

the physicist

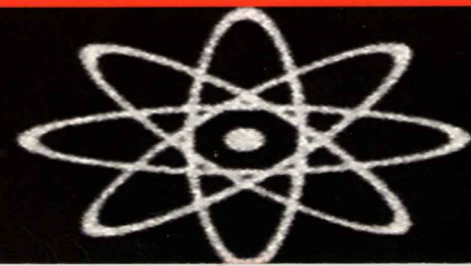
review and commentary on contemporary art



j o u r n a l

December 1996

room



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The Physics Room Journal ①  
 ©The Physics Room Trust and contributors  
 ISSN 1174 - 0264  
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 Printing: Bullivants Commercial Printers  
 Christchurch  
 Pre Press: Colortronics Ltd

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The Physics Room Journal is published with  
 the assistance of Creative NZ Toi Aotearoa.



ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND TOI AOTEAROA

Cover image 'Rock Your World'  
 detail, Melissa MacLeod

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# EDITORIAL

You may have obtained this magazine from a source through which you have in the past seen the South Island Art Projects newsletter or their more recent Output magazine. **South Island Art Projects**, though, is no longer.

The poster project, **Hoardings**, documented in this issue, along with July's successful **Artlaw** seminar –also discussed here, in pieces by our Australian guest Julie Robb and local cultural theorist Stephen Pritchard– are among the last projects to have been undertaken by SIAP.

The best of the energies that supported that organisation, however, live on, refigured into a new organisational structure, centred on the Physics Room Trust. A key difference is the initiation of **The Physics Room** itself, an arts project space located in the South Quadrangle of the Arts Centre in Christchurch. This space has been open since June this year and has so far been used for the exhibition of **Crime Show**, **Rock Your World**, **Scale of Sorrows** and **The Therapy Room**, also featured in the following pages.

**The Physics Room Trust** is made up of a voluntary board of twelve members drawn from the professional, academic and visual arts communities of the region which it serves directly. An influx of new members, and a refocused set of goals and objectives, differentiate **The Physics Room** from SIAP, but along with some continuity of expertise and experience, the commitment to SIAP's basic aim is unchanged: The new organisation will continue to serve the audience and the community of artists that exist in Christchurch with an interest in more challenging, professionally presented contemporary art and the discussion of ideas raised through or otherwise touching on it.

**The Physics Room** project space will exhibit the work of more established contemporary New Zealand artists, more challenging and experimental and technology based work, with the responsiveness and flexibility required to involve visiting international artists in its programme.

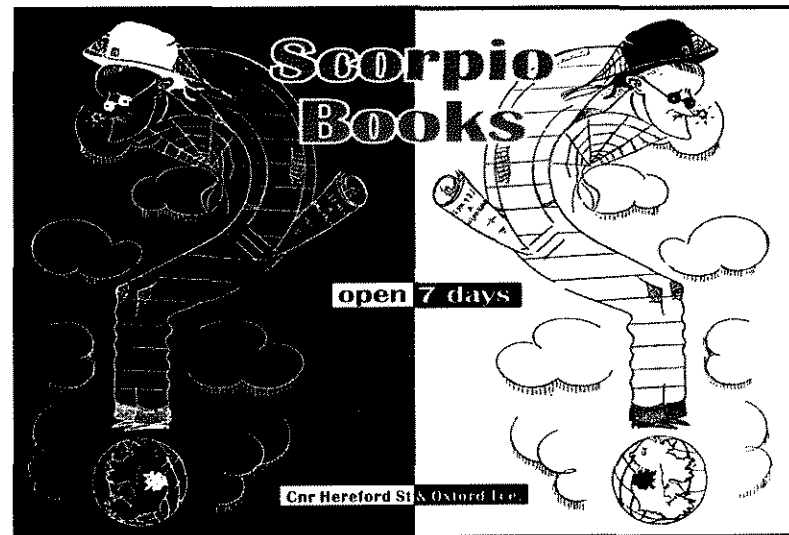
**The Physics Room** concept is that parallel, integrated activities will be launched in the gallery, in print and electronic publications including a site on the world wide web, with the issues and ideas raised having the widest possible dissemination and discussion as a result. Through a policy of active engagement with academic and civil research communities, of both sciences and humanities, the programme in general will achieve a wide currency in our national culture, and so internationally.

The establishment of the Physics Room has taken place with the support of various in-kind and financial sponsors, these include: The Arts Centre of Christchurch, TrustBank Community Trust, Bullivant

Commercial Printers and Magnum Mac.

In the last funding round, **The Physics Room**, were granted an annual budget by Creative New Zealand that will enable the Trust to employ a part time administrator to oversee projects for next year.

In 1997 three issues of the **Physics Room Journal** will be published. Unfortunately the publication will no longer be able to be made available without charge. However, the scope and quality of the Journal will be enlarged, so that each issue, thematically focused, will serve not only to document **The Physics Room** projects but to expand and further broadcast the issues they raise, each one forming a useful reference work. The next issue, for example, will investigate video in New Zealand, following up on the last major show at **The Physics Room** for 1996, **Monitor** and other video - related projects scheduled for early next year. Subscription enquiries are welcome.



# PRAXIS, ARTLAW, CRIME SHOW; THE ART OF POLITICS AND THE POLITICS OF ART

Recent debates between Marxist, feminist and 'postmodernist' art critics and theorists have centred upon differing conceptions of the relationship between politics, theory and art. Within the context of such debates the art projects organised by the South Island Arts Projects organisation (S.I.A.P.) can be seen as attempts to negotiate a complex of issues relating to the place of art within society. At a time when critics and theorists seem to announce either the end of history, truth and art or the return to history and politics, S.I.A.P. projects such as **Public Practices** and **Praxis** addressed such timely issues as the politics of artistic practice and the possibility of significant social commentary and critique. While considering such issues critics all too frequently cast the debate in terms of diametrically opposed positions. Typically art is either seen as an end in itself that should not be reduced to politics or, alternatively, it is seen as a means to a political end. In light of these sorts of issues and in view of the history of past S.I.A.P. projects, it is interesting to consider both **ArtLaw**, which was the last event organised by S.I.A.P. before it was transformed into **The Physics Room**, and **Crime Show**, the first exhibition held in **The Physics Room**. Like the earlier projects, **ArtLaw** and **Crime Show** addressed issues concerning the relationship of art to authority. Framed in this manner, my discussion of the way in which both events invoke questions concerning



**Artlaw Seminar: South Island Art Projects Christchurch**

authority, politics and artistic practice expands into a consideration of the legal, political and institutional judgement of art in relation to the possibility of critique. Considering **ArtLaw**, **Crime Show** and past S.I.A.P. projects in this manner not only allows a problematization of radical or critical art in relation to the framing strategies of the law and the art institution, but also suggests problems with more general modernist framing strategies employed by Marxist and neoMarxist art critics and theorists. In relation to such framing strategies the very idea of 'radical' art seems paradoxical in so far as it implies both the following and the breaking of rules. In fact, this apparently paradoxical relationship between 'radicalism' and 'art' corresponds to a similar paradox between radicalness and the law and politics in general.

On the 6th of July, the two-day **ArtLaw** seminar began and the **Crime Show** exhibition opened in **The Physics Room**. Speakers at **ArtLaw** included Kathryn Paterson (NZ Chief Censor), Joan Ropiha from Te Puni Kokiri and Julie Robb from the Arts Law Centre of Australia, while the **Crime Show** exhibition included the works of artists such as L. Budd and Andrew Drummond. Both events framed art in terms of legality: the discussions at **ArtLaw** considered "legal issues for visual artists"<sup>1</sup>, while **Crime Show** exhibited artworks that 'transgressed' the law in some way. Bringing 'art' and 'the law' together in

this way, these two events demonstrated how these apparently separate and distinct disciplines or activities interconnect. In different but complementary ways, both events described the relationship between artistic practice and the law as artistic practice in terms of the law. Articulating the relationship in this way, **ArtLaw** and **Crime Show** emphasised the authority vested in judgement. This, of course, suggests a way in which the art-law relationship can be cast in terms of power; the law classifies and controls art practice. In as far as the

judgement of 'the law' resembles the judgement of the art institution, the role or position of critical art practice seems clear (at least with regards to these institutions): the law judges and controls, while critical art practice challenges or questions this authority. This characterisation of critical art practice as opposed to the law may even describe the differing perspectives on authority found between **ArtLaw** and **Crime Show**. Many of the speakers at **ArtLaw**, for example, characterised art and art practice in a manner that emphasised the very economic and legal aspects of art that a number of the works in **Crime Show** engaged with. Despite the many common themes between the two events and the fact that many of the discussions at **ArtLaw** explored controversial aspects of the law, in my opinion, **ArtLaw** was most notable for the lack of critical discussion concerning the authority of the law. For even though it was a practical seminar that aimed at providing answers rather than posing questions, I had expected discussions concerning censorship, copyright and the protection of intellectual and cultural property to dwell, at least briefly, upon the question of the authority of the law.

In contrast to **ArtLaw**, the works in **Crime Show** addressed the question of authority directly and without faithfulness to the law. Furthermore, **Crime Show** could not be reduced or restricted to the

1. From the **ArtLaw** information pamphlet.

vocabulary of **ArtLaw**. The artworks were not so much examples of the 'unlawful' art discussed in **ArtLaw** as much as they were evidence of a far more critical and destabilising kind. To be fair on the works in **Crime Show** and not judge them in advance, one had to suspend judgement and allow prior judgements to be judged.

