

HEARTLAND

kate lohse
mandy martin
margaret morgan
susan norrie
wendy stavrianos
ania walwicz

Foreword

The idea for this exhibition grew out of a series of conversations that I had with Susan Norrie about the recent work of young women painters. We felt that there were a group of artists in their late twenties and thirties who were in a sense the beneficiaries of social, political and cultural changes brought about by what is broadly encompassed by the description, 'the women's movement'. These artists were working in a situation where abstraction was well and truly passe and the various strands of feminist theory were well understood and assimilated. There should, we surmised, be a quality and character about their work which would form the basis of an exhibition. This basic format was varied slightly to include one artist with more obvious links back to the 1970's. This was to avoid the error of assuming that artists of one generation are born fully formed with antecedents requiring no acknowledgement. The title 'Heartland' was chosen to suggest in an almost geographical sense that the work of these artists is central to the concerns of recent art practice, and perhaps as a concomitant to that, that painting is also returning to a central role. The title is also to suggest the confronting emotional strength of the imagery in all of the works in the exhibition. This exhibition has been financially assisted by the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council and we gratefully acknowledge their assistance.

Frank McBride
Director

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|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Wollongong City Gallery | February 13 - March 13 |
| Newcastle Region Gallery | April 5 - May 12 |
| Heide Park Gallery | May 27 - July 1 |
| Ivan Dougherty Gallery | July 20 - August 10 |

This exhibition has been curated and toured by the Wollongong City Gallery with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council.

HEARTLAND

"... we want to avoid being trapped in the man-made category of woman as repository of feeling, subject to the tyranny of emotions. This is particularly acute for women artists whose products have been treated as emblems of this image of trembling femininity and described exclusively in terms of sensitivity, delicacy, grace, charm and other intended derogatives."

Griselda Pollock, from the catalogue SENSE AND SENSIBILITY IN FEMINIST ART PRACTICE, Midland Group, Nottingham, 1982.

The heart of the matter . . . what's at issue here? What matters? Suppose I wrote: "There's nothing out of the ordinary. It's an exhibition of paintings; the only difference is, they're all by women." The only difference and the crucial difference that makes the show extra-ordinary, in more than one sense. Admit it: wherever you've come from, you expect it to be different, too.

I cannot remember another exhibition of contemporary art in a state or regional gallery where all the artists were women, outside, that is, shows staged by the Women's Art Movement in Adelaide or by feminists and their festivals, whether state-funded or not. "Men only" exhibitions excite no comment in catalogues or the press, nor any disturbance of normal critical faculties. Arguably, for most people "men only" is a meaningless category. Except, and here's that difference again, for women and men who value work by women. We look to the discourses of women's art since women work from specific positions within culture. Women, in short, have different things to say, and say them differently. Difference is crucial: feminine and masculine voices speak differently even when they utter the same, apparently the same, images. Once men said, or so we were told: "Vive la difference!" Now, for reasons of their own, women say so too.

HEARTLAND is unusual. It offers the chance to see some, by no means all, the sensibilities women bring to contemporary painting, an opportunity to reflect on the dialogues and discourses in women's work. I intend my essay as a critical framework for these paintings; like any frame it can be used or discarded in favour of another, as you will, as you think fit. I don't want to offer pre-emptive "descriptions" of the work. I'd rather suggest ways the culture of femininity has nourished it, to attempt to situate it and to provoke questions about it.

Initiatives by women have profoundly altered the face of contemporary society. A great enrichment of our culture, public culture, is one of the benefits the last several decades have brought. For me, the interest of HEARTLAND lies not in the excellence of the work, but in the evidence it offers of rich and diverse strands in current painting by women.

Painting is the focus here, painting as a specific practice. Other exhibitions must take up work by women photographers, sculptors, in installation, video and prints; they are certainly long overdue. But given

that painting is highly valued at this moment, what I find interesting is the evident impudence, albeit unconscious, that has led women to stake out painting as their own territory, boldly, as if unaware they are trespassing on artistic turf usually reserved for larger egos. In a sense, this exhibition enters into dialogue with the unconscious masculinism of John Kaldor's *AN AUSTRALIAN ACCENT*, the show of work by Mike Parr, Imants Tillers and Ken Unsworth currently touring Australia. Not in a spirit of rivalry: no deliberate historical nor rhetorical play is being made.

Once critics accounted for the preponderance of women in photography and performance art by the relative absence of men from those fields. On this account, men had occupied the high ground of painting, sculpture and later conceptual art, and the women tended to move into unoccupied territory. Times have evidently changed. Painting is an admitted site of strength for women working now.

I'm not interested in rehearsing here the complex artistic, social, critical and market forces that have brought painting back into cultural prominence after more than a decade of neglect. More interesting are the reasons artists look to painting, and why it should attract women. Painting carries narratives, and implied narratives. It's a mode that's congenial to improvisation and to rapid transcription of images; it welcomes on the same surface and simultaneously, states of feeling, notation of ideas, indications of past histories. In short, painting is an extremely flexible way to make images.

