

the
Solutions
project

Five installation and performance projects were selected by Bruce Blucher, Colin Facer and Jude Rae for the Solutions Project scheduled to open 21 September at Solutions Gallery, 8 Vogel St, Dunedin.

The artists are as follow:

Breath

Performance and installation work by Eng Teong Low and Simon Kaan

Raranga Korero/Weave Language

Installation by Fleur Yorston

Islands of Memory

Installation by Michael Morley

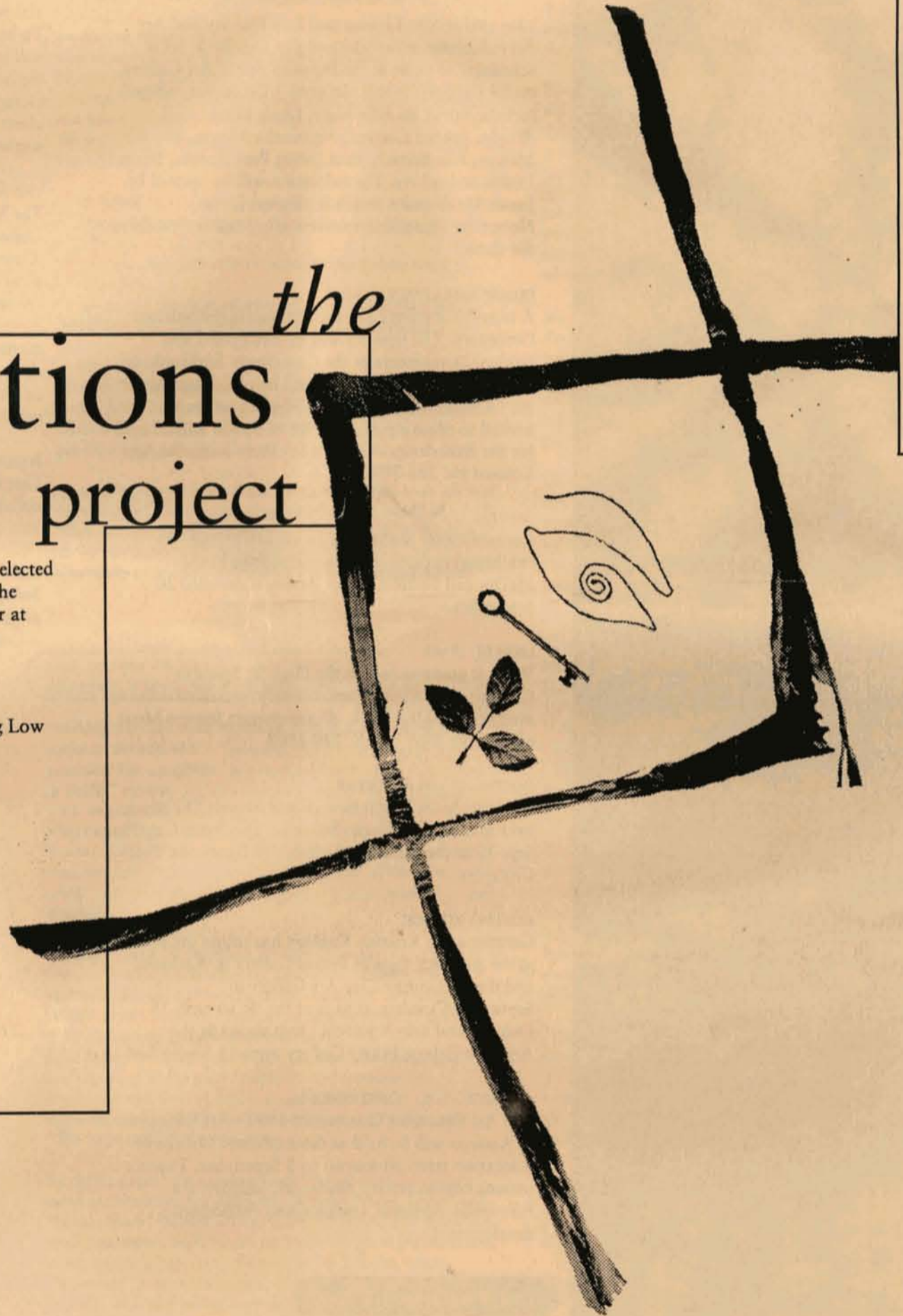
Myself as a Bag

Performance/installation by Robyn Webster

Expression-isms

Installation by Brendan Lee

work featured by Robyn Webster ›



DOCUMENTA IX

Documenta was founded in the early years after the second world war by Kassel artist and university professor Arnold Bode. His purpose was to bring Germany back into the main stream of contemporary art after years of Nazi rule. The eight documentas since then, one approximately every four years, have surveyed the leading themes, movements and personalities in the visual arts of the time. Documenta IX is different. It presents a strange mixture of the old and the new, the hot and the cold, the contemporary and the historic. As a consequence, it lacks the focus of its predecessors. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that it was curated by a team rather than an individual. Perhaps it can be explained by the philosophical shift which attempts to account for and accommodate a pluralistic attitude towards art production. Whatever the reasons, questions are being asked about the value of the world's biggest blockbuster exhibition.

What follows is a compilation from some of the material which promotes and critiques this exhibition. If nothing else, it demonstrates that an exhibition of this magnitude serves a diversity of interests.

From the Visitors Guide to Kassel

Kassel - the only city between Hannover and Frankfurt - is in the first instance the focal point of Northern Hesse and the adjoining districts of Southern Lower Saxony and Eastern Westphalia. Thanks to the harmonious relationship between town and countryside, between Nature and architecture and between tradition and progress - probably a feature unique in the whole of Germany - life here is of a high quality.