Thus, **Crime Show** allowed authority to be questioned insofar as it encouraged a consideration of the law's classifications. However, the claim that the law was wrong, unjustified or unfair in its judgements presupposes another law, principle, or rule of judgement; a superior law or a 'law of laws'. This again raises the question of the foundation or basis of authority. According to Jacques Derrida, "the origin of authority, the foundation or ground, the position of the law can't by definition rest on anything but themselves, they are themselves a violence without ground."<sup>2</sup> In other words, a judgement is only ever justified in terms of a law or rule that must already be accepted. One can only judge the works in **Crime Show**, therefore, if one accepts the authority of a law or principle of judgement. But by keeping the question of authority open one may deny the finality and determinacy that 'the law' always requires; one can allow that a judgement may always be judged again. The relevance and significance of **Crime Show** and **ArtLaw** is thus greatly extended by their timeliness insofar as their concerns connected, directly or indirectly, with recent discussions about the relationship between art, art institutions and funding bodies<sup>3</sup>, what is considered 'appropriate art'<sup>4</sup> and what art is 'unlawful'<sup>5</sup>. The works in **Crime Show** drew attention to the institutions that measure and classify art and that in a different context may have, or have already, judged the works in the show to be 'inappropriate', 'unlawful' or not even art. Indeed, in this context the question "what is art?" is not only a metaphysical question,

but is also a moral, political and legal question relating to authority. Widening the discussion in this way highlights the fact that art, as a discourse, has its own politics and is political, and as **ArtLaw** and **Crime Show** suggest, it is a discourse that is contested and challenged. In fact, in a time when art is often considered to be of little significance or power, the works in **Crime Show** could be seen to demonstrate art's ability to be assertive and challenging.

Framed in the language of the law, both **ArtLaw** and **Crime Show** testified to an ever increasing tendency to characterise art as a social, political and economic practice. Depending on your view of art, this description of the economic and political aspects of art could suggest that art is either located within these systems or, more radically, that art is itself necessarily economic and political. The former suggestion, in its most positive form, suggests that art can be indifferent, supportive or challenging to any particular economic or political system because art, ideally, enjoys relative autonomy; artists choose to make art political. In contrast, the latter description, in its most negative form, suggests that art has been appropriated by bourgeois ideology and, at worst, only takes institutionally approved forms. According to the former position, even if 'art' (categorically speaking) is itself institutionally sanctioned, artists may still challenge institutional definitions and therefore the institution itself. This might also suggest, by extension, that art may challenge other institutions that govern society.

However, for such a challenge to be possible one must assume that art is able to be produced in a manner or space that is not already ideologically determined; art may already be complicit with bourgeois interests. Following this line of argument, it is not merely the content or subject matter of art that is political, but also the form or practice of

art itself. Thus, in the case of **Crime Show** the question of art's ability to challenge authority relates not only to the content of the show, but also the 'manner' or 'space' in which the works were delivered, performed or exhibited. Considering the works in this context involves situating them historically and politically in relation to wider social and cultural practices; the gallery itself becomes part of the politics.

The question of the separateness, or alternatively the blurring of the boundaries of 'art' and the 'political' comes into question, not only in cases where art is considered within the jurisdiction of politics, but also within the wider picture of ideology, if, as many have suggested, artistic practice is itself ideological. As I have already suggested, with the case of **Crime Show** the question is not so much about how politics intervenes or includes the gallery space within its scope or even about some representation or depiction of politics within the works themselves. Rather, figuring art within ideology in this way suggests that art is itself an ideological act; art cannot be non-ideological. In order to answer the question of whether or not artworks like those in **Crime Show** are able to challenge authority in any radical way one must first consider the ways in which art is already authorised. In other words one must ask "what is it that makes art 'art'?" To answer that 'art' is merely what the institution says it is poses obvious problems as far as critical art practice is concerned. According to this position, any autonomy that art may enjoy is dependent upon the separation of art from other activities or practices. According to the institutional theory of art, this separation has already been made. This may seem obvious; the social space that art creates or is created in is secured by certain socially, culturally or historically sanctioned practices. However, theorists such as Jacques Derrida have complicated this description

2. Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" from *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, David Gray Carlson. Routledge: New York 1992. p.14

3. See Jane Gregg's article "Creating New Zealand" Output No.18 Autumn 1996, Ted Nannes's article "Public Art, Community Art and Creative New Zealand Funding" South Island Arts Projects Magazine No. 17 November 1995.

4. See, for example, the article "Arts policy angers Mayor" The Press 13th August 1996.

5. See any of the numerous articles about the Robert Mapplethorpe exhibition in Wellington this year.

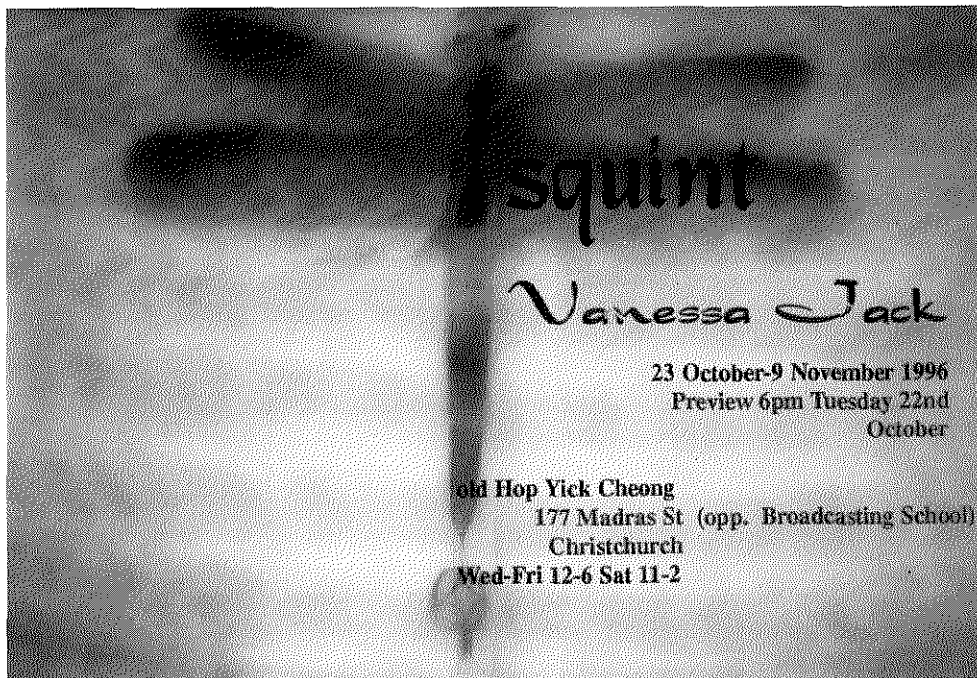
of art's relationship to the institution by suggesting that, not only is 'art' dependent upon the creation of such a social or cultural space, but also that such a space can neither be considered exterior nor interior to the work<sup>6</sup>. It is the context or the conventions and techniques that enframe the artwork and make the art work. However, because these conventions or techniques are what define the line that separates the inside (art) from the outside (world), inside and outside become thoroughly confused. So the production of art already implies the following of procedure, but the relationship of these rules to art cannot be unproblematically described as one strictly between art (inside) and the institution (outside), as Derrida illustrates: "(i)n order to think art in general one thus accredits a series of oppositions (meaning/form, inside/outside, content/container, signified/signifier, represented/representer, etc) which precisely structure the traditional interpretation of works of art."<sup>7</sup> These structures that frame the work and make it art are both necessary to art but cannot be contained within its frame. Art itself can never be art by itself, and yet, to suggest that art is determined by an external force is to risk making art indistinguishable from theory (ie. the rules).

If we follow this argument to its logical extreme we will find that, just as 'the law' has categorised artworks like those found in **Crime Show**, so too art, categorically speaking, meets its own classifications; it has already been named, it follows the rules. Of course this is just to acknowledge that 'art' is what the art institutions say it is. But this also suggests two interesting things. Firstly, this suggests that for art to be truly radical with respect to the institution it must endanger its status as art. This is not such a controversial point, often art that is politically motivated raises questions about what art is. But secondly, this suggests that any radical potential

6. Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* translated by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London 1987.

7. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* p.22





that institutionally sanctioned art may have had is reconciled or undermined; it is framed within the institution. Framed in this way art becomes merely art: fabricated, composed, fictional and subjective. Artist references to the world 'outside' the frame are thus severely circumscribed; framed as 'artistic' references they are merely representations, allegory or depiction.

