



free

EDITORIAL

output magazine has been the catalyst for major changes to its host organisation South Island Art Projects. Since last word (editorial, issue #17) the SIAP Trustees and staff have been working on plans for the future. SIAP in its present form has realised a number of substantial projects and has contributed significantly to the development of contemporary visual art in the South Island. The environment in which we work is complex and changing however and it is now appropriate that we refocus our energy and resources to best promote artists' work and the exchange of ideas. To do this we need to develop a greater profile and to generate a larger community of support for challenging, thoughtful work.

Very soon a new organisation OUTPUT SOUTH will open a new project space in the Arts Centre of Christchurch. *output*, the magazine, will continue to be a major priority, but more than ever we will need the active support of those who believe that an active contemporary culture is essential to the vitality of any city. Watch for further details.

The implications of new government arts funding policy –Creative New Zealand policy– for our operations are, we hope, better understood. However, at the time of going to press, we had not heard the result of our application for project funding made to Creative New Zealand in the February funding round, so we can not yet report on the likely extent of activities for the rest of this year, beyond those projects for which funding has previously been secured (see news section page 4).

output, the South Island Art Projects magazine, is not funded as a project by Creative New Zealand, but recognising its integral part in the achievement of our aim to foster contact and communication, we have resolved to keep it running in its new format for as long as possible.

Responses to the questionnaire that was printed in the previous issue have been an encouraging reconfirmation of our belief in the effectiveness of a free magazine in reaching a wide range of appreciative readers. Thank you to everyone who provided us with feedback. It seems clear that there exists an important role for a free magazine in providing access to art for a wide public and fostering participation through promoting events and exhibitions. We have printed the questionnaire again in this issue so that we can gather as many responses as possible. So if you have not participated already, a few minutes of your time would be greatly appreciated.

Publication of critical writing about contemporary visual art is the primary purpose of *output*. Our objective is to encourage a range of different approaches to writing about art and to foster debate around the issues which are raised. To this end we are always looking for, and encouraging new writers, in addition to those who are established. If you, or someone you know, has a way with words, why not give us a call.

Julian Bowron. Editor.

SURVEY

SIAP magazine Reader Survey

Thank you to everyone who returned the questionnaire printed in the last issue of this magazine. Responses have been informative and encouraging. If you did not find time to answer last time, please do so now. If you are not already on our mailing list, we will happily add your name. Thank you!

1. your age group

- a. up to 20
- b. 20 – 35
- c. 35 – 45
- d. 45 +

2. annual income

- a. up to \$25,000
- b. \$25 – \$35,000
- c. \$35 – \$45,000
- d. \$45 – \$55,000
- e. \$55 +

3. occupation

- a. student
- b. arts worker
- c. artist
- d. unemployed
- e. self employed
- f. other

4. please prioritise magazine contents 1 – 7

- a. exhibition reviews
- b. art related articles
- c. interviews
- d. film & video reviews
- e. news
- f. artists pages
- g. advertisements

5. how did you get this magazine

- a. SIAP mailing list
- b. cafe, gallery, bookshop
- c. friend
- d. library
- e. other /specify:

6. please estimate how many people will read this copy of *output* magazine

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 – 5
- c. 5 – 10
- d. 10 +

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South Island Art Projects reader survey
PO Box 902 Christchurch
many thanks.

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ArtLaw

SIAP looks forward to presenting ArtLaw, a two day, midwinter seminar on art and the law. The dates are set for the weekend of the 6/7 July for a series of talks on issues ranging from the flash and dazzle of copyright court cases to the day to day hinge oiling of contracts and insurance. We are working hard to make the the seminar easily affordable for all artists and interested parties. We hope to sneak an impoverished artist in for a token \$50 o.n.o. while extorting \$150 each from fat cat lawyers. Although the idea of legal issues may sound dusty and missable, we can promise that the event will be of immense practical value, interestingly presented, and that it will raise some juicy theoretical issues. Lending their wits will be Delia Browne, Auckland law lecturer and obscenity expert, Ian Collie from Australia's Arts Law Centre and local lawyer, Sue Ariel will be preparing a legal handbook for artists, to be informed by and to come out after ArtLaw. Don't let yourself double book your diary and lose this opportunity. Register your interest now! Tel: 03 3795 583

Hoardings

Commencing soon, Hoardings—a SIAP project that will run throughout the year—

apology

in issue #17 on page six an unfortnate error was made. A "pull quote" was placed in the second column amongst some text which refered to statement made by Sandi Morrison at a meeting in Hamilton. The result of this placement was that it might appear that the quote was made by Sandi Morrison when it was in fact taken from elsewhere in the writer's article. This unfortnate ambiguity was entirely the mistake of the editor and the frustration caused to Sandi Morrison is acknowledged and this opportunity is taken to apologise.

will bring artists into cooperation with street level community organisations to prepare large two colour posters that will be displayed in usual poster sites around town. First up, filmmaker Janene Knox will be working with the Prostitutes Collective. Her poster should be out there in the next few weeks.

CNZ Special Initiatives

Creative New Zealand offered the visual arts some extra money in the first funding round following its paua inlaid re-design. "Special initiatives" were made to fund outcome-orientated projects in new media, by emergent artists, in new sites and for writers projects. Of particular interest was the suggestion that artists might site work in New Zealand's many "Theme Parks" and "Nature Spaces".

High Street Project

Following up on a sucessful sequence of individually organised shows that has run from the start of the year, the High Street Project will host a new series of two week shows, *Identikit*, with funding from Creative Communities Christchurch. Local artist Violet Faigan, who has worked as co-ordinator and envigilator at the gallery since it reopened in early 1995 has retired her position to travel in the United States, where she will doubtless enjoy getting to see good art without having to sit with it for weeks on end! Melissa Macleod plans to assume Violet's responsibilities and can be contacted at the gallery from June.



Grant Lingard

The death of West Coast born and Christchurch trained artist Grant Lingard was marked by a memorial gathering at the Travel Lodge on the Avon Loop in December last year. He died, early in the month, of AIDS-related illness in Sydney, his home town of the past half decade. Friends and family from Australia and around New Zealand attended to honour Grant, whose thoughtful, bold and witty work provided a highlight of SIAP's Tales Untold in 1994. A show of Grant Lingard's work *Swansong* was held at First Draft gallery in Sydney in February of this year. An exhibition of Grant's work (with the working title *Desires and Derision*) will open at the Jonathan Smart Gallery in Christchurch 25 June and an essay surveying his career is in preparation by Christchurch writer, Brent Skerton.

Gordon Walters

The renowned abstract painter Gordon Walters, a long term Christchurch resident, died late last year. Before his death he had been the subject of no less than two major retrospective exhibitions, (curiously neither in his home town) the most recent, *Paralell Lines*, at the Auckland City Art Gallery in late 1994(?).

Glittering Prizes

Our recent reader survey indicated that many people found the SIAP newsletter's listings of prizes, residencies and the like particularly useful or heartening, and that that service has been missed in recent times. Rather than duplicate their efforts, we would recommend the Artist's Alliance newsletter as the place to look for a most comprehensive listing of such opportunities for artists. It costs \$3.50 per issue and can be obtained from the Alliance, c/- 1 Ponsonby Road, Newton, Auckland.

Sharp as...

The Bishop Suter Gallery in Nelson held an exhibition of painting/wall work by younger Christchurch artists through March. *Pins and Needles*, curated by

Jonathan Bywater, offered a sample of new blood for Nelson audiences and included work by Tony De Lautour, Violet Faigan, Kristy Gorman, Kirsty Gregg, Chris Heaphy, Caroline Menzies and Séraphine Pick.

Cemented

Concrete Deal, the long awaited, stringently managed, artist-run project is now underway in an inner city Wellington carparking building. First up was former Christchurch artist Jim Speers... *Concrete Deal* has been initiated by and includes many recently departed Canterbury trained artists, including Jim Speers, Simon Endres, Maddie Leach and Joyce Campbell. Virtually all of whom have been involved with the High Street Project and SIAP. In spite of this however it is reported that one of the opening speakers welcomed the arrival of ideas from the North!

Blank It Coverage

sauvignon blank formerly known as eugenie blank, aka David Hatcher, film maker, e-mail entity, initiator/"star" of the 3x3 project (see review section) and lapsed SIAP Trustee, has left Christchurch to work in Berlin. At last mail check he was warmly wrapped in felt blanket before a coal stove working his way through a "hearty quota of Ennio Morricone". Stay on-line for sauvignon's account of the most exciting new German digital image-work in the next *output*.

Helluva Writer

Justin Paton, the mouth of the south art-wise of late, has landed a plum job at Unitech, Auckland. We will all miss his regular, vigorous and accessible commentary on art in Canterbury. No ordinary reviewer he.

