

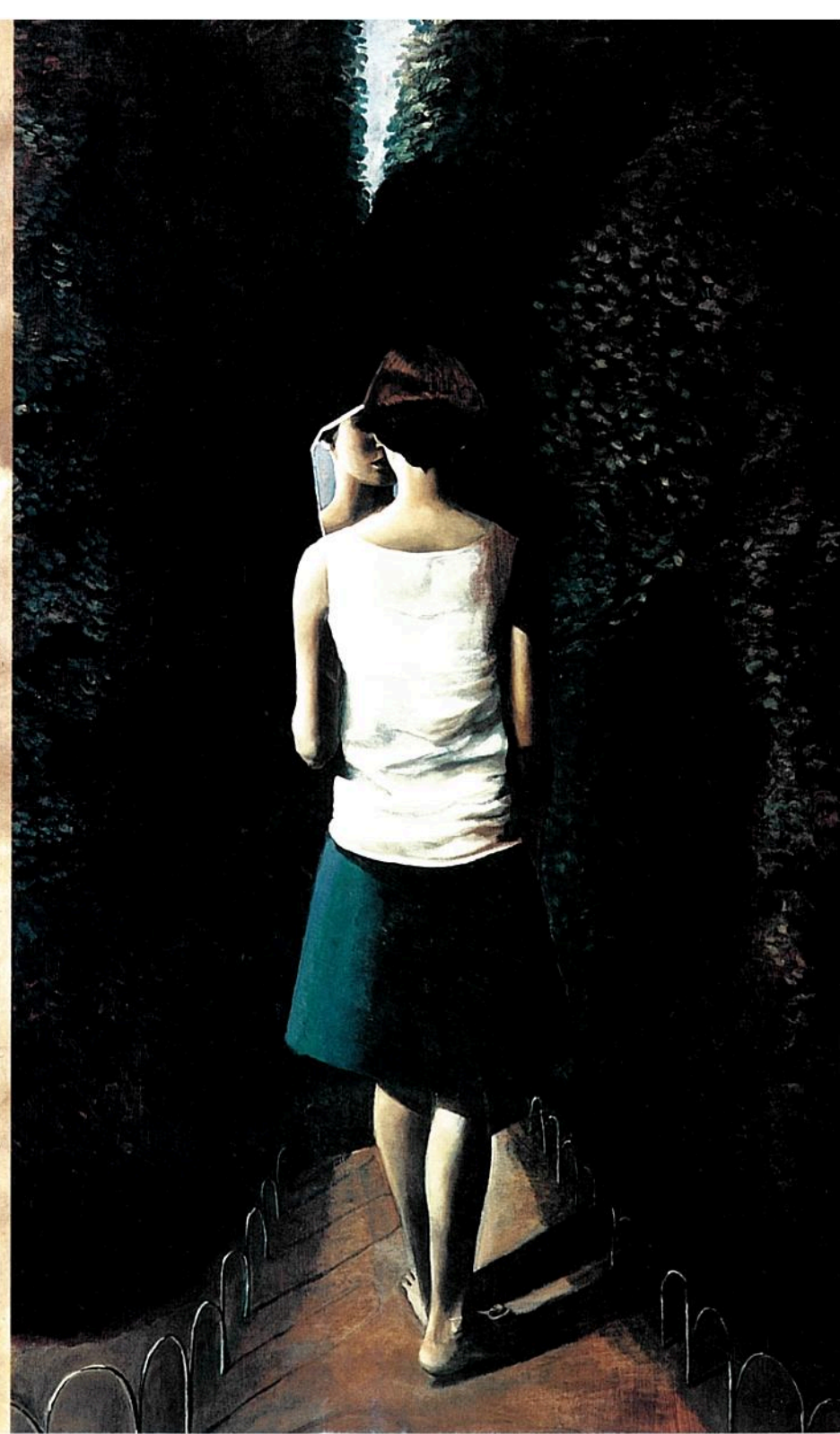


C·A·S·T

*An
Exotic
Otherness*

Crossing Brisbane Lines

C·A·S·T



An Exotic Otherness
Crossing Brisbane Lines

This exhibition is sponsored by the Gordon Darling Foundation and Australian Air Express, in conjunction with QANTAS.

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Cover: ANNE WALLACE
In Retrospect, 1994
Cat. no. 22

An Exotic Otherness
Crossing Brisbane Lines



A n E x o t i c O t h e r n e s s

Crossing Brisbane Lines

RACHEL APELT

RICHARD BELL

LEONARD BROWN

STEPHEN NOTHLING

BRUCE REYNOLDS

LUKE ROBERTS

JANIS SOMERVILLE

RODNEY SPOONER

KATARINA VESTERBERG

ANNE WALLACE

JUDITH WRIGHT

CURATOR - BARBARA TUCKERMAN

Foreword

I approached Barbara Tuckerman to curate *An Exotic Otherness Crossing Brisbane Lines* because I had seen and been impressed by several of Barbara's exhibitions when she was Director of the Wollongong City Gallery, prior to her move to Brisbane. My instinct that she was the best person for the job has been fully justified for she has curated and co-ordinated what I am confident will prove to be a landmark exhibition.

Why has Contemporary Art Services Tasmania (C.A.S.T.), a Tasmanian based organisation after all, initiated an exhibition of contemporary Brisbane art? Three reasons. Tasmania's status as an island, isolated and cut off from the mainland, is deeply felt by both artists and audiences here. C.A.S.T. is the major contemporary visual arts organisation for the State and a vital part of our role is to act as a bridge between Tasmania and the mainland. C.A.S.T. brings in exhibitions of work by mainland artists and sends out shows which focus on or include Tasmanian artists. We generally tour nationally both the incoming and the outgoing shows we have initiated. (*C.A.S.T. Touring* is the Tasmanian arm of NETS, the National Exhibitions Touring Scheme.)

An Exotic Otherness Crossing Brisbane Lines corresponds with C.A.S.T.'s policy of enlivening and providing inspiration to the local scene by providing audiences and artists in Tasmania with the opportunity to see the best, most interesting contemporary art being produced in other regions of Australia. There are interesting parallels between the current Brisbane and Tasmanian visual arts scene: art produced outside of major centres like Melbourne and Sydney often tends to be regarded as peripheral, outside of mainstream concerns. The diversity and broad spectrum of concerns - political, social, personal, aesthetic - evident in the range of works selected for *An Exotic Otherness* illustrates that the whole question of contextualising art according to where in Australia it is produced is to a large extent irrelevant to considerations of meaning and excellence.

Meaningfulness and excellence were in fact the curatorial criteria for selecting artists for this exhibition; Barbara Tuckerman chose from the outset to operate unhampered by a curatorial thesis. I venture to say, although Michele Helmrich's essay for this catalogue may prove me wrong, that few similarities, if any, exist between the eleven artists in this exhibition.

That, I believe, is the point. Brisbane is currently producing artists whose art is centred around a personal vision, personal passions even, rather than fashionable ideas or current trends, so Brisbane is indeed a vital centre of contemporary Australian art. Another similarity with Tasmania.

Victoria Hammond Director C.A.S.T.

Introduction

A journey, one hopes, will become its own justification, will assume patterns, reveal its possibilities - reveal, even, its layers of meaning - as one goes along trusting to chance, to instinct, to hunch. Journeys undertaken in this spirit - acknowledging, that is, the obscurity of the impulses that have provoked them - resemble a work of the imagination; a piece of fiction, say.¹

An Exotic Otherness is an exhibition initiated by Contemporary Art Services Tasmania for their interstate touring program. It has been sub-titled *Crossing Brisbane Lines*, though perhaps *Mexicans Awake!* could have served equally. Brisbane is gaining recognition as a vigorous and thriving centre of contemporary art practice as cultural perceptions expand and borders diminish, a situation similarly enjoyed by Tasmania. C.A.S.T.'s project is both timely and laudable in nurturing our own visual arts industry by opening up new audiences and territories for contemporary art practitioners, thus developing our sense of a cultural identity. I recall John McDonald writing during the Bicentennial year "*We first have to be able to see ourselves before submitting to the gaze of others*".²

The exhibition title is somewhat playful, inspired by an Australian curatorial focus on other cultures, other regions, in search of otherness, exotica, or perhaps, curatorial coups. The Queensland Art Gallery's First Asia-Pacific Triennial was truly inspirational as it manifested genuine curatorial interest in a cultural and intellectual interchange with regions previously overlooked in terms of contemporary art.

As curator I endeavoured to explore contemporary art practice in Brisbane within the constraints of organizing an exhibition suitable for a variety of touring venues. Installation-based work and sculpture, unfortunately, could not be considered; thus, *An Exotic Otherness* does not claim to be a survey. Rather than present the artists with a curatorial theme for them to illustrate, they had the freedom to produce work for the exhibition which reflected their visions, work processes and respective philosophies/ideologies. It is important artists are empowered to determine the direction and nature of their work, as I believe they are the prophets and the visionaries who should not have imposed on them production-line, theory-driven exhibition programs.

For those interested in pursuing conceptions of regionalism/difference, *An Exotic Otherness* offers a starting point, among other things. Whilst director of Wollongong City Gallery (1986-1991) I became especially aware of these issues, for Illawarra artists worked in geographic proximity to Sydney, yet were distanced from that centre by metropolitan indifference to work produced beyond city perimeters/parameters.

An Exotic Otherness should redress any lingering perceptions that Brisbane's visual arts culture is peripheral and locate this sub-tropical city as a vital component of Australian cultural life. The disparate work of the eleven artists in the exhibition encapsulates a fresh vision and spirit which perhaps underscores any belief in the value of regionalism. "*All we have to begin with are stray enigmatic images, evanescent scraps of feeling and intuition, which unite to create an intimation of possibility*".³ Naipaul's sentiments express my approach to curating *An Exotic Otherness*, to seek that "intimation of possibility". And that is how my journey of discovery began.

In *Rachel Apelt's* mixed media installation, which incorporates innumerable materials and techniques, she explores the Judeo-Christian preoccupation with linear time - Alpha/Omega - and the danger inherent in a cultural anticipation of an End Time.

Urban Aboriginal artist (Kamilaroi language group) *Richard Bell* uses traditional and Western processes with humour and irony to address contemporaneous interests. The contemplative paintings of *Leonard Brown* resonate with a spiritual integrity in

both his installation, *Kyrie Eleison*, and the barely there, *Boat*. Baudelaire's 'L' 'Invitation au voyage' motivated *Stephen Notthing's* paintings *Luxe, calme et volupté*: "*La, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, Luxe, calme et volupté*".⁴ The combination of scale and imaginary flora in his triptych creates an atmosphere of menacing ambiguity.