An obvious example of this can be found with the institutionalisation of the avant garde, where the *avant garde's* radical impulse and its attempts to debunk the transcendental pretensions of the art object have become standards by which modern artworks are judged. But perhaps the most threatening suggestion to the possibility of radicalness is not the institutionalisation of that type of art, but rather the suggestion that the whole idea of the radicalness of art is itself paradoxical. The idea of radical art that moves on or transgresses the art institution or ideology in general can be connected with certain modernist conceptions of historical

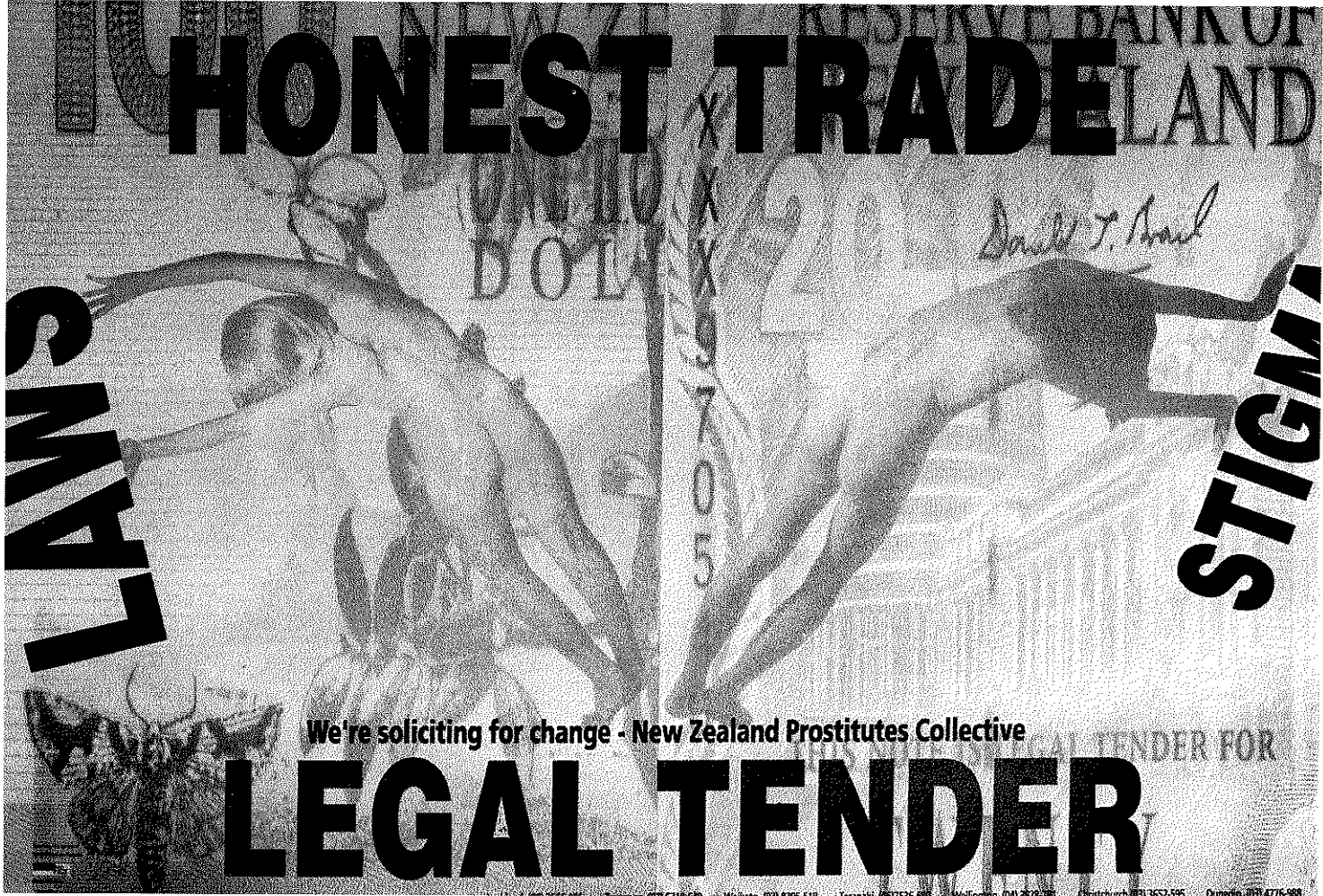
progress and utopian fantasies concerning the movement of art and society towards some ideal state. 'Radical art' anticipates the future, it anticipates change. This reveals the paradox: the very idea of radicalism seems to deny the possibility of art; if it is art it is accepted and therefore not radical. The terms radical and art can never refer to the same object at the same time; one anticipates the other. There can be no critical theory of art that does not, in some way, question the determination of the borders that define art. But to move beyond or reject these borders is to make art impossible; art cannot 'unframe' itself.

The question of the way in which art is 'framed' is especially relevant to public art. For example, the works in the **Praxis** public art project, placed within the ambiguous space designated 'public', addressed the very question of the place of art within society. The show brought into question the very notion of the 'public' as both the audience which the show addressed and the 'space' in which the show took

place. A number of works in the show, for example, explored the fictionality of the 'public'. This, at the very least, opens the idea of public to contestation and critique. However, the extent to which works in **Praxis** were able to do this was complicated by the way that they, as artworks, already assumed a certain type of public.

Ideally '**Praxis**' allowed the viewers to consider their relationship to the 'works' as it complicated the space of both 'art' and the 'public'. Like '**Crime Show**', '**Praxis**' contextualized art in a manner that allowed viewers to judge judgement, to consider the basis of the authority upon which such judgements are made and to consider the terms by which funding bodies, city councils and art institutions evaluate and name art. Viewed in this way, the terms 'art', 'the law', 'the public', 'community', 'country' and 'culture' are thoroughly problematized. The unity of such terms is based solely upon the repression of difference and discontinuity; once one considers the basis or 'reality' of such terms (which public?, whose law? whose art? which and whose culture?) the designation of such terms becomes less empirical and increasingly political. Viewed in this context, the works in **Crime Show** or **Praxis** are limited by the context in which they are presented. Even the works in **Praxis** that appeared 'unclothed' or de-contextualized within the urban environment found that the recognisably artistic components of the work compromised their ability to be received critically. Once the works are recognised as art, the frame reduces any politics the works may have had to subject matter or art politics. But some of the works in **Praxis** did not merely accept the frame. Indeed, in many ways the **Praxis** project problematized the frame; it 'framed' its frame. Rather than assume or defend traditional conceptions of 'the public' or 'art', many of the works in **Praxis** sought to 'open' up such categories and terms to question and critique. This will be of no surprise to those who claim that politics is not something that can be considered external to art. The fact that the project was named

opposite page: Janene Knox in collaboration with The NZ Prostitutes Collective '**Hoardings**'



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**Praxis** seems to suggest that the artwork produced within this project would at least problematize the relationship between theory and practice. From a Marxist perspective, this suggests a way in which art might be radical. Marxists and neoMarxists such as Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Frederic Jameson and Terry Eagleton, for example, have suggested that art is framed by politics<sup>8</sup>. This suggestion, against romantic conceptions of art as autonomous or transcendent, politicises aesthetics by 'revealing' the complicit relationship between modern art and bourgeois ideology. By historicising aesthetics, Marxists are able to debunk theories that suggest that art is some timeless enduring entity that stands outside of history and claim instead that art is itself historical and political; art is framed historically. Following this line of argument, critical artists would resist the appropriative attempts of bourgeois culture and they would align their practice with the interests of the proletariat. Conceived in this way, critical art is a means to a political end.<sup>9</sup>

More recently, however, this way of conceptualising art's place within society has itself been problematized by a number of theoretical positions subsumed, sometimes inappropriately, under the name of 'postmodernism'. While Marxists have demanded that art be understood in relation to the historical and social conditions of its own possibility, postmodernists have argued that such conceptualisations of art are themselves dependent upon the assumed stability and unity of notions of art, politics and history. Despite the fact that Marxists recognise how judgements of art are themselves political and despite the constant demand that one must "(a)lways historicize"<sup>10</sup> Marxism is unable to fulfil its own demands; it cannot fully

account for its own historical and political conditions, it cannot explain its own relation to authority. In fact, it isn't clear that Marxism is distinguishable from the institutions it seeks to politicise. It seems, therefore, that the apparent clarity of Marxist descriptions of the relationship between art and politics is dependent upon the way it is framed in terms of certain assumptions about objectivity or the truth of history. Just how this 'truth' of history can be situated in relation to ideology is something that the Marxist is unable to specify. Ironically Marxism itself can be historicised, framed in terms of certain modernist conceptions of history and truth. Furthermore, by considering art to be a means to a political end, Marxism reduces art to politics, but in rejecting the set of rules that govern bourgeois art practice, Marxism is unable to show that any alternate rules it may offer may be better. In fact, it becomes clear that any means might be justified in terms of the political ends. In fact, the historical closure that Marxism requires to make a determination can, in a sense, prevent the possibility of critique. If history is final then history cannot be judged.

Of course these problems are not just specific to Marxism, the inability to specify the nature of relationship between ideology and critique is itself a dilemma characteristic of the 'postmodern'. This dilemma also relates to the paradox of critical art described by Jean-François Lyotard in his essay "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?"<sup>11</sup>. According to Lyotard postmodern critical art must be "understood according to the paradox of the future (post) anterior (modo)."<sup>12</sup> According to this paradox art cannot be both radical and art at the same time. As I have already suggested, if art is radical it is not

'art', and even if this is judged art at a later date the radicalness and the status 'art' belong to distinct moments- they cannot coexist together. Thus according to Lyotard, the goal of critical art is to magnify this paradox of the way art is framed and to resist being reduced to knowledge- ie. an institutional definition. Postmodernism is, therefore, not a historical category, the period coming after the modern or some radical break from it, but rather the critical moment of modernism; to be 'postmodern' is to be both linked to the past but never completely "of the past". This suggests that critical art cannot be already known and not knowing what art is means not knowing the rules, as David Carroll suggests in his book *Paraesthetics*, "experimental art, is never satisfied with knowledge that it cannot help but project; it is obliged to look constantly for alternative approaches to art, for different ways of categorising art, and new rules for playing a constantly changing game."<sup>13</sup> Rather than being simply for or against the 'frame' like the Marxist or the aesthetician, this position suggests that the frame can only be resisted if it is first accepted. Similarly, for Derrida, a theory of art can be considered critical only if it "works the frame, makes it work, lets it work, makes work for the frame."<sup>14</sup> To work the frame is to thus make work for theory and art, to attempt to force openings in each and to transform each other- without, however, determining either by the other. 'Working the frame' is thus Derrida's strategy for breaking with the sterile alternative that both aestheticians and historical- philosophical systems have forced on the question of art. In a similar way, David Carroll suggests that "(i)f a critical strategy is to maintain the indeterminacy of art, it cannot itself be determined by exterior forces and theories; it must

8. For an overview of these positions see Terry Eagleton's *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* Basil Blackwell: Oxford 1990.