Chris Heaphy at Waikato

Also drawn Northward by the lure of a real job, Christchurch painter and former SIAP Trustee Chris Heaphy joins the staff of the Waikato Polytech.

Reversing the Flow

Sean Kerr a video maker and computer whiz from Elam, has arrived to teach at the Art School at Canterbury. He succeeds Lawrence Wallen in the position of lecturer in electronic art.

Monikers For Mags

Tessa Laird, performance artist and (last year's arts editor for Auckland student newspaper Cracuum) has edited a pilot issue of a new art bi-monthly, *Monica*. She styles herself Managing Editor and is assisted by Senior Editors, Anna Miles, also of Auckland, and Anna Sanderson of Wellington. Their ambition is to provide an opinionated critical alternative to the advertorial/promotional leanings of existing art publications, concentrating on reviews. Issue #1 looks good but fails to look beyond the North Island. Even so, independent critical writing is a rare animal, so get yours now. (It's \$5 at good bookshops.)

God Forbid

Ronnie van Hout has taken up an artist's residency in Taranaki. We heard as he left that he planned to conquer the long hours of isolation by "watching television" while acting as teacher and example to the students of the Polytechnic. His exhibition, which opened in late April was titled "The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost".

Counter Culture

Two Christchurch artists travelling with the assistance of Creative New Zealand to research their practices, Kristy Gorman and Caroline Menzies, were living in London during January where they had temporary work in Harrods department store for the January sales. Kristy helped sell designer clothes while Caroline purveyed perfume.

London Palling

Kate Fielder, ex-SIAP worker, is also staying in London at the moment. The murky chill of the city's winter has leached her spirits so badly that she has not come up with a Letter From London for us, but she has proved a useful contact for local artists researching educational opportunities thereabouts. She is working a boring job for poor pay and misses her Bakehouse lattés.

Lerve Conquers

The already syrupy atmosphere of reconstituted Anglo heritage in the Arts Centre was thickened recently by the Festival of R♥mance. Crêpe bows and astonished mermaids polluted the walls, while fairies and elves rehearsed their dance steps noisily, and package deal marriages were celebrated by Japanese tourists and their camera crews outside the SIAP office window. A highlight, for us, was when some local women chased away one such breakfast-and-bed ceremony in order to protest for the legalisation of same sex marriage. The distractingly lurid mural on one side of the Annex was surely a sign that work was available for artists and that competition for it was not strong. Take note for next year.

situation vacant

Heritage/Tourism industry

The City Council seeks to employ a suitably qualified and experienced person in the position of:

Village Idiot

The position will complement existing heritage characters such as the Town Crier, the Wizard and the Tram Drivers, whose presence brings an authentic touch of olde Disneyland to our postmodern colonial hamlet. It is anticipated that the successful applicant will have a background in clowning, Morris dancing and/or local government. Auditions: apply in person.

The City Council is an equal opportunity employer.

Seven sins and artists in the city

Rob Garrett

"Let he who is without sin try to survive." An obese stay-at-home is forced to eat himself to death. A young "reconstructed" model has her nose cut off to spite her face. And a prostitute is found cut open by a device strapped to a hapless patron's penis: Three elaborate sermons on Gluttony, Pride and Lust. *Seven* [i] is the story of two cops, one killer, and seven sins. Retiring cop William Somerset (Morgan Freeman) gets to partner his replacement, young Detective David Mills (Brad Pitt) as the two try to keep up with and outwit serial killer John Doe (Kevin Spacey -- and no, if you haven't seen it yet, this gives nothing away) with a mission to give elaborately scripted object lessons in Catholicism's seven deadly sins: Gluttony, Greed, Sloth, Envy, Wrath, Pride and Lust. The detectives find that each crime scene has been staged with theatrical precision, offering complex and layered intertextual fields of excess reference, cross-reference, exegesis and allusion. And the viewers are in no more privileged position, for not once is the theme killer shown at work on his entirely postmodern site-specific installations with their condition of awaiting the signifying beholder and reader.

The *mise en scène* is a dark sepia-toned and sinister post-Orwellian and *Blade Runner* hybrid city, equally unrecognisable as either Los Angeles or New York, caught in an incessant downpour. The rain isn't cleansing, though, in this miserable urban landscape. Instead it obscures faces and details, and lends the

film's disconsolate message ("Who gives a damn?") an inescapable out-of-focus, grimy and claustrophobic inevitability.^[2] *Seven* presents a frightening vision of the contemporary metropolis as if all that is left of the urban everyday is its dark underbelly. Directed by David Fincher who comes out of MTV videos (The Rolling Stones' "Love is Strong", Madonna's "Express Yourself", "Vogue" and "Oh Father" and Aerosmith's "Janie's Got a Gun") via *Aliens*, *Seven* is based on a screenplay by Andrew Kevin Walker who wrote it while working at a Tower Records store in New York, a city he describes as "a cauldron of unpleasanties."



Ambitious and optimistic Detective David Mills (Brad Pitt) in contemplative mood as disillusioned and nostalgic William Somerset (Morgan Freeman) disconsolately confesses he thinks all murder cops are nothing more than curators of mysteries and custodians of evidence in the hope that someone else might one day pass judgement. Sound familiar?

Photo courtesy of Roadshow Film Distributors (NZ) Ltd.

As in any buddy film, Somerset and Mills do not get along at the beginning. But soon, with the help of Mills' lonely wife Tracy - played by Brad Pitt's real-life love interest Gwyneth Paltrow (yes, they met on the set)- the men become friends and work together to solve the murders. The film is edgy early on, but the plot slackens too soon from suspense into predictability. However

there are other tensions that go some way towards sustaining the movie. There is a frisson between the different values, experiences and egos of the two cops - the one hot-blooded the other cool and dispassionate. There is the uneasy but necessary tension between the claimed insanity of the killer's deeds and the rational logic of his methods and purpose. And there is constantly the arty and grimy vision of an oppressive and alienating city which keeps at arm's length brief glimpses of its utopian other: the old man's desire to escape, the young woman's deep loneliness, and the conventional wisdom that says hell is no place to bring up children. Despite the fact that the movie has surprisingly few "warm" scenes, they nevertheless skirt its gloomy rhythm much like the walls of a resonating chamber. One is an interlude late at night in the city library where Somerset pores over books while security guards in the background play poker to the strains of Bach's Suite No. 3 in D Major on their ghetto-blasters. Another is the touching supper at home initiated by Tracy Mills who greets the detectives as they arrive for dinner with a low-voiced "Hello, men." And the third is a moment when the two men are alone in a bar and Somerset eloquently outlines his disenchantment. Mills, in reply, passionately but haltingly dismisses the older man's world-weariness as nothing more than log-cabin escapism. It is a pointedly inarticulate rebuttal. This failure of character, and film, to spell out a justification for an idealist or alternative vision of the city, coupled with the film's depressing *dénouement* and the killer's too credible and literary craziness caricature Mill's defence of hope as naïve and untenable. The film reinstates that old and constantly resuscitated stereotype of the everyday of urban experience as an inevitable decline towards excess, degeneracy, and horror. Thus it recuperates nostalgia as the only idealism worth anything. Disturbingly and

paradoxically, the naive idealism of David Mills and the cruel "sword of God" idealism of John Doe are conflated in the end as equally useless and insane.

What caught my attention from the start was the way the movie smuggled the persona and methodology of a certain view of the contemporary avant-garde (read 'subversive') artist into the tropes of the *mise en scène* to articulate these structural tensions. *Seven's* killer appears by inference in a number of pivotal scenes as a cross between Weegee, Joseph Cornell, Christian Boltanski, Damien Hirst and any number of club-scene New York performance piss-artists. Other movies recently which have centred on a psychotic or sociopathic protagonist have articulated the killer's reason/unreason dynamic differently. By demonstrating elaborate games of logic, or by revealing a past influenced by military or police training, or by unfolding a fanatical political ideology or personal revenge motive the killer cannot be dismissed as simply "mad". That the killer has to be "understood" is a (necessary) plot device which helps sustain the narrative tension. Remember *The Silence of the Lambs's* two killer artists – the one with his picturesque drawings and the other with his macabre hand-sewn patchwork second-skin reminiscent of Galatea's fabrication of Pygmalion? And *Basic Instinct's* supposed ice-pick killer Catherine-the-accused who scripts her crimes as novels before acting them out? Who said life and art were alienated? Not since these two films has mainstream Hollywood employed the rhetorical device of the artist to demonstrate the intelligence and rationality, the creativity and cool objectivity, the dead sexiness of serial murder. A more recent release *Copycat* (a Warner Bros. film directed by Jon Amiel), starring Sigourney Weaver and Holly Hunter as a "She-Doc" and "She-Dick" duo, makes the killer-artist

connection too, but nobody in this movie seems to believe the serialist's claim that with a stone for a heart, killing can be perfected as an art.

