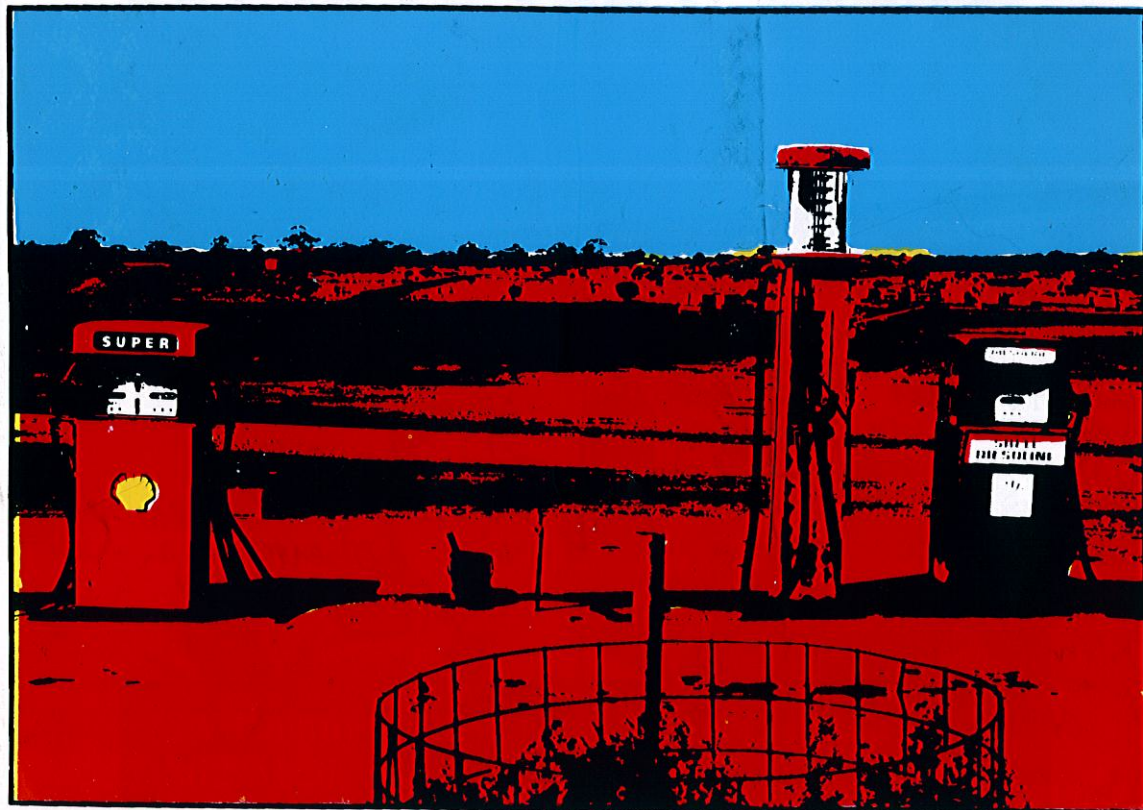


Praxis M#5: Winter Issue 1984 \$3

Australian Cultural Identity



A West Australian Journal of Contemporary Art

Contents

Editorial Comment.....	Nigel Helyer.....	5
What's the Alternative.....	Praxis Gallery.....	6
EYECON; Reading Womens Film.....	Cinematrix.....	7
The Cultural Complex; James Street and "North-bridge".....	David Brown.....	10
Artists Accounting.....	Bob Poolman.....	12
Notes toward a Western Australian Art History.....	Julian Goddard.....	14
The "Bad" Biennale?.....	Jane Barwell and Michael Carlin.....	16
Autobiz-speak; The G.M.H. Camira and "Australianess".....	Lloyd Marsh.....	18
Perceptual Identity.....	Allen Vizents.....	21
Media Space at the I.M.A.	Peter Anderson.....	23
Adam Green Lives in a tree.....	Terry O'Malley.....	24
Book Review; "The Archibald Paradox".....	Tom O'Regan.....	26
A Tourist Perception.....	Paul Thomas.....	28
Style as Solidarity!	Julie Prott.....	30
Political Practice: The Avant-Garde and the Womens Movement	Anne Marsh.....	31
The Sculptor in A Painters World.....	Theo Koning.....	36
The Praxis "New Painting" Exhibition.....	David Brown.....	39
Australian Cultural Identity Crisis(?).....	Jane Sramek.....	40
Producing culture in W.A.	Alan Mansfield.....	42

POST CARD



Dear Readers,

Ah! You've at last turned the page! Now you find out that the postcard designs, layout and printing of the cover of this issue of "M" all took place here at the Praxis Community Poster Workshop, a project of Praxis supported by the C.E.P. and I.L.D.A.C.C.

Please read on at your leisure and ponder the question of the Australian Cultural Identity beyond its postcard dimensions.

XXXXXX

Pam Kleemann
Roxy McGuire
Jane Sramek

"Australian Cultural Identity?" by Jane Sramek 1984

"Cue Gardens" © Pamela C. Kleemann 1984

*Ci-Dag Noreen - been
travellin a good few days
now. Stopped for gas at this
last outpost. Thought you'd
like this postcard as a souv-
enir of a bit of Aussie
culture. Nuthin much
else out here though. It
must've all slid into the
great open void in the
middle. Apart from the
occasional radioactive
rabbit jumpin up & down.
Time to make tracks.
Blimey that red dust
gets everywhere.
cheek luv. Mervyn.*

PS. Hows the littlies?



*Noreen + the kids
at Post Office
Worlds End Creek
via Robertstown
S.A.*

THE ARCADE BOOKSHOP



2A Basinghall St East Victoria Park
362 5126
Open 10-6 Monday — Friday 10-1 Saturday

Editorial Policy Statement Praxis M 5

As **Praxis M** is the sole contemporary arts journal currently published in Western Australia, its principal function must be to establish a forum for analysis, evaluation and debate of cultural practice within its regional area. However, this responsibility to monitor emergent West Australian material can only be reasonably undertaken within the context of a broad perspective of cultural developments nationally and internationally.

We might reasonably describe our regions visual culture as emergent in the sense that it is not yet densely sedimented, (by the incremental pressures of population and historical tradition); nor is it yet polarised by the polemics of ideologically opposed factions. For these reasons the responsibilities of this journal can only be addressed by providing a vehicle for discourse which considers the entire gamut of cultural practice and embraces in its regard the widest possible spectrum of analysis and critical stance, avoiding at all costs the establishment of a narrow and partial platform, (which might be a reasonable strategy elsewhere!)

The editorial board wishes to thank the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council for its interest and generous support, for the forthcoming financial year, (1984/85), with grant aid of \$8000 to defray production costs. With our activity thus underwritten for the next four issues **Praxis M** will have the opportunity to consolidate upon its modest beginning and develop both the infra-structure of its critical concerns and its distribution network. We remain actively concerned to encourage artworkers and writers working in Western Australia to enter into the critical dialogue, using the pages of this journal as a vehicle.

We wish to extend an open invitation to potential contributors and ask you to note that the remaining issues for 1984 will be broadly thematic, providing a certain coherence to the publication. From the point of view of authors, they are intended as a leit-motiv and not a constraint.

M-6 SPRING ISSUE

Cultures in collision/collusion. The formation and structure of social and cultural networks.

Dominant and emergent; corporate and counter; marginalised and transitional cultures. Deadline for copy, September 1st. Publication, October.

M-7 SUMMER ISSUE

Holiday issue "The Romance of Semiotics", dealing with cultural analysis per se. Its historical development, its effective relationship with cultural production/producers. Its adaption and development within an Australian context.

Deadline for copy, October 15th. Publication, November.

All manuscripts should be:-

- 1.No longer than 3,000 words.
- 2.Original unpublished material.
- 3.Typed with double spacing, on one side of the paper only, with material for italics underlined in the text.
- 4.Lengthy quotations are to be indented and footnoted.
- 5.Photographs and illustrations must accompany the manuscripts and be of a minimum 15cm x 20cm. Photographs must be glossy. The title, medium, author and metric dimensions of the original, as well as photo-credits should be written on the reverse in soft pencil.
- 6.A copy of the manuscripts should be retained by the author as the editor cannot accept responsibility for loss or return.

All enquiries and contributions should be directed to Nigel Helyer at the Praxis Gallery Tel. (09) 335 9770, during office hours. P.O. Box 536, Fremantle, W.A. 6160

Editorial Comment

The Imperial Camping Trip.

Nigel Helyer

The mechanisms of quotation have recently formed the obsessive subject of much Australian cultural practice, so to are they successfully employed as a general characterisation of Australian cultural history across the board. As such they are centralised as salient features in our discussions, framing commonly invoked terms of reference:- *trans-location; trans-portion; re-creation; re-production; an entire nation viewed as an act of mimesis; a Europe blissfully re-planted.*

It is pertinent to note that these terms all have a perjorative function when used in this context and it is no surprise that when Australian cultural history is articulated by such Euro-centric concepts it is necessarily damned in its attempts to re-produce its parent cultures; all points of difference being interpreted as indications of a failure in the cultural process, as dysfunctional.

Such a mechanistically comparative view would best be resisted by the European and native born Australian alike as it inevitably forms a cynical closure upon all cultural debate and, no doubt, romanticises those parent cultures under the cover of distance and temporal separation.

A Euro-centric view is, of course, inescapable for many "recent" Australians but this can be harnessed for constructive purposes within the Australian context; in a similar fashion those terms of "cultural imposition" can be re-examined and recuperated to provide new and generative meanings.

As a means to investigate the mythology of Quotational practice as a formative element in Australian culture, (and here we should make the distinction between this historical process and the temporary fascination with the act of quotation, which stems from European linguistic theory), we can draw up a simple historical scenario. We can consider a continent peopled in the final imperial expansion of an industrial nation, its population constructed by coercion and contract, its natural resources exploited at a rate only moderated by the logistic problems imposed by distance; its "natural" economy unseen or ignored. Consider too this operation from the colonial point of view as a



kind of vast campaign, a quasi-military operation which demanded for the sake of expediency the adoption of a selected and compressed range of both physical "tools" and social "constructions". Let's go whole hog and make a simple analogy with a camping trip where we adopt, for pragmatic reasons, a reduced set of "tools" which whilst functioning in a physical way inevitably stands as signs for our domestic life. The sleeping-bag acts for the bed-room; the billy for the kitchen; the tent, house and so on. So to the colonial enterprise established bridgeheads with a similarly reductive baggage, a quotational compression of the physical and social construction of England; again this baggage had two prime functions. Each element having a pragmatic usage, say, (a gaol, a woolstore, a hotel), but fused with this is the ambassadorial function of the cultural sign, (which would in this case signify the entire range of European Architecture). Where architecture is concerned this reduced range produces reactions of pleasure in Europeans who view the compressed range of style in (say), Fremantle; Bank; Hotel; Prison; Wharf; Railway, reading it as a Toytown effect.

However the logistics of distance and geography which imposed this compression of cultural range were also the elements which undermined their signification function. The physical structures of the new colony long out lived the contingencies they were intended to service, to become part of a secondary sequence of acculturation. Their ambassadorial function as cultural signs for a distant Europe rapidly fading to be re-constituted as signs for a new Australia ("Historic Australia is therefore composed of nostalgic and dislocated signs for an now effaced Europe). Detached

from their parent context these signs naturally embedded themselves within the new and synthetic (sic) process that signalled the development of a separate history. Reworking and transmuting that material originally intended to facilitate the effective implantation of Europe in the Southern Hemisphere; gradually establishing an "index of difference" on a cultural level to mirror that grand index of difference to be found in the landmass, its flora and fauna, which constituted the supra-social identity of Australia.

But getting our feet back on the ground, such a clean cultural and historical break is of course wishful thinking. The terms "Cringe" and "Strut" usefully encapsulate the crisis of confidence historically experienced by Australians, continually seeking approval and criteria from overseas, whilst realising the inappropriate nature of such foreign models.

The final snare when considering the national identity is to open the Pandora's box of its economic history, (we won't here!), suffice it to say that the ownership and control exercised over the Australian territory and its economic processes may well have transferred from the hands of the colonial power, but only to be passed to the multinationals, who through the insidious operations of the mass-media and economic engineering manipulate the identity and cultural and political processes of Australians in a manner that far out-reaches those concepts of identity issuing from the original colonial imposition, or the myths of the bush and the pastoralists. □



Whats the Alternative?

prawn night /'pron nait/; n. Colloq. a social function at a club at which prawns and beer are served.
praxis /'praekses/; n. 1. practice, esp. as opposed to theory. 2. habit; custom. 3. a set of examples for practice. [ML, from Gk] **pray/prei**. v.t. 1. to make devout petition to (God or an object of worship). 3. to make petition or entreaty for; crave.

The *Alternative* has become *Contemporary* and as such a "contemporary art space" may at first glance appear to operate in the same area of concern as the major state galleries, the pertinent question is therefore not *where* but *how*?

Praxis Gallery, as its name implies, is most readily and accurately categorised at the pragmatic level; by a simple listing of its endeavours, its orientation towards, and support of, young artists for whom Praxis provides vital first exhibition opportunities, its community programmes which seek to establish a wide base of interest and involvement with art practice within the public at large, (mural programmes, community poster workshop), and its continuing efforts to encourage exchange and debate both through its monthly forum series and the ongoing artist-in-residence programme which injects fresh and often controversial material into the metropolitan area. Whereas "contemporary art spaces" are

severely limited by financial constraint and inadequate resources they are unhindered by the considerations of a permanent collection and cumbersome, (or isolated), administrations which are often encountered in the larger state galleries. Neither are they fettered by the considerations of fashion and the consequent economic viability of exhibition material which is the bottom line that all commercial galleries have to negotiate.

In many respects this "trade-off" works to the advantage of the contemporary-space. Whilst organisationally *lean* a gallery such as Praxis can remain responsive to the needs of the community; can retain a facility for self-criticism together with the flexibility for constructive change and, most importantly, can constitute itself as an *open-access* group approachable on a "grass-roots" level for practicing artists and the general public alike.

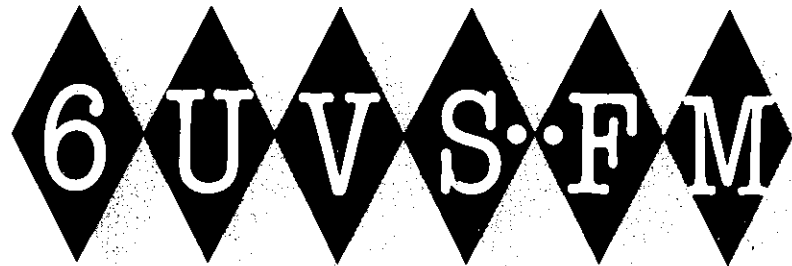
The Praxis Group may be joined by annual subscription entitling members to receive the monthly newsletter and use the gallery and its facilities. The cost of subscription is \$5 concession; \$10 individual and \$15 for organisations and institutions; further information about the Gallery, its programme and its projects can be obtained by calling Julian Goddard or Nigel Helyer on (09) 335-9770, or visiting the Gallery office, situated at, 33 Pakenham St., Fremantle, WA. P.O. Box 536, Fremantle, 6160 WA.

It would be pedantic, (or simple minded), to assert that the aims and objectives of the Praxis Gallery could be defined in terms that easily differentiated its ideology or philosophy from those held by a general background of state and commercial exhibition venues.

The epithet "alternative-space" that Praxis, and like minded organisations through out the continent once used to describe themselves has lost its currency, along with those other legacies of the sixties *oppositional-practice*, and *non-consensus art*. A major reason for this "parting of ways" may well be the assimilation of annexation of such artistic-guerilla practice by the major state institutions, rendering it, in many respects, ideologically ineffective; forcing the "alternative-spaces" to re-examine their role.

Universities Radio Limited
 C/o University of W.A.,
 Nedlands, W.A. 6009.

Telegrams: Uniwest Perth.
Telex: A.A. 92992.
Telephone: 380 2787.



92.1: The Sound Alternative

EYECON; Reading Womens Film .

Cinematrix

A 'retrospective' usually implies a selection of film representative of others from an authorized canon, but Cine-Matrix's first film season, ten years of Australian Feminist Film, has a rather different function. The films were chosen not so much with the aim of constructing a narrative of progress finally reaching its apogee in the ultimate 'Feminist Film'. Rather, as a group that involves film-makers, we wanted to construct a context for ourselves, a place from which to speak, a relation to a tradition of feminist film-making and debate already established in the Eastern States. We wanted to open up a space for discussion about representations of women and about feminism, to establish some common ground for women to participate as a collective entity in the growing 'film culture' of Perth.

For those of us who are film-makers, it is important to involve other women in the discussions that inform our practice in order that women (this fragile 'we' feminism attempts to construct) become subjects and not objects of representation. Film-making for us involves a kind of collaboration that extends beyond the bounds of immediate crew and scriptwriters, and crucial to this is a particular notion of 'audience', conceived not as a static body of individuals to be reached, (whose needs/demands exist independently, as empty space to be filled prior to the creation of needs and desires), but as a mode of receptivity constantly reconstructed. Just as there is no pre-existent audience, (as market research would have us believe — as in "Give the people what they want"), neither does the film text have a fixed meaning outside time and place, or class and gender. Similarly, feminist film practice, existing as it does in relation to the broader concerns of a feminist politics (within which there exist a whole range of positions) is neither a particular style nor a prescriptive set of conventions; rather than seeking to sell the definitive truth' of women's position in society, it seeks to open up possibilities for change.

To return to the idea of 'canon': we don't therefore frame the films we have chosen to screen as 'great global feminist statements; with a

stable political function, a perpetually assured, homogeneous audience and a reassuring single reading. To facilitate discussion of the historically and contextually variable effects which constitute films, we have organized screenings around several specific, yet related, topics:

"The Politics of Issues"

Womans House; Dir. Anne Roberts, '74
Just Me and My Little Girlie; Linda Blagg, '77
Just Part of The Job, Victorian Unemployed Workers Union, '79
Women Break Out, Dir. Erika Addis, '81

"Questions of Difference"

My Survival as an Aboriginal, Dir. Essie Coffie, '81.

"Representation of Sexuality"

Just Friends, Dir. Heather Williams, '82
Show Time, Dir. Jan Chapman, '77
Relating, Dir. Leonie Seebohn, '80

"Experimental Narrative"

Farewell To Charms; Dir. Carla Pontiac, '79
Just Out of Reach; Dir. Linda Blagg, '79

"The Construction of A Collective Memory"

Grandma Rose, Elsie-May and Lottee; Dir. Carole Sklan Kimble Rendall '78
Bread and Dripping; Dir. Wimmingsfilm Collective, '81
Stations; Dir. Jacki McKimmie, '83

"Theories of Representation" (Two Sessions).

Film For Discussion; Sydney Women's Film Group, '74
Secret Storm; Martha Ansara, '78
Maidens; Dir. Jenni Thornly, '78
Take Five; Dir. Margaret Clancy and Carole Kostanich '77
We Aim to Please; Dir. Robin Laurie and Margot Nash, '77
Serious Undertakings; Dir. Helen Grace and Erica Addis '83

Traversing the season and linking these specific areas is the debate about the relative merits of documentary, (once seen as privileged purveyor of the truth of women's experience), and drama, (entertainment in the form of pleasurable identification for feminists and particularly lesbian feminists). Whilst this debate has been historically central to feminist film-making, it is also connected with broader theoretical and political concerns. Radical theories of representation in the visual media have put in question the 'truth-status' of documentary, with its vocabulary of neutrality and objectivity. A documentary style which does not problematize its relation to the 'real' is based on the assumption that reality is directly accessible and not constructed through discourses and systems of representation. In television, for example, we can see how the repeated use of certain conventions works to naturalize a particular view of reality and reinforce dominant relations of power.

To be able to see these power relations, between, for example, men and women, not as natural, but as produced with specific cultural and historical contexts, provides us with a crucial political strategy. It enables us to see alternatives and begin to work for change.

In contrast to documentary, the conventions of drama may seem more obvious and more easily subverted by feminist film-makers and spectators in their efforts to represent and position women in ways which challenge the patriarchal construction of sexual identity and gender relations. However, the production of pleasure through structures of identification often involves processes which operate at the level of the unconscious. Therefore films made by women working within the tradition of mainstream narrative cinema may run the risk of simply reproducing the very structures which it is their intention to change. One of the films in our season, *Me and my Little Girlie*, a drama, raises just these questions. While the film takes up the important issue of incest, the way in which it does so is problematic: constructing the young girl as the object of the voyeuristic gaze (through lighting and camera angle) and inscribing the spectator in a position of looking, coded as masculine through dominant conventions, reinforcing psycho-sexual relations oppressive for women. The



taken-for-granted status of our expectations as viewers, organized around notions of pleasure/identification/entertainment, can be foregrounded by the kind of discussion which situates films in terms of their relation to dominant conventions.

Our discussion of *Showtime*, a narrative about the growth and enforced ending of a relationship between a young teacher sent to a small country town and an older 'worldly wise' principal (played by Jude Kuring) made clear that identification is not an innocent pleasure. When the film was first screened in Melbourne, many women left the cinema elated to have seen in the Kuring character, for almost the first time on screen, a representation of the object of schoolgirl fantasies, and an 'obvious lesbian'. But how is this 'obviousness', this naturalness of recognition constructed? In the film the character wears a striped blazer, and trousers, which are constructed as such in opposition to the printed smock the younger woman wears, and which signifies her heterosexuality. Sexual identities are here fixed by reference to class: the Kuring character is 'free' (unencumbered with children), sophisticated (Kuring's deep voice is used to schmaltsy effect), and also somewhat decadent (in an earlier scene, the camera focuses on her swallowing a glass of scotch). The other female character appears harassed, over-burdened by children and poverty stricken. The stereotype of the fascinating, but wicked lesbian is alive and well here, despite the film's apparent attempts to put it to rest (for example, by having the younger woman initiate swimming together naked and by reversing the expected positions of the women's bodies on the bed during an 'after fucking' scene.)

Cine-Matrix's audiences found the film a riot: Kuring is less well known in Perth than in Melbourne, so her presence in the film functions differently, for one thing, and for another, discussion with Richard Dyer had already contextualized this kind of representation for much of the audience. (Richard Dyer had given a talk at Cine-Matrix a few days earlier on "The Representation of Gays in Films".) Nevertheless, the discussion considerably expanded the parameters within which Dyer was working, and ultimately the most important aspect of his visit was the space he opened up in which we could begin to talk to each other differently.

Seminars and discussion on film in Perth more often than not privilege a particular way of speaking about film, a way which assumes a certain kind of knowledge to

which those outside of universities have less access. This has the effect of dividing participants into the 'experts' who have the authority to speak and those who don't. Discussions at the Cine-Matrix screenings have been successful in breaking down this academic frame, largely through the continuing commitment of an audience with diverse backgrounds. Because the audience is comprised mostly of women, and given the context that has been established over a number of screenings, many women have been encouraged to speak, whereas whilst men attend, they largely remain silent. This, in conjunction with the wide range of interests in practical film-making, film criticism and feminism, has contributed to the kind of discussion which flows easily from considerations of *what* is represented to *how* it is represented.

1. Richard Dyer, lecturer at Warwick University, England, toured Australia recently giving talks about the representation of 'marginal' groups in film.

