

aftermath

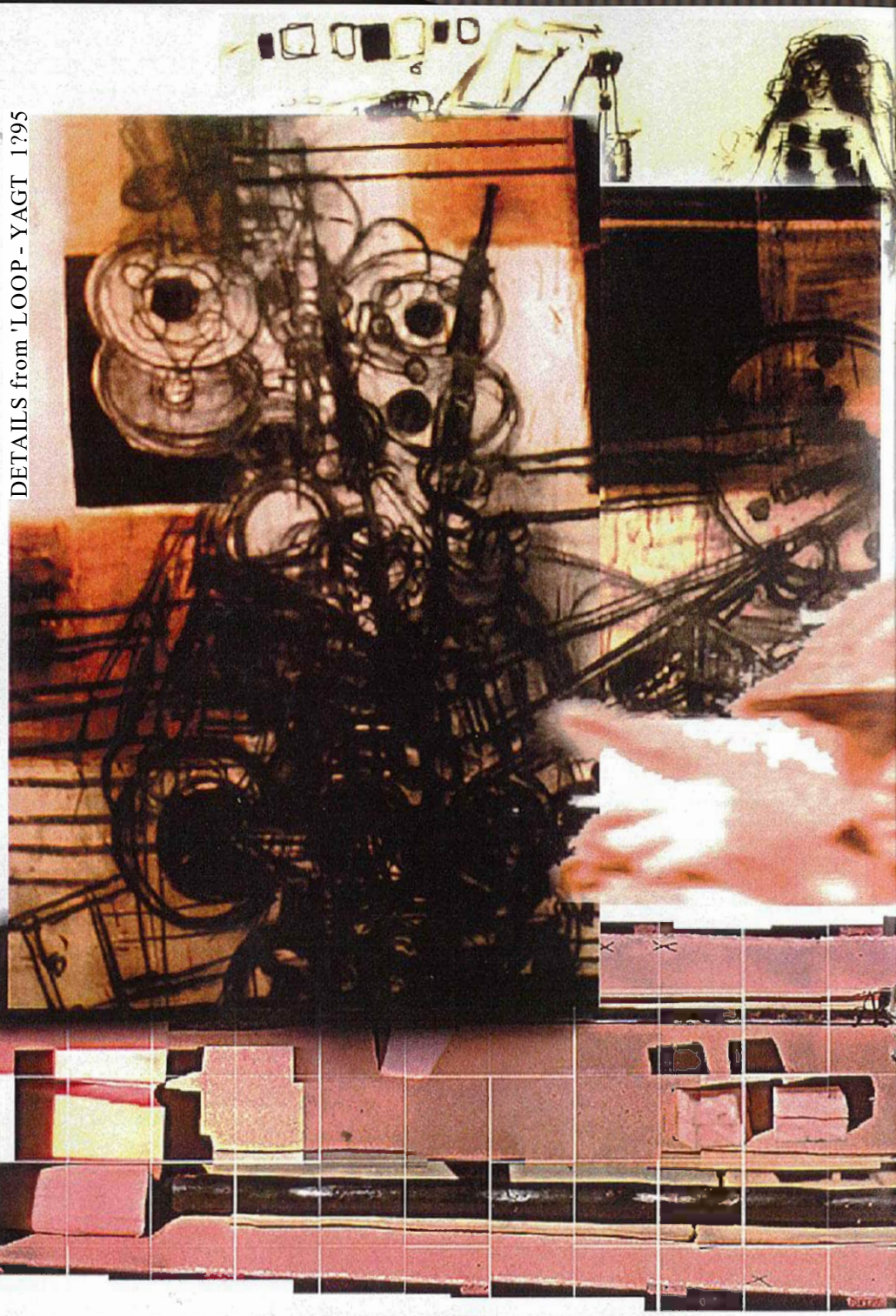


26 JULY- 25 AUG 1996

McDOUGALL
ART ANNEX

/MARK BRAUNIAS
STEPHEN CLARKE
A.J. PEARSON

Text by
JUSTIN PATON



WAR STORIES

The piece of battle-pocked terrain on which Mark Braunias stakes his claim is that of the Figurative Painting Tradition, site of numerous recent skirmishes and takeovers. His art crosses the wires on Iliat mode's already scrambled circuits. In the hectic, eye-dizzying visual frieze that is the heart of his current exhibit, Braunias pins up image alter A1 image in an unruly, ink-black sprawl.

