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A U S T R A L I A N A R T

AUSTRALIA: NINE CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art,
Los Angeles
30 JUNE - 18 AUGUST 1984

AN EXHIBITION OF NINE AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS WHO WILL
CREATE SITE SPECIFIC WORKS AND PERFORMANCES IN AND
AROUND LOS ANGELES, AS WELL AS EXHIBIT RECENT WORKS
AT LAICA.

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LYNDAL JONES
JOHN NIXON
MIKE PARR

JOHN DUNKLEY-SMITH
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REDBACK GRAPHIX (MICHAEL CALLAGHAN, GREGOR CULLEN)

Presented by the Los Angeles Olympic Organising
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The Olympic Arts Festival of the 1984 Games is
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For further information please contact: Bob Smith
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Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art
2020 S Robertson Boulevard
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AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND ARTISTS: ANZART IN EDINBURGH

Edinburgh College of Art, Edinburgh
5 AUGUST - 1 SEPTEMBER 1984

AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS

HOWARD ARKLEY
LYNDAL JONES
JOHN LETHBRIDGE
GEOFF LOWE
LINDA MARRINON
ROBERT ROONEY
VIVIANNE SHARK LEWITT
PETER TYNDALL

NEW ZEALAND ARTISTS

ANDREW DRUMMOND
RICHARD KILLEEN
FROM SCRATCH
PHILIP TRUSTTUM
COLIN MCGAHON
JOHN COUSINS

FILM:

GREGOR NICHOLAS
RON BROWNSON
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MERATA MITA

Presented by the Richard Demarco Gallery with the
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Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council of New Zealand in
Association with the 1984 Edinburgh Festival.

For further information please contact: Richard Demarco
Richard Demarco Gallery
10 Jeffrey Street
Edinburgh EH1 1DT
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AUSTRALIAN VISIONS: 1984 EXXON INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION

The Solomon R Guggenheim Museum,
New York
25 SEPTEMBER - 25 NOVEMBER 1984

AN EXHIBITION OF RECENT WORKS BY THE FOLLOWING
AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS:

BILL HENSON
JAN MURRAY
MANDY MARTIN
PETER BOOTH
SUE NORRIS
DALE FRANK
JOHN NIXON
VIVIANNE SHARK LEWITT

Presented by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New
York, the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council and the
Department of Foreign Affairs, Australia.

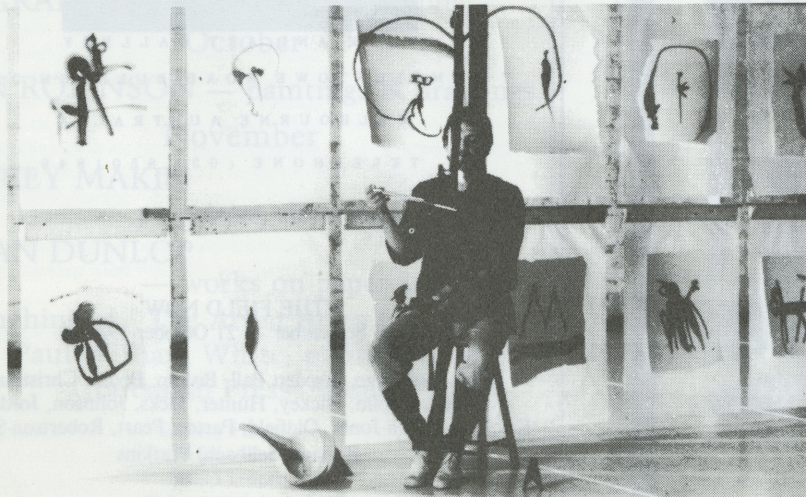
The exhibition is sponsored by Exxon Corporation.

For further information please contact: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
1071 Fifth Avenue
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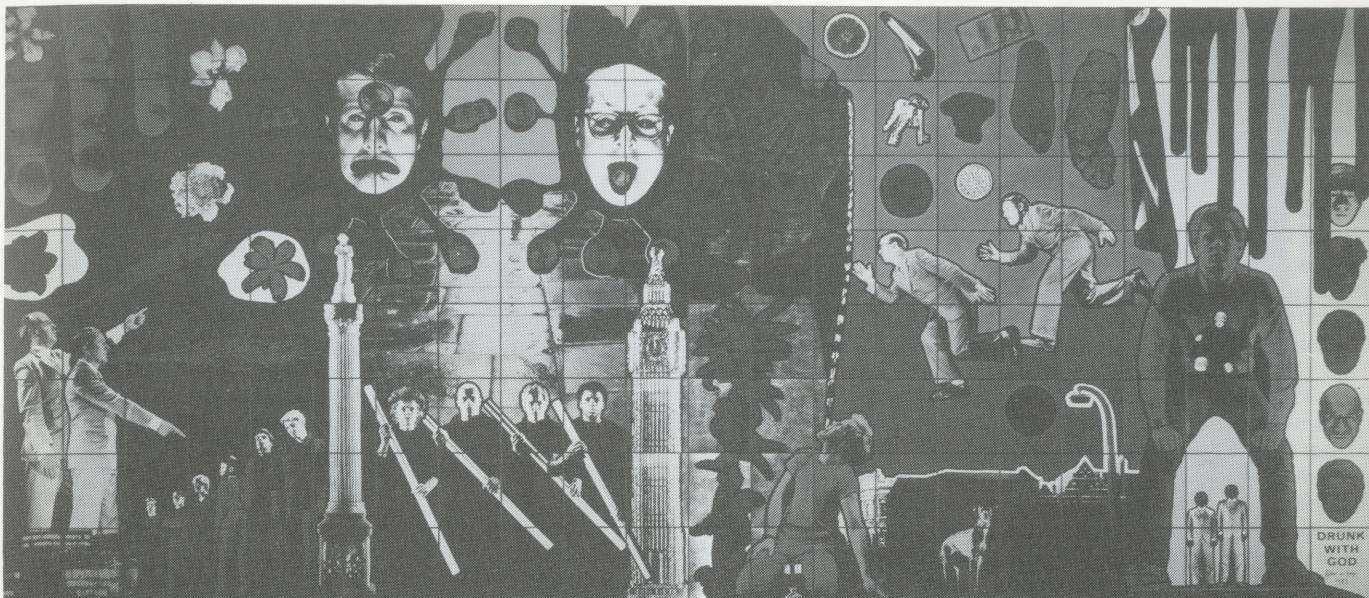
Colin Offord