The last film in our first season, *Serious Undertakings*, is a self-relexive film, which raises the questions of 'what' and 'how' in a particularly acute fashion. The film sets up no opposition between documentary and drama. In one sequence 'Academics' address the camera, through the use of dramatised documentary. 'Authority' is shown to be constructed through academic discourse and specific documentary conventions, rather than being embodied in 'real' people. The film deconstructs those myths and images which underlie notions of national identity, looking at the way in which Australian identity has been constructed in masculine terms, as the norm against which femininity is defined in a negative relation. Within the binary opposition masculine/feminine the forms of political intervention available to women are shown to involve an either/or



choice: either identifying with the masculine (being 'just like men') and acting in and on the world, or accepting the role of the 'mother' within which the possibility of political action does not exist. At the level of representation this is attempted by juxtaposing images of terrorism and childcare (metonymically represented by the pram), the effect of which is to produce a disjunction-creating a space within which to review these ideological categories. This opens up 'issue' questions in different ways:

— *what form should political action take and how is it to be represented?*

— *for whom is terrorism a possible and appropriate form of political action?*

— *can we represent terrorism in Australia without, as the film would suggest, taking into account its romanticization as a European cultural import, and is the identity of the terrorist necessarily masculine?*

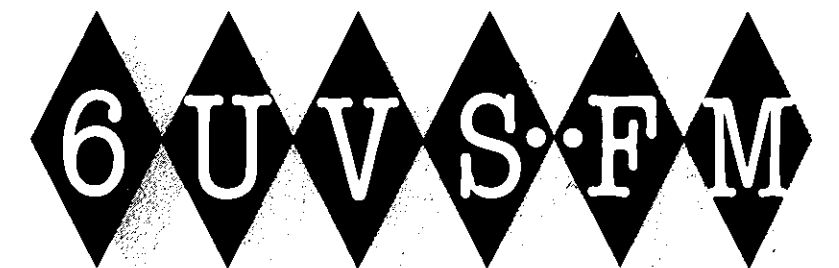
— *can feminists make films about issues such as child care without locating them in a wider political context, without examining the contradictory construction of feminine identity which gives a central value to woman as mother while at the same time marginalizing women politically, socially and economically?*

We hope that dialogue around such issues will continue and to facilitate this we are planning our next season of film tentatively titled "Film and Revolution". This season will explore, amongst other, things how women have been situated in relation to traditional forms of political action, and how the Women's Movement has made possible alternative strategies and forms of intervention that have shifted the very definition of that which is 'political'.

Photo's by Donna Shepherd.

ANNA GIBBS
JANNE COUSINS
JOSEPHINE WILSON
RUTH PHILLIPS
for CINE-MATRIX

Universities Radio Limited
c/o University of W.A.,
Nedlands, W.A. 6009.
Telegrams: Uniwest Perth.
Telex: A.A. 92992.
Telephone: 380 2787



92.1: The Sound Alternative

The Cultural Complex, James Street & "Northbridge"

David Brown

Most of us can be excused for knowing very little of the history of the Perth Cultural Complex or of the present state of its planning. No serious critical comment on it has appeared in the newspapers since 1978. No public debate (or vote) about either its existence or its qualitative aspects has ever occurred. The model for its future development that is to be found in a side room of the Art Gallery is out of date: the planned theatre complex is in doubt; the landscaping plans have been altered and now include, for example, a large triangular area of bare concrete blocks near the old Perth Boys School; the William Street side of James Street (east) will no longer be raised twenty feet in the air; the amphitheatre has gone; the entrance to Car Park No 11 will be open to the air rather than covered; etc, etc.

The continuing lack of public knowledge of this important, if unnecessary, project bespeaks an unhealthy situation which the present government is doing nothing to improve. So "ignorant" (as one architect put it) had been the early approaches to its development, and so limited had been communication even to government departments and to concerned professional bodies (not to mention the general public) that The Royal Australian Institute of Architects was moved to publish, in *The West Australian* of March 11th, 1977 (the eve of a State election) a series of points that included both a recommendation that all future State and Commonwealth civic building designs be subject to general competition and that "public" involvement, in and consultation about, all such projects should occur.

Although a Cultural Centre Planning Committee was formed in 1967 (made up of the Under-Treasurer, the Commissioner of Town Planning, the Principal Architect (and Chairman), the State Librarian,

Directors of the WA Art Gallery, the WA Museum, the WA Arts Council, the Festival of Perth, representatives of the Education Department, the Perth City Council, two architects from private practice, and, later, a representative of the Perth Theatre Trust), which might satisfy some people's conceptions of what "public" participation is, no public meeting was ever held to discuss the Cultural Complex. This fact is unfortunate as there are many people in the community who have valuable ideas on the way it should be developed (or disassembled) and who are finding no avenue of expression.

The key issue, about which fruitful discussion may still occur, concerns the degree to which the Cultural Complex (or "Centre" as it is optimistically called) should exist. At present the Cultural Complex is little more than an extension, or duplication, of already existing facilities (new art gallery; new library; new technical school) and it remains for the landscaping, the construction of a theatre complex,

the removal of James Street and the destruction of the buildings on the east side of William Street to occur before a separate, and massive, Cultural Complex will be evident.

Isolated in Perth, and subject to a degree of City Beautiful consciousness that has disappeared in other parts of the world, we are well placed to repeat mistakes that have become clichés in other countries, notably the United States and Britain, where zonal, hygiene-oriented town planning has run riot this century.

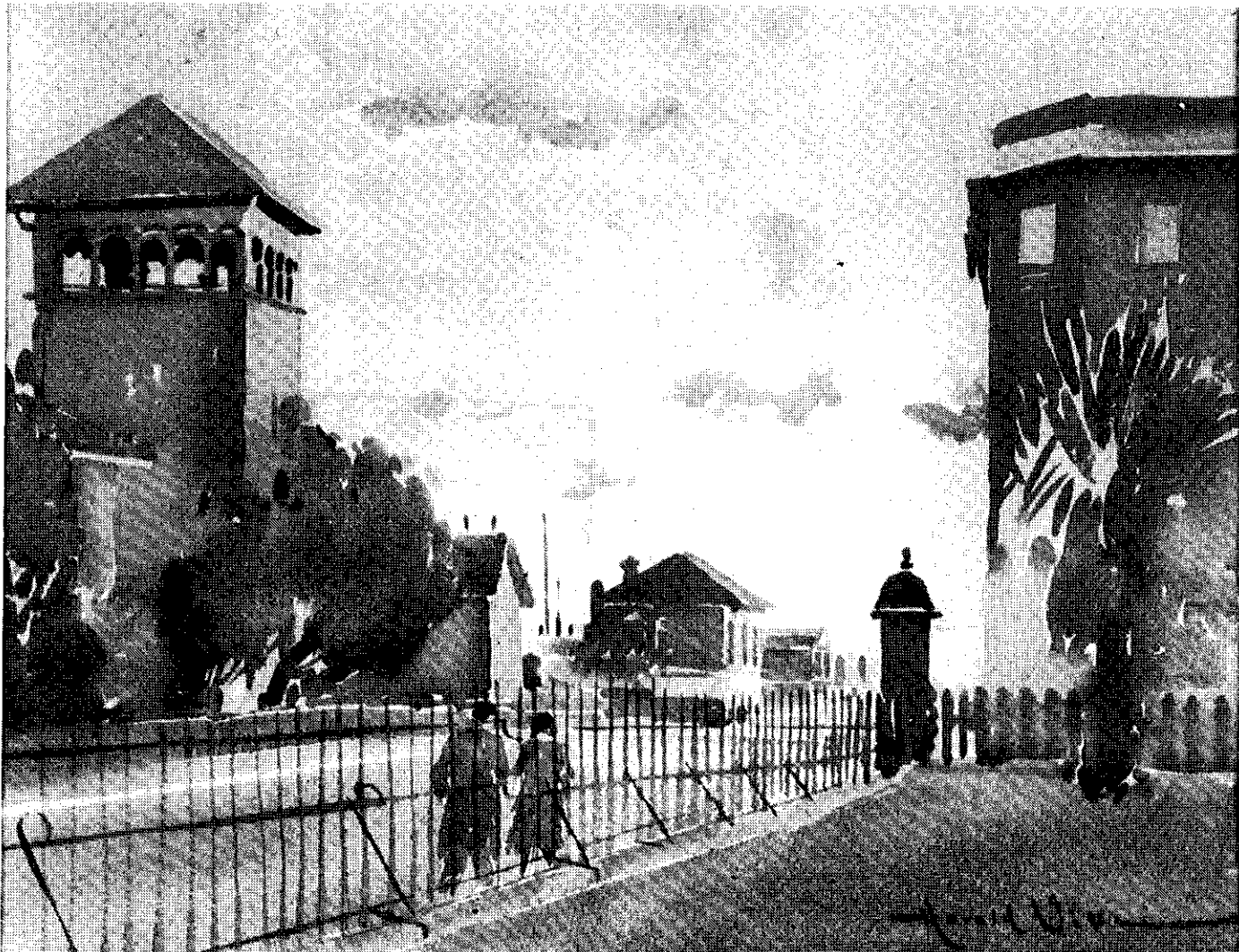
The first hammer-blow against such planning occurred in 1962 with the publication of Jane Jacobs's influential work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Jacobs, who had ample opportunity to study the social reasons for the many failures of Cultural Complex developments in the first country in which they proliferated, observed that "although people were proud of them" they did not live up to the typical claims made on their behalf (eg. that they "uplift" and area; act as a cultural "hothouse"; provide a market and social centre for nearby areas; etc). Writing in the days when tattoo parlours were a symbol of urban decay, Jacobs wrote, "... invariably the ordinary city ran down around them instead of being uplifted, and they always acquired

an incongruous rim of ratty tattoo parlours and second hand clothing stores, or else just nondescript, dispirited decay. For another, people stayed away to a remarkable degree." She argued that planners should think of cultural places in terms of users and their "schedules" rather than in terms of size and appearance of buildings. The central public library in Philadelphia, for example, which is set "in a monumental Cultural Centre, draws fewer users than three of the library's branches, including an attractive but unostentatious establishment inserted among the downtown shops of Chestnut Street." Since the Alexander Library will not even have a public lending facility, there is little hope for it attracting more than a handful of users.

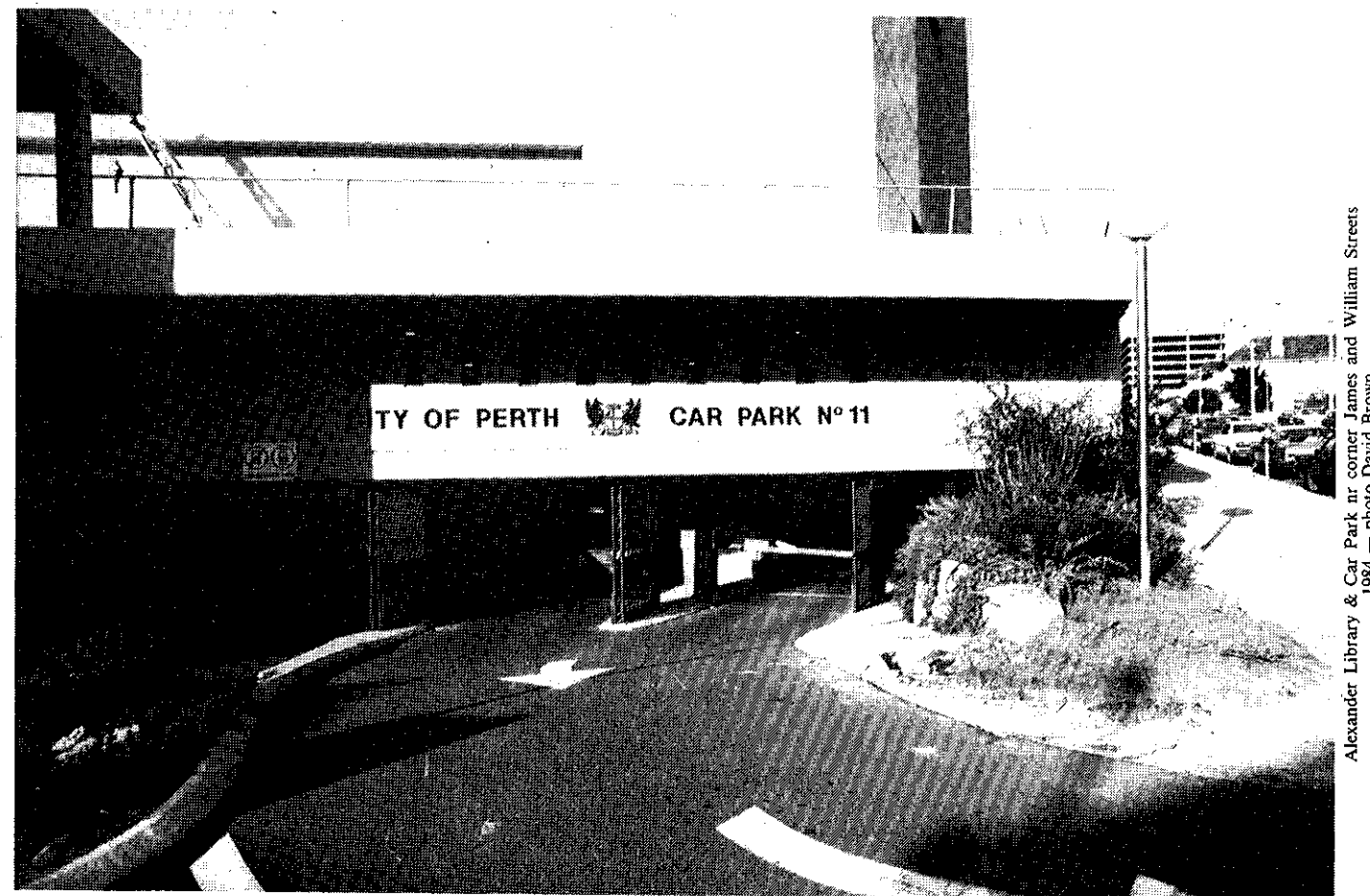
Mr Barry Melotte, the head of WAIT's Department of Urban and Regional Planning is critical of the Public Works Department's lack of appreciation of the social consequences of its developments. He, like Mr Ian Kelly of the Architecture Department at WAIT, believes that the proposed demolition of buildings on the east side of William Street which back onto the Cultural Complex structures is ill-considered. Mr Melotte visited the "Bloor Street development" in Toronto in 1981

and told me that a row of similarly placed buildings backing on to a new shopping development was maintained to the social benefit of both sides of the street. Their retention, in William Street, is necessary to diffuse the perception of the hard edge of the cultural complex behind them (see reproduction 2 showing hardness of the Cultural Complex, west side) as well as allowing the commercial and social activities of a healthy streetscape to be maintained.

One mistake already made with the Perth Complex was the removal of Museum Street between James Street and Francis Street (described in *The West Australian* of April 11, 1977 in an article entitled "The Death of Museum Street"). In Jacobs's observation the increase in the size of city blocks, which has been associated with "City Beautiful" planning, helps destroy the social fabric of an area. It is now intended to remove James Street itself (between William and Beaufort Streets) and link up the two large remaining blocks that together make up the Cultural Complex precinct into one enormous block by means of a landscaping project that is to focus upon a mysterious thing called "Level 18". This would compound further the damage to the social fabric,



"Public Library and Perth Boys School James St." Harold Vike c.1939
Water colour 25cmx32cm — courtesy the Robert Holmes a Court collection



Alexander Library & Car Park nr corner James and William Streets
1984 — photo David Brown

lightness and diversity of the whole neighbourhood that began with the obliteration of Museum street. Even if James Street is kept only as a pedestrian through-way rather than as a living street, but is allowed to keep its street-like appearance, it would still serve to induce a sense of continuity across William Street to the other parts of Northbridge.

The P.W.D. could further remove enormity from the project by cancelling plans, already in doubt for other reasons, for a theatre complex in the south-west corner. Their place could be taken by mixed commercial, or other, buildings, which would add diversity to the area of the complex. Any new theatres would be better located between city buildings elsewhere.

The landscaping that is proposed should also be discussed publicly. My own view is that it is unwise to try to "unite" the whole area in Besser concrete block paving mixed with patches of greenery. The Besser blocks reflect too much light in summer, look synthetic, cost money (that could be put to a better alternative use) and are otherwise completely unnecessary. Their presence outside the Besser Brick Art Gallery should already show the degree of their glaring unpleasantness in supposedly "special" places.

The survival of both sides of William Street (as above) and the retention of James Street are the most important issues in question at present. The landscaping programme is dependent upon whether

James Street remains and will alter substantially if it does. For this reason and for the other reasons outlined above the retention of James Street is a fundamental issue.

Mr Charles Cierakowski, the project architect in charge of the Cultural Complex, and co-designer of the Art Gallery, is one of only two people I have spoken to who do not want to keep James Street. The other is Mr Ron Davies, the Minister for the Arts, who is ultimately responsible for the development of the Cultural Complex. The principal architect and head of the Cultural Centre Planning Committee, Mr Jerry Bateman, who has recently visited the ill-fated South Bank complex in London, seemed favourable to the idea of retaining it when I spoke to him. The South Bank complex, which appears to have become more inhospitable with each addition to it, and on which Mr Cierakowski has previously worked, was described in *The Economist* of April 9th, 1983 thus: (it is worth quoting at length) "... The site which once embraced the 1951 Festival of Britain is now littered with ... buildings constructed at considerable public expense in the cause of bringing arts to the people of London, including the Festival Hall, the National Film Theatre, the Hayward Gallery, and the National Theatre. Each is a monument to a different style of postwar architecture. Collectively they comprise a concrete citadel of empty walkways and piazzas of

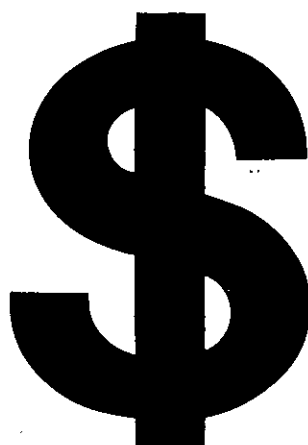
stark, impersonalised ugliness. It has been suggested even that they be left exactly as they are, with a plaque labelled "This is modern architecture". One idea "to extract some humanity from the concrete acres of the south Bank ... would probably be to treat the whole area as a planning disaster area, to be declared free of almost any controls: anyone should be permitted to conduct any activity, commercial or other, up to the level of a single storey. The existing buildings could be encouraged to acquire moss and creeper, to age like Angkor Wat amid a new London casbah of shanties, shacks and 'alternative' activities."

If you wish to avoid needing such prescriptions for the humanisation of our own Cultural Complex and its neighbourhood, the time to act is now.

RING MR RON DAVIES ON 325 4133 AND ASK FOR A PUBLIC MEETING (advertised, and with all the right officials present) ON THIS ISSUE, to be held AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

My thanks to Tom Jenkins of The West Australian, and Ian Kelly and Barry Melotte of WAIT for help in writing this article. Any mistakes are my own. □

hobbyist. To address this question, the Taxation Commission looks at the facts and examines each individual case on its merits. He looks at the intentions of the Taxpayer as evidenced by his or her conduct.



Artists Accounting

R.A. Poolman — Taxation Consultant.

This is the first in a planned series of articles on Taxation and Financial Planning advice for Professional Artists.

The Australian Government would like all Artists to be professional and extremely financially successful.

This would enable it, through the Agency of the Australian Taxation Office, to swell the Government coffers by the collection of Income Tax.

Sadly, for both parties extreme financial success is the exception rather than the norm. This does not mean however, that Artists can ignore their financial or taxation affairs.

In this article we will explore two relevant basic concepts:-

- Who is a Professional Artist for Taxation purposes
- What is Income for Taxation purposes.

A — Professional Artists:

Many Artists, particularly in the early stages of their career, find it necessary to supplement their income by undertaking other work as teachers, labourers, secretaries, shop assistants, etc. The income from this source is of course taxable. The question as to whether your art activities need to be accounted for in your income tax return remains. If you are earning taxable income from art, then the Taxation Department would deem you a Professional Artist and hence the income is taxable. If you are making a loss from art, then that loss could be offset against your other income if you are deemed to be a Professional Artist and not a

The factors include:-

- Is the business/profession as an Artist being carried on for profit? The absence of this does not necessarily preclude the finding that a business does exist, but the presence of it is a strong indicator that the transaction was a business one. Profit motivation is important.
- A person may carry on more than one business. Therefore, for example, you may be both a Waiter and an Artist.
- Education, training and experience are relevant. For example, if a person has been to Art School, it suggests that he or she intends to pursue Art as a career and to derive income from that career.
- The type of evidence that you could put before the Taxation Commissioner to confirm your position as a Professional Artist is similar to the support-material for a Grant application, i.e.; Curriculum Vitae
Evidence of work (Slides)
Evidence of Place of Work (Studio or room used exclusively as a studio)
Evidence of Exhibitions you have taken part in (Catalogues, price list)
Evidence of Criticism of Work, press cuttings, reviews.
Evidence of Awards, grants.
Evidence of Standard business contracts (gallery exhibition agreements, etc).
- The keeping of records is extremely important. If your records are kept in a business-like manner and financial information can readily be obtained, then there is evidence of a business activity. If you do not keep any records or have them kept for you, then it would be hard to say that you were in business, unless of course you were making profits.

The status of a Professional Artist for Taxation purposes is important for two reasons:-

- You can offset losses made against income from other businesses or vocations or:-
- If you do not have other income the losses can be carried forward for up to seven years to be offset against profits.

There was an important case some years ago when the Taxation Office investigated a now, well known Australian Artist who had not lodged Taxation returns disclosing his then substantial income. He, like many other Artists, was making losses at the start of his career and did not worry about keeping records or filing Taxation Returns. This meant that when profits were earned, they became fully taxable with

no offset of previous losses or costs.

If you are a Professional Artist or developing a career as one, you must maintain records of, and declare all art related income so that you can be recognised by the Taxation Commissioner as a Professional Artist and not a hobbyist. Early in your career, works normally sell for low prices which will easily be offset by expenses and therefore no taxation will be payable. However, the establishment of a pattern as a Professional Artist will clarify your dealings with the Australian Taxation Office for your future profession.

B — Income for Taxation Purposes:

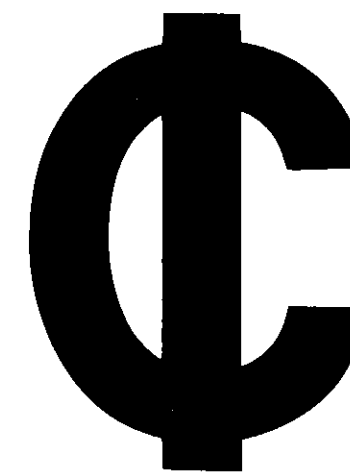
In 1983/1984 anyone who earns more than \$4,595 in Taxable Income for the year, must lodge an Income Tax return. The financial year is 1st July, 1983 to 30th June, 1984.

Taxable Income = Assessable Income — Allowable Deductions.

What is Assessable Income? It is Income from all sources including:-

- Employment Income** from work undertaken to supplement the inadequate income earned from art. Unemployment and most Social Security benefits are assessable income. However, without any other income they do not reach the taxable level of \$4,595.
- Interest on Savings, Share Dividends or Profits** on the sale of any property purchased and sold within 12 months.
- Business Income.** The creation of art for the purpose of deriving income will constitute the carrying on of a business. Thus the income derived from the sale, lease, rental, loan or exhibition of works is assessable income.
- Prizes.** For a Professional Artist, prizes are usually assessable because they are a benefit received in consequence of occupation. The similar situation applies for footballers, cricketers who win cars and trips and must pay tax on the value of these prizes. In contrast, lottery wins or a prize-winning appearance on the Sale of the Century does not result in Assessable Income, unless you are a professional lottery winner or quiz contestant.

Grants and Subsidies. Grants from, say, the Visual Arts Board or the W.A. Arts Council are Assessable Income as they are awards given in consequence of profession. Some awards, for example, the Nobel Prize are not Assessable Income. Loans from the Visual Arts Board or W.A. Arts Council are not Assessable Income as they are capital and not income in nature.



- Royalties.** The income derived from the sale of the right to use designs, copyrights, plans and models or payment for rights to use video film in connection with television is Assessable Income.
- Gratuities, Benefits and Bonuses.** Whether given in the form of money, meals, property, use of premises or otherwise where the gratuity, benefit or bonus is given in relation to any employment of, or services rendered by, for the recipient, the value will be Assessable Income. This is a complex area and not often encountered. If it is then professional advice should be sought.

