

# monica

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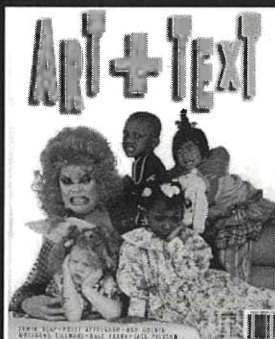
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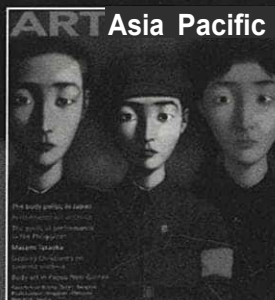
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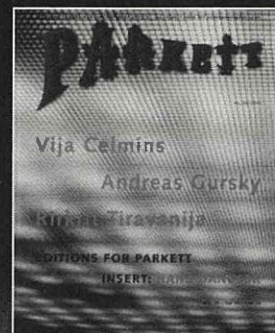
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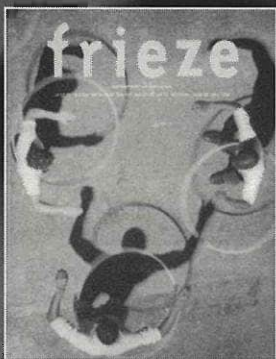
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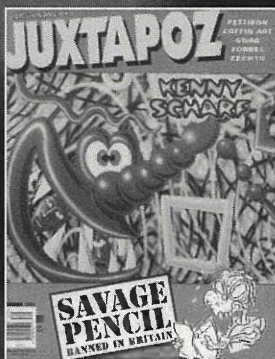
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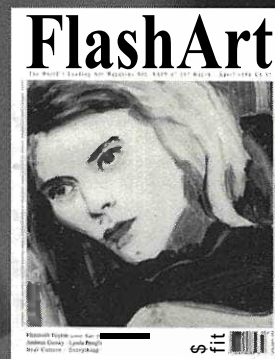
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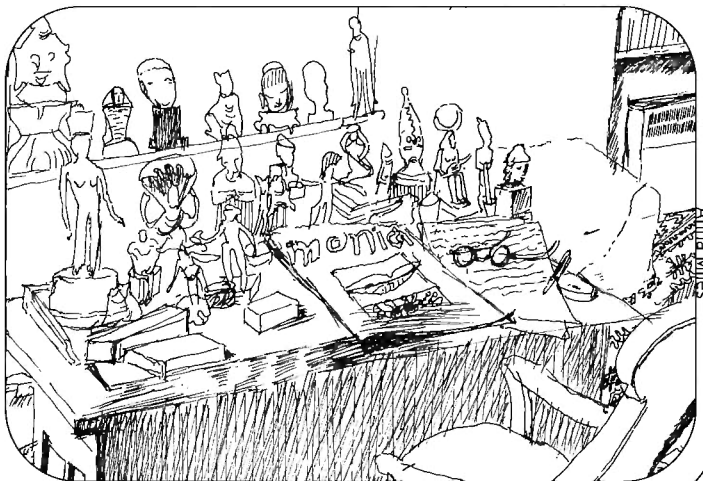
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Just what is it that makes today's magazines so different, so appealing? *monica* contends her magazine habit reflects a fascination for the printed word in all its guises. But even *monica* knows that the charge of a magazine comes from fashion and the riveting promise of the avant garde it holds, even at its most recycled and nostalgic moments, *monica* is not afraid to admit that her modernist aspirations materialise in the face of fashion — the lust to be part of the now and grab hold of the thing itself — be it chainmail bag, Sicilian fedora or paisley dressing gown, comes rushing, *monica* is analysed in this issue, see Terrence Handscomb's "The Problem with Monica", and *monica* is recognising that her relation to fashion is, as Anna Sanderson points out in "More Artistic", a matter of adopting endlessly shifting permutations of superiority and adoration.

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Tessa Laird

**EDITORS**

Anna Miles  
Anna Sanderson

**ART DIRECTOR**

Miranda Dempster

**TECHNICAL CONSULTANT**

Robert Hutchinson

Correspondence & Subscriptions:

*monica*  
Po Box 68-779  
Newton  
Auckland  
New Zealand  
voice 09-360 2407  
09-373 5899  
fax 09-379 7277

email [monica@spatial.co.nz](mailto:monica@spatial.co.nz)

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# monica

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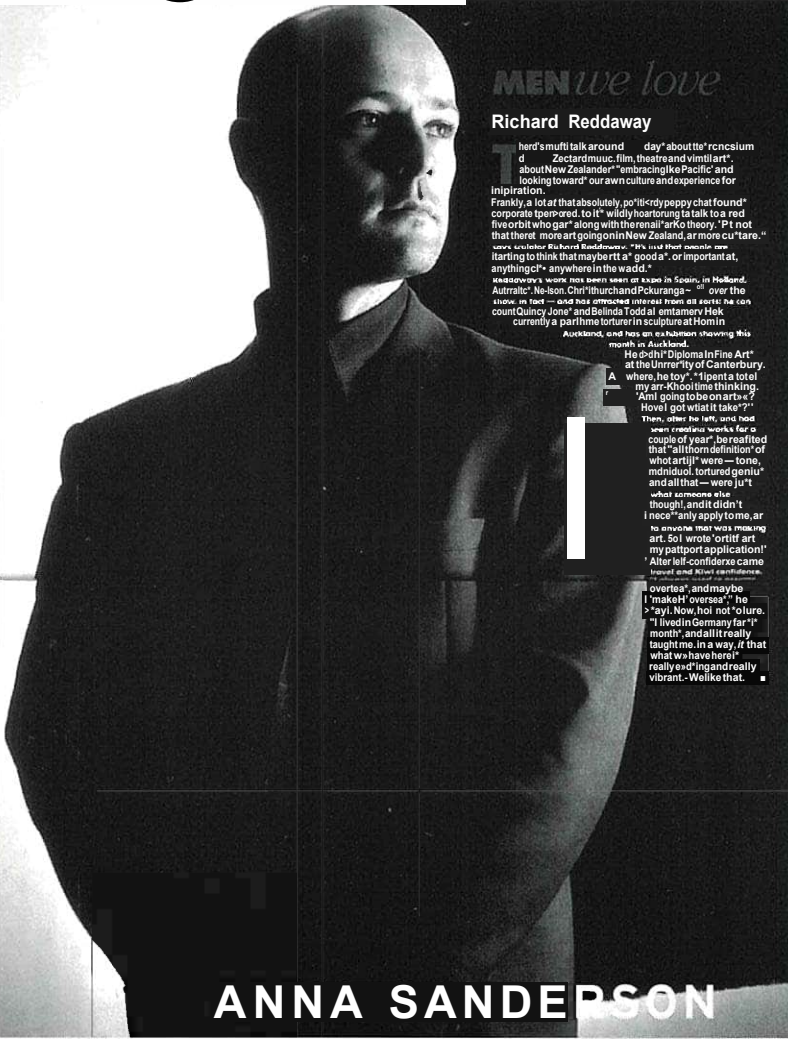
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# MORE

Right: Neil Frazer in *More Magazine*, September 1992  
Below: Richard Reddaway in *More Magazine*, November 1993



## MEN we love

Richard Reddaway

Here's mufti talk around day\* about the rncnsium d Zactardmuuc, film, theatre and vintilart\* about New Zealand\* embracing the Pacific and looking toward\* our own culture and experiences for inspiration.

Frankly, a lot of that absolutely, po\*ll\*rdy peppy chat found\* corporate spin\*red\* to it\* wildly heartening\* in talk to a rod five or bit who gar\* along with the renal\* arko theory. Pt not that there\* more art going on in New Zealand, ar more cu\*tare,\* was architect Richard Reddaway\* P\*ke told their guests are starting to think that maybe art\* goods\*, or important at, anything c\* anywhere in the wadd\*.

Reddaway's work has been seen at T\*ras in Scotty, in Holland, Australia\* Nelson, Christchurch and P\*karanga — of over the show in fact — and has attracted interest from all sorts: he can count Quincy Jones\* and Salma Hayek\* as admirers. He is currently a part-time lecturer in sculpture at Hornby

Auckland, and has an exhibition showing this month in Auckland. He co-edited "Diploma in Fine Art" at the Unrrarity of Canterbury.

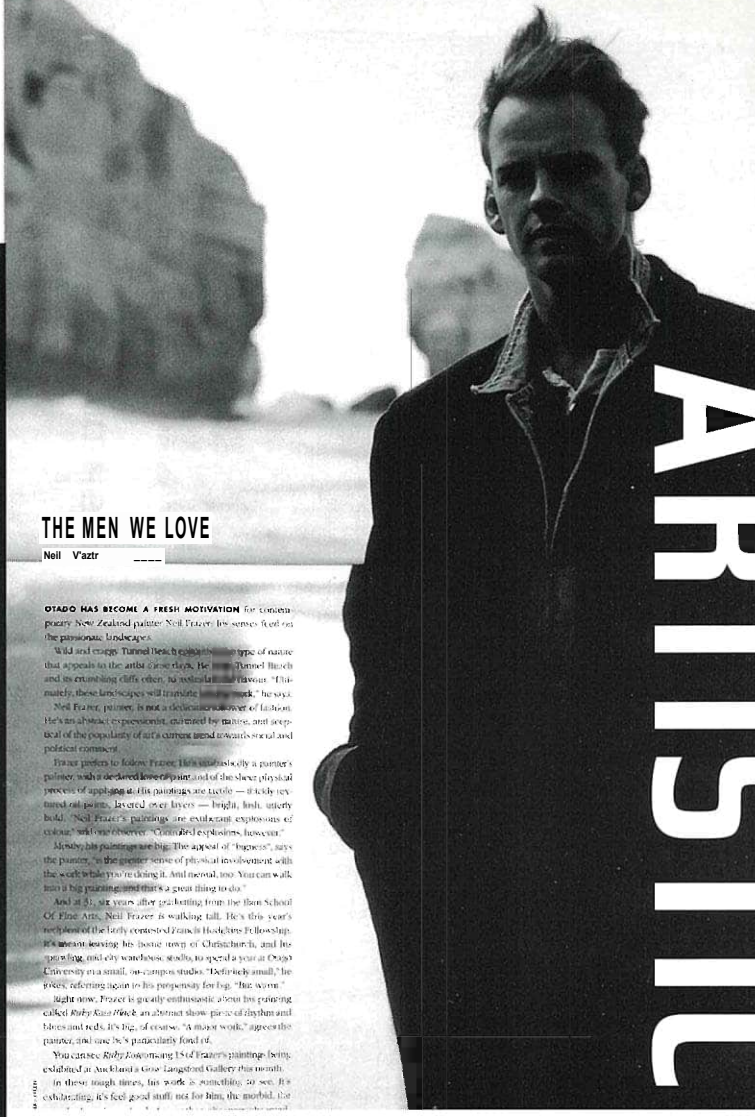
where, he toy\* "I penta to tel my art\* school time thinking, "Am I going to be on a r\*? How I got what it take\*?"

Other, he has, and had seen cinema works for a couple of year\* be recalled that "all those definitions of what art is\* were — tone, individual, tortured genui\* and all that — were just what someone else thought, and I didn't necessarily apply to me, or to anyone else was missing art. So I wrote "ortif art my passport application!" After all confidence came travel and Kiwi certification.

over tea, and maybe I'm a bit overseas,\* he P\* sayi. Now, he's not culture, "I lived in Germany for 18 months, and all it really taught me, in a way, is that what we have here\* really is\* ing and really vibrant. Welike that. ■

## ANNA SANDERSON

Who knows exactly what kind of rite of passage the lifestyle magazine profile represents in the life of an artist. Peripheral talent to national celebrity? Attention-shy idealist to media-wise professional? Personally, I haven't yet come face-to-face with the dilemma, which isn't to say I haven't puzzled over it. Although precious, the constant upkeep required in keeping my own persona intact dampens my enthusiasm for collaborating on new market-driven selves. Equally true, it seems misplaced to say to the world "Look at me — I'm an artist" at the very moment when that is probably further from the truth than ever. And perhaps most truly, it seems just too embarrassing, too fraudulent, and there are too many people who know better. Then again, the profile could be the most acute autobiographical tool available to artists, at least those interested in the penultimate self-effacement (maybe we are few). Whatever the genre enacts, there is no question that it raises the spectre of the artist's relationship to fashion, business, and the unofficial Creative New Zealand mantra, "get with it or die".



## THE MEN WE LOVE

Neil Frazer

OTAGO HAS BECOME A FRESH MOTIVATION for contemporary New Zealand painter Neil Frazer. It's a sense of place that's the passionate backdrop.

Wild and rugged, Timaru Park is a landscape of nature that appeals to the artist's sense of place. He's a "Tanned flesh and its crumpling cliffs, often, he's a naturalist and a realist."

Neil Frazer, painter, is not a delicate creature of fashion. He's an abstract expressionist, nurtured by nature, and a proponent of the popularity of art's current trend towards social and political comment.

Frazer paints in Otago, New Zealand, and is a painter's painter, with a declared love for the physical process of applying a thick palette knife to the canvas. He's a "bright, fresh, layered, layered over layers — bright, fresh, layered hold." Neil Frazer's paintings are evocative expressions of colour and form. "Controlled explosions of colour."

Mostly, his paintings are big. The appeal of "biggest," says the painter, "is the greater sense of physical involvement with the work. It's not just a painting, it's a great thing to do."

And at 31, six years after graduating from the then School of Fine Arts, Neil Frazer is walking tall. He's the year's recipient of the lovely coveted Frank H. Hodgson Fellowship. It's about leaving his basic stamp of Christchurch, and his painting, and city, and studio, to spend a year at Otago University in a small, on-campus studio. "Definitely small, it's great, it's a great thing to do."

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The magazine world's pantheon of artists probably shapes more New Zealand opinion about art than all the galleries put together when you consider that the *More* magazine readership alone is estimated at two hundred and fifty thousand per issue. The artists' stories that circulate in this parallel world are true — like the myth of harsh New Zealand light is true — in having entered popular consciousness. It may be useful to keep up with these true stories, especially for an art industry anxious to gain an understanding of what its public knows. And if you are the public, it may do for art viewing what reading *Vanity Fair* or *Who Weekly* does for film viewing, providing behind-the-scenes intelligence and added intertextual complexity.

Considering this, it is good to know that Dunedin enfant terrible Wayne Seyb will be one of the two leading painters in the country by the year 2000. Similarly it helps to get your head around the fact that sculptor Richard Reddaway and abstract expressionist painter Neil Frazer are or have been "Men We Love". It is also beneficial to understand painter Julian Hooper as he was in *More*'s special feature on big things — a "towering inferno".

On a less proclamatory, more conversational note, it is reassuring to see the loveliness of New Zealand's female artists attested to in print. The art world can take pride in the fact that its female artists are just the kind of women that New Zealanders



are bound to like. They are often, like both Fiona Pardington and Luise Fong, found to be "refreshingly down to earth". Profiles on female artists produce many gems of popular psychology, like the fact that artists often display signs of creativity from an early age. "I was always more interested in making things than I was in toys" Denise Kum reveals to *More*. In Seraphine Pick's case environment was formative: "We had no electricity so we were forced to make our own fun". And to reassure that tales of feminine creativity are not completely devoid of grandeur, there is always *Metro's* claim for Gretchen Albrecht: "the next Frances Hodgkins."

The low profile of the profile amongst art professionals and enthusiasts is without doubt due to the fact that they're so shockingly off-target. I imagine that those who do submit to the profile treat it as a necessary evil and then try to forget about it, doubtless aware that to sanction a caricature of oneself for the passing attentions of "progressive women aged between eighteen and forty" or some other heinous demographic is some kind of travesty. The under-exposure of the genre may also be due to the drawing of boundaries between commerce and art. However, registering the relationship of palpable exchange between the two, rather than the model of mutually beneficial but ideologically distinct roles, may make it easier to move towards critical understanding.

Surely the way fashion deals with art, as in *More* magazine's March 1995 Luise Fong profile, is just as complex a phenomenon as the profusion of art strategies toward fashion. In this piece, "At Ease Luise," the author makes a story out of a formative artist-in-residence experience which engenders a new relaxed attitude towards life. The photographs attempt to capture this mood by depicting the artist 'camping it up'. These images seem to want to distinguish themselves, if marginally, from the superficiality of the fashion world, by referencing the conventions of the fashion shoot with a specious irony. In one particular shot Luise appears to send herself up as a glam essentialist, up to her wrists in black paint, staunchly seductive in a black dress and boots, making a stagy hex over one of her paintings. The styling of Luise herself in embroidered satin, lush

Cotton's appearance in the summer 1995 issue can be classed as a classic *Style* moment then, taking place on the brink of his leap into the general public consciousness via the Sky Tower Casino mural. An artist for whom a magazine can confidently use the yearning rhetorical byline "What happens when all your dreams come true?"

