

# LIVES OF THE ARTISTS #5



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### LIVES OF THE ARTISTS

number five

September 2003

chick's issue

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she's a great artist she's friendly I've never heard of her she's clueless she's an art star she's a bit desperate she's really nice she's at every opening she thinks she's so hot she's really gentle she's all washed up she always blanks me she's a true eccentric she was the next big thing she slept her way to the top I wish I'd never met her she's the real deal I think she loves me I love her art she's psycho she's boring she just wants to be famous I used to be her best friend she works hard she's a bit of her work is when she travels a lot she'll never have a gallery she just gets better she doesn't know what art is she's been around for ages she dresses really well I can't stand her friends she's the best artist ever she's got a problem for her, it's all about money she's really judgmental she's younger than you think she's a legend she's a slut I'm jealous of how she looks she's really good value I love working with her she'll never make it she's paranoid I wish I was her she has integrity she doesn't care about the art world she's beautiful she's beautiful she has real talent she's serious she worries a lot she never comes out she thinks she knows everything about everything she's always giving me advice I need her she doesn't ring any more she never has time for me I wish she'd leave the city if she's showing there I won't she should stop come more she's too caught up in her life she's neurotic she won't relax she's dependable she's reliable she's too nice she's running herself into the ground she teaches she doesn't work I don't know how she gets by she's creative she lives her art she makes my work look amateur she gives herself away she's unstoppable she's such a career she doesn't do enough work she doesn't need a studio her gallery is folding I can't contact her she's an addict she's very spiritual she left home she let herself be swallowed up by him she doesn't know what's good for her she's in a really bad place right now she's confident she has a lot to share she's rich she does all the housework she's going to win she's losing it she's a fag hag she always gets taxis she thinks she's so unique everyone loves her she turns heads she has nothing to say she came out from nowhere she's from another country she's a curator she can't do anything she should watch herself she needs to change I feel like I'll never get to know her she's so great I think her work needs more support she's going to leave she's in a big spot she doesn't tell me anything I thought she liked me she's crude she's deluded she makes mountains out of molehills she's overworked her job is killing her she makes jewellery she wears a lot of makeup her style is stuck in the nineties she's selling a lot of work everyone's after her she's

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## ALL GIRL LINE-UP by Lisa Kelly

Italy has been spoken of as 'the land that feminism forgot'. What the English speaking world knows as 'International Women's Day' on the 8th of March, translates in the *Bel Paese* as 'Festa della Donna', which might translate back as something like 'celebration of woman'. Note the lost collective and authoritative dimensions and you'll come to appreciate the reality of a largely commercial appropriation that has more in common with the 'art of chivalry' calendar dates of Valentine's and Mother's Day, dragged out into a week-long occasion for men to buy specifically mass-marketed flowers and chocolates for the women in their lives. To all appearances, many Italian women find it a load of tokenistic rubbish. Younger women in particular aren't falling for it, as a series of interviews with school students in the national newspaper *La Repubblica* for the event made clear: one saying simply that all she had to do was take a look around to see that no positions of authority in her society (read judges, lawyers, editors, politicians) were occupied by women. While comparatively this makes the role of women in public life in Australia look pretty progressive (though hardly as progressive as New Zealand), local indicators might otherwise be pointing some way towards 'a land that is forgetting feminism'.

A current series of exhibitions facilitated by Marrickville Council titled 'Ironsides' claims to celebrate all Australian women artists whilst commemorating the life and art of Adelaide Ironside (1831-1867), 'the first Australian-born professional woman artist to study overseas and to exhibit and sell work internationally'. By all accounts Adelaide fully worked the scene here in Sydney before contributing to what we now call 'the brain-drain', heading overseas for further study and a successful practice. Typically, this failed to translate to her esteem back in Australia, and after dying young in Italy 'many of Ironside's paintings were donated to the Art Gallery of New South Wales where they were stored in what was known as the "women's shed" in the Domain. The shed fell into disrepair over some twenty years with broken windows, a leaking roof and vermin infestations; consequently most of the paintings were destroyed<sup>2</sup> - fascinating stuff.

The Ironside series is not unique of late in featuring a line-up of all female artists. A veritable rash has been spreading across all sorts of cultural programming, including the 'Ladies First' hip-hop event in Sydney in May, performative arts paper *Real Time's* women artists focus 'The Women's Pages' (issue no.55 June/July 2003), '360°' featuring all-female sound artists as part of the *Liquid Architecture* program in Melbourne (July), the *Shangri-La Collective* exhibition of female, Sydney-based artists making music videos at Artspace (April), as well as this chick's issue of *Lives of the Artists*. My own feeling for such events is typically a 'power to the ladies' positivity and excitement at seeing the work of my female friends and peers getting the exposure it needs and deserves. No doubt the setting of such a defined curatorial parameter also works to circumnavigate usual-suspects syndrome somewhat, generating opportunities for artists that might not have been thought of in the first instance, and expanding awareness on the multitudes working away beneath the shiny surface of visible art. Yet I've come to feel that this instinctive response is an uncritical one, and am curious that despite the sudden necessity for focus-programming of women artists, I've not come across too much discussion or elaboration on why this is so.