Seven is dead arty though. Its titles and credits are scratched and stamped into black film stock like a cross between a legible version of Len Lye's direct animation *Free Radicals*, pubescent scrawl from Beavis and Buttheads' diary, and what conservative Dunedin students would characterize as a "bad-type-day" in the deconstruction design of SPeC.[3] or for its US equivalent, David Carson's *Raygun* signature style. Accompanying this, in a series of extreme closeups, fingers can be seen at work with blades, pen and needles on an elaborate bricolage of opaque and transparent images mounted on various papers together with narrow feint, small-script hand-written notes on delicate translucent pages all painstakingly sewn into handmade books. In the show-and-tell confessional workbook orthodoxy which has gripped the studios in Dunedin's art school it is possible to see dozens of similar



Conflicted Tracy Mills (Gwyneth Paltrow), around whom most of the movie's few warm moments orbit, hates the city, the vibrating apartment, and the fact that she can't get a teaching job because all the schools are just too awful.

Photo courtesy of Roadshow Film Distributors (NZ) Ltd.

constructions; in the film we learn later these bound assemblages are the work of the serial killer, all 2000 of them. This is not the incomprehensibility of copybook insanity. What is demonstrated here is the loving care of a passion; a productive, accumulative, archival, and aesthetic passion. When eventually the killer's apartment is opened and these books are found amongst his other belongings, what the camera reveals in the dimly lit space is a strange and yet familiar mixture of artist's studio, private gallery and archive.

There are three passages in the film which interpolate the artist as signifier of the killer's rationality and obsessive fanaticism and which effectively complicate his status as an out-and-out nutter: the closeups of the title sequence, the torch-light tour of the killer's apartment, and Somerset and Mills' visit to a customized leather goods store where the killer has ordered an evil little number in black and blades from a guy who remembered he thought John Doe must be a performance artist: "You know, one of those guys who pisses into a plastic cup on stage and then drinks it, his own piss. Yeah, a performance artist." The claim that artists and killers are alike in their dispassionate aloofness and necessary inhumanity is a well-worn myth of romantic and high modernism. "An apocryphal story – told by an anonymous psychologist – illustrates this supposed criminal coldness: the sculptor Benvenuto Cellini, casting a statue, is said to have needed some calcium for the bronze alloy, and, finding none in the studio, to have thrown a little boy into the pot for the calcium in his bones. 'What was the life of a little boy to the claim of art?'"[4] It is exactly this distance, this cool, but ruthless head that is claimed for the killer in *Seven*. It is a claim made in the scripted discussion between the detectives, and demonstrated in the complex cross-referencing of clues by the killer from one crime

scene to another and from one literary source to another, but my argument is that it is also powerfully alluded to in the leitmotif of the killer's work as artistic creativity and his sites of labour as gallery installations in a manner familiar to viewers of visceral art of the last ten years or so. Intriguingly the audience is never shown the killer at work on matter corporeal. What is displayed instead is his handiwork carefully laid out for the attentive labours of the forensic voyeur. This theatricality extends to John Doe's apartment. The killer's own bedchamber looks like a set for an Andres Serrano photograph, with its illuminated red cross against black. Photographs of his intended victims in the manner of Weegee's edgy serendipity were found in the pale red glow of a bathroom-come-darkroom. In a series of reliquary glass-fronted boxes ranged along one wall of the apartment there were references to the fastidious assemblage techniques of Joseph Cornell, fascination with the formalin suspension of body parts of Damien Hirst, and, with their little picture lamps casting a yellow glow over each one, a suggestion of Christian Boltanski's archival signature style: photographs of the ordinary dead each caught in a halo of lamp-light. Even the police crime scene photos are arty black-and-white shots rather than authentically clinical and polychrome. Here is an artist desperate for attention – why the visual and visceral excess otherwise? – but for himself, or his work? Finally satisfied that his subversive installations have the effect of hitting people who won't pay attention any more with a sledgehammer, John Doe is prepared to slip away, leaving only traces of the proper name in the archive: an excess of material he expects people will puzzle over and imitate for years to come.

While I went to the movie with friends who were shocked by its graphic gruesomeness, what struck me was my own dispassionate aesthetic engagement and my sense of *déjà vu*. Have I become

inured to the laying waste of human life portrayed in such movies? I remember laughing longer and louder as *Pulp Fiction* progressed, but I remember too, during *Reservoir Dogs*, my reflexive ducking at times to avoid the spectacle of gore. For me *Seven*'s familiarity lies in its arty patina; it is a mannerism which is double edged. On the one hand it induces a certain aloofness, an abstraction like being taken out of oneself, that enables, as Richard Rorty has claimed for literature,[5] an increase in our awareness of difference, our understanding of what causes others pain and our ability to extend our sense of "we" to people we have previously thought of as "they", that enables in fact the transformation of the private subject into a public citizen; but equally, the film's conflation of crime and art reinstates the cultural ghetto to which the Right has recently relegated so much difficult difference and by which it justifies tiresome vilifications of the subversive body art of photographers and performance artists. What is re-marginalized by the artist-killer connection is work that seeks to expose the suppressed underbelly of dominant social relations by interrogating sexualities and nonconformity. *Seven* can be seen as a compelling metaphor of the Right's forensic interest in "deviant" contemporary art, and a vision of art's imagined links to sociopathic behaviour, general moral decline and the death of the traditional family. Is this a chilling or thrilling vision for the artist or anyone arguing for the legitimacy of difficult differences? As the detectives' torch-lights jerked nervously about the cramped spaces of the small rooms in the killer's apartment an interesting contrast emerged between the anally retentive orderliness of the tool racks and drawers, and the arte povera or mannered grunge style of the displayed items – especially the little vitrines on the wall with their rickety lamps. It was as if this chaotic and violent creativity was in the end only an affectation, a patina that might be rubbed off with a little domestic cleanser. Is the message here



Cerebral puzzle solver Lt. William Somerset (Morgan Freeman) in the "ops" room. Is he thinking or just waiting? After all, the killer always seems to be one, or three, (or is it seven?) steps ahead of the cops.

Photo courtesy of Roadshow Film Distributors (NZ)

that a long-suppressed subterranean natural order might re-surface if this mannered artiness is stripped away? Might the artist be "saved" from "yucky" surfeit by a good body programme? Wouldn't the Right be thrilled if all deviancy could be "corrected" in this way, and beauty, order, and harmony be reinstated in its place, either by genetic re-engineering or by the social engineering of "responsible" legislation and self-policing. So whether the chips fall in favour of nature or nurture doesn't really matter, things can still be put right in this utopian vision of a world where excess can be stripped away without the body losing its vital signs.

This may indeed be the polemic of the film despite its apparently gratuitous celebration of sensual surplus, for the plot figures the return and triumph of the lean, clean and uncomplicated. The screenplay is stripped and streamlined, reduced to bare essentials, and in the quest for the killer there are no red herrings or redundant references. *Seven*'s stiff of a story-line limps

lately towards an all too inevitable set of narrow possibilities, particularly after the moment when David Mills begins to foam at the mouth as if auditioning for a Deadly Sin role himself. Trimmed and toned in this way the critical bite and textual excess suggested by the film's visual style turns out to be toothlessness and anorexia. While fragmentation and uncertainty are presented as the exclusive attributes of the movie's twinned villains – the psychotic killer and the modern metropolis – their actual counterparts in real life, difference, distance and complexity within and between persons, become othered and vilified. The political Right posits that the last bastion of the ideal society resides in the mythic traditional family. And in the movie, as an echo of this conservative ideology, it is the private sphere occupied by the Mills couple contemplating parenthood that the killer and the dark city finally infiltrate. Conservative ideologues know only too well the emotional tug exerted by images of the family under threat in the representational sphere, amounting as they do to proofs of a general moral decline and acting in turn as justifications for intolerable forms of political and social disenfranchisement. In the end, despite the visual and aural seductions in this movie the sound track overlays of off-camera interference noises, dialogue, eclectic musical citations and original score by Howard Shore (*The Silence of the Lambs*)? -- it was the conservative structure and tropes that had me shifting in my seat. Here perhaps is a lesson, as if we needed it, in how the subversive potential of polymorphous perversity is not guaranteed in as much as excess is the already anticipated irruption of/on themargins by which the centre's dream of coherence is maintained. Where are optimistic images of the city, positive renderings of interpersonal distancing and non-sociopathic visions of fissured subjectivity? Where are images that awaken longings for connectedness and an ethic of care without

resorting to outmoded and depressing tropes which demonize the present in the name of unattainable utopias, dreams of the past, and a return to traditional values? Certainly not in *Seven* with its simple inference that its vision of city life as raw, depressing, hostile and evacuated of all caring is entirely authentic.