Artist & Musician Extraordinary



FREE CONCERT
6-8 pm Friday Sept 14

Informal Concerts
within his gallery installation—
Markings and Mouthbows
Sept 14-Oct 21
Adelaide Festival Centre Gallery



Gilbert & George
Drunk With God, 1983
 Photo-piece, 480 x 1100 cm
 Courtesy AGNSW

SYDNEY BANALLY

The Sydney Biennale 1984

David Bromfield

"The primacy of spirit in art and the lifting of old taboos are two sides of the same coin. They both address phenomena that are beyond social acceptance and preformation. They indicate an awareness of social relations ultimately pointing to a determinate negation. Spiritualisation is not brought about when art propagates ideas. It comes to pass when it has sufficient strength to penetrate non intentional, non ideal layers of art. This is one of the reasons why socially unapproved themes have tempted artistic genius time and again. The new spiritualisation in art prevents the continued sullyng of art by the true, the beautiful and the good; the ideals of a philistine culture. What is called art's social criticism or commitment (in other words its critical or negative element) is thoroughly amalgamated with spirit, with the law of form. When nowadays some people play spirit and commitment off against each other, they prove nothing except that their intellects are regressing."

Theodore Adorno, *"Aesthetics"*, translated by C W Lenhardt, 1984, pp 137-138.



Jenny Watson
Transport, 1983
Acrylic, oil, ink, charcoal, pastel and cord on hessian.
274.3 x 304.8 cm
Courtesy AGNSW

By the time this review appears, the Sydney Biennale will be long over. It is already clear that there has been widespread public disappointment with the exhibitions. The Biennale is held to have lacked excitement.

Many of the invited artists voiced their disappointment that it failed to recharge the batteries, brought no new discoveries or insights. At least one, Eva Man-Wah Yuen, did so nationwide, on ABC FM's "Arts Illustrated". She hazarded a guess that many Western artists were unused to the discipline of restricted means and an even more restricted audience. In short they were spoilt rotten, though Ms Yuen put it more delicately.

The usual response to failures of this kind is to shoot the person in charge. The penalty for failure in the art world is professional death — or so it would seem, but this begs the most important question raised by the exhibition, which is whether this Biennale could have been different or better, given the premise that it has to represent some statement as to the current condition and concerns of visual art practice.

It may have done that very well. There is always a possibility that Western art like the Western world in general is going through a phase of self apologetic inadequacy, a turgid inability to rid itself of the limits of an art practice now so deeply inscribed in the career structures of the visual arts and arts administration that nothing outside it can ever be perceived, yet alone evaluated. The leading

essays in the Biennale catalogue with their discursive accounts of the current scene, certainly provide strong evidence for this, with the exception of the other scrupulous "Drift" by Stuart Morgan.

Morgan's essay has at least the merit of honestly recognising that the basic "method" of most of the Biennale artists is "drifting" through a culture where signs and images have broken off a collapsing system. Morgan poses the artist's problem as that of signalling the importance of art. So far he alone gets it right, but to delude oneself as he and others have done into believing that this collapse is permanent and interesting seems to me to be seriously mistaken and indeed to be asking for trouble. To claim that one is simply messing about in the beautiful ruins has been the excuse of inadequate artists for at least two hundred years. This claim also ignores the manifest failure of most of the work in the Biennale to be interesting, to live up to Morgan's claim for it.

I intend to offer some explanations of the Biennale's failure and a justification for expecting better than we were given.

The failure appears partly to be the result of the mistaken pessimism exemplified by Morgan. More immediately though two unlikely forces appear to have worked together to prevent much in the way of art happening. The first is the rebirth of the bourgeois version of Romanticism as an acceptable role for the artist — the individual whose private

Jenny Watson

The Horse Hospital

Oil, acrylic, pastel,
charcoal and glass beads
on cotton duck 1983
274.3 x 304.8 cm
Courtesy AGNSW



notions are somehow held to be mystical clues to our social experience. This was the perspective from which the show was assembled. The second is the extremely reductive theory which informed much of the work selected, a theory directly hostile to the idea of artistic personality. To disentangle the consequences of this encounter will require more excursions for which I apologise in advance.

Two issues cry out for discussion, the unsophisticated assertion of the "private" in art and the unquestioned assumption that history no longer has any bearing on the acts of artists.

There is no doubt that the Biennale was boring, like an oversize New York disco where everyone knows no-one.