If *Style* wants to divert its readers with the magical success stories of those who make it, then *North and South* is interested in investigative pieces on those who are persecuted for their commercial appeal. A profile/polemic on Jane Evans from January 1995 rails against art establishment snobbishness and conspiracy for those readers who know in their hearts that most contemporary artspeak is a con. The piece unproblematically swallows Evans' outrageously hackneyed artistic sentiments and constructs its own conspicuous chestnuts about the art world in order to defend them, like: "[Evans] is well aware that conceding that her paintings do not require a videotape or three-page catalogue entry to "decode" them automatically disqualifies her from membership of the modern movement." It also tries to cite the "joie de vivre" of Evans' paintings, and the artist's frequent appearances in the country's glossy magazines as a kiss of death to critical approval. One has only to flick through a few issues of almost any glossy though, to see artists who couldn't be more officially endorsed, quite as willing to discuss their artistic life with journalists from their tumble-down villa or inner-city studio apartment as Evans is from her Mediterranean-style oasis.

For the popular magazines who say they never have problems convincing artists of the positive benefits of the profile, their invitation is a veritable gift — the advertisement that artists desperately need to increase their exposure and sales. *More* editor Shona Jennings has a firm belief that her magazine's artist profiles also tell "a real person's story" and provide inspiration to the women who read her magazine. If Seraphine Pick's experience is anything to go by though, there are major translation glitches between those real people the artists, and their commercial storytellers. She recounts the make-up artist applying layer upon cosmetic layer to her *More* artist profile-bound face, chatting as she goes that her work is like painting too, as the photographer grapples with the problem that the artist's Rita Angus cottage residency isn't expansive like the studio in a Roy Lichenstein lifestyle piece being used as a style guide for Seraphine's profile. In spite of attempting to perpetrate every con-

## Profiles on female artists

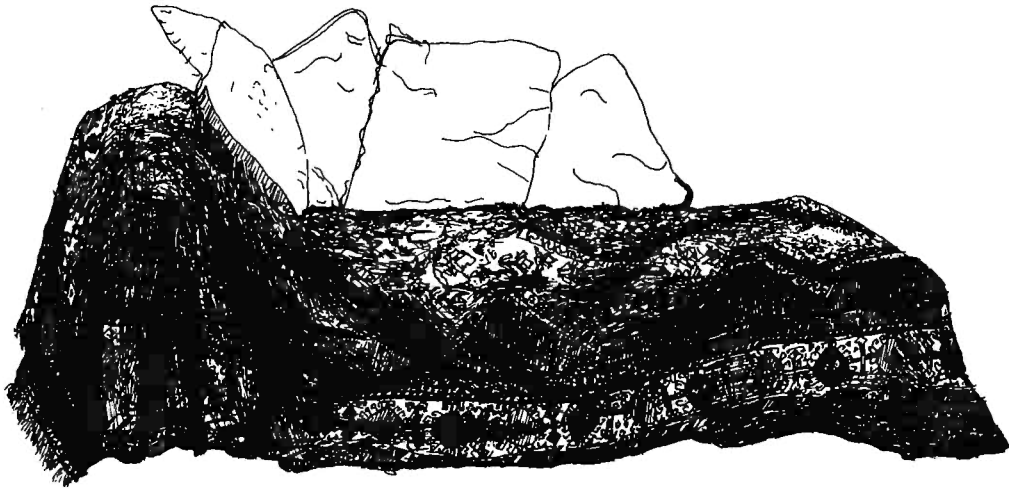
# produce many gems of popular psychology

voided-velvet black and gauzy wedding white draws her as close to the physical properties of her paintings as humanly possible. It is significant to the art-fashion juncture that this coming of age piece contains a tacit acknowledgment of the importance of style to her work which no other writing on her has seriously broached.

The business of tailoring the myths of the artist to an identified readership is handled with acumen by the mainstream magazines. *Style* editor Michael McHugh describes his typical reader as a female, twenty-five plus, urban professional. "She works in the city, she has money, she eats out, knows designers, art galleries, likes art movies. In a three week holiday she travels overseas." This magazine knows "she" will be impressed by a new talent, or an artist with massive 'credibility' — as McHugh puts it, "someone who may charge thousands and thousands for a piece of work". Shane

ceivable artistic stereotype, here the magazine engenders a curious switch of stereotypical roles in which the artist (the mythic iconoclast) is subdued and made over while photographers, dressers, make-up artists and designers embody total creative control.

In my experience, artists are classically insecure in relation to fashion, as they are towards most forms of commercial mass culture — simultaneously superior and adoring, and adopting perpetually shifting combinations of identification and critique. By comparison, ignorance seems to be bliss in the fashion world. Although swoony about creativity, to the popular press art is easily recognisable and easily compartmentalised. Magazine culture places a premium on art which seems like art, and artists who seem like artists — a confidence trick recognisable in the art world itself and evidence of the enmeshment. j



# The Problem with Monica.

Monica is resentful and Monica is hysterical. Hysteria is allegedly the Thinking Woman's neurosis and hysterics especially suffer from reminiscences. When Monica makes judgments Monica remembers things. People don't like hysterics but Monica doesn't care. However, Monica is not in analysis and Monica doesn't even believe in the structures that support the heinous weapons of domination, such as transference and the whole despotic logic of psychoanalysis. Monica doesn't even like the language of psychoanalysis. She likes even less, others mimicking the language of psychoanalysis. Monica likes theory, but not the vocabulary of a generation of teachers and art historians who hold too much power. Monica wants to think about things, but in her own way.

Hysterics do not like to commit to words but some things can never remain hidden. The pain of exclusion is just too strong and Monica is vain enough to want to be taken seriously. It bothers Monica that she uses the language of theory. However, Monica is happy in the belief that she does not have to use theory to explain the images and events that demand her attention — rather it is a way of using language to work through their meaning. What

bothers Monica is not that these images and events may possess some intrinsic power of their own (Monica is much

too smart for that). What makes Monica resentful is the observation that other cultural forces, powers well beyond Monica's range of influence, are ascribing value to these images and events, and these values are corrupt. Visual politics predicated on domination, surplus value and the protection of investment, understandably anger Monica.

Monica operates in a geographically isolated culture whose identity is confused and heroic. The culture is young and the community is small. Monica is young and angry and in a small community, fractious assertiveness is taken seriously enough to be talked about and Monica is being discussed. Monica likes it that people are talking but it also makes her feel uneasy. She has never accepted that the 'moi' is unstable, sensitive and weak and that the condition of paranoia is general. This angers her. Her heroics are not symptomatic. What Monica perceives as an uneasiness in the culture is simply not her projection. If it is someone's problem, it definitely is not her problem. Das Unbehagen in der Kultur is a general condition. She feels guilty and vulnerable when she tries to accept that the relationship between the subject and culture is always one of tyranny and annexation. A whole generation of feminists accepted this, but argued that cultural tyranny was not a necessary condition and positions of power may be transposed.

Monica is restless. If the condition of cultural annexation is so general, then to assert that a particular case is significant, is trivial. If the condition is significant, then is it not general but particular? If it is so bloody particular, then it's someone's problem — someone else's problem. The high-logical narratives of her ancestors still speak with tones of inequity, pain and corruption. If it hurts Monica it does not show. Monica is brave. The axiological systems that infect her culture are simply corrupt. Monica has to say something, even if what she says is inconsistent. "Why cannot they grant me that indulgence, those bureaucrats of culture."

The voices of Monica are various. Like many hysterics, Monica's voice conceals her motives. Monica does not like Derrick and she is unsure about Peter. Both Peter and his work have a history. Peter's history was written by pedagogues and it is really this history that Monica finds so questionable. Derrick, on the other hand, is a younger artist who enjoys a different mythology. Derrick's one has been developed for both mercantile and pedagogical interests. Derrick enjoys more mainstream support than Peter. However, it is Derrick's myth-maker who has hurt Monica, not the myth. Derrick's name was on the 'A' list and Monica's was not. Of course Monica was resentful but something would not allow her to say this.

Cultural politics can be tricky but the hysterical voice makes sure that it is heard. Cultural compliance is

virtually absent when something down inside gets pissed off.

Monica's first sentence about Derrick isolated the motive and the rest just followed. Monica believes that you can say what you want to about art. Whether it is good or bad, it is all politics.

When artists talk publicly about other artists in this country, what seems to count after the alliances are acknowledged and the subjectivity is rationalised, are the ethics.

In this context, the work is merely an object of material and curatorial investment and of secondary importance. Any trouble Monica may have with the curatorial bureaucrats, although related to this case will have to wait. What is important however, is to recognise that Monica's belligerence is ad hominem and that Monica is implementing the very same structures that she seeks to expose.

Peter's is a different case. Peter does not pose the same threat to Monica as Derrick. Peter is more Monica's target than he is her adversary. Peter has decided that he wants to do some more performance art. He used to do it back in the early eighties. Monica's art history lecturers had valorised the history of NZ performance art and as Peter was included in this history, Monica wanted to check it out.

Especially so given the recent popular interest in body art, branding, piercing, mutilation and so on, and that performance art in this country had recently included this curious bent. Peter had fallen in with dubious company. Marginal cultural production that is aesthetically and ideologically informed by popularist interest, such as body art fetishes, can be a worthy form of cultural production.

What Monica was to find however, was a drunken Peter unconvincedly cutting up fluorescent light tubes with a chainsaw, and to

view Peter and his equally immoderate collaborator fall down and cut themselves and mingle each others' blood.

Good performance art, no matter how inflated its history, rarely adheres to the structures of the humanist dramaturgy one may expect to see in conventional theatre. Monica did not expect this. History is always written from a sedentary point of view. What was lacking was not convincing art but the perception of the opposite of history, a nomadology of unstable values and suspended judgements. An axiology of perversion, deviation and failure. This was beyond Monica. Monica is really quite conventional and she seeks conventional rewards. Thus Monica is unimpressed with Peter and when Monica is not impressed, she moralises. Neurotics often moralise when someone else is perceived as not quite making it. It is obvious that Monica feels better when she is moralising. However, Peter deserves more respect than Monica is willing to concede and Monica needs a few personal failures to germinate the seeds of charity. This, however, is unlikely as hysterics rarely openly accept failure. They have heroic deferral episodes. In the end, Peter's pain is more convincing than Monica's self indulgence.

The value systems that infect Monica's culture form a logical tree in which all power is hierarchically distributed. Pedagogues and curators contrive the mythologies that serve their own interests and those of the art dealers, investors and

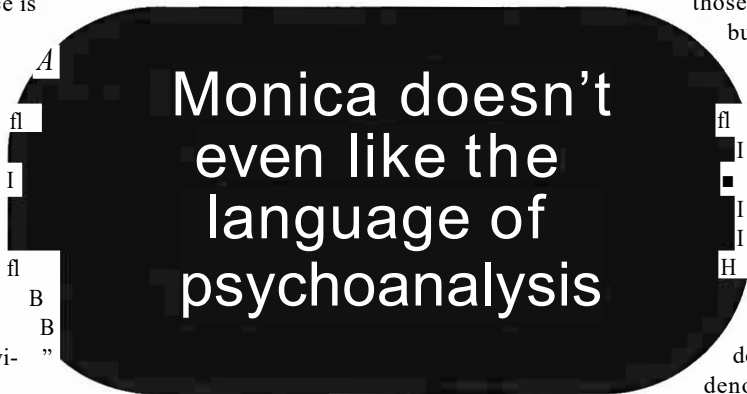
bureaucrats. They have assumed power and they organise the artistic community and monitor its cultural production. Alliances are formed, challenged and destroyed and artists protect their careers. All very normal but Monica is still not satisfied and Monica wants to say more.

Monica conceals her own deviant tendencies and denounces their validity when she sees them reflected in others. Monica still

subscribes to the Oedipal structures that define her sexuality but finds no context in which to dissolve them. Monica is a child of her culture and a victim of its geographical isolation and fragile history. The feminine nature myths of nourishment and protection that attempt to give meaning to our land-based pastoral and vernal culture will not wash with Monica. Tyranny, annexation and loss carry the same axiological valency as protection, inclusion and nourishment.

Narratives that advocate the victory of nature over culture and the predominance of light over darkness stabilise their meaning through the repression of that which is deviant, yet Monica chooses high moral ground from which to survey her adversaries.

Even though conventional structures determine the value of Monica's judgements, independence characterises her voice. Monica will never introject the compliant moral systems advocated by the politically correct. These would render her judgements trivial and Monica is just too vain for that. On the other hand, unless Monica transforms the structures that presently give meaning to her judgements, her narratives will emphasise the distance that must eventually form between herself and our cultural legislators whose subsequent rancour will eventually transfuse her life blood.\*



the we  
clothes love



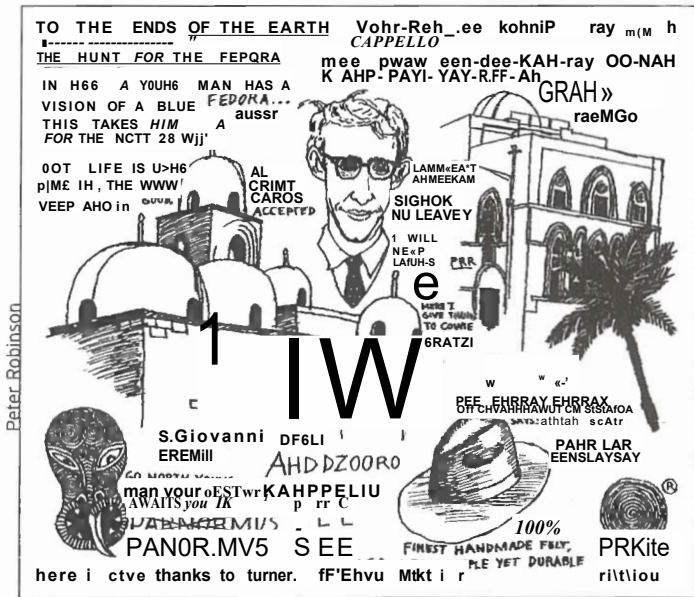
Martin Pomeroy

# PETER MCLEAVEY

When, in February 1994, I landed at Palermo, I was immediately struck by the uniforms of the Police, Customs and Military stationed at the airport. Some were in dark green/blue while others favoured powder grey. These colours, framed and embellished with metal buttons, epaulettes, medals, colour flashes and leather trim conveyed something that was beyond chic. With bolstered weapons and military hardware, here, you had serious power dressing. Over the next two weeks I travelled widely through the island. It was a place, I soon discovered, where most of the men wore hats. These ranged from simple knitted woollen caps through to the elegant Sicilian fedoras and Borsalinos. Opposite my Palermo hotel was a hat shop. Its small display window held just one hat, a sombre felt with a cheeky feather stuck in the brim. One afternoon I plucked up courage and went in.

Somewhere a dull buzzer sounded. The interior I entered was a large room, about twenty feet square. Several well placed lamps lit the wooden, varnished alcoves which were built into the walls and ran floor to ceiling. In these small spaces were several hundred hat boxes. It was like a library. Several plush velvet seats, a low table with a large oval mirror were the only furnishings. In the corner, on a stand, was a plaster mannequin of a man's head on which was placed a similar hat to the one I'd seen in the window. A lady emerged from behind the lattice screen which separated the room I had entered from the rear of the shop. Maybe, I thought, the family lived there. She spoke a little English. I had some Italian. She asked me to sit. She studied my face, measured my head, while speaking of a cousin in Wollongong. Then she excused herself telling me that she was off to find my hat.

Alone I studied the face of the mannequin. He was clean shaven apart from a pencil thin moustache. He came from a time long before designer stubble had become an art form. The lady returned with a ladder, climbed to an upper alcove, and returned with a green hat box. It's watered-silk covering shimmered in the lamp light, from the box she removed a dark blue fedora. She handed it to me. I tried it on. "That is your hat, sir", she said. No selection. Nothing to mull over. I tried it on again. Yes, it fitted like a glove. My face, now hatted, smiled back from the mirror. I took it off. Senora adjusted the brim, its rakish curve appealing more as the seconds ticked by. I felt good. They took all credit cards. The hat sold. Out on the street darkness was settling in. The Via Roma was packed with shoppers and promenaders. I merged with the crowd and strolled to a favourite bookshop at the Quattro Canti. Another hat took its rightful place in the Sicilian dusk.