In addition to the world - famous "documenta", Kassel has other gems to offer in the sphere of art - the national art collections, for example, in Wilhelmshöhe Palace, including the Gallery of Old Masters (with 17 Rembrandts) and the section containing sculptures from antiquity. Lowenburg Castle houses a collection of weapons and armour from bygone centuries. The Brothers Grimm Museum is devoted to the life and times of those famous Kassel citizens, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. The highlight of the Regional Museum is its Astrophysics department, while the same building houses the world's only Museum of Tapestry - history and story depicted on its walls! The New Gallery exhibits paintings and sculptures from 1750 down to the present day. Among the treasures in the Regional Library is the Hildebrandlied, the oldest written evidence of German poetry. Incidentally, all museums are closed on Mondays!

The rationale behind Documenta IX (from promotional material)

Art has a language of its own. When it comes into being it is alien. And it remains alien, even when it has long become part of art history. Then people simply assume they can understand what it means because the works seem more familiar. Art is Alien. It tries to fill a void, to answer questions that life leaves open. It cannot do this if detached from society and its circumstances and problems, it has to conduct a direct dialogue with society, but must use different means of expression.

The media, the market and prices have meant that alien things are being consumed with ever increasing speed, and ticked off, as though people understand them. Art has become a commodity, a conversation topic at parties, an object of speculation and, of course a device for proving concepts.

A time when we are recollecting ourselves, taking a deep breath, distancing ourselves from sensationalism must also be a time for clearer outlines. The failure of corporate bodies has been followed by the discovery of the individual body. If art can change anything at all, it is the individual, not society. Contemporary art is taking its bearings at Documenta IX, an exhibition of world wide significance, and artistic director Jan Hoet and his team have given it this motto: "From the one to the one to the other - or: from the body to the body to the bodies - or from the artwork to the viewer to the art."

From the Exhibition Guide by Christoph Becker

We have not risked blurring each artists individuality by providing a 'guided' tour; the complex relationships between the works of individual personalities can be traced without outside assistance. However, some carefully selected clues have been provided for the viewer, from an art historian's point of view.