The most obvious presumption you might make on the logic of gender specific programming is that of redress. Which follows that we have all observed the persistent imbalance in sex representation and male bias in public exhibitions and events, where shows dominated by he-practitioners are rarely dubbed gender affairs or plagued by utopian subtexts (unless they're gay)<sup>3</sup>. Yet the very real persistence of these instances leads one to doubt that you, or perhaps many other people, have in fact noticed, and the genuine lack of analysis renders this a weird, unspoken terrain. In a generation hallmarked by the dumb claim, "I'm not a feminist, but...", feminist-oriented complaint or criticism seems to have been vested with an air of the mealy-mouthed spoilsport, the company of artists included. Whilst the first to agree that terminal seriousness is a total bore, the general pall of thoughtlessness on a topic like this, here and now, is kind of remarkable. What is current thinking on the place of feminism, affirmative action or positive discrimination in the professional (visual) arts in Australia today? I'm not sure and I can't think of anybody amongst the many artists and arts professionals I know who could tell me.

The interesting thing about artists is their tendency to self-organise, and that they should replicate gender bias one way or the other in their projects is symptomatic of both entrenched societal discrimination and the mutable organicism of artist's interests<sup>4</sup>. More dubious is inequity generated via the output of our prominent arts institutions. Here we see the comparative infrequency of solo exhibitions by female artists well cemented into long-observed fact<sup>5</sup> relative to early-career artists in particular, who on one hand might be more interested in the scope and flex of collaborative practice, and the other more obliged than their male peers to mobilize and market-harder (think the girl artist 'collective' or novelty-duo) - despite tertiary arts courses being typically dominated by female students, and the swelling local rank of younger female curators. Solo exhibitions are universally interpreted in the art world as signifiers of status and development; by necessity somebody believes enough in you and your work to hand over space and all that goes with it to you alone. Running with belief, do

curators and/or institutional galleries believe in male artists more than they do women artists? Too crude a question really, it being much more obvious that they believe in good art. Could it follow that the blokes are more often trusted to consistently develop and put forward good work? Also touchy, but perhaps heading toward part-explanation for some recent instances of imbalanced programming. Neatly closing the circle of self-explanation, how better to earn esteem and have curators feel they're 'backing a winner' than having had a good opportunity to shine in public exhibitions and events, or benefit from other professional development opportunities, such as studio residencies. As Linda Nochlin asserts in her decisive 1971 essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* - 'it is no accident that the crucial question of the conditions generally productive of great art has so rarely been investigated, or that attempts to investigate such general problems have, until fairly recently, been dismissed as unscholarly, too broad, or the province of some other discipline, like sociology<sup>6</sup>. Should we deduce that this is where the all-girl line up slots in, quietly, earnestly looking to animate and expand these currency cycles of 'now' practitioners? Perhaps a little too quietly.

Most things around here take their cue from the commercial sector. And indeed a look at the books of some Sydney dealer galleries is relevant and revealing. Most support a larger proportion of male artists than female: Sherman galleries 10 women of a total 32, Darren Knight 8 of a total 23, Sarah Cottier 8 of a total 20, Boutwell Draper 7 of a total 24, Kaliman 2 of a total 13, Grant Pirrie ½ (of a duo) in a total of 10, with the interesting exceptions of Roslyn Oxley and Mori galleries, who both feature 25 female artists in total stables of 36<sup>7</sup>. It's telling that it is these longer-established galleries that best represent the dynamic breadth of Australian women practitioners, whilst some recent blow-ins look more fashion-conscious and less with the program. And reassured in this millennium the research and findings of Heather Johnson in her thesis 'The Sydney Art Patronage System 1890-1940', that, 'although women artists did have some work purchased by the Gallery (AGNSW), did have one-artist exhibitions in some of the private galleries, did have works hung in exhibitions of the artists' societies, and did have work purchased by private collectors, none of this was done in a relative proportion to the number of women artists working in Sydney or to the amount of work they produced<sup>8</sup>.

A present notion of the quantity of women practitioners was well illustrated by 'The Shangri-La Collective' project at Artspace, which mobilized work by 31 artists, virtually all with established exhibition histories. Yet simultaneous to their time on show in the gallery, Artspace held its Annual General Meeting and re-elected a Board containing no female artists whatsoever, in fact all-male save for their smart chick lawyer whose unfortunate official title is 'Secretary'<sup>9</sup>. Something here doesn't compute: like the contribution and participation of women in the processes of authoritative decision-making within the organization - a bit 'upstairs/downstairs'. Linda Nochlin suggests that 'those who have privileges inevitably hold on to them, and hold tight, no matter how marginal the advantage involved, until compelled to bow to superior power of one sort or another. Thus the question of women's equality devolves not upon the relative benevolence or ill-will of individual men, nor the self-confidence or abjectness of individual women, but rather on the very nature of our institutional structures themselves and the view of reality which they impose on the human beings who are part of them'<sup>10</sup>. And if these institutional structures are no more mindful of looking like a men's club than other areas of the sector? It starts to make your well-intentioned all-girl line up look more than a little passive. Some tricky terrain, as 'to be "for women" can also mean being "against women", not only because the category of "women"



is often cast in the specificities of race, class and sexual privileges, but also because women are often themselves vigorous protectors of patriarchal power<sup>11</sup>.