Painting is also remarkably diverse today. The stylistic hegemonies of the past are not rehearsed with the old stifling insistence. This diversity suits women, gives them room to move, breathing space. The culture of femininity depends on evading the powerful pressures of stereotypes, succinctly described by Craig Owens as "truly an instrument of subjection."¹

That brings me back to *HEARTLAND*. I'd like to untangle several threads in this title that might trip up the unwary. *HEARTLAND* suggests: painting as the central mode of artistic practice and the specially resonant emotional territory allowed to women in a (cynically) uncaring culture.

Is this the central place in Australian culture, by now crowded with metaphors of "The Centre" and "Dead Heart"?

I say beware, lest women and their work be too easily categorised and therefore misrepresented once more. I debate the notion that painting is, per se, the most important visual practice in our culture, that an irresistible hierarchy of value has reassigned it, with comfortable recognition after the disturbances of the 1970s, to its former pre-eminent place in the order of things artistic. The debates of the 1960s

1. Craig Owens, catalogue essay for *WE WON'T PLAY NATURE TO YOUR CULTURE*, and exhibition by Barbara Kruger, I.C.A. London/Kunsthalle Basel, 1983, p.7.

and 1970s established that contemporary artists use media according to their various purposes, and we rightly suspect theories that insist on the "excellence" of one form of art over another. The diversity of recent painting favours the many voices of women and recalls the plurality of media of the last twenty years.

What of the idea that women, as creatures of the emotions, with "more heart", have something special to offer as artists? I resist seeing the emotional burden of life OR art as the exclusive prerogative or the exclusive charge of women. It's generally admitted that men feel, of course, but the grander passions are reserved for masculinity and maintenance emotions for femininity. So that anger, potent justified public anger, anger turning outwards rather than inwards, is not an emotion usually associated with women. Yet as Angela Carter remarks, "As women, perhaps we are more used than man to living with a real sense of personal powerlessness and that may give us, as a lobby, a kind of extra anger."²

It is impossible to underestimate the importance of women's voices raised in anger over the issue of nuclear war and uranium mining. The women of Greenham Common and Pine Gap repudiate previous masculine custody of "peace" and what we, with unconscious irony, call "civilisation". Defending the peace isn't women's "natural" role, a consequence of essential femininity, but action taken out of the urgency of this historical situation. (Forget the hearts and flowers.)

As for the centre, you'll search in vain here for the "central core" imagery seen by some as an unconscious metaphor for women's sexual identity. Nor do these artists canvass the issue of the Australian identity, a topic by now nearly as exhausted. As the eroded soil of other cultivated pastures in this diverse land.

HEARTLAND? No centre, necessarily, and for women only what dissident femininity can wrest from culture by cunning or coax from it by stealth. Many lands and locations, actual and metaphorical are valued by women artists, by women still mapping themselves with wilfully shifting sets of co-ordinates. These paintings mark some of those co-ordinates, some points of conjunction.

2. Angela Carter, "Anger in a Black Landscape," in (ed.) Dorothy Thompson *OVER OUR DEAD BODIES: WOMEN AND THE BOMB*, Virago, 1983, p. 151.

exhibition is an anomaly makes the point. That it should be odd as late as 1985, to walk into an art gallery and find all the work on display by women, speaks volumes about the slow progress being made towards even acceptable levels of involvement by women in the public arenas of culture.

On a more personal note, it is worth recording that some of these artists have never encountered a woman lecturer in their career as art students. To say this is the norm is to reveal an unconscious acceptance of men as the bearers of "artistic standards" that does, in truth, still pervade art schools. Others were more fortunate: Ania Walwicz remembers the sympathetic teaching of Bea Maddock at the Gallery School in Melbourne, where Maddock was her only female studio teacher. Kate Lohse is unusual in practising as an artist without the conventional training, yet it is Mirabel Fitzgerald's teaching that she refers to in her account of her beginnings as an artist.

Very little consideration has been given to the Visual Arts as an industry in Australia. One fact revealed by the 1982 WOMEN AND ARTS FESTIVAL³ research study was that more women successfully complete art training than their male counterparts; it is after leaving art school that women become discouraged, and drop away from practicing as artists. The development of Affirmative Action proposals, such as the ones published by the Australia Council in 1984, will hopefully signal a period of new growth for women in the arts, both as artists and audiences.

FEMINISM/FEMININITY

"Feminism" is not necessarily a consciously determined ingredient in the work, but rather it arises out of the relation between that work and the representations of a dominant culture, a particular audience, and the use to which it is put. (Some are born feminist, some become feminist, and some have feminism thrust upon them.)"

*Lisa Tickner, "Notes on Feminism, Femininity and Women's Art",
LIP, Vol. 8, 1984, p.17, from a paper originally
given at the Feminist Art Forum at the Biennale
of Sydney, 1982.*

It is sometimes said the art community has a memory stretching approximately three weeks. More common though, is the habit of talking in decades and presuming generational groups to fit them. Thus the often made distinction between the Seventies and the Eighties, and easy agreement that one "group" succeeds another like night the day, the one following the other into critical oblivion. In the implied teleology

³ Research Advisory Group, Women and Arts Project, "Women in the Arts", Australia Council, 1983, pp. 42-43, 72.

of the art market the YOUNG—WOMAN—PAINTER is a fiction precisely because all the artists in this exhibition were influenced by feminism in the Seventies and now develop ideas and approaches indebted to feminism in the Eighties.