Notes:

1. *Seven*, a New Line Cinema film produced by Arnold Kopelson (Platoon and Falling Down) and Phyllis Carlyle (The Accidental Tourist), was distributed by Roadshow and released to New Zealand audiences in November through the Hoyts chain.
2. Rainmaking machines were utilized in nearly every scene, canopies were hung to block out excess sunlight and sets were weathered and aged. In most scenes the characters are seen through a fog of moisture, obscured by the blurred focus and oblique perspectives of closeups and odd camera angles and revealed in miserly silhouettes by the lighting effects. In addition, a colour enhancing film process (CCE) was used to re-bond silver to the print and intensify the shadowy tones in the picture. When producer Kopelson claims "each frame of the movie looks like an oil painting" he can't be thinking of Matisse.
3. SPeC is a periodical published by Radio One, the Otago University Students Association radio station in Dunedin.
4. Donald Kuspit, "Artist Envy", *Artforum*, (November 1987):118.
5. Richard Rorty, in *Contingency, irony and solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1989, p.192), claims it is imagination rather than reason that acts to extend our sensibilities and our understanding of others, it is literature rather than philosophy that increases our awareness of what causes people pain. The notion of transformation from private individual to political citizen which follows my reference to Rorty is not the same as the notion of transcendence associated with an ideal of citizenship

that calls on people to separate themselves from their own identity or immediate location. Transcendence is not the same as transformation: the transformation of people into citizens should not depend on us forgetting our own more specific perspectives, but in our ability to provisionally set them sufficiently aside so as to engage in the egalitarian politics of discussion with others to reach decisions that seem just and fair on issues of common concern. Various authors have written usefully on these matters: Mary G. Dietz, "Citizenship with a feminist face: the problem with maternal thinking", *Political Theory*, 13, 1 (1985); and "Context is all: feminism and theories of citizenship", *Deedalus*, 116, 4 (1987); Anne Phillips, *Democracy and Difference*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993); and Iris Marion Young, "Polity and group difference: a critique of the ideal of universal citizenship", *Ethics*, 99(1989).

Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the theatre: **AN ECHO OF MY TRANCE** University of Canterbury Drama Society **4 – 7 June**. The myth of Echo & Narcissus from **Ovid's Metamorphoses** read by Howard McNaughton. **Trance music** and dance. A sung **soprano** textual deconstruction. Music by Ben Parsons. **Ngaio Marsh Theatre**. **4 – 7 June 8pm \$7 & \$10**. Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the theatre: **AN ECHO OF MY TRANCE University**

creating new zealand

Jane Gregg

There is something of an ironical turn in the title of the newly born agent of arts funding in New Zealand. The presence of the funding body Creative New Zealand, once the more staid and imperial QE2 Arts Council, reminds us that in the late twentieth century, art production is more about snappy corporate image than it is about the process of defining and redefining the limits and boundaries of ideas and images. Like other spheres of activity that intersect with the governing discourse of free marketism, art has become increasingly subject to the creeping scourge of mediocrity, lowered horizons and "dumbness", while its critical edge is whittled away by both the institutionalization of relativistic aesthetic philosophies within the Academy, and the establishment of bland notions of what art should be within the wider cultural milieu. Here at the fag end of a century noteworthy for its epic scales of cruelty, its symphonic crescendos of violence, and its discordant complexity, it seems no coincidence that the art arena is being forced to retreat from its historically constructed critical role into something more suited to the needs of fin-de-siècle capitalism. The driving principles of institutions such as Creative New Zealand effectively dictate an art culture which eschews edgy critique in favour of feel-good fluff at worst, or self-reflexive play at best.

"The advent of Creative New Zealand is another historical marker in New Zealand's great rightward lurch."

The advent of Creative New Zealand is another historical marker in New Zealand's great rightward lurch. The installation of rationalist policies advocating free market ideology and laissez-faire social agendas was destined to trickle down to the artworld eventually, and in the rebirth from earnest Council to corporate logo-meisters, the way has been paved for arts funding and arts promotion to be systematically reduced and disempowered in the same manner that so many other government agencies have been over the past decade or so. Interestingly, however, in the case of Creative New Zealand, the means by which this is to be



achieved has been delivered in the language of up-to-the-minute postmodern soundbytes; a kind of collision between Keynesian economics and Derridian free play, mixed in with a bit of good old fashioned racial essentialism and folk lore.

It is at this juncture between contemporary cultural concerns and contemporary political fashion that we see the inception of the ideological underpinnings of

creating new zealand

agencies such as Creative New Zealand. Examining the founding documents which paved the way from a council which tended to be centred around the core notion of "the artist at work", to a corporate hegemony centred around some rather loosely argued "goals and principles" for New Zealand arts, the discursive features of cloaked authoritarianism and anti-intellectualism begin to emerge. Throughout the press releases, documented statements and within the Act of Parliament which established Creative New Zealand [The Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Act, 1994] is an on-going narrative that speaks of adherence to notions of participation, access, excellence and innovation, professionalism and advocacy. While these sound like worthy ideals, it is perhaps more interesting to consider what kinds of art and art practices are allowed, and which are necessarily marginalised under the terms of such discourse. If the funding body of Creative New Zealand is indeed the State, we need to question the terms and motives of words like "excellence" or "advocacy" in order to determine the degree to which work funded through the State must become, by definition, State art. State art, as history points out, is necessarily conservative, self-reflexive, and usually uncritical in its approach. It is built upon the notion that art can somehow placate social instability by providing a cohesive raft of images which celebrate perceived national identity and social cohesion. This is the kind of art that we can expect to see funded in the name of "participation" and "access". The consequences of allowing quangos with various ideological agendas determining exactly what kinds of projects can be considered meritorious for some mythical New Zealand community can only be disempowering for art as a critical organ, or art as a site of radical experimentation. It is no wonder then, that already we

have seen a lack of commitment to existing projects which have been more interested in examining critically and conceptually the place of art in the world, than in propping up fictitious and nebulous celebrations of diversity and bi-culturalism. Far from wanting community access and participation and people investigating their situations through art, it seems that Creative New Zealand would prefer to simply affirm a world in which the political and the economic forces causing lack of access and lack of participation can be kept at bay by feel-good images and representations made by recipients of what is essentially government public relations money.

The ideological turn from which Creative New Zealand emerges doubtlessly has its roots in the New Rightist dogma of rationalism and accountability which New Zealanders have been force fed over the last decade. However, simultaneously, within the intellectual world, a widening adherence to philosophical agendas which announce the "end of history", the "end of class", and the installment of postfeminism, and postmodernism as the new religion of choice for mainstream academic enterprise, has meant a certain detachment from critical analysis of the external arena. It does not seem coincidental that at the same time that notions of "difference", "plurality" and "multivocalism" are being championed within the depleting Academy, decentralisation, disenfranchisement and fragmentation are taking place outside it. With this in mind, we have to consider the degree to which young and emerging artists coming out of the halls of higher learning are being prepared to accept the lowering horizons of late capitalism. If money for art is to be given out on the grounds of how successfully the artist is able to

creating new zealand

prop up the status quo, it would seem more palatable to believe and to teach that art doesn't actually act within the world, therefore the world need not especially bother the artist, unless it is in some idealistic or fictional way. However, as these younger artists frequently express, the intersection between the political and the personal; art and power; discourse and practice, is more impinging and insistent than this. The recent series of exhibitions entitled "What Now?", at the High Street Project indicated this concern in a manner which is not evident in the works of more established and more frequently funded artists. Indeed, one of the most dominant interests of the series was the suggestion that, having left the safety of art schools and lecture halls, the "real world" was utterly contingent upon the kinds of work that they should be producing, and a tension was drawn in a few cases between the lofty ideals of the Academy and the dirty realism of the market. Kirsty Gregg's show "Booze Artist" and Saskia Leek's "Filthy Claws" resonated particularly strongly with these kinds of concerns. Similarly, the recent "Praxis" series, coordinated by South Island Art Projects also seemed to show a widely held concern that art and politics; artist and community; representation and reality should be able to intersect at the level of social commentary and social action. This seems a long way from the kinds of theories and philosophies being promoted via the Academy's strange and dangerous collusion with free market thinking, the logic of which underpins the foundations of Creative New Zealand.

The corporate track currently being taken by arts funding in New Zealand via the establishment of Creative New Zealand signals the need for artists and critics

interested in the flourishing of an intelligent and vigorous arts culture in this part of the world to pay closer attention to the means by which government policies are being ushered in via back door methods. It is not enough for the reigning elite to address what are serious issues like community access to resources; race, class and gender inequalities; or national identity through the arts. Pointing to an inclusive racial policy within the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Act, as has been the case for government ministers from a variety of portfolios, does not solve on-going race issues, for example. These kinds of surface concerns deflect attention away from the sources of the problems from which they emerge, and subsequently enforce an ideological straitjacket on artists who would seek state funding support. Artists should not have to perform Saatchi-esque positivity tricks on behalf of the government of the day, but must be allowed to maintain a critical and experimental edge. Without this, the only "creative" thing about "Creative New Zealand" will be its name.