Simply because this is the way things are however does not make being boring a virtue. To judge from this show with its dreary mixture of theoretical poses and pretensions to social relevance, Post Modern art may well turn out to have been the New Realism of the "Me" generation, lacking all pretensions to critical purchase or experience.

If Post Modernism is defined as the artistic counterpart to the experience of the end of the modern era in the western world then it is now over. Periods of openness, of linguistic and formal ambivalence in which hierarchies of signs and practices are set aside, are never more than moments. New hierarchies of symbols always rise. History, which was always the counterpoint to modernism may well also be over as a means of explaining and informing the human actions and the relativity of artistic activities. But in any case, it has only been around the West in this role for 195 years (since 1789).

There have been many more thorough and more durable hierarchies of fake signs than those offered by the construction of history, all of them timeless and tyrannical, Egypt, the Mongol Empire, Byzantium China, to name but a few. It is too easily forgotten that history was constructed theoretically, as a means to the foregrounding of problems of freedom against various static and tyrannical models of human affairs. This applies as much to art history as the ground for theory and as a major informant of practice as to any other historical perspective. It is necessary to make a clear distinction between history and its misuse as historicism, the reduction of an open history to a closed "ideology". This has not been done recently and so we are now at a point where theory alone gives the appearance of taking on this grounding role for the visual arts. However the works and words of many involved in the Biennale suggested that for them the connection between liberty and creativity was an embarrassing bad joke, a necessary backdrop for the display of complacency, the belief in small scale finality, the lack of alternatives and the unquestioning acceptance of boredom.

Whatever else it may be, the end of the role of history in Western culture is not an advance for human freedom. There is clear evidence that the West is becoming a new Egypt in which world wide economic cycles, replace the

flooding and decline of the Nile as the source of all social reason. Anyone who doubts this should ask themselves if they can remember a social event of any "significance" in the West since the end of the Vietnam War. Our current failure may be repeated uselessly for a thousand years.

Given this, one major problem highlighted by the current Biennale is the emerging official art of this new Egypt. That is to say a system of opposing aesthetic dead ends and just failed radicalisms scraped together with no decent relation to the experience of any particular audience. It is possible to foresee an infinite series of bad Biennales extending into the future; each a variation on the current banality, each "sustained" by a massive bureaucratic effort and the confines of the arts administration career structure.

At the opening of the Biennale, Edmund Capon (Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales) nerved himself to declare the centrepiece by Gilbert and George "the masterpiece of the exhibition". He is known for his ironic sense of humour and Gilbert and George are known for a lifetime's attachment to tepid boredom as an aesthetic principle. They have long mastered the art of a bad excuse for a bad conscience.

Modern boredom remains the deadly enemy Baudelaire first thought of and any art work which lacks excitement and hence the capacity to interest an audience in their own powers of growth and change through experience has failed. I remain convinced that it is the role of good art to resist boredom and impotence with all its formal and imaginative resources.

It is certain that somewhere in the world there are at least fifty "unknown" artists working, exhibiting and entertaining who are succeeding in this task. These would have made a far better show than those seen in Sydney.

One cannot know the unknown of course (though a single minded Biennale director has plenty of time to find them) and art world history and politics is always preselective of what is "discovered" by critics and gallery administrators. Yet almost everyone reading this article will know of some artist working in Australia who would have made an interesting substitution for the work on display. Of the Australians chosen for the Biennale only Jenny Watson showed any maturity, any ability to get beyond modishness. Yet presumably the director must have known as we do that many better Australian artists exist. We can therefore hold him directly responsible for the poor showing of Australians in the Biennale at a time when Australian art is beginning to be highly valued internationally. However it is the precise nature of his misjudgement which matters. There would be no point in another winge about the poor representation of Australian art.

The critical ineptitude of the theme for the exhibition, "Private Symbol/Social Metaphor" was one cause of the general failure of the Biennale. This is best explained by looking at the Australian works in the show and their content.

Jenny Watson's "Transport" was successful precisely because it resisted the general theme. It drew on imagery from the subconscious and from the embodiment of fulfilled wishes of a sexual nature. The image of a woman on a horse is widely accepted culturally in this light — from Lady Godiva and the "transport" of delight to the dreadful Freudian cliché. It has also been given wonderful cultural embodiment in paintings by Chagall, Delacroix and many others. It is not therefore a "private symbol". Watson's achievement lies in recovering the symbol from cliché through an immediate involvement with the image. Her strong drawing and careful use of the divisions of the canvas surface created by it, through modulated textures and varied thicknesses of paint, make it a very subtle work. It is obviously the product of long concern with the difficulties of painting.

There is nothing new or radical in all this yet because of its accomplishment the work came as a great relief to me during my visits to the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Watson's presence in the show appeared almost as an accident. Clearly she was there because of her prominence in the Melbourne Art Scene and the strong and accurate critical advocacy of Paul Taylor and not a someone whose work fitted the Private/Social theme. Indeed Watson like the other few successful artists in this show is a Post Surrealist, not a Post Modernist. She relies on the fusion of the public and personal realised consciously for the first time by Surrealism as a cultural and creative fact. This she ironically emphasised by copywriting one painting, "The Horse Hospital".