'Embedded' is an interesting buzzword going round at the moment. 'Embedded journalists' - 'embedded' this, that and the other. The New Shorter Oxford English defines it as 'fixed firmly in a surrounding mass of solid or semi-solid material' (sounds like the

Artspace Board!). A while ago I was attracted to attend a book launch, 'The Work/Life Collision' by Barbara Pocock, due to the mention of 'embedded gender inequity' in the press blurb. This was discussed within the frame of current debate on work design, paid maternity leave and workplace sensitivity to home life. Very interesting, though not quite in this orbit, and looking back at my notes all I wrote down were the phrases "jacking up" and "take more power". Fine sentiments, unmistakably framed in the active stance. Whereas a passive or inarticulate position looks more likely to undermine than affirm. Pocock also discussed an interesting notion of 'disembodiment', concluding from a period working at Parliament that the peculiar life led by our largely male politicians in Canberra, remote from the inanities of the daily grind and tended (fed, driven, laundered) by an army of staff, sees them making high-impact policy decisions from a vantage of curious disembodiment to the everyday role of caring. Likewise, could it follow that to corral women artists is to disembody their practices from the broader cultural conversation? Ian Burn wrote that 'the meanings or sense of art activities are governed by the contexts they derive from and occur within. 'Paintings', 'objects', 'conversations' lose all sense and indeed purpose if divorced from the social framework in which they occur...All the participants have learned in similar ways and are therefore capable of communicating with each other - and what any one of them is doing is in principle intelligible to the others'<sup>12</sup>. In asserting women's practice as distinct within this social framework are we fixing ourselves up another women's shed? Unfortunately it's certain that such programming is liable to play into some people's lesser imagination and/or latent sexism. Penny Drop, the hip-hop promoter behind 'Ladies First' and many other Sydney events said in a recent interview, 'I don't think that anyone's ever been really judgmental about the fact that I'm female. I'll tell you what does piss me off is when people see things that I'm putting on like film nights or parties and say, "Oh, is this a female event?" Regardless of the line-up, it's suddenly got this female tinge to it. Just because it's me and I'm a female putting on an event, all of a sudden it's a "female event"<sup>13</sup>. Collective solidarity mowed down all too easily by collective disparagement.

At the end of it all it's really no big deal being a female artist in Australia these days, with heaps of women doing great stuff and cool role models to be had in our older artists and professionals. Yet while it's feasible to discount ideas of explicit disadvantage felt by women, it might not be quite time to gloss over the implicit advantages of being a male artist. All debates, gender included, might be more lively in the arts were they vested with a more interrogative and less reactive personality. Obviously an ideal-world scenario will be when positive female bias is propagated as unwittingly as male is now and the only issue is what it should be - engaging and dynamic art and practitioners. Somehow it feels like we were closer to this nigh on ten years ago in the mid-90's. And really this might well be part of the biggest context of them all - the Great Australian Backwash under the government of John Howard, with right wing creep retarding so many dimensions of the national mindset, forgetting feminism along with it. In this case, waiting it out isn't working, and it needs to be taken on. As urged by journalist and writer David Marr in a lecture earlier this year titled 'The Role of the Writer in John Howard's Australia'<sup>14</sup>, looking at "the way writers are addressing (or shirking) the challenge of working in a country, where dark political forces are being stirred, 'elites' are once more denigrated, and the 'mainstream' is supposed to set the agenda"<sup>15</sup>. It's no great leap to conceive of artists here along with writers, questioning and intensifying the resonance of these issues in the cultural community, for as Marr suggests, "something has happened in Australia and for some writers the emergence of this new old Australia is not something to flinch from but to write. It's the most compelling raw material". Here is exactly where risk-taking creativity is most called for, "to shake off the new philistinism of John Howard's Australia and find absolutely unexpected ways of doing this".

<sup>1</sup> Terry Cutliffe, curator 'Ironside catalogue' 2003

<sup>2</sup> Terry Cutliffe, 'Ironside catalogue' 2003

<sup>3</sup> Some examples: six months of all-male solo shows at the Studio foyer, Sydney Opera House curated by Anne Loxley (August-December 2003); perennially blokey *Impermanent Audio* events curated by caleb.k, including I.Audio at the Performance Space in September featuring something like 18 male sound artists and 2 female; *Art+Film* show at the CCP in Melbourne, with 2 women artists in a total 8, and the upcoming *Primavera '03* at the MCA, curated by Julianne Pierce, will feature 5 solo dudes, 1 solo chick, 2 collaborating dudes and the *Kingpins*, consisting of 4 chicks (effectively presenting one work), hilariously, way-ironically in character as men

<sup>4</sup> Standout example: *Desk Job*, Mori gallery June 2002, curated by 5 young artists (including 2 women), overall featuring 6 female artists in a total 21