Abnormal Receipts:

The Taxation Act provides a special formula for calculating the taxation payable on what is referred to as "abnormal receipts." These include:-

- Lump Sum from the Sale of Copyright.
- Advances on Royalties.
- Prizes.

Abnormal recurring income in one financial year (this often occurs when an Artist works for a long period of time on an exhibition and the financial rewards for two or three years' work are received in one financial year).

The taxation is calculated at a concessional rate. It is a complicated formula and advice should be sought from your professional advisor, accountant or tax agent.

The next article will explore the topic of Allowable Deductions. □

The editor will accept correspondence on the topic of accounting and taxation for artists, which will be published in this column.

Notes Towards a Western Australian Art History

Julian Goddard

"All human beings are assumed to have roughly the same psychological need and the same psychological responses. Behaviour which is the immediate undecorated outcome of these psychological drives, e.g. breathing, sleeping, eating, drinking, defecating, and so on — is looked upon as part of human nature. The residual category of non-natural behaviour (in this blanket sense) is then treated as either *idiosyncratic*, peculiar to a particular individual — or *cultural* — peculiar to a group of human beings who have been brought up in a particular historical tradition."

— Edmund Leach — on structural anthropology. (1)
The lack of an historical location for Western Australian art practice is possibly the major factor contributing to problems of identity for local artists. Western Australia is without an articulated art history. That is, there has never been any real attempt to construct a history of Western Australian art. The lack of such, means that local artists are not aware of their "historical tradition" and their work thus lacks a "cultural" context.

The construction of a local art history must take into account the society in which it has operated. The inter-relationship between any art history and its social context is of course undeniable and it is in the social history of this community that its art history is located. (2) The social history of Western Australia operates within a specific structure or framework that reads as such.

1829 — colonisation
1890's — gold boom
1914 — 1st World War
1930's — Depression
1940 — 2nd World War
1960's — Mining boom

Prior to 1829 — Topographical

1829-1890's — Sentimental Recordings

1890's — 1935 — Quasi Impressionism, arts and crafts movement

1935 — 1940 — Modernism

1940 — 1950 — Absent

1950 to present — International

If we accept this as a primary paradigm for social activity in Western Australia we can test any historical practice against it. Ian Molyneux has constructed a history of local architecture which reflects the above paradigm. (3) It reads as such:

There are five broad stages of economic development most relevant to the change and range of architectural influences in Western Australia. These are, broadly:

1829-1849:
two decades of early settlement marked by deprivation and acute shortages of materials and labour.

1850-1889:
four decades during the first eighteen years of which the transportation of convicts provided a dramatic improvement in the supply of building labour and a market for local produce, followed by a general steady improvement in economic conditions and expansion of settlement.

1890-1918:
Responsible government providing the machinery to exploit the gold boom of the 1890s for the benefit of the State, and a period of substantial immigration from Britain and Eastern Australia.

1919-1939:
two decades between the two World Wars dominated by post-war recovery, agricultural expansion, depression and post-depression recovery.

1940-1979:
four decades including post war recovery, industrial and mining expansion, and recession, and being a period of instant international communications.

Other detailed economic and social changes had their effects but principle differences in architectural developments are explained by these broad divisions of the State's first 150 years.

If we wish to construct a similar scheme for Western Australian art practice, considerable research and work is to be done. However, an initial and broad draft, using the very little documentation that is available, is possible. (4)

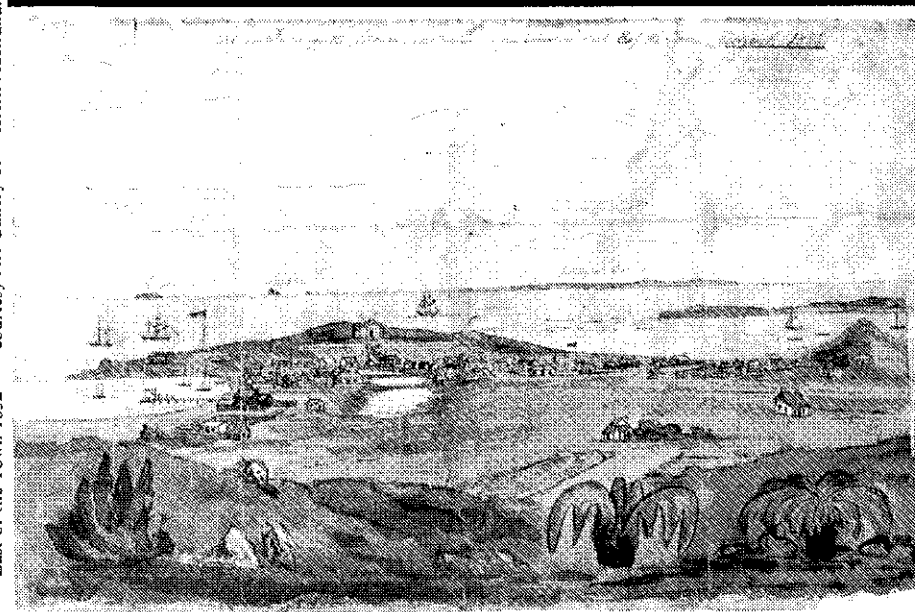
Barbara Chapman's "The Colonial Eye" immediately articulates the massive shift in sophistication of imagery between precolonisation and colonisation. Prior to colonisation all imagery associated with Western Australia is topographical and purpose specific. The French

and English expeditions to this coast, usually carried an artist to make a visual record of the discoveries. Their recordings constitute a set of imagery; within this set of work exists some interesting dialogue; not the least being the difference between the French and English representation of aboriginals. The topographer, either French or English, was usually a well trained and professional artist skilled in a particular practice. No such persons inhabited the colony. The pictures produced during colonisation and persisting until the 1890's were sentimental attempts to justify what must have been a lifestyle permeated with doubt. Again, this set of work produces interesting concerns. For instance, the pictures produced for families "back home" are reassuring and comforting. Whereas the more informal recording of settlement show us a struggling, small and wind-swept settlement looking particularly fragile Charles Whittenoon's "View From The Court House," Arthurs Head Fremantle, C1838. (5) While trying to present an optimistic view belies the insignificance of this speck of western civilisation.

The predominantly naive imagery of colonisation persisted until the gold rushes of the 1890's. Chapman's catalogue shows the beginning of professional art practice developing in the 1890's. Linton, Pitt-Morrison, Gibbs and Williams all arrived in the West during this decade and entrenched themselves as practitioners.

There exists a correspondence between shifts in art practice and that of the socio-economic history of the 19th century occupations of Western Australia. However, the socio-economic paradigm fails to provide correspondence in the 20th century. According to the paradigm there should be a shift in imagery around the time of the First World War but none appears. The quasi impressionism of Pitt-Morrison, Linton, Rossi et al, persists well after the war and into the thirties. The next shift occurs with the intervention of modernism through the influence of depression and post-depression communism. Catherine Susannah Pritchard's influence upon the artistic milieu of Perth and Fremantle asserts itself at this time through her agitation and continual critique of conservative politics and the formation under her guidance and patronism of the

Richard Morrell — "View of Fremantle from Church Hill East of the Town 1832" — courtesy Art Gallery of Western Australia



of John Lunghi and the return of the younger Linton and Missingham from London is crucial to this shift, as is the arrival from Queensland of McClintock. McClintock's surrealist work under the alias of Max Ebert is the first attempt by a local artist at any stylistic genre more advanced than a second hand impressionism.

The Marxist influence upon Vike caused him to produce the three trade union banners of the late 30's which he uses as vehicles for social realist comment. Interestingly, Vike does not appear to move away from his more conservative style influenced by Pitt-Morrison in his easel painting.

The next stylistic shift in Western Australia's practice occurs with the advent of World War II. Vike, McClintock, Missingham and the enigmatic but highly influential Poignant (7) leave Perth for the Eastern states (8). As the war soon cut off most routes of influence and contact with modernism. (9) It is not until some ten years later that modernism, "internationalism," as used by Molyneux, is a better term returns via Grey-Smith and later on David Foulkes Taylor. (10)

Socio-economic paradigm

1829 — 1890's — 1914 — 1940 — 1960's

Art history paradigm

Topographical/ Sentimental recordings

1829

Quasi impressionism Arts & crafts movement

1890's

1935

Modernism

International

1940/1950

2. See Raymond Williams "Base and Superstructure", and Janet Wolf "The Social Production of Art".

3. Ian Molyneux "Looking Around Perth — a Guide to the architecture of Perth and surrounding towns" Wescolour Press 1981 for the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. This book while not pretending to be anything else than a quick visual reference does contain worthwhile and considered essays by Molyneux.

4. The little information available is basically that of catalogues. The work done by the staff at the Art Gallery of Western Australia in the late seventies, (before they all resigned), is an invaluable start. Otherwise students of art history must rely upon Eastern state productions.

5. Page 39 of The Colonial Eye: Barbara Chapman. The Art Gallery of Western Australia, 1979.

6. Features a John Heartfield montage and testifies to Pritchard's contact with the artist in Berlin.

7. Poignant's photography while pertaining to social realist imagery would appear to have been conditioned more by Theosophical dogma. His photo-essays of the 1930's are to be found recorded in "Axel Poignant" Photographs 1922-1980. Art Gallery of N.S.W. 1982. Poignant had access to contemporary German photo documentation and his imagery is conditioned by such.

8. Missingham and McClintock to Sydney. Vike to Melbourne and Poignant to the Northern Territory via Canning Stock Route.

9. The period during World War II saw virtually no art activity in Perth or Fremantle save that of the Womens Art Group with Margaret Johnson prime mover. Johnson had been a member of the Pitt-Morrison, Linton milieu and one can perceive an immediate shift back to the safer imagery associated with that group during World War II.

10. Foulkes-Taylor's influence seems to have been over-estimated. The catalogue seems to neglect the commercial consideration of his patronage.

11. While no significant shift in style emerged in the 60's an obvious shift in the level of activity occurred. 1960 saw two galleries in Perth, 1970 saw four. In 1960 there were two Art Departments and in 1970 five. □

1. Edmund Leach. "Structuralism in Social Anthropology", in "Structuralism, an Introduction," pg. 39. Edited by David Dobey. Oxford University Press, 1973. Edmund Leach was at the time of printing, Provost of Kings College, Cambridge.

The "Bad" Biennale?

Jane Barwell & Michael Carlin

Two young West Australian sculptors, Jane Barwell and Michael Carlin report their reactions following their "cultural pilgrimage" to the 5th Biennale of Sydney. Their comments appear as a sequence of notes:



Reactions

The Fifth Biennale of Sydney was received as a wholly bad "Zeitgeist in Australia", a reaction that can pay little attention to individual works or the place of the artists. As a reaction it is indiscriminate, superficial and unconstructive.

The Fifth Biennale of Sydney was a survey of contemporary art curated by an individual. As always there was an expectation that it would be a definitive statement on the state of the visual arts in all its various forms; there was an expectation of "Great Art"; that the Biennale would be an overwhelming Art Hit! It is not surprising that the show fell short of these expectations!

This is not to say that it was all a load of rubbish. Partly because of our lack of exposure to contemporary work from overseas, and also because of differences between cultures, art specific politics, and social politics from country to country, much of the work is difficult to interpret. This certainly does not mean that the artists have necessarily gone out of their way to defraud their public, but that we must be increasingly circumspect when approaching it.

The Biennale has been seen as a Neo-Expressionist Event and its most ardent critics have perpetuated this myth by focusing attention on the sensationally "bad" work. There is a large proportion of work that is anything but Neo-Expressionist that has either been overlooked or thrown into the expressionist camp. There seems a general reluctance to see what is not fashionable. (But are the kings new clothes necessarily without merit?)

Painting; The S.H. Ervin Gallery, "Aspects of Australian Figurative Painting 1942-1962."

There were many comparisons made between the satellite show of Australian Painting and expressionist painting in the Biennale. However, comparisons of this kind are not really viable, most of the older Australian work has been assimilated into our culture and is therefore immediately accessible to us as Australians. The accusations that this show was a justification for the current rash of expressionism in Australia or simply an exercise in self congratulation, (we told you so!), seem to be simplistic criticisms, latching onto the most obvious, (negative), solution to the problem of contextualising the show vis a vis the Biennale. Probably the most interesting aspect of this show is that it demonstrates that during the period (1940 - early 60's) Australian art had a specifically Australian identity and a freshness and vitality that seems to have drained from the work of the late sixties and seventies, a period when Australian artists tended to appropriate in a wholesale fashion movements and styles from overseas. This realisation is particularly enlightening for us in Perth where our gallery has few examples of good work from this earlier period.

Curatorial Power

There was a great deal of criticism directed at the curatorship of the Biennale. It would seem common sense that a show curated by one person would be a much more cohesive whole than if it were

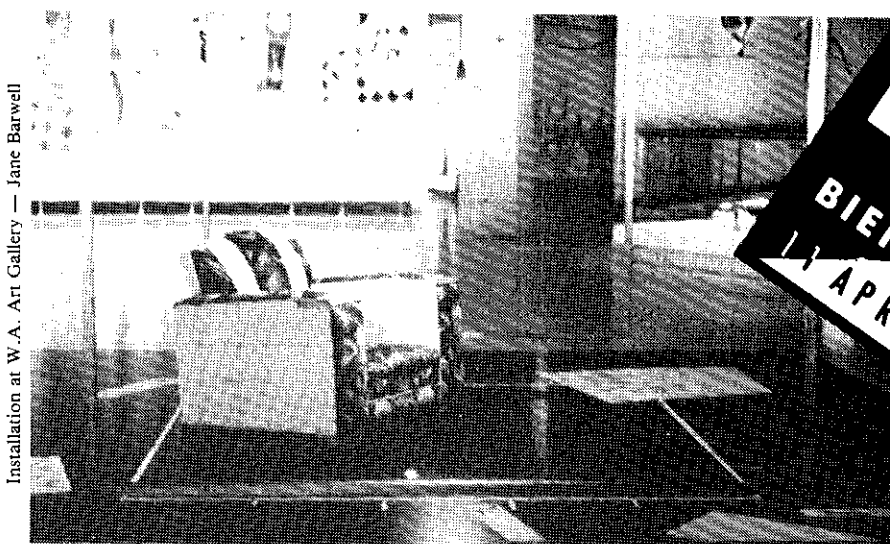
selected by a group, the bias that this develops toward certain work is an unavoidable hazard. If a show is curated by an individual it should be viewed in that light, rather than as an objective survey. The whole notion of an objective survey is a fiction no matter what curatorial process is involved.

But the Biennale should not be viewed as a milestone in a curator's career. It is first and foremost an exhibition of work and, difficult as this may be, (considering the fanfare that surrounds such events), if we are going to have Biennales we should take the bad with good and look at the art, and turn a blind eye to lesser matters.

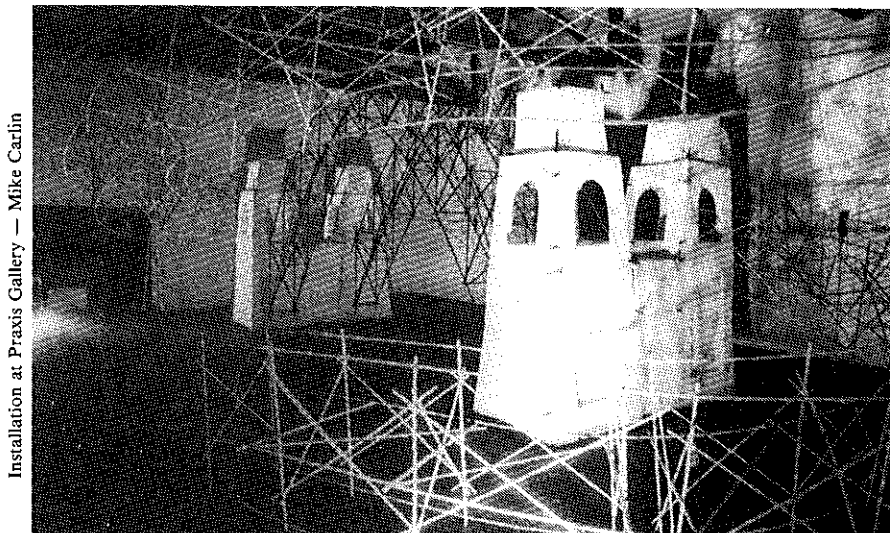
This is not to say that the activities of curators are above reproach. Survey shows like the Biennale and more specifically shows like "Tall Poppies" and "Vox Pop" seem to function most importantly as vehicles of curatorial power and can easily give, (or are intended to give), a distorted view of what is actually happening at the base level of cultural production.

Currently New and Important (Fashion)

Fashion seems to have taken a terribly powerful hold in Sydney. The comfort of fashion as opposed to the avant garde. Fashion being a superficial parasite on what is actually happening; fashion being descriptive of insecurities in the scene. Insecurities in the shape of, "Not Being Up to Date"; insecurities in constantly trying to validate an insecure position on the part of arts administration; not having anything solid to draw upon or being too scared to draw upon it.



Installation at W.A. Art Gallery — Jane Barwell



Installation at Praxis Gallery — Mike Carlin

The Exhibition, (Physical)

In its physical appearance and placement the Biennale has as many problems as are perceived in its concept.

Placing work in that space was obviously a great problem, the general impression of the whole was that of a smorgasbord, where none of the pieces had very much impact due to the huge amount of variation, and by their unsympathetic juxtaposition. It was rather like visiting a freak show in a hospital, the exhibition space cold and stark and too full.

All the installation pieces were treated badly, (except for the video installation), and huge paintings were crammed into tiny viewing areas.

We felt it was not a very sympathetic arrangement and certainly not the fault of the artists. It was difficult to get a good impression of an artist's work from two pieces among over a hundred others in fact all you got was a confused and negative view of the organisation of the Biennale which unfortunately rubbed off on the work.

Debate

The forums did anything but help. They appeared to be an avenue for entertainment, clowning, and pedantic side-stepping rather than an informative seminar. The people presenting papers seem to have gone to great lengths to disguise their meaning. It is unfortunate that the art of making art and the art of making theory/criticism are apparently opposed. The papers seemed to be steeped in mystification and self-reference. I think the problem arose here because the papers were to be published and were written to be read, and to be as impenetrable to criticism as possible. Also, fashions in literary theory were creeping into and mingling with fashions in art theory making for an unintelligible whole. The informal talks given by artists from the Biennale at Sydney College were far more beneficial. It might be interesting to note that the chair for the last forum, (Bernice Murphy), seemed to be reluctant to recognise any speakers from the floor whom she did not know. This seemed to suggest that anyone with anything relevant to say would obviously be known to her, (difficult if you live in Perth).

The Payoff

The benefits of the Biennale are manifold. It is beneficial to see international contemporary art and artists in the flesh, to be able to see how they work, what they are able and not able to do, or how they are manipulated by their situation. It encourages discussion and criticism and allows access to a large number of artists from many different situations. It is unfortunate that it should be fraught with the problems we have outlined, but as we have said, these are as much manifestations of the present climate as of the Biennale itself. For sure there is no way we would be better off without it! □

DAY PASSES
PRIVATE SYMBOL:
SOCIAL METAPHOR
THE FIFTH BIENNALE OF SYDNEY
11 APRIL TO 17 JUNE 1984

Biaspeak ~ Camira ~ Australianess

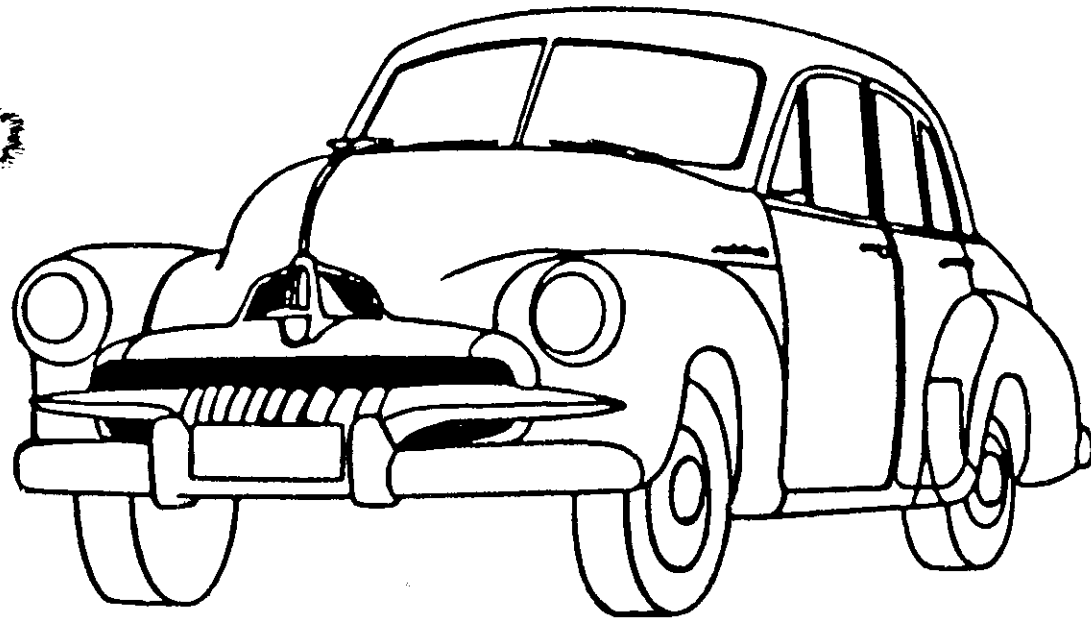


Illustration — Dick Fairweather.

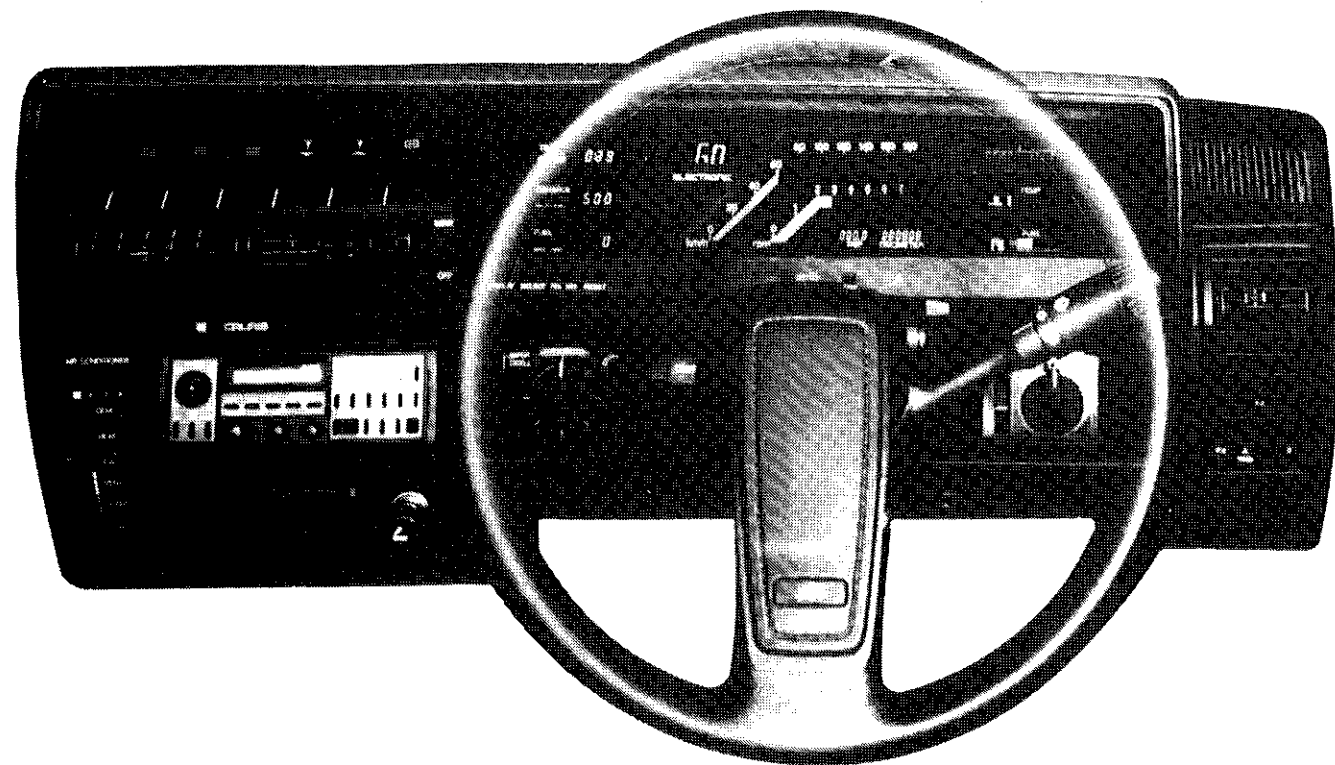
Lloyd Marsh

In discussion of the Motor Vehicle Industry a description of the machinations of the Business magazines and press commentaries locates the *Camira*, firmly in the Business world as a commodity with a market to be speculated on. The point of detailing the following

reports is to give insight into the institutional voice of such self-opinionated commentaries and of the manipulation of the reader through disinformation and omission.