In contrast to this consider the work of Annette Bezor. Her large, erotically obvious paintings are tackily put together with a very limited sense of form and no sympathy at all for the problem of paint surfaces in illusionistic art. Her surfaces often congeal like puddles of damp sperm, which may be apt for works with a masturbatory theme. One critic has had the nerve to compare her to Puvis de Chavannes and Moreau. The truth, banal as usual, is that her eroticism is from Gleeson out of Dali which explains its cliched misconception. In her work the erotic loses all its trance like power. Even in "A Bedroom Piece 1" 1983, the numerous fetishes scattered around, shoes, a teddy bear, a revealed armpit and breast simply fail to evoke an erotic dream or indeed any fantastic involvement at all. The coy absence or concealment of the male participant implied by the "mine and yours" heart-shaped pillows and the mask, makes the whole thing too cute for words.

Yet Annette Bezor and Jenny Watson both passed the Private/Social test of authenticity as if the quality of their work was irrelevant. Only one general area of Australian art practice seems to have been totally excluded from the show regardless of quality and that is art concerned with Feminism or sexual politics. It may be that Feminism is discredited as an artistic concern, but I know many artists whose concern for these matters remains strong. It is also the case that feminism made a point of attaching notions of separate private and social spheres of action as it saw them functioning to degrade and disadvantage women. A good example of this is the refusal of feminist artists to accept a "private" realm where pornography is defensible on its own terms.

The Private/Social theme simply eliminated all art that could not be co-opted. Since most of the interesting work going on in Australia does resist co-option as the product of a private soul, its absence from the Biennale was assured. One may be justified in assuming that the same occurred with overseas work. Sometimes this is not just a case of one artist being ignored in preference to another, but of the deliberate inclusion of second rate work by an artist whose successful pieces would not have been acceptable to the theme. The awful "political" pieces by the British artist Tony Cragg were an embarrassing example of this.

Thus the notion of Private Symbol/Social Metaphor was damning from the start. Thanks to Wittgenstein we know that a private symbol cannot exist except in the sense of a trademark of a private beach where ownership, the right of one person to alienate an experience from another is symbolised or embodied. In all other cases symbols can only be seen to exist as they are recognised by two or more people as having the same significance. A "private" symbol therefore can be nothing other than a symbol held in common by an alienated or elitist group used for its own ends. Most of the best artists working today are well aware of this obvious truth and its implications, but it does not seem to have bothered Mr Paroissien. He wishes to separate the private, that is the individual, from the social act. In other words to repeat the old confidence trick of "privatising" and devalu-

ing the artist and the work in order to substitute the general formulation of an art world and its rules. This is a trick that used to be brought off by invoking individual sensibility and the expressive power of the art work. These strategies are now so out of fashion after twenty years of unrelenting critical damage that even he would not have dared to use them.

Instead we are offered this convenient trendified version of nineteenth century bourgeois art theory masquerading as the key to the current "art situation". There is, of course, no art situation or art world other than that constituted by the art market and art institutions in which artists live and breathe. Paroissien is like a school child reaching for the first answer he can think of to a question that he knows is beyond him and his ambitions. Typically he avoided responsibility for the show by offering so many catalogue essays and notes by other people that one barely notices that practically all of them are saying the same thing and usually quite badly. His inept curatorial sleight of hand coincided with the tendency of many of the artists that he was interested in showing, to overvalue theory as a basis for art practice. The result was inevitably unintelligible from any point of view.

The new Expressionism was naturally enough, well in evidence though it has long since ceased to be new or interesting. I find it barely possible to remember any of the works in the show without referring to the catalogue. With very few exceptions such as Sandro Chia, the New Expressionism was simply an attempt to regain the power of the artistic image to signify by a de facto assertion that it did. Self indulgence of this kind was always bound to fail and the Biennale presented ample evidence of failure in the works of Schmalix, Muller, Mulcahy, Jensen and others. The best comment on all this was made by another artist, Marlene Dumas, in her "Three Crowns of Expressionism" which features an artistic chimpanzee, an expressionist of course.

The saddest disappointment for me was the range of work by artists with some claim to social or political commitment. All of it showed an astonishing mixture of failed nerve, radical chic and knowing self satisfaction. It is hard to say whether this was the fault of the director or the artists.

The work by Hans Haacke was the greatest failure. It added nothing to the practice of Heartfield who, though he failed to prevent Hitler, at least added a little through humour and the acuity of his images to the space for those opposed to Fascism. One can imagine Hitler being made very angry by Heartfield. Reagan might get a good laugh out of Haacke's "Reaganomics" (Yes my son collects unemployment too). Similarly to make the point that the whole capitalist military complex is committed to the Arms Race by means of a nuclear missile with the General Electric emblem, crossed with a pediment holding another head of Reagan, is to indulge in knowing nonsense — the kind of thing first year fine art students do well.

It ought not to be difficult for a competent artist to make objects that scream out the obscene nonsense of societies which take their priorities from a devil's brew of technological possibilities and private ambitions. Works of the kind I have in mind would make Reagan (and me) distinctly uncomfortable but you can bet there would have been no place for them in "Private Symbol/Social Metaphor". As Herbert Marcuse pointed out a long time ago it is the distinction of private and social realms that makes cruise missiles and the like possible. It is impossible to obtain a serious critical grip on experience from the comfort of your own home, even if that home is in the street. In the new Egypt, nuclear weapons are as necessary and eternal as pyramids were in the old.

Of the unspeakable Immedorff and his painting "My Biennale", the less said the better. In the previous Biennale his work showed promise of developing a formal vocabulary and

a skill that could carry new critical meaning. In this exhibition his technique was seen to decline in proportion with his increasing self absorption.