HEARTLAND is based in part, on curiosity about feminist influence on artists who were not associated with the women's art groups of the last decade, but who are familiar with issues raised by them as part of their cultural inheritance. This corresponds to the (sometimes wistful) curiosity expressed by women in their late thirties and early forties who wonder if younger women enjoy self-confidence and an unconfined sense of purpose in their lives and work, who wonder, in short, if the younger women have achieved what they themselves desired.

I argue that the feminism of the 1970s has profoundly affected every one of these artists. For the most part this influence has been felt obliquely, and particularly in questions of art, such as issues about representation and forms of artistic practice. None are currently active in feminist campaigns or activities and most have never been. I'm not trying to establish "authentic" feminist credentials, but to point out the broad influence that feminism has had was, after all, one of the original objectives of the political work of the last decade.

In short, I want to resist any covert desire to rescue these artists from feminism for "Art", for the more palatable discourses of liberal culture. The articulate femininity of these artists is the legacy of the Women's Movement. Through feminism, women came to speak femininity, to claim feminine positions in culture. Feminism not only gave permission for the cultural discourses of femininity: exploring femininity had been one of the stated aims of women writers, filmmakers and artists. Yet it cannot be said too often, lest femininity be regarded as unitary, stereotypical or "naturally" static, that the many feminisms of the last two decades have fostered many aspects of femininity, or better, many femininities. Feminists resist prescriptions and limitations on diversity within women's culture. There must be as many feminine modes as there are masculine, structures of feeling, images and impulses available to women.

This exhibition by no stretch of the imagination addresses all the themes and issues associated with feminism in the arts. Nevertheless the meaning of the work depends on recognizing that the position of women in culture, as artist and as audience, is fundamentally different to that available to men. This is how these artists see their own place in the scheme of things. Proof positive: the agreement that led these professionals to exhibit together. All the artists are acutely aware of the readings of their work, individually and collectively, that are invoked by this particular conjunction. For some it has been a consummation that has suggested possibilities for newly exploratory work: this has been the case with Susan Norrie, Margaret Morgan and Kate Lohse, for example.

KATE LOHSE

Biography

1948 Born Crookwell NSW
No extended formal training
Studied Sturt Workshop, Mittagong, Willoughby
Workshop, Sydney
Married with three children, lives Blackheath NSW

Exhibitions

1980 Mori Gallery, Sydney
1981 Drummond Street Gallery, Melbourne
1982 Mori Gallery, Sydney
1983 Perspecta Exhibition, Art Gallery of New South Wales
1984 Mori Gallery, Sydney

Collections

Art Gallery of New South Wales
National Gallery of Victoria - Mitchell Foundation
Bathurst City Gallery



no 1 HEARTLAND TRESPASS

KATE LOHSE

1. Heartland Trespass
Enamel paint on cardboard laid down
153 x 307.5cm (six panels each 76.5 x 102.5cm)
1984
Collection. The artist
2. Exile
Enamel paint on cardboard laid down
229.5 x 205.5cm (six panels each 76.5 x 102.5cm)
1985
Collection. The artist
3. New Land Discovered
Suite of twelve etchings
99 x 138cm (each print: paper size 33 x 345, image size 18 x 25cm)
1984
Collection. The artist

MANDY MARTIN

Biography

1952 Born Australia
1972-75 Studied South Australian School of Arts
1977 Visual Arts Board Grant
1978 Lecturer Canberra School of Arts

Selected Exhibitions

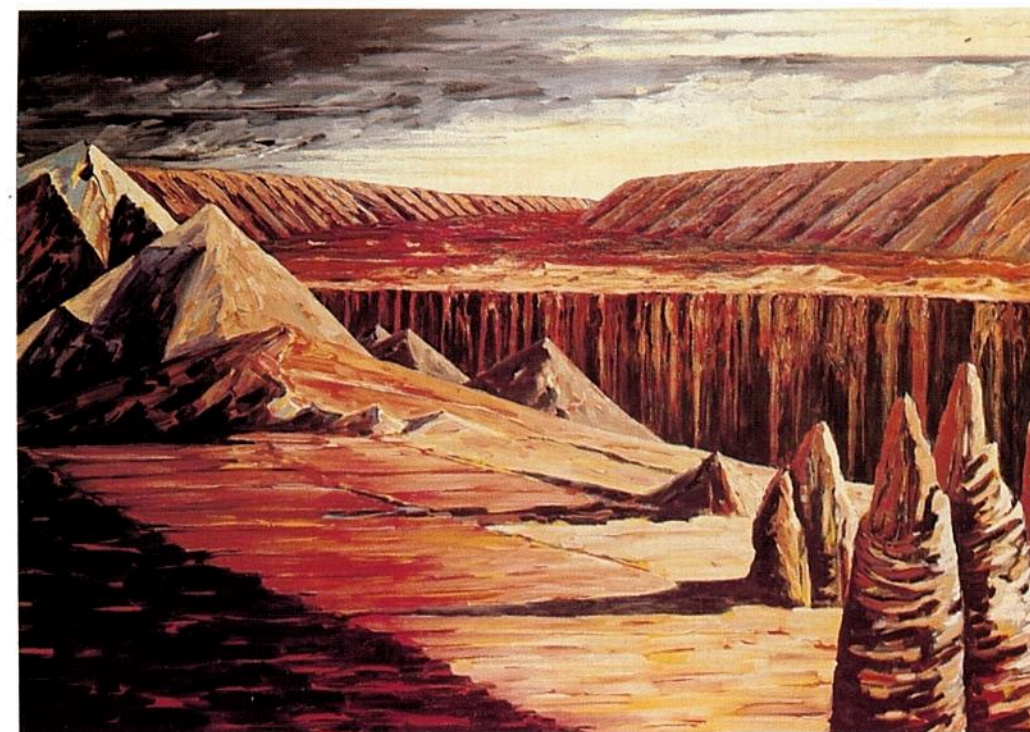
1977 Bonython Gallery, Sydney
1977 Abraxas Gallery, Canberra
1978 Hogarth Gallery, Sydney
1978 Contemporary Art Society, Adelaide
1980 Robin Gibson, Sydney
1980 Solander Gallery, Canberra
1981 Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne
1982 Paris Biennale
1983 Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery
1983 Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne
1984 Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
1984 Australian Visions, guggenheim Musium, New York
1984 Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery

Selected Collections

Australian National Gallery
National Gallery of Victoria
Art Gallery of South Australia
Art Gallery of New South Wales
Australian War Memorial
Wollongong City Gallery
Newcastle Region Gallery
Queensland University Art Museum
Art Gallery of Western Australia
Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery
Art Bank
Warrnambool Gallery

Selected Publications

Arthur McIntyre, 'Mandy Martin - An Artist with Something to Say',
Aspect vol.4. no 1-2 1979
Robert Lindsay, Survey 12: On Paper (catalogue/broadsheet) N.G.V. 1980
Ron Radford, 'Spectres of Our Time', Royal south Australian Society of
Artists, 1981
John Buckley, Commentary: Mandy Martin', Roslyn Oxley9, March 1983
Robert Lindsay, Vox Pop, National Gallery of Victoria 1983
Tony Bond, 'Form, Image, Sign', Art Gallery of Western Australia 1984
Mandy Martin, 'Different Strokes', Art & Text vol. 14, 1984



no 4 GREAT DIVIDE

MANDY MARTIN

4. Great Divide
Oil on canvas
180 x 244cm
1984
Courtesy. Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery
5. Strata
Oil on canvas
180 x 244cm
1985
Courtesy. Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery
6. Drawing No. 2 for 'Break'
Acrylic and enamel on paper
114 x 156cm
1984
Courtesy. Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery
7. Interlock
Oil on paper
114 x 156cm
1984
Courtesy. Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery

MARGARET MORGAN

Biography

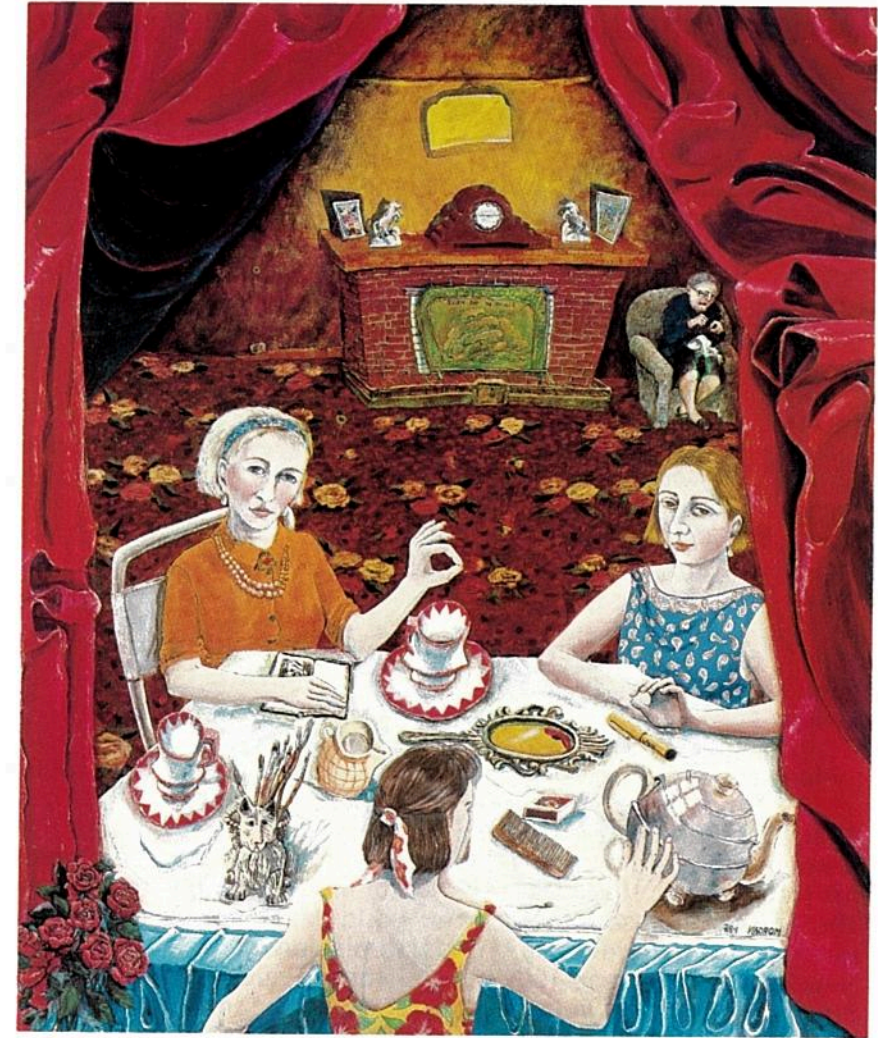
1958 Born Sydney
1977-79 Studied Alexander Mackie College
1981 University of NSW Travelling Scholarship
1982 Power Institute Studio, Cite des Arts, Paris
1982 Dyason Bequest
Lives Sydney