Ready, Steady, Broom!, Broom!, it's September, 1982 and the new Holden Camira has just been launched, to an enthusiastic reaction from the business community. In the September issue of *Rydge's* magazine they ran the article "Which Car Maker will be first to go?" Pedr Davis writes, "... and the advent of G.M.H.'s Camira, the

first completely new Holden in 34 years has shot the status quo to pieces," the effect on its competitors being, "the Camira and coming Ford equivalent have placed them (Toyota, Nissan and Mitsubishi) in an invidious position". The Japanese companies lose money if they keep prices down — yet an increase could slow sales to a disastrous rate. Toyota Mitsubishi and Nissan entered the 85% local content plan in the belief that they could gain a share of the expanding medium size four cylinder market. Ford has opted for local assembly,



Calais dashboard — courtesy G.M.H.

G.M.H. has gone somewhere in between — thanks to export credits."

From these quotes and the others which follow, a set of assumptions about audience, the writer is addressing, are apparent. For instance, the phrase "completely new Holden" and "shot the status quo to pieces" are nothing more than sales talk and journalistic hyperbole. However, they imply that the Camira is radically different in design and crucially different manufacturing strategy. This is further hinted at in the description of G.M.H. manufacturing plans in the second quote. "G.M.H. has gone somewhere in between — thanks to export credits" and, also in this article, small related pieces of information are given such as "the Japanese components in the Camira some body panels and the transaxle) has contributed to G.M.H.'s growing commitment to Japan. In 1976 only 5.3% of G.M.H.'s mix was Japanese sourced but the figure is now over 38%". What the Rydge's article does not state is that G.M.H. has, with the Camira, started to move into a "World Car" concept, which is a strategy adopted by transnationals like G.M.; manufacturing certain components at the cheapest cost in various global locations and assembling the finished product in the market country (i.e. Australia).

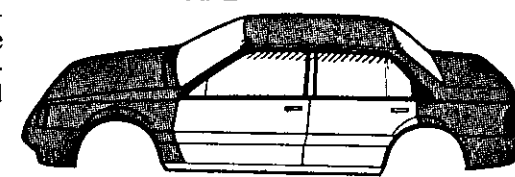
Another clear evocation of voice comes when Pedr Davis talks about the public perception of what they (consumers) expect of a car. He writes, "... publicity given to the handling qualities of Camira and Laser have become major conversation topics with motorists". The implication here being a class of motorists who previously did not expect the front-wheel drive handling characteristic. He goes on "... rightly or wrongly, the public is beginning to regard conventional drive cars as old-fashioned". How is the public perception mediated? we might ask! Through advertising, publicity; through the mechanism of corporate capitalism, and a dynamic relationship between demand generated by new products which over time create a trend to the market. A good example of this is the lower duty charged on imported commercial vehicles, (prior to the Button plan) light commercials in the van category carry 35% duty compared with 57½% for imported sedans and wagons, plus sales tax of 17½% on the wholesale price and import duty. So the lower price of light commercials in the van category is significantly lower. This lower price plus the growing interest in dual purpose leisure vehicles has grown, due to advertising and price

competitiveness. So the government's tariff policy pressured the local industry and specifically the sedan and wagon market.

In the final analysis, the key word is productivity. Cars are made less expensively in Japan, so obviously car manufacturers would rather import, than build in Australia. In an attempt to facilitate this, Sir Phillip Lynch stated in December, 1981 that any local manufacturer withdrawing from the 85% local content scheme would be awarded import quotas equivalent to half the current average sales. The Australian government has been pursuing a policy of protection of the Australian motor industry since it began, although from the confusion arising from vehicle categories and various tariffs paid, it would appear that either the protection policy has not been coordinated correctly or some commercial interests are at work to undermine its effect.

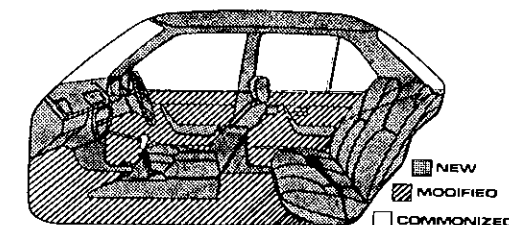
EXTERIOR

SIMPLE THEME] 風格あるスタイル
CLEAN SHAPE]



INTERIOR

HI-TECH, SPACIOUS] 高密度インテリア
HUMAN, UTILITY]



NEW
MODIFIED
COMMONIZED

As I have implied earlier, the World Car concept or the 'J' car, as G.M. has coded it, has caused employees to panic. The concept is seen as a cudgel to beat disgruntled workers into submission. Even in late 1983 the World Car concept was seen as a transnational strategy, which is open to dispute. However, when G.M.H. was producing Australian-designed Holdens in the early 1940s it was still American owned, still concerned with productivity. The technology of Robotics welding and body panel moulding in Japanese factories, developed over the last 15 years, have mounted increasing competition. The technology for G.M.H. in Australia is a strategic move to insure an Australian presence.

Car Manufacture is dependent on sales. In a dynamic market with 15 locally produced models to choose from, sales are highly dependent on advertising hype, tariff and tax structures. The car magazines say 'styling still sells cars', so finally this tedious story comes to look at the Japanese perception of style in respect of the 'J' car, the *Camira*. The priorities of interior design at Isuzu (G.M.'s Japanese link) consist of four elements: Hi-Tech, Human Orientated, Spaciousness, and Utility. These priorities are basically common to interior car design internationally. They are interpreted in each 'J' car Country differently as the graph shows an insignificant percentage (in design terms) is commonalised. (fig i).

Looking at the Camira the first easily recognised distinction is the typically Holden sounding name i.e. Monaro, Torana ... and yes!, it was found in an *Aboriginal* dictionary. It was selected for its spoken sound, its neutrality, then the meaning was considered. Depending on who you asked, its meaning was interpreted as "A gentle wind", "A light breeze", "A subtle wind at dawn", "The sound of the wind rustling through reed beds".

The meaning accorded to naming, could be seen from an extreme point of view as indicative of the deviance of fetishizing a material commodity, a motor car. In keeping with my extensive research, I will not bore the reader with a descriptive account of the various design features of the Camira, but zero in on the instrument package (The dashboard) and compare this design feature with the new G.M.H. model the Calais instrument package, which (as any salesman will not hesitate to point out) is *electronic*.

This electronic feature determines the layout of the instrument package (see pic) and fulfills the design concept of *Hi Tech*. It would be interesting to have the design brief which was presented to the Designers of these two packages, but this is restricted by the competitive pressures of the industry.

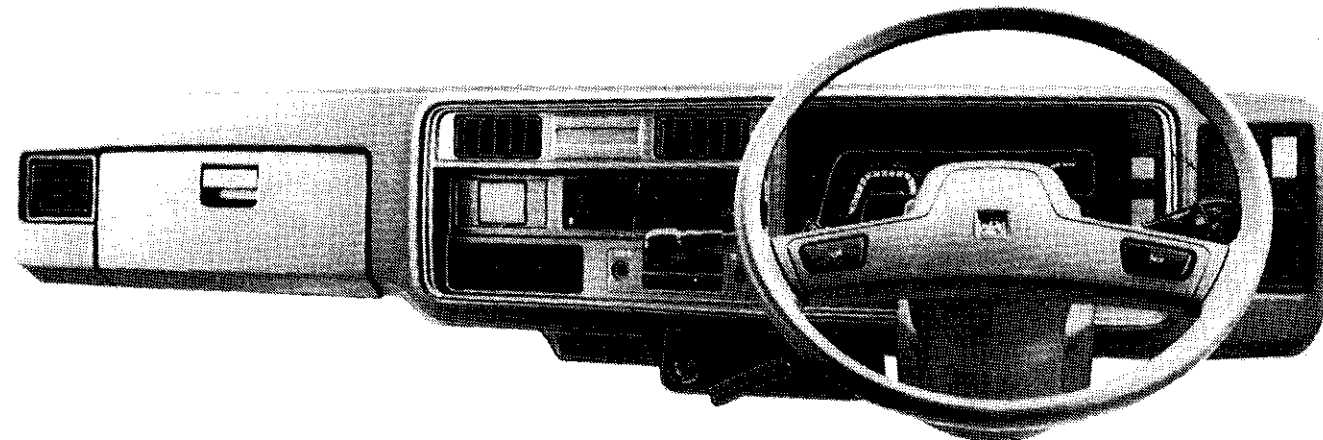
The type of assumption made about the design, are informed from a common perception of what market the complete cars are aimed at. The Camira at the Family budget and the Calais at the Company executive budget. To locate further speculations on design in something more than curious observation, let the Semiotic whipping post be employed in legitimation. I propose that these instrument packages form a paradigm and that each one is a sign which may stand for a thought of some property (or Properties) of the sign itself; in this way a sign substitutes for a thought. The most

obvious being the use of an electronic dashboard; the information age; Hi Technology employed in the hands of the executive class. If this premise is accepted we admit automotive interior design as a prime force to sustain, reinforce or modify a society's values. It has a cultural function, when related to the wider context of co-existing codes.

The Calais has an 'on board computer', which implies that the buyer/user will already recognise the need for such in an automobile as it is an integral part of the design. The Camira package also has an 'on board computer' thus recognising a common need. The difference lies in the Calais total use of Hi-Tech; electronic touch controls, remote controls and a warning system with fluorescent graphic display. Some connections between consumer choice, (expensive vs economical), can be made with macro-economic strategy. The Motor vehicle industry needs to use

research and development. (This was the proposal from the Car Industry Council; the working papers for the Button Plan). The question of how Australian, the Camira, the Calais or any of the "post Holden" cars are, is a curly one. G.M.H. has displayed in its product advertising that *Holden* (as a Trade name) belongs to a more real Australia than, say, *Ford*. The Holden car, the basis of the trade name, has appeared over time and is perceived presently as Australia's own car. This establishment of the Holden as a *mythological* representation of essential Australianess (along with meat pies, kanga's and Aussie rules) has allowed a conceptual shift to occur. A conceptual association of contiguous images, in which each gains meaning in terms of implicit relationship to each other has constructed a stock of anachronistic images with connotative depth to signify Australia. This image bank, drawn from arbitrary ideologies within cultural artefacts, is con-

'Australian' car, post-Holden. The original Holdens, to my mind, (having not invested any emotional energy in them) evoke no sentiment. The best I have heard said of them is "It's easy to get parts for." Of issue is the acceptance that Australians have been sold a phoney National icon, "*Holden*" as all such glib advertising references to Australia must be. International Business, General Motors, are not concerned with what is authentic and unequivocally Australian, but in popular interpretations as a means of modelling Australian popular perceptions of Australian Culture and selling a phoney nationalism back to Australians. The bottom line is, *Baby!*, Australians must accept the context of being complexly linked to International Capitalism and assume a hyper critical attitude in dealing with it, while scheming on how to return the interest. □



Camira dashboard — courtesy G.M.H.

Hi-Technology in manufacturing processes, which in turn are a cause of structural unemployment. As the local industry gears up with robotics, the need for people diminishes. The massive investments incurred (300m in G.M.H. Fisherman Bend engine plant) gives the companies that invest, tremendous bargaining power in framing future legislation and directing the future of the Australian industry, *not only* in motor vehicle manufacture.

Australian Design Skills — Australianess

The skills involved in designing new cars for Hi-Tech production methods, which facilitate easy body styling changes are in great demand in Australia. There is a talent drain on. Designers cannot afford to languish in Oz until required. As an incentive to foster Australian designers, the details of the Labour Car industry Plan may include specific incentives for manufacturers to spend two per cent of wholesale revenue on approved

stantly being redefined and overdetermining a symbolic representation of Australian past history. An example of the use the advertising industry makes of this manufactured meaning, is the Australian Tourist Commission's Paul Hogan advertisements. Hogan waxes sentimentally about creating jobs in the '*Lucky Country*' while relaxing by the pool. This representation draws upon recent indications from social research that Australians are not particularly productive, for its topicality and Hogan's own associations as a true blue, dinky die, *Holden* owning, Aussie.

Returning to how Australian is the Camira, the simple answer in terms of design is 99 per cent, although this Australianess is problematic. True, the Camira is significantly different from any other car in the 'J' car stable. It has been designed for '*Australian conditions*', the components are 80 per cent Australian, but the point is moot! There never was an

References

- Pedr Davis "Which Car Maker will be first to go" *Rydges* v.55 Sept 1982.
- Peter Burden "The Holden Story: local success turns to corporate slide" *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 March, 1983, P31.
- "World Car threat to Vehicle Workers" *Direct Action* 24 August 1982.
- Frank Fisher "Calais gets into Ghia" *Modern Motor* May 1984 P43.
- Claus Seligman "What is a Door? Notes towards a Semiotic guide to design" *Semiotica* 38-1/2, 1982, P.55-76.
- Yoshimi Inoguchi "Isuzu Aska — The Design and the World-Wide Background" *Car Styling Magazine* (Japanese) No.43 1983.
- Paul James "Australia in the Corporate Image's New Nationalism" *Arena* No. 63 1983 P.65-85.
- Car Industry Council Report 14 December 1983 Australian Government.

Perceptual Identity Media Space at the I.M.A.



We are confident there are people

We are convinced of personal identity

Allen Vizents

We are presently in a cultural transition. A great deal has been moved out of reach and a new understanding is now being articulated. In that transition zone of widespread confusion are the nodes of reorganization. The work that is attempted here is structural, a bridge across the chasm of the present.

We must be able to use language with some common definitions, in this instance a broad mapping of terms like the word 'culture' or 'society'. If an artist works within a contextual framework we will be unable to discuss roles without a shared experience of the map. This map is three-dimensional, an hour-glass with the present tense as the small neck through which we will be inevitably propelled into the future.

Secondly, we must locate ourselves with a clear relationship to the context of culture. That may reveal an extreme marginalization, to some extent created by our own activity as artists and to a greater extent enveloping us through no choice of our own. It has been estimated that some 75% of those individuals whose measurable intelligence is within the top margin of

the community work in the sciences. All of the humanities, politics and technical fields may thus be seen to draw on the remaining quarter of optimal resources of excellence. Also, it is an act of marginalisation to define ones activity as cultural by elimination.

For instance, most art institutions and artists concern themselves with the "visual arts". Biochemistry and physics, even architecture are rarely seen as having any relationship to "culture".

We habituate a comparative process of the present and the past. It is our mythical imagery of the past that constructs our perception of the present. Australia mirrors itself to a limited extent in its own short history and to a much larger extent in the active mythology of a past borrowed from other cultures dominantly European. Anzac Day in Australia celebrates a symbolic point of disjuncture. The impotent rationality which planned, authorized and justified the death of tens of thousands throughout Europe marks a point of no return for Western Civilization. It locates the beginning of the dismemberment of classical values that were shredded by 30 years of conflict and social deprivation.

Prior to 1915 there existed a notion of centrality in Western culture, a spiritual and conceptual bond with a set of basic principles that was

shared across the divisions of society. There are at least three axioms that can be identified from a transitional perspective: one is the notion that Western culture is the best that has been said and thought, the image of a self-evidently superior location in time and space. This myth obscures deep social injustices in sexual ethics, class conflict and economic dominion over the third world.

Second, we were firmly convinced of the directional nature of culture as being a long, upward curve. Both material and intellectual progress were coupled to this axiom. Culture was about becoming more perfect and about the natural spread of progress to those less fortunate nations. We are now acutely aware that technical advance is at the detriment of the ecological balance between society and nature, that it ruins primary living systems. We are very capable of destroying the entire context of living systems on the planet.

The impotency of political and social systems caught in the explosion of information prevent and deny the spread of any real progress. Information continues to accelerate advances in technology and at the same time inhibits to an increasing extent the solution of the economic and political problem which technology creates. A great measure of the world ecological and demographic crisis is due to the availability of information. As the

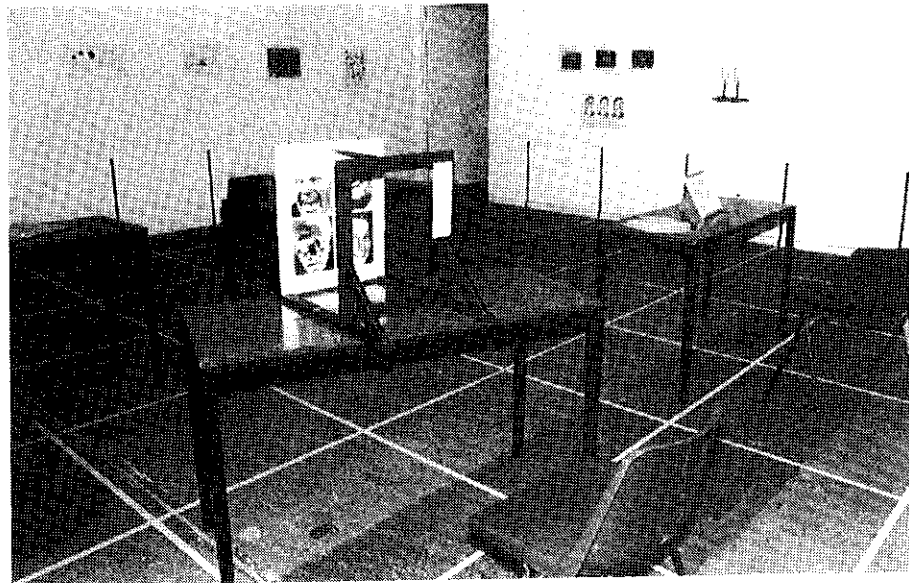
quantity of information increases, so does the difficulty is determining relevant information. We are quite incapable of assimilating more than a small proportion of the information available to us today. The notion of selecting relevant information has a measure of irony in the concept. The notion that culture is about becoming more perfect and the natural spread to less fortunate nations is an absurdity.

Third, it was self-evidently clear that education in humanistic values eliminated barbarism, cruelty and folly from the individual. Where culture was enthroned, ignorance was transformed through education and barbarism fled from the mind. We now realize that collective hysteria and savagery can coexist with the ordinary activity of conserving and developing high culture. Martin Heidegger wrote one of the principal works that we have in the philosophy of language almost within earshot of a death camp.

It should be possible to define what has been lost in this position of transition, how the present does not include certain elements of a former acceptance. We have lost the notion that Hell was a location outside this life as defined in Dante, Hieronymus Bosch and others from the 12th to the 18th century. We have learned how to build and run it above ground within this life. This is a transition, not merely a stretching of the possible, but a position outside one of the major ideological constructs of morality.

We may have lost an ability to project a future harmony, a utopia that was possible to Milton and Marx. There was a central notion of perfectibility that was genuinely felt, an imperative that was central to our culture. We are left with a hollow material progress and an ironic pessimism in the confusion of material and ideological imperatives. This confusion elevates the notion of style to that of a determining model of culture and obscures the internal levels of change in a psychological or social system.

We have lost a central view of the relations between the individual and time. This position of elitism or conceit allowed the production of art as an effort to transcend one's own life, that the works of art spoke to future generations. The signature projected the individual ego into the future memory, a kind of secular religion. In the visual arts we have numerous examples of vertical cuts through this transition: ephemeral mediums such as performance, installation, and collective work within the general community and the labour movement. The criteria of 'lastingness' has shifted from the



Media Space installation at the I.M.A. Brisbane — photo Allen Vizents

individual and notions of creative 'genius' to the archival value of the document, the recording and the notion of appropriation, the use value of the work of art. The United States is no longer the dominant production centre for works of excellence. It is however the central storehouse for the indispensable record of civilization. It is to the American libraries, universities, archives and museums that the European artist and scholar must come to see the afterburn of the cultural engine.

Given time and space the above list could be lengthened. It should be given the Australian preference for imposed models of culture. If we are to continue as a marginal European culture then we must have a clear perception of that T.S. Elliot term, the 'dry brown husk' of our past and our past selves that is finished. The following is an outline of future change, of sources of maximum pressure on the transitional culture. Perhaps it is becoming more important to study the probable course of future events than to study history.

As the primacy of the word diminishes the notations of symbolic logic, the languages of mathematics leave their positions as meta-dialects where they were dependent on the grammar of verbal cognition. The grammar of the past implies an order, a system of gender identification and a set of rules of hierarchies that place the sexes, the social structure and history in terms of value judgments. (Men above women, master above servant, etc.) The grammar that can condescend or enslave is being re-examined in the predicate calculus, a mathematical logic that defines the truth functions in formal sentence structure. That work by Edsger Dijkstra and others is necessary because, in the objective sense, it

supports the writing of a computer program. The Mariner 1 Venus probe had to be blown up immediately after its launch in 1962 because of missing word in its control programme. A subjective calculus, one that explores the truth value of qualitative functions may seem a contradiction in terms unless we can recover the interdependence of modes of thought. A classical verbal grammar does not increase our powers of reasoning, it places restrictions on what can be achieved.

Music is another language that will continue to intervene between the past and the future. It has always been one of the principle languages available outside of the verbal. It is now an intervention because of its technological accessibility. It drives back the silence demanded by a verbal culture.

A great deal of pressure is now and will continue to be exerted on the culture from the area of science and technology.

1. Bio-medical engineering: spare part surgery, the use of chemical agencies against the degeneration of ageing tissues, pre-selection of the sex and parenthood of the embryo, the manipulation of genetic factors towards ethical or strategic ends and the construction of new bio-organisms maps out a new set of relationships within society. It disrupts an area of conditioned thought on evolution and redefines the word 'natural' to a close proximity with 'alternative'.

2. Computerization and electronic data-processing: High technology in the form of cybernetics, machines that are more efficient than people, is a source of uncertainty in our economy. It will change the way we define employment, our attitude toward education as a finite period in one's life, and our relationship to

leisure-time. With the micro-chip, the traditional relationship between complexity and cost has been inverted. The cost decreases as the complexity increases. Information technology is a powerful tool of decentralization. It can disrupt the centres of power by transferring data throughout the telecommunication network.

Our ethics, our central habits of consciousness, our relationship to the synthetic world, our relations to age and to memory, to work and leisure, to the children whose gender we may select and whose heredity we may programme, are being transformed.

The doctrine of classic western culture held that men and women (more likely men alone) were companions with truth on a moving footpath into the future. I have outlined some of the historical changes that have resulted in a dismantling of this axiom. Many artists will continue to produce works of art, some with the knowledge of that activity as being no longer the primary input into our cultural future. That work will be defined as craft activity, as not raising questions of validity or appropriation, but rather supporting materialism, historical fantasy and the insecurity prevalent in an isolated nationalism.