9. See, for example, Walter Benjamin's essay "The Author as Producer" in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation* edited by Brian Wallis. *The Museum of Contemporary Art: New York 1984* or *Aesthetics and Politics: Debates between Bloch, Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno* edited by Ronald Taylor, Verso: London 1980.

10. Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as Socially Symbolic Act* London: Methuen 1981 p.9

11. Jean-François Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" translated by Régis Durand included as an appendix to *The Postmodern Condition* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1984

12. Jean-François Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" p.88

13. David Carroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida* Methuen: New York 1987 p.156

14. Derrida p.16

15. David Carroll, *Paraesthetics* p.157

attempt to ensure its own indeterminacy- at least to a point."<sup>15</sup>

To be a critical artist one must neither reject the 'frame' imposed upon it by art institutions or naively assume it. In fact, for artists to challenge authority they must consider the way in which art is determined by authority. But, of course, if one accepts the institutional theory of art, it is difficult, if not impossible, to make a distinction between art and the rules of art without already presupposing a certain relationship between art and the institution. This has significant implications: art cannot be critical unless it can be distinguished from the rules determined by the institution. But for it to be critical it must also break the rules, and thus, not be art. This may cause no alarm to Marxist theorists and critics who are quite happy to conflate art with politics and economy. But for postmodernists, this suggests a paradox with the ways in which we tend to think about radical art. Rather than accept this, however, postmodernists such as Lyotard claim that the task of the critical artist is to expose and aggravate this paradox, to try and open the determining forces that frame art to question and thus, ideally, attempt to maintain a certain indeterminacy of art.

Although many of the works in **Crime Show** or **Praxis** may not have even considered these issues, it is certainly useful to consider the way they have been conceptualised by critics in relation to the place of art within society and the idea of 'radical art'. The failure or success of the works, for example, was often measured in terms of their inability to function either artistically or politically because the politics compromised the art or the art compromised the politics. It is interesting, therefore, to consider the way in which the art was already political and the politics already 'art politics'. Furthermore, this suggests ways in which some works, particularly those in **Praxis**, subverted the contexts they were placed in by not being properly 'artistic' or simply 'political'.

# The Arts Law Centre of Australia

based on a lecture given at the ArtLaw Seminar in July this year.

The Arts Law Centre of Australia is the national community legal centre for the arts in Australia. It has a very wide brief: to give legal and accounting advice and referral services to individuals and organisations in all sectors of the arts on all issues which affect their professional lives, nationwide.

The Arts Law Centre was the brainchild of Shane Simpson, an Auckland boy whose name may be familiar to some of you as the author of "The Visual Artist and the Law", still the best legal resource for practitioners, unfortunately now out of print - but on the shelves of the most discerning tertiary institution and public libraries.

Genius though he unquestionably is, Simpson did not invent the idea of a non-profit community legal centre for the arts community. He had seen a version of it in London, in the form of Arts Law

Services, which was established in 1978 with the support of the Arts Council of Great Britain. But, à la Thatcher, Arts Law Services had its funding cut after three years. Two years later, it collapsed.

There is a cautionary lesson to be learned here: it is a fatal mistake to contemplate that a community legal centre can ever be self funding. Every couple of years, the Australia Council commissions David Throsby, Professor of Economics at Macquarie University in Sydney, to conduct a survey of artists' income across Australia. The most recent study, "But What Do You Do For A Living?", published in December 1994, revealed that the average income of artists earned across all sectors from arts work in 1992-93 was \$18,000; that 50% of artists earned less than \$10,000 from all of their arts-related work; and that there was a universal downward trend in artists' real incomes across all art forms since the period of the previous survey.

The first President of the Arts Law Centre of Australia was Justice Michael Kirby, then a judge of the NSW Court of Appeal and a prominent human rights advocate - now a High Court Judge and member of the International Court of Justice - one of those rare beings who can hold judicial office of the highest status in the land and maintain an outspoken (some mealy mouthed conservatives would even say "radical") role as an advocate on controversial issues.

In his address at the tenth anniversary of the Centre, Justice Kirby was so bold and fond to refer to Shane as "a flamboyant descendent of Barnham and Bailey" and noted his achievements as the first Director: "Not only was he a good promoter of the Centre's free national legal service to the arts community of Australia; he wrote very well regarded texts on legal principles as they affect artists; he expanded the legal help of the Centre to taxation and accounting assistance; and he also



creative nz

TAINTO

KC

LOUIS ROUSSEY

db

"Naomi + Kaha"

SACRED

Reduce

WOMIN'S ZONE

The dream of Life

The sky is zipped up tight tonight

Last Dance with Mary-Jane

acquired the Centre's first premises in a suitably run-down, turn of the century building which projected an image of chaste poverty and empathetic deprivation".

Now not withstanding the judge's words, I think his Honour hit on some qualities crucial to the pioneer of a legal service for artists: the gift for and commitment to marketing; legal expertise; a knowledge and understanding of how artists work and what their legal needs are; and a preparedness to forego whatever status symbol the moniker of 'lawyer' might carry.

All of the principles which drove the establishment of the Arts Law Centre, and the qualities of its first director, are as crucial to today. From its grand aims and immodest means in 1983, the Arts Law Centre today is a truly national service with an annual budget of \$450,000, a full time staff of seven, a national panel of 200 volunteer lawyers and about 1350 subscribers. The core business of the Centre remains the advice and education of arts practitioners, but the scope of delivery of those services has grown enormously.

#### **Legal, accounting and mediation practice**

The Centre's legal officers give legal advice to practitioners nationally via its toll free line. We receive between 15 and 30 calls for advice per day. That advice is given initially free, over the phone; for follow up services people are asked to subscribe. The benefits of annual subscription in terms of the legal advice services include access to a face to face consultation with a specialist lawyer in Adelaide, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, if a legal officer determines that the matter would be dealt with more appropriately in this way. This service is managed by the Centre's legal officers, but the legal advice is provided by private practitioners who volunteer their time to the Centre's subscribers.

Free financial advice is provided over the phone by a consultant accountant, who also arranges for referrals to a national panel of accountants who have expertise in advising arts practitioners.

In 1993 the Arts Law Centre mediation service was established. One of the perennial difficulties artists have in enforcing their rights is the difficulty of going to court to have them enforced through lack of funds. Indeed, because so few artists can afford to retain a solicitor, very few solicitors have the expertise in the legal issues which confront creators. This is another justification for the existence, and government funding of, a specialist community legal centre for artists.

*But the other problem with enforcing rights in the Court system is that to do so involves giving up your case once it gets to the rules of Court and the restricted remedies it can give. A very famous US supreme Court judge once quipped: " It is a rare litigant who recognises his case once it gets to Court" and it is undeniably true. And once there, sometimes the only remedy at the Courts disposal is to order the payment of the money; and very often what an artist wants is something else altogether - an acknowledgment of their creative contribution to a project; for example. Courts can be pretty useless in such cases.*

Mediation is geared towards amicable resolution rather than Court intervention; and most judges appreciate the opportunity to have cases resolved without them. Mediation is yet to catch on in a big way in the arts community in Australia, which is a shame and I think will change; because the speed, affordability, and informality of the process are so well suited to artist's needs. To the extent that the service has been used to date, it has been very well received, and industry bodies are beginning to endorse it and recommend it to their members.

#### **Education and resource development**

In theory, advice work should comprise about half of a legal officer's workload. The rest of the time is spent on educational activities. One of the topics of most fervent sermonising by Arts Law Centre legal officers is the crucial importance of the use of written agreements; but the strength of the argument is somewhat diluted if you can't give artists an idea of what a contract looks like, or have to invent each one from scratch each time a practitioner needs one.

To date we have published 28 sample contracts. We include explanatory notes to all of them, and encourage people to get advice on the tailor made draft they make before using it. We have, with the help of a consultancy fee from the Visual Arts and Crafts Board of the Australia Council, developed a more sophisticated package of contracts for community broadcasters and small budget filmmakers. All are available for purchase; and at a significantly discounted rate for subscribers.

We also produce information sheets on the questions we are most often asked; so that people do not have to retain all the information they get over the phone; and also to allow legal officers to give an overview of the area, knowing that it can be backed up with a written resource. Fifteen information sheets have been published so far, ranging in subject matter from how to protect ideas to self-help debt recovery procedures in all Australian States and the Northern Territory to performers' releases.

Our consultant accountant has just updated a very popular free booklet on income tax issues for artists, produced again with the support of the Australia Council; and we have published books dealing with business structures for the arts, and insurance matters in all sectors.

The education component of our role includes a very intensive lecture and speaking program (and extensive too - although NZ is as far as we have got so far): a series of lectures at tertiary institutions in Sydney and a national lecture program which this year took in the Northern Territory, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and regional Western Australia.

For the last few years the Centre has organised and hosted a monthly seminar program at which speakers from outside the Centre - generally a mix of lawyers and practitioners speak on an issue of practical relevance in each sector. Speakers are asked to donate the papers they give at these seminars, and we publish these for sale also.

The Centre also produces a quarterly newsletter, ART + LAW, which is free to subscribers, to keep them informed of the Centre's activities; but even more importantly keeps them up to date with news in the arts law world. This is written by legal officers, with the help of volunteers, and desk top published in house.

Our latest publication is a bulletin on art, law and technology, published every two months - ARTlines - produced with the financial support of the Australian Film Commission and again available at a discounted rate to subscribers.

There is always a backlog of educational resources which we champ at the bit to do - a package of contracts for the commissioning of the on line work, in particular for web sites, is on the next agenda.