Linoleum on ply is utilized by *Bruce Reynolds* as historical maps of human culture. "*...they form cross references and short circuits - connections between modernist style, quotations of the quoted, corruptions, culture by association, displacement, surrogates...*".⁵

Luke Roberts manipulates form and meaning via treasured trash and local junk shop discoveries in assemblages which offer ephemeral desirability and surprising poignancy. Since her childhood *Janis Somerville's* life has been inextricably linked to the horse, which she employs in her work as metaphor for the psyche, nature and woman.

Rodney Spooner works with cement cast in corrugated cardboard. He also works with large-scale installation. His interest is in the man-made environment and in analysis of the sum of the whole. He considers the works reflect simultaneously both order and disruption.

The sociological aspects of science and history have a strong bearing on the work of *Katarina Vesterberg*. She prefers to retain a certain mystery about her work process and is interested in human identification with, and comprehension of, specific sites, incorporating her own images - photography - and collected material.

Anne Wallace abhors glib art-speak and believes "*when you speak about it, painting disappears*". Because figurative art is seen as readily accessible, Wallace considers the object is subordinated to the text. She would like viewers to construct their own meaning from her paintings.

Judith Wright's words *...memory trace ... echo mute ... to ear unbending ...* address her sombre, evocative work on paper and book, both titled *echo your caress*, in this exhibition. An intense personal vision is conveyed by the artist and succeeds in propelling the viewer into other realms.

I thank the many artists whose work I viewed; the Queensland Artworkers Alliance Inc; the writer, Michele Helmrich, whose Brisbane background adds an essential quality to the project; the Director of Contemporary Art Services Tasmania, Victoria Hammond. Her original idea created this exciting opportunity for Brisbane artists, interstate and Brisbane audiences, and for me as curator.

It was a pleasure to work with everyone involved in *An Exotic Otherness Crossing Brisbane Lines*, especially the participating artists whom I thank wholeheartedly.

Barbara Tuckerman Curator

1 & 3 Shiva Naipaul, from the author's notebook, *The Spectator*, 1988.

2 John McDonald, "Issues in Contemporary Australian Art", *Art and Australia*, Spring Issue 1988

4 Baudelaire, *Selected Poems* translated and introduced by Joanna Richardson, Penguin Books, 1975 "*There, all is loveliness and harmony. Enchantment, pleasure and serenity*".

5 Bruce Reynolds, "Congoleum", 1992.

R A C H E L A P E L T

Rachel Apelt was born in Brisbane in 1964. She received a Diploma of Arts from the Queensland College of Art in 1984. Since 1989, she has participated in several group and five individual exhibitions in contemporary art spaces in Brisbane including one at the Institute of Modern Art in 1994.

During this time she has also worked on several projects and residencies including one for the ACTU, Queensland, and two other residencies for the Brisbane Ethnic Music and Arts Centre. She has executed commissions for the Queensland Teachers' Union, Griffith University Faculty of Law and Ipswich Girls' Grammar School.

In 1993, Apelt received an Arts Queensland Project Grant and was awarded First Prize, Painting, in the Inaugural Ormiston College National Art Awards. She serves on the Boards of Inkahoots Inc. and the Queensland Artworkers Alliance Inc.

Apelt lives in Brisbane and works part-time at Inkahoots, a graphic design and arts studio.

COLLECTIONS

Griffith University, Brisbane

University College of Southern Queensland

Ipswich City Art Gallery

RACHEL APELT
'X' (Detail), 1994
Cat. no. 1



R I C H A R D B E L L

Richard Bell was born in Charleville in 1953. He is a member of the Kamilaroi tribe. Since 1990 he has participated in a number of group exhibitions including *Balance 1990: Views, Visions, Influences* (Queensland Art Gallery, 1990); *Flash Pictures* (National Gallery of Australia, 1990/91); *Unfamiliar Territory* (Adelaide Biennial, 1991); *Ninth Biennale of Sydney, 1992/93*; *Australian Perspecta* (Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1993); *Aratjara: Art of the first Australians* (Dusseldorf, London, Humelbaek, National Gallery of Victoria, 1993/94); *Australian Aboriginal Art* (Bomani Gallery, San Francisco, 1993); *Been, Gone, Is* (Boomalii Aboriginal Artists' Cooperative, Sydney, 1993); *Reference Point I, II, III* (Queensland Art Gallery, 1991/94); *Stories* (Kerava Museum, Helsinki, 1994); *True Colours* (Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool, South London Gallery, The City Gallery, Leicester, UK, 1994).

Individual exhibitions include *Aboriginal* Crisis* Live* (Institute of Modern Art, 1992); *Pretty: Serious* (Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville, 1992); and a series of *Prospectus* exhibitions at Armadale Aboriginal Keeping Place and Museum, Moree Plains Gallery, Fire-Works Gallery, Brisbane and Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide, 1994.

Bell has executed a number of commissions including QANTAS Postcard, 1993; ACTU Banner 1993; Queensland Art Gallery prints, posters, postcards 1992, Art Monthly cover 1992 and the Queensland Indigenous Committee for Visual Arts poster, 1992.

In 1993, Bell was the recipient of the National Aboriginal Art Award at the Gold Coast Arts Centre. He has also received a Professional Development Grant, Arts Queensland 1991; Australia Council Project Grants in 1992 and 1993 and a Fellowship from Arts Queensland in 1993/94.

Bell currently lives in Brisbane and paints full-time.

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Australia

National Gallery of Victoria

Art Gallery of New South Wales

Queensland Art Gallery

University Art Museum, The University of Queensland

Griffith University, Brisbane

NSW Aboriginal Legal Service

Townsville Aboriginal & Islander Media Association

City of London

City of Auckland

City of Kobe

City of Japan

Gold Coast Council

Flinders University

Suncorp

Qantas

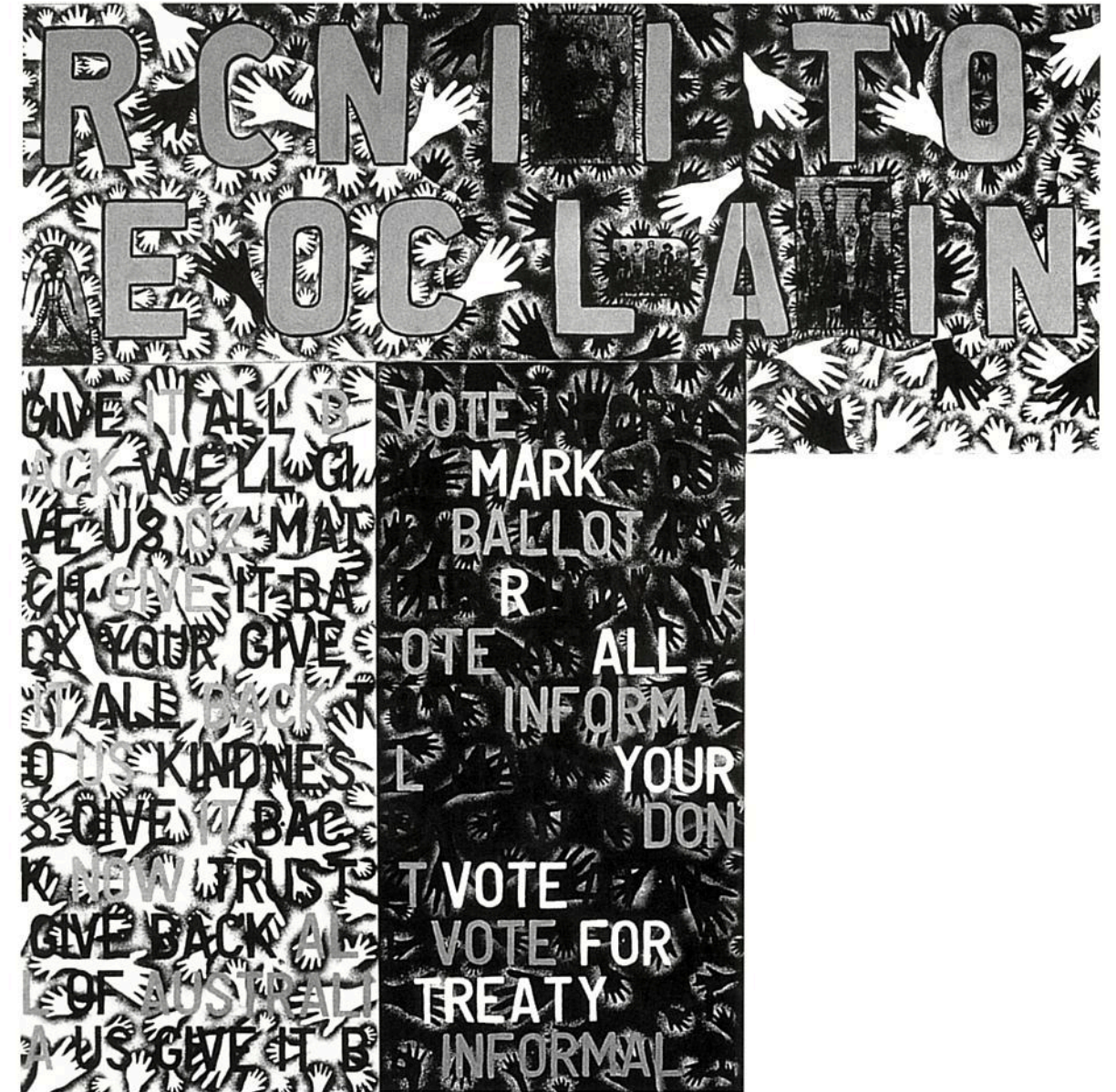
Moree Plains Shire Council

Pat Corrigan

RICHARD BELL

Options, 1994

Cat. no. 2



L E O N A R D B R O W N

Leonard Brown was born in Brisbane in 1949. He is a priest-monk of the Orthodox church. His extensive overseas travels over two decades include trips to Papua New Guinea, USA, Italy, France, Great Britain, Greece and Turkey. He regards his journey to Arnhem Land as highly significant.

Individual exhibitions include The Design Arts Centre, Brisbane (1968) and from the mid 1980s onwards, shows with the Painters' Gallery (Sydney), Niagara Galleries (Melbourne), Garry Anderson (Sydney), Deutscher Brunswick Street (Melbourne), Mori Annex and Mori Gallery (Sydney). In 1993 he participated in *Approaches to the Sublime* at the Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney.

Brown lives and paints in Brisbane.