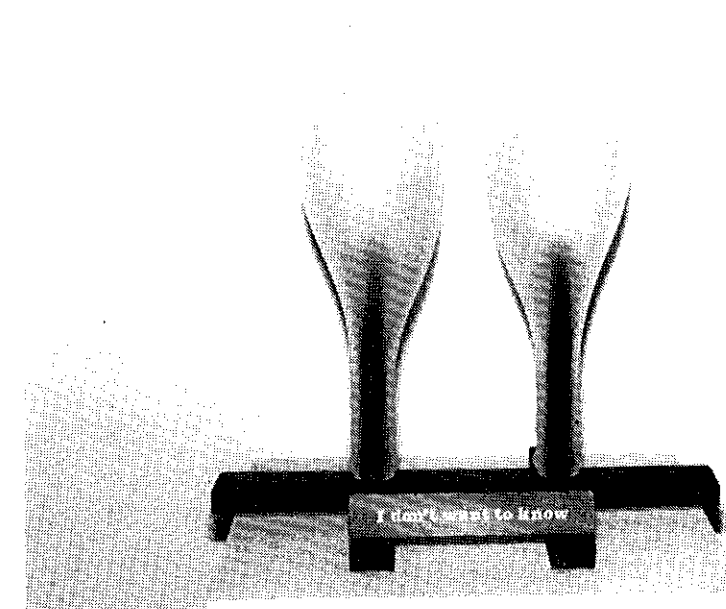
Ezra Pound once described the artist as the antenna of the race. That analogy may have been valid in a classic culture. It however does not stress the selection process that is necessary in a transition culture of increasing rates of change and vast amounts of information. A role as mediator might be more tenable.

**MEDIATION:
PERCEPTUAL IDENTITY
MEDIA SPACE
(Installation)
Institute of Modern Art:
Brisbane (May-June '84)**

Peter Anderson

Three short paragraphs about the installation.

The writing begins by taking a fragment from the surface of the work and reproducing it here. "Of all liars the smoothest and most convincing is memory." This writing is perhaps to function as some kind of memory of the work, to act as a



Media Space installation at the I.M.A. Brisbane — photo Allen Vizents

Mediation implies no category of activity inherited as a specialist from the Industrial Revolution. Mediation revalues the methodology of the dominant objective culture and employs the tools of research, analysis, modelling, and criticism to achieve knowledge, a relevant historical location, holistic identity and an audience interested in the ability to project a potential future. Mediation accommodates cultural differentiation and locates a bridge between the plurality of stratified layers in society. Mediation does not impose a shared view of the world, it is trans-dialectic.

Other societies have opted for a static culture. We have the example of Aborigines here who survived for

document (evidence) through which it can be mobilised in some other space. The writing serves to somehow fix the work (memorize it), but also to allow for its partial reproduction; we can, as it were, remember it without having seen it, and without the need for its continued existence. The work will not be produced here through memory.

Another fragment is reproduced here (in this magazine), it is an essay by Allan Vizents. Yet it does not function as a fragment. Through quotation we disengage a statement. "As the quantity of information increases, so does the difficulty in determining relevant information. We are quite incapable of assimilating more than a small proportion of information available to us today." We are not dealing with the work as a whole. Our understanding of events/concepts is partial, fragmentary. We live in a whole culture but comprehend only subsections of it. The work func-

thousands of years without a dynamic advancing culture. Fortunately, we have not been successful in completely eliminating that tradition. It remains embedded within our culture as a great example of harmony between people and the natural environment they inhabit, however new research may reveal serious argument to this perception. We have no examples of how to disconnect from a forward dreaming culture within our own society and it remains unclear if that is an honest choice. We do have a rather frightening inheritance. That is whether we can press home the debate within the unknown and simultaneously maintain the image of our own destruction. □

tions through the gathering together of fragments. These fragments function to produce the body of the work, but outside of it they have a 'life' of their own. The culture can be viewed as a whole way of life, but the significance of fragments can shift through subcultural practices. How can we equip ourselves to understand all the things that go on around us?

"Australia can not be invented, it exists as the relationship and struggle between elements in a whole way of life." In writing about the object as a whole, is not some claim made to an overall unity? Isn't Australia invented/produced daily? What Australia is constructed through the range of practices: from journalism to advertising, from school teaching to watching television, from picture making to taking a bus ride? Is there any other Australia than the ones we invent? Is it not the relationships and struggles of these inventions that are the whole way of life? □

Adam Green lives in A Tree.

Terry O'Malley

Recent visitors to the Praxis Gallery, and to The York Winter Theatre Festival, will have had the good fortune to encounter the work of Terry O'Malley. Terry has been the Artist in Residence at Praxis (mid-May to mid-June) and has shown, in addition to an exhibition of his drawings, the performance "Adam Green Lives in a Tree".

Old Adam Green won't be fond propping the bar in a downtown cocktail lounge, he is in terms of the current artistic chic a loner. Adam, you see, lies "60ft up in an old cedar bush"; his is a steady and a verdant breeze of humanity; the ancient spirit of spring; a fertile old bugger, (and at times necessarily horny — walking stick and all.)

Adam's being stands sentinel against the current tide of the dun(g) coloured cynicism of the trans avant-garde. A movement which purportedly plumbs the expressionist depths of the individual, whilst simply subscribing to banal conventional wisdoms. These philosophies of "popular despair" find their reversal in Adam, he knows his historical lineage, and skillfully manipulates the metaphors of the spring-rite; rebirth, resilience and resistance. Whereas more fashionable protagonists celebrate a termination of culture and throw their hands up in a final act of anguish, Adam works on the knowledge gained through millenia of human experience; the Spring-rite celebrates the victory over "closure" or "termination", (metaphorically "winter") he demonstrates the same toughness of spirit and (cultural) optimism that helped his distant forebears survive a real ice-age.

ADAM GREEN LIVES IN A TREE —

In come I, auld Adam Green, a handsomer fellow you've never seen. This tricky green chap, lives in a tree, sixty foot up, in an old cedar bush in a rude sort of dwelling constructed from the wrecks of cars. The tin-plated dreams of engines deceased patched up, and hoisted away. A leather bound steering wheel hung in the wind, drives the



Terry O'Malley at the York Winter Theatre Festival — photo Nigel Helyer

leaves through the darkest of air, on a road, that lurks between heaven and earth or, sixty foot up, in an old cedar bush.

I'm an old broiler shootin a line. A rare dash cuts this jolly spring bugger. God save our gracious etc. I feeds the birds and the birds feeds me.

I spies down the avenue, the auld biddies dressed up — in quiet tweeds and heavy blue rinses. Waiting for a bus to take them to market. Secure in their court shoes — their capped teeth steep in the clatter of chatter. I gives em an elegant bow, all courtly and grave. Goodday fair maidens — I trust your carriages are not chafing too much in the flaxen heat of this verdant season. They grip their shopping baskets tighter.

Let me look at thee awhile from the glass of my eye. An intrepid sight, a variable delight, a trinity of shoppers, two millions years of human engineering, a twinkle upon

the evolutionary ladder. A species gated in elysian fields, a shoppers' paradise, protected by consumer expectation, bedazzled by the price is right. You've no business talking to us like that, screeches one of the old biddies. The bright glimmer of malice falls like a fly into her eye. Aren't you that greenie that lives in a tree? I bid them a gracious farewell and depart beneath a volley of genteel shot.

*"The dinosaurs are dying
On their back they will be lying
It's a case for extreme unction
let the telephones run
production"*

I love a good joke. I love to make people laugh.

Getting about without being seen, used to be a rare auld problem. Until I built ropewalks way up in the canopies of the forest. Now I can travel for miles across leaf bridges, without a glove or a boot, to disturb the sleep of the grass.

I'm very deft upon my feet, for one of my age, I practically tap dances, along the branches. In the early days, though, I fell rather badly. But, monkeys came before man, an' pride cum's before a fall. The experience of gravity soonest teaches you head and feet. If not, yer as dead as stone in Gallileo's pocket.

An elephant sits in the moonlight, memories like flea's on his back. Slips from his pocket an anchor. And wishes' is black boots adieu.

Well here I am

Hung up; by the palelight of the mornin.

A face in a ground of mysterious leaves

a wild man, wild with invention.

The sun rises, a reveille of light cascades in cuneiform columns.

God blows bright gold.

The volume of bird song increases.

To live in a tree was a dream, begun by my father, he sold birds nesties, gold crests and finches for a livin'.

My mother made posies of dog roses and daisies an sold them to the gentry and the factory owners. Hard life, hard living.

Trees to me, are the escalators to heaven.

Wooden rivers rung with memory of being.

The sun puts the tan in your fingers.

The snow bleaches your bones.

To the past I won't hold the flicker of a butterfly's wing. my wife did a moonlight, took the kids an' all of the chattels Cleaned the house out.

The old paper bag.

Well — after that, I lost me job.

Felt my breath blow from hot to cold, in the gutter.

In and out, in and out like a yo yo from the soot of the red brick fireplace, from her majesty's dog box. Eventually, I managed to escape, not over the wall, too old, no I detach myself casual, stepped out from the lines of an outside working party, ran off, no more penal sun sets for me.

So here I am.

Snug as a bug in a tree independent as a flea.

The first tree I ever lived in was a forty foot high Lombardy poplar, beautiful trees, beautiful. But I felt a sailor, pitched in the riggin' my did she sway.

Consequently, I was forever being jettisoned, by the living green of her branches. The wind and Lombardies just don't seem to be able to abide a chap or his baggage.

Now this cedar bush suits me well, in this tree, I sings like a bird.

My lungs rise and fall, inflate the bags with sweet air.

Inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale, beat the drum! Beat the drum! Roll out the ghosts of adoration.

Men have nailed the stars to the heavens.

But — my feet beign to step out a jig

The maps, in my taps, cry out, such a lack of movement cannot be true.

My head is as bright as the sun My boots are as black as a hole in the ground

My body is a fortified colonnade.

Sometimes when the mist is floating — thin as a bride's veil from earth to height of horses tail.

I swears I 'ears a clarion

whisper a lament for Robin Hood.

The forest's are contracting in the wake, of an army of sanctified axes — I have seen the displaced dryads huddle together an' weep

The wheel has expelled, the spirits of vegetation from their kingdom, an' dammed a wild river with their corpses.

I'm recordin' some of these creatures ways, their passin' in a book, called, 'A History of Ephemeral beings', the life an' beliefs of a people's, that walk in a world not taller than a blade of sparrow grass.

The first chapter is entitled 'A Nation of dwarves'. Dwarves live in the vacant halls of duck eggs — they wear red or green suites spun from fine flaxen cloth and flat caps of a very bright hue.

On their feet they wear wooden clogs, made in the shape of coggy boots.

They ride to church on the backs of pigs and charge to war against a race of sciapods tied to the necks of roaring goats — the senior dwarves of the community are distinguished by their iridescent wings. They also hibernate from mid-winter onward till their sleep is broken by spring. Dwarves are great talkers, they love to smoke, and 'have a good crack.' Their pipes are milled from dogwood an' their tobacco is a mixture rubbed from rose petals an' dandelion leaves. When dwarves are not involved in their bitter fight with the Sciapods, they tend the catacombs where any endangered animal or bird comes to rest, to be still, away from the arrows and wheels of men. Til' one world gives way to another the dwarves believe that once there was no distinction between the world of reflection and the real world, that once the men and animals of the mirror used to exchange positions daily. Both worlds lived in perfect

harmony. Until, one night the mirror people invaded the earth and a terrible battle commenced. They fought through the nights of three days, until the mirror people were driven back

confined in glass walls — they were stripped of their power and reduced to mere slavish reflections.

Nevertheless, the dwarves believe, that a day will dawn when they will shrug off the magic spell.

The first to awaken will be the fish, deep in the mirror we will perceive a very faint line and the colour of this line will be like no other colour. Later on the shapes will begin to stir, little by little they will differ from us little by little they will not imitate us. They will break through the barriers of glass or metal and this time they will not be defeated. Side by side with these mirror creatures the creatures of the water will join the battle. The dwarves have a saying which they whisper in times of personal trouble or war

*Be watchful
Be peaceful
A fish will appear
Through a whisper
of light it will come
A mirror will cracked
The shadows will be ransacked.*

Well, that's enough of that for the moment. When you lives in the scrub, you sees and hears a lot of strange things. Interesting ain't it. Still

here I sit pontificating in a tree hung up by the sky.

I like bugs that live beneath the cold crusts of trees Succulent bugs — bright-as jewels bitter as stones to eat.

People these days, don't knows what's good for'em.

Take worms — for example, they're rich in protein they are, rich. My father's attitude towards worms was down as many as many as yer can son, the bugger's will down you soon enough.

I never forgot his advice even when I gots married.

If a man plants a ladder at the foot of a tree the least he can do is to climb it.

From this birds nest of dreams. I spend a lot of time watching ancestral traffic, pictured in clouds.

Or the foreshadowed gait of a badger moving through the holly bushes, far below

Ten feet below the cedar tree I've dug out what I calls a winter chamber. Sometimes the solstice gales force a man to lie down.

So into a measured burrow I goes, bundles up in a blanket of dry leaves — suspended in a deep faraway silence.

I wait beneath the frozen firmanent. Rag bones depressed in a womb

a seed in a fissure of rock.

I wait for a dream of the leafman to call an old boot disguised as a tree.

The earth is warm. The earth is warm. In the tick, in the flick, of a hedgehogs ear. Between black and white patches I hear the badger's fleas call out from their sets.

I arise in the owl glass light. The green leaves are my heraldic flags.

I'm over wound

I've come too far

Wake up

The fat dead

Wake up

The fat dead

Shatter the glass

Shatter the glass

Shatter the bovine peace.

Adam Green lives in a tree sixty foot up in an old cedar bush.

Winters shout is faraway the prison cell is empty.

I love a good joke I love to make people laugh with games of hide and seek Old mummies never die

I hears the step of axes beating up the stairs. I see schematic figures engraved in every tree. Chip, chop, chip, chop, goes my daddie's big clock

Consider the picturesque mathematic of adding tree and human figure.

A sacred union of meat and vegetation. Which constituted the world as a bloody wheel, patterned with mouth's bludgeoned to consume, reconstitute the tread of its circumference. Trapped breath burns in a shadow of fire, between the regimented hemispheres of heaven and hell, a globe forever mirrored in a fractured sea. I see a glittering dolphin rising up, from the depths of a cerulean sea, and with a gentle flick of his tail dissect the arc of the horizon.

A new star has fallen into the cell of heaven. I consider these joyous creatures profound play to be the bridge by which the world's will quench their bellies of blood and fire.

Only time echoed in the concentric rings of trees, will tell if Adam Green is right.

When I die, place my head in the rollcall of fabulous beasts I speaks for the trees I speaks for the birds Adam Green will forever be grateful for the sight of wings playing time — a birds act of faith in the air.

The day is a commin' soon, when the animals will knock loudly upon our door, and ask a simple question. Please tell us, who the holy animals were. What we need is a parliament for the animals and trees.

I dream I was a tree and all the world came to visit me, the blackbird and the parakeet, were the first to call, Chip, chop, chip, chop, tapping my door with their beaks chip, chop, chip, chop, singing, down falls daddie's big clock chip, chop, chip, chop.

Second: Lawson's *Archibald* is an allegory. The man undoubtedly was extraordinary, an eccentric even, as that gross fountain he be-queathed in a Sydney park testifies and as does that odd institution the Archibald Prize for portrait painting. But this book is not another life of a big man, too big to be you or me, but too flawed, too good for this world to remain sane and have a happy home life. What is extraordinary is not the man, but his and the *Bulletin's* "explosive" negotiating of those twin poles of internationalism and cultural nationalism; cosmopolitan openness and republicanism; Culture and political activism, the literary and the popular; conservatism and radicalism. The allegory, the parable, of the book lies here. Archibald's condition is that of us all: from Artists to intellectuals, from cultural policy makers to gallery purchasers, from consumers of culture to the culture producers; and that is the condition of being colonial. What makes Archibald exemplary then is his practice (not his life).

"The house is built of the stones that were available.

The rebellion was raised using the rebels that were available.

The picture was painted using the colours that were available".

Carelessness should not be forgiven.

More would have been possible.

If this is a pen sketch of how Lawson writes about the *Bulletin*, it is also an invitation to practice a cultural politics of the near to hand. Lawson insists, after Brecht, that this book is a history (a story) for the present, and, for me, it does show the way to a publicly available analysis of Australian culture. Not the miserable Australia dour historians reproduce, in which their lack of originality is passed off as a function of Australian history and Australian culture.

No! This is an analysis which finds, not the slow teleologies of development; not the unfolding themes of our society; not the birth of a bureaucratic machinery, not an Australian ethos; but the very excess of the historical moment, grasped not in order to control and to tame, but to open out upon the exigencies, the conglomerations, the conjunctions of a complex social and cultural event: Archibald's *Bulletin*. This viewpoint makes a study of the press, as fascinating as (I now realise) it always should be. To do this Lawson works upon the minutiae of the everyday, honing in upon the language of the *Bulletin* in its reported events; in its editorial polemics; in its correspondence columns. Through these; the issues; the problems; the gambols; the face of colonial Australia appears. Take the following quote of Archibald's

writing and Lawson's analysis of it as a sample of this process:-

"The hangman, 6ft 2" in height, broad shouldered, spider-legged, with arms like a gorilla, a flat face without a nose, and huge feet, presented a spectacle to be seen nowhere else out of Hades."

"The principle figure is a fiendish monster, of mythic size and brutality, a looming Caliban. His victim is posed like a martyr ready for the stake: "the dying Aboriginal" who with unfaltering step ascended the scaffold and turned his eyes towards Heaven to call upon God for mercy . . . For two minutes, so long that they seemed hours, Alfred kept his face uplifted and prayed to the Being whom in days gone by he had unconsciously worshipped in the Qld wilderness as Pundinyal of the Stars and whom he had only just learned to call God."

"It was not the time for a newspaperman to worry about shaky ethnology, nor to question why in the name of the same Heaven, Alfred should have been obliged to learn any such thing. It was time only to witness what he saw and felt, and to make the afternoon's readers, if not the angels weep." (p.58).

This becomes a sprawling canvass, contradictory and exciting, when in addition Lawson looks to its networks of readers, its letters, its other journalism, its editorial policies, its politics. Through the accumulation of these examples she produces the *Bulletin* as epic and as tragedy. □

Book Review; "The Archibald Paradox".

Lawson insists upon the literariness of its journalism, the prose of its reporting; the cultural politics of its depictions, representations and mobilizations.

often extraordinary pieces of journalism Lawson's own text elegantly revives. Similarly with the cultural politics of the *Bulletin*. The tension between its jingoism, its racism, its sexism on the one hand; and on the other, its republicanism, its anti-capital punishment, its anti-imperialism and its occasional anti-racism; these become, not a way to blame the *Bulletin*, to find in Australian history yet another confirming of "a conservative nub and the heart of the Australian experience"; but become something to dwell on and to explain. Something of a paradox.

This is the very same paradox through which Archibald, its editor, the internationalist francophile was simultaneously a cultural nationalist. A man who could lament the absence of truly cosmopolitan bookshops and have as the *Bulletin's* motto: Australia for the Australians. The same who could insist, with the kind of insistence that one would wish on many Australian newspapers and journals, that his writers "write stuff that will appeal not only to Sydney people, but that will be of interest to the pearler up at Thursday Island, and the farmer down in Victoria" (p. 157)

Tom O'Regan

Sylvia Lawson, *The Archibald Paradox*, Penguin, 1983.

Imagine a book that looks at newspapers as texts; that sees in journalism the pressure, drama, tension, juxtaposing, ordering normally consigned to the study of literature and art. Such a book is Sylvia Lawson's *The Archibald Paradox*. The newspaper is *The Bulletin*. The major focus is the years of Archibald's, its principle editor's involvement (1880-1918) in both it and Australia's political and cultural politics. The subsequent, more ignominious history of the *Bulletin* into its present *Newsweek* form is also traced, but is adjudged to be less worthy as a publication than its earlier versions.

First:- *Paradox* is unashamedly an attack upon Australian literary scholarship. A scholarship which produces a literary legend of the nineties; and on the other a "you think it was republican and serious about letters and politics, but really it was just trivial, jingoist, misogynist and rascist". Against them both,



graphic courtesy The Bulletin

The Bulletin becomes interesting at the very moment when Patterson, Henry Lawson and Stephens (cardboard creatures of the literary search for a fashion of culture) fade back into the page; cut back by the



graphic courtesy The Bulletin

Today we shrink from the notion of a colonial experience to describe our own. But internationalism, an openness to the outside world, still sits uneasily with notions of a national culture. Think of the film industry and its national/internationalist divisions (how many West Australian's remember *Harlequin!*) The anxiousness with which indigenous cultural traditions are looked for, the queries over whether the Australian and indeed regional location in Art funding or purchasing are important, the concern to facilitate the import and to monitor the import of overseas styles, philosophies and strategies of art and sculpture (and film and TV), prove that the Archibald paradox is still very much our own paradox. And because it is, his practice and that of those around him, are still relevant today.

Lawson's characterisation of this relentless practice is crystallised in the quotation from Brecht with which she begins the book:-



"HE NEVER TOLD HIS LOVE."
 HIM (to the man behind him): "WELL, AND WHAT'S YOUR NAME, THEN?"
 HER: "MY NAME IS PEARL, SIR."
 HIM (with appreciation): "BET! AND ARE YOU THE PRINCESS OF GREAT BRITAIN?"
 HER: "NO, SIR. I'M THE PEARL THAT WAS CAST BEFORE SWINE."

graphic courtesy The Bulletin

A Tourist Perception.

Paul Thomas

Ref: Aspects of Australian Culture; **Ref:** "Australianness" in Australian Television:- Albert Moran.

"Australia only came into being in 1901. The states and their capital cities all predate Australia and indeed just how unified an entity is the nation? In the 1970's several states, in a flourish of statehood rather than nationhood, have set up their own film production and or financing authorities. The intention behind their establishment is not only commercial but cultural."

8; **Re:** The Australian look.

We should have "an Australian television service which looks unmistakably Australian", "our television service should have a distinctively Australian look — one which could convince a visitor from overseas that he was in Australia". "It is of paramount importance to ensure that the persuasive medium

of television is used to show Australia to Australians; to reinforce Australian values and to reflect Australian attitudes and life styles."

Ref: Section 114 of the Broadcasting and Television Act, stated "Australian content is a consequence of the employment of Australians. Australian content is nothing other than programs produced by Australians, no matter what the ostensible subject of such programs."

The relationship between Australians and their television is seen as a way of developing cultural awareness by representing a normal way of life that can be assimilated. The problem being with this relationship is that a government or private enterprise can start to direct the public, into creating a fantasy about themselves in regard to their own environment. The concept of a national identity is a false illusion, most Australians are Europeans and therefore bring their customs with them, but there are subtle changes that occur, one change that occurs is based on the climate which affects the way we translate our imposed customs. At the turn of the century Dr. Buttner said "in cases where

both the parents are Australian born, the weakening effect of the climate shows itself more and more strikingly with each succeeding generation".

It also seems that the governing bodies identify this climatic conditioning as a form of national apathy, hence advertisements on national television stating "Advance Australia", which imply that every one is sitting around doing nothing. They ignore the fact that there is a process of assimilation going on, in relation to the environment. The early settlers related to the Aborigines in a similar way because they sat around and seemingly did nothing.

As Sir Paul Hasluck stated "Australian society today is only a temporary arrangement for quick and present gratification of those who know little of the depth of the past and have little concern for the future. Australia - the land that adopted the motto 'Advance Australia' - is a land without vision, a high speed vehicle without a compass or any other aid to navigation, consulting neither the star's nor anything else external to itself, but hurtling headlong into what it calls progress, and finding satisfaction in

appeasing its own physical appetites."

Through television the European conditioning has developed a national "coming" together a long time before the America's Cup made us a nation. The television has developed a national identity which is European based, with strong American material overtones, (assimilated through frequent viewing of "Coronation Street", "Days of Our Lives", "Dallas", plus our own Europeanised pot-pourie of second generation culture). One would imagine certain difficulties which this constructed televisual identity would encounter when confronted by "the bush"; an Australian context.