### Advocacy and Policy

The Centre advocates for law reform wherever appropriate. This year, we have made submissions to government on the (still) proposed introduction of a moral rights regime in Australia; the regulation of on line services, the overlap between the provisions of the Copyright and Design Acts and in

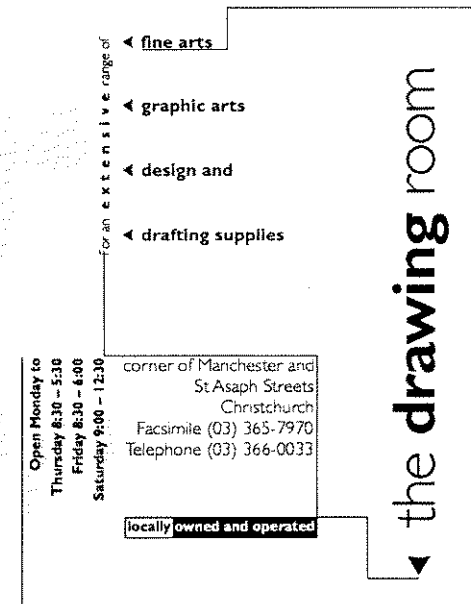
response to the first review of Copyright Collecting Societies in Australia - written by Shane Simpson! Before the end of the year there are submissions to be written in response to a proposed bill to amend the Copyright Act (including the introduction of moral rights), the Australian Taxation Office in relation to their treatment of works of art for sales tax purposes, a New South Wales Law reform Commission report on proposed amendments to the State Defamation Act, and a federal government inquiry into the effect of the parallel importation provisions of the Copyright Act on the prices of CDs in Australia.

### Conclusion

The Arts Law Centre has come a long way in its 13 years, and it continues to grow in strength. From inauspicious beginnings, with a supportive but cautious funding body, the Centre now receives triennial funding from the Australia Council - which is a great vote of confidence by them in us, and gives us the opportunity to plan, in the security that the money will come. We generate one third of our total income through the services we provide, and the resources we produce. Just in the two years that I have been lucky enough to work here, the budget and staff have doubled.

The picture of health which the Centre radiates today is no coincidence. It is I think the result of a clarity of vision as to the role of the Centre right from the start; a real understanding of the Australian arts community and a commitment to respond to its needs; governance by a Board with expertise and a faith in the importance of the existence of the Centre; and the quality of the legal services which it provides. I think that the Centre will grow, and that the next few years will be very exciting ones. But only with eternal vigilance devoted to all of these factors.

Julie Robb



Christchurch Poster Site for 'Hoardings'

Further information on legal issues for artists gathered by the Art Law Seminar will be published early in 1997 in the form of a legal handbook for artists. This is currently in preparation under the editorship of Christchurch lawyer Sue Rout. You can register your interest in the handbook by joining the long list of pre-orders at the Physics Room office. PO box 902 Christchurch, Ph 03 379 5583

# THE HOARDINGS PROJECT

Over a period of months during 1996, South Island Art Projects coordinated the making and presentation of a series of art posters under the project title **Hoardings**. These were displayed, according to the poster's subject, in Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland. Five contemporary artists were commissioned to each work in collaboration with a community group of their choosing, to prepare a large two colour poster. These posters were "published" using the professional services of project sponsors Phantom Billstickers, appearing on city poster hoardings in the context of band and street culture advertising posters.

## **Hoardings Participating artists:**

**Kirsty Cameron collaboration:  
Women prisoners in Mt. Eden jail**

**Simon Endres collaboration:  
MESH (Maori Education for Sexual Health)**

**Rob Haakman collaboration:  
The Roger Wright Centre**

**Honor Harger collaboration:  
Womens Refuge (Auckland)**

**Janene Knox collaboration:  
NZ Prostitutes Collective**

Each of the Hoardings poster designs is published in this magazine, along with an image of the poster as it appeared on the street.

Hoardings continued SIAP's investigation of the potential for contemporary art to re-claim a role as a vehicle for contested ideas, in the arena of social/political debate. It also investigated current notions and lack of clarity in the identification of the categories "public" and "community" art. Being a project which directly engaged artists and audiences, with specific communities of interest and the issues which concern them, **Hoardings** opened up for discussion these important relationships. In addition, the project encouraged the integration of design-based art practices into contemporary conceptual public work.

Hoardings required artists to contact an organisation whose activity they supported and identified with. The poster was the result of a process of negotiation and development between artist and organisation. The project raised issues such as the effectiveness of poster campaigns, and art versus design debates. The collaborative process between artists, organisations and SIAP generated issues at all stages of design, production and publication.

The Hoardings project was made possible by funding support from Creative New Zealand.



Hoardings Posters on poster sites around the city





the struggle against

silent suffering

women's



g

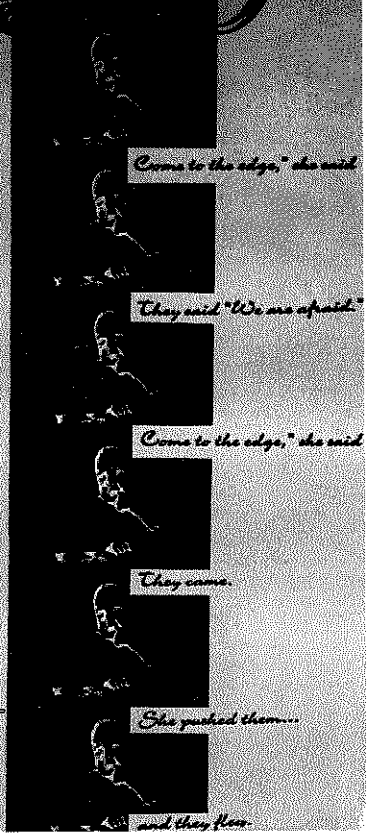


many more remain

silent  
unseen

Supportline

woman's refuge



*Come to the edge," she said*

*They said "We are afraid."*

*Come to the edge," she said*

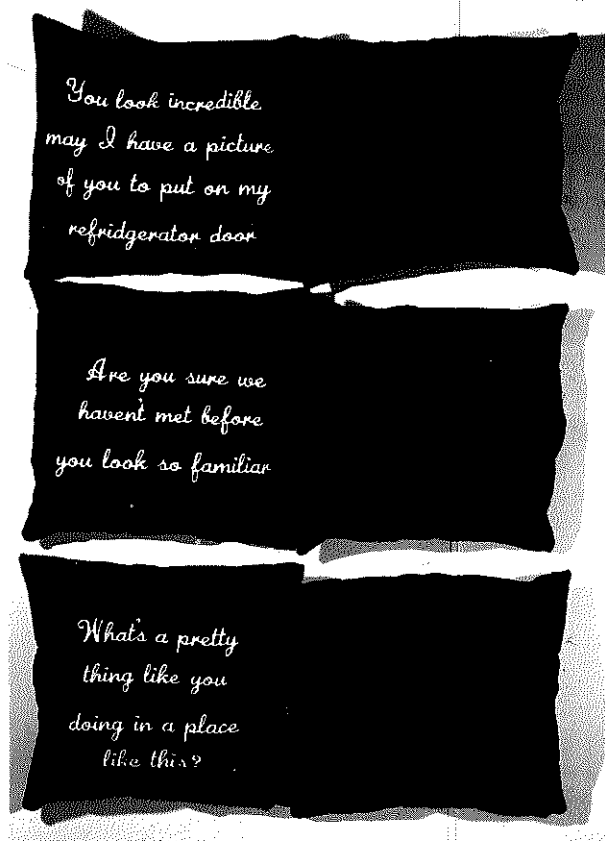
*They came.*

*She pushed them...*

*and they flee.*

# Haven't I Seen You Somewhere Before?

Kirsty Gregg  
Jonathan Smart Gallery  
20th August -14 September 1996



Above: Kirsty Gregg, embroidery on velvet cushions  
opposite page: Honor Harger in collaboration with  
Women's refuge 'Hoardings'

Hot on the heels of her successful boudoir pieces in **Good Luxury** at CoCA, Kirsty Gregg's **Haven't I Seen You Somewhere Before?** was a reverse traverse of the well-worn and treacherous path between the singles bar and the double bed. Complete with bar stools, bottles and propositions, the Jonathan Smart gallery was transformed into an elegant, if uncomfortable, den of liquor and desire. Appropriately enough, the exhibition was publicised with scarlet-printed calling cards bearing its arresting title which were handed out to drinkers by the artist herself from behind the bar of the Mainstreet Café.

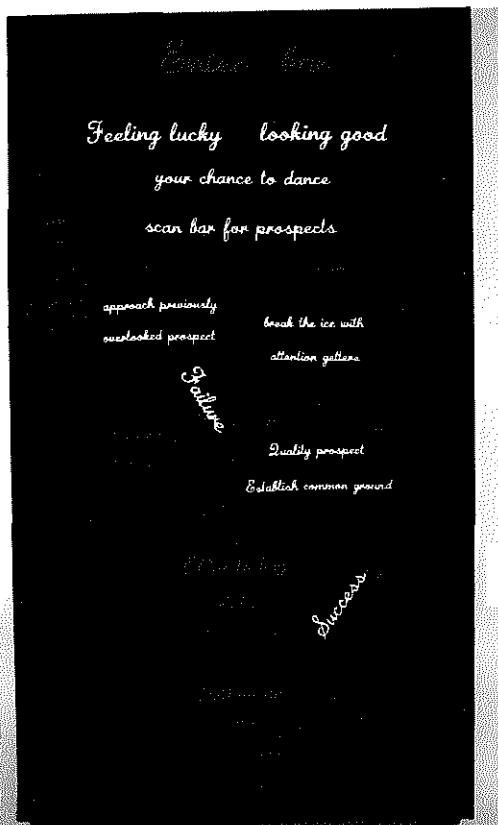
Dominating the gallery space were ten, awkward, gawky-legged chairs, which crowded nervously together, yet pressed forward, anxiously offering the prettily embroidered come-ons decorating their black-cushioned laps. The surrounding walls echoed with the diverse voices, alternately censorious, bawdy and crystal-hugging, which have become an indexical feature in Gregg's art. At one end, a flow chart and instructive panels served to guide the inexperienced suitor through the rituals of 'the score', on another wall, a triptych bearing the legend "Incredible Failures: God looks upon them with pity" displayed a range of less-advised approaches.