<sup>5</sup> The current Susan Norrie double-bill is a fine exception - though unquestionably as a senior artist, whilst the opening period was still described unfetchingly by the Herald as 'Norrie's biggest week in Sydney since 1987' (19/7/03, p.7)

<sup>6</sup> Linda Nochlin *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* 1971, in 'Women, Art and Power, and other Essays' by Linda Nochlin, New York: Harper & Row, 1988 p.152

<sup>7</sup> All information as on gallery websites, august 2003

<sup>8</sup> Heather Johnson *The Sydney Art Patronage System, 1890-1940*, published Grays Point NSW: Bungoona Technologies, 1997 p.29

<sup>9</sup> Artspace Board 2003: Brad Buckley (Chair), Kate Gilchrist (Secretary), David Cuda (Treasurer), David Haines, Brian Mahoney, Ralph Kerle, Laurens Tan, Sean Lowry, John Potts (Artspace newsletter issue no.123 july/august 2003)

<sup>10</sup> Linda Nochlin *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* p.152

<sup>11</sup> Diane Elam & Robyn Wiegman 'Contingencies', introduction to *Feminism Beside Itself*, edited by D. Elam & R. Wiegman, New York: Routledge, 1995, p.7

<sup>12</sup> Ian Burn 'Art is what we do, culture is what we do to other artists', *Dialogue: Writings in Art History*, North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991, p.132

<sup>13</sup> *That's Not How You Make Hip Hop: An Interview with Penny Drop*, by Georgina O. Smith, issue 10 'Lucky Bitch' (women's issue) 2003

<sup>14</sup> Colin Simpson Lecture, Redfern Town Hall, Sydney 29th March 2003, organized by the Australian Society of Authors. Speech archived at [www.asauthors.org](http://www.asauthors.org)

<sup>15</sup> David Marr *Books & Writing*, with Michael Shirrefs, 6/4/03, Radio National, <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/bwriting/stories/s823973.htm>

# Artist Interview—Maria Cruz

*I'm interested in talking to you mostly about painting – people often refer to artists that paint as 'painters'. Do you consider yourself a 'painter', or an 'artist', or both? Does this definition even matter, to you?*

Sometimes it doesn't matter to me, the definition. Sometimes I call myself a 'painter', and sometimes an 'artist'. If you only consider making painting as an academic thing, and not a visual thing, then I think that's different to being a painter. Some artists tend to separate this in their practice, or not pay equal attention to both aspects of painting. You know? Because I think you learn painting, your interest in painting, your sensitivity to painting – I think I was aroused by the way we look at a painting, initially. And then you become interested in all of it, the whole baggage. If you're only interested in painting in relation to what it represents, then I think that's a lacking aspect of looking at and making paintings.

*So it's looking at it as a part of a bigger practice...?*

Yes. Sometimes I'd like to look at looking at painting as a small part of a practice, you know? And not part of the rest of the greater practice around. But I know that I make works that are beyond just this 'bubble' of painting. I think, to some extent, it's a complete experience. To make painting, to be able to make a painting and call yourself a 'painter' is complete, sometimes, to me on the level of experience. But then there are things that I have to do in a different way, where I employ painting 'stuff', you know - painting ideas. Maybe it doesn't matter that painting is not contemporary, sometimes. I mean, I don't think painting can be all things in my art. I would like to do other things as well when the time comes that I can't paint 'it'. I'm open to possibilities.

*Your paintings are often installed on the gallery wall in quite a specific formation – for example the paintings you did of song titles, at Sarah Cotter and the MCA. Do you have the form of their installation in mind when you make the paintings, or does it evolve as you hang them?*

They actually evolve as I hang them, because when I paint them I don't have the design of it, I just have all the materials in front of me, and I paint them as I go along. It's a whole process of creating an ambience, you know, making things work as your ideas develop.

*And you'll work on them one at a time?*

One at a time, really.

*So you finish one and then go onto the next one?*

Yes. And sometimes I repeat something, because there's something that I don't like about it, and I have to do it again.

*So you actually will reject one?*

Yes.

*How do you begin a painting, or series of paintings? For example, do you have an idea of how you'd like the painting to end up looking before you begin, or is it a more experimental and evolving process?*

It's definitely the latter, it's experimental and evolving. In fact, I find it really, really difficult to start, because I'm really grasping, always, at the beginning. It doesn't matter that I've painted the same thing before, I always have to find my way around it, it's different each time. I edit my exhibitions heavily.

*What kind of a role do you think painting plays in the contemporary art arena?*

That's a difficult question to answer, because I think painting is being exposed a lot, to artist's desire to challenge. The first thing they want to do is challenge painting, you know, that happens a lot - I mean, this is my experience in teaching, at least. These students are going to be young artists, and the first thing they bounce against is painting. How to paint about painting, painting that is against painting - those are the things, basic stuff. The other one is to be absorbed in representing information which actually doesn't contain information so much about painting, but information like any other information. You know, like photo realism, I find, is used this way.

*Is that how you see painting fitting in with other...?*

No, I don't see it like that, but I think that's how I see...