His "Biennale" faced Gilbert and George's "Drunk with God" across the centre of the exhibition. If a contrast had been hoped for it was not to be. Immendorff's work was so badly painted it failed even to begin to make its point. In this way the two works at least complimented each other, although Gilbert and George fail knowingly, in a moronic imitation of English good manners. One never frightens the horses after all.

Attempts have been made to characterise their work as fascist. It is certainly authoritarian but to grant it a political character would be to join in the fun and games of the emerging official art that I characterised earlier. Rather, one should point to their celebration of boredom and of their own images as evidence of their inability to make any worthwhile critical response to experience. Their new works are reactionary perversions of that great line of simultaneous imagery stretching from Manet's "Bar at the Folies Bergere" through Picasso's Cubism and Ernst's collages to the earlier silk screen paintings of Rauschenberg. For all these artists simultaneity was a response to new experiences all of which invaded and negated nineteenth century notions of the private versus the public. All their successful works offer the possibility of emancipation of the self.

Gilbert and George, on the other hand, celebrate the inevitability of unfreedom in a deliberately confused parody. In "Drunk with God" our two heroes, (Morecombe and Wise without the jokes) appear three times, at the top as two large clown like heads, one down in the mouth, one yodelling in pain. On one side they are seen in pseudo dynamic action, on the other like Hitler and Himmler taking the salute at a march past of teenage boys passing Nelson's column and other imperial echoes. All this happens many times life size amongst a scattering of half recognisable consumables. The ensemble is a recognisable caricature of some current media posturing in Britain. Even the method of construction of the work which gives it the appearance of being behind a massive black square grid contributes to the accuracy of the impression of a conservative, static impotence underlying all these contrasts and events. But there is no irony, no clue is given that the whole thing is a massive lie, of the same order of untruth that allows Margaret Thatcher to win elections. The worst untruth is told about the heroic young boys appearing again and again in this work, as pathetic and unreal as the drummer boys in the "Triumph of the Will". They are the romanticised working class sex objects of British Public School fantasy. Youth culture in Britain is alive and well and the kids, boys and girls by the way, don't look like Gilbert and George's bad dreams nor act so mindlessly.

Gilbert and George are held by many to have captured the mood of Modern Britain. Rudi Fuchs in another display of the staggering insight that he brought to the last Biennale conference has compared him to Baudelaire "They walk the streets and see the sadness and hope, the poetry and beauty of our generation."

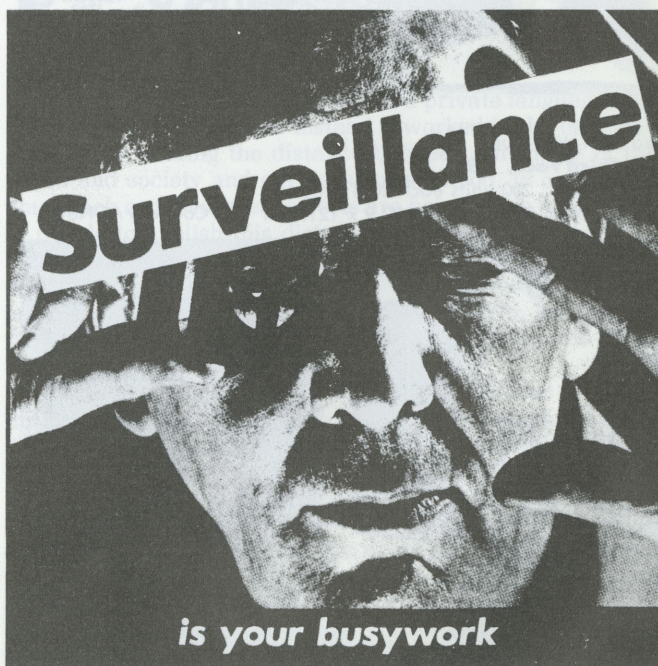
This, like so much in the catalogue, is pure garbage. Gilbert and George don't walk the streets, they watch television for a quick fix and enquire no further. That is what makes their art such a boring, inconsequent celebration of impotence. In a sense "Drunk with God" was indeed the masterpiece of the show.

Some of the pseudo committed art in the show was deliberately unintelligible, trivial and downright bad. This included the work by Robert Longo, Andy Patton, Olaf Metzler and Barbara Kruger. None of it offered more than a moment of dislocated banale rhetoric. All of it fitted perfectly into the mindless space offered by the Private/Social theme. Perhaps on their own the works of Barbara Kruger might



Annette Messager
Les Chimères, 1983 — 84
(Detail) Installation
Photographs and Paint Courtesy AGNSW

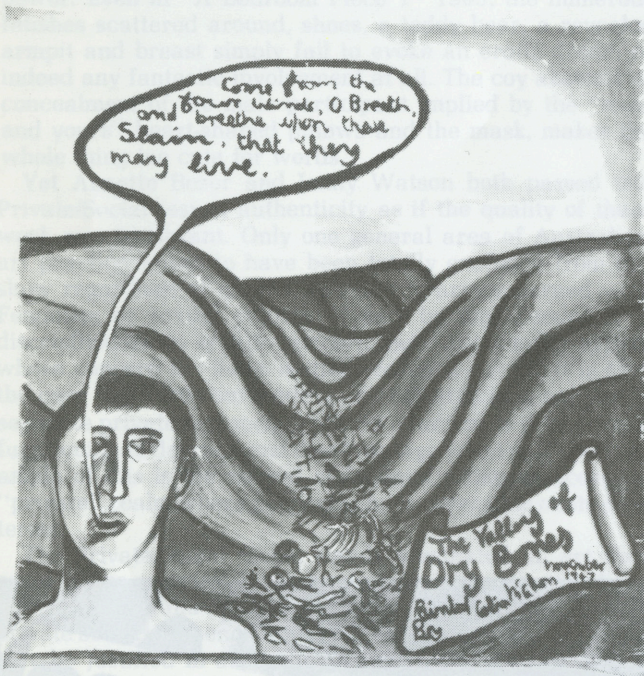
▼ Barbara Kruger, **Untitled**, 1983
black & white photograph,