Melissa Macleod

an installation

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3X3

Australian, Chinese & NZ artists

temporary venue, 172A High Street, Christchurch, 17/18/19 November, 1995. (Also Sydney Sept '95, Berlin Jan '96, Beijing April '96, Canberra Sept '96.)

3X3 announced itself as an "internationally touring residential exhibition", and fundamental to the concept of this series of shows was its "ability to remain autonomous of funding bodies and state museums" as it sought to "give an uncensored view of contemporary art practices in our region".

The three separate exhibitions, shown consecutively over three days, in a residential environment here in Christchurch, was a serious attempt to sidestep the agendas of various museum organisations; many of the pieces exploring the relationship between language and the production of meaning within a culture in order to reveal the covert power structures that underpin all societies. Entering the home of artist David Hatcher through an archway between two shops on Christchurch's High Street was a curious experience. For me the exhibition provided a fascinating collision of what we usually think of as being a private place - and yet it was once an old coleslaw kitchen for

Christchurch restaurants - and the context of mixed messages, both personal and industrial which became layered even further with artworks installed in doorways, hallways and inhabiting the lounge room like the antics of some mischievous children: Sitting red-lit flashing dolls on the lounge suite to watch a TV screen of stars - of the galaxy kind - (David Hatcher, NZ), covering the walls intermittently with dots 'near things that are blue' (Eve Sullivan, Aus), and on the final day wrapping the room and its contents in white butcher's paper so that visitors could cover the surface with



Ah Xian: facsimile self portrait, in 3X3.

Chinese calligraphic messages that were incomprehensible to them (Binghui Huangfu and Guan Wei, China).

In summary, the New Zealand component of the series was largely concerned with ways in which we know and remember our natural environment. Lawrence Wallen's video installation jammed into the doorway at the entrance of the bedroom cum coldroom juxtaposed a still image of the artist himself as a young child with footage moving through dense undergrowth in a forest somewhere in New Zealand and a text/voice-over from a diary entry by Joseph Banks on his first encounters with a New Zealand environment.

The Australian component was minimalist and largely opaque in nature, relying for effect on the poignancy and subtlety of placement within the architecture.

The Chinese work was the most overt in its political engagement. Juggling the twofold problem of identity and technology, Ah Xian sent his facsimile self portrait from Sydney as one long series of repeated images slowly dissolving back to the white of the paper. Several of the works from China were concerned with the various transformations and slippages that occur between and within cultures and languages.

3X3 was a brief event but one that afforded a

different format and context, as well as a range of work that would not usually have been seen. While most of the work was of a temporal and transient nature, it was the surprise of each daily visit that made this visitor aware of the most revealing aspects of the different approaches, especially between the preoccupations of each country's contribution.

Fiona Gunn

Machine Dreams

For Beating and Breathing
Andrew Drummond

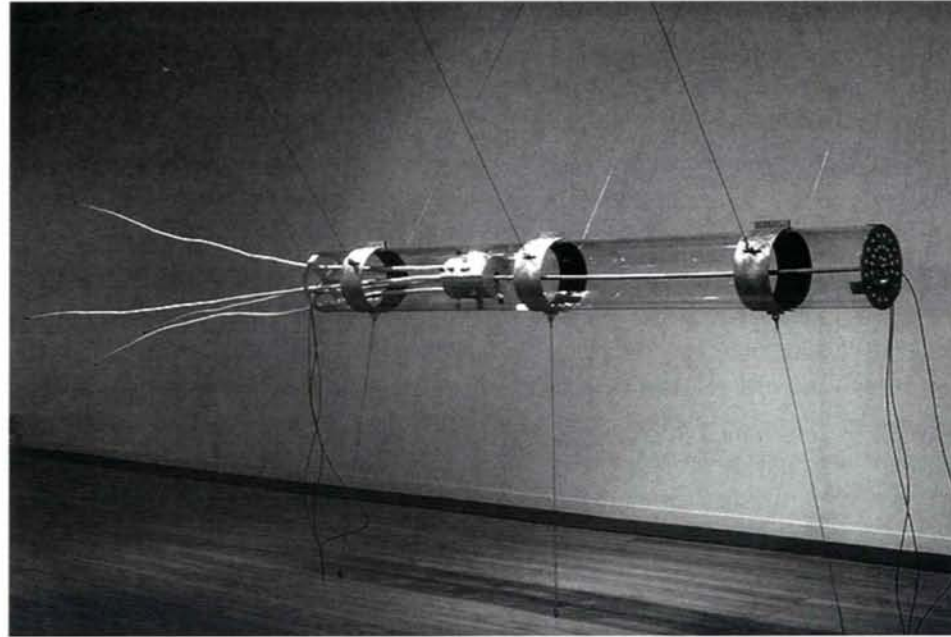
McDougall Art Annex
3 November – 10 December

It is mesmerising, this object, even at rest. You are looking at a long horizontal cylinder of glass, clasped at its ends and middle by bracelets of copper, suspended tautly between floor and ceiling by slender wire hawsers. You see enclosed in this cylinder, like a stopper in a syringe, a small copper carriage which sprouts four long, spindly, stripped willow branches, as pale and strange as sun-bleached bones. You are wandering around it, this elegant machine, wondering what purpose on earth it might serve; thinking, perhaps, of glass arteries, electronic veins, of limbs, lungs, blood.

You are thinking of all this when the carriage begins to inch, hesitantly, almost comically, toward the open end of the cylinder and - here's the strange part - slowly drives those branches out of their enclosure and into your space, groping nervously, like the canes of blind men seeking firm ground at a cliff's edge. Stranger yet, as those branches reach full extension, the carriage emits a tiny mechanical sigh - chooh - reverses direction, and solemnly draws its wavering wooden feelers back into their glass housing, like a snail shrinking into its shell. Day in, day out, with ritual regularity, the device goes through those slow, longing motions - an endless round of extension and withdrawal,

"blind men seeking firm ground..."

exhalation and inhalation, desire and denial, yearning and fear - as if propelled by some un-named, and un-consummated, urge. Even on an off day, Andrew Drummond's art speaks richly to the head, the heart and the hands, but "For Beating and Breathing" makes his recent showings look like mere warm-ups. Helluva sculpture; no ordinary sculptor. It's an index of the object's presence and edgy beauty that the word "sculpture" seems too stingy and shopworn to do it justice. "Device" is closer to the mark, because this object seems to have been imported into the Annex's antiseptic interior from some alien technology, dislodged from the rites that gave it life. Unlike most art,



Andrew Drummond: *For Beating & Breathing*

this device is functional; but its function is potentially ambiguous - all the more so for being cleanly crafted. The air round it eddies with secrets, crackles with questions: Who made it? Why? For whom?

Contrasting our fin-de-siècle with the last, Stuart Morgan notes that the old Baudillairean role of the artist as flâneur, urban connoisseur or pavement dandy has been eclipsed in our time by the artist as shaman or healer. Internationally, you think of Joseph Beuys; in New Zealand, of Andrew Drummond. This show is, after all, the latest instalment in a sculptural meditation that stretches from Drummond's

harrowing performances of the 70s to the serene dream objects that have lately issued from his llam studio. Attuned to The Body long before it hit the art-world headlines, Drummond charted and orchestrated a sculptural scheme in which blood spirals through the body just as water flows through the land. His theme, crudely put, is the poignant frailty of the ties that bind and intertwine all things. His mantra: only connect.

Times change, though, and the lofty hopes and corny idealism that drove so many artists of Drummond's era into the redemptive role of art-priest - those hopes seldom seem available to sculptors today, despite the brave

but often clod-hopping efforts of diehard eco-artists and New Age polemicists like Suzi Gablik. Which may be why, staring at the hyper-elegant sculptures in one recent Drummond show, it was hard not to wonder whether the one-time body artist and transgressor of boundaries had relaxed into a mid-career hammock, like all those Woodstockers who went on to become stockbrokers.

Wonder no more: this show explodes such doubts. Drummond's past art has been offered as a kind of anti-technology, an oblique and vaguely primitivist rebuke to Western civ's hi-tech decadence; but his new work is less holistic than that, laced with threat and impotence. In his *Druids' Hill* sculpture, in his latest dealer show, and here in the Annex, Drummond has recharged his art with some of its original psychic voltage by setting his objects in motion, by making them perform as he once did. Tapping into a history that runs from Duchamp's "Bride" through Beuys' mystic machines and on to Rebecca Horn's mutant mechanics, "For breathing and reaching" presses on your mind as an image of life sustained artificially; and its wheezing, frustrated gropings suggest all's not well in the transaction.

Thus, Drummond's art is freighted with "issues" ecological, medical, and so on - but caution's necessary, lest our heavy-handed "readings" smudge the precise enigma of these objects.