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Australia

Art Gallery of South Australia

Artbank

Queensland University of Technology

Philip Morris Arts Grant Collection

National Gallery of Victoria

Art Gallery of New South Wales

Newcastle Regional Art Gallery

Gold Coast City Art Gallery

Parliament House, Canberra

LEONARD BROWN

Boat, 1993

Cat. no. 5

S T E P H E N N O T H L I N G

Stephen Nothling was born in Brisbane in 1962. He completed a Diploma of Art at the Queensland College of Art in 1983 and a Master of Arts (Visual Art) from the Queensland University of Technology in 1994.

His participation in group exhibitions includes *Right Here, Right Now* (Australia 1988 National Touring exhibition); *Balance 1990: Views, Visions, Influences* (Queensland Art Gallery); *Signs of the Times* (Queensland Art Gallery, 1991); *Australian Universities Exhibition of Visual Art* (Australian High Commission, Singapore, touring South East Asia, 1994).

Individual exhibitions, all held at Metro Arts Brisbane from 1988-1994: *Stephen Nothling's Pals, Delicatessen of Hope and Fear, Other Plants in the Bed; I See, I Repose; Violins; A Bird on a Blind Boy's Head. Other Arrangements* was mounted at the Queensland University of Technology in 1994.

In 1992, Nothling was overall winner of the National Australia Bank Award, Churchie Exhibition of Emerging Art. He was the featured Visual Artist for the 1993 concert season for the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

Nothling lives in Brisbane and is currently engaged on a ceiling installation for the foyer of Metro Arts.

COLLECTIONS

Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane

Australian National Gallery

Art Gallery of New South Wales

Metro Arts Gallery

Power Gallery, University of Sydney

University of Tasmania

Warrnambool Civic Art Gallery

Queensland Art Gallery

STEPHEN NOTHLING
Luxe, calme et volupté, 1994
(panel - volupté)
Cat. no. 6



B R U C E R E Y N O L D S

Bruce Reynolds was born in Canberra in 1955. His early studies were at the Canberra School of Art and the Victorian College of the Arts (1974-77). He subsequently completed a Diploma of Education (Melbourne State College, 1978) and a Post Graduate Diploma, Painting, at the Canberra School of Art, 1982.

Reynolds has travelled extensively, to Asia, Europe and North Africa and, later, studying major art collections in Austria, Belgium, England, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary and Italy. In 1989, he studied and worked in New York with artist, Marian Drew, at the Visual Arts/Craft Board studio in Greene Street.

Reynolds has participated in several group shows including a collaborative installation with Marian Drew in Brisbane and Kassel, Germany. Individual exhibitions include regular shows with Michael Milburn, Brisbane.

Reynolds lives in Brisbane and lectures part-time in the Photography Department of the Queensland College of Art. He was recently awarded the Visual Arts/Craft Board studio in Los Angeles, where he will work for four months in 1995.

COLLECTIONS

Queensland University of Technology

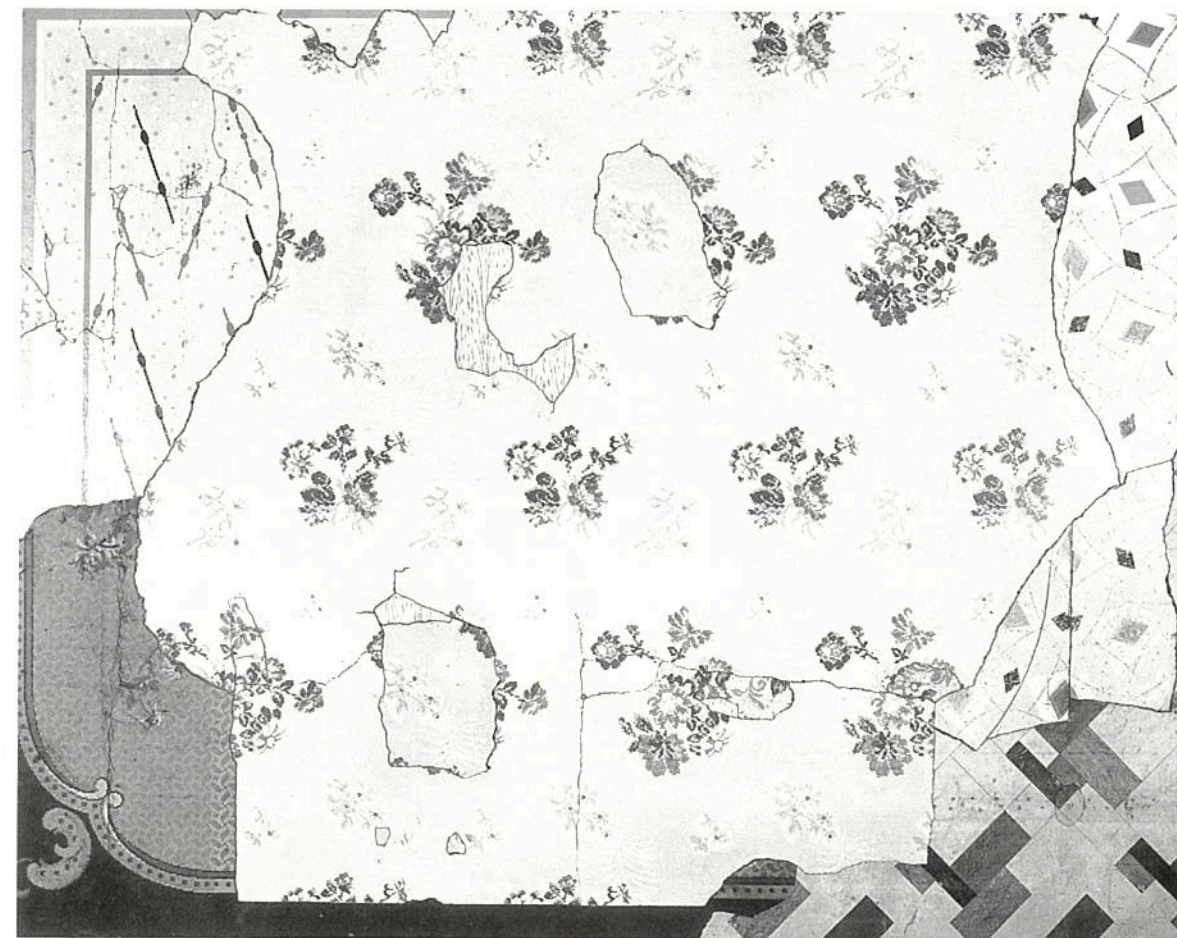
Gold Coast City Art Gallery

Artbank

Ipswich City Art Gallery

Bundaberg Art Gallery

Queensland Art Gallery



BRUCE REYNOLDS
Tribunal, 1994
Cat. no. 7

L U K E R O B E R T S

Luke Roberts was born at Alpha, Queensland in 1952. He studied at the Julian Ashton School, Sydney in 1971 and Queensland College of Art, 1972-74. Roberts was co-director of E.M.U. Experimental Artspace, Brisbane, in 1980. He lived and worked in Japan and Europe from 1984 - 87. He is co-director, with Scott Redford, of AGLASSOFWATER (1989-) and in 1993 worked as a lecturer at the Queensland University of Technology.

Roberts' career spans two decades with extensive individual and group exhibitions and projects as well as curatorial work, including *25 Years of Performance Art in Australia*, (Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney, toured nationally); *Aussemblage* (Auckland City Art Gallery, 1994, toured New Zealand); *You Are Here* (Institute of Modern Art 1992-93 toured nationally); *Luminaries, 5th Australian Sculpture Triennial* (Monash University Gallery, Melbourne); 1991 and 1995 *Australian Perspecta* (Art Gallery of New South Wales); *Salon de la Jeune Peinture* (Grand Palais, Paris, 1987); and *umama* (Stedelijk, Amsterdam 1986).

His solo exhibitions include *Pope Alice presents Luke Roberts* (Spring Hill Gallery, Brisbane, 1980); Institute of Modern Art, 1982 and various exhibitions/projects in Europe and Japan including screening and discussion of the artist's films in Hannover and Braunschweig, Germany. Roberts exhibits regularly with Bellas Gallery, Brisbane and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

Alice Jitterbug first appeared publicly at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1974 thereby launching Roberts' career as a performance artist. Roberts has made his own films and performance videos including *Pope Alice Plastik*, *Nazissus*, *Alice Springs Into Wonderland*, *The Despair of the Parrot* and *My Dress Hangs There*. In 1992 he played the role of the artist in *Bedevil* directed by Tracey Moffat. His extensive television work includes *True Stories* (Mardi Gras), ABC TV, 1994.

In 1989 he received a New Image Research Grant from the Australian Film Commission and a Premier's Encouragement Award; an Overseas Development Grant, Visual Arts/Craft Board (1991); a Project Grant, Queensland, Office of the Arts, 1991 and an Arts Queensland Fellowship (1994).

Luke Roberts is a division of the Pope Alice Corporation and currently lives and works in Vitanza City, an enclave created via necessity within Greater Brisbane in the 1970s. As a Saint, Roberts enjoys the patronage of Her Divine Holiness Pope Alice and is a consultant for the Corporation, which has expanding international interests.

COLLECTIONS

Griffith University

Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane

James Hardie Collection, State Library of Queensland

University Art Museum, The University of Queensland

Gold Coast City Art Gallery

Brisbane City Hall Art Gallery and Museum

Ipswich City Art Gallery

University of Southern Queensland

LUKE ROBERTS

WHIRLING LOGS:
(abbr. title) 1994

Cat. no. 12



JANIS SOMERVILLE

Janis Somerville was born in Melbourne in 1947. She studied part-time at the University of Queensland from 1965-86. In 1966 she gained her Certificate of Education from the Brisbane College of Advanced Education. She studied with the Australian Flying Arts School from 1971-76 and was a Board member of the School from 1975-76.

Somerville began a fifteen year teaching career in 1967. She was Education Officer at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane from 1988-90.

Since 1986 Somerville has participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions throughout Australia, in Toowoomba, Perth, Darwin, Sydney, Townsville and Brisbane.

In 1994 she was the recipient of both the Asialink Residency in Indonesia and an Arts Queensland Individual Professional Development Grant.

Somerville currently lives in Brisbane and is involved in several group exhibitions. In 1995 she will be taking up her residency at the Visual Arts/Craft Board Besozzo Studio in Italy.