Then comes the "Life be in it" campaign to get us out from in front of the television and to be involved with life, as well as Advance Australia; which suggests we are not doing enough and the little we are doing is not good enough. The contradiction posed by the media is not one that can be solved by inanely demanding of a nation to get up on its feet and to be involved with life when the life they want them to be involved with is nothing but a fantasy. The latest development in this form of cultural manipulation is in the campaign "Progress lets go for it" which has taken us from being behind to "We'll lead the way".

This promotes a dysfunction in the fabric of the culture which has developed its own tourist mentality and seems to see itself only in the present tense. These tourists have never learnt to assimilate "Internal" information about the way European Australians relate to the environment or to each other, in order to come to terms with an identity. In reference to this there is the promotional material for Australian made holidays which states:- "Prof Hogan's history lesson, "Of course the aborigines were our first tourist. They walked overland for a bit of a squizz when Australia was still connected to Asia. Next came the Portuguese, then the Dutch, closely followed by the French. So as you can see tourism was thriving by the time the Captain launched his Cook's tour in 1770 to give pale pommie sailors a suntan."

Examples of that period of Tourism Jerry building, Short term investments, Resource industries plus the support industries (only): No cultural development, Thriving materialism, Outdoor culture (physical), Plagiarism, scaled down models of European and American achievements, Mediocre intellectual concerns, Preferring Fantasy. Fantasy as cultural imposition is a destructive social reality. (Insulation/isolation) Social fantasy created by the media, religion,

materialism. "In a convict society, material possessions were the symbol of the free man. Since then they have represented a handrail for the white Australians passage through a haunted continent. It is a desperate, touching attempt to grasp human meaning from out of the abyss of time. More than he'd ever want to admit, each Australian knows he is an alien, a straphanger in a void - and let's face it, when you're suspended there alone, you do need good equipment."

Ref: Peter Blazey

Re: Aspects of Australian Culture — Editors Joost Daabler and Michele Fryar.

Ref: Inventing Australia - Richard White.

Ref: Waltzing Materialism - Jonathan King

Ref: The Australian Tourist Commission - Australian Made Holidays.

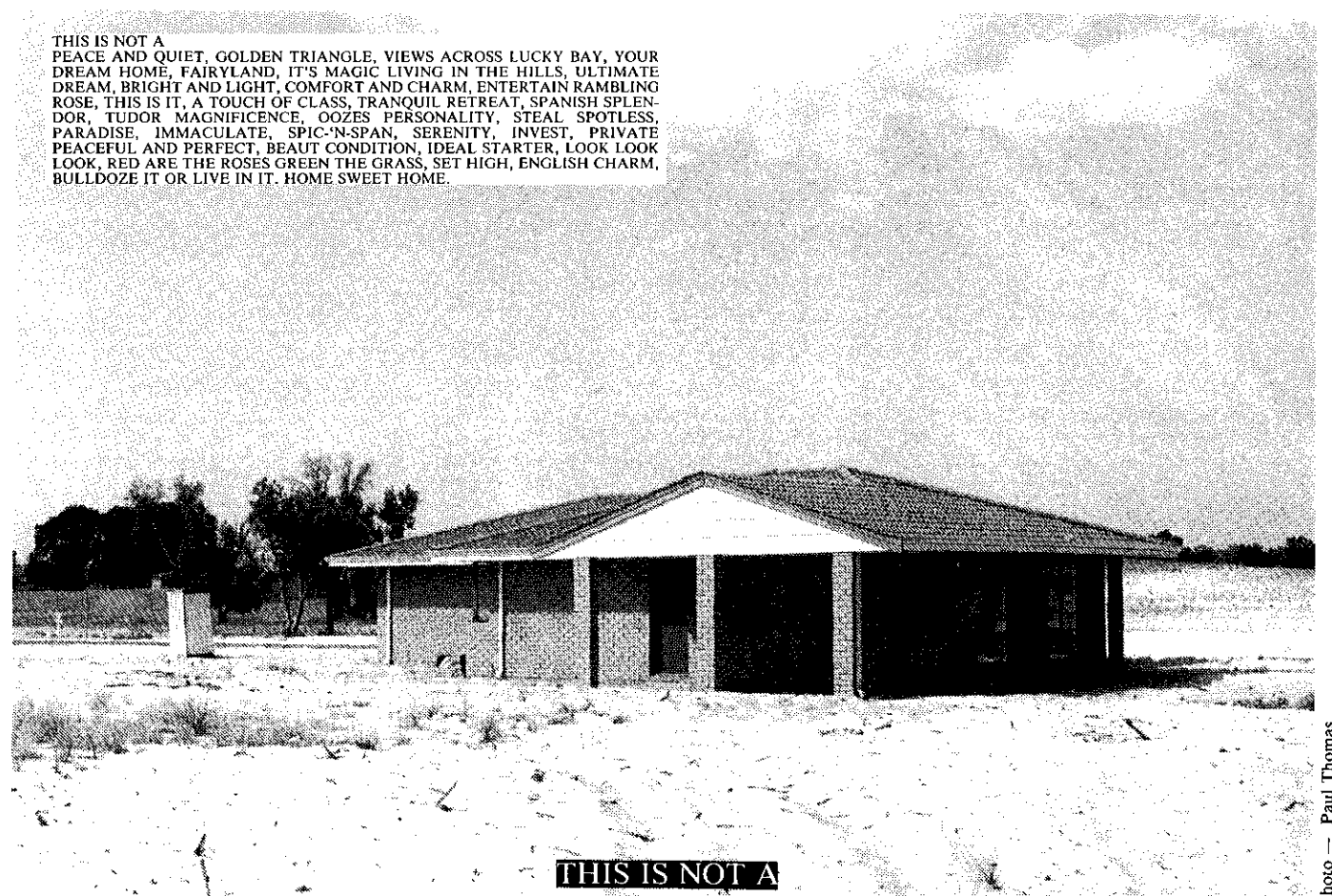
THIS IS A PEACE AND QUIET, GOLDEN TRIANGLE, VIEWS ACROSS LUCKY BAY, YOUR DREAM HOME, FAIRYLAND, IT'S MAGIC LIVING IN THE HILLS, ULTIMATE DREAM, BRIGHT AND LIGHT, COMFORT AND CHARM, ENTERTAIN RAMBLING ROSE, THIS IS IT, A TOUCH OF CLASS, TRANQUIL RETREAT, SPANISH SPLENDOR, TUDOR MAGNIFICENCE, OZZES PERSONALITY, STEAL SPOTLESS, PARADISE, IMMACULATE, SPIC-N-SPAN, SERENITY, INVEST, PRIVATE PEACEFUL AND PERFECT, BEAUT CONDITION, IDEAL STARTER, LOOK LOOK LOOK, RED ARE THE ROSES GREEN THE GRASS, SET HIGH, ENGLISH CHARM, BULLDOZE IT OR LIVE IN IT, HOME SWEET HOME.



THIS IS A

photo — Paul Thomas

THIS IS NOT A PEACE AND QUIET, GOLDEN TRIANGLE, VIEWS ACROSS LUCKY BAY, YOUR DREAM HOME, FAIRYLAND, IT'S MAGIC LIVING IN THE HILLS, ULTIMATE DREAM, BRIGHT AND LIGHT, COMFORT AND CHARM, ENTERTAIN RAMBLING ROSE, THIS IS IT, A TOUCH OF CLASS, TRANQUIL RETREAT, SPANISH SPLENDOR, TUDOR MAGNIFICENCE, OZZES PERSONALITY, STEAL SPOTLESS, PARADISE, IMMACULATE, SPIC-N-SPAN, SERENITY, INVEST, PRIVATE PEACEFUL AND PERFECT, BEAUT CONDITION, IDEAL STARTER, LOOK LOOK LOOK, RED ARE THE ROSES GREEN THE GRASS, SET HIGH, ENGLISH CHARM, BULLDOZE IT OR LIVE IN IT, HOME SWEET HOME.



THIS IS NOT A

photo — Paul Thomas

Style as Solidarity

Julie Prottr

For ages beyond reckoning we in Perth have been waiting for some expression of local 'style'.

We have gone off after the Art Gallery of WA, claiming that it failed to recognise local artists. We have stewed over a lack of entrepreneurial zeal which is needed if the commercial galleries and their artists are to succeed.

We have felt that the hope of recovering the 'creative verve', supposed to exist at grassroots level, is not being met by the State aided system (the WA Arts Council, the Crafts Council, the City of Fremantle galleries, Praxis, A.G.A., etc.). Finally, we have endorsed Modernism even though it is clearly an academy, where New Expressionism's latest dummy stoops in artistic array.

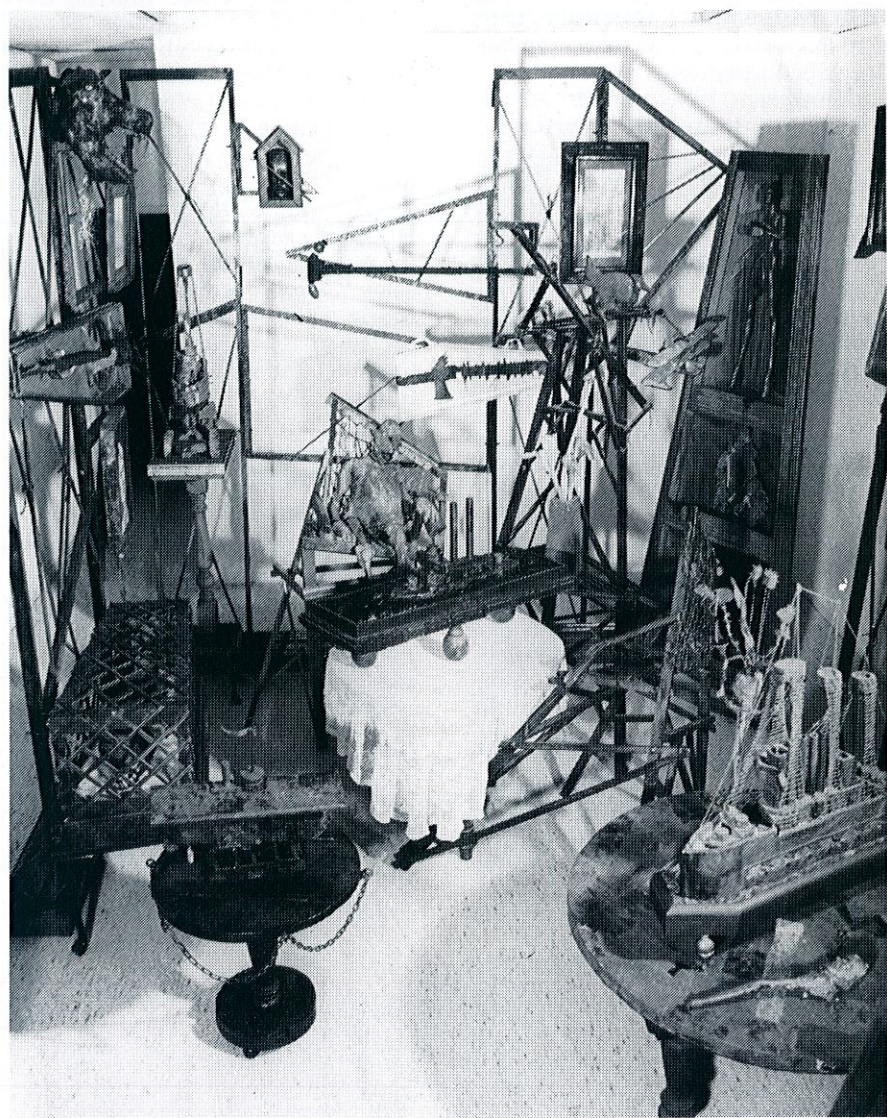
On each occasion we have been more wrong than wronged. This has made us a little suspicious that the notion of artistic solidarity, ie. 'style' as a social expression, has any validity. These suspicions have drugged our minds so that we did not see this form of unparalleled artistic culmination when it arrived.

It has arrived in the persons of John Tarry (paintings and sculpture) and Stuart Elliott (installation), together at the Quentin. It was also present in Fred Gilbert's collection of paintings at Fremantle New Painting and in a sequence of solo exhibitions by Richard Gunning, Philip Burns and Thomas Hoareau at the Galerie Dusseldorf.

There are a number of things these artists have in common which form the "miracle" that was observed by incredulous bystanders waiting about on Nigel's installations to have their sight restored and for the cut lunch to be handed out on the shores of Lake Claremont.

1. They were all contemporaries at WAIT a few years ago.
2. They have all worked and exhibited since that time.
3. Four of them are involved with the liturgy of the colourist tradition.
4. They all have humour in their work.

(a) Fred Gilbert uses loud garish complementary colours in a way which is soft and succulent in its overall effect.



Stuart Elliott installation — courtesy Quentin gallery

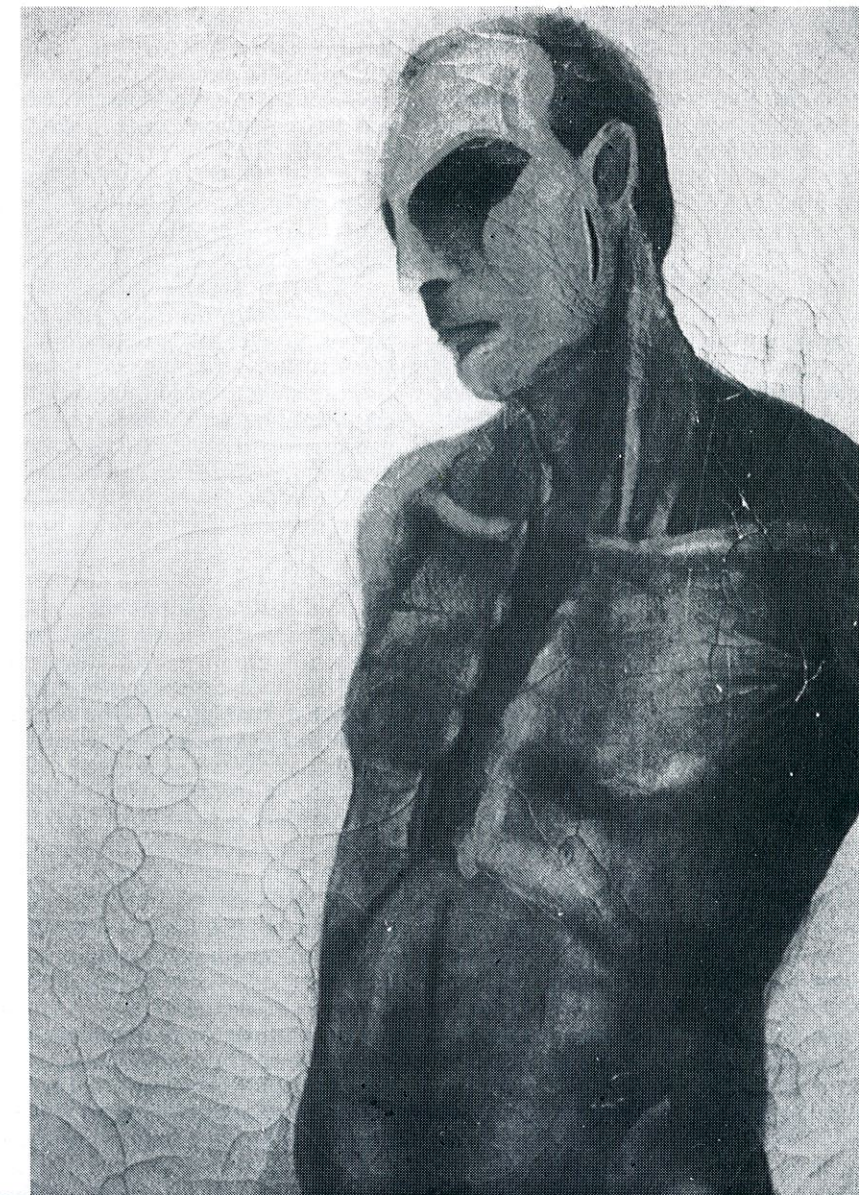
- (b) Stuart's work is a punny gallery within a gallery — a cave or ossuary of grotesque figurines and fleshy furniture and a travesty of the system. He is the backbone of the Western Desert art scene.
- (c) John Tarry's exhibition was a monument to human vulnerability and he managed to describe this subject without direct reference to women. There was a single sensitive colourist painting, with a figure which might have been female, but it translates too readily as a child in sludge, caught in a drain.
- (d) Richard Gunning presented views seen in and from his studio, on high in a city office block. His message is — we can never get out into the world of reality because of painting; but we can stay in the warmth of the studio and see the outside world,

None are creating myths, desert paintings or landscapes. These artists are Australian in that they are oblivious of their artistic ancestors. The Australian tradition is that in the relay race to maturity every runner drops the stick.

6. These artists avoid a fixed group or individual style. In that sense 'style' is no more the symbol of social solidarity or evidence of rebellion against repressive superficial values. In fact it is a sign of institutional control.

On the other hand if the individual style is to make an impact it must be conspicuous. This can be done at the level of the exhibition or in each opus. Although curators, gallery owners and even reviewers often try to have the last word, control over the style of an exhibition is never in the hands of any one person. However these artists come close to succeeding in their struggle to maintain their independent ground.

Diversity and variety are acclaimed nowadays. Unfortunately the fashion is a distraction which prevents people from noticing the unity of this group and their individual strengths. This review is a lament for the combined show which has never occurred and which should have taken place while these artists still constituted a local group. □



John Tarry, "Derma" — courtesy Quentin gallery

Political Practice: The avant-garde and the womens movement

Anne Marsh

It would be a generalization to assert that all innovative artists of the eighties are moving into politically concerned art practice. However, a brief glance at the alternative sector of the art community does verify a move in this direction. Artists are beginning to organize politically for various reasons. A disillusionment with the art market has caused a unity among artists, collectively forming around the issues that concern them.

Artists organizing around the politics of the art world, and their own exploitation within it, do not make up a phenomenon exclusive to the situation we find ourselves in today. The first Artists' Union was formed in 1934. Similar conditions caused the formation of Art

Workers Coalition in 1969 and its development into Artists Meeting for Cultural Change in 1977. Throughout the seventies feminist art organizations and political art groups formed in the Western world. In the 1980's this movement continues, aware of its history and its goals yet often employing diverse means.

Lucy Lippard has been involved in this politicization of the art world for almost twenty years, she has been active in the New York groups and her travels have inspired developments in Australia. At a workshop held at the Women's Art Movement (Adelaide) in 1982 Lippard talked about the waves of political art in New York:

"Having been in New York for some twenty years I have seen three peaks of political art becoming fashionable. It is

never political particularly, sometimes it is valuable on certain levels, a certain kind of theory leaks into the art world." (1)

The organizations mentioned above all differ somewhat in their concerns and strategies, but they are collectively linked by their analysis of the role of art and the artist within capitalist society.

The artists on the move became increasingly disillusioned with the avant-garde of the sixties. They found that their strategies, manifesting in conceptual and anti-aesthetic art, private protest and outrageous attempts to shock the public, were failing to radically change the notion of what constitutes art. The artist's product was being absorbed quickly by the market, every radical shock became a new trend, an innovation accep-

table within the art system as it was. Artists failed to realize that what they were producing, and the strategies they were employing fitted neatly into the institutional theory of art. The very notion of questioning what art is and striving relentlessly for innovation of style is commonplace within the institutional theory. It allows the artist licence to question, to outrage; it thrives on such methods of revolt. The institutional theory is a status theory, it does not tell us what art is, rather it tells us how status is achieved in the art world. (2)

"The artwork which perpetuates the joke gets status. It gets status because it has raised the question of status in a sharp and clever way. It achieves status by putting status on the agenda, by putting status in question." (3)

The avant-garde has always been committed to the concept of a movement rather than a school in the classical sense; the school being concerned with technique and training, whilst the movement promotes an end in itself — a new doctrine. (4) The term "movement" itself suggests a body formed in order to agitate against something or someone. The term activism has also been applied to the avant-garde, it suggests action — but action without plan or programme. Poggioli states that anarchism is the only political ideal that the avant-garde artist has (5); he sees the artist as the alienated individual, antagonistic towards society and towards the art public. A rebel without a cause. He also talks of the aristocracy of the avant-garde, the revolt of the 'unique' against society. (6)

The artist has been questioning standards of art in producing anti-aesthetic work, challenging what art has been in the past. Given their practice has been one of protest, it is only protest within certain limitations, their means of protest is still referential to the formal notion of art. The artist rebelling against tradition and against the public represents the anarchistic individual conforming strictly to the boundaries proscribed by the avant-garde.

"The artist is imaginative and creative in inventing alternative modes of being outrageous. One way is to caricature the tradition. Another is to present as art just those things most unlikely to be regarded as such. But the subtlety of this latter mode is that it remains parasitic upon tradition." (7)

The easy absorption of the avant-garde of the sixties led the artist to question art, and its role in society, in a much broader sense. Today's artist is no longer content with formal rebellion and the anarchistic aesthetic. The old avant-garde is labelled as the 'established institution' used to absorb innovation and rebellion. (8)

The artist has become involved in a political analysis of the role of art in society and the responsibility of the artist to the audience. This move represents a considerable shift in thinking, the traditional role of the avant-garde artist has been to rebel against the art of the past and the public. Now artists are re-thinking their position; we hear much talk of the artist's responsibility to the audience. This is quite the opposite of the prevailing anarchistic spirit associated with the old avant-garde.

In alignment with the new analysis we find the development of the political art group. The organizing of artists into such groups can be attributed to two factors:-
(a) The exploitation of the artist by the art market.
(b) The need for alternative network systems for artists to establish their new strategies.

Artists found that they needed organizations, as alternatives to the mainstream, in order to pressure and manipulate the market and gallery system to their own advantage. Artists realized the need for and the effectiveness of lobby groups. The Artists Union of 1934 and the Art-Workers Coalition of 1969 operated as such groups. They were not propagating a particular style, rather, they were in-service organizations for artists. As such they represented a shift in the image of the artist. Before such strategies existed the artist could not avoid the exploitation of the market place, the individual had no recompense.

Artist's unions and the like, lobbied for artist's rights and acted as pressure groups to establish a system of reckoning with the market place. They were groups committed to action. The representation of mutual concerns changed the position of the artist in society. No longer the lone individual struggling, alienated against the pragmatic world. The artist now had 'rights' as an individual who was part of a larger community of artists all with similar grievances. The meeting of artists around mutual issues brought them together prior to meeting in the market place, as such these groups operated as communications networks. In 1975 the focus changed from an agitational to a strong theoretical base.

The Art Workers Coalition was replaced by Artists Meeting for Cultural Change. The new group involved the members of the Art and Language Group; artists who had been involved in political activism in the sixties and a contingent of feminists who joined en masse. The Art and Language people gave the group its Marxist theoretical base, although in the early days a cross-section of Left views were apparent. Artists Meeting for Cultural Change was advertised as a "forum for the examination of the political nature of culture." (9)

"Papers were read or study groups were held on such topics as new methodologies for art, collaborative work, imperialism, the role of museums, art and feminism, the culture industry, and the artist as intellectual. By spring 1976, the meetings had grown more specifically political and much attention was being given to the subject of socialism." (10)

Artists Meeting for Cultural Change continued the agitational policies established by Art Workers Coalition. On January 3rd 1976 Artists Meeting for Cultural Change picketed the Whitney Museum in protest of the Bicentennial exhibition which was described as 'male and pale!' *An Anti-Catalogue* was published in reaction to the exhibition, its principle tenet was that art is never politically neutral, and art institutions and forms tend to reflect and reinforce the values of the prevailing art-elite. *An Anti-Catalogue* was the first publication put out by the group; the climate of political analysis and collective work gave rise to a wave of publications that continues to the present day.