Much prose has been devoted to uncoiling the meanings of Drummond's devices; but their potency, surely, lies in our not knowing exactly what they're about, in the aura of strangeness that they radiate. Yielding more magic and mystery than can be netted in a single review, these weird, graceful gizmos are unlatchers of metaphor, transports for thought, dream machines.

Justin Paton

"... the loss of another sense."

Clean Slate

Anton Parsons

Jonathan Smart Gallery

17 October - November 4, 1995.

The entrance to the front gallery at the Jonathan Smart Gallery, where Anton Parsons installed *Clean Slate*, was screened by an aluminium framed, heavy hanging PVC strip door (very like those - right down to the shade of translucent forest green - at the end of the fruit and vegetable section of the Big Fresh supermarket on Moorhouse Ave). You might have expected something industrial, medical or culinary, to lie fly-free behind. The point of such doors is, of course, that they don't require of you a spare arm, as you brush through with a trolley load of

whatever; a fact which gathered a slighty macabre pertinence for me once I passed inside.

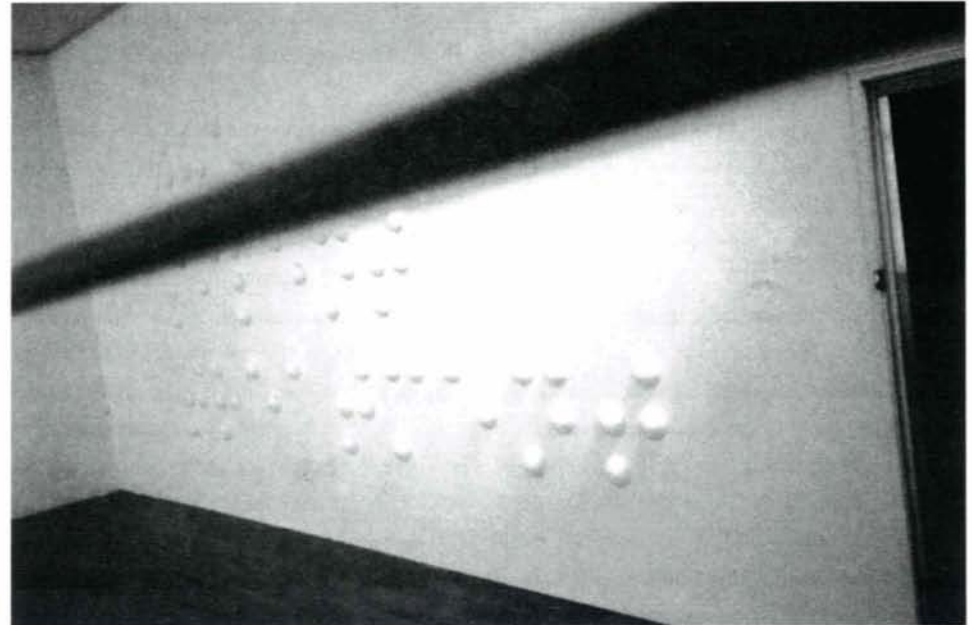
The room's clinical calm, its sealed feeling was augmented by the diffused light from the waxed-out windows (an inheritance from the previous show in the gallery).

A grime coloured cord hung lengthways across the room, just at my neck height, a snare especially sinister for the allusion to the possible presence of a blind person made by the braille script on the door wall.

Stuffed into the wall at either end of the cord were yellow foam plugs (nicely keyed against the green in the otherwise white room). So while the long curve of the wire looked something like a tin can telephone, a line of communication, it also seemed to depict an outsize set of ear plugs, a hear-no-evil deafness, the loss of another sense.

Each letter of the braille frieze was poster size, conspicuously too large to be easily read by touch, and so was presented with an effect similar to, but subtler than, the braille on blocks that Parsons has covered in transparent satchells (at 23A in Auckland in *Charity Starts at Home*).

Isolation, hearing loss, blindness, illegibility, a head-high tripwire and possible missing limbs were all neatly suggested by this visually tidy installation.



Anton Parsons: *Clean Slate*

Willfully mute and nonsensical signs have been Parsons' specialty, and here more than ever his depiction of frustrated communication seemed to turn back on itself (perhaps especially as an *installation*, being notably not an exhibition of Parsons' more usual site-independent objects).

Sculpture is not the same for everyone, at least clearly not for the blind, the show might have been seen to quip, and perhaps can deafen us too. On this reading, the gallery was dressed up as a dummy trap, a BANG-flagged pop gun (though the punchline wasn't clearly enough determined for the work to be flippant or slapstick).

Looking back over or under the cord, the braille inscription on the back wall contained enough repeated letters for it to be possible to slowly decode its message. "THE SILENT TREATMENT" is what we were given.

Jonathan Bywater

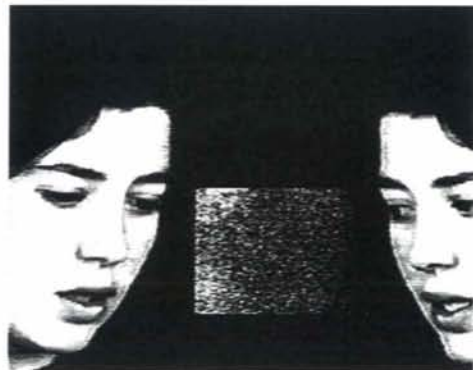
PAUL JOHNS at
The High Street
Project
note hours:
29 April - 4 May
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"The situation is here..."

Inside/Outlook

A video documentary
by Paul Redican

The premiere screening of *Inside/Outlook*, an experimental documentary by video maker and visual artist Paul Redican, took place late one Wednesday night in October of last year in the disused gallery space of the Carnegie building in Dunedin. The room was lit only by the projected video image, which took up one complete wall, and the funky sound-track filled the room as we waited expectantly, in an atmosphere closer to that of a dance party which hadn't quite warmed up, than that to the usual polite murmurings of many art openings. This is Dunedin, and experimental video works are still something of a novelty; hence the atmosphere of anticipation. (This is changing, though, with the Otago Art

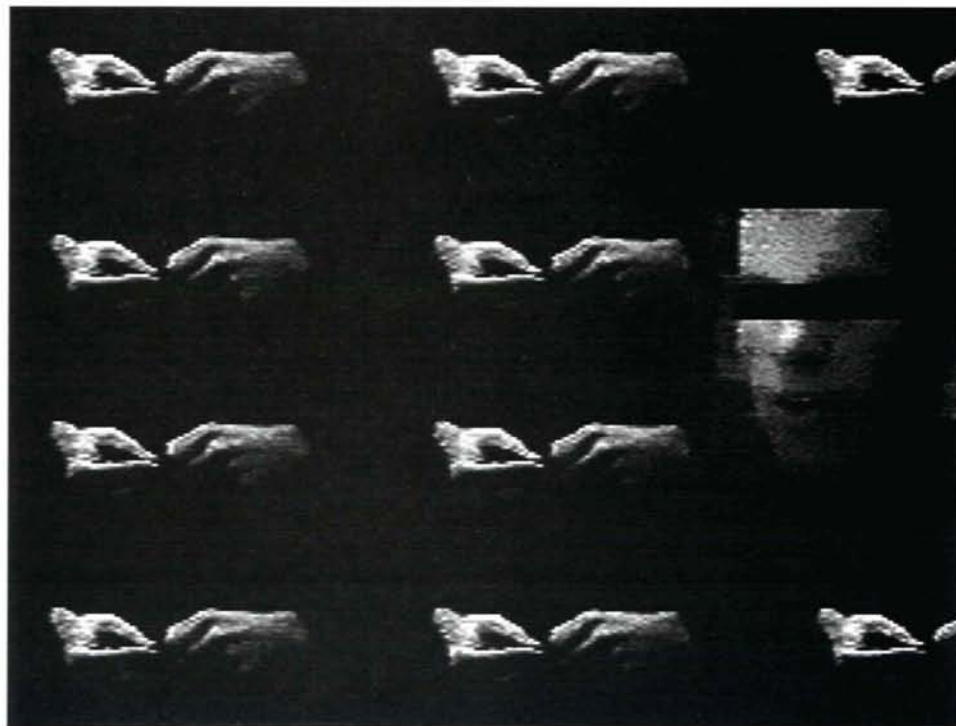


Paul Redican: still from *Inside/Outlook*

School's course in computer and video art, of which Redican is a recent graduate.)

Inside/Outlook explores the attitudes of a group of artists to living and working in Dunedin. Constructed from conversations with artists involved in a variety of mediums (many of whom were closely associated with the multi-media Super 8 arts collective), the documentary examines aspects of producing art in a small and somewhat isolated environment. Redican's initial impulse in making the documentary was an interest in his own environment and "a wider sense of an art community; not just one limited to a specific idea of fine art, or artists who sell successfully, but about a sense of community; of a specific place and time."