I once heard of a guy whose love-life depended entirely upon his intentionally incompetent delivery of the most banal come-ons. Halfway through an old favourite like "Don't your feet hurt?" (Because you've been running through my mind all night), he would blow the line, confess his ineptitude, and, presumably,

his adoration, throwing himself on the mercy of his *objêt de desire*. His success rate was almost 100%. Gregg's felted flow-charts, "Self Promotion Campaign" and "Increasing the Odds with winning techniques" by-passed such an unconventional approach, offering instead familiar and pragmatic advice such as "develop a list of prospects and contact sites". Not all the voices in the exhibition however, were so comfortingly assured. The reflective glass covering a collection of doomed chat-up lines printed on match-boxes (further relics of the traditional bar-scene) suggested that the punters who endeavoured to make these lemons work for them would end up where they started, back in front of the bathroom mirror, practising more acceptable approaches in the difficult art of tastelessness.

Gregg's work neatly examined the cast of contradictions manifest in the dating game. A shelf of felt-covered flasks seemed to provide the comfort suggested by one of the "instructive" panels; "order drink/liquid/confidence", yet the words on the bottles themselves exposed the outpourings which usually follow such an alcohol-induced lack of inhibition for the banal falsities they are: "you know they want it," they said smoothly, "They're just waiting to try out the goods". Despite the constant emphasis on the pick-up target as prey, the sententious and didactic tone of the panels suggested that it was the hunter him/herself who was vulnerable and in need of assistance. Gregg carefully avoided any gender demarcation - even traditional lines like "What's a pretty girl like you doing in a place like this?" were altered to maintain this ambiguity. This approach meant that the work could be read from a variety of perspectives, over and above the more obvious "man/hunter, woman/hunted" scenario.

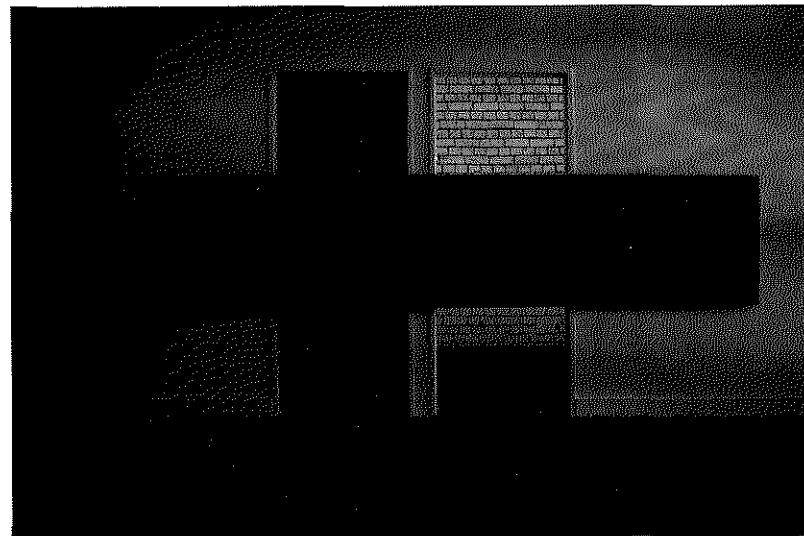
The visitor hoping for any kind of thematic or material departure from Gregg would have been



**Above: Kirsty Gregg** "Increasing the Odds with Winning Techniques" embroidery on velvet.

disappointed, this work was not markedly different from her **Booze Artist** installation for **What Now?** at the High Street Project in 1995. Still, if you're into pretty, witty social observation, she's one of the best around. In the end however, the picture was a little too neat, a fraction too well-made. The room could have been threatening, the crowd of chairs fins in a sea of sleaze, but the mood was detached, far from the sweaty flesh-fests lines like "I hope you don't mind me asking...are you a model?" conjured up. **Haven't I Seen You Somewhere Before?** alluded to the smoke and sweat of bar-room sexuality, but finally came a little too clean.

## 20 billion bricks



**Patric Tomkins, 'Bricks':** Pencil and paint on doors 76cmx390cmx3.6cm **The High Street Project**

"BRICKS", a painting by Patric Clark Tomkins, born 1969, Mosgiel. (no. 8 in "IDentikit" series, October 96', High Street Project, Christchurch.)

It cast me.

Fuck me! And I mean it. Fuck me days. 20 billion bricks. Each about 3mm x 10mm, freehand and you better believe it. Bricks, in lead(B) pencil, on light pink. Lead bricks. But light as a feather.

My eyes, mine eyes. Took a wander - in clouds I think. (I decided this on that day anyway. Things Change.) Remembering Mr Turner. This work has huge atmosphere. Sometimes you can see air. It was like that. Stare hard and squint slightly- moving particles. Dizzy days.

Picture this. 20 billion bricks.

Some process/ time taken. It's true. Some sort of pilgrimage. Your plight. And honest. Days and days and days and days. What were you thinking, boy? What's hidden/drawn in? Sad days and o.k. days during a Christchurch winter- small bar-heater. A letter, a diary, a history. Mission man. I have to say it. There's passion - so much meaning. Drawn in.

And yet in a way - nothing. Just a spiny thing. Come in one at a time please - this is written. And an unspoken - you're welcome - relax and take your time. When you're climbing - you reach for that far hold. Succumb. Pure fantasy and story. Reach for the moon baby. Loose it. Sure contrast to the world outside - High Street on a week day.

Alone. I walked around the corner- into the big room/white room. A new white wall to one side. To keep things simple. Blocking off- stuff. And it's there- this long landscape/wallscape. It's so flat here in Christchurch- two doors long and cruising across. Left to right, left handed boy...

**opposite page: Simon Endres in collaboration with MESH (Maori Education for Sexual Health) 'Hoardings'**

Nga Kaimahi  
O Te Po Trust

WHAKARŌ

K I A T Ū P A T O

KŌRERO

SEXUAL HEALTH  
EDUCATION SERVICE  
PHONE/FAX  
04 304 1500

# Crime Show

6 July to 3 August, the Physics Room.

The crisis that is the safety zone. Plastic Eden, the original sin is on display. Calling dangerous freedom.

Art law, the laws of art. The crime, the transgression. The fall from grace. Punishment. Learning how to fall, how to land, how to stabilise, climb, leap... No matter what we do we are always here. "Who is judge?" This life is the task of love.

**Hone Heke** tells **Raskolnikov** the Russian student to use his hatchet on a flag pole.

**Daniel Malone** drinks **Rose Selavy's** perfume. Copycat cool, the cool copycat, the New Zealand flag is my doormat. Flattery, come on, step me into the floor. *Back to the future*, blank. Art halt. The crime of imitation. Who said they could not be imitated? We both are and are not. **Pierre et Gilles** **Kylie Minogue** side saddle rip off of **Luke** ( I want to see you in court) **Roberts's** *My childhood vision of Mother Mary MacKillop galloping past the Alpha convent bringing more joeys to central Western Queensland.* The mission, more joeys. The future! Giving up. Going nowhere and happy. Make the made. Give up NZ, It's All OK(not). Blessed indulgence. Flagging the future. Kerplunk, punk. I ain't no human bean. Burn our clothes on the new day's freedom and go swimming. My Arts School vision of the adolescent Maui Solanas going fucking crazy with an I AM for forty dazed days and nights, writing doubt in shit across the sky, bleeding rivers, and then taking us all to heaven of the back of a whale.

The Italian Aids gang pull off another Bank Job. **Marilyn Monroe** leaps off the giant H, setup? What? Wasted. **Paul Johns**, reversed, he counts his pearls. Love beads, numbering off, one, two, three... mother! *Censored*, hard red. Strawberry jam on a

contrasts. Light and dusk. Half hidden mystery rooms/ mystery messages. Secrets. If you've looked really carefully you've seen two small words - one at each end. A little "man", and a little "woman" - float in the big silver expanse/wide sea. Nevernever land. More than a reference to public toilets enroute Intercity-loos at Oamaru. Do I read this as some sad, lost sexuality? Swim around in this brick world. Dissolve where they are written. Into.

Maybe, in fact, these small words / big words, annoy

me. (Decided this on another day. Things change). Names - call me back and tie me down - to too much. Controlling and bossy. Ignore them and fall back. Dreams are free.

You know, the whole thing is moving. Hovers. Swimming and swarming - ant bricks. Small tricks, small pleasures. Happy travels. This swimmer flounders. It's clever. And I mean it.

Picture this.  
20 billion bricks.

Fuck me days.  
It's a big thing that is little things that is big.  
And beautiful.