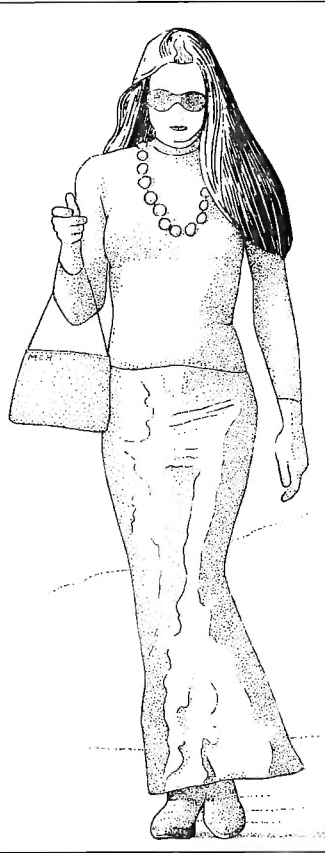
Peter Robinson

Ginza is the geisha-house capita] of Tokyo. Nowadays it vibrates and glistens with shimmery gold hostess dresses, buzzing pachinko bells and lights, and high-shine Mercedes processions rolling through the crowded streets. Those of us who make the choice to work in Ginza have the pleasure of watching the modern day geisha on the runway. Curtains of coloured silk, green, yellow, plum, and tempting. A kimono's design must give us some information. In cherry blossom season the fabrics are dominated with petals and twigs, the women inside them are decorating the subways like ikebana. From a Pajero steps a Gianni Versace kimono covered in lipsticks. The sleeves are long suggesting the woman is unwed, however at about age sixty she is the definition of a "Ginza bad girl". Kono kata ga suki desu — I like this style, and here there's enough of it.

The kimonos look best in pairs, one flamingo-hued, one blue, checks by Gabbana and Hawaiian prints always accessorised with flashing rocks, mobiles, shopping bags, and comic-book coloured origami footwear. To have two garments like this in your drawer is the equivalent to owning your own home in Tokyo. There are futuristic visions for summer '96. Kimonos made from mock-croc and film coated materials selected for their reflective properties. The translucent fabrics are of course in elevator-girl pastels and lollipop colours, perhaps printed with the animal of the year, 1996 being the year of the rat.

ANITA DYNE

Anna Miles



Michael Harrison

Chain-mail is flexible armour, and my handbag has links with the simple and elegant style worn by 12th century Crusaders, and none whatsoever with the rather cumbersome metal plate used in the mid-Renaissance. I'll readily admit that I may not be recovering Holy Land from Muslims on a daily basis, but I am a busy woman, and I often wonder if all its owners feel, as I do, part of a truly modern crusade, when they throw one on (gentle clink of the house-keys on compact) last thing in the morning? I have always felt that the prime function of the accessory is to gain access of all kinds, and it follows that the chain-mail handbag must be accompanied by a certain degree of daring. Definitely black and gold, sometimes satin, but never in the dreaded clutch style, it should be worn on the right shoulder for maximum effect, thumb and index finger clasped firmly around the bit where chain meets leather. I love to see the pale catenate tattoo it invariably leaves on my bare shoulder when paired with a light summer shirt.

## BRIDGET ORR

Living in the States again after five years in NZ I was reminded of how badly Americans dress, and how strange that is, given their affluence and access to clothes at reasonable prices. Their sartorial codes have a certain fascination though, and following Montesquieu, I've become convinced that climate is a crucial factor. Even though they think they're fierce individualists, Americans are rigidly conformist in dress and in the North-East, the seasons rule. Now it's spring, shopgirls and ladies who lunch wear Prince-of-Wales plaids and grey (silk-wool) tweed ensembles and there are lots of spectator shoes about. Soon it'll be pastel suits and mushroom (or cream) jackets over black pants-and-mock-turtle. Come fall, out come the corduroys and all the taupe suits will be gone by Labor Day (September 1) — and it'll be back to black. (With a red jacket only if you're Mid-Western). I sort of like it — it reminds me of spring in provincial towns in England where you knew the winter was over once the swarms of Anglican priests appeared en bicyclette wearing elderly creamy-pink jackets over their clerical black. But in Britain it's really only the Royals who do the seasons like the Americans — English designers like Vivienne Westwood as well as the punters share a thoroughly ironised relation to the classic fashion heritage. But America being, broadly speaking, an irony-free zone, many recent fashion trends — including this season's geek-chic — are ignored by the garmentos and everyone else in favour of CK and DKNY and Ralph "refining" the pantsuit.

So what's different about the clothes we love in NZ? It's true that in Wellington you do see that very American sobriety about dressing-to-impress — good suit, good shoes, good coat, authoritative and obedient at the same time. But clothes I liked in Auckland, made by Zambesi or Marilyn Sainty, aren't really functional or seasonal. They're colourful and they often have this peculiar NZ triple label — Italian fabric, NZ-made, Wallace Rose copyright. I think they're Creole clothes. In the eighteenth century, West Indian planters were known for the brilliance of their dress (and their interior decoration). Maybe it was all that tropical vegetation and bright light, as well as the influence of African taste, but European fashions were transmuted into something rich and strange in an environment where the climatic and customary bases of dress were simply absent. On the Eastern seaboard of the US, both the sharp seasonal changes and the prevailing conviction that the country embodies the Western Heritage conspire to keep people in bow-ties, Panamas and seersucker suits, houndstooth and tweeds. Fashion in Auckland looks more like an elaborate formal exercise in which the weather and traditional class and cultural signifiers are irrelevant. It's po-co mode — metropolitan sportswear in unusually sensuous fabrics accessorised by a kete.



## ALF.X CALDER

I am not exactly unfond of my dressing gown. Like an elderly but unlovable pet, I am used to it, although its length is not what it was. (An unretractable Herald has led to embarrassment at the letterbox). I think it came from Farmers. It looks like it was made for farmers, too, with its green and woolly checkerboard of swandri stripes. Not that it is without charm or pedigree: it was dressing gowns like these that got Londoners through the Blitz.

But I have long aspired to something better, and came across the very thing recently in one of those Special Advertising Supplements that advises, "cummerbunds are strictly a matter of choice." On the subject of dressing gowns, I learned: "For a man to wear a dressing gown when entertaining at home during the Victorian period was considered quite fashionable. However, in the company of women, the coat had to be long enough to cover the buttocks. When the company was exclusively men, no such rules applied..." Intriguing as it is to imagine those chilly bottoms, Holmes and Watson, close to the fireplace, in their abbreviated robes de chambre, I would go for something longer. This silk twill robe with woven paisley shawl lapels will do. It is black and slithery from shoulder to toe and is unobtainable from Farmers. I expect Cary Grant would wear one, or Cole Porter, or maybe one of the smoother baddies in *Pulp Fiction*. I would need a few modest accessories: pearl-grey cigarette case, ice-bucket with champagne, delectable nibbles. It would feel Dorian Greyish, a robe for vice: something to read one's bedside pile of True Romances in.

She remembered the mystery and awe while watching her mother being pinned into a ball dress by the dressmaker. The hushed tones. The necessary invisible silence which would allow her to spy on their collaboration. Years later the dress appeared in the dress-up box. It had been cast aside, buried, along with the unfulfilled dreams of glitter and glamour it had promised. But she seized its romance and wore the ice-green matt brocade, cut with a fitting bodice, shoe string straps and flared skirt. She wore her mother's style. Cool, severe, elegant. Nordic. She wore her childhood era. *Life Magazine*, Marilyn Monroe, Kim Novak. In this dress she was a star, tottering around the local streets in strappy silver high heels for everyone to admire.

She was eight and still hoping that her mother would let her dance. It was the fifties and the very first blue jeans had come to Dunedin. Her mother was the first to buy them. All five children were bought two pairs each. They revelled in their American dream. Their mother revelled in their cool, casual, practical stylishness. Her mother embraced it all. Wash and wear. Skivvies. A-line skirts. No ironing. No frills. No ballet.

It's been a lifetime pattern. Clean lines. Simplicity. Understatement. Tailoring a fantasy to fit the A-line skirt. Fashioning a glamour without glitter.

MARGRETA CHANCL



RELESIA BEAVER

***I DECLARE  
THE SEASON  
OPEN!***



Sydney correspondent Relesia Beaver gives Roslyn Oxley a run for her accessories.



When Monica buzzed my princess phone to suggest a fashion spectacular I knew she had a perfectly manicured apricot talon right on my button even if the only pencil I'd anticipated using this month was a Dior "Blonde on Blonde" on my eyebrows. Fashion and art, what is the correlation? I rolled the idea around like Sherilyn Fenn with that infamous cherry stalk. I pondered Pablo's mystique for the young Paloma. I contemplated Dali's influence on Schiaparelli. What awe did Lucian instil in Bella Freud? Would Andy have been so cutting edge if he hadn't had tres chic Edie at his side? Could Krusty the Clown have been quite the success if Tracey Collins . . . hmmm, forget it. There was no pattern emerging, my primary concern was how to deal with the flurry of invitations stacking up like Belgian waffles, when it hit me. Like a smack from my giant wand of "2000 Calorie" mascara, here was the angle, I could glide to every event I pleased and still whip up an assignment without really lifting more than a glass of champagne.

So for you my readers, I have worn the heels on my Blahniks to nubs, attending openings of art events, legs and toilets to bring you the essential guide to what to wear when you go where I suggest you do. Before we commence our petit tour, the answer to the fashion dilemma hanging over your head like a tiresome and rather heavy chandelier, how many accessories do you really need to air at an opening? I prefer not more than deux hangers on, and firmly attached to my earlobes, the only thing I want to find at the bottom of my martini glass is an olive. Too many handbags and you risk ending tangled in something. And so we begin at Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery, where la couture du jour is a wig, unless you are planning to blend into the walls. Flaming Ros has such a dazzling coiffure that even Pierre et Gilles had trouble capturing the media's attention at their preview. Take along a pair of this season's affordable great quality sunglasses from Versace to shield you from the glare. The sixties is still very happening, Eva Gabor Creations line in pink, lemon and lime bouffants is bound to push any fashion competition into the background or off the balcony.

So to the CBD Gallery where luckily for director David Thomas, furs are back, in time for another season out of that lovely natural looking sable stole he's been sporting fashionably high on the neck. For spring he'll strip down to a sequined Todd Oldham shift teamed with Paloma's "Donut" style bangles. Shouldn't he be a fashion inspiration to his clique who surface repeatedly in the same tired look? Try going downtown in Commes de Garcons' great patchwork casual pantsuits, and watch your credibility skyrocket as you open pocket or purse to reveal you have cleverly accessorised with a chunk of blue cheese. I couldn't resist slipping a dead cat into my Prada tote for their last launch.

At Rex Irwin the look is expensive and minimal, not unlike the designer crotchless pant you'll be sporting at one of his piping hot 'label' openings. As all his stable have been shifted in favour of Matisse, Picasso, Warhol et al, it would be headline grabbing chic to rise from the grave in a Miyake cream chiffon gown before divulging your Fredericks of Hollywood intimates.

It's a torrent of innovation and sophistication at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. You might like to don a Vivienne Westwood bustle before touring their extensive collection of landscapes. Those of us savvy enough to consider our proportion in relation

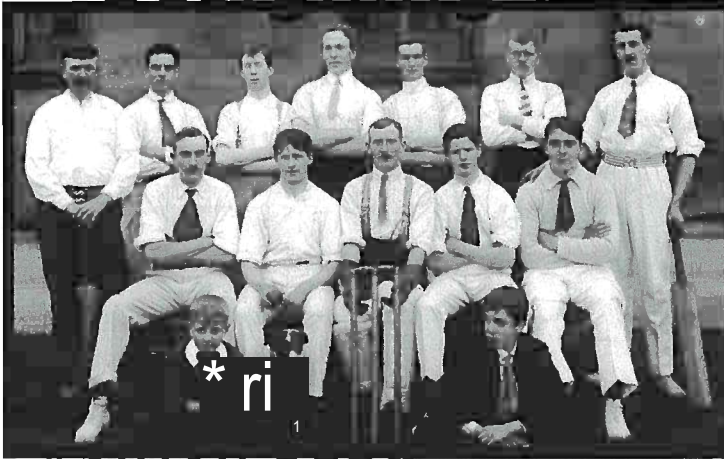
to the space we're dressing for, will realise carrying off an opening in the foyer means being not much under the size of a 747. Perhaps you can toss on your cartwheel hat, something in straw and marabou by Philip Treacey will restore the harmonies and let everyone know, the centre of the universe is where you are.

Any opening, even if it's a wound, can be nothing but an extravaganza at Sarah Cottier Gallery. Do you need an excuse to

*I couldn't  
resist slipping  
a dead cat into  
my Prada tote  
for their last  
launch.nch.*

parade your latest finery while sipping Campari drinkies out of dinky conical bottles? Madame Directeur is never sans the newest hem or heel, so you're going to have to be hotter than hot or Hotter than not. Sometimes there might even be a review . . . in *Mode* magazine, "Sarah Cottier was in Jodie Boffa's full skirted black satin and Ashley Barber in Yohji Yamamoto, this couple can't put a foot wrong." *You know it.* For a truly thrilling fashion moment, consider my stunning entrance to the MCA Warhol show in silver satin with white feather hooded cape by Balenciaga. The magazines however are trumpeting conservative chic, a Gucci velvet suit teamed with Kenneth Cole sling backs is a formal option without intimidating. But retain this thought while donning your ensemble, the only thing worse this season than a closed toe is a closed mind, perhaps even the Sherman Galleries can afford to part the velcro on their fashion blinkers when you turn up in something racy like a PVC side-laced catsuit by Gaultier. Keep cleavage in check, remember the difference between Art and Tart is only one letter away. Please fasten your Hermes belt and extinguish your Cartier cigarette — but don't dare cross the ditch **without your entire wardrobe.** ¶

# designing men



A selection of images from the Zambesi Man ad campaign



croc loafer.

These appeals to traditional values in men's dress would seem to work in two directions. Firstly there are claims being made that the clothes Zambesi sell are of a comparable quality to those made in the era of the photographs. Opposing this is an ironic self-reflexive avowal whereby

the avant-gardist consumer is invited to buy the clothes precisely because they will become obsolete in the near future.

Oppositions aside, the cricket team is probably a near representation of



Zambesi's Man. There are subtle signs of difference in their costume, that can be apprehended by those 'in the know' similar to the signs of difference that Zambesi attempt to locate in their own clothes. The captain wears the webbing belt and moustache of the King's Commission; the vice-captain the markers of the non-com officer. When compared to the other images this depiction of leisure indicates a class hierarchy, whereby the cricketers' class character is akin to that of the Zambesi buyer. Never mind that white shoes are currently 'in-store.'

Apart from gender, what unifies all the men in these images is their race. If we engage with a basic concept of film theory — whereby images create their audience — then a white image creates a white audience. In this case any appeal to a multi-cultural or at least bi-cultural audience of buyers is completely obviated.

This manipulation of clothing and image has a resonance in the contemporary political climate, as Winston Peters 'plays the race card.' He has cloaked his own race in an immaculate old-boys uniform of pin-stripes, pocket square and paisley tie to make an attractive electoral appeal to a white middle-class electorate. Peters is engaging with clothes in a performative sense, wearing them as a costume to stabilise his identity. Zambesi is manipulating the same concept of costume but it would seem that they see their clothes as indicators of a more radical or ascetic identity.

The expansion of the male fashion boutique has as much to do with the upswing in the consumer economy driven by the consolidation of corporate and private wealth as with any creation of a 'new man.' Whether in a positive or negative sense, as a signifier of conservative rather than avant-garde culture, I find Zambesi an apposite reflection of the Zeitgeist.J

## SIMON REES

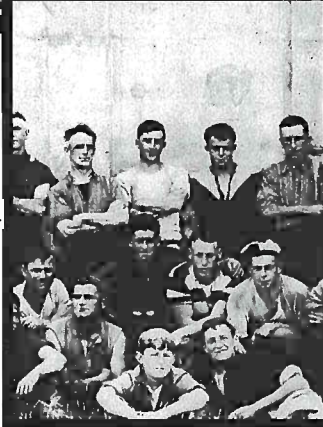
*The new man is many things — a humanist ideal, a triumph of style over content, a legitimization of consumption, a rise to persuade those that called for change that it has already occurred.*

— Jennifer Craik, *The Face of Fashion.*

Our current position at the fault-line of the millennia means that the process of summing-up is in full swing. Writers, academics and ad-men are browsing through the opportunity shop of recent histories hoping to find the phenomenological markers (perfume bottle, comic strip, master work) of their times. I'm browsing too, and just as CKi advertisements are to *Artforum*, Zambesi Man ads are to *Monica*, a fashionable fragment of the fin de siècle.