A sense of dialogue between artists is established through the form of the documentary, which Redican describes as collage. The conversations are the raw materials from which fragments are selected and 'pasted' together at the editing stage; creating a sense of a discursive interaction between artists. Aware he was interested in "creating a certain picture" from other's words, Redican found during interviews he didn't need to prompt to find the material he was after; "people in their own words would stumble across what I wanted to discuss. I found what I wanted to say through what others are saying. I didn't want to stand in front of the camera and say this is what I think. I wanted to use what other people thought and felt, even if I



Paul Redican: still from *Inside/Outlook*

didn't necessarily agree with it." Often the opinions offered are openly contradictory views of what Dunedin as a creative environment has to offer; as the opening statements by two artists illustrate. The first describes Dunedin as "an incredibly supportive place to make art", followed by a paradoxical perspective; "There isn't enough critical thinking; there isn't discursive looking at art. There isn't enough adventurism in looking at ways of seeing images". This open-ended dialogue structures the documentary; addressing

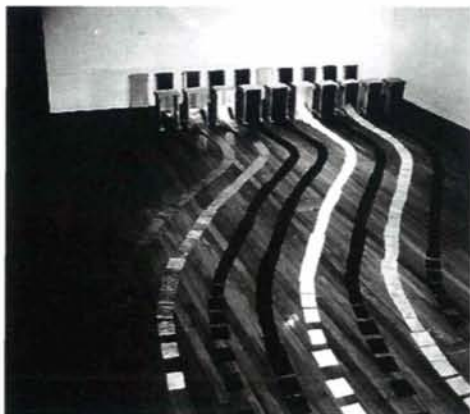
views which are both specific to their time and place, such as the advantages of cheap studio space and lack of commercial competition between artists in Dunedin, as well as issues which are part of much wider debates; the influence of critical art theory on the production of art and the sense of being marginalised, or placed somehow 'outside' of the mainstream.

Visually *Inside/Outlook* continues this dialogic effect. Numerous layers of video images, graphics and text interact and counteract with each other and the views of the

artists; although often in a manner Redican describes as more "tangential" to what is been discussed than of any direct association.

Ultimately the most successful aspect of Redican's work is his skill in coordinating a number of positions into a coherent dialogue without relying on an overwhelmingly rigid structure. Yet this fragmented form, and a perspective, which as the title makes clear, is from the 'inside' of a small community looking out, could perhaps lack a sense of context for a wider audience.

Lisa Morton



Julia Morison: *mOnOchrOmes*, as installed at the Robert McDougall Art Annex, 19 January-18 February, 1996.

"indulging that personal vocabulary..."

L,patois

(re: a project by Julia Morison.)

This her work it bothers me,
Oh enchanting steps of profundity.

Inspired by those mystical esoteric sources,
I expected a flow of the juices discources,

what I got was many panels of gold and shit,
that offered little more than a diluted sip.

Oh system analyst with credentials long,
why have you sung so diffuse a song?

But look, they cry, don't you see,
those never repeating irregularities?

This ingenious work of interior decor,
will alter to match your wall or floor.

The numbers, the order, those packing cases,
why do you stand there making faces?

Forgive me please but I fail to savour,
this dish's somewhat specious flavour.

Through Codex, Vademecum and Amalgame,
experienced have we, enigmatic disjunction.

With formal melding and a pinch of intrigue,
were we not provided, with all we did need,

to submerge unforced, within the compendium,
and surface again with a sense of the idiom.

Oh temptation, artists, do be wary,
when indulging that personal vocabulary.

Apon what for one, does coagulate,
'tis impossible for others to speculate.

So scatter ample clues outside the manual,
with just enough stable, grip and handle,

and do keep that symbolic magnanimity,
from ending up mundane transparency.

Jason Maling.

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LETTERS

Dear Editor

Fiona Gunn's letter in the November 1995 edition of the SIAP magazine raised a number of important and interesting issues concerning the Praxis project. In light of these issues I would like to take this opportunity to respond to her letter and to attempt to "develop dialogue a little further."

While reading Fiona's letter it occurred to me that like work by Daniel Barrett that Fiona mentions, her letter "poses more questions than it can answer." While this feature of Barrett's work is an asset, I'm not sure that the same can be said of Gunn's letter.

There were three things that I found particularly puzzling in her letter: 1) the way 'praxis' was defined, 2) the reference to Jacques Derrida and 3) the claim that Jane Gregg was preoccupied with the "language of the title and accompanying lecture" and that she failed to consider or 'engage' "with the work itself." In fact, these three things seem related in a number of ways. Initially I was unsure about the connection between Derrida's essay/lecture "Restitutions" and the argument against Gregg. But the more I reread the letter in search of connections to Derrida, the more difficult the connection

became. I could see the relationship between the problematization of context that Gunn observes in Barrett's work and the way that Derrida describes the indeterminate context of Van Gogh's painting. Presumably the ambiguity of Barrett's work or the way the work sits in an "open textured way" is similar to the 'lacing' that, according to Derrida, simultaneously "cuts out but sews back together" (The Truth in Painting, p.304) the 'inside' and 'outside' of Van Gogh's painting. Barrett's and Van Gogh's work, it would seem, both cut up and sew together various, often contradictory, contexts. I did, however, have trouble finding the connection between this problematization of context and Gunn's discussion concerning the distinction between 'theory' and 'practice', "the space between art and the street context in which the work is encountered" and the deferral of "expectations. . . [and the possibility of] engaging with the work itself." Thinking about a connection to Derrida I had to ask myself what "the work itself" means in this context. This question, like the voice that questions Derrida in "Restitutions" kept on re-emerging as I reread Gunn's letter. Gunn defines 'praxis' as "the practice of a field of study as opposed to the theory." This distinction, between theory and practice, like the distinction between "the work itself" and our expectations of it or the rhetoric of the project, seems difficult to maintain in any clear and definite way. In fact,

many of the people involved in the Praxis project were conscious of the difficulty in maintaining such distinctions. As I recall, it was the 'spaces' or 'spacing' that separates the art context from that of the street, or the 'public' from the 'private', the 'theoretical' from the 'practical' and the 'aesthetic' from the 'political' that was called into question by the project. The Collins dictionary may say that "praxis is simply a practical exercise and that it is concerned with accepted practices or customs", but it seems to me that there is nothing simple about the way that such exercises, practices or customs stand in relation to theory, politics etc. The dictionary definition of 'praxis' does not help us here- the dictionary is, after all, a strange place to look for philosophy.

Praxis is based upon distinctions between theory and practice- but the project also problematized their relationship. This is where the distinction between the language of the project and the works 'themselves' is difficult to sustain in any clear sense. True, the difference can be and should be made, but the drawing of lines is a big issue here. Not all artists agree on how art practice should or does relate to politics. However, all the artists involved in Praxis 'agreed' to participate in an art project that claimed to "challenge perceptions that art in public should always celebrate the apparently positive and marketable aspects of a

place concentrating instead on interrogating the assumptions and values which underpin Christchurch and similar late twentieth century cities" (SIAP press release, 20/6/95). Whether the artists accepted the aim of the project, or how they went about 'challenging perceptions' is one thing, my point here is that by choosing to participate in the project the artists associate themselves with the claims and aims of the project. Reading their work without reading into it "the language of the title and the accompanying lecture" is a difficult thing to do. Of course the rhetoric of the project should not eclipse the individual works. The works, however, cannot escape such rhetoric. How the individual works are read is an important issue- artists should accept some responsibility for the ways their works are read aesthetically, politically and conceptually- and also by the way in which these different ways of reading relate, intersect and overlap. Individual works can enjoy subtle or private jokes at the expense of "those who read this work just a little too literally". But within the context of the project artists should also accept that such humour could also be conceived as pretentious and/or self-indulgent.

Surely, in this way, Gregg's criticism of the individual works in relation to the politics of the project is valid. Furthermore, Gunn's claim that Gregg's article is based solely upon the

"language of the title and the accompanying lecture" is hardly fair. Gregg did, after all, attend project meetings, read proposals and briefs and observed and/or participated in the preparation of most of the works. It may be wrong to expect artwork to save the world, but artists should not shy away from criticism concerning the politics of art practices- especially art that happens within a project called 'Praxis'.

-Stephen Pritchard

Decorum

recent works by

Belinda Drum

24 April – 23 May

Andrew Jensen Gallery
(off Ghuznee Street)
Te Aro, Wellington

Dear Editors

I would like to comment further on the issues raised by Fiona Gunn in the November edition of the newsletter.