*It happening?*

...it happening, yes, in a way, around me. But I think there are those artists who are actually painters, who will actually keep on painting, and be in this bubble of 'being a painter', do you know? Like, if I can have a map, this is contemporary art (draws a circle), and there's a bubble in the middle, and the painters are in there. Occasionally, there's like, a little kick of painting that goes into contem-

porary art. I think it's ok for it to be like that. I think that's a good level of participation. Let's put it this way - I give out slowly. Speed can only be an illusion in painting, at this stage anyway.

*Would you say that people who are obsessed wholly with painting - if I've understood you correctly - that it's their craft, in a way? That they don't look at their work in the greater context, they look at it as process?*

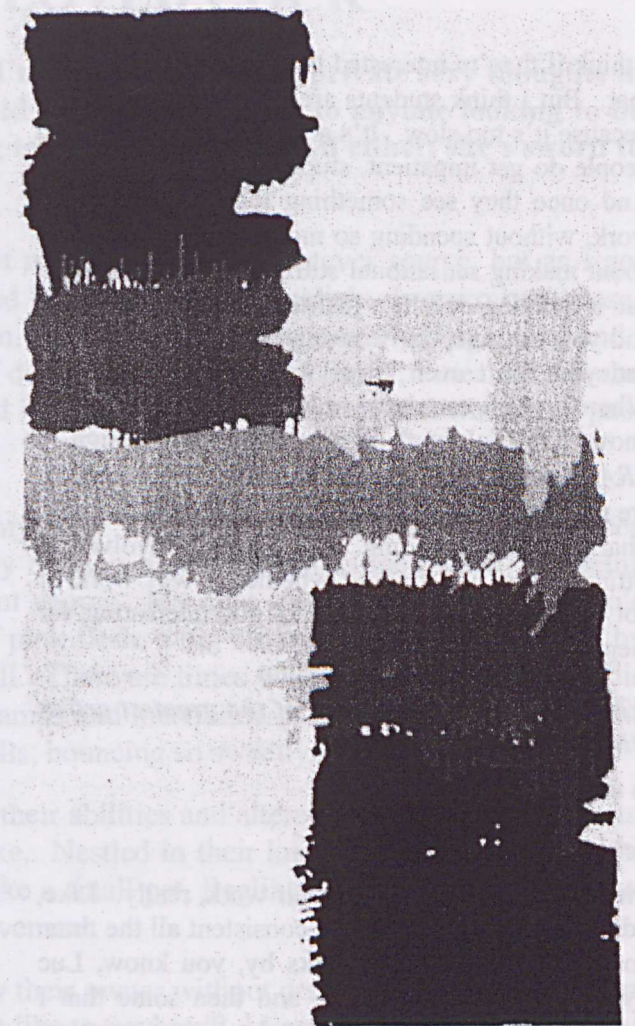
Well, you can look at painting as a cultural artefact of the time, you know, in our time, so it can't help being part of a greater context of art making. Painting is process, is a craft as much as other forms have a craft and process attached to them. Paintings are marketable objects publicised by museums, galleries, real estate magazines. But because it represents market orientation so much - and if people are critical, one of the things they would be anti about is its market orientation. This is blinding. Sometimes this is good, but sometimes a real turn off. But this is its reality. It is also difficult to remove its relationship to good taste. It is beautiful, in all of its gesture. All of this doesn't stop painting from being part of the bigger picture of contemporary art, if that's what it wants to be - if it doesn't, it still exists as an activity in the abyss and not in a painting bubble, maybe. But that's not to say that all other art is not a commodity, you know? I mean, a piece of cardboard is just as much of a commodity as a painting. It's just that you have to always be reminded that, in apartments, you have big paintings. And that's kind of...half good and very bad, really.

*If you're going to paint, you've got to be aware of that...*

Yeah, you have to be aware that it's visual, and then if you want to incorporate, you know, contemporary anthropology in painting, for example - what do you do? Paint it.

*You recently curated a series of videos made by women artists, the Shangri-La Collective - do you make much video work yourself, and how does video as a medium fit with your painting practice?*

In the video which I made for Shangri-La, I was really interested in the images on the cars, and the text. The whole video I made because of the text on my t-shirt, it's all based on that, so on the level of subject matter, I think there is a connection between this video and the Ono song title paintings. Both have a declarative and commanding text. But on the level of making video, the moving thing about video is really intriguing to me, because I



Maria Cruz—Standards of Good and Bad  
1995 oil on canvas

don't only look at the images in the video. It's one of those really nice mediums, where you can think of the sound, and you can think of time, and rhythm. So all of that is there, and I think that's something that painting cannot do. But then a video cannot be still, for example. Even if you pause it, it would still have that kind of...

*...flickering?*

Yeah, so in a way I thought about making videos in relation to what I cannot do and what I can do in painting. It's just an extension, for me.

*Have you made more videos apart from that one?*

I do, but that (Shangri La Collective video) was the first one where I actually edited it, and I had all the cheesy rendering in it, because, you know, it's just so nice to press (a button) - and it happens. At this point it is a novelty to me - I think that's ok, too.