Selected Exhibitions

1981 Urban Exclusive, Mori Gallery, Sydney
1982 Urban Images, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney
1982 Drew Gallery, Canterbury, U.K.
1983 Perspecta, Art Gallery of New South Wales
1984 Soft Attack-'Artists Against Militarism', Artspace, Sydney
1984 Peggy Went to Market, Mori Gallery, Sydney

Collections

National Gallery of Victoria - Michell Foundation
Myer Foundation Collection



no 8 ALLEGORY AFTER THE SCHOOL OF FONTAINBLEAU

MARGARET MORGAN

8. Allegory After The School of Fontainebleau
Synthetic polymer paint on linen, with found objects (Rose tapestry, courtesy Myrtle Morgan)
180 x 150cm
1984
Collection. The artist
9. Reflected Still Life
Synthetic polymer paint on plywood
120 x 240cm
1985
Collection. The artist
10. Allegory In A Paris Cafe
Synthetic polymer paint on plywood
120 x 240cm
1985
Collection. The artist
11. Interior
Synthetic polymer paint on plywood
120 x 240cm
1985
Collection. The artist

SUSAN NORRIE

Biography

1953 Born Sydney
1973 Studied National Art School, Sydney
1974-76 Studied Victorian College of the Arts
1977-78 Travelled Morocco, Egypt, Japan
1983 Housing Commission, Woolloomooloo Mural Project
1984 Tutor Victorian College of the Arts
1984 Artist in Residence, Melbourne University Gallery
Lives Sydney

Selected Exhibitions

1981 Art Clothes - Project 33 Art Gallery of New South Wales
1982 Mori Gallery, Sydney
1983 Australian Perspecta, Art Gallery of NSW
1983 Realities Gallery, Melbourne
1984 Form Image Sign, Art Gallery of Western Australia
1984 Australian Visions, Guggenheim Museum, New York

Select Bibliography

Vogue Living 'Australia's Young Painters' April 1981
Sydney Morning Herald 'Susan Norrie Makes a fleshy feminist statement' 14 October 1982
Sydney Morning Herald 'A woman takes a macarbe look at mummys baubles' 13 October 1982
Australian Perspecta catalogue 1983
Melbourne Herald 'Norrie Turns out visual poetry' 15 September 1983
Art Network no. 10, S. Davies & R. Dunn, Grappling with Diversity
The Age 'A glimpse into a private world' M. Holloway 14 September 1983
Australian Art Review no. 2 ed. L. Paroissien
New York Art Express 1984 'Susan Norrie Recent Work'
Studio International vol. 197 no.1007 'Australia In Manhattan'
New York Magazine 'Upstarts from Downunder' October 1984

Collections

Art Gallery of New South Wales
Art Gallery of Western Australia
Australian National Gallery
Wollongong City Gallery
Guggenheim Museum, New York
Myer Foundation Collection.



no 12 DETERMINED 30 (KNOTTED)

SUSAN NORRIE

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 12. Determined — A work in thirty parts | 18. Envy 10 x 11.5cm |
| 1. Directed 41 x 60cm | 19. Detached 13 x 17cm |
| 2. Dangled 13 x 20cm | 20. Desire 15.3 x 17.3cm |
| 3. Vapour 35.5 x 35.5cm | 21. Illusion 9.5 x 12cm |
| 4. Distracted 25.5 x 33.5cm | 22. Obstinate 37 x 47cm |
| 5. Expected 12.8 x 18cm | 23. Jealousy 27 x 35cm |
| 6. Disciplined 37.5 x 50.5cm | 24. Consumed 42 x 51cm |
| 7. Harnessed 34.5 x 50cm | 25. Delight 42 x 51cm |
| 8. Preoccupied 25.5 x 63.4cm | 26. Purchased 25.3 x 30.5cm |
| 9. Polluted 30.5 x 56cm | 27. Defy 30.5 x 36cm |
| 10. Marketed 20.4 x 25.3cm | 28. Anxiety 37.7 x 49cm |
| 11. Mourned 25 x 37.5cm | 29. Objectified 41 x 45.5cm |
| 12. Compromised 24.6 x 31cm | 30. Knotted 14 diam. |
| 13. Necessity 34 x 49cm | (All dimensions, image size) |
| 14. Detained 33 x 46cm | Oil on plywood |
| 15. Martyr 25.5 x 63.4cm | 1985 |
| 16. Regret 49 x 59cm | Collection. The artist |
| 17. Submit 30 x 35.9cm | |