Couturiers, fashion designers, and designer-fashion merchants claim to be the intelligentsia of the clothing community. Calvin Klein calls the fashion elite "lower-rung sociologists," referring to their role of assessing and making physical the spirit of the day. According to Richard Martin, costume curator at the Metropolitan Museum, "fashion is the vanguard of culture for this decade." At its best, fashion's strategies are closely akin to avant-garde visual art. The use of found black and white photographs is an attempt by Zambesi Man to furnish this association, implying that the clothes sold in their shop assume a place in this art-house context; challenging the potential wearer, it would seem, to join the avant-garde.

What strikes me most is the irony attached to a close reading of the photographs. In their historical context the images form a set of denials that include: male fashion doesn't exist; practicality is the primary consideration in men's clothing; and clothes don't enter into the equation of individuality. Further, nostalgia for clothes usually includes the assumption of a superiority of tailoring and quality of cloth, of a time when clothes were made to last. Ralph Lauren alludes to this nostalgia with his new label *Made In England*; suits tailored in a nineteen thirties style from heavy worsted cloth. Similarly the permanence of the rugby jersey and gumboot in the workingman's wardrobe polarises the death-wish of the zip-front jersey and mock-



# tatau

## DAMON SALESA

Tattooing, I am assured by those who know, is painful. At least, it is painful for the person getting tattooed. Yet even for that person the pain is eventually over, and the tattoo alone is left. And pain is not unique. People tell me that childbirth is painful, and that so too, is cancer. Of childbirth I will never know, of cancer I hope not to; of tattooing, I choose not to. So it is that people choose to get tattooed, they choose to go through pain, to shed blood, to be another's sculpture, knowing that they will never be able to erase it, not from their memory because not from their skin. Tattooing has a permanence that few things about a human life do.

Many different peoples etch their skins with colour, in some sense 'tattooing'. But the idea itself in New Zealand as in Great Britain and Europe, owes to European activity in the Pacific. The English word 'tattoo', is a bastardisation of the Polynesian word 'tatau' (which differs slightly from language to language). As such, tattooing (as opposed to tatau) is one of the most lasting and silently influential appropriations of Polynesian culture. Other such appropriations have continued (and continue) forcefully and pervasively.

Appropriation is nothing reprehensible, not anything unusual. But appropriation suggests problems of ownership and context, and when this occurs across cultures it often brings conflict. And this arena of conflict is the arena into which Greg Semu enters, with his exhibition, *O le Tatau Samoa; The Tattooing of the Samoan People*.

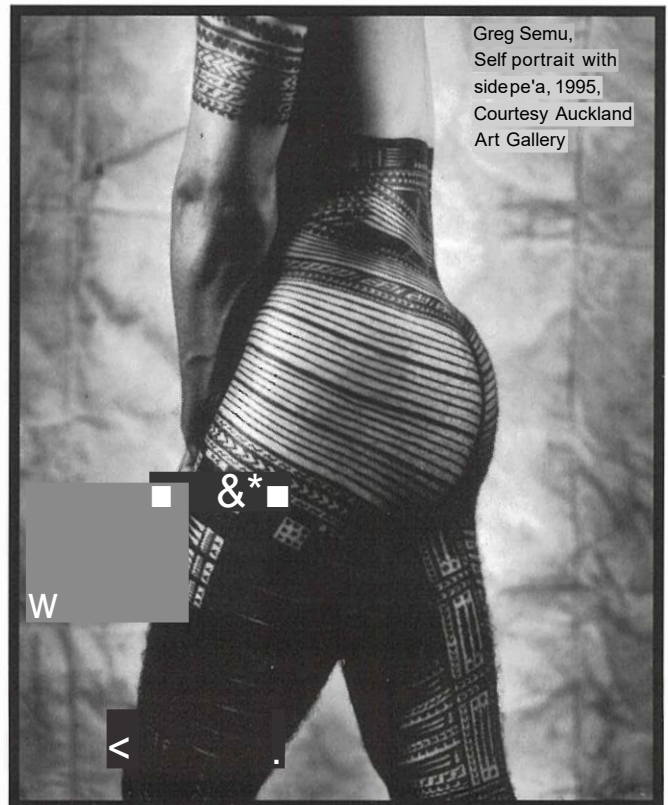
The exhibition is an understated affair; quiet, and quite small. It is mainly a collection of black and white studies of peoples' bodies, focusing on their tatau, their tattoos, and to a lesser extent on the process, the tattooing. It does not seem photographically innovative, but that is clearly not its purpose. Greg Semu's photography is reminiscent of anthropological, or even, dare I say it, police photography. At least initially, it seems to be purely documentary photography; formal, almost clinical. But it is not quite that. The decision to photograph in black and white is obviously a deliberately aesthetic one, and an effective one at that. Samoan tattooing is only in one colour, depending on the play between black and white (or perhaps more rightly, brown). This dramatism in the subject is heightened by the way in which Semu exaggerates the contrast between light and shade in many of the photographs, occasionally framing within the frame.

The understatement continues in the exhibition's text. The words are simple, but the information is careful and intimate, yet strident. The subjects are named and located. The people who have been tattooed, and 'exhibited' themselves to Semu (not to the exhibition viewer though), are not anonymous, nor are they dislocated. And while the people may not be totally familiar, the places certainly are. They are the places — the spaces — of Aukilani Samoa, Samoan Auckland. Semu has created, successfully, a sensitive and insightful study of tatau Samoa ma fa'a Samoa i Aukilani,

O le Tatau Samoa: The Tattooing of the Samoan People. Photographs by Greg Semu.  
2 March - 21 April, 1996,  
Auckland Art Gallery

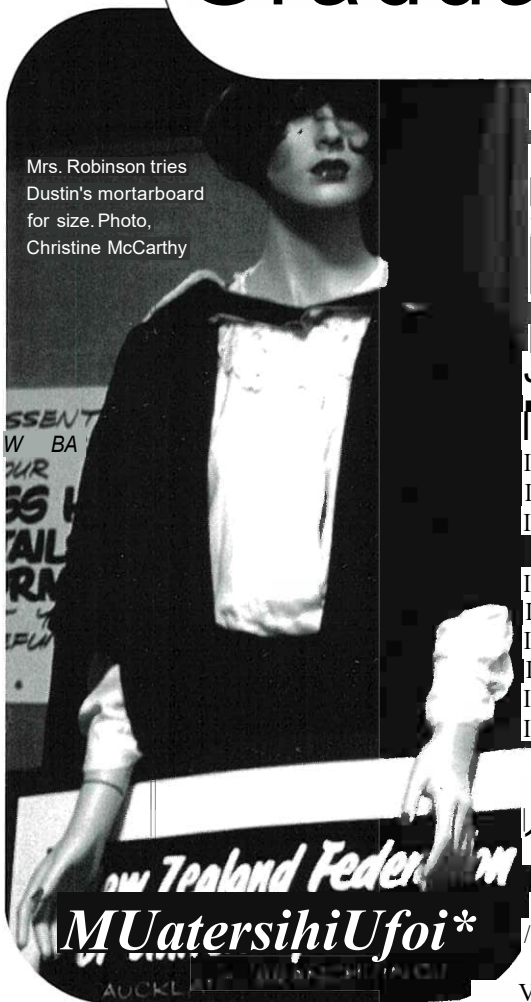
Samoan tattooing and Samoans living in Auckland. He has taken many of the techniques of tattooing and used them to guide his use of another artistic form, photography. The phrase 'ta tatau' means, in Samoan, to strike correctly; that is to mark out space, to impose order. Semu has achieved a similar order in his photography.

It is perhaps apparent that I have talked little, if at all, about the actual tattooing that is in the photographs. This is entirely deliberate. The tattooing, which is all the work of Suluape Paulo II, has a sophistication that exceeds the bounds of this review. The artistry of tatau is not really for the uninitiated. As with any symbolic experience, literacy of the symbols (such as 'asolaititi and fa'amuli'ali'ao) is a prerequisite to any intelligent understanding. The motifs are saturated in history and meaning, and that is not coincidental, but the entire purpose. To see only skilled and formally pleasing marks on skin, where there are a galaxy of references and meanings, is to miss the point. Both Suluape and Semu have made succeeded in making the fa'a Samoa, through the medium of tatau, accessible. But it is made accessible not for unintelligent scrutiny, nor for (mis)appropriation or superficial commentary of reviewers, but rather to inspire the pursuit of understanding and intelligent appreciation across cultures. la Manuia! y



Greg Semu,  
Self portrait with  
sidepe'a, 1995,  
Courtesy Auckland  
Art Gallery

Mrs. Robinson tries  
Dustin's mortarboard  
for size. Photo,  
Christine McCarthy



# The Graduate

Graduation, a site of frocks, trenchers and tassles, a dressing up game drenched in tradition and folklore, is seemingly immune to the instability of fashion. But, like fashion, graduation is a serious game whose appearance denies its fashionable under garments.

This game of dressing up is a dressing up of boys — gendered as such via the maculated language which calls graduates bachelor, master and doctor — and is a reversion to the childhood play of the wardrobe. Usurping a ground conventionally implicating women, the graduand takes the location of fashion, of fur and velvet — redressing them as male and ceremonial, employing a fashion rhetoric which appears frankly un-fashionable, for not only does graduation enact both fashion and anti-fashion, it has about it the musty fragrance of an unaired closet.

It is this fragrance which pretends the unfashionable. The annual airing presupposes that the graduation garb is protected from the guise of fashion, yet fashion is located within and identified as the architectural rather than the transient. It is found inside and is known as a wardrobe; the musty closet claimed by both building and furniture. It sites itself 'between', occupying constructions of interior and exterior, containment and container, and changing gradations of scale. It manifests the transience fashion is accused of, and yet the wardrobe is the permanent fixture that temporal fashion moves through.

Maintained and administered by the Federation of University Women, the graduation wardrobe, although existing outside of the conventional physical boundaries of the house, is, iconographically, well founded within the institution of domesticity. Enlarged and estranged, this wardrobe allows a perverted domesticity to exist within the academic. It is a pulling-out-of-domestic-entrails, referring to the violation of boundaries effected in its estrangement. The graduand moves through, disemboweling the wardrobe whose interior is employed to cover the exterior of his body.

An item of fashion himself, the graduand is a transient occupier of the wardrobe. Each graduation season brings new fashion apparel and enacts the mechanics of the wardrobe on the graduation stage. Inside the wardrobe, between fashion shows, substitute bodies constrained to a military line enforced by the rack, prepare for the graduation fashion parade. Ghosts from graduations past, they construct the lineage which perpetuates tradition. Brought into line, they mark the order and discipline of soldiers, monks and fashion models.

Coathanger-thin bodies inhabit this wardrobe-house — clothed by fashion, for inside the graduation wardrobe exists the ideal body of fashion — the thin, the anorexic, the ghost-like. Taken out of the wardrobe, fashion exposes this skeletal framework, revealing the horror of the fleshless coathanger. This skeletal fashion model remains behind the closed doors of the wardrobe entombed, attending the ancient ritual in absentia. The wardrobe becomes a haunted house.

Drawers — more frighteningly — deny even the erect reference to this body of the ghost. Made foldable, the body mutates — is ironed and pressed. Bent in submission, disembodied, the deformations deny the bodily. This mutilated body of fashion and the mythical body of graduation coincide constructing medieval notions of exemplar: the model. Idealised, fantasised about and dreamed of, the model is an ideal body whether of fashion or of graduation. It is an artefact of traditions of desire and excess and it provides the framework on which this graduation uniform is worn.

Veiled in tradition, this uniform black regalia manifests excess and desire, a piling and condensing of catholic tradition which an hygienic 'modernist white' might attempt to detect and erase. This blackness, which is an accumulation of all fashion, refers to some notion of an essential consistency and stability. Of all time and no time, it locates itself as permanent; yet as an initiation rite, graduation intensifies the transcendental nature of fashion, and recycles it annually.\*



# Westwood Ho!

## FlashArt



Vivienne Westwood on the cover of Flash Art, November/December 1994

After playing aesthetic tag through most of the 20th century, artists, curators, and the art press have flirted with fashion: from Dali's and Jean Cocteau's collaborations with Schiaparelli, to Cindy Sherman and Comme des Garçons, to Vivienne Westwood's show at the Leiden Museum with photographs by Inez van Lamsweerde, propelling her onto the cover of *Flash Art*, to Martin Margiela's debut in this context on the cover of *Artforum*. To name Sylvie Fleury, Nan Goldin, Jean Colonna, Matthew Barney, Wolfgang Tillmans, Richard Prince, and more locally, John Reynolds and Luise Fong, would only begin to scratch the surface of this interdisciplinary minefield.

Vivienne Westwood expounds, "the high-heel shoe augments the possibilities to play around with the upright dynamic... the genius of being human is to stand on two feet". Endeavouring to hyperbolise and idealise the female body she designs amplifying corsets, excruciatingly high stilettos, belt-width skirts and butt-cushions. If femininity is masquerade, Westwood creates a sublime account. Drawing upon a rich knowledge of social history through costume, she has focused upon aristocracy and its societal effects; often wryly representing the hypocritical corruption of British society- its prudish puritanism stimulating fetishistic titillation. Although Westwood maintains punk is dead, the Queen still raises her iconic head from time to time, last year with safety pins through her fabric cheeks.

Westwood's dandies and ladies are mythological fetish objects as well as archetypes of style, beauty and gender. Using the occasional transsexual in her shows, as does Thierry Mugler, Westwood highlights the game of femininity. This exaggeration cannot help but be a parody, oozing humour in its grandiose, excessive artifice. In all its glorious splendour, it remains what most anglo-saxons would term 'vulgar'.

In *Fashion and Perversity- A life of Vivienne Westwood, The Go's Laid Bare*, Westwood claims "I can't stand puritans...it is elegance that is potent and subversive. Elegance in a world of vulgarity". The new biography by long-time friend Fred Vermorel encapsulates her anarchism and disdain for mediocrity. With a cover as subtle as a British tabloid, she stands grinning like the Cheshire Cat in 9 inch platform pumps, silvery sheer pantihose, and voluminous skirt flung to high heaven to reveal she has no knickers. The back cover, a more poised interior mis-en-scene, features Vivienne resting her elbows against a candle-lit mantelpiece. She is dressed from head to heel in a long transparent black lace dress, with matching underwear. Shot in profile, the image is jarring, she has a hugely bloated stomach which she relishes bringing attention to, flouting any codes of decorum for a woman of 55. Her transgression is a re-articulation

of the need for fantasy and imagination in a world barraged with pre-selected images.

For the first time in this country, there is a ready supply of Issey Miyake, Martin Margiela, Comme des Garçons, Ann Demeulemeester, Dries Van Noten, Dirk Bikkembergs, Romeo Gigli, Vivienne Westwood, Red or Dead and Gaultier. These visions of fierce fabulosity go unannounced while gargantuan abjection is trumpeted as "fashion". The *Smokefree Fashion Awards* never ceases to encapsulate all that is spurious about the word: novelty, ugliness and frivolous stupidity. The recent collaborations between Deborah Smith and Marilyn Sainty, which include postcards, an editorial in *Style* and Smith's current installation in the New Gallery window, provide a somewhat antidotal effect.

Smith's installation features 6 black slip dresses against a white background, embroidered with black and white photographs; a close-up shot of a tape measure resting on plump dark lips, a grainy close-up of a small silver sword gently gripped between incisors and the broken fingers of a marble statue relating a dialogue in tacility with a bare bottom. This superimposition of images brings to mind Martin Margiela's latest collection in which photocopied articles of clothing adorn fabric, including a xerox of a long sequined dress on a skirt. Smith employs the spare elegance of the shop window, without irony. The dresses and images are sombre, alluding to sepulchral wrappings. As 'momento mori' these garments recall the long black Issey Miyake dresses donned by Orlan and her assistants for one of her performances.

Smith is referring to the transience of fashion. Now more than ever, fashion holds up to the art world a simplified version of itself. Fashion is a world where the only thing more certain than the single-minded pursuit of beauty and style is the regularity with which they are redefined each season. It is, in other words, an art world that operates like clockwork, maintaining the myths of newness, breakthrough, and perpetual change. ¶

# wanting it the



## ANNA MILES

Jaqueline Fahey Fraser Analysing My Words, 1978, Collection University of Auckland, Dept. of Psychiatry and Behavioural Science. Photo Studio Lagonda, courtesy Fisher Gallery.