*Do you think it's important that art students are given a practical and technical education in, for example, the application of oil and acrylic paint; painting techniques; or stretcher preparation?*

I think if they're interested they should be provided that. But I think students are not interested, really, because it's too slow. It's a very slow process, and people do get impatient, students do get impatient. And once they see something that looks like it'll work, without spending so much time - and it's all about making sensational stuff, isn't it? And what can a painting do? It's just that thing on the wall, and you just keep on working on it, until it works, and you don't even know when that would stop. Whereas you can have models to look at, you know, like slick stuff, in advertising and design in PRADA, or a Viktor and Rolf parade. And students are much more interested in that in general, I think. That's what I'm finding. It's the time involved in sitting down, and finding whether it will work or not in the end, that I think is not interesting for them.

**Who do you think are some of the greatest artists alive today?**

In the world?

**Yeah, to you...**

Oh my God, it depends on their work, really. Like, I don't expect an artist to be consistent all the time. For example, I've seen works by, you know, Luc Tymans, that I really liked, and then some that I didn't. I also like many artists who are not painters.

**What about Richter?**

Richter - I kind of like Richter's approach, I suppose - again, I can't like all of his work. There was a period when his work was really interesting - and that's the same with Sigmar Polke - but I couldn't say that I would be so interested in it at the moment. I also go through periods of reassessing art from certain museum collections - I love doing that.

**So it varies?**

It really varies. I like Alex Katz's work, for example. I have a different kind of taste, I think, every time I go and see a show. It changes - I can't really like something for ever. It's terrible. I like Marlene Dumas. I am not mentioning younger generation art here, I haven't time to reflect. But I do like most art.

**That's probably quite realistic.**

Yeah, it is realistic, yeah.

**As an artist, you've travelled and worked in different countries around the world, do you feel there is anything distinct about the way painting is viewed in Australia, compared to those other**

**countries?**

I think there is a difference - I don't know whether I'm just saying this because I feel like painting is so badly appreciated here. I actually think that there's really no dialogue about painting here, you know? It's like, new ways of image-making is much more active. Maybe it's the presence of museums with good painting collections, with good art collections in general - I think that generates discussion about what's happening in the work of artists, and here, actually, we don't have that. I mean, that's why I don't blame students when they get disinterested with painting, because how do you develop sensitivity to painting? Which is absolutely electrifying, I think, when you look at a painting, and you know you're the only one it's communicating to, almost like that. And it's difficult to have that experience. I know that's a very elitist experience, because you will find those experiences in big museums, and it's all kind of framed by the big museum thing, but - that's nice, that's a nice, special feeling. I don't want to go to a Nike shop, and feel the same way in a museum, for example. I really like a different feel. This is also what I like about films in cinema.

**And that's a bit lacking here, for you?**

That's a bit lacking, I think. Those kind of framework - I mean, you could keep on questioning them, you know. They're probably loots from the Second World War, but it doesn't matter, I still enjoy it. You know? It's kind of grim, but take that away from the work, and the work would still function in the same way, I'm sure.

**When can we expect to see another exhibition by Maria Cruz in Sydney?**

All the time, Liz! Continually! No, I'm having a show with Sarah (Cottier) next year, so...

**Finally, what do you think is most lacking in the current art scene in Australia - not just for painting, but for art in general?**

Funding, of course, will always help, will be appreciated. But I think the art activities in Australia are really dynamic. If I said 'it doesn't need anything', that would be very stupid of me. It's just funding that it needs, because artists are doing whatever they can to make work, and I think that's fantastic. And maybe some good curatorial work, I think that would be really, really interesting - a lot of artists are doing that themselves. More independent curatorial work, I think, and enlightened collectors.

## I'VE ALWAYS LOVED COCK

**I know how anonymous this'll have to be, as I'm exposing my most private sexy thoughts in public. Make no mistake; this material would be deeply offensive to anyone looking to be offended. And please, don't bother Liz trying to find out who wrote it either, she's sworn to secrecy.**

I've always loved the feeling of pressure against my clitoris, from whatever source, but as I got older, I desired and fantasised about being fucked by a real man with a dick. I remember dreaming of a vibrator that squirted liquid, just like jism, when my sexuality was really burgeoning and I had to get a vibrator to fight the torrential tide of desire for sex. I was so horny, I mean, I still am, but at first, it was on my mind so constantly, and I would have sex wherever, and whenever, possible.

No sense of shame, or decency. I love having my cunt 'filled to the brim', I love being pumped away at, and almost bursting from intense, body rocking orgasms. Sometimes when I'm being fucked my mind feels like it's turned into a giant vagina. My cunt seems to takeover my whole body and I am reduced to an enormous wave of pink flesh, a big clitoris, and I'm mummified by the sensation leading me to a culmination of it all. There are times when I've felt prepared to die during sex, I'll endure discomfort, pain, even cramps and mosquitoes, just so that I can enjoy the slamming of cock inside me. (And the lovely balls, bouncing so sweetly.)

I'm just thinking of all the boys, now. With all their abilities and altered (from mine) body parts. I wish I knew what their cocks and balls felt like. Nestled in their knickers, softly curled in the pouch of Y-fronts or loose and free in boxers, like a small pet, jiggling around. A body-part that seems to outline and carry a deep, subjective movement.