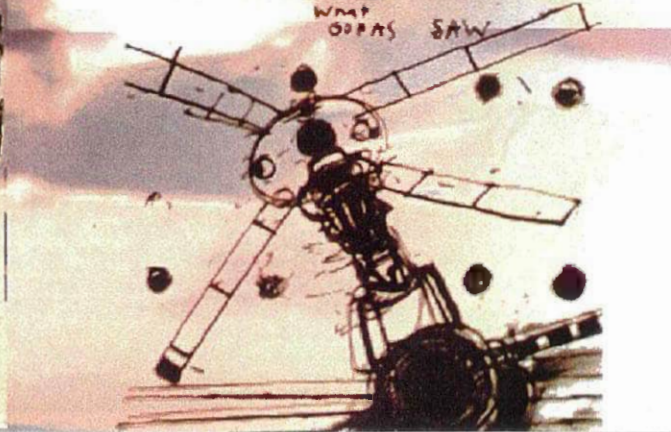
Uncoiled in ink and twink and shellac on double exposures of slippery acetate, each drawing crackles and sparks with graphic energy: like the Contwmido comics to which they pay gritty homage, these scenes are action-packed. Probing, playful, at home on the A4 page, Braunias takes a line for a walk (make that a sprint), but the places it goes and stories it unscrolls can seldom be predicted. His lines flies without a map. His doodles are *wired*

Dealing low blows to high culture, Braunias injects the grid long-revered by high modernism with a Shot of low cultural juice. Here are scenes hooked by Braunias's magpie eye from this century's cutting-room floor: the precision graphics of **science manuals**; the smeared **and grainy blur** of tabloid newsprint; TV's blue flicker; the goofy, lumpen curves of depression-era comics.

story, a one-frame fractured narrative. To read your way sideways through this vast grid of panels is like shuffling randomly through an archive of eccentric human dues, a lost-and-found depot of strange encounters that lure you even if - especially if - their sidewise plots won't unscramble: When will the mad, babbling egghead crack the secret code? Should he share **it with the human guinea pig strapped to a slab in the panel above?** And whose voice utters that paranoid text?

A weird scientist himself, Braunias cross-breeds these one-sheet stones to spawn the mutant mechanics that loom out starkly from his Oddball Abstracts. Tangled with conduits, cams and cogs, bristling with mutant clusters of barrels, scopes, eyes and lenses, they are end-of-lhe-century updates of the war scenes that this artist unleashed half a 'decade ago. Sinister shutterbugs and beady eyed circuitries, born of a post human world of surveillance. chiller and clank their way around the pjimlms bituuuKiixs ink-iiuis. Here Braunias's trademark images of sight - all those gas masks and range-finders hefted by his young Ailzacs - have **sprouted into weird and edgy new electronic lives**, and the air is thick with techno-fear. Stand in the midst of these manic optics and you're criss-crossed by sightlines, loomed nt by