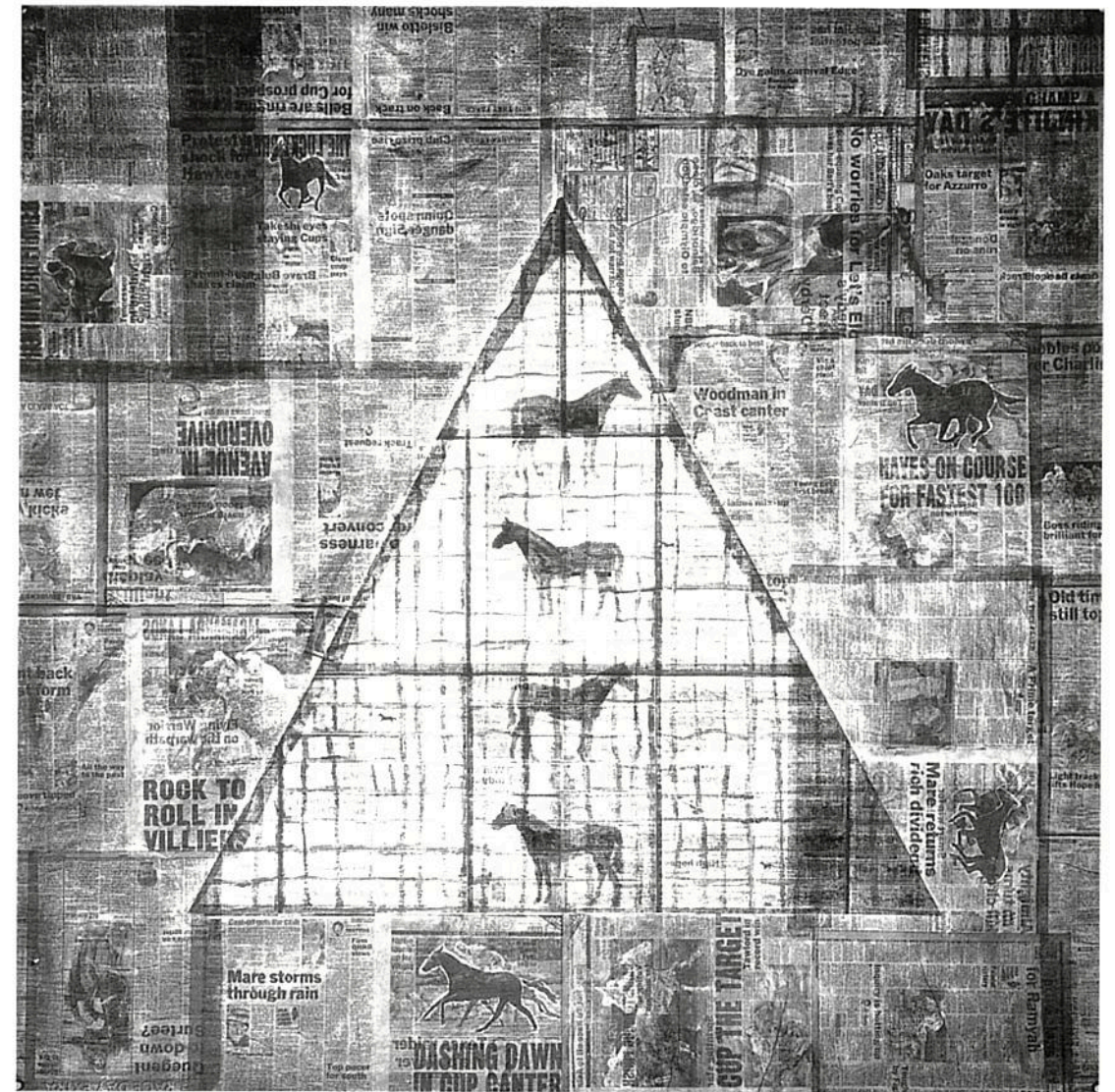
COLLECTIONS

Toowoomba City Art Gallery
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane
Brisbane City Hall Art Gallery and Museum
James Cook University, Townsville
University of Southern Queensland
Stanthorpe Art Gallery
Private and corporate collections

JANIS SOMERVILLE

Design for Self Transformation: Process I, 1994

Cat. no. 14



R O D N E Y S P O O N E R

Rodney Spooner was born in Sydney in 1962. He obtained his Bachelor of Arts, Visual Arts (Honours) from the Queensland University of Technology. Since 1989 he has participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions throughout Australia and in Pisa and Bergamo, Italy. He participated in *Primavera*, (Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney 1993) and *Australian Perspecta*, (Art Gallery of New South Wales). He exhibited in 1994 with David Pestorius Gallery, Brisbane and showed an installation, in *Flawed*, (Institute of Modern Art 1994). His work was selected for the 1994 Moët & Chandon Touring Exhibition.

In 1993 Spooner was the overall winner of the Churchie Exhibition of Emerging Art and the Kennedy Group Sculpture Prize at the Ormiston College National Art Awards. He received an individual Professional Development Program grant from Arts Queensland in 1993.

Spooner lives in Brisbane and currently teaches in the Painting Department at the Queensland University of Technology.

COLLECTIONS

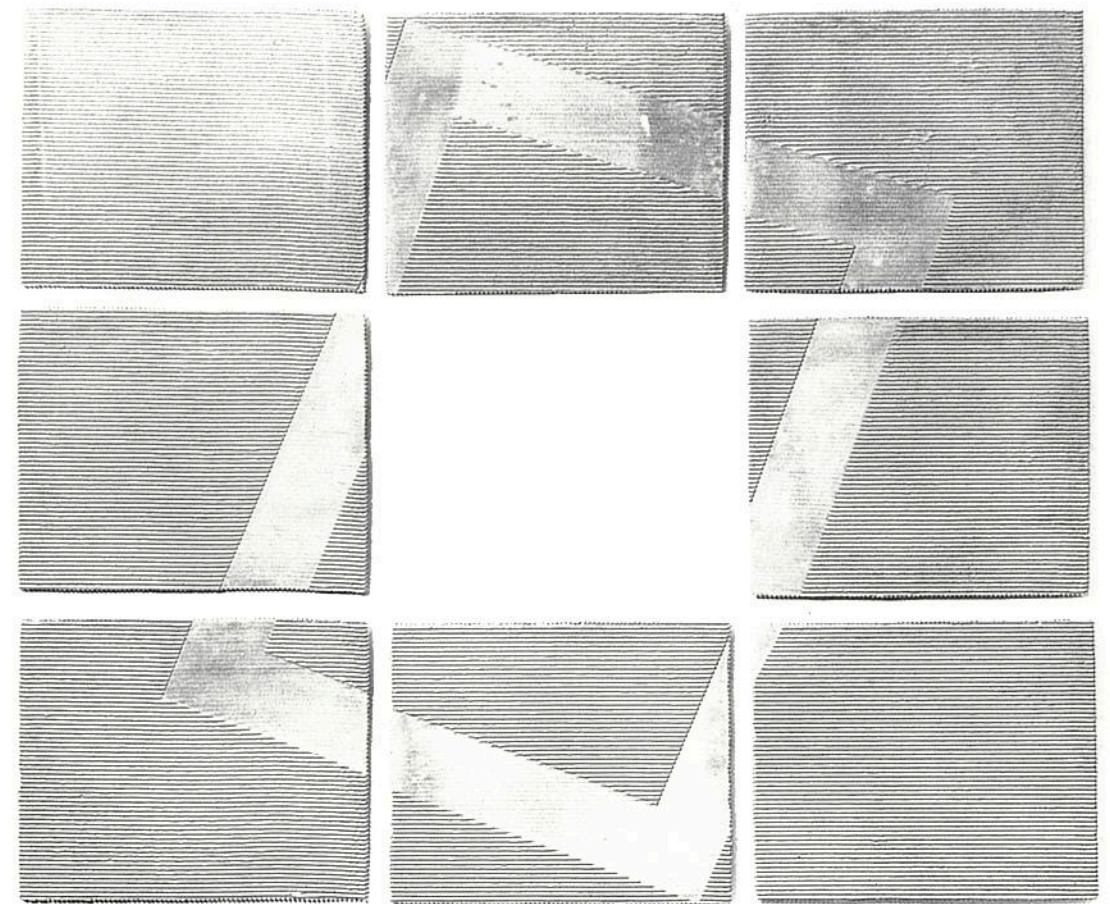
Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane

Ormiston College

Queensland University of Technology

Queensland Art Gallery

Corporate collections



RODNEY SPOONER
Geometry Perfected (third attempt), 1994
Cat. no. 17

K A T A R I N A V E S T E R B E R G

Katarina Vesterberg was born in Karlstad, Sweden in 1962 and arrived in Australia in 1971. Since 1987, she has participated in several group exhibitions including *entropy* (Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane 1991); *Unfamiliar Territory*, (Adelaide Biennial 1992) and C.A.S.T.'s *Do Something with a Blundstone* Invitation Prize and national tour from 1992-94.

She has held solo exhibitions including Galerie Brutal, Brisbane in 1990, First Draft West, Sydney in 1992, the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane in 1992, University of New England, Lismore 1992, Michael Milburn, Brisbane 1992-93, The Contemporary Art Centre, Adelaide 1993 and the University of Southern Queensland, 1994.

Vesterberg lives at Fernvale near Brisbane and works full time as an artist.

COLLECTIONS

Queensland University of Technology

Griffith University, Brisbane

Ipswich City Art Gallery

Federal Court of Australia, Brisbane



KATARINA VESTERBERG
Cape Moreton Lighthouse 1913, 1993-94
Cat. no. 20

A N N E W A L L A C E

Anne Wallace was born in Brisbane in 1970. She completed a Bachelor of Arts (Visual Arts) at the Queensland University of Technology in 1990 and a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Queensland, majoring in Art History is nearly completed.

Wallace has participated in numerous group exhibitions since 1990 including the Butterfactory Contemporary Art Space, Dayboro in 1991, *Potential Space: The Butterfactory Touring Initiative* in 1992, and three exhibitions at Darren Knight DKW, Melbourne from 1992-93.

In 1993 she had a solo exhibition at Darren Knight DKW, Melbourne. In the same year Wallace was awarded the Anne and Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship to study at the Slade School, London, from September 1994 to June 1996.

Wallace lives in Brisbane and works full-time as an artist.

COLLECTIONS

Queensland University of Technology

Queensland Art Gallery

National Gallery of Victoria

Artbank

Private collections

ANNE WALLACE
St Lucia Reach, 1994
Cat. no. 23



J U D I T H W R I G H T

Judith Wright was born in Brisbane in 1945. She was a dancer with the Australian Ballet from 1966-70 and later was a tutor at the Queensland University of Technology from 1990-94.