Soft cocks are one thing, being carried around by their owner without demanding anything, except the occasional itch and re-adjustment. What is it like to get hard? I know a guy who likes having a perpetual semi-hard on. The head of his cock is pierced, and this seems to act as an impetus for his stiffy. Piercings seem like post-it notes; little reminders...would semi-hard feel good to most men? Isn't there some extra weight when you're engorged, and discomfort? I've been led to believe that a hard on can be a dangerous thing.

**A weapon against you**

When I first began fooling around with guys, I remember a huge pressure being put on me to *relieve* his 'bursting' cock. Evenings were spent alternating between hand jobs, blowjobs and fighting to keep my virginity intact (for some time I was reluctant to go all the way). I would be made responsible for the fact that their dicks had gotten hard after hours of pashing. I was blamed for their pain, and had to do something about it. Relieve their distress. Lucky buggers with their simple outward signs! Cunts are so much less accessible, but good for more orgasms, so that's quite fair. I think love and sexuality have an inherent lock and key hypothesis behind them. We want to fit in with someone, and to be involved with him or her in an essential way. Not just for sexual pleasure, but an underlying great psycho/physical need of having your heart and genitals encircled by someone who stimulates you. But then there's plain lust, which just oozes with desire and greedy fulfilment. No wonder casual sex is so popular.

**What goes on in your underwear?**

I love hearing cock stories, as the tubular flesh is so alien, with such a life of its own. Phallic references have plagued my existence, from an early age, and I remember having a much better idea of the workings of a cock, let alone the general look of them, than the reality of a cunt. I'd always heard feminists deriding phallic structures, but I've come to terms with that generalisation. When

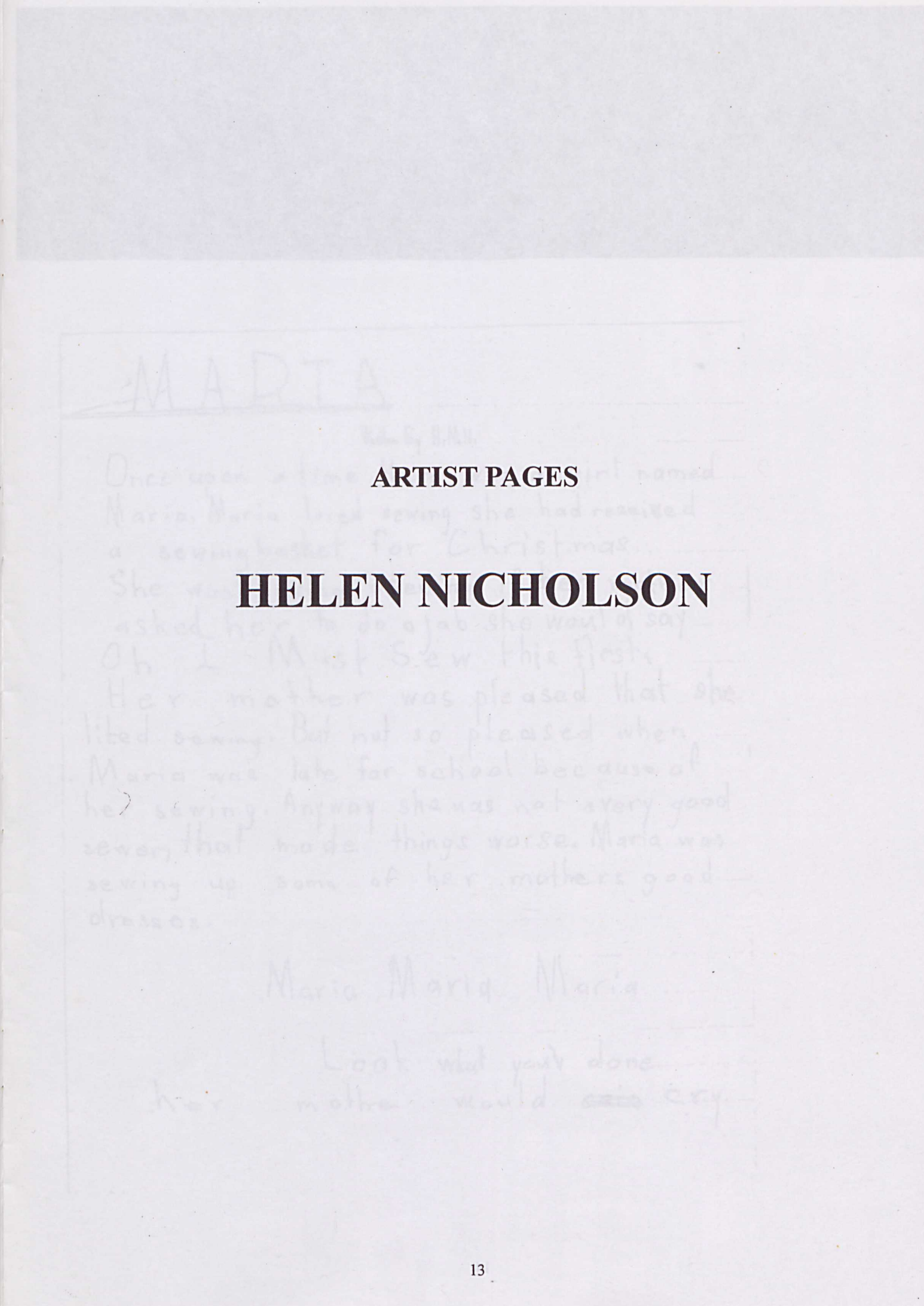
I go to sex shops I'm amazed by the variations of genitalia, we're all so unique, in so many ways! It's interesting that in Hollywood flicks, increased blood flow to the penis is censored. One would think that actor men would want their cocks to look as engorged. What does this feel like, as the blood flows into the member? Other than in real life the only way to see an erection, is in porn films, where viagra, and other sexual aids are employed, making real men fake it and doctoring cum shots. I've been to a big porn movie theatre, where over a hundred men sat, some of the rows shaking with excitement. It wasn't very sexy, because it was so sleazy. I can't remember an instant of the flick, which is unusual for me, as I was so disconcerted by the atmosphere and my chair being agitated from behind! Enjoying porn at home is much more comfortable, but I suppose some of the thrill would be in the exhibitionism. Internet porn is so successful, in particular for male wankers, as they can sit up right to jack off. I'm an extremely visual person, and watching porn opens floodgates in me. Talk about a wet-patch, I feel sometimes I could flood the bedroom!