WENDY STAVRIANOS

Biography

1941 Born Melbourne
1957 Diploma Fine Art, RMIT
1961 Teacher Geelong
1963 Overseas study - England, Italy, Greece
1970 Studied Printmaking, RMIT
1973 Lecturer Darwin Community College
1978 Lecturer Canberra School of Art
Lives in Canberra ACT

Exhibitions

1967 Princes Hill Gallery, Melbourne
1968 Princes Hill Gallery, Melbourne
1974 Flinders Gallery, Geelong
1976 Tolarno Gallery, Melbourne
1978 Tolarno Gallery, Melbourne
1979 Ray Hughes Gallery, Brisbane
1980 Gallery A. Sydney
1982 Gallery A. Sydney
1983 Tolarno Gallery, Melbourne

Collections

Australian National Gallery
Art Gallery of Western Australia
National Gallery of Victoria
Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
National Bank Collection.



no 15 NIGHT CURTAIN

WENDY STAVRIANOS

13. Skin Canyon
Synthetic polymer paint and wax on canvas
180 x 225cm
1983
Collection. The artist
14. Skin Curtain
Synthetic polymer paint and wax on canvas
172 x 240cm
1984
Collection. The artist
15. Night Curtain
Synthetic polymer paint, wax, net, sequins
173 x 240cm
1984
Collection. The artist

ANIA WALWICZ

Biography

1951 Born Swidnica, Poland
Diploma and graduate studies Victorian College of the Arts
Lives and works in Melbourne

Selected Exhibitions

1980 Preston Institute of Technology
1981-
82-83 Art Projects, Melbourne
1983 Ballarat Art Gallery
1984 'Perspectives', Performance Space, Sydney
1985 Performance Space, Sydney
1985 Australian Centre For Contemporary Art, Melbourne
performance pieces
1985 Sculpture 85, Melbourne

Publications

1982 'Writing', Rigmarole Books
1982 Notes on Art Practice, Art Projects
1982 Virgin Press, Sydney
1984 Aspect, Sydney
1984 Art and Text, Melbourne



no 16 PANTHER DONE IN

ANIA WALWICZ

16. Panther Done In
Synthetic polymer paint on calico
100 x 200cm
1984
Collection. The artist
17. Hells Angels
Synthetic polymer paint on calico
100 x 200cm
1984
Collection. The artist
18. Ready Tiger
Synthetic polymer paint on calico
200 x 100cm
1984
Collection. The artist
19. Flourescent Girl
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas
200 x 100cm
1984
Collection. The artist

In the recognition of the special significance of an exhibition by women, one idea is crucial: the feminine is neither essential nor "eternelle" (with apologies to Sonia Delaunay). Rather, feminine voices depend on who chooses to speak how, and what spaces for this speech may be wrested from current artistic codes. For instance, if a woman makes a landscape in Australia, she stands in a particular relation to a long tradition that has tended to place her outside its concerns. When a woman tackles imagery from the masculine lexicon, one must ask whether she endorses it or disputes it. Again, domestic imagery is so foreign to the dominant visual discourses of this culture as to instantly signify femininity, and to beg the further question, what feminine fiction is being made? Female and male artists have neither neutral nor symmetrical relations to visual codes. Sexuality is one factor that fundamentally inflects the relationship of an image to its audiences.

These artists know it. They can explore femininity in what are, after all, rather explicit sets of meanings. Femininity has its visual codes, identified and developed in the last decade with enthusiasm and with esprit de corps. A lexicon of feminine visual forms, images and inflections is available, and in currency. Images, media, colours, shapes: all embody meanings that may be altered when brought into different conjunctions. Artists manage these elements in their daily work, bending them and persuading them into new meanings. No matter how elusive and elliptical the imaginative and intellectual processes involved in making art, artists work with objects and tools in a signifying practice that finds material form.

Lucy Lippard drew attention to these processes many years ago when she noted the rehabilitation of pink. It since enjoyed some notoriety in artistic circles, and shows up in this exhibition. No longer shunned on account of its associations with femininity, pink is used by women with consciousness of all the connotations it carries of softness, intimacy and eventually flesh. Once an ineradicable stigma clung to pink, pink being for girls and blue for boys, as we've known since our baby days. Pink is still feminine, but assertively so. It is available to men, too, signifying relaxation, intimacy, affection, and is often claimed by them. Look here at paintings by Margaret Morgan, Susan Norrie, Wendy Stavrianos, and even at FLOURESCENT GIRL by Ania Walwicz, for a spectrum of significations carried by pinks.