The imposition of psychology on art, propagated by Barnett Newman with his paintings and also with his programmatic texts, is nothing other than a liberation - not a liberation of the work of art (that happened a long time ago), but of the viewer. He is now shifted into the centre and led to perceive his own autonomy and individuality by the picture. Such autonomy and individuality are the only motors for a confrontation with art. This process makes heavy demands on the viewer but it is the only way to spiritual independence. It is a fundamental requirement for an understanding of contemporary art.

Excerpts from Micheal Kimmelman's review for the New York Times, Sunday, July 5, 1992

Documenta 9 is the biggest, costliest version yet of the behemoth of contemporary art exhibitions, which takes over this hard - bitten city for a summer every four or five years. It is also a dud of the first order.

Lifeless, pointless, the show rambles on without any sense that a guiding vision or set of standards has been applied to the choice and arrangement of the works by roughly 200 artists from nearly 40 countries. There are outstanding things on view, but they must fight for attention in an environment in which the strongest, loudest and most aggressive thrive.

Documenta 9's team of curators, which began to put the show together three years ago, has labored towards this end not only by providing an event bloated in size but also by generating sensational publicity before its opening. The all - male team is headed by Jan Hoet, Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Ghent, Belgium, whose reputation as a former boxer and fan of Mike Tyson has been widely advertised, as has his selection as one of Belgium's sexiest men. "Jan Hoet: On the Way to Documenta 9", a book of photographs of Mr. Hoet, annotated by his typical hot-air, self-aggrandizing remarks, was published last year.

It's hard to imagine what they have been doing for the last three years. With all that time and money at their disposal, Mr Hoet and his colleagues discovered few talents. (Ousmane of Senegal is one of those few)

The ultimate failing of Documenta 9 is the most basic. Although supposedly an international artistic crossroad, it does little to illuminate how different cultures can speak to one another. A visitor quickly passes by dozens of works that may have cogent meanings within the societies that produced them but are simply lost here, where they are hopelessly out of context.

Publications

DOCUMENTA IX CATALOGUE - three volumes, 1200 pages (soft cover in slip case) with articles and essays by the curatorium along with artists' biographies and bibliographies. 1200 pictures with approx. 500 in colour. Published separately in German and English.

Short guide - Handy German/English guide with clear maps of the many museums and sites where the works are located. 248 pages with text by Christoph Becker.

Jan Hoet: On The Way to Documenta IX - Gives an insight into the artistic director's wide - ranging preparations and discussions as documenta approached. 128 pages with 80 photographs. Available in German, English and Flemish.

The main catalogue should be available in New Zealand in time.

Admission Prices

Day ticket DM 20, two day ticket DM 30, season ticket DM 100.

Information

Documenta 9, Friedrichsplatz 18, 3500 Kassel, Germany. Ph: 0561 77 00 34, Fax: 0651 77 42 76. REPORT BY EVAN WEBB

SOUNDWATCH '92

3 - 21 August, Artspace Auckland. Opening Night, 3 August
Around the space were several installations with accompanying visual or written material. One called "Wendy House" was a mud-clad small building with domestic interior and occupants who improvised with voice and instruments. The interior was viewed through tubular shaped "spy-holes". The sound came through the walls.

"Aria", a sound/visual installation (aeolian sounds, video/slide projection, shadow and stones) by John Cousins, was given several showings each day for one week.

"Bloodlines" (a computer triggered visual work with sound track exploring mixed race and the prejudice experienced by the individuals interviewed) by Jack Body and David Crossan.

Performances were by:

Stephen Branden - a computer generated composition with composer responding, interacting and improvising on keyboard in real time.

Philip Dadson - Solo performance. This work consisted of a circular ritual visiting, in turn, five large earthen ware crocks, lighting a candle inside and lifting two small stones stored in each. The history of the stones, their significance and how they came into the possession of the performer was told in short anecdote accompanied by the playing of the stones by hand.
John Gilles - (Australia). This multi-media work consisted of reworked and synthesised musical material from a variety of sources (eg. John Rox) which was synchronised with video images (close up) of various instruments being played (eg trumpet, keyboard). The performer (John Gilles) responded to the rhythm of image and sound in real time on a drum kit. This provided another layer of loud relentless beat to the rhythm of the other two elements. REPORT BY COLLEEN AUSTEY

CHRISTINA KUBISCH AT SOUNDWATCH '92

Kubisch's work was installed in the George Fraser Gallery in a concrete floored and walled, rectangular space, deprived of all natural light.