Portrait in the Looking Glass  
The World of Jacqueline Fahey:  
Paintings from 1957 - 1995  
 Fisher Gallery, Pakuranga  
 26 April - 26 May 1996

The title of the Fisher Gallery's Jacqueline Fahey retrospective promises interpretation. It's hard though not to wonder whether *Portrait in the Looking Glass* was chosen haphazardly. It seems a gratuitous nod to a moment in feminist discourse that has passed. The title is predictable, less predictable is how little is made of it. Fahey's *Fraser sees me, I see myself*, 1975, in the collection of the Museum of New Zealand, would seem pivotal to her exploration of the portrait and the looking glass, it is absent. This is a powerful work, and an odd omission, particularly when you consider the Fisher has not left much of Fahey's oeuvre out. *Portrait in the Looking Glass* is an exhibition that has neglected to take a good look in the mirror and consider what donning the institution of a retrospective could and might mean. Fahey's work is fantastic! however the Fisher does not appear to read it from a contemporary perspective or indeed

any particular perspective. There is little pleasure in being forced to speculate whether Fahey's male peers would have been subjected to such a curatorial jumble in Pakuranga.

The crowded hanging of the Fahey show appeared to me as symptomatic of the shortage of curatorial decision making, but nevertheless, despite its crude execution it has connections with the arrangement of print rooms and portrait galleries. These sorts of hanging arrangements and the actual portraits within them emphasise the accumulation of material wealth. Fahey's paintings of the 1970s also emphasise accumulation, the contents are not even that dissimilar, the richly patterned Persian rug in many of these works would be at home in a Zoffany or Hogarth portrait. Like the subjects at the centre of these earlier portraits, those in Fahey's domestic interiors often appear as accessories to a material display. But the way Fahey fills her paintings with possessions does nothing to consolidate a representation of affluent composure. Possessions, in particular clothing and

textiles, are the instruments of Fahey's assault on tasteful restraint. Sometimes, as in *Self portrait in Alexa's Bedroom*, 1974, it is the figures within the paintings that are strangely silent, the numb oasis of calm within a demanding environment.

Fahey's paintings of this period open themselves out to scrutiny and promise revelation. They have all the voyeuristic lure of grommet bags being emptied of their contents in advertisements. I have the same insatiable desire to scan them that overcomes me at the magazine rack. Nothing is concealed, every drawer and biscuit packet is full and open, every piece of discarded clothing or dirty laundry is available to the eye. Perhaps why I admire Fahey's paintings of this period so much is that for all the promise, they ultimately reveal how little possessions say about people. Fahey's paintings remind me that the faith that is renewed every time I pick up a *House and Garden*, faith in knowing anyone more intimately for knowing their domestic interior and its contents, is misplaced. I wonder if the girl playing with a doll on the carpet as her mother and aunt drink together in *Sisters Communing*, 1974, is as interested in dolls as in eavesdropping on adult conversation and storing up anything impenetrable as evidence of their incomparable sophistication.

Fahey's paintings of the 1970s record a female dominated household in an era that is often caricatured in retrospect as a period when a myopic feminist essentialism ruled. The concerted inclusion of all the trappings of conventional middle-class femininity in Fahey's paintings, the sheer volume of fashion, makeup, decoration and Gin tells another story. Seeing so many of these works together, the concentration of highly patterned fabrics appears to dominate Fahey's persistent investigation of the self-portrait. Painting this wealth of material is about wanting to have it all, and Fahey makes the inevitable frustration that accompanies this desire abundantly clear. The smoothness of Rita Angus' fantastic painting of printed cactus patterns is not emulated. Fahey rejects the display of virtuosity in favour of leaving the tracks of her own impatience. It is the philosophy of Shirley Conran's *Superwoman* manual, "Life's too short to stuff a mushroom". Fahey's painting of pattern eschews depth in much the same way that *Fraser analysing my words*, 1978, portrays the psychoanalyst in psychedelic stripes, clutching at peacock utterances that flaunt the impossibility of their analysis. Fahey represents the energy of pattern, as equally capable of representing restlessness and frustration. The fabulous patchwork oven cloth at the centre of *Christine in the Pantry*, 1972, is a target.

Despite Fahey's unmistakable railing against decorum, the 1970s paintings are largely set in the living room. After *My Skirt's in your ... room*, 1979, the narratives tend to become more didactic and action, like Fahey squirting lurid green Palmolive at the ceiling in *Happy Christmas*, 1984, moves to the kitchen or the world outside the domestic sphere. In a sense Fahey's work of the 70s is more social documentary than social commentary, although it's arguable how far you might prise these two apart. Certainly Fahey's compositions owe as much to the camera and the snapshot tradition, as the history of the painted portrait. The ambiguous tone Fahey maintains, the mix of identification and cool detachment is a source of enduring fascination in the work. *The Birthday Party*, 1973, presents a moment in the dining room for observation, the objects arranged over the surface of the table invite concentrated looking, there is delight to be had in the recognition of things, striped Cornish ware bowls, marbles, an origami box. The table is slightly tipped up, compelling you to look before things slip, but it is also a wooden barrier, that con-

# The sheer volume of fashion, makeup, decoration and Gin tells another story

tains the three subjects in the background and asserts your distance from them. You are drawn in and made aware of your estrangement. The grandmother is estranged too, staring straight out she is demanding, but her arms across her body shun contact, unlike the arm of the girl in the middle reaching out to touch her friend. The friend is wearing an orange cardigan that stands out, she looks detached like the three balloons floating over the table, self-conscious perhaps about the presence of an adult in the room. Caught between being stared at by the grandmother and observing the two girls, I am awkward too and notice there are not enough balloons to go around. Fahey doesn't pass comment on the scene so much as make you self-conscious about the act of looking at it.

Thinking further about Fahey's distinct combination of the portrait and document, I would have liked to have seen it played out against a number of other images, leaping pregnant girls by Ian Scott, anonymous suburban women exercising by Richard Killeen, photographs by Ans Westra and portraits of Erica by Peter Peiyer. In *Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort*, Peter Galassi makes the point that because lack of privilege too easily translates into lack of privacy, domestic poverty has been far more accessible than domestic affluence. It is Fahey's achievement to have documented a moment in middle class New Zealand family life and in the process to have reflected on particularly cruel ironies that surround women artists. The limited form of feminine artistic expression propagated within unspoken codes of social acceptability is never far from consciousness in Fahey's domestic interiors.

On the table between the magnifying glass and mirror, in the middle of the looking relations that make up *Fraser Sees me, I see Myself*, Fahey lays out *The National Geographic*. Fahey has a superb eye for detail — the magazine that in cataloguing a feast of visual otherness sometimes makes us wonder about our own, is not unlike her painting. Fahey's paintings make a parade of concealing nothing, whether the sea of possessions is rendered hurriedly and with demonstrable boredom or assembled with consummate wit, the domestic world has been tipped out for inspection. But the more that is spilled, the more you confront not knowledge of an unfamiliar interior, but a familiar longing of your own. Fahey's paintings of the 70s remind me of what my mother called feeding time at the zoo, and something I thought adult growth corrected — eyes bigger than your stomach. I wonder if the little girl on the carpet still believes in the incomparable sophistication of adults or if she now recognises this as her own desire.\*

## ASTRID MANIA

# ANOTHER LOOK

fusion: there is life on the other side of the world! These artists could stand, and had to stand, the challenge of contemporary American and European art. Especially in the case of Ludwig-Forum in Aachen, since the exhibition spaces are hardly fenced off and *Cultural Safety* was literally mixed up and competing with an exhibition of fish in fibreglass by Toni Grand, and with the permanent collection including such obtrusive works as Koons' *Made in Heaven*. This disturbed the shape of the show, but is a well-

known problem resulting from the interior design of the Ludwig-Forum.

It was impossible for us to judge the choice of artists, since we had no idea of the quality or quantity from which they had been selected. Shows being assembled on the grounds of giving a survey of a country's art scene always put the curator in an uncomfortable position, provoking the question of what makes up the identity of a given nation or country. I personally dislike any reductionist position that looks at artworks only from a national point of view. This may well be a German paranoia, as I hate seeing German art reduced to the slogans 'expressionist' or, later, 'wild' — but I do admit that selling the show under a national label was the easiest approach to this pioneering project. Moreover, the show itself was aware of this tricky problem being imposed on it by the Frankfurt curator, but the range of art presented was wide enough to distract people from searching for a commonly underlying 'kiwiness'.

The ironic title of *Cultural Safety* contradicted any nationalist feeling, but its mere use unveiled an interesting difference between Europe and New Zealand. While we deal nowadays with notions of racism and hostility against foreigners coming into our countries, New Zealand

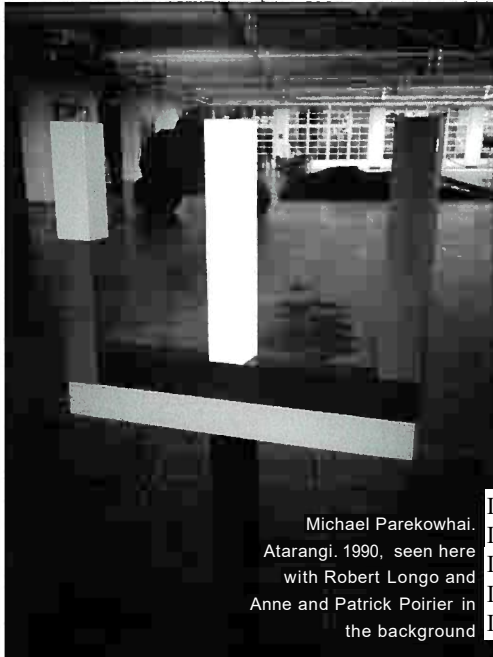
has been dealing with the trauma of being a colonial country and the sensitive relationship between the pre-existent and the newly arrived cultures. The catalogue dealt very instructively with these issues, depicting a clear and understandable image of the current discourse in New Zealand/Aotearoa, both on a broader cultural and specifically art-related level. Still, we felt, some deeper insights into the history and culture of Aotearoa would have helped to further comprehend the artworks. Maybe it is an art historian's obsession, even weakness, to always trace the roots and models of a work, but a broader knowledge — like it or not — of Colin McCahon's work would also have been enlightening. This raises the tricky question: does an art work necessarily need a historical or political frame of reference? In our daily practice of shifting artworks around the world via exhibitions, printed or digital repro-

Astrid Mania gives a German perspective on *Cultural Safety*

What would an average German know about New Zealand? Or, the question we (the free-lance staff of Ludwig-Forum, Aachen) had to ask ourselves in awaiting the *Cultural Safety* and *Second Nature* shows from those far-away islands was, what did we know about them? We all lived with the well-promoted 'cleanical' image of a healthy, green environment where people enjoy bungee-jumping,

rafting and mountain-skiing. This does not fit the self-stylisation of European intellectuals, (or self-declared intellectuals). We knew the words "Moa" and "Maori" from cross-words ("extinct giant bird" and "indigenous people of NZ"), which helped a little, and, of course, we all furiously followed the dramas around the Rainbow Warrior and the latest French manifestations of nuclear muscle-flexing. This provided us with a warm wave of sympathy for the artists coming from such a dreary and culturally deprived country. Why do we never get the New Zealand of big cities, modern galleries and a vivid art scene in the media?

Then they arrived, the chosen few, to represent their country's contemporary art for the very first time in old Europe. Some visitors were disappointed since they expected a tamed ethnographic show of Maori art — at least they knew about its existence — and the rest of us were overthrown by deep con-



Michael Parekowhai.  
Atarangi. 1990, seen here  
with Robert Longo and  
Anne and Patrick Poirier in  
the background

### Cultural Safety,

Co-curated by Gregory Burke and Peter Weiermaar,

Frankfurter Kunstverein

30 March - 14 May 1995

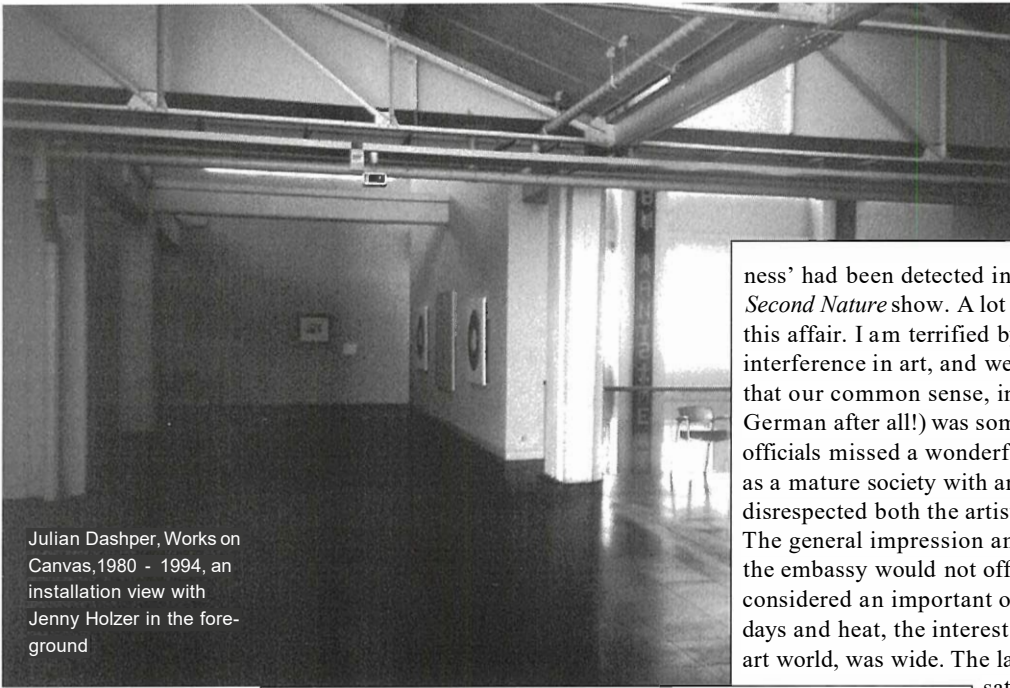
Ludwig-Forum für Internationale Kunst,

Aachen 31 May - 6 August 1995

City Gallery Wellington, Te Whare Toi

4 April - 22 May 1996





Julian Dashper, Works on Canvas, 1980 - 1994, an installation view with Jenny Holzer in the foreground

ness' had been detected in the photo advertising Peter Peryer's *Second Nature* show. A lot has recently been said and written on this affair. I am terrified by any governmental or administrative interference in art, and we could not help but form the impression that our common sense, intelligence or judgment (Kant was German after all!) was somewhat underestimated. New Zealand officials missed a wonderful opportunity to promote their country as a mature society with art and artistic discourse. These officials disrespected both the artists and the German institutions involved. The general impression among the audience was — alas — that if the embassy would not officially open the show, how could it be considered an important one? Fortunately, despite summer holidays and heat, the interest in the exhibition, especially among the art world, was wide. The lack of official benediction was compensated for by the amazing fact that we saw artists speaking and singing (!) at the opening. We were stunned: artists in Germany are generally unwilling to speak, and — even worse — when they do want to, they are usually muzzled.

ductions, how much of its weight is being lost on the way? No question, a decontextualised work must still speak in a new and foreign context. I admit that I would be as amused and alarmed seeing a show of recent German art including a model of the former Wall and the Berlin Brandenburg Gate as I would be in seeing a show of contemporary New Zealand art including a stuffed Kiwi, a romantic photo of Maori dancers and a reproduction of a Colin McCahon painting.

The show was an interesting experience. It has changed our view of, and has stimulated our interest in, a country that up to now has been one of the few blank spots on the contemporary art world map.

## CULTURAL SAFETY WAS LITERALLY

It appeared an

interesting fact that most of the works were — for lack of a better word — conceptual,

## MIXED UP WITH KOONS' MADE IN HEAVEN

none showed the polished surface of an academically-painted post-modernist canvas. The work most shaped by purely artistic concerns appeared to be Luise Fong's, whereas the other artists revealed a lot more of the *Cultural Safety* discussion. Ruth Watson's maps with their reflections on the situation of New Zealand in both its geographic and cultural context were a good and accessible approach to the show, smoothing the way for the more 'alien' works, such as Peter Robinson's and Jacqueline Fraser's, both using Maori imagery. It took us some time to believe in the irony of Robinson's work — which is not a weakness of his oeuvre, but we were trying so hard ourselves to be 'culturally correct'! While his work is aware of its 'exoticism' and is deliberately exposing it, Fraser's fragile installations were in danger of being read as 'exotic goods' only. We found them the most difficult, simply owing to our lack of knowledge of Maori traditions. Being art historians we sympathised with Julian Dashper's installation dealing with the problem of second-hand experience, as we also suffer from reproductions and badly blown-up slides. And we laughed along with Michael Parekowhai's kit-set Duchamp.