Another example: cutting and stitching cloth has carried feminine associations with domestic needlecrafts. These connotations have been avoided in the past by artists who wanted to stress their distance from domestic concerns and their proximity to professional ones. When Ania Walwicz paints her masculine icons on unstretched calico, she invokes a code that signifies the domestic domain and the realm of the needle. Through a studiedly amateur presentation, she makes a pretension to NON-pretension. The masculine icon is thereby altered in its meaning: made by a woman (knowledge we bring to the work) and deliberately flirting with informatility so as to note: "This painting signifies its distinction from other images of this sort". With Wendy Stavrianos the tactic is precisely the opposite: her use of cutting, folding and pleating

cloth reinforces the femininity that she triply encodes in her work with pink, with fabric and with imagery drawn from the new lexicon of female sexuality.

HEARTLAND doesn't exhaust the range of feminine visual concerns of the moment; it constitutes a small enough selection from them. My purpose next is to read these works made since the beginning of feminism, but not for that reason to be seen as "post-feminist", in the sense of departing from it. On the contrary, the proliferation of feminine visual imageries depends on the many feminisms of the moment, and those learnt from the recent past.

WITHIN THE GAPS

"The actual creative project of woman as subject involves betraying the oppressive mechanisms of culture in order to express herself through the break, within the gaps between the systematic spaces of artistic language . . . this kind of project offers the means of objectivising feminine existence: not a positive, avant-garde subversion but a process of differentiation. Not the project of fixing meanings but of breaking them up and multiplying them."

Anne Marie Sauzeau-Boetti, "Negative Capability as Practice in Women's Art",
STUDIO INTERNATIONAL, 1976
Jan/Feb, Vol.191 no. 979, p.25.

Landscape is a good starting point in Australian art, a central concern. Not because of the often-asserted "presence" of the bush, the space light and heat most urban coastal dwellers have never seen but because of the stubborn persistence of landscape in the cultural imagination. Very likely you are reading this essay in Wollongong, Melbourne, Newcastle or Sydney; all the cities on HEARTLAND's itinerary are coastal. Consider for a moment how for decades city people have made territory foreign to them the raw material of Australian art.

For the most part this territory has been contested by men and pictured by them. That's the case with the dominant traditions of this century: pastoral landscapes typified in the paintings of Streeton, and the desert wastes of existential immobility in Nolan and Drysdale. These might be summarised as "nature tamed" and "nature as yet untamed", and the predominant emotional mood as complacency in the one case and anxiety in the other. But in both there's a relationship posited to the countryside that presumes dominance and exploitation by European society. Making land into landscape is one form of this conquest.

Women have been persistent landscapists, however, whether modernists like Grace Cossington Smith in her native Turrumurra or traditionalists like Jo Sweatman in Victoria. Yet as a site of the drama of national identity, the Australian landscape has been a masculine forum dominated by the virtues of heroic endeavour and laconic mateship and makes the outback a theatre of strength, a masculine-proving place. To

IMAGING WOMAN/MAN

"In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote TO-BE-LOOKED-AT-NESS. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leit-motif of erotic spectacle."

Laura Mulvey, "Visual Cinema and Narrative Pleasure"
SCREEN, Vol. 16, no.3, Autumn, 1975 p.11

Laura Mulvey's classic text investigates the exploitative imaging of women as sexual objects in the patriarchal visual system. Mulvey summed up one of the most important feminist theoretical developments of the 1970s. In fact, this argument proved so persuasive that by the early 1980s some artists thought the very attempt to make images of women was suspect in itself, a position with obvious difficulties.

Yet John Berger's dictum "Men act and women appear", first published in *WAYS OF SEEING* in 1972 and itself a direct response to feminist critiques of images of women in art and the mass media, has been one of the most fruitful initiatives in contemporary explorations of relations between women and images made of them. To summarise briefly, the general argument is that western European culture privileges vision above all other sensory modes: that asymmetrical power relations in our society favour a visual culture that caters to men and their sexual desires; and that this visual culture so excludes women that finding the means to image women's sexual desire towards men (or towards other women) is extremely difficult.

Looking, the act of looking, deliberately gazing at another: any social situation that allows a person to look at another confers knowledge and therefore power. In our culture, social situations from strip clubs to museum walls favour the male gaze, provide for masculine (mostly heterosexual) desire. The very act of looking, the gaze itself, has been assigned to men in psychoanalytic theory, so that looking itself has been theorized as a form of masculine privilege.

In this context, images by Margaret Morgan and Ania Walwicz can be read as a complementary set. Morgan explores feminine attempts to evade the masculinity of the gaze in favour of feminine ways of seeing, and Walwicz insists on rehearsing icons of masculinity, appropriating them to feminine desire, perverting them to her own ends. Margaret Morgan, the youngest artist in the exhibition, is most explicitly concerned with questions raised by feminist visual theory, refuting the suggestion that feminist art died decently with the Seventies; Ania Walwicz delights in disappointing expectations that women take "women only" as their proper subject.

Mirrors, windows, reflection, looking: these double and re-double in Margaret Morgan's paintings. Her sleeping girl doesn't see her own reflection, closes her eyes to narcissism. Instead, another woman watches over her, protects her image. In a Paris cafe (the kind dreams are made of) another girl sleeps; the object of our gaze, she stubbornly refuses to meet our eyes, to acknowledge us. To protect herself, another will see us only through the safety-shield of the mirror that mediates between her and us, the viewers. She knows we are watching, but what else can she do? But the sleeping girl, the object of appropriation? She has nothing to lose: she's a fiction already, Courbet's heavy-lidded dreamer from the Australian National Gallery, transposed to Paris once again.