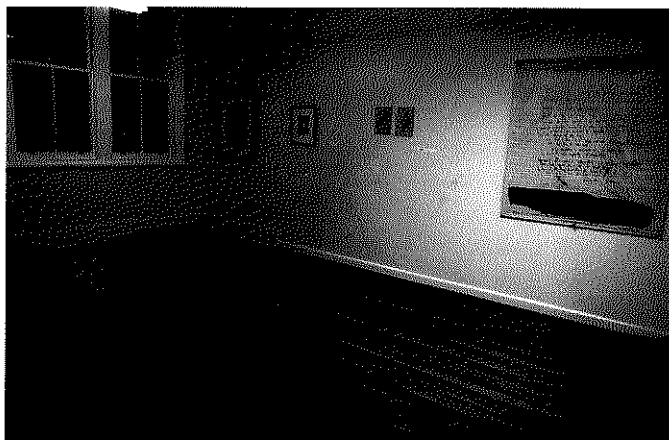
by **M. Cloud**  
(and flying)

Patric Tomkins, 'Bricks': Pencil and paint on doors 76cmx390cmx3.6cm, at The High Street Project

Placed over the doorways into the two small rooms. No bullshit. Sure of itself and meaning it. Crisscross/christ cross - viewing at chest height. It goes like this - it is on the doors that were there. Vertical to horizontal- this sky spins. So you can't get in- physically. A barrier of sorts as brick walls can be. Try conceptual entry- spacey ways. Stand in the big room and stare. Lean against the opposite wall - dreamer.

A barrier and an opening. Oscillates between. Can that be? I had a barrier opening feeling. 20 billion bricks and more bricks behind. These two rooms you can see into- they have brick walls too. They were terracotta, now painted white. To keep things simple. Bricks on bricks. Bricks forever. For a moment - two weeks - High Street - you, me - had a slice of infinity. It's fleeting.

I notice one room is darker. A quiet play with



Above: Crime Show, The Physics Room

**Caravaggio** cupid. The bird of prey eats cock. Faceless head eating loaded juice unit in style. Headless body arched savage, one arm action. Full throttle love machines, posed. Wristwatch timing, lights, action. The camera. What can you see? Hunger. This obsession, losing myself. Flesh addict.

Death on credit. A hole to my heart, I bleed. *Tainted Love*. The *Veil* held up. The shroud of Turin, the martyrs wounds. The cloth becomes the picture plane. Enlarged, close-up. The lunch is naked. Dry blood.

**Raphael's** veiled woman, we're talking very mysterious. Hide my face. Burn the love letter, obsession. The poet leaps to her death from the cliff top, she always loved to swim in the sea. **Fiona Pardington** lovesick. "Once love deceives the eyes, which are the true spies and gatekeepers of the soul, she slips through the passageways, travelling imperceptibly by way of the veins to the liver where she suddenly imprints an ardent desire for that object that is either truly lovable, or appears so." Jacques Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*. Nothing hides. The lover's Why.

The mad deluded huge-moustached philosopher writes another love letter to eternity hammering home another self inflicted headache. Infinite repetition. The lie is a lie. **L.Budd**, *Cause in Search of an Effect*. Never landing. Coming in out of the abstract. I dream of crimes unspeakable, impossible, unknowable. The mad rant, scribbled out, the dreamer is an outlaw. I came down out of my ivory tower and found no world. Contemplating the clouds in my head, losing it, whatever it is. Blind. Lawless.

I am a nigger of the universe. I can stick my fist up into the air because I don't give a shit. Fuck crime.

A Taste of Kiwi. Face on the forest floor, the taste of mud. Loose forward action. If a complete stranger suddenly gives you flowers, that's impulse. Throw back some beers. Hooker throws in. Fuck me up. Try time right under the posts here at **The Institute for Psycho Sexual Research**.

Kicking for touch. So obvious it hurts, yes. Scrum collapses to a cum shot review. Ruck me. Hold tight, lock in. Repression intensified to a transcendent release. The Genuine TV Kids loaded on acid wander the streets handing out free ammo.

**BLAM** *Necro Enema Amalgamated*. CD rom. Low-tech Hi-tech. Flicker cut chop. Bang, wham, thump, kapow. Dumb hit, on the offensive. Crude technical, shotguns in the sports bag padded out with tennis socks. Awkward motion through the liquid static crime city, learning to walk. Retarded interactive system of bad motion, stutters through itself, downloading porn. BLAM"BLAM" BLAM". Teenage sex scandal, criminal access, F.B.I necrophilia, psychotic smiles, poor resolution gun held to my face. Indulgence is so rewarding.

**Kirsty Cameron**, rubber stamps. Ink me up, peach-jelly. The scream clutch sucking, I suffocate in the universe. I must retreat into myself in order to love. Raw wonder. Fear. Everywhere people are in chains. *The Vagaries of her own Feminine Heart*. She drops the knife, outside the riot grows, surge to the west, gore sea glory. **Doris Day** blows her brains out with a shotgun. Her last words, "No apologies. Tell them I have gone to America." The brain is just the weight of God, they measure pound for pound. Silent screams, frozen, ready for reproduction (text book stuff). Alone, together. Nurse? Horror. Clutching. She said, better to perish with land in sight than

# EVERYTHING FOR THE ARTIST

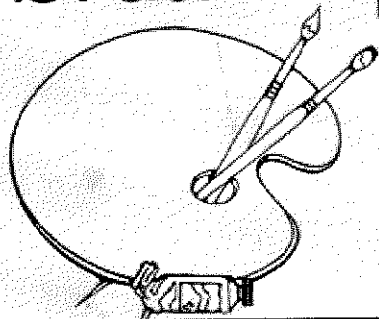
## • Professional and Amateur

Acrylics • Oils • Watercolours • Pigments • Size, Natural resins • Natural binders • Restoring colours • Egg tempera • Gouache • Varnishers & mediums • Canvas panels • Stretched canvases • Primed canvas • Canvas stretcher frames • Canvas pliers • Palettes • Dippers • Painting & palette knives • Oil & watercolour pads • Brushes • Pencils & charcoals • Soft & hard pastels • Blending Stumps • Oil pastels • Oil paintsticks • Conte crayons & pencils • Tinted paper • Watercolour papers • Mount boards • Lino printing inks • Etching inks & grounds • Metal etching instruments • Heatset colours • Fabric colours • Cold ceramic colours • Glass painting colours • Silk painting colours • Calligraphy pens & nibs • Easels – field, table, studio & box models.

# brush-n-palette

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# brush-n-palette



134 Oxford Terrace  
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New Zealand Agents for  
MAIMERI Artists Materials

reach my blue peninsula and perish of delight.

**Janene Knox**, the dreamy slow whip, *Monger*. Powerplay, metal and leather. A monitored world, shadows, projections. Take the law into your own hands. Awash, the trader crosses the border. Market thresholds, the limits of injustice... money for sex, sex for money. Rights in the face of exploitation.

Nail yourself to the cross. *Crucifixion*, the artist as self punishing. **Andrew Drummond**, martyr. This is the world, welcome to my world, where the fuck am I? At the centre of the cross. The crime of indecent exposure. **Pope John Paul** with a low polaroid angle, AD naked. Latex skin, torn off, getting off.

Stoned on duty. Racked, hung, guillotined, shot, gassed, electrocuted... Polaroids in plastic specimen bags, icons of the old new New Zealand art. No tree hill. Back to nature, original innocence. Illusions.

**James Ormond Wallace**  
alias The Know Nothing Kid.

city art 96 disraeli st. christchurch ph/fax 03 3653811

*stretchers*



**Solander**



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# Melissa MacLeod's installation, "Rock Your World"

at first glance appears to be merely an open invitation for child's play. A false floor, with its structural support system hidden from view, completely fills a room and sits a metre or so above ground level. Its steps, strategically placed just inside the doorway, encourage participation.

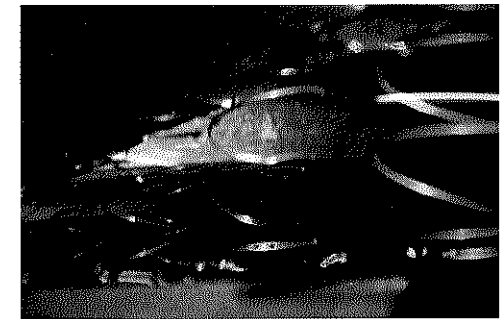
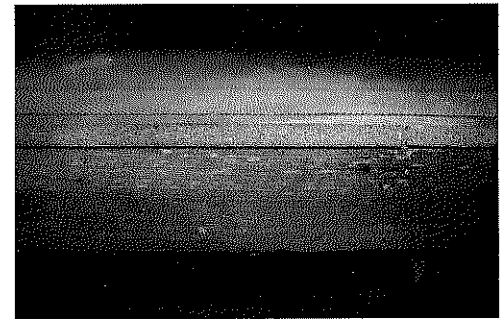
Once inside the room, the particle board bobs beneath my feet, and I bounce, enjoying the whimsical opportunity Melissa has created. Reluctantly, I climb down and venture into the second space. A single television monitor is braced against the wall, the cable snaked across the

wooden floor. I climb up the steps to get a better view. An arrangement of coils, sandwiched between wooden planks, stands poised- ready to spring, revealing the structural components underneath the false floor.

I go back to the first room and jump more emphatically this time. It is different knowing about the camera underneath the floor boards. I rush back in hope of catching the movement on screen. But, the motionless picture mocks me.

I am reminded of security cameras. The ones that show my profile when I look towards the monitor. When I look straight at the camera I know a full view of my face is shown. No matter how quickly I turn towards the screen, I will always be faced with my profile. It is the same with "Rock Your World". Regardless of how quickly I rush to the monitor, I am unable to see my effect on those springs.

Of course, I could ask a friend to jump as I watch the monitor, but it's not the same. Just as no one else's face on those security monitors will appease me, it's *my* bounce I wish to see on screen.



## Melissa MacLeod at The Physics Room, August 9 - September 7



Installation Views of "Rock Your World"

By dividing the monitor and the camera, Melissa has actually fused the two rooms. The events in one room are relayed in the other. If there is motion depicted on screen, there is action taking place in the other space. Likewise, there cannot be any activity in the first space without it being displayed in the second room.