Firstly, while Gunn is compelled to consort with the mastery of her pocket Collins for verification of her theoretical terms, it might interest her to note that the word "praxis" cannot be easily separated from the political tradition from which it emerges. That would be like claiming that deconstruction is simply the act of taking something apart. When the word "praxis" is used in connection with commentary upon city spaces and city practices, it is certainly announcing its historical roots quite clearly. Of course, we can easily seek the slippages of meaning in language. That is, after all, the better part of the so-called postmodern project, however, for the purposes of analysis, I would suggest it is more useful to speak of words or terms in the context in which we confront them; in this case, the intersection of public art and critical inquiry.

I find it strangely ironic that for someone so ready to reach for their Derrida; their dictionary; or their canon in general, Gunn wants to show herself as being committed to the notion of public art. Her letter reveals the kinds of elitist concerns that have always underlined art when it is allowed into public spaces.

Essentially, she wants us to believe that the placement of a work is of no real concern except in the context of how it looks, and that it is possible and even desirable for art to maintain some kind of critical distance from the world in which it is situated. Thus, Cathedral Square might as well be the Louvre, for all she cares. The work is the thing, and not the philosophies which produce it or the ideologies which situate it.

I am heartened that "as a practicing artist", Gunn has been able to illuminate me regarding the error of my ways of seeing, however. And while for most critics and writers, the central tenet of criticism is the open-ended text, it is nice to see that for some of us the "truth is out there" still.

-Jane Gregg



LOUISE FONG

April 3– 27

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Christchurch

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Have you ever...?

1. ...wished you could take out a contract with/on your dealer?

2. ...wondered who does own the copyright on that work you sold in 1987?

3. ...been unsure whether those images might be legally obscene?

4. ...thought there must be a way of claiming more art related tax deductions?

5. ...wondered if, as an artist, you should form a company and what the advantages might be?

Art Law

—a two day seminar on practical legal issues for visual artists to be held in Christchurch 5 & 6 July 1996.

A handbook on legal issues for visual artists will be published following the seminar.

All enquires to:
South Island Art Projects, PO Box 902, Christchurch.
tel: 03 3795 583, fax: 03 3796 063

ArtLaw has been enabled by funding from Creative New Zealand and the New Zealand Law Foundation.



ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND TOI AOTEAROA

Museum of New Zealand
TE PAPA TONGAREWA

project sponsor

Entries are being sought from professional and student film makers for New Zealand's only competitive short film and video festival



10th-12th October - Christchurch

Awards - totalling \$20,000

Best Film Overall	Best Video Overall
Best Drama	Best Documentary
Best Animation	Best Experimental
Popular Choice	Cultural Award
Highest Technical Achievement	
Best Student Production	

Entry Forms and Enquiries

P.O. Box 526, Christchurch
Phone / Fax : (03) 377 0677

Entry Deadline:
Friday July 5th 1996

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Call for Entries

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artists working with street level community organisations to design and produce posters

janene knox



honor harger

peter robinson

simon endres

kirsty cameron

robert haakman



Hoardings is funded by Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa and sponsored by Phantom Bill Stickers
enquires: contact South Island Art Projects PO Box 902 Christchurch, tel: 03 3795 583 fax: 03 3796 063

Congratulations
to the Dunedin
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Dunedin City
Council on the
opening of
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SIAP Trust stalwarts retire

It is with considerable regret that we say farewell to John Wilson and John Hurrell, both long serving members of the Trust. John Wilson joined the Trust shortly after its inception and has provided constant and professional financial counsel without which we could not have operated. His commitment, though, has been much broader than just 'keeping the books' - he has a keen interest in collecting paintings and supporting artists and their work and for many years was a member of the Canterbury Society of Arts Board. He has given freely many hours in his role as accountant and for his love of the arts, and we are indebted to him. We wish him the very best in his new capacity as financial manager for the Methodist Church of New Zealand.

It was John Hurrell's persistence and vision that initiated South Island Art Projects. He made the initial contacts with Arts Council and set the ball rolling. Later, as a board member, he brought a depth of knowledge about contemporary art practice to the Trust next to none. But the quality of his contribution must surely be that he questioned, argued, and always swam against the current. John has dedicated more than twenty years to supporting the arts in Christchurch and he will be sorely missed by not only this Trust but the art community as a whole. We wish him well in his new appointment as Curator at the Govett Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth.

Evan Webb



credits

output magazine
is a quarterly publication of the South Island Art Projects Trust: a not-for-profit organisation promoting production, exhibition and critical debate in contemporary art.

Director: Julian Bowron
Assistant to the Director: Jonathan Bywater

SIAP Board Members: Sue Ariel, Andrew Drummond (Chair), Jane Glentworth, Jane Gregg, Stuart Griffiths, Marianne Hargreaves, David Hatcher, Sean Kerr, Paul Sutherland, Rebecca Turrell, Ronnie van Hout, and Evan Webb.

Design Advisor: Belinda Drum

Special Thanks to: Belinda Drum, Sean Kerr, Guy Hargreaves.

output magazine is FREE

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The views expressed in the articles in this publication are exclusively those of the contributors, © 1996

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ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND TOI AOTEAROA

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

In the second funding round of the new community arts funding scheme Creative Communities the successful applicants were:

Aranui/Wainoni Co-ordinators Trust, Canterbury Childrens Theatre, Christchurch Elim Church, Godley District Girl Guides, Te Whare Manaaki (Sunnyside), Tamariki School, Te Kotahtanga Maori Club, The Arts Centre of Christchurch, Woman to Woman, YFC Production Division, Aim Children's Book Festival, Christchurch, Community Arts Council, Horomaka Whanau, Festival of Japan, Nga Tai Tamariki O Roimata, Now Is The Hour, NZ Short Film Festival, St James Samoan Club, Kohanga Reo O Te Rangimarie Whanau Inc, Te Waiponamu Cultural Festival, Alan's Men, Avon Loop Playgroup, University of Canterbury Campus Choir, Canterbury Choral School, Canterbury Composers Group, Canterbury Concert Band, Canterbury International Ballet, Canterbury Repertory Theatre, Canterbury Wind Soloists, Canterbury/West Coast Choral Federation, Christchurch Civic Music Council, Christchurch School of Music, Christchurch Theatre Workshop, Gaelic Dancers, Goodwill Shakespeare Trust, Jubilate Singers, NZ Fire Service Band, NZ Suzuki Institute, OSCAR Network, Samoan Students Association, Tihe Music Trust, Young Ambassadors, Sumner Community Centre, Avon Bonsai Group, Canterbury Patchwork and Quilting Guild, Canterbury Embroiderer's Guild, Floyds workshop, Hoon Hay Youth Centre, Hornby Primary School, Nga Puna Waihanga Otautahi Branch, NZ Tapestry Network, Pegasus Handiscope, Town and Country Art Club, Theatre Royal Trust.

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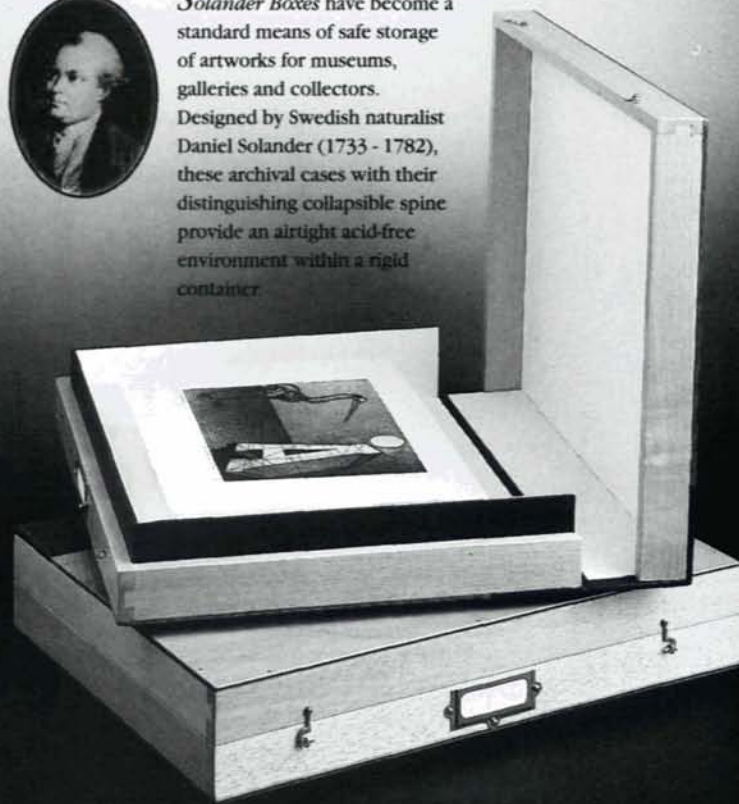
The next funding round is for applications under \$1000 and closes 31 May. For further information contact Janet Luxton, Community Arts Worker, PO Box 237 Christchurch. Phone 3711 886

Solander Boxes



Solander Boxes have become a standard means of safe storage of artworks for museums, galleries and collectors.

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