Wright has participated in several group exhibitions since 1980 including *Australian Perspecta* (Art Gallery of New South Wales 1989); *Reference Points: A New Perspective* (Queensland Art Gallery 1991); the *Adelaide Biennial of Australia* 1992; *The Nature of Space* (Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane 1993) and *Temporality* (Queensland Art Gallery 1994).

Her solo exhibitions in Australia include shows at Michael Milburn, Brisbane; Artspace, Sydney, Annandale Galleries, Sydney. Wright has had several solo shows in Japan, two with Gallery Lunami in Tokyo in 1993-94 and with Gallery Finarte, Nagoya, Japan in 1994.

Wright was awarded a Fellowship from the Queensland Minister for the Arts in 1993 and a Project Grant from the Australia Council in 1994.

She currently lives in Brisbane, working full-time as an artist.

COLLECTIONS

Australian National Gallery

Artbank

Brisbane City Hall Art Gallery & Museum

Canberra College of Advanced Education

Gold Coast City Gallery

National Gallery of Victoria

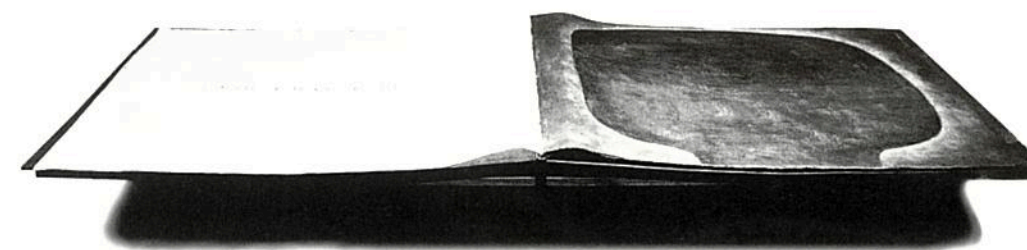
Queensland Art Gallery

Queensland University of Technology

University College of Southern Queensland

University of Sydney

JUDITH WRIGHT
echo your caress, 1994
Cat. no. 25 & 26



Out of Exile & Into the 90s

As if to demonstrate its awareness of its past sins, it returned from exile with a self-critical manner. As if to redress its former arrogance, it returned with self-mockery.

Thomas McEvelley, *The Exile's Return: Towards a Redefinition of Painting for the Post-Modern Era*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993

The hardest years, the wildest years

The desperate and divided years

We will remember

These should not be forgotten years

Midnight Oil, "Forgotten Years", Blue Sky Mining, CBS, 1990

From the perspective of those arriving from North Queensland, Brisbane is a metropolis, glistening and tremulous in its quick development. But for those beyond our southern border, the Brisbane Line may still represent a point of cultural cringe, deemed palatable only as a sub-tropical Gateway to the Sunshine State. Yet Brisbane was in 1993 voted Australia's most livable city, and some 10,000 Australians per month now seek residence in this state. For those who have crossed the Line, the Brisbane of today may serve to dispel those entrenched myths and jibes of country hickdom, police state repression and cultural desolation.

Is there still a need to defend Brisbane? Put simply, we still do. But less often, and with greater conviction. The visual arts are not down and out in Brisbane. Indeed, we've upped the ante, nationally. Yes - the national press stands to attention when Brisbane generates yet another successful blockbuster, when a third Queensland artist wins the Moët & Chandon Fellowship, when we take a lead with the Asia-Pacific Triennial, and yes - the Institute of Modern Art in Brisbane is acknowledged as setting the agenda for contemporary art spaces in Australia. But artists here remain concerned that curators elsewhere will not make the trip, that they are considered 'not serious' for not being 'there'.

An Exotic Otherness locates eleven artists - Rachel Apelt, Richard Bell, Leonard Brown, Stephen Nothling, Luke Roberts, Bruce Reynolds, Janis Somerville, Rodney Spooner, Katarina Vesterberg, Anne Wallace and Judith Wright - in a geographic and social field, a provocative manoeuvre which is intended to acknowledge and deflect preconceived notions. It is a loaded field which does require scrutiny. This exhibition samples a 'younger' generation of Queensland artists who are based in Brisbane, for whom this city has played a formative role. It does not pretend to be a comprehensive survey. Moreover, they are artists for whom the task of painting has not become an anachronism, though 'painting' may not be the sole focus of their practice. The work in this exhibition attests to an innovative return to the 'idea' of painting, whether its form is approached in concrete, linoleum, plaster, newspaper, mass-printed landscapes, photocopies, or in traditional oil paint. For it is not only Queensland which has returned from exile, but increasingly, the act of painting.

Beyond the 'state-of-emergency' to ground level revolutions and nation building

The younger artists in this exhibition would have little memory of the anger which underscored events in Brisbane in the 70s and early 80s, and which confronted the regime of Joh Bjelke-Petersen. It was a time of anti-institutional and underground energy, punk culture, police harassment, and Right-to-March marches after street marches were banned in 1977. Premier of Queensland for almost 20 years from 1968, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, with his gerrymander favouring a conservative rural Queensland, did not stand for all Queenslanders. During these years, Queensland was ridiculed as a Banana Republic populated by 'rural rednecks', with Joh satirised as a Bible-bashing, anti-communist, inarticulate peanut farmer from Kingaroy. Under the Fitzgerald Inquiry, initiated by the National Party's Mike Ahern in 1988, the full extent of corruption in Queensland became evident. This Inquiry, along with World Expo 88 and the Commonwealth Games of 1982, helped motivate the development of a new psyche and new infrastructure for Brisbane. In December 1989, Labor and Wayne Goss were elected to power, marking the end of the Joh era.

Following this electoral victory, there was an expectation that the Goss government would effect rapid transformation. Change did not happen overnight, but the conservative Goss has made changes. Joh's gerrymander was virtually removed, anti-gay laws decriminalised, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Acts introduced in 1992 (to a hostile reception by Aboriginal groups), a Mabo 'Task Force' established,¹ Fraser Island was given World Heritage status, and public sector reform and accountability became a priority, seeing the formation of the Public Sector Management Committee and the Criminal Justice Commission.

As Minister for the Arts (a role since ceded), Goss made a fundamental impact on the visual arts in Queensland. The government commissioned report, *Queensland: A State for the Arts*, delivered by the Arts Committee in February 1991, opened the way for unprecedented state government funding, with priority issues including individual artists, regional development, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art.² Previously, the only assistance offered artists by the Queensland government had been the Premier's Arts Encouragement Awards, a once-only grant of up to \$1,000, introduced in 1986.

A transformation of the major-league arts infrastructure had begun under the National Party, primarily through the edifice of the Queensland Cultural Centre, with the Queensland Art Gallery (QAG) finally vacating temporary premises for its new Southbank site in 1982. Previously despised for its total failure to attend to contemporary Australian or international art, the QAG under present director, Doug Hall, appointed in 1987, has undergone a major policy shift.³ The gallery's acquisition program now firmly focuses on the late 20th Century (especially contemporary Australian, Aboriginal and Islander, and Asian art), and its Gallery 14 space has consolidated as an experimental and installation space for contemporary art. In a strategic coup in late 1993, the QAG undertook the ambitious First Asia-Pacific Triennial which showcased the contemporary art of Asia and the Pacific - a focus which runs parallel to recent Australian government policy.

However, it has been the Institute of Modern Art (IMA), which, since its formation in 1975, has provided more consistent support for what previous director, John Nixon (1980-81), described as "the exhibition, critical assessment and development of progressive art practice in Australia".⁴ Of the directors in the 80s and 90s, Peter Cripps (1984-86) employed the most controversial tactics to spark debate in the local community and counter the "view afoot in Brisbane, perhaps almost a hegemonic perception, that Brisbane was the end of the world artistically speaking".⁵ "Artists in Ferment at IMA Forum", reported *The Courier-Mail* of a forum on Provincialism in August 1986.⁶ The biggest debate concerned Expressionism, the subject of an IMA forum in March 1985. While prompted by the neoexpressionism prevalent in the 80s, controversy stemmed from claims of a Queensland tradition of expressionism - a claim not entirely untrue. Cripps began the debate by polarising Brisbane art between 'Cool' and 'Hot' tendencies, with the key supporting exhibitions being *Show No Cowardice* of 1984 - cool and conceptual, and *Brisbane Hot* of 1985 - expressionist. In a paper commissioned by Cripps, Robert Lingard argued that "in Queensland painting, figurative expressionism has been the unchallenged pre-eminent style since Molvig", noting the influence of Queensland's "cultural provincialism" and "isolation", "crass anti-intellectualism" and "larrikinism", and "tropical climate",⁷ and the role played by the dealer Ray Hughes (now located in Sydney). This theme was further pursued in an exhibition curated by Lingard in 1986, *Past and Present*, which juxtaposed several generations of 'expressionist' Queensland artists, including the older Jon Molvig, Gordon Shepherdson, Andrew Sibley, the younger Davida Allen, Joe Furlonger and Ian Smith, and emerging artists Hollie, Ruth Propsting and Ross Thompson.

Younger Brisbane artists who felt unwittingly included within the ambit of a 'dumb' expressionism rallied against the perceived slander. Adam Boyd, an artist associated with O'Flate and John Mills National, wrote in the first issue of the Brisbane art magazine *Eyeline*, of May 1987, that the "Brisbane art community has never looked so good", but that it was a place "where 'hot' is a word definitely out of flavour", given "those past attempts to shoot Brisbane out to space in an expressionist time capsule".⁸ This theme was also taken up in the same issue by Urszula Szulakowska, lecturer in Fine Arts at the University of Queensland, who instead proposed for a number of the younger Brisbane artists the concept of Brisbane Dada, stating,

Brisbane Dada appears within a system of socio-political repression of a highly active kind and within a sterility of culture which creates a vacuum for the operation of severe rightism and its accompanying brutality. It is not too far fetched to compare it to Zurich and Berlin in 1915-1920.⁹

Referring to *Brisbane Hot*, she noted that an installation by the group O'Flate was "badly misplaced in the context of expressionistic art".¹⁰ Szulakowska was an articulate protagonist for the younger artists who had adopted collaborative, anarchic, anti-art and conceptual strategies during the Joh years, "a state-of-emergency consciousness" which found its outlet in the artist-run spaces and other conjunctions which began to emerge in the early to mid-eighties, such as E.M.U., One Flat, O'Flate, A Room, John Mills National, Zip, THAT Contemporary Art Space, along with the Queensland Artworkers Alliance (evolving from the Artists' Union).¹¹ Avoiding any speculative positioning with the survey exhibition *Queensland works. (1950-85)* at the University Art Museum, curators Nancy Underhill and Malcolm Enright stated: "we wanted to subvert a search for the 'Queenslandness' of it all and discourage false regional chauvinism. This is not a separatist exhibition."¹²