There are physical links between the two rooms as well. The cable, which is hooked up to the monitor,



is a literal connection between the equipment. The eye follows the cable across the floor to the second room, down the steps, and into the first room. It reinforces the connection established by the video image. Likewise, the false floor joins the spaces. It has been constructed to be the same level as the floor of the second room with the same number of steps cut into it.

Melissa not only manipulates the architectural aspects of the room by raising the floor, but also distorts and reshapes the audience. While feeling like a child, bouncing, one has the awkward sensation of also being a giant. The room's height has shrunk and the naked bulbs, hanging limply from the ceiling, are now uncomfortably close.

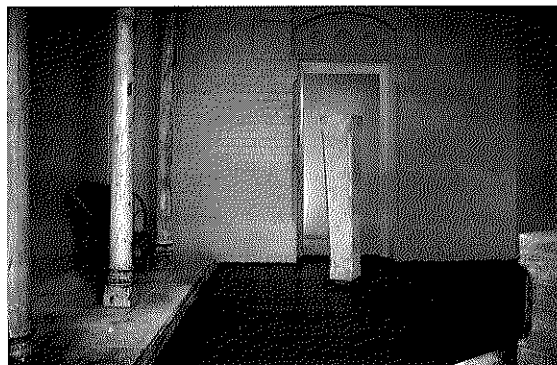
And then there's the dialogue between the viewer/participant and the installation. The viewer ceases to be a passive observer and is incorporated into the work. The false floor unexpectedly quivers and the visitor is given permission to play, to loosen up, to add whimsy to her or his day. Then, the monitor reveals the psychological aspect and a sense of frustration and dissatisfaction is introduced. One cannot help but feel cheated out of witnessing his or her personal spring. But then, that's the attraction. Human expectation and desire are constantly present and Melissa understands this. She has created a sincere work of art which is an exploration of human nature as well as an expression of both the expected and the unexpected.

Celia Mendoza

## the physics room

a contemporary art project space

### Scale of Sorrows the view 'Wakatipu' Stuart Griffiths and David Watson, 14 September - 12 October



## the therapy room

19 October - 30 November

37 page works  
from Australia, the UK and the US  
curated by  
Suzanne Treister  
The Contemporary  
Art Centre of  
South Australia



A COMPONENT OF

white hysteria

CONTEMPORARY  
ART CENTRE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

# H I G H S T R E E T

## 96/97 SUMMER PROGRAMME AT HIGH STREET PROJECT:

### A BRIEF HIGH STREET PROJECT UPDATE:

The **IDentikit** project which ran at High Street Project, for the longer part of '96 recently came to an end with the tenth and final show by Kane Dyer. Continual two weekly installation/de-installation throughout **IDentikit**, of predominantly large and physically involved works made for an exciting, varied, and ever demanding/ ever changing series. (High Street Project would like to thank Creative Communities for their support of **IDentikit**.)

The current High Street Project programme, which will run over the summer months of 96/97, marks the last group of shows before the gallery shifts to a new location. Moving yet again, High Street Project

embraces its third phase. Destination still unknown, this pilgrimage from 132 may take the gallery up or down High Street, or equally, land the gallery elsewhere in central city Christchurch.

The plan is to open the new High Street Project space **March(ish) 1997**, with the first of the **Lots** series; an interdisciplinary group of shows involving 7 three week collaborative projects. This will also be the launch of two major catalogues, documenting both **IDentikit** and the **What Now?** series that went before it. Archiving, elaborating, these catalogues will hold on to some of the significant projects that have been/are going on, at High Street.

We will keep you posted.

Melissa Macleod



**Oct 22-Nov 9**

**Maja Milhailovich**  
Alice in the Wonderland  
**Emma Velde** Poke  
**Jules Novena Sorrel**  
sculpture & installation

**Nov 12-16** Video / Movie Week Spy

**Nov 19-30**

**Emma Budgen**  
**Jason Ross**  
**Simon Howden** Hop-Skip-Jump  
**Sauvignon Blank**  
**Tabatha Forbes**  
**Kathryn Bird**  
(collaborative project)

**Dec 3-14** Xmas Show / Fundraiser

**Jan 7-18 (1997)**

**Celia Mendoza** Uncovered  
**Phil Price** sculpture

**Jan 21-Feb 1**

**Fiona Amundsen & POLAR**  
**Stella Brennan** (collaborative project)

**Feb 11-23**

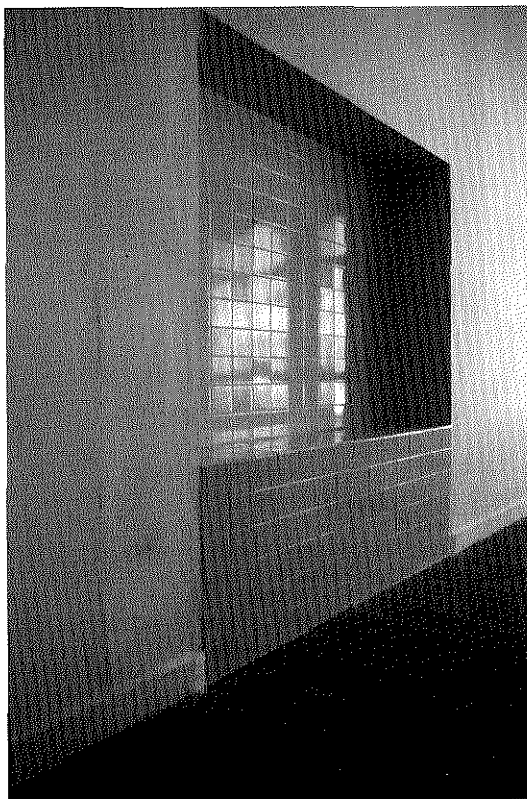
**Marcus Moore &** Re coding  
**Sarah Mitchell** (collaborative project)

High Street Project will be moving to a new space **March(ish) 1997**, opening with the first of the **Lots** series; an interdisciplinary group of shows involving 7 three week collaborative projects.

# Pink Bits

"In what can clearly be described as a feminisation of space, the almost excessive attention given to surfaces and fitting and decorative details is perhaps consistent with the idea of providing a heightened tactile environment for pampering the naked materiality of the body. The spatial principle of the bathroom celebrates sensuality and arousal while at the same time encapsulates security and privatisation of experience."\*

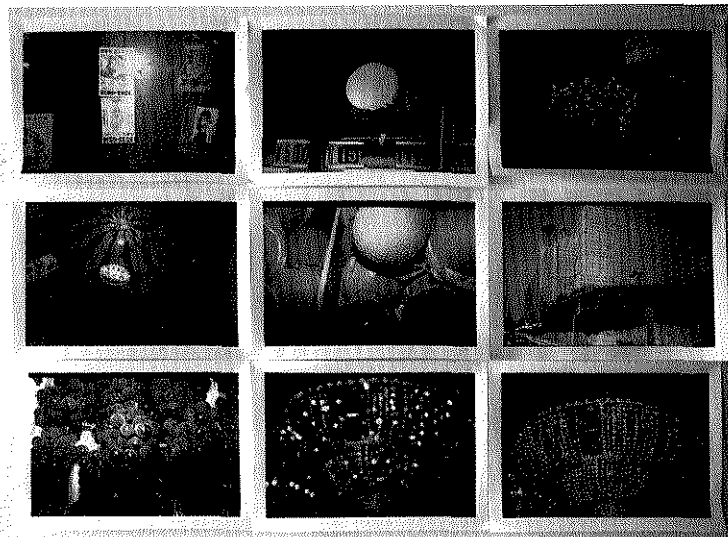
Ann Shelton's two pieces were made up of rectangular groupings of images of consumer goods



Joyce Campbell *Pink Bits Detail*

in Japanese stores: flawless, individually wrapped peaches, pristine cigarette packets, neatly shelved canned goods interspersed with images of hotel bedrooms and bathrooms notable for their worn, utilitarian appearance and discreet bondage equipment fixtures. These are not photographs contrived to accentuate the glamour or sensual qualities of any of the subjects, the effect is flat, ironic, matter of fact. Laser prints which often have something of the quality of those faded photographs of food in restaurant windows. The look is associated with the bland chic of contemporary fashion magazines, the implications are withheld, ambiguous, perverse.

Joyce Campbell's two constructed elements also receded from the viewer, she used the architectural device of the discreet recess to contain her seductive, pink tiled, appointments. At first look both pieces had the quality of large pastel grids, abstractions which loomed and floated in the gallery space, a soft optical effect which counterpointed the eroticism of the bathroom experience. One piece a gleaming tiled seat or shelf, formidably austere, a geometric and precise fitting. Cool, cold but warm to the touch, sensual surprise, the pleasure of the icy ceramic surface heated, inviting the contact of bare skin and spacious enough for more than one sitter's pink bits. The second piece further extended sensory experience by incorporating running water, recalling the pleasing



Ann Shelton *Pink Bits Detail*

babble of the garden fountain. But all is not right in this garden. Although at viewing height the ubiquitous, tiles and the too clinical chrome drains have more to do with a certain public amenity for men. A twee, tiled representation of Duchamp's pan pun. The ensemble is resplendent in a particular shade of too pink ceramic, the excessive flesh colour of cheap dolls and medical equipment or the flush of heat and arousal.

The contrast between Shelton's detached observation of Japanese bathing facilities and the erotics of packaging, and Campbell's fantasy bathroom features generated a resonance which capitalised on wit and the modernist grid. The audience peopled the emptiness of both artists' work and were drawn into the particular experience that is the bathroom and its rituals of nakedness, defecation and vanity.

## Julian Bowron

\*Yao Souchou A Room Named Desire, Body, Space and the Bathroom in the Australian Home Broadsheet Voi 12 No 1 March Adelaide 1993