An uprooted tree, its trunk roughly severed about chest height, and with its root system intact, was propped in one corner of the space.

To each of the eight most sturdy roots was attached a speaker cable which snaked along the floor of the space and terminated in a small speaker cone facing upwards from the floor. The tree and the speaker cables were coated with a fluorescent paint which gave off a green glow when energised periodically by special light tubes installed in the ceiling of the space. From the speakers came the sound of what seemed to be bird song, each speaker producing a different and seemingly continuously varied pattern.

Attached to the outside wall at the entrance to the space was the text of a German folk song entitled "The Linden Tree". In conversation with the artist it was explained that the "bird song" sounds were in fact electronically generated, being recordings of malfunctioning electronic alarms originally manufactured as devices for keeping wildlife away from crops. For me, this work evoked the linden tree (from the sweet spring of German folk song), uprooted, decapitated, radioactive; languishing within a lightless cavity, with a mutated and exposed root system... a system which rather than providing security and nourishment, sang a counterfeit chorus, warning of the dawn of oblivion. REPORT BY JOHN COUSINS

RESULTS OF THE CANTERBURY SHORT FILM FESTIVAL '92

Best Overall Film

Violent Hands Dir. Christine Rogers (Melbourne)

Best Drama

The Minute Dir. Scott Reynolds (Auckland)

Best Documentary

Whenever We Get Out of Here Dir. Richard Nevitt (Hamilton)

Best Animation

Not My Type Dir. Mark Winter (Invercargill)

Best Experimental

Cyclic Dir. Dierdre McKessar (Christchurch)

Best Student

Three Women Dir. Jane Murphy (Wellington)

Best Canterbury

Tuning In Dir. Michael Brown (Christchurch)

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SPADEM

While in Paris, Evan Webb made contact with SPADEM an artist organisation centred in France but with growing international connections. SPADEM is an association of visual artists. It is a non-profit organisation that currently defends the rights of 15,000 artists both french and foreign. The association covers, painters, sculptors, poster designers, engravers and carvers, illustrators, designers, photographers and architects. SPADEM already holds reciprocal agreements with similar associations outside of France (England, Japan and Australia) and is enthusiastic about forming further associations. To this end they can give advice and share experience and other expertise.

There is also the possibility of exchange exhibitions.

The information we have is in french and a brief translation reveals that it includes:

- statement of objectives for both France and overseas
- a constitution which covers the regulations governing the association
- profiles on elected officers
- a membership form for individuals to join at a cost of FF 100.00 (approx. \$30.00)
- information about a service which keeps a record of the sale and where abouts of artists' works
- information on taxation
- a yearly report

SPADEM attempts to protect the rights of artists in three ways:

- by ensuring that they receive 3% of the profit from the sale of their work at auction
- by ensuring that they receive payment when their work is reproduced
- by protecting the right of artists whose work is plagiarised, misrepresented, used without authority or destroyed

SPADEM:

- provides information
- provides legal assistance in forming contracts with galleries
- offers a service which traces the sale of an artist's work
- provides legal assistance in cases of plagiarism and the like

If you are interested in establishing an association with SPADEM or if you would like to join as an individual or would like further information please write to South Island Art Projects and we will forward the information. This may be an ideal opportunity to form an association of New Zealand Artists!

MCA, SYDNEY - 4 JULY MAKING THE CITY CONFERENCE

"Making the City" was organised by Artspace Sydney as it comes to the end of its "spaceless" phase while awaiting new premises. The conference followed a project called "Working in Public" curated by John Barrett-Lennard which placed the work of artists in various public sites around the Woolloomooloo area in Sydney where the new Artspace will be located. This is a densely populated area, historically working class and newly gentrified with the remnants of the former community population isolated in what is now desirable water frontage.