By 1976 the political art groups had established ideological splits. Art and Language published three editions of *The Fox* (1974-76) under the umbrella of the Art and Language Foundation Incorporated, the group under its new title doubled in size and eventually fell prey to internal dissension. The majority of the Foundation's members decided to adopt an orthodox Marxist-Leninist stance and to collectivize the group. The dissension in Art and Language effected a split in Artists Meeting for Cultural Change. New York's political art scene was split in two. Artists Meeting for Cultural Change continued with fewer members and Provisional Art and Language formed advocating a Marxist-Leninist interpretation of cultural revolution in their new journal *Red Herring*.

Feminists, who had been involved in all the groups in varying degrees, decided to leave what they labelled as the 'male art left' to their own political dissension. Women artists had been working within their own groups throughout the early seventies and had already established a strong theoretical base of their own to work from. *The Heresies Collective* formed in New York in 1976 as a reaction to the fragmentation of the other groups. Women also felt that their needs were not being catered for adequately. In a workshop at the Women's Art Movement in 1982 Lucy Lippard spoke about why women had left the mixed groups in favour of their own organizations.

"When a lot of us feminists went into that group (A.M.C.C.) we found that the dominant, the noisiest 10 people were Art Language people. Since we were talking about cultural change and they couldn't even change their pronouns, we had a certain amount of trouble . . . There was all this lip service paid to a certain kind of feminism, or to feminism period." (11)

On the West Coast the Feminist Studio Workshop had been formed in 1972 and led to the formation of the Los Angeles Women's Building in 1973. From 1973-76 the Women's Building ironed out a lot of organizational and administrative problems.

It is never an easy task to coordinate a feminist administrative structure because of the anarchistic spirit of the women's movement generally. The women's movement because of its nature incorporates diverse views, not only do we have your run-of-the-mill anarchists, socialists, communists, labour supporters et al, but we have the extremes as well like Christian Women's Temperance and the dreaded Spartacists. Not only is the women's movement diverse but it is also committed to collective rather than hierarchical organization. In 1976 the Los Angeles Women's Building stated that:-

"The fundamental conflict is not primarily one between men and women but between the world views of people who participate in feminist vision and the traditional world views of the society in which they work and live. The ability of a feminist community to disrupt does not lie in its apparent separatism but in its strong critique of our culture's values and its position as a concrete alternative." (12)

It is more than just interesting to note that the development of an international Women's Art Movement has been the only consistent and continuing alternative structure to survive.

Lucy Lippard first visited Australia in 1975. At that time she was still committed to the notion of a separate women's culture. Her first tour of Australia inspired women here to form women's art organizations and slide registries to document the work of women.

Women's Art Movements were formed in Australia throughout the '70s, each group formed for their own individual reasons, some to conquer discrimination, others to create study and research groups, and some to establish their own galleries and spaces. Many different schools of thought began to emerge under the banner of the Women's Art Movement.

'Why have there been no great women artists?' was the question raised in the early seventies. At this time it was generally believed that there had been women artists of significance but they had been ignored and never recorded within mainstream history. Numerous volumes of art *herstory* began to flood the publishing market, research books, magazines and films emerged to prove that women artists had made important contributions to art.

Running parallel to this search for great women artists we find a discourse around the issue of traditional women's crafts. In America Judy Chicago's book *Through the Flower* documented the foundation of the Feminist Studio Workshop and the L.A. Women's Building; it also asserted the 'feminine aesthetic' — centralized imagery, enclosures, soft sculpture and feminist performance art. Traditional women's crafts were re-evaluated and elevated to a position of prominence in women's cultural circles. The quilting bee became for some a symbol of regeneration, a reclaiming of women's cultural activity.

Chicago and others within the female aesthetic stream of consciousness continue to support the original claim that: 'because women's experience is different from that of men they will naturally make different art, and that this art can be easily recognized as the work of women. It was held that the concerns of women artists come directly from their own personal experience as women. This school of thought fitted well into the overall feminist consciousness which states unequivocally that: 'the personal is political'. Personal experiences shared and analysed through feminist ideology can become the

basis for a political practice that can change the inequality that women experience throughout the world. Further, that this process of self-to-world evaluation, because it begins with the personal, can become a strategy for all peoples to alleviate their oppression.

Within feminist art circles women's personal experience received considerable attention. The growing number of women's art organizations and feminist education programmes led to a new era of women's art. By the mid seventies 'Feminist Art' had established itself as a new movement and women artists became active in all art practices. Many of the new generation pledged their allegiance to Feminist Art, concerning themselves with personal subject matter and women's issues, others experimented with new practices, some stuck with mainstream art, and some avoided feminist organizations fearing they would be too easily categorized, and perhaps discriminated against because of affiliation with a political group.

The Women's Art Movement as an international concern is a cultural-political movement, in Australia in the early seventies the obvious implications of such political involvement was not always apparent. The modern feminist movement is the political force that motivates the larger concept known as "the women's movement". This women's movement was active on all fronts during the seventies, feminists lobbied and pressured society on all levels to acknowledge the unequal position of women. The women's movement ploughed forward armed with theories and ideologies to change the position of women in society. It operated on a liberal and a radical front, fighting with theories and persuasion on one hand, and on the other with slogans and protest marches. The women's movement has become one of the largest political movements of our time. It unites women together under one banner, by virtue of their gender, yet it has grown to such huge proportions because of this that it incorporates diverse, and sometimes conflicting schools of thought within its larger structure.

The Women's Art Movement in Australia emerged from, and around, the position that women artists found themselves in by virtue of their being born female in a male dominated society. Women's Art Movements formed autonomously, encouraged by sister organisations throughout the country and the world. Because of this and due to the nature of the women's movement generally, each group

developed and directed its own particular focus. The Women's Art Movement grew into a large heterogeneous group representing women of different ages, backgrounds and degrees of feminist political involvement; some groups presented conservative or liberal ideologies whilst others pursued a more radical practice.

In 1976 Lucy Lippard's book *From the Centre: feminist essays on women's art* was published, one of the crucial questions posed was should women be content with just a piece of the 'pie'? (13) The proposition questioned whether women artists should lobby for equal representation in exhibitions and the art world generally. Was this original strategy a reformist move that would eventually backfire? It was feared that 'tokenism' — acceptance of a few women with the mainstream would eventuate, and women artists as a population would find themselves in the same position they had been in throughout history. The pursuit of equal representation would not change the established base of power, women would still be denied access to defining what is 'significant' or 'great' art, this privilege would remain in the hands of the male dominated establishment. The strategy of interventionism was seen by many feminists to be reformist and retrograde. Women artists had learnt that tokenist policies of limited and belated recognition did not change the overall position of women in the art world. (14)

The two strategies of interventionism and alternative networking were debated within feminist criticism. The interventionists argued that alternative networks for women could be easily ignored by the mainstream, and that such organizations only served to reinforce the position of woman-as-other — separate from the whole. By the end of the seventies women generally agreed that both strategies were equally important and should be implemented simultaneously to redress the unequal position of women in the arts.

I take issue with the argument that labels women-only organizations as 'separatist', it reflects a certain kind of philistinism. A monthly or weekly meeting with only women is hardly likely to infest the species or create by some selection process an army of amazons ready to lop the head of any male indiscriminately! Feminism offers the human race such universal propositions as equality of sex, race and class; it demands equal pay for equal work and has raised some of the most important moral questions of our time, most explicitly the abortion

issue. These are not sectarian issues, and the women's movement as such does not propagate any dominant party-political policy. It says in effect, that the established Left is not perfect. The women's movement incorporates in its wider structure diverse views and yet it survives with one unity, coming together and moving apart as issue demands.

As an alternative model, feminism offers all people a chance to re-analyse their own position in society, and it asks us all to take political responsibility for the way we live and the things we do.

The concerns of twentieth century art support and confirm the need for alternative spaces and networking, not only for women but for all artists wanting to redefine the role and position of art in society. Prominent within the art concerns of our time has been the analysis of the position of the artist and methods of representation. The separation of artist/product/audience has been undermined, and the all-pervading position of the market has been challenged.

As the concept of Women's Art Movement grew and matured, so a critical ideological analysis developed. The search for the great women artists changed to focus on women's position in culture and why it is that women have been neglected and ignored.

In *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* by Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (1981) the authors state that:-

"The way the history of art has been studied and evaluated is not the exercise of neutral 'objective' scholarship, but an ideological practice. It is a particular way of seeing and interpreting in which the beliefs and assumptions of art historians, unconsciously reproducing the ideologies of our society, shape and limit the very picture of the history of art presented to us by art history." (15)

The notion of a feminine aesthetic has also been challenged in view of the vast array of work being produced by women.

"The heterogeneous activities of women in the twentieth century convincingly dismiss any notion of a homogeneous women's art. Instead we are confronted with the very many different ways women have intervened in avant-garde practice." (16)

Women are active in all areas of the arts representing a liberal and a radical perspective. Women seeking to intervene in mainstream practice align themselves with the dominant ideology by association alone. The more radical and experimental work of women supports the alternative networks and ideologies resistant to the establishment. Other-than-mainstream structures have become crucial for the experimental artist, in order for the resistance to survive there must be an alternative structure.

The Women's Art Movement offers such an alternative, its policies and strategies are far reaching. The model of collectivism is a difficult structure to work with. We are all used to operating with directors, secretaries and hierarchies — these are the norms. The Women's Art Movement as a feminist organization resists the norm and is fervently committed to the new.

Maintaining and strengthening resistance to the mainstream is a radical strategy since it undermines the power structures and value systems of our world. By its very existence it challenges the existing order and offers people a real alternative, a new vision, a new art practice, and the power to make their own decisions.

Notes.

(1) Lippard, L.R. "Political Art Activism"; workshop conducted at the S.A. Women's Art Movement, Oct. 1982.

(2) Wartofsky, M.W. "Art, Art-worlds, and Ideology", *Journal of Aesthetics* no. 3. Spring 1980. p. 242.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 246.

(4) Poggioli, R. *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Harvard University Press, 1968) p. 20. Translated from the original Italian edition, *Teoria dell'arte d'avanguardia* (Scieta editrice il Mulino, 1962).

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 5.

(6) *Ibid.*, p. 39.

(7) Wartofsky, M.W. "Art, Art-worlds, and Ideology", *Journal of Aesthetics* no. 3. Spring 1980. p. 246.

(8) Parker, R. *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* Pollock, G. (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) p. 151.

(9) Marmer, N. "Art and Politics '77", *Art in America* July 1977, p. 63.

(10) *Ibid.*, p. 64.

(11) Lippard, L.R. "Political Art Activism"; workshop conducted at S.A. Women's Art Movement, Oct. 1982.

(12) Gaudin, A. Press release material from the L.A. Women's Building 1976.

Art Papers & Supplies



"Oh! Pablo, don't cry, your Mummy will buy you a new box of Faber-Castell's from Art Papers & Supplies."

Art Paper & Supplies offers a comprehensive range of materials for professional amateur and student artists.

We provide new and different products at very competitive prices and our selection of art papers is considered to be the finest available

Art Papers & Supplies is your very real alternative for quality art materials with friendly helpful service

State Distributors:

Marcus Art Products ● Raphael Brushes ● Arches Paper Drawell Brushes Le Franc Oils, Watercolours, Acrylics

Rear of:
243 Stirling Highway,
Claremont 6010.
Telephone: 384 6035, 383 1679

(13) Lippard, L.R. *From the Centre: feminist essays on women's art* (Dutton & Co. New York, 1976) p. 135.

(14) Parker, R. *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* Pollock, G. (R.K.P. 1981) p. 135.

(15) *Ibid.*, preface. p. xvii.

(16) *Ibid.*, p. 137.

Bibliography.

Clay, Jean. "Aspects of Bourgeois Art: the world as it is", *Studio International* Dec. 1970.

Dickson, David. "Art Politic", *Art and Artists* Sept. 1972.

Graham, Gordon. "Art and Politics", *British Journal of Aesthetics* Summer 1978.

Hein, Hilda. "Aesthetic Consciousness: the Ground for Political Experience", *Journal of Aesthetics* winter 1976.

Lippard, L.R. "The Art Workers Coalition: Not a History.", *Studio International* Nov. 1970 "Dilemma; growing ethical and political concern", *Arts Magazine* Nov. 1970 *Changing, essays in art criticism* (New York 1971) "More alternative spaces: the L.A. Women's Building", *Art in America* May 1974 "Projecting a feminist criticism" *Art Journal* no. 4. Summer 1976 "Caring: 5 political artists", *Studio International* May/June 1977 *From the Centre: feminist essays on women's art* (Dutton & Co., New York, 1976).

Marmer, Nancy. "Art and Politics '77", *Art in America* July 1977.

Roth, Moira. "The Aesthetics of Indifference" *Artforum* Nov. 1977.

Poggioli, Renato. *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Harvard University Press 1968; orig. pub. Italian, 1962).

Parker, Rozika and Pollock, Griselda *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (Toutledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

Walker, John. A. "Art and Anarchism", *Art and Artists* May 1978.

Wartofsky, Marx. W. "Art, Art-worlds and Ideologies" *Journal of Aesthetics* no. 3 Spring 1980. □

The Sculptor in a Painters World.



Theo Koning at Praxis — photo Lloyd Marsh

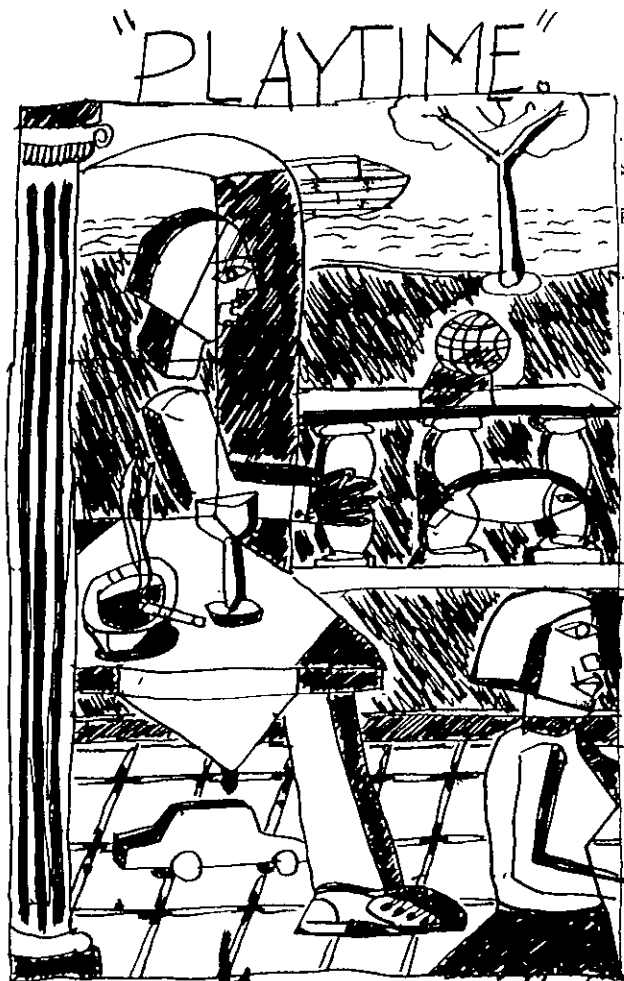


Note-book Extracts and Conversational Excerpts

Theo Koning 84.

"Its very difficult for artists in W.A. to make art in a continuous way; everyone has their energy disrupted (by a lack of time/money/space). I've tried to solve part of this problem by building a "shed" to work in. Other people talk about their "studios" but that's a place where you make *Biennale* art. You see, in this area, you can look down any alley and see people in their sheds, sitting around on fruit boxes drinking wine, or bottling tomatoes and so on. So the shed is a common term, it is a place for intimate forms of production. Art has been removed from its proper base and is only used to gain Kudos, when it should be used as a buffer-zone between reality and the imagination; my shed is just for that!"

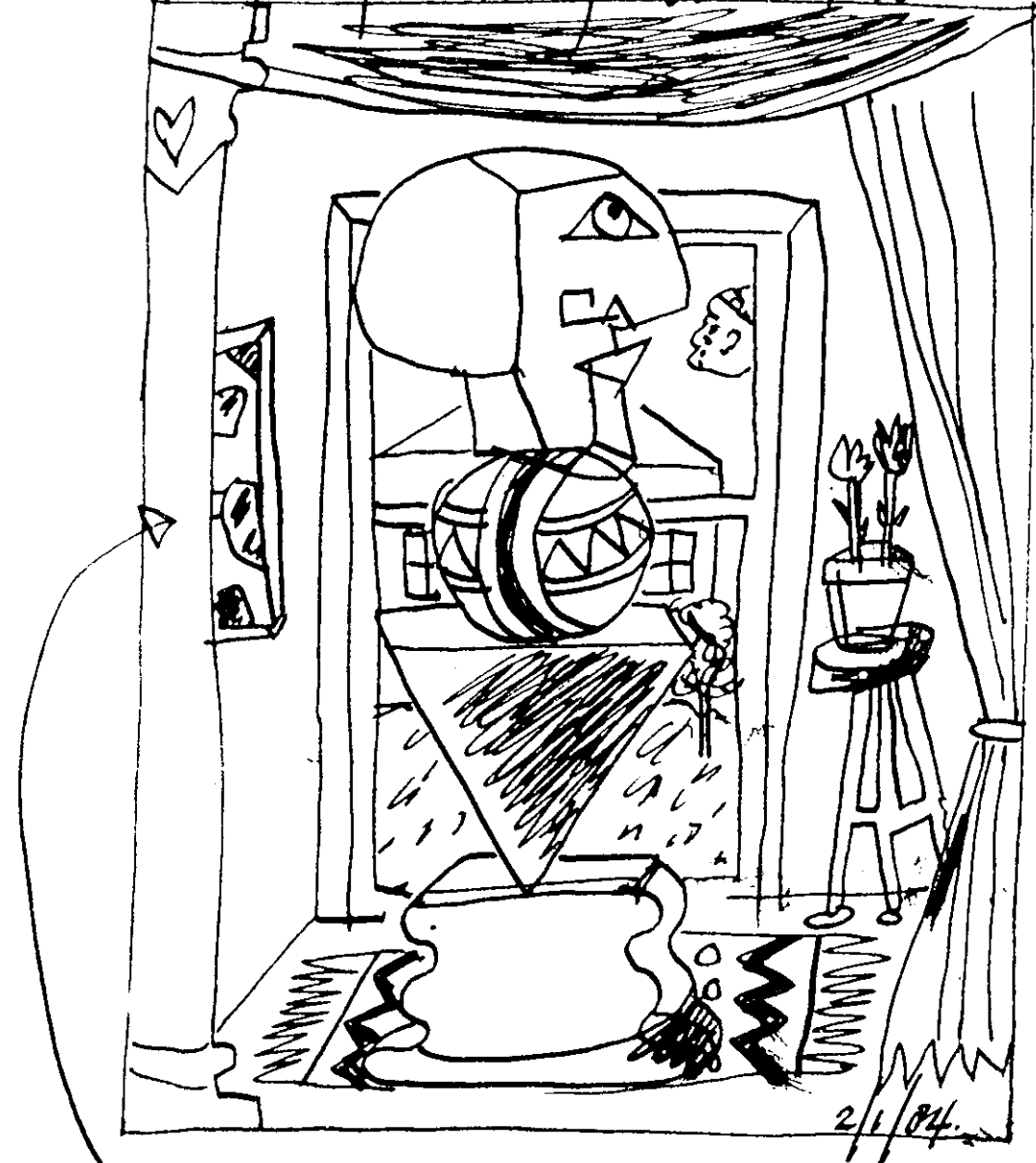
"In Western Australia you pick up snippets of art information which together form the basis for work". A fantasy combination formed from the canons of European Modernism; (Brancusi/De Chirico/Magritte/Matisse), a collage of hearsay recreating an imaginary European "high culture". Following that great Australian tradition — all is gleaned from the channels of media reproduction in the absence of more substantial encounters.



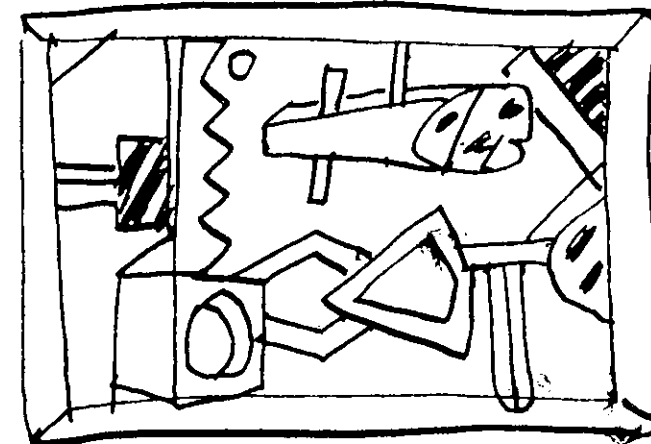
drawing — Theo Koning

The drawn and painted images all directly reference the *distant*; culturally, geographically or historically. "They indicate a lust to be elsewhere and, represent the absence of *exotic* and *sophisticated* cultures" . . . "Yet my only reason to travel would be to realise, (by comparison), my local situation. To know Australia, it is not necessary, as many Europeans think, to discover the bush because that's not the *real* Australia. The *real* Australia is in this street, its our social fabric."

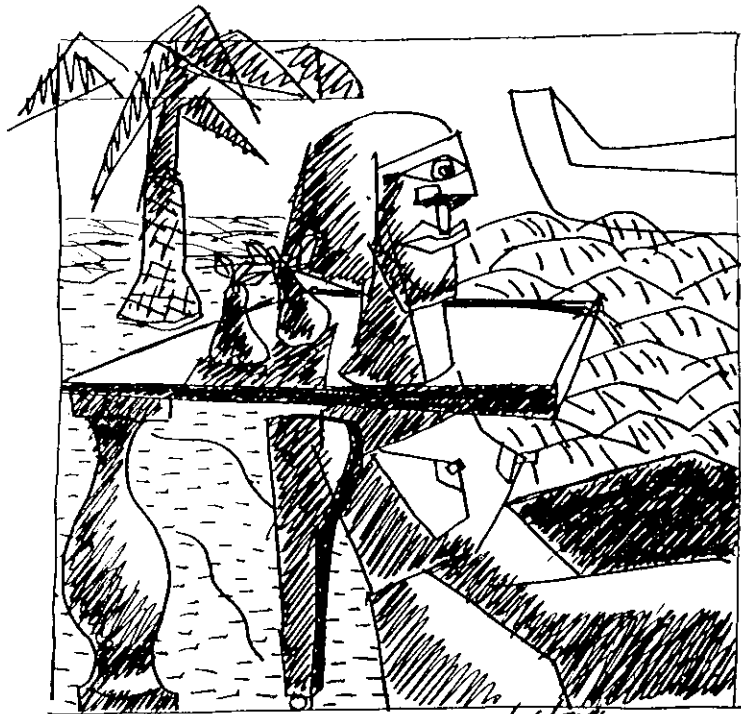
"The Sculptor living in a Painters World."