From what I have perceived of New Zealand so far, it is time for it to leave its splendid isolation and set sail once more to explore foreign shores. The residency established in Aachen is surely a step in that direction. On the back of the recent international success of New Zealand film, people involved in culture need to establish links across the different media and join forces for self-promotion. In contrast to the founding of a United Europe, I have experienced a somewhat chauvinist attitude lurking behind this country's facade, and would recommend fresh blood transfusions for an incestuous family! y

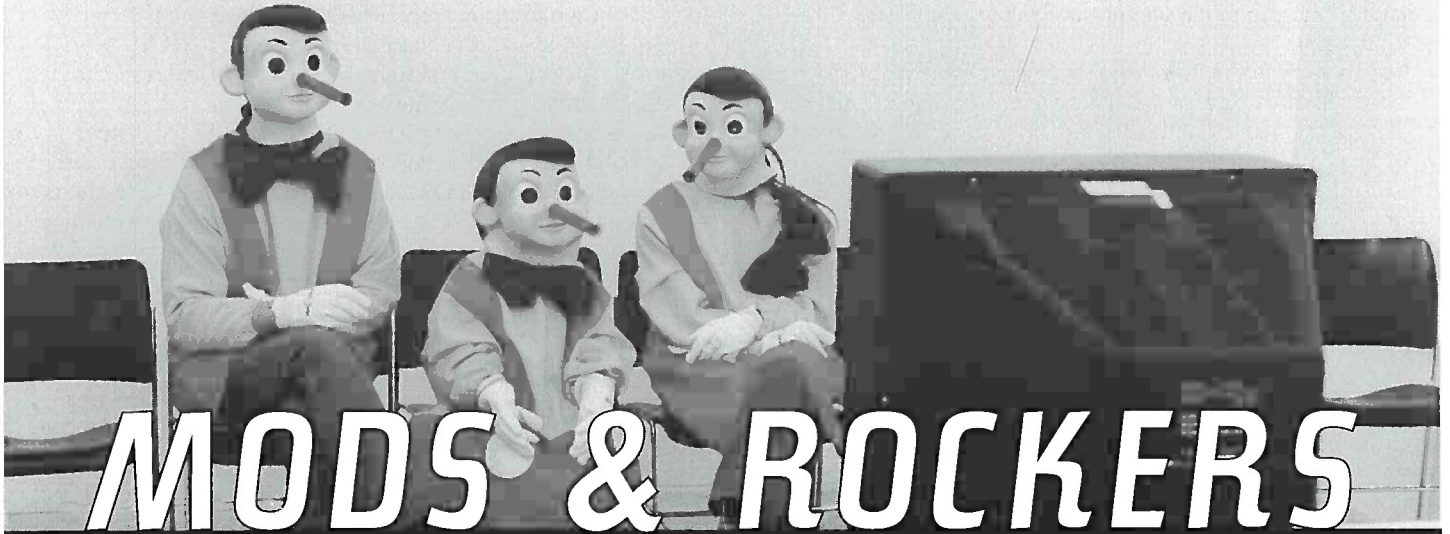
The formal opening was overshadowed by the New Zealand embassy's refusal to appear and speak because 'a stroke of mad-

## TESSA LAIRD

Transformers: A Moving Experience

25 April - 28 July 1996

Auckland Art Gallery



# MODS & ROCKERS

### THE CHILD

Contrary to the futuristic tenor of *Transformers*, I found myself repeatedly catapulted into the past. Memories of *Chance and Change*, curator Andrew Bogie's 1985 exhibition on a similar thesis, began to flood back, and so much of *Transformers* made use of childish vernacular. I was 14 years old in 1985, still, my memories of that first exhibition were unshakably juvenile. With the rest of Auckland, I had queued for Tinguely's *Meia-Matic* and paid for a machine-made artwork that I treasured for years to come. I too, patted Medalla's foaming fountain and gawped at George Rickey's aesthetically challenged wind machine which still stands sentinel outside the Heritage Gallery.

*Transformers'* recycling of ideas and even artworks was somewhat disappointing. But the 'child within' didn't care, being happy to perambulate an exhilaratingly motley collection of moving, noisy stuff (the 'dog's breakfast' epithet should be worn as proudly as the 'populist' one — neither need be an insult).

Nike Savvas exemplified magnanimity to minors with her *Simple Division* in the Projects Room, which was meant to quote heavily from the colour theories of Seurat, but seemed to owe more to the playground in the roof of the old Farmers building. Like much of *Transformers*, the confetti-like *Simple Division* was swimmingly optical; celebratory above its pseudo-scientific raison d'être. The white balls stood out amidst the coloureds like Braille dots setting up some point of reference with the muddled alphabet pinned opposite, and let's face it, who doesn't remember writing their name backwards in the bad old, cogni-

tively dissonant days? The fun of movement and colour was freckled with cot-dwelling angst, a counterpoint to the glib technobabble sewing up the show.

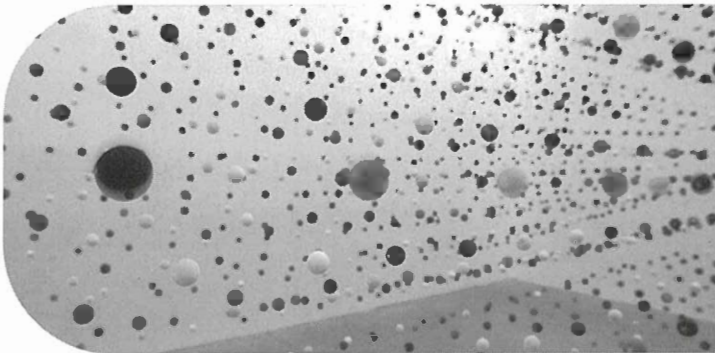
*Transformers* demonstrated that technology, rather than broadening our horizons, seemed to possess the disturbing capability of reducing one's learned intelligence. James Angus' *A Lot More Bright Ideas* exemplified this synaptic retardation. Though Bogie rightly attested to the ubiquity of electricity in his essay, through a subtle reconfiguration of shapes, Angus had us gaping at this "everyday miracle" and reciting "Bart! Swastika! Mickey!" as each lightbulb revealed its referential insignia, like proud 5 year olds clocking an intelligence test. (The New Gallery had safeguarded any subsequent illiterate tendencies by replacing their infamous "Do Not Touch" signs with severed, cancelled-out hands, no doubt Council run-ons from the zoo.)

Paul McCarthy's *Pinocchio Pipenose Household Dilemma* simultaneously satisfied the most childlike propensities for dress-up, and the sickest and saddest of adult fantasies. Though technologically simple, McCarthy's work embodied more complex themes of abuse, desire, consumerism, isolation, and human interaction than all the *Transformers* works put together. Entirely unsuitable viewing for children, it was, nevertheless, attended by queues of them, bemused, often imitative (one split his lip whilst trying to interpret McCarthy's masturbatory movements as press-ups). Inclusion of this work belowered a stupidly literal curatorial interpretation of the word transform. So we get dressed up, so what? But McCarthy's work, for all its blistering sore-thumbness, stood out with a pensive brilliance: arousing and depressing beyond belief, it showed a genuine commitment to the social.

## THE TREKKIE

An avowed *Star Trek* fan, it occurred to me as I herded into the New Gallery lobby for the opening with the rest of the art cattle, that I was in a scene from *The Next Generation*, with the masterful, soaring architecture, and the speech makers standing to attention on high. The Picard-like poise of Chris Saines had me swear an internal pledge of allegiance, while the stiff formality of Telecom's representative at least fulfilled my need for "robots in disguise" from the famous TV cartoon of the same name (one wonders where Bogle gets his ideas).

Bogie's essay in the throwaway catalogue read in part like an article from *Mondo 2000*, promising acceleration beyond imagination. And the centrepiece to all this feverish anticipation? Eric Orr's *Fire Window*, which couldn't have looked more *Star Trek* if it had tried. Despite all the ephemeral and installation work and despite Bogie's parting catalogue shot about new technologies being "the saving grace of our art museums in the struggle to house ever expanding



Nike Savvas, *Untitled*, 1994-96, Courtesy Auckland Art Gallery

and cumbersome collections of inert sculpture", *Fire Window* is now a permanent addition to Auckland City. This "Public Art Bonus" is the perfect blend of the 'surprising' fountains in QEII square and the blazing torches of numerous Parnell/Ponsonby brasseries, setting up the rusty old nature versus culture dichotomy that monopolised the show. Ironically, much of the work predicated towards 'the latest in technology' was nevertheless engaged in a backwards scramble to the assurance of the natural world.

Cases in point: Helen Altman's faux log fire, Len Lye's classic *Grass*, Nam June Paik's characteristically cute *Video Fish*, Garnett Puett's aptly titled *Nature's War* and *Green Noise* by Australians Jennifer Turpin and Michaelie Crawford.

Of all the pieces marrying nature and culture, Christian Marclay's deceptively simple *Tapefall* offered the most readings. As technology records a waterfall, so it comes to physically resemble it. The apparent dichotomy in our lives is utterly flawed as everything we create is destined to follow a 'natural' pattern. Kinesis also achieved its literal apotheosis in the stored energy of Marclay's wasted but waiting tape which formed an unnerving sargassum. The "ant hill" comparison in the catalogue ignored the more sinister connotations of the pile-ups of industrial waste, tyre yards, for example. The heap that had formed at the time of writing did bear a striking resemblance to the Smog Monster of *Godzilla* movie fame. One almost expected to see the blob rise up and fly about the gallery spraying patrons with sulphuric gas. Interactive art indeed! Perhaps it's this kind of scenario Bogle looks forward to when he touts the future of nano-technologies and "self-transforming sculptures"?

At least *Tapefall* finally put the 'diving board' to use, but as a friend astutely observed, the only artwork that could ever truly complement such ostentatious architecture would be a Duane Hanson, preferably of a blind man with a stick.

## THE SOCIAL BUTTERFLY

So much fuss was made over the New Gallery's mishandling of the monarch chrysalises, when this kind of New Age marketing has long been available to any consumer. A high percentage of chrysalides meet a sticky end in nature, too, but never has there been such a flurry of animal rights activism in between mouthfuls of (blithely non-vegetarian) hors-d'oeuvre.

The invite's promise that "Every social butterfly will be there" was a little hasty, but the exhibition itself was riddled with works which foregrounded surface and social interaction. It's not the exhibition to attend on a bad hair day, and although numerous jokes were made about ambulances and existential crises, the closest I came to a per-

**THE CLOSEST I CAME TO A PERSONAL REVELATION WAS WITH WERNER KLOTZ'S INTELLECTUAL TRAP...THANKS TO WHICH I VOWED NEVER TO WEAR SO MUCH EYE MAKE-UP AGAIN.**

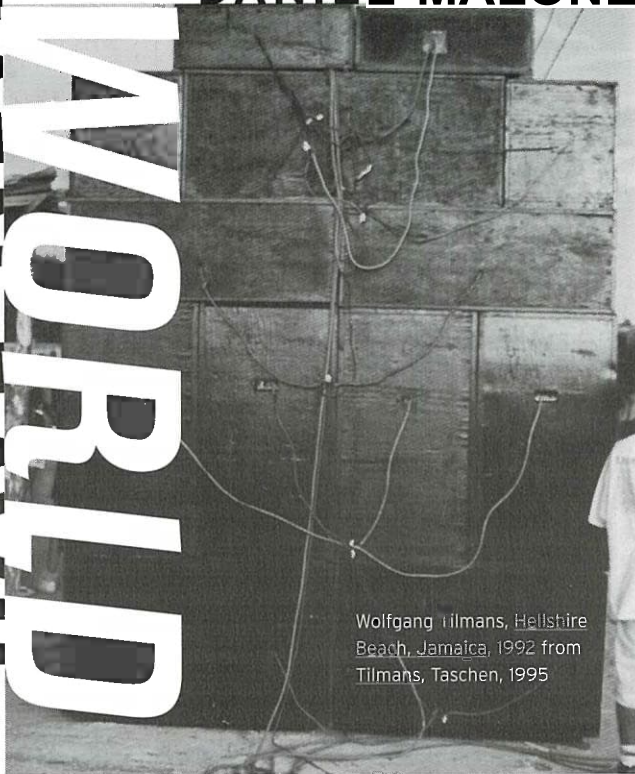
sonal revelation was with Werner Klotz's *Intellectual Trap* (repeating the viewer's eye inside a tardis-like mirror-box) thanks to which I vowed never to wear so much eye make-up again.

Klotz's *Sisyphus' Flight* reflected the audience in a bank of monitors with a perpetual spinning motion, creating inextricable relations within a social whirligig. Taking its name from one of Ancient Greece's damned, one wonders if there's not a specially tailored punishment for "social butterflies" in Hades. Certainly, in *Transformers*, we were condemned to observe a series of cyclic activities, terrifying in their eternal banality.

Paul McCarthy's *Pinocchio* installation was the only reflective piece which created a genuine displacement between self-perception and physical reflection, as well as compulsory identification with the awfully strange McCarthy. The supreme dis-ease evoked for anyone who got beyond the 'cute' exterior was a far more powerful experience than knee-jerk-cosmic mirror-gazing.

Which is not to say Juan Geuer's perfectly simple *Eye to Eye* mirror pieces did not work wonderfully, melding your partner's eyes into a reflection of your own face, and coming closest to the genetic engineering Bogle rhapsodises in his essay. It seems telling that Bogle targets the Futurists as all talk. "For all their revolutionary rhetoric, the Futurists were traditionalists in their choice of media." Well, I would no longer equate mechanics, mirrors and video screens with new technology. For all his nano-rhetoric, Bogie's choice is still heavily rooted in the 60s, and in some already broadly accepted notions of contemporary art. *Transformers* oply whets the appetite for truly new and revolutionary art practice.?

RAVE NEW  
DTRON



Wolfgang Tillmans, *Hellshire Beach, Jamaica, 1992* from *Tillmans, Taschen, 1995*

165

So what are we taking? Pills are mimicked so fast. Someone's dribbling "sign or signifier?" to a dealer. Methylene-dioxy-N-methylamphetamine doesn't tell you what it does. Empathy just wasn't as catchy as Ecstasy. Emotions are intensified — more akin to window-shopping than psychology. With this comes an intensification of all sensation, retinal and tactile. To touch someone or smile at someone has a value that is spent/indulged immediately, a self-contained unit of currency. This is not a quality of the drug per se, to disconnect actions from the marionette of etiquette. Such affection exists as an end in itself.

173

Some people have waited 40 minutes and are there. Like de Saussure as a tourist, they shuttle between two airports, Dance and Talk. Excited by visitation more than occupation, they are real E-state agents. They think they are under cover and flash their sauced eyes at each other like badges. A rave is a highly populated desert, you have to drink a lot of water, but not too much or your brain will swell. That combination of soft-drink packaging and baby's bottle, the sports-sipper, is constantly thrust in front of you like you're running a marathon.

184

Hiding under the black-light we can read colour. Fluorescence drinks the light thankfully, drunk with its inner glow, the (non-)colour white reflects it with cold indifference. Likewise people occupy two distinct spaces. It's probably worth mentioning the lines between these cannot be drawn in any spaciophysical way. The fundamental difference is that you either stand alone amongst hundreds of people or you stand connected. Those at one with the whole inhabit an organic space, a pastoral space (they dance in bare feet) and while it is by no means exclusive to, it favours the out-door event. They swim in essential oils and fluorescent colours, they eat fire and distract themselves with juggling or bang obsolete drums, taking the beat of the music to

be something primeval, a key to a forgotten space. In short they insist on belonging to something.

185

I take it as an opportunity to belong to nothing — this space is perhaps the first post-city urban space, having kept company with cyberspace but possessing none of its tasteless enthusiasms for process. The beat is about repetition, not for the chance of some trance-like opportunity to go somewhere but for the eternal return to right where you are. Everything will come to you, like an empathpsycho 7/11.

187

To dance is to count...see how I'm concentrating, I'm ruling out the dance floor like so much math paper, counting, step by step. It's arithmetic. I have to concentrate completely, I have no *sense* of rhythm.

188

It is not an ironic appreciation, for this banality is the tabula rasa of desire. The banal is a new kind of truth, like a product which no longer bears a trace of the tool which made it.

190

The ones that don't move dance the most. That do-less. The kids come in and sit down on the dance floor, like flying the flag upside down, a protest if you don't like the music. But it's not even that for these smacked-out kids. Wearing pants so big you couldn't see them moving inside even if they were, and most of them are, through private rooms, inside those clothes they keep coming home. And parkas, hoods up, in an environment where common sense says they are unsuitable. They mock nature as the source of anything: food, clothes and shelter.

213

Beats should be 3D at this point. They don't so much have gravity as direction. If you listen you will hear some move upwards, some down, while some march side-ways. It has nothing at all to do with plotting of the wave form, which is steeped in the arrogant organic nostalgia of it's mapping of the human heart. This is instead the instantaneous construction of a sky-scraper, sub-way line or lift-shaft and its equally instantaneous collapse.

215

Words are a profane addition, singing is worse still, singing is for songs — this is dance music. It is the interference of one language with another, like people talking in a cinema.