"Making the City" presented a range of speakers including Sydney Council representatives, architects, designers, artists and theorists, some of whom spoke about the "Working in Public" artists projects. There is not time or space to describe them all but two I found most interesting.

John Barrett-Lennard presented a paper on the Multiple uses and meanings of the term "public" - the overtones of democracy and access often obscuring more subtle implications. His article in the most recent Art & Text titled "The Impure Public" expands on this.

Sue Best's paper "Sexualising Space" raised questions about space as colonised, the difference between "being space" and "having space" (historically a male prerogative) and discussed Anne Grahame's work which addressed issues of homelessness in the central urban area, and that of Jeff Gibson, whose "Screwball" posters juxtaposed cartoon/graffiti images of male genitalia with pop psychology definitions of hysteria, paranoia etc. Needless to say the posters did not "stay up" long!

The afternoon session consisted of presentations by three artist/designer/architect teams each of which attempted to address the problematic inner city site of Belmore Park near Central Railway Station - high traffic, dangerous, home of the homeless and darkened by the shadows of tall office blocks. The solutions presented ranged from the pragmatic and achievable to the extraordinary, futuristic and seductive. It was evident that some problems were encountered in collaboration but the most visionary group had a wonderful time. Whether this indicates that frictions arise more commonly as the constraints of problem solving are faced was not clear but the exploration of collaborative models is certainly a worthwhile and fascinating process.

REPORT BY JUDE RAE

FIDIAS FORTISSE

Fidias Fortisse is a group of young artists who have chosen to work collectively. Known as ff the group includes Duane Brooking, Fiona Grieve, Kelly Michael and Mathew Auton. They see their collective strategy as challenging the "romance" of the lone artist creator. They have just shown over 20 collaborative works at Solutions Gallery in Dunedin.

In their own words:

"In the new ff romance of art, the artist is not lonely. They are not cast out or alienated. They work alone, they work with others. They are free to communicate in whatever way they please, no longer oppressed by convention or tacit political will. They remain desirable, considerable, sexy."

JOURNEYS 1993

A project for women artists who want to participate in the celebration of or give a response to 100 years of suffrage in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Women artists and craftspeople are invited to participate in the 1993 art events. This will be a chance to show your own art, craft, mahi aringa, in your own studio, home, marae, ad-hoc or public gallery. These can be done individually, in a group, with friends or as a collective work. These exhibitions will be presented as a "tour" around Canterbury over a two month period in Spring 1993 guided by a map and calendar of events. This will be printed as a poster to inform the public of times places and particulars of each event. A short description of each artist or group and their work will be included.

We are asking women to give expression to what they see as the contribution women have made to the art world and the personal and political changes women have experienced since 1893. The project is intended to recognise and celebrate the diverse cultural activities women are involved in and to enhance New Zealand's understanding and appreciation of these.

There will be a wide range of activities and a number of individuals and groups have already responded and put forward ideas. These include Temporary Sculptures (an outside group show), renting a house or inner city space for changing exhibitions, a Lesbian Art show, Video and Installation work, a Drawing group show and a group show on the theme of abuse.

This has been organised by a collective of artists and art historians at present made up of Colleen Anstey, Margaret Dawson, Linda James, Pam Gerrish-Nunn, Tiffany Thornley and Julie King. A grant from the Suffrage Year Committee will hopefully cover the cost of the map and associated advertising. Individuals and groups will be responsible for the organising of their own events. Our collective will co-ordinate the events and advertise the map (do a mail out, put articles in the paper, make and distribute posters etc.)

What we need from women is their ideas, a detailed description of the event, address and directions of how to get to the exhibition site, a contact address and phone number and any other specific information (eg. women only, bring lunch etc.) We will need this information by the end of February 1993 but it would be good to gauge initial interest as soon as possible so please reply and we will keep you informed with progress.