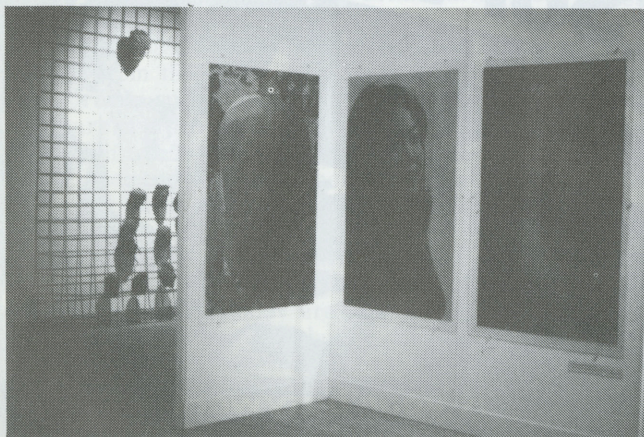


Gonzalo Diaz
Let's See If You Can Run As Fast As Me, 1983 (Detail)
 Silkscreen and enamel on plastic canvas
 270 x 400 cm

Colin McCahon, **"The Valley of Dry Bones", 1947**
 oil on canvas
 93.4 x 90.2 cm



Eva Man-Wah Yuen
The Third Face, 1984
 Paper heads, 200 units each 20.3 cm
 Photographs, 3 units each 182.9 x 121.9cm
 Courtesy AGNSW



have achieved a symbolic resonance, but orchestrated by the Biennale theme they became nothing more than footnotes to the well wrought mindlessness of Gilbert and George.

One little noticed artist did seem to find a way out of all this mess with both humour and skill. This was Terry Atkinson. In "Comic map made by both Trotsky in Heaven and Trotsky in Hell — A really dialectical condition", the same impotence celebrated by Gilbert and George is examined, but Atkinson makes no big deal of it. The irrelevance of all the posturings made so much of by Gilbert and George to the flayed skin of Marsyas — that is to say of art — and by consequence of humanity, which can be found in the centre of the painting being carried between Capitalist Heaven and Stalinist Hell, is commented on humourously. The very lusciousness of the painted pink skin exposes the poverty of humourless theory, the dialectic of paint.

The same irony is found in "Picture with botched-up drawing depicting British Proletarians attacking German Proletarians. Both sets of proletarians defending the interests of their respective capitalisms". The "botched-up effect is presumably contrived to avoid the slick impotence of Haacke's work and to emphasise the messiness of any attempt to locate the humanity of those on whom capitalism exercises its sway — their "human" image having long ago been lost to official war artists and the like.

I would like to see Atkinson apply himself to a more contemporary subject matter — "Russian and American athletes boycotting each other's Olympic games in the service of their respective technocracies" comes to mind as a good starter. With subject matter like that around, he wouldn't need to "botch" his drawings to make his point.