Three of these paintings are played on the domestic stage. It's a woman's world that is presented here. Women converse with women, spend time with the tea-pot in interiors surfeit with the emblems of domestic femininity. Florals, roses, patterns from remembered rooms speak a self-knowing artifice that's familiar and comfortable. Table-tops mark the limits of one woman's landscape: her tea-pot, her cups, bits and pieces that eventually add up to the artist's own possessions, her brushes, her pentel pen, her notations of sexual desire. As surely as Brett Whiteley's *SELF-PORTRAIT IN THE STUDIO* depends on reiterated masculine sexuality recast in homage (which is to say rivalry) to Matisse's own self-absorbed *RED STUDIO*, Morgan turns to all that signifies the feminine in Australian visual culture. Some icons are nostalgic: do young girls still prize those romantic ballet pictures of the Fifties?

These garnered images do not refer to the artist's own works: they summon up a shared culture of women. Feminist practice in art permitted the domestic as subject matter. The indicators of artifice here mark the domestic realm as a field for investigation for speculation. Margaret Morgan makes it crystal clear: from the second generation comes a second order of images.

With Ania Walwicz the case is almost the polar opposite. Only one of her images pictures a woman, and that through an outrageously masculine icon. For the rest, it's the machismo of tattoos and motor-bike leathers, borrowed from the Hell's Angels for the purposes of a woman's desire. There's no simple appropriation here. (Is appropriation ever simple?) "Note", the paintings say, "we draw your attention to these images and we reflect on them." Commentary on the originals is established through the enlargement of the images to heroic scale, ludicrously expanded—blown up?—in admiration that is ambivalent.

Image is set to work against its material support. In the tug of significations that's set up we recognise a something new being said, a reflection on the crudity and brutal strength assigned to the masculine culture that produced these images. Why would a woman be interested in these references to ritual violence, the panther "Done In", the skull, the fierce tiger? Why not? The artist signifies fascination with the public proving-grounds that young men seek out for themselves. This is the

Morgan uses to talk about her continuity with the traditions of domestic decoration in the "women's realm", and Norrie's scavenged frames. There's a play between the scale of Morgan's work and the small objects she collects, and again between Norrie's refusal of the larger size she has worked to in the past. Not that this is the intention of the artists. As I have been writing this essay they have been working in the usual solitude of their studios. My point is a similar recognition of the significations that these small framed pictures carry for domestic femininity. Morgan refers to it: Norrie embeds her images in it.

And finally Kate Lohse, and the apparent anomaly of her suite of etchings in a painting exhibition. Despite my initial disclaimer, a description is in order here. For the way Kate Lohse handles etching is itself a metaphor for the shifting character of women's desire. She refutes the "fixed meanings" that etching usually implies by painting on the surface of the plate after it has been bitten. The shifting ink on her already-bitten plates accounts for the variation of the image. Printers usually mark changes in the plate in successive "states": Kate Lohse rejects the fixity of one state in favour of fluidity.

This method matches the meanings of her images. In ten prints none is identical, yet all have been made from the same source. None is, therefore, authoritative, but all contribute to a potentially infinite series, summoning up snatches of consciousness, dreams and nightmares. It is by no means certain either, who or how many personae float through this field: are they one or many? In the vortex of the image distinct individuals disappear, merge into one another.

With the paintings, it is we who are compromised in this play between consciousness and unconsciousness. The black night of the etchings absorbs our gaze; the glassy surface of the paintings throws the viewers back onto their own resources. Willy-nilly we are IN the paintings, caught in their movement and in the dramas they refer to.

The notion of theatricality has played a major part in my seeing the works in this exhibition. Sometimes the artists alerted me to theatrical devices used in their work: Morgan and her drawn curtains, Norrie with her self-declared artifices, even Ania Walwicz whose history of performance work has strongly influenced her ways of scaling work to the physical position/size of the body. Notions of the theatrical in work by women artists set up speculation about the self-consciousness of woman's speaking position in culture. Craig Owens suggests that: "In order to speak, to represent herself, a woman assumes a masculine position; perhaps this is why femininity is frequently associated with masquerade, with false representation, with simulation and seduction."⁵

In Kate Lohse's work, as with the other artists in the exhibition, these artifices and representations are acknowledged in the images. The

5. Craig Owens, "Feminists and Postmodernism", in Hal Foster (ed.) *THE ANTI-AESTHETIC: ESSAYS ON POST-MODERN CULTURE*, Bay Press, 1983, p.59.

predicament of women in culture may well be as Owens describes it, but in recognizing that predicament women artists take steps towards evading it.

POST SCRIPT

I left the viewer of this exhibition thrown on her own resources in the dark glass of Kate Lohse's paintings. The rest is your part, reflection after you leave on what you've seen. I recall what Gertrude Stein is said to have said as she lay dying: "What is the answer?" There was no reply. After a pause, Gertrude Stein said: "Then, what is the question?".

Julie Ewington
Sydney, January 1985.