217

This is the opposite of the traditional concert. You don't get people dancing facing the front, there should be no front, this is confusion. The DJ is no more important than the author of the music they're playing. If they are good you won't even know they are there. Principles of structural efficiency (virtuosity) impinge on this autonomous quality.

235

A school of thought has problems with the legitimation of improved experience, mistaking sincerity for an epistemological truism. This is the worst kind of liberalism. Take for example those that say the music is just as good straight. Subjectivity is not the issue here, on the contrary it is objectivity. They miss the fact that this music formed out of the events where particular drugs were first taken en masse. Music experienced and later written by people who took these drugs. Written for people on these drugs. This is not embarrassing, this is culture, not sub- because culture is not something (in spite of people confusing history with quantity surveying) that has anything to do with scale.5

# NOCTURNAL EMISSIONS

GAVIN HIPKINS

the sky above, are free agents, birds of fire composing a spectatorial Disney World of fleeting utopia and inflated civic goodwill. And from this illusory cloud-palace, Tinkerbell introduces another of Walt's episodes, dropping emotionally charged bombs and spilling eternally wholesome values from the statecraft fire-safety kit.

Reacting, the crowd let go Adorno's noted ecstasy cries: oohs of envy, aahs of mauve sentimentality and squirms of destructive incitement. This Group F affair was a combustible sensual event, a wonderfully cruel operatic act staged in the agora. Totality, functioning like the big bang theory—projecting everlasting light, is never accomplished. The *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art) scatters like piss in the wind, freeing the spectator for a moment or two, but no more. Meanwhile, the show's whimsical passages discharge deflated crackers and angry rockets, sustaining the crowd's

determined amazement. To Engels' "desperate masses, who demand bread and work, or death" must be added "or fireworks"!

At first glance, firework displays give the impression of 'anti-acts', the advocacy of civil disobedience is not far away (a vital ingredient in their long lasting popularity). But the heated unruleness latent in such gatherings is more of a state-ordered radicalism—under the dome of lights and borrowed power—the outdoor venue becomes a pleasure garden for forgetting. In jostling for better views though, the crowd agrees; here is acute participation.

For Wellington, a double-banger celebration was taking place, marking not only the opening of the 1996 Festival of the Arts, but also an embarkation into the realm of the cultural ephemeral event or "high energy attractions", as they are locally called. This fireworks display denotes the ongoing shift from material objects to service delivery in the folk-art arena. Such glorious fantasies held in spherical shells are on a collective or national scale: *Rockets pierce chrysanthemum shells deflecting fireball projectiles towards the in-process multi-purpose stadium. Spider web shells intermesh with red-tipped comets striking impasto celestial wheels above the proposed casino site. The drooping lines from peony shells draw pale arches to the vacant New Zealand pavilion — future home of our treasures—the Museum. And the grand finale comes too soon emitting white showers from near the zenith.*

Encompassing all, the night sky as arbitrator is host to scrambling waterfront cultural developments that playfully assert 'timeless celebrations will take us away'.f

Gavin Hipkins,  
Zerfall: Wellington,  
1 March 1996

*Your eyes, lit up like shops to lure their trade...  
Or fireworks in the park on holidays,  
insolently make use of borrowed power*

— Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mai*

It's one thing to wish upon a star, another to create one. Hearing Wellington harbour was on fire during the opening night of the festival, I rushed to the waterfront to watch. The French pyrotechnicians Group F had been billed by the Festival of the Arts as exotic "Birds of Fire"—professional salvo-orchestralists of Olympic Games closing ceremony stature. Yet Barcelona's calm Mediterranean sky could not have prepared the Group for this harbour's tempest-tossing antics. Despite relentless wind, the masses had gathered to contemplate the ECNZ-sponsored sky gestalt.

In the harbour's basin, Group F made efficient use of available resources by employing an effect well known to European firemasters. By the fifteenth century, spectacular aerial displays (local victory cries) were strategically exaggerated by igniting fireworks from a floating launch site; doubling the scale of fireworks presented in the mirror of black water, and duplicating the actual show of available power.

The magic of firework displays has something to do with universal symbolism, or so it would seem. In a fairytale manner, firework displays unleash a folk mythology of cosmic catastrophe. From this timeless tradition, a beautiful cascading tragedy manifests through the duration of the show. Here, in

# FANCY CLOBBER. H?

what a big palaver it is\*.

OH' AMDANICE TANK TOR VVIHILST  
YOUR DOWN THERE HAVE YOU CROT THESE  
PLUS -FOURS INASIAEFOR -FIVES

EXCERPT\* fKOM  
OOUHIHLWS  
DAILY JWIUF AL



DONALD PARSNIPS SPEAKS His mind  
ON THE EN PUSH FASHION ...  
IN THE BRITISH MANNER

*Shavely »' / cZca. uMoe ever\* / loup\*  
manifest as really red & then  
it would have to be in  
the glorious carefully  
structured gardens of ENGLAND.*

## 50 WHAT\$ UP THEN?

•A -tkta is dkh classao4» Jto&jtMdl  
ever come to that paradise,  
urt>Jbh\*uf guilt fc etc WHY  
is it that in London, the public  
take more offence to blatant  
displays of nudity, than they  
do to the cruel & unthinking  
Fashion industry pill' ty wWC

over their eyes: AFTER ALL  
IS SAID L MOST IS DONE ; if including  
KK «- Darling darling  
we are all bods (some  
shaped in funny manner) Ano  
CLOTHES, ,SURPLUSTo IVR KtAUIREMENTS"



COftVHAWBEJUXMS  
BY OoHALO FARSMIPs

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USUAL PARSNIPS STYLE HUMOUR

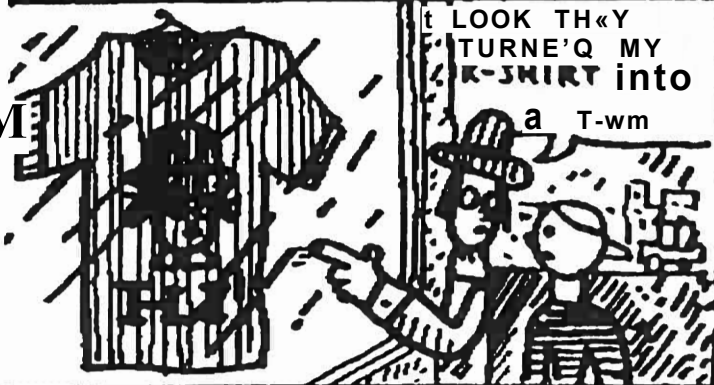
YOU'RE VERY SMART WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO THE CHIP SHOP!

IN FULL EVENING DRESS? YOUNG LADY! ONE MUST ALWAYS BE PREPARED! ALWAYS!

EXCUSE ME SMART YOUNG MAN! IT'S JUST THAT THE DUKE & DUCHESS ARE ONE PERSON SHORT AT THE GRAND DINNER TONIGHT & NEED SOMEONE TO LOOK AFTER THE PRINCESS! WOULD YOU..

I'D LOVE TO! BUT I'VE GOT THESE TAKE AWAY FISH & CHIPS NOW! YOU SEE

SHIT! I'VE SPILT KETCHUP ON MY CVMt & 00M.



SPOT THE POLIOWINT COMBiMAIM  
TottETHEft OH  
1ACKY STHANGEU  
t CHILE CT HUNTS  
TOR BEE AS Qd?x|

## DAVID TOWNSEND

Terry Urbahn's installation *Cult* at Teststrip appears to be a parody of an ethnographic documentary, pathologising the pratfalls and pathetic miserablisms of the suburban condition. Availing himself of the cultural authority of the social anthropologist (or social apologist), Urbahn's project investigates the rock 'n' roll mythos of popular youth cults, cribbed in the glib sloganese of tabloid journalism and the "pretty vacant" aesthetic (in)sensibility of punk, creating a seismographic register of the phantom tremors of a Taranaki Zeitgeist. Confined to this limbo of white trash mythology the game is to see "how low can you go"? Right down to the "bogan basement."

*Cult* operates within the psychic economy of the teen neurotic, engaged in the tragi-comic tribulations of existential crisis. The primal scene of these Oedipal Wrecks parallels the scenario of the proverbial "banana at a clockwork orange convention"...just because you're paranoid doesn't mean people aren't talking about you. Pop psych, ioi truisms ("I eat because I'm upset, I'm upset because I eat") are conflated with the diaristic particulars, dreams, and libidinal cathexes of *Tracey's World*.

These bathetic kismet psychodramas ("I bought a ring today and one day I hope to give it to my boyfriend") have a phantasmal logic that suspends the mechanisms of classic narrative, allowing the subjects a floating valency: to be in a state of 'perhaps'. Strategies of intertextual readings (or hypertextual lateral readings, to co-opt the Internet phraseology) between the anecdotal narrative and the lay quotations of Scientology, hermeneutic and architectural theory, erase the concept of closure.

*Cult's* representation of sporting and musical luminaries along with anonymous also-rans, tends to show de-subjectivised stereotypes, disavowing agency but promoting desire — to inhabit the hallucination of the other, the *Alien Space*, an exorcism or paralysis of uniqueness.

Urbahn adopts the contingencies of the Dada lottery, the touristic psychogeography of the Colombia Hotel video and emphasises the found object. These latter are susceptible to being seen as fulfillments of the unconscious, whose manner of being objectified is by substitution and metaphor: the purloined letter of a streetkid named 'Desire'.

The anecdotal fictions of *Cult* are quasi-metaphoric. The metaphor is a sign without content, the symbolic process is one that designates a distance from meaning. *Cult's* hermeneutical circle of philology reduces the meaning of being to an etymology of being. The determination of the truth of being passes through the detour of a tropic system of rhetorical pluralism.

Terry Urbahn is a "mid art populist, and a postmodern Buddhist casually surfing his way through the chaos of the late 20th Century."

*All quotes from Alien Space, a catalogue for the artist's project of the same name, Terry Urbahn, 1995.\**

## KAI JENSEN

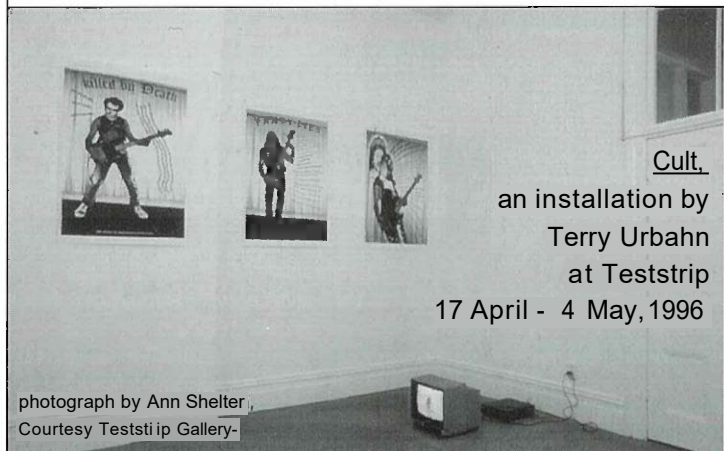
Art this big can never be bad, if you're a gallery manager. The three works in the *Diaspora* trilogy are about nine metres wide, four high. They're made up of canvasboards, each whole presenting a jumble of painted images and text. The largest images are gloomy and grotesque: a crucified Christ, a cluster of shaved heads that suggest concentration camp inmates looking down into a grave.

Routinely postmodern, Tillers' works mingle the painter's own images and text with quotation from other artists, predominantly the later McCahon and a transcript of Bjorn Norgaard's and Henning Christiansen's performance *Manresa Aktion* (1966). With the *Diaspora* pieces are exhibited 'smaller' works, plus some of the original paintings that Tillers quotes, a display of sketches for *Manresa Aktion* and a video about the performance. There's another video where Tillers discusses these recent paintings. It all supports the claim to place the *Diaspora* paintings 'in context'.

Do I want them explained, however? Fragment-work like this is sometimes better left cloaked in its small mysteries. Then I can imagine sources for the fragments that are of less debatable significance than *Manresa Aktion*. The McCahon, unfortunately, can't be cloaked. For a New Zealander, quoting *The Blessed Virgin Compared to a Jug of Pure Water* is like quoting the *Mona Lisa*: banal.

McCahon brought us the text as painting, and mostly used a source with great cultural resonance, namely, the King James version of the Bible. He kept the quotations few, sought to integrate them into the paintings. The risk of postmodern text-art for a painter like Tillers is its deceptive freedom: the freedom to spray language all over the wall, not realizing that this, too, requires skill.

Unfortunately Tillers includes his own writing, and much of it is strained or, at best, dull. His choice of textual fragments and their positioning, whether his own or from other sources, is seldom felicitous.





Imants Tillers, Diasporajn Conte>ct  
Waikato Museum of Art and History,  
15 March - 5 May 1996

THEIR JESUSES ARE ALWAYS DREAMING  
THEIR JESUS IS LITHUANIAN  
THE SWEET JESUS OF THE ROADSIDES  
BROWN ROOMS

Good day, where are you going?  
To paradise.

Those last two, portentous lines stifle any interest in the transition from Jesus images to "brown rooms". Artworks don't recover from attacks of dullness like this. The short quip "NKVD- DEATH OF THE AUTHOR" beneath a sketch of Stalin, Barthes or no, is idle Gothic. Compare the force of Biblical language in these lines from McCahon:

WE HAVE MADE A  
COVENANT WITH  
DEATH AND  
WITH HELL ARE  
AT AGREEMENT

That syntactic progression, from perfect active to present passive, makes quite a period, but the distinction between this and his own writing is evidently lost on Tillers. I'm not saying it's good to quote McCahon quoting the Bible, either. Biblical texts sort of worked for him at that time. Re-quoted by Tillers, though, what power was there is dissipated. We're left with canvases broadcasting old modernism at us like banked video monitors.\*



Chinese Whispers, a new short  
film by Stuart McKenzie and Neil  
Pardington, premiered at the  
Festival of the Arts, Wellington

Cantonese Opera performers  
Rosemary Jones and Jennyanna  
Reade. Photo, Mark Graham,  
courtesy MAP Film Productions.

## TONY LEE

There's a marked aversion among the second-generation Chinese I know against jumping onto the PC 'I'm a victim' bandwagon. For a start, most of the settled Asians in Aotearoa are too middle-class to justifiably claim the dignity-in-suffering that belongs to the poor. And those that aren't are busy studying hard for exams, without the time to run down the streets screaming anarchy. Being a rebel in immigrant Chinese terms is not too much different from drinking too much and smoking a little pot in the privacy of your own bedroom. On the other hand, we have an enduring and rich culture to take pride in, including not least of all the martial arts movie. Anyone who's kept up with the Hong Kong film industry will know that kung fu was mixed with a heavy dose of the American mafia gangster image long ago, and the Hong Kong look, if not the fighting style, seems to have captured the imagination of New Zealand directors Stuart McKenzie and Neil Pardington in their short film *Chinese Whispers*, a quasi-potted *Pulp Fiction* that attempts to speak meaningfully about racism, family issues, extortion, and the evils of a gang that looks suspiciously like the Triad. And all in only fifteen minutes.

Partly it's this anxious desire to address such a large agenda in such a short time that lets *Chinese Whispers* down; overburdened, the film fails to entertain and merely whinges, which is the worst stance for a film dealing with what is becoming by the day a crucial national issue. Poor Vincent Chan is alienated from his father's cultural world on the one hand ("Vincent's ashamed of being Chinese"), and is obviously outside of pakeha culture on the other hand. Adrift in the lonely world of Urbania, relating more to video arcade machines than his 'own' Chinese culture (in the form of his Old World father), Vincent finds a form of brotherhood in the friendship of a local Triad-style gang that steers him away from what is 'right' and inexorably towards (you guessed it) Trouble. In the context of the film Trouble means hard drugs and loose women, involvement in an extortion ring and the wrong kind of crowd, and the eventual painful run-in with a group of street-wandering punks. But the real trouble in the film is the predictable soap-opera style denouement: the stiff silent over-puppetized reconciliation between father and son that should really only be seen at the end of those cloying American sitcoms.

Such sincerity would not seem so artificial in the right context, but the film's inheritance of Hong Kong 'hip' makes for a confusing and contrary juxtaposition. Not understanding that the street metaphors of one film culture translate only with difficulty to another, the directors mix cartoon tuff with a heavy-handed and stylised moralism.

It's like Bruce Lee meets Hollywood formula schmaltz (which is, as a matter of fact, the present state of Hong Kong television), and the pairing is uncomfortable at best. *Chinese Whispers* loses the plot, drowning in dreams borrowed from another movie industry, while making only a cursory attempt to connect its concerns with the state of the immigrant condition in New Zealand.\*

Margreta Chance looks into Kate Small's painting *You're Next* which won the recent ASA Ida Eise Award. Small's drawing *The Pamela Chronicles* is on the cover of this month's *monica*.