The rapid growth of the Brisbane art scene in the late 80s not only saw the establishment of the privately owned Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in 1987, but the opening of new commercial galleries. Despite MOCA's uneven program which never threatened the position of the IMA, it added to the vitality of the scene in the late 80s through its collection, solo shows and events, and more ambitious curated exhibitions (MOCA finally closed earlier this year).¹³ Prior to the recession and James Baker's legal problems, MOCA provided valuable support for Brisbane artists and commercial galleries. With the Ray Hughes Gallery playing an increasingly minor role in the late 80s, many of those artists who had been contextualised by the IMA in terms of postmodernism and conceptual strategies found committed representation with the new Bellas Gallery, with others looking instead, primarily, to Milburn Gallery (later Milburn + Arté; Michael Milburn Galleries), Roz McAllan Gallery (now closed), and Savode Gallery. Both Bellas and Milburn showed greater preparedness to embrace a degree of installation art and on occasion performance, though in the main Bellas supported conceptual 'painters', with Milburn representing a number of artists working in photo-media. An exciting newcomer to Brisbane's commercial scene in 1994 has been David Pestorius Gallery, many of whose artists re-visit minimalist strategies. Bellas, Milburn (presently between spaces), Pestorius and Savode have on occasion facilitated curated exhibitions.¹⁴

In the late 80s, Sue Cramer's measured and scholarly directorship of the IMA (1987-89) was perceived as failing to respond adequately to the burgeoning energy of the local art scene, as compared to the support previously given by Peter Cripps, with disquiet due also to the continuing Melbourne presence at the IMA. Not the deliberate provocateur, Cramer's program did canvass the photo-media work being pursued in the 80s, especially by women artists, along with developments in art and technology. She encouraged local critics such as Graham Coulter-Smith and Urszula Szulakowska to curate group exhibitions, and towards the end of her term gave a number of younger Brisbane artists solo shows.

Given there was a backlash from the local community towards institutions such as the IMA, the energetic and street-wise role played by artist-run spaces in this period must be emphasised. Many of the artists associated with those spaces, especially in the late 80s, were highly politicised and they mobilised critical activity, a notable instance being the *Demolition Show* at The Observatory Gallery in 1986, and particularly a work by Jay Younger which directly addressed the issue of funding for the visual artist in Queensland (both state and federal) as being a major reason why artists left the state to 'drift south'.¹⁵ The artist-run spaces of the late 80s provided a camaraderie and allowed a transgression of boundaries, involving process and time-based work -including performance, the electronic arts, ephemeral and multimedia practices and site-specific installation. Artists could contextualise their work and exhibitions on their own terms. They also organised exhibitions which toured independently to southern cities.¹⁶ Brisbane artists, such as Scott Redford, Luke Roberts, Hiram To and Jay Younger, have continued to be very active in coordinating projects and curating exhibitions, some touring.

Importantly, it was the anger at being disempowered - at being marginalised both within Queensland and within Australia, that incited artists and critics in the Brisbane art community to establish *Eyeline* magazine in 1987 through the Queensland Artworkers Alliance, making it possible "to reverse the short memory life of much local art activity" and to promote more widely that activity, while not being merely 'local' in its scope.¹⁷ Art in Brisbane could be assured its own history, could reduce the risk of being edited out of an Australian art history which predominantly spanned a Sydney-Melbourne axis.

Performance art continued to flourish in Brisbane after it had all but died in southern states - spaces such as John Mills National and THAT Contemporary Art Space encouraged performance in the 80s, as did later Galerie Brutal, ISNT, Omniscient, Space

Plentitude and Boulder Lodge Concepts. The performance program at the IMA in the 90s has reflected a recent resurgence of performance, in part due to the director's (Nicholas Tsoutas) personal commitment to this area of practice.

Brisbane and ex-Brisbane artists have made substantial contributions to the practices and debates surrounding the electronic arts within Australia, including the likes of Virginia Barratt, Tim Gruchy, Ross Harley, Gary Warner, Adam Wolter. Notable projects have included the Bicentennial *InterFace: City as a Work of Art* project (IMA administered) coordinated by Jeanelle Hurst, which brought art and technology to Brisbane inner-city streets in 1988; Gary Warner and Adam Wolter's installation, *Without Number*, of computer-generated video-projected images in the QAG's Gallery 14 in 1989; and *Instant Imaging*, curated by Anne Kirker at the QAG in 1991. *Artlink* launched its special art and technology issue in 1987 at John Mills National, and an issue of *Continuum: Electronic Arts in Australia* has been edited and launched in Brisbane in 1994 by Nicholas Zurbrugg. Critics such as Graham Coulter-Smith, Urszula Szulakowska (now in the UK) and Nicholas Zurbrugg have provided contextualising support for these developments.

The Brisbane art scene has continued to consolidate in the 90s. Importantly, Brisbane's art colleges have been radically overhauled and gained university status, in line with Dawkins' reforms to tertiary education. But curiously, the energy and vigour of the art scene evident in the mid to late 80s has levelled off, and that generation of extremely energetic and talented artists who emerged in the mid-80s and who did not relocate 'south', has not been matched in the same numbers in the 90s.

Perhaps because the Brisbane context is no longer at such a 'state of emergency', artists are no longer as politically motivated, nor are they as collectively inclined, despite there still being a number of artist-run initiatives to cater for young and emerging artists, or for those who prefer a non-institutional venue for their practice. Since the late 80s, spaces such as Arch Lane, Bureau, Galerie Brutal, AGLASSOFWATER, Artsite, Space Plentitude, Boulder Lodge Concepts, Omniscient, ISNT, Kiss My Art, Doggett Street, The Butterfactory, Campfire Consultancy, and Fire-Works Gallery have provided bright flash-points for a wide cross-section of activity. But the artists in this exhibition, apart from Luke Roberts who was co-director of AGLASSOFWATER, have been exhibitors in, rather than organisers of, such spaces. It would appear that 'energy' or 'activity' can no longer be accepted as prime indicators of cultural value - that we have to look for more. The political energy of the artist-run space has been more apparent in the 90s in Campfire Consultancy (formed 1990) and Fire-Works Gallery - both venues primarily for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, and in the advocacy body for ATSI visual arts, Queensland Indigenous Committee for Visual Artists (QICVA).¹⁸

Since the IMA's appointment in 1990 of a director from Sydney, Nicholas Tsoutas (1990-94), there has been a marked increase in the number of local artists exhibited at the IMA, and overall, a noticeable change of pace to a more ground-level of high energy, scheduling more exhibitions and ever more active programs of events. In many respects, Nicholas Tsoutas' program has paralleled that of Peter Cripps, in its intent to provoke debate and to put Queensland, and the IMA, on the map. Regional debates have continued, but now meaning regional Queensland in line with state government policy. The IMA is no longer "the Brisbane Institute of Modern Art", but "Queensland's Institute of Modern Art".¹⁹

However, Tsoutas did not stir the same level of sometimes acrimonious debate as had Cripps. Rather, his political agenda was more in terms of representation, whether it be multiculturalism, ATSI art, gender issues or regionalism. The exhibition which most succinctly summed this up was *Who do you take me for?*, curated by Clare Williamson, of photo-media work by British and Australian artists addressing displacement in terms of gender, race, sexuality and class.²⁰ The deliberate mix of local art with other Australian art, and sometimes international art, was also a political decision to counter marginalisation to deny the view of Queensland as secondary or Other. For the first time in the IMA's history, Aboriginal artists were given exhibitions, including artists associated with Queensland such as Tracey Moffatt, Gordon Bennett, Judy Watson and Richard Bell.²¹ While postdating the QAG's landmark *Balance 1990: Views, Visions, Influence*, the IMA in 1993 staged *Commitments* on the issue of Reconciliation, with collaborations between Aboriginal and White Australian artists.²² Important in the context of the present exhibition is the almost exclusive focus the IMA, over the past four years, has given to installation practice, on the grounds that this was true to the initial experimental imperatives of contemporary art spaces which sought to evade the commodification of art. Exhibitions of painting, indeed even of photographic practice, were rare, and artists who might normally adhere to such 2-D formats were encouraged to expand their parameters.

Earlier in 1994, exhibitions focussing on Queensland practice have been undertaken by the more contemporary-orientated regional galleries in south-east Queensland - those at Noosa and Ipswich,²³ and it is certainly an irony that this exhibition, *An Exotic Otherness*, has not been toured from a Queensland venue such as the IMA, but has been initiated from as distant a location as Tasmania.

The visual art scene in Brisbane has matured, it is vital and increasingly complex, and it is ambitious. *An Exotic Otherness* takes an 'outsiders' view of the work of eleven Brisbane artists - an 'outsiders' view in that curator Barbara Tuckerman is a relatively new arrival and as such allows a fresh appraisal. While not denying the pluralism which exists in art practice here (including photo-media, electronic, multimedia, and installation practices), this exhibition has chosen to focus on artists working in an area which 'surrounds' painting. Some artists are well established in their careers, others are not. The selection allows access to work by artists not widely known in Australia - some not even well known in Brisbane (particularly Leonard Brown and Anne Wallace who have chosen to exhibit elsewhere). The curator does not propose any 'tradition', 'school', stylistic cohesiveness, thematic unity or political agenda. Some work is political, whether in terms of regional identity, environmental concerns, or sexual or Aboriginal politics. Other work presents an abstracted or 'poetic' un-reality, some maintaining a symbolic function, some not. Artists employ traditional modes of representation, others establish representation in found images and objects. But the materiality of the art object, and our perception of it, is important. What this diversity stresses, perhaps, is that these are individual artists who may share a location and a culture, but who are pursuing their own intellectual concerns, in their own ways.

An Exotic Other?

Rachel Apelt's 'X' is a multi-media work which sites the present environmental crisis at the critical hour, seconds before midnight. Initially part of an installation at the Institute of Modern Art earlier this year (Apelt emerged from art school in Brisbane in the mid-80s), 'X' presents what appears an incomplete child's picture alphabet book, whose double pages are spread out on the wall as on an old tablecloth.²⁴ This alphabet, however, is designed for the dyslexic, with letters in reverse, reading backwards, right to left, a special alphabet for the dysfunctional West which has brought the world to the brink. While cautious of being associated with eco-feminism, Apelt casts the feminine as a means of restoring balance. The alphabet is encapsulated within the soft pink folds of the cheesecloth and voile shroud, and it is on this fragile and vulnerable 'skin' that the last letter, 'X', has been loosely stitched and positioned within an embroidered circle as in a special or sacred place. Embroidery is traditionally women's work. This then is a site which harbours those histories which have been excluded, and from which might arise a more ethical and diverse culture, which could circumvent those eschatological doctrines forecasting the end of the world.