Each image, you sec, is a short lenses. **No escape.**



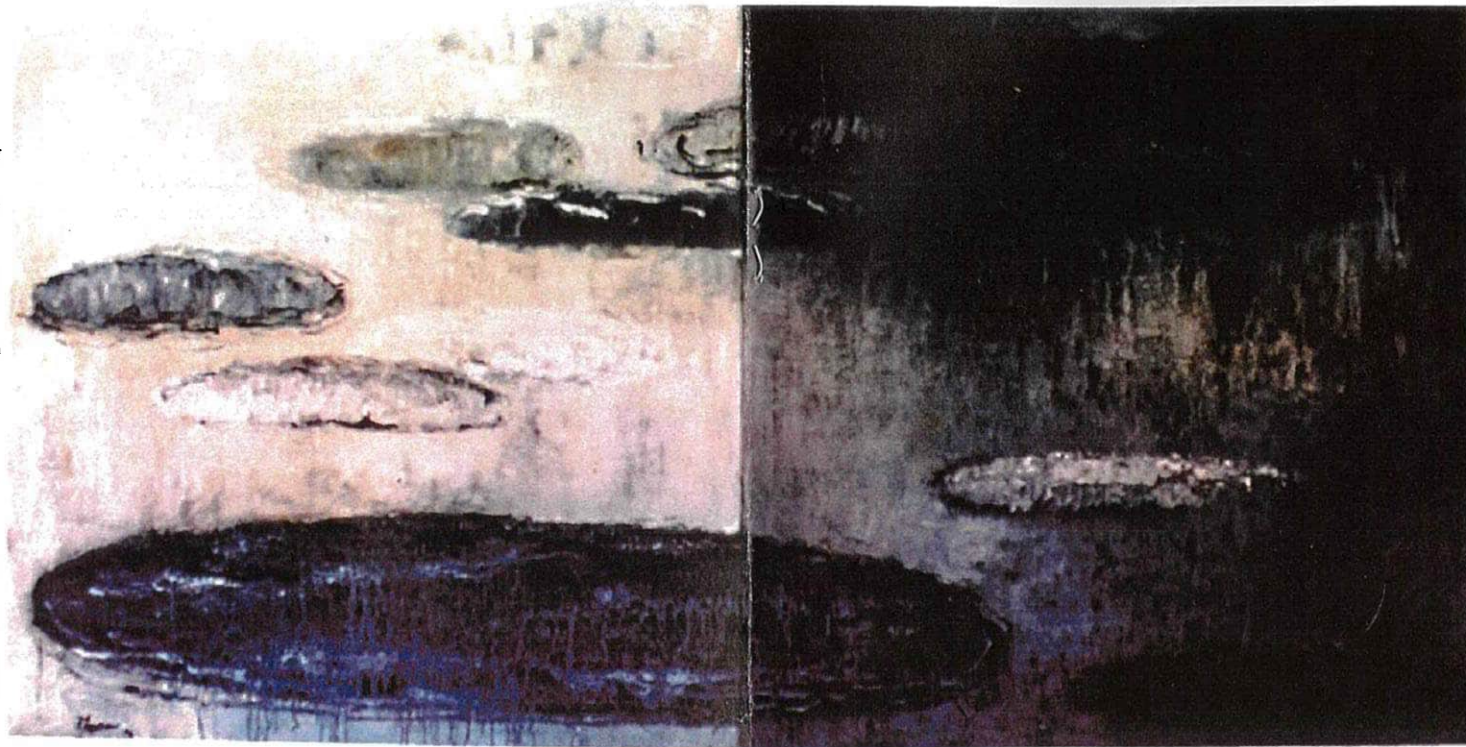
ENDS OF THE EARTH

African. The offer* Aerial a high emotional pitch. The sound Stephen Clarke's sculpture utters is an addled, silent scream. and Brauruas's machine dreams whirl and hum with menace.

9 The soundtrack tv A.J.Pcaisaii's paintings is an other-worldly hush Of this trio of artist lie's least likely to summon apocalypK readings. Silence prevails in the Pearson landscape, yielding no dues to locale. Who can tay with certainly which domain time scenes unveil? it might be 2000z/D or 2000BC. might be a landscape undocked in earthly years, might even be some psychic inscape. If this is the landscape of aftermath, a world razed by the battles that Brauniasdepicts, it exhales unexpected serenity. Finally, the pointings possess a precise enigma too cosily smeared by eager interpreters.

Whatever their exact nuances these huge, soulful paintings form still pools of reflection in a show that otherwise assaults the eye and jolts the nervous system- Oil-pointed summons to contemplation, Pearson's primal vistas enforce a slowing-down of Hit"eye's rapid scanning Al their heart is an klea of time (perhaps even lune; Pearson's unitized by Big Themes. Iwppy to brave cornness), a notion nut ini-rvly iUslrated but embodied in their process: the tender