Titled *You're Next*, Small's painting speaks ironically and directly to the viewer, forcing us to contemplate a domestic scene in terms of our own life. What is this scene? A baby, almost a toddler, is sitting on the floor, front on, exploring the possibility of enfold-ing a piece of cardboard under and over its body. Nearby a caregiver stands side on, directing her gaze away from the child, towards a family pet, a dog. These three occupants are in an interior domestic space, which is symbolised by a front loading washing machine and a dryer.

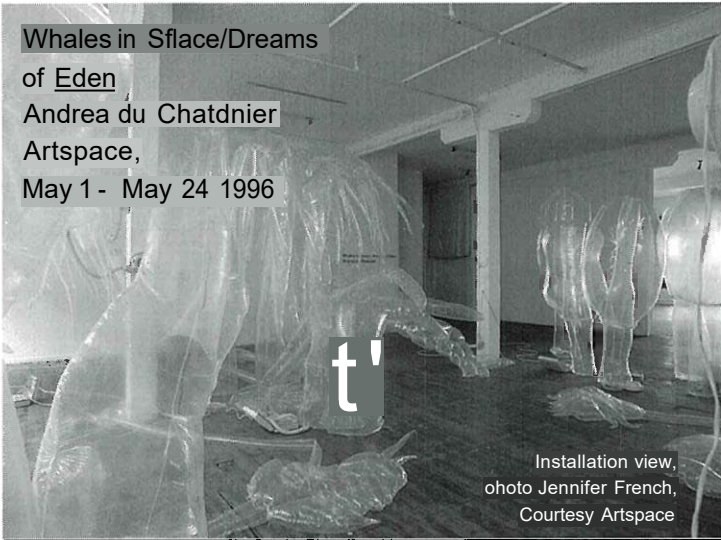
The interior is stylised. It's recognisable but non-specific. It's everyone's place with everyone's mod cons. The three occupants are enclosed and anchored into its inescapable domesticity. The psychological weight of its interminable endlessness can be seen and felt in the way all three figures are embedded in an expanse of floor and wall that has no end and no beginning. There are no windows or doors, telephones or fax machines. We are witnessing the total, all encompassing, inescapable responsibility of being a caregiver.

Small is painting a study of relationships. We are viewing an interdependent trio whose lives are inextricably bound together at this moment. Nevertheless, Small has chosen to freeze the frame at the point when the trio, while sharing a physical space, are self-contained, and not actively connected. The baby is totally absorbed in exploratory play, the dog is sitting observant but passive, and the caregiver has a brief moment to reflect and relax into herself.

This painted moment echoes an underlying subtext in Small's work. The isolation and disconnectedness within the nuclear and solo parent family. Regardless of our world's complex and sophisticated communication systems, once at home, caregivers and children are boxed into their separate space with no access to the community. In this way we are faced with a cultural double bind — privacy that excludes community and refuge that includes entrapment.

Small's interior landscape engages the imagination immediately, and draws us into a drama that forces us to question a potent mix of needs and how we meet them. The need to nurture and be nurtured, to love and be loved, and the need to belong and to have a place of one's own."

Whales in Space/Dreams of Eden  
Andrea du Chatenier  
Artspace,  
May 1 - May 24 1996



Installation view,  
photo Jennifer French,  
Courtesy Artspace

Since fashion is in for this issue of *monica*, it may be appropriate to begin a review of Andrea du Chatenier's absorbing installation *Whales in Space/Dreams of Eden* at the point of its deployment of kitsch. Is anyone other than me annoyed at the cosy ways in which residues of 'the sixties' and 'the seventies' are appropriated with little awareness of the appropriator's own position in time and of the instantly dated nature of more 'contemporary' phenomena? *Whales in Space*, however, uses its kitsch in an infinitely more intelligent and critical way, as both a point of departure and a historicising anchor. 'Anchor', though, is too strong a word, because here the historicising does not so much tie the work to a particular point in time as suggest that it has some (any, BYO) origin other than the pre-historical Eden of Genesis. Because the Eden offered here is not an originary one, but a discovered one, the alien Eden encountered in science fiction and TV dream sequences, encounters which, in TV-land, trigger off moments of alterity or self-examination in the visitor.

The kitsch pieces that form the installation's point of departure are pink carry-case hair-drier sets. Linked by scattered arterial cords to power-points, they breathe air into large, intricate, and un-kitsch figures sewn from clear plastic, which, according to warnings printed along the edges, 'may cling to nostrils to prevent breathing. This bag is not a toy.' The air and the plastic give shape to displaced images of krill, squid, anemones, and blunt coral growths. Transparent, intricate trilobites crouch frozen in mid-scuttle. Air escaping almost imperceptibly from the seams makes the figures move slightly, swaying to the *National Geographic* whale-song playing on an elderly turntable near the middle of the floor, which lends the installation an aura of museum-like loftiness. The whale-song is unintelligible, but you know it's communicative. There's a parallel to this in the inchoate 'aliveness' of the marine life here: in its intricacy and accuracy it's quite recognisable, but in its transparency and hesitant mobility it's disquietingly other.

Du Chatenier's dream of Eden associates itself with a wide range of constructions of Eden and nature, and evocatively disturbs these heights with its nagging eeriness. And, in Artspace, the dream is given a Keatsian frame of preciousness by proximity to wakefulness: when you stand back against the wall to survey the whole thing, you can't help noticing the buses and other unrequited traffic smoking in the terminal outside the window. \$

# JIM SPEERS

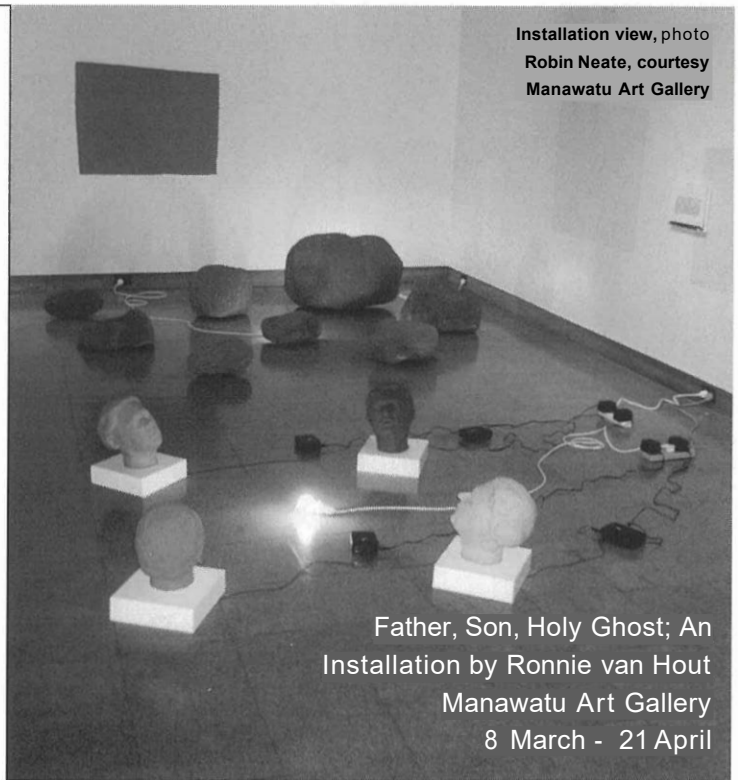
In 1979, in a galaxy not far from our own, a young Jedi used the force, navigating through the canyons of the Death Star to fire bomb the Empire's pride and joy. An awards ceremony is held back on friendly soil, in a centre that would have made Albert Speer a happy man. The difference between good and evil, like that of father and son, is a scripting necessity. The organised rows of fresh rebels recede out of the camera's range. Despite the best efforts of Darth Vader, the Stormtroopers, (although sartorially fine), go on to fail for another two movies.

A small spread of disparate objects lie across the gallery's floor. A framed portrait of Hitler is placed against a wall facing a Starwars poster. Both images have the radiance of food falling on carpet. Gutted by replication, Adolf's methods are fictionalised, placed in the same category as light-sabre combat, socially damaging like Princess Leia's hairstyle. The Nazi decorative touch is repeated in paving-stone sized concrete slabs placed between the images. One bears a swastika, another the SS monicker and another the comic book death, Urghh!

The teenager described in Van Hout's catalogue has taken a break, frustrated in his attempts to make the bedroom an accurate reflection of his personality. The remaining possessions reflect points of passing obsession. Agony aunt letters are pasted to the walls of the gallery. Placed near the signs of Nazidom they offer a strange parallel to the incarcerated's writing provided to visitors of concentration camp sites. Information scarcely consumable in its horror is drawn into a relationship with writing ostracised for its banality.

In a loose circle, four casts of the artist's head face inward. Earphones embedded within their latex skins are connected to walkmans which play muffled karaoke. Similar in appearance and materials to Bruce Nauman's hung and butted heads, these fellows lack the Nauman theatrical staging and paranoia-inducing anonymity. Like the fake rocks that rest alongside they seem more likely the possible remnants of a misguided craft enthusiasm. Imbued with all the loving care of a poured-plaster Tobermory, Nauman's desire to produce sculpture that "neither bears the hand of its maker nor of the lack of it" looks possible.

For a work that is constructed in shrugging gestures, the installation contains a range of paths to read within. Strings of connections, all various and possibly contradictory in their final shape are generated. Memory is tripped and meaning emerges, but a red Walkman remains a red Walkman, excluding metaphor. The global availability of a Chewie doll, apart from ensuring cultural apocalypse, may provide enjoyable shared experience. The storylines at least, were around way before the invention of plastic, y



Installation view, photo  
Robin Neate, courtesy  
Manawatu Art Gallery

Father, Son, Holy Ghost; An  
Installation by Ronnie van Hout  
Manawatu Art Gallery  
8 March - 21 April

Dear *monica*,

Further to Gregory Adamson's commentary on the debut exhibition at In House, I thought some clarification was needed.


In House is an art space inside my home. In House is an ongoing project that is involved in an alternative and experimental mode of exhibition practice, outside the mainstream institutional and commercial gallery structures. Exhibitions occur roughly once a month and usually have a duration of two or three hours.

The mentioned debut exhibition on the 9th of December 1995 featured work by John Collins, Toby Curnow, Simon Ingram, Ani O'Neil, Reuben Paterson, David Southard and Dion Workman.

Other exhibitions so far this year have been by Janet Shanks (24/2/96), Billy Apple (23/3/96) and Jan van der Ploeg (21/4/96). Other exhibitions planned for later in the year include another curated group show, as well as solo exhibitions by Simon Ingram, Sophie Coombs, Lydia Elliott and Stella Brennan.

For more information please write to: Toby Curnow, c/o, P.O. BOX 90796, Victoria Street, Auckland.

Yours Sincerely

Toby Curnow  
Coordinator of In House. 

*monica* welcomes letters from readers.

LETTERS



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Bccomjl an &x.pvt .Hais is the. best k/ir\c course m MZ-. Call damts re. July start.

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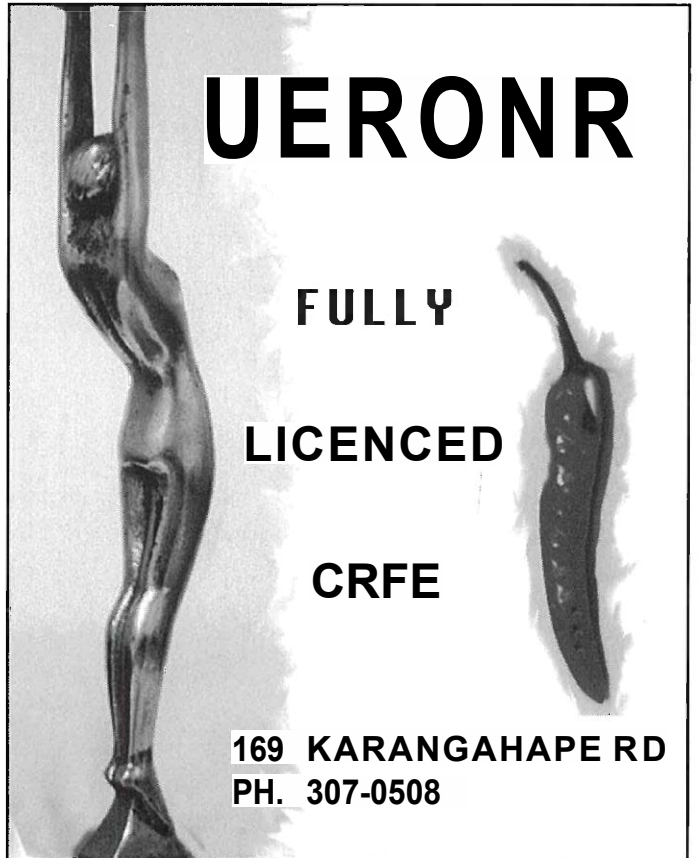
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In its 115 years of history, the CSA Gallery has moved with the needs of each generation in order to position itself with relevance in the cultural context of Christchurch.

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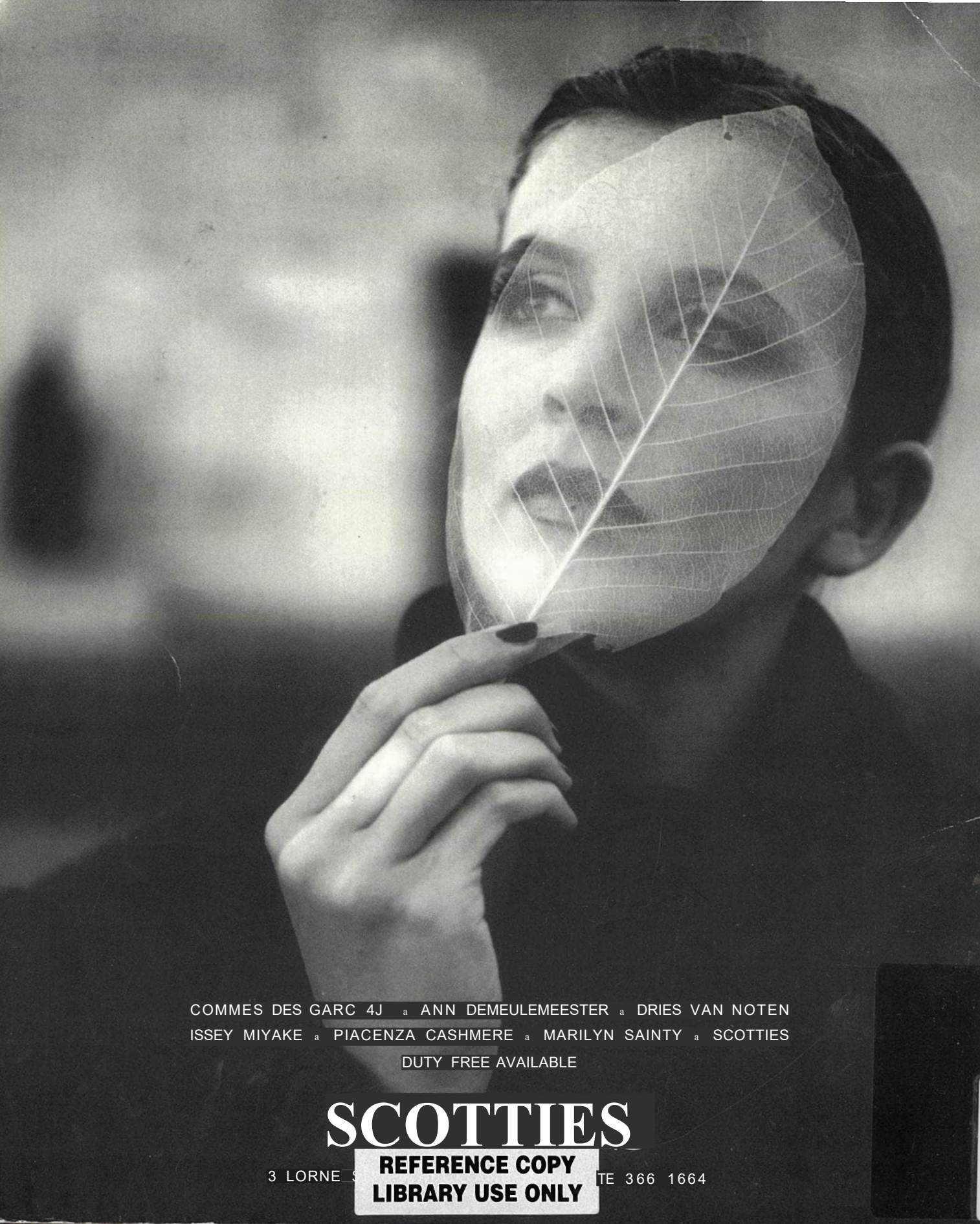
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