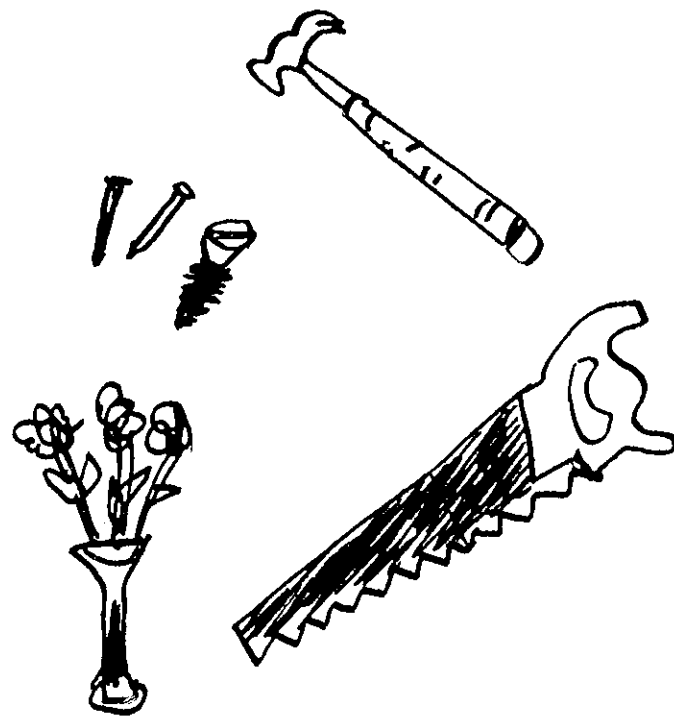
drawing — Theo Koning



*A picture by a famous artist.
Theo Koning.
2/1/84.*



drawing — Theo Koning



Exotic

Theo Koning

"My experience of Art History studies in Western Australia is that one is lead to believe that the best art, the serious art, the master-piece can only be made in Europe. *Australian Art History* was taught as an apologetic after-thought, there never existed for me the possibility of an *Australian masterpiece*." Flooded by European iconography the problem was/is "how to privatise it, how to trap and re-synthesise these images and attach to them a personal significance and not simply reiterate the myth of Europe?"

The Praxis "New Painting" Exhibition

David Brown

The "New Painting" exhibition that the Praxis Group organised and held at the Fremantle Art Gallery from 10 may to 4 June was an un-qualified success, and it is not because I write for M magazine that I say so.

If structuralism really means anything, and I'm sure it does, let me say that there was a positive abundance of structural homology between the freshness and vigour of the works, their placement in the gallery, the gaiety of the people (mostly artists) present on the first night and the healthy dialectic-in-diversity that seemed to be the deep code holding everything together; as also the youthfulness of the artists.

Shaun Lloyd Atkinson's works were rightly placed at the top of the catalogue: Very beautiful and soft reds, blues, greens with white, "badly" painted without being so, and making reference, but not indelicately, to "Neo-Expressionism."

His work *Red Tape*, on the right hand side of what seemed to be a nicely related, though non-contiguous, triptych showed a human figure loosely embroiled in coils of white-smudged blue-red brush-strokes. There was a hint of Egon Schiele's *For My Art and for My Loved Ones I will Gladly Endure to the End!* but the emotion was considerably less tortured. Perhaps because we are living at a time when neo-conservatism is all pervasive, the "red tape" was not convincing as a symbol of repression. It looked more like curls of smoke than hard-core bondage. It is a subject that, in any case, is out of fashion, having been done to death in the consciousness-raising plane of popular culture in the 1960's and '70's. The artist seemed aware of this, however, and created a pleasantly ambiguous effect.

The curatorial placement of Darren Howard's "foam surfboard collage", *The Aboriginal Beach Opposed to Landrights* (an original and vicious-looking assortment of aboriginalised surfboards) against the most seaward-facing wall of the art gallery was fortuitous, as was the placing of Karl-Wilhelm Wiebke's abstractly and totemically painted broomsticks opposite them. An interesting ceremonial balance was achieved, with both groups of objects standing at about 70° to each wall, the fatness of several surfboards being roughly equivalent, it seemed, to the slim posturings of forty stick paintings. Wiebke's work, called *New Paintings*, appeared to combine the tendency of recent years to produce pseudo-ethnographic art, in this case ironically referenced to "aboriginality" (as well as to the title of the exhibition), with a delinquent desire to make play upon the question of artistic production itself. I found myself meditating upon how many of these things Wiebke would have to "mass produce" (when of course they were not mass produced) to make himself a millionaire. Had I had any surplus value to splash around I would have bought a couple.

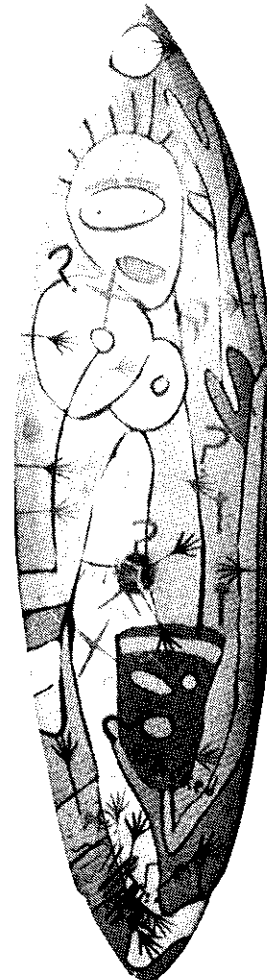
Meanwhile (half way through the first night, that is), Roxy McGuire was rushing to and fro in new turquoise-blue gumboots, delivering party invitations, printed on each of which was a warning to "Be There or Be Square!" Of her seven works (on the balcony above Weibke's) was one most unsquare one, "... *Should Be Seen but not Hurt*", a "bad painting" on a dark ground,



Surfboard, Darren Howard — photo Nigel Helyer

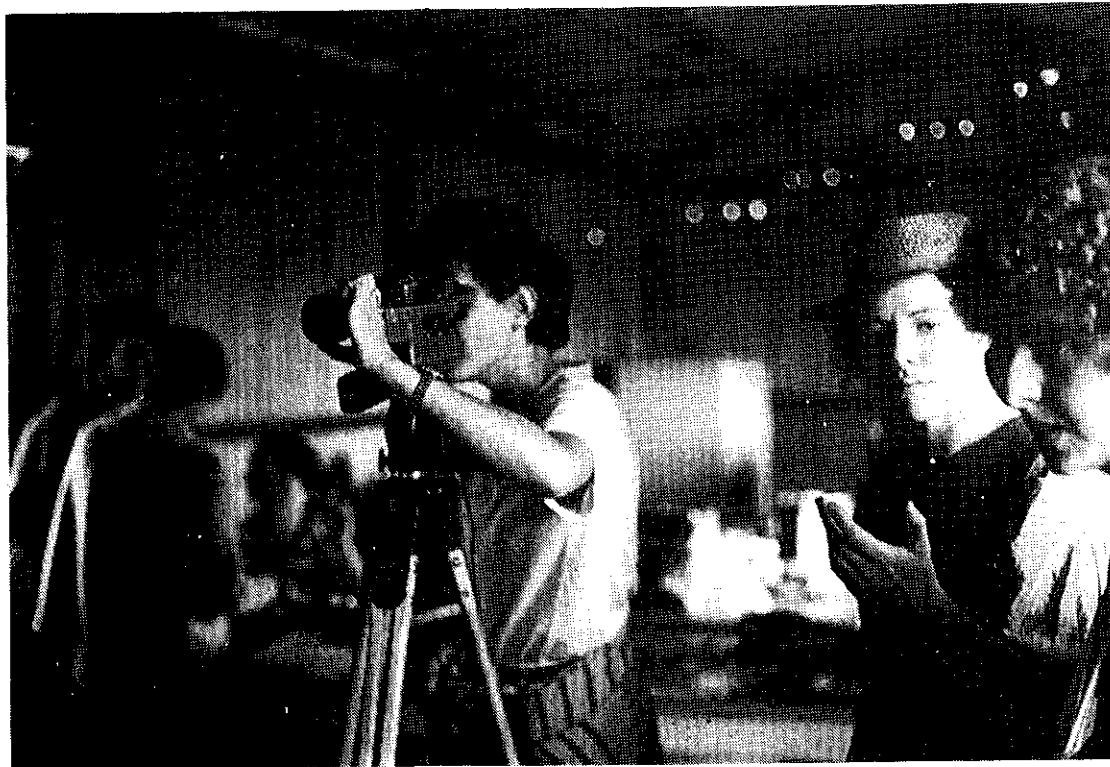
of a very dark vagina. Her best work, I think, was a naivist painting of a woman with a splendidly vacuous face seen through the criss-cross of a kitchen window (*Untitled*). It seemed she was making an omelette or doing the dishes and accepting a fate worse than death with equanimity. It suggested that a resigned existentialism is creeping into feminist art, not unalloyed to a sense of humour.

On an opposite balcony were some scary, feministically tinged works by Penny Bovell. "*A Dream Realised*" had a similar form-content matrix to *Untitled*. A middle-aged woman seen through a clear glass door dropping a door key. Some child-like, but quite sophisticated, representation. A tragic appearance to woman's face. She reminded me, for some curious reason, of Mrs Natwick in Patrick White's short story "*Five-Twenty*." As in all of Penny's works, there was a flattening of perspective. I don't know why this should be so, but it is characteristic of everything



Cine Matrix Inc. Women in Film and Television

Library, Seminars, Lobbying:
Advertising and Sexism



Film Resource Centre, Screenings,
Workshops, Scriptwriting

57a High St. Fremantle W.A. Tel. (09) 335 7774

she has produced, even landscapes, going as far back as 1977. It achieves the effect of spectator discomfort. "From Nightmares to Politics" was superb; a haunting black crouching, pouncing human figure, a female *Steppenwolf*, surrounded by a richly textured, horizontally layered, collage in orange-browns, black and reds. This landscape, although flat and vertical, appeared also infinite. Jacques Lacan has suggested that metonymic association in language is associated with the infinite plane of "desire" in the emotional centres of the mind. It occurred to me that the "landscape" in "From Nightmares to Politics" appeared to be a visual form of metonymic association, but without the clear meaning that metonymic relationships have in language. There is

never any second-hand metaphor in Penny's work, possibly because metaphor forms the basis of a history and a tradition she has rejected totally. Although the black figure is symbolic (i.e. metaphorical) it does not mean anything to Penny outside psychological investigation of herself. It does not derive from, or relate to, anything in literary or art-historical tradition.

How much female-to-feministic art is like this I cannot tell. Perhaps the "two-dimensionality" of Penny's work is related to the fact that the "paradigmatic axis" has been largely removed. The consequent protoplasmic extension out into the plane of "desire" (which translates artistically, I think, into desire for the "new") is perhaps like a reaching-out for wide flat psychic

zones of blank, syntactic, non-signification, as seen, most clearly and most famously, in the "Bricks" sculptures of Carl Andre.

Contrast the stodgy qualities of most of the works at the "Exhibition of Paintings" at The Western Australia Week Invitation Art Award (Fremantle Art Gallery 8 June to 1 July). Even painters who sometimes produce stimulating and emotionally powerful work appear to have been intimidated by the call to quality and the desire for a prize. The warping effect has been towards some fancy legwork in the drafting department, a surfeit of cleverness, and great contrivance of emotion. □

Australian Cultural Identity Crisis(?)

Jane Sramek

I have had countless social conversations around the topic of Australia's cultural identity, seeking out various viewpoints. Everybody had something to say on it, and I found that there was little, if any, disagreement on the conclusions. So, am I wasting my time even writing on a topic about which so many people seem to agree? I have been encouraged to put forth the ideas discussed in these conversations. Although I don't feel as if I am saying anything new, there seems to be a need for these things to be said *again*. Please note that my comments are personal observations, some of which are critical, but they are in no way intended to be negative.

Broadly speaking the Australian culture is an odd combination of British and American culture (often the worst of both worlds) and less an expression of its Self than a reflection of the external political and economic influences.

The early British influence helped create a character which is reserved and stoic, class conscious, racially prejudiced and easily sunburned. The more recent American influence has instilled a value system based on materialism, consumerism, disrespect for the earth, militarism and fast foods.

Beyond that Australia suffers from an inferiority complex and

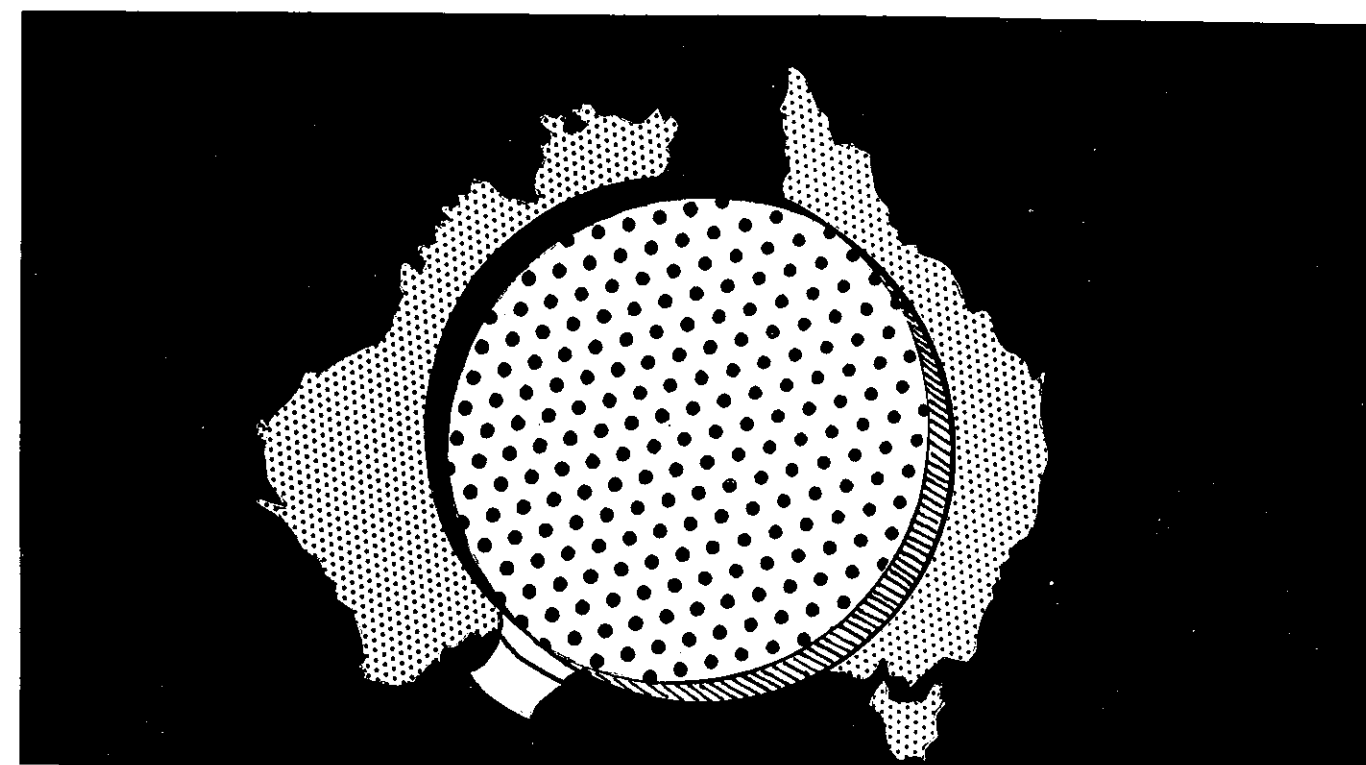
rather than setting the pace it follows in another's lead. Australians don't seem to have strong beliefs, or if they do they are reluctant to express them — perhaps because they wish to avoid confrontations at all costs. The "She'll be right, mate" philosophy is a non-committal and non-expressive, encapsulation and I believe, the essence of the dilemma of Australia's cultural identity. Australia is a nation of easy-going, well-natured people, but its culture is without things to say and without passion.

Culture is expressed in physical form by the objects the culture makes and through ritualistic-behaviour. In a specific way it is related to people's sense of aesthetics and the arts. The Australian character and values; the history without major internal conflicts; the contemporary easy life without friction and a mundane, non-spiritual attitude toward life have all contributed to the lack of "inspired" art in the Australian past. This proverbial vicious cycle continues as Australia looks to the U.S. and U.K. for expertise, inspiration and, ultimately, approval. The lack of innovative art movements; the overseas pilgrimages and high percentage of foreign tertiary art instructors are indicative of this. I am one of those foreign art instructors!

I would now like to note some observations and feeling about my Art education experiences because the education system is a product and perpetuator of culture. As a secondary and tertiary teacher and former tech. ed. student I have

noticed that the first twelve years of the general school curriculum do not stress creativity; critical thinking; individuality or self-expression, all qualities vital to the arts. The creative, questioning, expressive individual seems "to make it through" in spite of the system, perhaps even in spite of the cultural thrust. Art as a separate class subject is usually a low priority with school administrators. It seemed of no real concern what went on inside my high school art classes as long as my students were quiet and did not leave a mess. One year, because of timetable juggling, the Manual Arts department was required to take a few of the Year 8 drawing classes, and I have heard of cases where other non-art teachers are teaching art classes. What sort of artistic experience does that provide? I have taught with other art teachers who have doled out recipes for "successful" projects or done the students' work for them. They may have just been bad art teachers, or they may simply have been a product of the system. I have had students who were forced to take art because they were considered "unsafe" in a Manual Arts class. Beyond the secondary level I have had a third year painting student who had never heard of Cezanne, and a mature age student who was already teaching high school art who had never done silk-screen printing. How can this be?

Art is viewed as a recreational activity and is not considered in a philosophical, intellectual or academic context, with the result often being "superficial picture making." The emphasis seems to be



Artwork by Jane Sramek

on media and technique rather than on depth of idea exploration, statement-making or dialogue. It is tragic that there is an imposed division of media into "Craft" and "Fine Art" areas, a distinction based on outdated, limiting concepts of how media are used. It is also unfortunate that within the fine arts courses Basic Design is not taught as a subject in its own right, being touched on only peripherally in other classes. Fine Arts students are handicapped because of it.

However, there are rumblings of change and the future looks bright both artistically and culturally. Australia is a cultural adolescent, heavily under the influences of Mother England and rich Uncle Sam, but it is beginning to break out; coming into its own; asserting itself. It is a young country and perhaps has simply not had enough

time to evolve its own unique independent character. Slowly aspects of the various immigrant cultures are being assimilated (beyond the restaurant scene!) There is a growing appreciation of the aboriginal Australian culture, and artists are examining aspects of Australia other than the beautiful landscape. The overseas success of Australian films, music and sports figures, the growing awareness of, and interest in, Australia abroad is contributing to the increasing sense of national pride.

Confidence is the first step toward independence. Australians are beginning to speak out and to ask what this place is really all about and where it is going — like the adolescent pondering its wide-open future. It is an exciting time to be here. The potential is great. □

Please complete and return the subscription form below.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

To:— Praxis M., P.O. Box 536, FREMANTLE, W.A. 6160

I enclose a cheque for \$..... for a 1 year/2 year/renewal subscription/1983 back issues pack.

Name

Address

Annual subscription rates \$10 (Australia) \$14 (International)

Producing culture in W.A.

Alan Mansfield

The local television scene is about to undergo significant changes. In 1985 Channel 0/28 arrives and 1986 brings the prospect of a third commercial TV licence to Perth. One could also note developments in existing formats: Channel Seven's introduction of a new 'soft' current affairs programme, 'State Affair', for instance. There are battles and births occurring in the WA press — the *Midweek Times*, etc. The Government is showing interest in direct aid to the WA film industry (film and TV). Taken with the success of the Fremantle Arts Press, the emergence of new local magazines (*Praxis M*, *Music Maker*), the longevity of *Westerly*, a great deal of activity in various festivals, (the Perth Festival, Indian Ocean Arts Festival), a lively series of seminars on politics, art and culture at the Praxis gallery, a well-organized interesting series of screenings at the Film and TV Institute in Fremantle, (particularly *Cinematrix* and the Independent Film-makers) and much much more, there is a great need to discuss, record and promote what is happening. The wider context of Australia's changing communications and cultural scene, the development of State and Federal policies, the investment in and adoption of new technology and the launching of Aussat and so forth, make an examination and discussion, (and record!) of what is happening in Western Australia all the more crucial. It's always useful to know where you've been, but knowing where you are going is the most central feature of good planning and achieving desired goals.

Tom O'Regan and myself are embarking on a study programme aimed at collating, recording and researching the Culture Industry in WA. Our aim is to assemble information in different areas of culture in WA, with a primary focus on the institutional bases of cultural production. We are interested in making contact with individuals and groups concerned with and/or working in this area, the ultimate aim of the project being to provide a comprehensive picture across the arts/media of the problems associated with both State and regional cultural production.

It is impossible to discuss methodological procedures in any detail in this short article; a little, however, needs to be said about the scope of the proposed study. The terms cultural production and

culture industry indicate the central institutional and professional focus of the project. Whilst psychoanalysis, semiotics, deconstruction and various forms of discourse analysis have contributed greatly to practices of textual analysis, the *institutional, economic/commercial* and *conjunctural* context of what is produced has not received nearly enough attention. A central epistemological tenet of our analysis would be that the potentially significant gains of the new communications/cultural theory are irrelevant unless one develops a political economy of the sign and locates the institutional sources of production (and reproduction). This type of analysis, then, cannot be done unless one engages with specific situations, specific instances and particular moments of history. Much communications/cultural analysis, then, 'fails' because of its level of generality and abstraction. (One could note here that this 'theoretical' failing is crucially related to the viability of much of such research to be politically useful, whether one wants to promote public policy or create alternative strategies and technologies.)

One of the most exciting developments in Australian cultural studies has been the attempt to address both textual and institutional elements of cultural production simultaneously. John Tulloch's *Legends of the Screen*, Sylvia Lawson's *The Archibald Paradox* stand out in this regard. The yet-to-be published work of L. Jacka and S. Dermody (on recent Australian film) and of Albert Moran (on Australian TV drama) will soon be added to this list. These are parts of a general shift in media studies towards insisting upon the contexts of cultural production in textual analysis. The clearest and most recent statement of this particular position is given in John Ellis' important book *Visible Fictions*.

In conclusion then, we should note that there are many benefits to be gained from a study of WA Culture Industries. The expanded definition of 'Culture Industry' enables one not only to discuss culture as 'product' (and thus institutional dimensions) but also enables one to link seemingly disparate areas of culture — including: film, TV, radio, press, publishing, art, sport and leisure, tourism and much more. One might also wish to stress the intellectual and political (assuming these are separable) benefits of such analyses.

That is, not only adding to a growing emphasis in Australian cultural studies, but essential in discussions of policy formation and cultural planning.

Perhaps the strongest case for the project is related to what one might term an 'Eastern States' bias in most of the cultural analyses done in Australia thus far. Whilst there is work readily available on the Sydney and Melbourne based media corporations, there is very little available on WA. The research project proposed would seek as one of its top priorities to rectify this gap.

For further information please contact: Alan Mansfield/Tom O'Regan, School of Human Communication, Murdoch University. 332 2165/2110.

Credits

Editorial board:-Nigel Helyer (Editor), Julie Prott, Lloyd Marsh, Joe Iannitelli, David Brown.

Design and Layout:-Nigel Helyer.

Typesetting by:-Rex Peach.

Printing by:-Gazette Printing Co. Fremantle

Cover illustration and text by:-the Community Poster Workshop 33 Pakenham St. Fremantle Tel; 336-2205.

All material is © Praxis M Publications and its contributing authors; no part of this publication may be reproduced without permission.

Praxis M is published by the Praxis Group Inc. which is supported by the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council; during the 84/85 financial year Praxis M will receive assistance of \$8000 to meet production costs from the V.A.B.

The views expressed by the contributing authors to Praxis M do not necessarily represent the views of the Praxis Group, its executive committee or its staff.

Registered by Australia Post-Publication No. WBP-0988 I.S.S.N. # 0813-6467.

Dear Mom + Dad,
Greetings from sunny W.A.
I'm having a great time
over here, lots of American
T.V. and movies, Californian
type beaches, Kentucky fried
chicken and every few months
we get a couple thousand
marines landing on the beaches
in Fremantle — just like
home!! Oh well, I hope
you all are fine — I'll write
again when I discover the
Australian essence xx love.

POST CARD



Join the Fight by Roxy McGuire 1984

Mom + Dad Jones
8 Melting Pot Road
Copper City,
Texas
U.S.A.

POST CARD

Dear Chuck + Nancy,
Just a note to thank
you for inviting me to the
beaut party at your place.
It's always such a pleasure
to catch up on what is
happening with you. You
must come out here one
day.

Fond regards,
Margaret



Chuck + Nancy
1000 Whitetail Ave.
Washington, U.K.

"The Blessing of the Elite" by Jane Sramek 1984