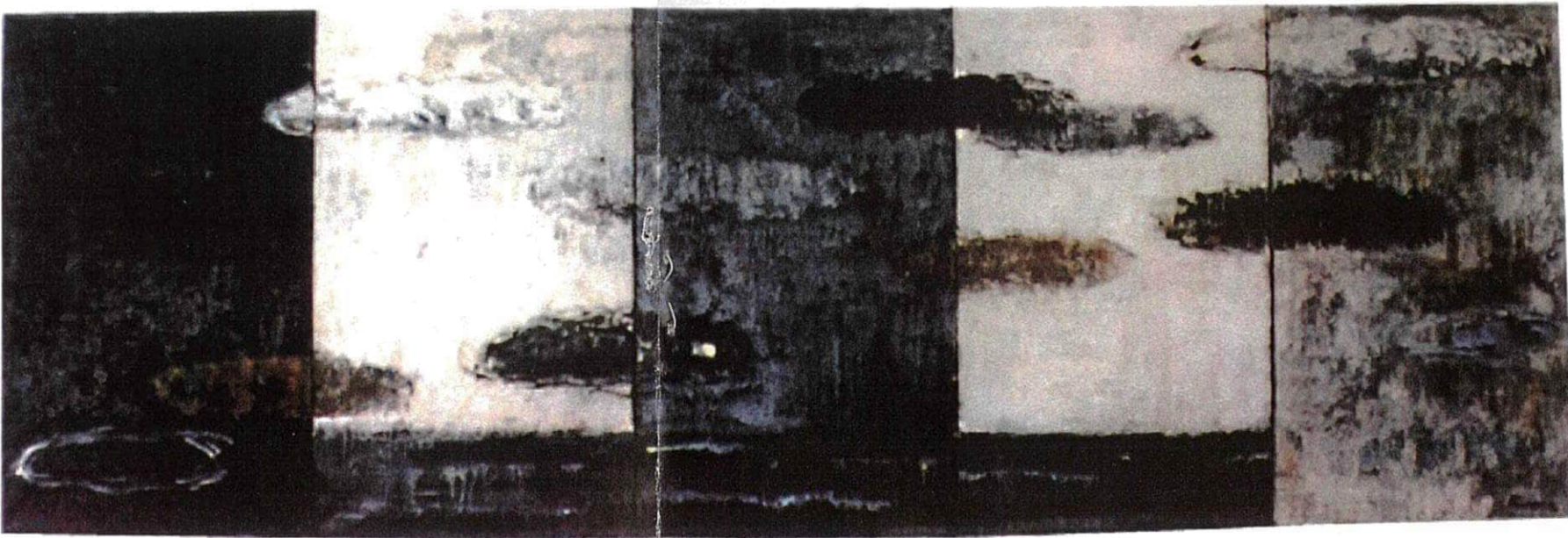
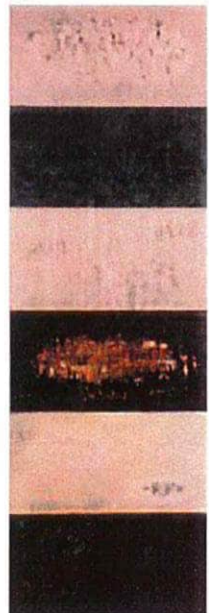
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deliberation with which his brush stipples and scumble the painted surface, the way Pearson's paint seems to percolate from land into sky into land again ui an endless tidal round, a continuum of evaporation and release - sandy runnels pour over a moss-green ground, sombre blues rise into smouldering greys that cleave finally overcast whites. Whether they chart beginnings or end of tune, landscapes or inscapes, these vistas deal m elemental*: land, sky, cloud, sea In Pearson's skies clouds hover benignly, and their soft, smoky oblongs an. cclioed on the lu-adlaidts that lie masslly below in die forms «il git-ji seething ponds. Real primal-swamp country.

Faced with a genre everywhere dismissed os passe or parcelled off imide embarrassed quotation marks, IVorsun has sought some way to paint landscape without sneering al illov.-tech limitations, condescending lo its rearguard past, or pinning it to a given place. These nowhere: resemble slow motion, melancholy Monels painted in some Givemy that time forgot No figures inhabit Pearson's topographies, but their associations are irrepressibly bodily. His real subject, after all is lire body of the land, and finally the body of the viewer who stands, peering, blinking, and listens in on these paintings' sombre mood-music

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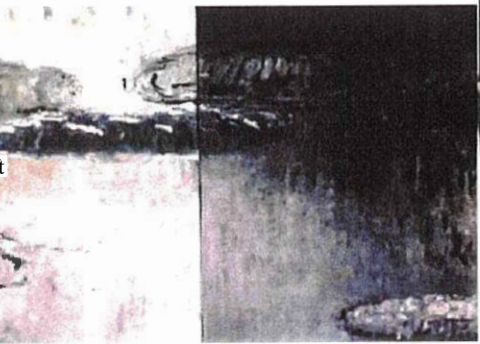


DARK DAYS, DIRE WARNING
 Ihsastrous predictions flourish as any
 tentun ends, and those prophesies
 have always found form, howevut
 fractured, in a closing epoch's art. This
 century's closing years have suffefrd
 no shortage of doomv foretellings, Nor
 has its art lacked for apocalyptic images.

For so long the vehicle of high hopes
 and Utopian ideals, modern art in the
 later years of this <cntun look a hit m
 its ideological uncarriage, plummeting
 to earth in a well-publicized blaze of
 inntx'ent hopes In this burnout, the
 whole and ideal forms of earlier art -
 the weightily hewn sculptural body,
 the fully fleshed figure painting, the
 confidently surveyed landscape - have
 been gutted of their old meanings.

Disconnection prevails; the centre of
 cultural gravity won't hold- Go< is a
 word in a dictionary. Dazed .inc
 unmoored by this quake in the
 imaginative landscape, some artists left
 those old forms lor dead For others
 the challenge has been to make a home
 >n the disaster zone. to take up edgy
 residence amidst the wreckage and
 piece together from the nibble' shapes,
 and scenes lhal tell some truth -

however bitter or makeshift, however
 hungover or cross-grained, however
 fraught with risk of melodrama about
 this doubt wracked and centrifugal
 moment Theirs is a landscape of
 aftermath Here are three inhabitants.



Catalogue Design: Stephen Clarke



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 mi: Doci MEM CoMPAM for their enthusiasm for the project