) along with *Apollo and Diana*, 1530 (Berlin-Dahlem, Gemaldegalerie). Close study of these works (just in reproduction) tells me exactly how far we have come. They are as much part of the heritage of Michael Harrison (1961—?) as of Max Beckmann (1884—1950) or Otto Dix (1881—1967). ☞

Theatre at Large with Montana  
Present Ian Mune as

# king lear



The Ambassador Theatre,  
Pt Chevalier, Auckland  
From August 16  
Downstage, Wellington  
From 10 to 18 August  
4 TEAR DO SCOLD'  
BOOK AT TICKETEX



Centre of Contemporary Art

# CE1CA

66 Gloucester Street, Christchurch  
Ph (03) 366-7261. Fax (03) 366-7167

## EXHIBITIONS

JULY - OCTOBER 1996

24 July - 18 August

Figuring Narrative

24 July - 18 August

Kirsty Gregg - *Good Luxury*

21 August - 15 September

Ross Gray - *paintings - survey*

21 August - 15 September

Sandra Thomson - *supporting roles*

18 September - 13 October

The Land

18 September - 6 October

Michael Dell - *drawings from the inside*

# FIAT LUX

Gallery opening 5th Sept?

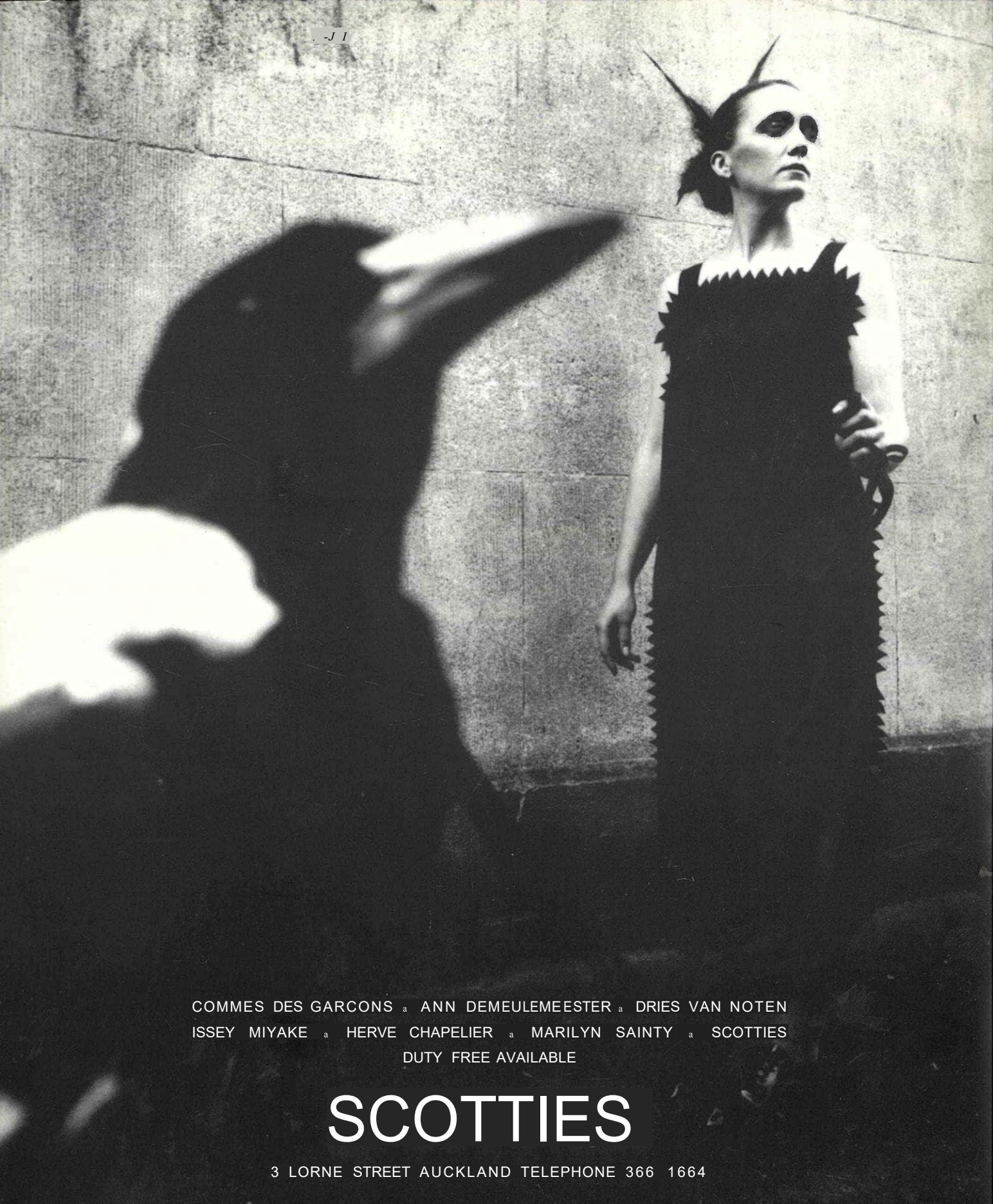
160 Hobson St, AK. central

Phone: (09) 3777893.

CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

CoCA is a non-profit and non-publicly funded institution committed to

*making art work*



111

COMMES DES GARCONS a ANN DEMEULEMEESTER a DRIES VAN NOTEN  
ISSEY MIYAKE a HERVE CHAPELIER a MARILYN SAINTY a SCOTTIES  
DUTY FREE AVAILABLE

# SCOTTIES

3 LORNE STREET AUCKLAND TELEPHONE 366 1664