Apelt's alphabet has two halves. The first concerns the loss of the sacred and the repercussions of Judeo-Christian and First World domination and colonisation, quoting fragments of European art historical sources - Bronzino, Manet, Munch, and Gauguin, along with more obscure images - a Spanish conquistador in Latin America. Targeting the 20th Century, the second half presents a grim look at our apocalyptic future, with images such as the Gulf War, an oil spill on fire, acid rain, the desanctified Shroud of Turin. On each painted or photocopied image is a 'raised' alphabet letter; on the facing 'page' a ragged student's exercise book. Hand-written are lists of verbs, each beginning with the letter opposite, and all associated with decay and disintegration: "rot rangle reek rust". Some words are repeated alongside as if in frustration or anger. Apelt's picture alphabet not only suggests the role of education in countering global problems and inequalities, but how our very use of language perpetuates our problems, and does so within education systems. Yet, if language mediates experience, does art not do likewise? Is there an alternative?

Richard Bell's work clearly articulates the anger of Queensland Aborigines who have felt discriminated against by a system of petty apartheid, though Bell's 'tell it like it is' social comment is offset by sharp humour. His paintings are conglomerations of techniques drawn from Aboriginal and European cultures, suggestive of the cultural displacement experienced by urban Murri artists. In the past, Aborigines in Queensland and northern NSW not only faced genocide, but were forcibly relocated from their tribal lands to 'reserves', such as those at Cherbourg, Woorabinda, Palm Island and Yarrabah. White education has further served to separate urban Aborigines

from their peoples and traditions. Richard Bell, of the Kamilaroi language group of the central north-west of NSW, is an inheritor and victim of the prejudices and bigotry which surround such a history of overt racial discrimination.

Bell's paintings since the early 90s have combined acrylic paint and photocopied paper on canvas, with the use of cave and bark painting techniques, stencilled hands and direct hand-prints, and x-ray and dot techniques. Dots, however, might signify a traditional usage or a computer dot, in acknowledgment of the technological future. Initially, Bell's confrontational methodology derived primarily from combining diagrammatic symbols (the \$-sign, the crucifix, or traditional Aboriginal symbols) with photographic or other images of Aborigines (elders in chains, in tribal dress for documentation by anthropologists, desolate children in ill-fitting 'white' clothes, or images of Aboriginal deaths in custody). Increasingly, however, the visual punch is delivered equally by text, and it is not a text which is subsumed by a modernist 'visual poetics'. In *Options* of 1994, a work about Reconciliation executed in the colours of the Aboriginal and Australian flags, words colour-coded blue to identify an ironical message: "WE'LL MATCH YOUR KINDNESS". Lists are used to identify common negative preconceptions. *It's Human Nature II* of 1994 provides a 15-point list of "SOME THINGS WOMEN HATE ABOUT MEN" and vice versa, a work in sequence to the earlier *It's Human Nature I* on racial hatreds. In Bell's view, sexual discrimination is second only to racial discrimination.

Leonard Brown, in speaking of 'a stillness that moves', alludes to an approach to life which is also of central concern to the quietude of his art, and to his life as an Orthodox priest. *Boat* exists like a whisper across four unprimed white canvas boards, creamy paint barely blocking in its simple geometric form. Suggestive of a spiritual voyage, of immutable silence and stillness, Brown offers a more particular reading:

The legend of Noah's Ark is a myth referring to esotericism. The building of the 'Ark' is the 'School', the preparation of men for initiation, for transition to a new life, for new birth. 'Noah's Ark', which is saved from the flood, is the inner circle of humanity.²⁵

Reference to such esoteric spiritual knowledge may appear to pertain more to a painter of icons than to one of highly reductive canvases where the image barely retains its symbolic value. The distinction for the artist is a clear one. While the icon possesses a liturgical role, these works pertain to the personal poetry of the artist. Deeply framing the sensibility of the artist's perception of reality, is his commitment to the mystical theology of the Eastern Church (Brown became an Orthodox Christian in 1976).²⁶

Brown's *Kyrie eleison* similarly is better read in terms of his spiritual practice. For every modest pale cross which marks each of the 40 small white canvasboards, does not denote the Western emphasis of the cross as a vehicle of suffering. As in early Byzantine mosaics, the cross in this work is synonymous with light and takes its place cosmologically as a star in the heavens. The economy of the brushstrokes which comprise each cross is surrounded by a surfeit of calming light. This constellation of forty stars translates as "Lord Have Mercy" (Kyrie eleison), and is repeated forty times in a mesmerising chant during the structure of traditional Orthodox Church services. The work resonates in its sequential grid like the echo of ceaseless prayer.

Stephen Nothling, in his triptych *Luxe, calme et volupté*, satirises the Western conceit of the land of plenty. Rekindling a vision of pastoral prosperity must be contentious when issues of a republic, Aboriginal land rights, eco-tourism and environmental management, are under public debate. Australia no longer rides on the sheep's back. The large scale of these paintings confirms the expanse of the Australian landscape, yet in each, a vessel loaded with flowers sits incongruously. In *volupté*, blooms from afar such as roses and tulips mix with such native specimens as banksias and proteas. Floral tributes rise with funereal elegance against a sublime sky, much as a ghost gum might in a landscape by Hans Heysen. Yet is this the halcyon days of the Australian landscape or the 'Big Pineapple' on the Sunshine Coast, an homage to the land's abundance which ends instead a kitsch Vanitas?

Luxe more especially bears the marks of Netherlandish flower painting, and is indeed based on a work by the 18th Century Dutch painter, Jan van Huysum.²⁷ However, van Huysum's yellow terracotta vase, inscribed with a female figure holding a lily, has been removed from its marble table and placed, complete with drapery, into a seemingly harsh yet arcadian landscape. Neither homage nor parody, Nothling has worked from this former bouquet replete with roses, tulips, pink peony, nasturtiums, and morning glory, allowing the curvaceous stalks on the upper right to ascend more steeply against the dark sky against which the white lilies are highlighted. Yet clearly these flowers are not painted alla prima as were van Huysum's, with scrupulous botanical observation instead shifting into a

fantasy realm of wilful elaboration. They become abstractions of what a flower might represent - abstractions also of 'sight', once one is aware of the reduced vision of the artist. In this sense they do become memento mori, but more because of what might have eroded from view or memory by the time we have removed our Western rose-coloured glasses.

Bruce Reynolds' work appears a mix of modernist collage, formalism, 'grunge' aesthetics and junkyard reclamations which return the decor of yesterday's domesticity. Either on a large or a small scale, Reynolds constructs his 'objects' - boxes or 'pictures' covered with scraps of old linoleum. It is painting become artifact (Reynolds was previously a painter). Looking like slices of giant children's building blocks, they dissolve distinctions to become hybrids between painting and sculpture, and between art and life. Neither do they adhere to the disciplined play of 'chance' with which we associate collage. Rather, the lino is marshalled into either a complex interplay of torn shapes - part engineered, part accidental, or gridded into geometric patterns - vertical or horizontal strips, diamonds, or in some smaller works, a stylised representation of a girl's head, a gem.

Lino brings its own referents. A cheap alternative to carpet, it evokes a history of the domestic life of earlier decades. As design, it elicits nostalgia or revulsion. As scrap, it is a humble material, most often worn, dirty, faded, ugly. Certainly, collage was often comprised of 'found' bits and pieces of paper, card, string, and so on. Yet this self-acknowledged late-modernist aspires to a formalist rigour. The works maintain a 'flatness' in that lino-overlap is minimised, though the box-support stands out from the wall to different depths, with the 'image' of the lino-pattern not stopping at the front plane, but 'wrapping' about the edge. The colour-scale of each work is orchestrated, as is the manipulation of the lino shapes, mixing chance with deliberation. The authorship of gesture is all but eliminated, except for perhaps the 'tear'. In the 'abstract' works which are not harnessed by geometry, but are 'fluid' in their conjunctions of large slabs of differently patterned lino as in *Tribunal* of 1994, it is the small jolts or connections which surprise, when for Reynolds, the inconsistencies become the content of the work.

Luke Roberts' work lampoons that which is sacred, and most particularly Catholicism. But in many respects he is not against the Church, but what it stands for, and more particularly what the Pope stands for. Hence Pope Alice, the persona Roberts launched in Brisbane in the 70s, could proclaim transgressions, could bless the multitudes lining the streets of the 1994 Sydney Mardi Gras. "Heterosexuality Is Curable" is the papal decree delivered to the Mardi Gras crowds, and here offered to the people of Tasmania where homosexuality is still a crime. But it is a message once as appropriate for Queenslanders during the repressive, paternalistic and 'Christian' regime of Joh Bjelke-Petersen. For it should be remembered that Roberts emerged as an artist in the mid-70s, though lived in Europe in 'self-imposed exile' between 1984 and 1987, and that he has been active as an artist and curator in Brisbane (and other state capitals) since his return.

Roberts' work, *WHIRLING LOGS: Letter From The Sand People To The Outside/Kachina/Some Great Apollo/We Want You Big Brother/After Giotto* is an ironical and complex work for which the signals for reading are given in the title. The crucifix shape is comprised of unlikely elements, a unique fusion of altarpieces by Giotto or Cimabue, 'placards' by Beuys, sand paintings by Navaho Indians, or even perhaps the gown of a Pope rising above a pair of slippers. A cross bearing the 'A' for Alpha (Roberts' birthplace in conservative outback Queensland), suggests sacrifices in a history too quickly forgotten. A gala, kitsch crucifixion this, the decree of "Heterosexuality Is Curable" a hand-written scrawl stretched out like forgiving arms radiating holy light, the 'body' flanked by equally splendid visions of sublime landscape, the smashing waves an amusing allegory of male sexuality and ejaculation. For the artist, the up-ended mass-circulation 'bourgeois' landscapes also testify to the way in which a puritanical Protestant culture has marginalised and satirised Catholicism in this state, impinging not only on the possibility of a spiritual life, but also on the life of the body. Hence the inscription: "Saints Today Not Tomorrow". The pronouncement delivered by this Pope is one which affirms a possibility other than that which is repressed. What is described is a self-portrait in which, as Urszula Szulakowska once wrote of Roberts, "the victim is victorious".²⁸

Janis Somerville's work *Design for Self Transformation: Process I, II, III*, hangs as a triptych of three back-lit heavy screens, as if the scene for a vigil. It is a work which implores change, or transformation, not only in terms of the environment, but also for the feminine. Somerville adopts a political stance akin to the eco-feminist, and one which seeks to avoid the separatist pitfalls of high-art exclusion. To this end she uses ephemeral, everyday materials, along with images which are evocative at different levels to a wide audience, such as that of the horse. She also incorporates ancient symbols. For instance, in *Process I*, the triangle symbolises the

feminine, as in the Trinity found in pre-Christian faiths of the Goddess, as well as sites of natural energy. In *Process II*, the cross refers to healing, and in *Process III*, the circle concerns connection. The horse, which is a prominent symbol in all of Somerville's work, is both of personal significance for the artist and signals 'nature' and the 'feminine'.