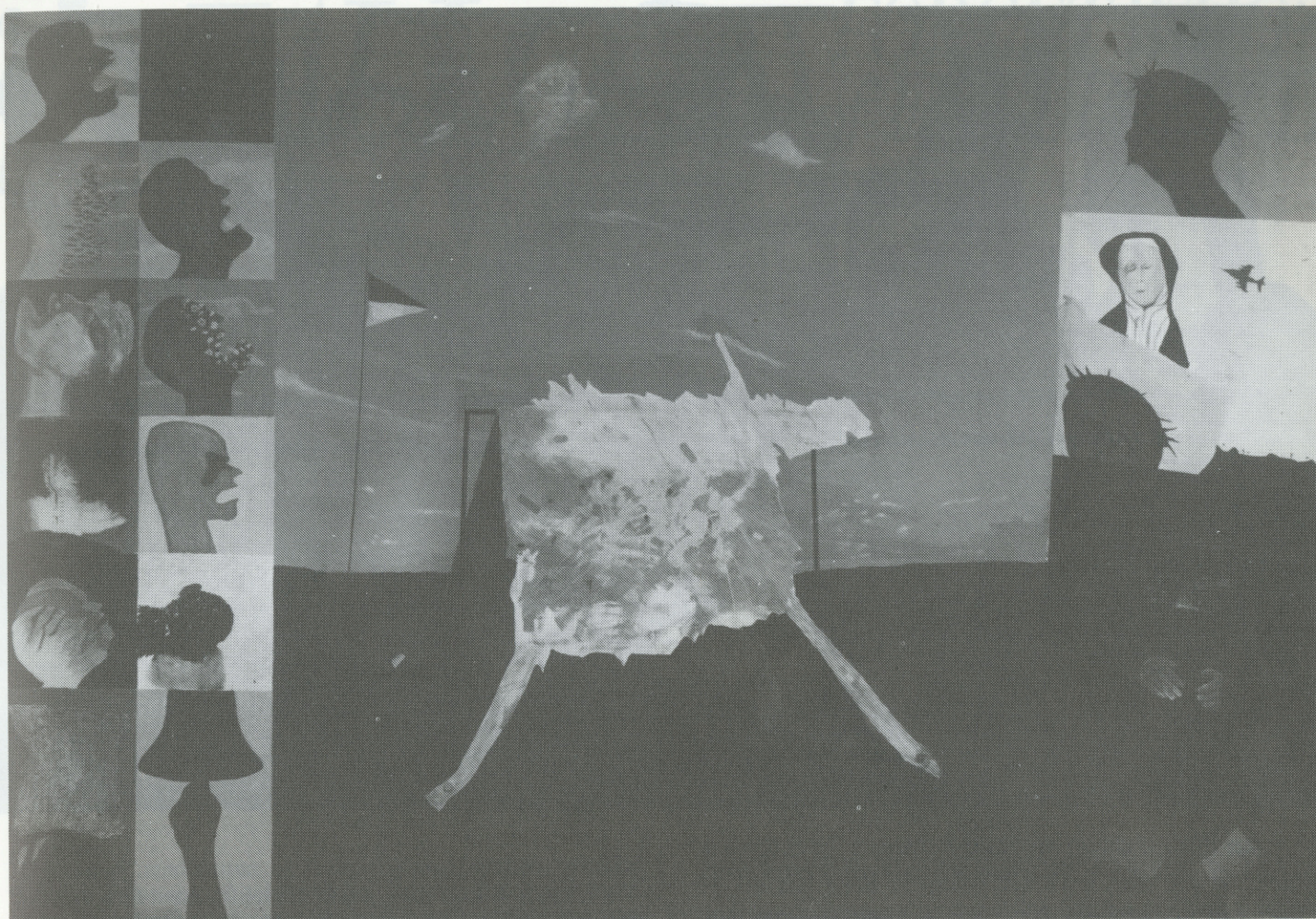
Atkinson's work came pretty close to resisting the attempt of the Biennale to make his theoretical position a mere personal preference. This was not true of the much admired Chilean artists. There is nothing in the work of Gonzalo Diaz or Eugenio Dittborn that cannot be found in much of the Art of the Sixties — for instance the paintings of Oyvind Fahlstrom. Even the theoretical construction of visual tautology was first made in the sixties in the criticism surrounding the work of Jasper Johns.

Another South American working out the consequences of earlier art for herself, Maria Modiano, also made a successful piece. "A culture disappears" was a simple and elegant statement mixing references to ancient Colombian architectural process art and natural decline.

It may be more than coincidence that other work which was most successful in surviving the orchestration of the Biennale theme was also by women. The photographic self-portraits of Cindy Sherman for instance retained their status as investigations of selfhood from the outside. Similarly Annette Messenger's installation "Chimeres", a brilliant development of Freudian and domestic fetish images into each of which was incorporated the eyes and teeth of consumption and voyeurism, was sufficiently well conceived to avoid privatisation. The image of a high heeled shoe beneath the surface of which there lurks some savage teeth and a pair of fearful eyes, is one of the most memorable of the show.

Eva Man-Wah Yuen also deals with the relation of the fetish and identity. In the "Third Face" she makes use of 200 self-portraits in the form of traditional Chinese paper funerary sculptures, with all their traditional references in tact. She presented these in a framing grid of bamboo each slightly different. Eva Man-Wah Yuen, like the other few successful artists in the Biennale, denies the very theme on which it is based. All of them clearly identify the personal and public, the spiritual and social commitment. They appear to have arrived in the Biennale by accident and their presence is an indictment to the rest of the exhibition.

My final visit there was on closing day. The gallery was virtually empty except for the space given to Robert Randall



Terry Atkinson

Comic map made by both Trotsky in Heaven and Trotsky in Hell — a real dialectical condition. Trotsky, entering on left from Limbo, one finds the same Christian skin complaints in both places. This is the final dialectical situation — a contradiction, eh! Nevertheless there's a standard issue of electroplasts in both places which cleanse the skin and annihilate fallout effect. One of the most tedious jobs here is that of interminably carting Marsyas' skin back and forth between the two places. This is done on a shift-work basis of course, since Heaven abolished slavery in Hell in 1866. The skin is carried on a personnel carrier Capitalist and Stalinist tank crews alternate — the scheme is that Capitalist crews take the Heaven-to-Hell journey. Since the journey has been going on since 1928 there are so many Stalinist crews in Heaven and Capitalist crews in Hell it gets hard to tell which place belongs to which camp. Originally, it was clear! Heaven was Capitalist, Hell was Stalinist! A film crew accompanies the tank crew on each journey. The IMF fund the entire operation, incidentally, for all the art lovers, what price the dialectic of paint?

Acrylic on canvas

231 x 370 cm

Courtesy AGNSW

Stuff blown into faces		Skin-Flick Marsyas (Elastoplast zone)	Sacred Imagery	Christian
				Christian
				Trotsky's Socks
Difficulty in seeing	Warning	Here's the map-key.		

Hence the enjoyment and enthusiasm.