The Christchurch Arts Collective is as point of contact for those who have not had much experience exhibiting or want a group to exhibit with. They meet on the first Tuesday of every month at 5.30pm at the Brasserie, 205 Manchester St. Contact phone number - Tiffany Thornley 366 7673. The idea is to include art events of all sizes and scale, each being as important as the other. They can be any length of time or be in any place you choose.

For further information write to Journeys c/- South Island Art Projects PO Box 902 Christchurch.

Please pass this information on, thanks.

I AM : KO AHAU - Lesbian and Gay Identity and Art
An exhibition on lesbian and gay identity in art is scheduled to open at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery on 14 October. It will run until 7 December and will include works by Allie Eagle, Linda James, Gail Wright, Paerau Corneal, Ngahiraka Mason, Maria McKay, Kaz Bartsch, Paul Johns, Paul Shiriffs, Shane Luskie and others. The exhibition will be opened by James Mack and a forum is planned for late November examining relevant issues and responses to the show.

COMMEMORATIVE TAPESTRY

A tapestry is planned to commemorate the Suffrage Centenary. The tapestry will be interpreted and worked by members of the Canterbury Embroiderers Guild. The completed work will be placed upstairs in the Christchurch Town Hall. Women artists are invited to submit designs. A fee of \$3000 will be paid for the final design. Contact Southern Regional Arts Council ph. 366 2072

VANITAS

Contemporary artists and an ancient theme - an exhibition curated by Lara Strongman at the McDougall Contemporary Annex open until 20 September.

HIGH ST. SPACE

Work is going ahead on the High St. Space in Christchurch. Anyone immediately interested in being involved/showing work, please contact Joanne Moar of Carolyn Menzies ph. 379 2508

HOTERE AT THE AEROCLUB

Dunedin Artist Ralph Hotere will exhibit *The Black over the Gold/Lo Negro Sobre Lo Oro* from Aug 30 to Sept 12 at the Aeroclub Gallery, 10 George St, Port Chalmers.

KRISTINA KUBISCH

German artist Kristina Kubisch has sound installations at the Artspace George Frazer Gallery in Auckland and the Wellington City Art Gallery in September/October. ALBA is at the WCAG until 18 October and KEIN SCHONER LAND shows at the Artspace George Fraser Gallery until 11 September.

ART EDUCATORS CONFERENCE

The Art Educators Conference 1992 - Art Education in Aoteroa will be held at the Auckland College of Education from 30 August to 3 September. Themes include contemporary Maori art, Identity, the Polynesian presence, resource and curriculum development.

LITA BARRIE RETURNS (briefly)

New Zealand art writer Lita Barrie will speak at the above-mentioned conference and will also be presenting a paper called "Art, Technology and Dreamstates - Recent American Video" in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. She will present this paper at Canterbury University on Monday 7 September at 7pm in Lecture Theatre A1 and at the Wellington City Art Gallery on 9 September.

involved in the projects. The projects include:

THE DUNEDIN OCTAGON PROJECT

To be curated by artist Ziegfried Kogelmier, this project will involve the commissioning of 8 artists to respond to the historical, social and physical specificity of the Dunedin Octagon as an urban site. A forum and visiting speakers event will be organised to accompany the exhibition of works scheduled for May 1993.

THE SUFFRAGE CENTENNIAL PROJECT

The Suffrage Project will take a similar form to that of the Dunedin Octagon Project. Public sites significant to the history of suffrage in Christchurch will be researched and a curatorial programme of commissioned works by contemporary women artists will be developed by a curatorial team. A documentary exhibition will be mounted extending the historical background and linking the past with the contemporary. A programme of forums and visiting lectures will coincide with the exhibition of works. This project is scheduled for September 1993.

FORUM ON COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES

Late in 1993 a series of forums are planned to discuss collaborative approaches in various visual arts areas. This may include an Australian/NZ curatorial exchange.

Publications are planned for all these projects. South Island Art Projects will continue to develop the programme of film, video and visiting speakers to South Island centres during 1993.