Somerville's concern with healing is made material by the mesh, which like a medical gauze, covers the sign of the 'wound' - newspaper sports pages featuring horse racing guides. The 'wound' is primarily spiritual, the split separating our culture from nature. Somerville adopts the horse to signify this split, contrasting the commodified horse of the racing industry with the meanings it may have had for 'primitive' cultures. In a previous work, *Lascaux Redefined*, the artist referenced the ancient cave paintings at Lascaux.²⁹ The whiteness imbuing the work is intended to suggest a 'white-washing' masking damage, though the crudely painted white horses speak more of a return to the intuitive or the 'primitive'. This would seem to imply that women be returned to the role of the 'other', thereby confirming a patriarchal order. Somerville, however, may instead be suggesting that the patriarchy re-connect with the land to stem environmental disaster, and that distinctions between masculinity and femininity be diminished, that individuals seek the feminine within.

Rodney Spooner's two works, *Geometry Perfected (third attempt)* and *Geometry Perfected (second attempt)*, both of 1994, each present a grid of eight, slightly off-square, sheets of cast concrete, an arrangement which surrounds a central empty space of equal size. Each concrete panel bears the parallel indentations of its now absent corrugated-cardboard casement, but moreover, across all eight panels is etched a wider groove, slanting diagonally, the trace of a larger 'square' shaped object or structure - the frame within a frame. But it is not a structure which works, for on closer observation, the details do not match up. Geometry is not perfected, it is not the perfect right-angle. Such discrepancies put on notice a condition of built-in obsolescence, which preempts the ruin.³⁰ By such discrepancies, Spooner takes the hard edge out of formalism, while undoubtedly acknowledging the heritage of minimalism, as in the use of industrial materials, seriality and modular structures, the condition of objecthood, and the relationship between work, site and spectator.

Spooner, in his particular use of concrete, denotes a relationship between the wall which supports the work, and the work beyond which we see the wall. In more panoramic terms, concrete is used to stand in for the building of cities and their structures, and their ultimate ruin. Concrete is a key element with which a civilisation's infrastructure is built. In his installation at the Institute of Modern Art titled *Flawed*, Spooner built a false floor - a floor above a floor, which appeared as if half demolished, despite a lack of rubble.³¹ *Geometry Perfected*, while retaining the authoritarian look of the public building, also maintains a relationship to works such as *Several Memories*, which sit in combination like small picture-frames cast in concrete, reminiscent of Allan McCollum's *Surrogates*, which sought to question the status of painting when serialised and mass-produced as an ultimate commodity. Here the 'picture' is objectified, made concrete, but in a way which acknowledges anarchy.

Katarina Vesterberg, as in previous work, has accessed the photographic archives of the John Oxley Library for a record of the social history of the Moreton Bay Islands, and from the Queensland Museum has located specimens of the flora and fauna of this region. On occasion she uses documentation of her own visits. Using blocks of white plaster cast as if old timber, beach sand, or slabs of worn coral, images are inserted onto a levelled surface with exhaustive realism, ambiguously suggestive of drawn or photographic processes. Her work is a 'mapping' of this territory according to Western science or history, and yet there is an attendant loss of data. This was especially the case in a recent work at the Institute of Modern Art. On a larger-scale, freestanding, plaster 'outcrop', the images transcribed onto the surface lost their particularity and instead appeared as graphic 'scrub'. *Kid Point 1897*, in comparison, continues the conjunction of weathered board and a crisp rendering of a sublime subject.

A nostalgia accrues to these objects, a curiosity even, as if commemorative plaques, souvenirs or facsimile prints deliberately aged, perhaps sepia-toned for effect. As images of 'place', we become aware of inclusions or exclusions in the selection of images. The image in *Cape Moreton Lighthouse 1913* depicts what appear to be tourists at ease in and looking at the landscape, but we are uncertain as to whether these images were for domestic or official use, or for publication. Vesterberg's work reminds us to widen the parameters of our looking, to consider the impact of the Age of Exploration in the South Pacific. It was only in mid-1994 that the Queensland government made a decision not to allow the mining of coral in Moreton Bay. As such, the small fossilised specimens which emerge as mysteries from their beds of plaster, also remind us of our often damaging intrusion into this land.

List of Works

All dimensions are in centimetres, height before width followed by depth where relevant.

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| <p>RACHEL APELT</p> <p>1. 'X', 1994</p> <p>Mixed media (photocopy, screenprint, shellac, oil, embroidery, gouache, charcoal, pencil, synthetic polymer paint, gold leaf, papier mache, paper, plaster, newspaper) on craftwood; support of muslin, hand-dyed, hand-painted; pegs. Forty panels each 24 x 22
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>RICHARD BELL</p> <p>2. <i>Options</i>, 1994</p> <p>Synthetic polymer paint, with collage, on canvas
Four panels 61 x 122 / 122 x 61 / 122 x 61 / 61 x 76.5
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>3. <i>It's Human Nature II</i>, 1994</p> <p>Synthetic polymer paint on canvas
Three panels 61 x 122 / 122 x 61 / 122 x 61
Courtesy of the artist.</p> | <p>LEONARD BROWN</p> <p>4. <i>Kyrie eleison</i> (Lord have mercy), 1993</p> <p>Oil on canvas boards
Forty panels each 23 x 18 mounted on rods
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>5. <i>Boat</i>, 1993</p> <p>Oil on canvas boards
Four panels each 40.5 x 51
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>STEPHEN NOTHLING</p> <p>6. <i>Luxe, calme et volupté</i>, 1994</p> <p>Oil on canvas
Triptych each 209 x 168
Courtesy of the artist.</p> | <p>BRUCE REYNOLDS</p> <p>7. <i>Tribunal</i>, 1994</p> <p>Linoleum on ply panel
193 x 244 x 10
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>8. <i>Untitled</i>, 1994</p> <p>Linoleum on ply panel
34.5 x 26.5 x 8
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>9. <i>Untitled</i>, 1994</p> <p>Linoleum on ply panel
34.5 x 26.5 x 8
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>10. <i>Untitled</i>, 1994</p> <p>Linoleum on ply panel
34 x 26.5 x 14
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>11. <i>Untitled</i>, 1994</p> <p>Linoleum on ply panel
34 x 26.5 x 14
Courtesy of the artist.</p> | <p>LUKE ROBERTS</p> <p>12. <i>WHIRLING LOGS: Letter From The Sand People To The Outside/Kachina/Some Great Apollo/We Want You Big Brother/After Giotto</i>, 1994</p> <p>Various media including synthetic polymer paint on linen
287 x 183 x 28 (dimensions of installation)
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>13. <i>CHARIOT OF THE GODS/Pendent/Zero Zero Oscar To Zero Oscar Tutu/Can You Hear Me St. Francis?/Over</i>, 1994</p> <p>Various media including wood and cotton
145 x 52 x 20 (dimensions of installation)
Courtesy of the artist.</p> | <p>JANIS SOMERVILLE</p> <p>14. <i>Design for Self Transformation: Process I</i>, 1994</p> <p>Synthetic polymer paint, graphite, acrylic binder medium, polyester mesh on newsprint
170 x 170
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>15. <i>Design for Self Transformation: Process II</i>, 1994</p> <p>Synthetic polymer paint, graphite, acrylic binder medium, polyester mesh on newsprint
170 x 170
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>16. <i>Design for Self Transformation: Process III</i>, 1994</p> <p>Synthetic polymer paint, graphite, acrylic binder medium, polyester mesh on newsprint
170 x 170
Courtesy of the artist.</p> | <p>RODNEY SPOONER</p> <p>17. <i>Geometry Perfected (third attempt)</i>, 1994</p> <p>Cement
Eight panels each 48 x 59
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>18. <i>Geometry Perfected (second attempt)</i>, 1994</p> <p>Cement
Eight panels each 48 x 59
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>KATARINA VESTERBERG</p> <p>19. <i>Kid Paint 1897</i>, 1993-94</p> <p>Mixed media on plaster
86 x 52 x 4.5
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>20. <i>Cape Moreton Lighthouse 1913</i>, 1993-94</p> <p>Mixed media on plaster
41 x 95 x 4
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>21. <i>Untitled</i>, 1993</p> <p>Mixed media on plaster
Four panels 18.5 x 17.5 x 9.5 / 18.5 x 19.5 x 9.5 / 17 x 18 x 10.5 / 18 x 19 x 9
Courtesy of the artist.</p> | <p>ANNE WALLACE</p> <p>22. <i>In Retrospect</i>, 1994</p> <p>Oil on linen
198 x 122
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>23. <i>St Lucia Reach</i>, 1994</p> <p>Oil on linen
122 x 103.5
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>24. <i>The Blue Room</i>, 1994</p> <p>Oil on linen
198 x 122
Courtesy of the artist.</p> | <p>JUDITH WRIGHT</p> <p>25. <i>echo your caress</i>, 1994</p> <p>Dry pigment, synthetic polymer paint, wax on Japanese paper 13 page book (with support table)
101.5 x 108 (closed)
Courtesy of the artist.</p> <p>26. <i>echo your caress</i>, 1994</p> <p>Dry pigment, synthetic polymer paint on Japanese paper
200 x 392
Courtesy of the artist.
(Exhibition at selected venues only)</p> |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|

Acknowledgments

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C·A·S·T

C o n t e m p o r a r y A r t S e r v i c e s T a s m a n i a
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P h o n e (0 2 2) 2 4 3 6 3 7 F a x (0 0 2) 2 4 3 6 3 8

EXHIBITION ITINERARY

Long Gallery, Hobart
16 September - 11 October 1994

Launceston University Gallery
23 November - 20 December

Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville
5 January - 5 February 1995

Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney
15 April - 13 May

Tamworth City Gallery
23 June - 6 August

Brisbane City Hall Art Gallery & Museum
25 August - 6 October

Back Cover: **STEPHEN NOTHLING**
Luxe, calme et volupté, 1994
(panel - volupté)
Cat. no. 6