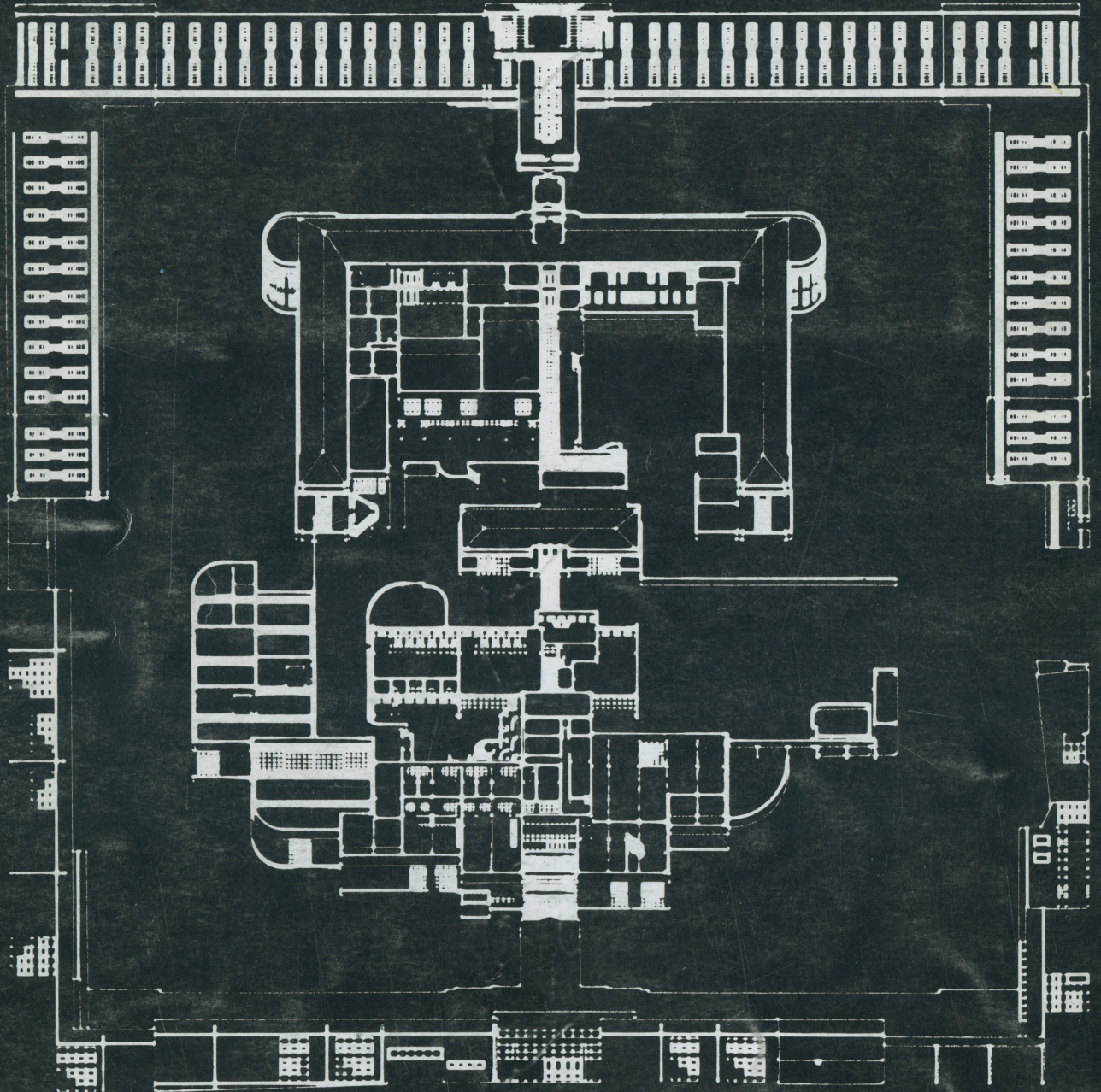
If the work had presented itself as a private language, this could not have happened. Instead it worked in the only way art can, by evoking the distance between our image of the world and society and our sense of selfhood. In oppressive times such as these, great efforts are being made by all sorts of people to abolish this distance by filling it with either a banal ideology of the private or a form of theorising in which the role of the individual as a participant in experience is completely denied. If these efforts succeed as they very nearly did at the Biennale, then there will be no place left for art or artists.

However there is no reason to lie down with our bellies in the air and our brains in our boots and accept the current "situation". Contrary to Fuchs, Morgan and even Adorno, I believe the space available for good critical art is expanding as things get worse. The extraordinary quality of the show by Colin McCahon at the Power Gallery showed what can be done with even a little room. His paintings are masterpieces of poetic resistance. I have almost no sympathy for his concerns but a great deal for his ability to survive the formal business of making art with those concerns intact. One of his paintings was worth the whole of the Biennale exhibition.

and Frank Bendinelli's video environment "Love Stories". In that space there were some twenty to thirty teenagers taking in the representations of poses and moves from Italian photo romance comics. I doubt that many of them knew much about deconstruction. They were clearly there to learn and be amused by the stereotypes presented to them. Randall and Bendinelli's work is not outstanding of its type, but it did succeed in achieving a distancing effect sufficient to give them the experience of self recognition, of seeing through the mediated expectations of commonplace love stories to the point where their own experience connected with them.



Canberra School of Art



If you have completed a degree or diploma course and have specialised in any of the following subjects: Ceramics, Glass, Gold & Silversmithing, Drawing, Leather, Painting, Photography, Printmaking, Sculpture, Textiles/Fibre, Wood you are eligible to apply for post-graduate studies at the Canberra School of Art.

The closing date for application is 26 October 1984. Applications are also invited for entry into the undergraduate programme.

Closing date for these applications is 31 October 1984.

For further information and details please write to:

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