I think of real men, everywhere, with hard-ons in their underwear, or, better still, right against the fabric of their trousers, and I am THRILLED. I don't care if they're gay or straight, I just love to think of their arousal and that bud of sexuality calling to be stroked. I used to draw naked men in my journal, and while I was drawing their cocks, I'd feel a blood rush come to my cunt, and I'd go over and over the flesh, masturbating myself by drawing on the paper with a pencil. Just this warm and sexy sensation, quite wonderful. How awesome a cock looks, with it's veins and slitted head, cut, in all it's glory, or un-cut and solidly hidden beneath a sheath of skin that invites being peeled back, positively begs for the head to be revealed in it's naked pink and glistening beauty. And when he's hard, such a beautifully darkened colour, getting brighter as it gets harder, trickling sperm, and then shooting the 'load'. How cool is that, to ejaculate! What's that like? How fantastic the balls are, sacs perfectly distanced from the body for reproductive success.

When I feel aroused, it's such a generous, warm and inviting sensation. I don't always need to orgasm, but the concept of fulfilment is strong and tantalising. There are some days where I'm acutely aware of my cunt. I can smell it, and it smells really good. Some days I can feel it between my legs when I'm walking, or sitting on the bus. Tidily tucked away, pink and shiny inside, hairy outside...quite a sight, even on a good day, grotesque. Vibrating to it's own tune. We've all got these private organs, more or less excluded from the light of day, unless it's part of your profession. Walking around, doing our business, and yet sexy thoughts seem to be at the forefront of my mind, quite a lot of the time. Being reminded to wear clean panties and to stop playing with myself, or my brother's cock, when I was young, I'm still so inquisitive.

I wish guys would divulge some secrets, anonymously. Help bridge the gap between cocks and cunts and develop my understanding of the configuration that produced us all. What is it like inside a cunt/ass/mouth? Lovers have never been able to explain the sensation enough, let alone what their orgasms feel like as a result of being fucked up the ass, or milked by hand, or inside someone. It must feel good, the 'glide', no? It amazes, the buttock muscles, on men, just made for pumping their derrieres with expediency. How sexy this looks, from any angle. I remember reading an article in Good Weekend, about a woman who went as a man for a good amount of time. It was a fascinating insight in to the social aspects of the male kingdom, and one part intrigued me. To simulate the feeling of a cock, she wore a condom full of birdseed in her underwear. I tried it and couldn't stop thinking about it all day! I would be very grateful to hear what men have to say about their organs. I've read "Sex tips by a gay man for straight women"; useful, but I'm hungry for more.

I want insight. Soft or hard, in-between, stories of sublime magnitude, and creamy moments. The whole bit. I'll show you mine, if you show me yours!



## ARTIST PAGES

# HELEN NICHOLSON

I go to sex shops I'm amazed by the variations of genitalia, we're all so unique, in so many ways! It's interesting that in Hollywood flicks, increased blood flow to the penis is exaggerated. One would think that actor men would want their cocks to look as engorged. What does this feel like, as the blood flows into the member? Other than in real life the only way to see an erection, is in porn films, where viagra, and other sexual aids are employed, making real men look as if they're doing cum shots. I've been to a big porn movie theatre, where over a hundred men sat, some of the rows shaking with excitement. It wasn't very sexy, because it was so sleazy. I can't remember an instant of the flick, which is unusual for me, as I was so disconcerted by the atmosphere and my chair being agitated from behind! Enjoying porn at home is much more comfortable, but I suppose some of the thrill would be in the exhibitionism. Internet porn is so successful, in particular for male weakens, as they can sit up right to jerk off. I'm an extremely visual person, and watching porn opens floodgates in me. Talk about a wet-greek, I feel sometimes I could flood the bedroom!

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# MARTA

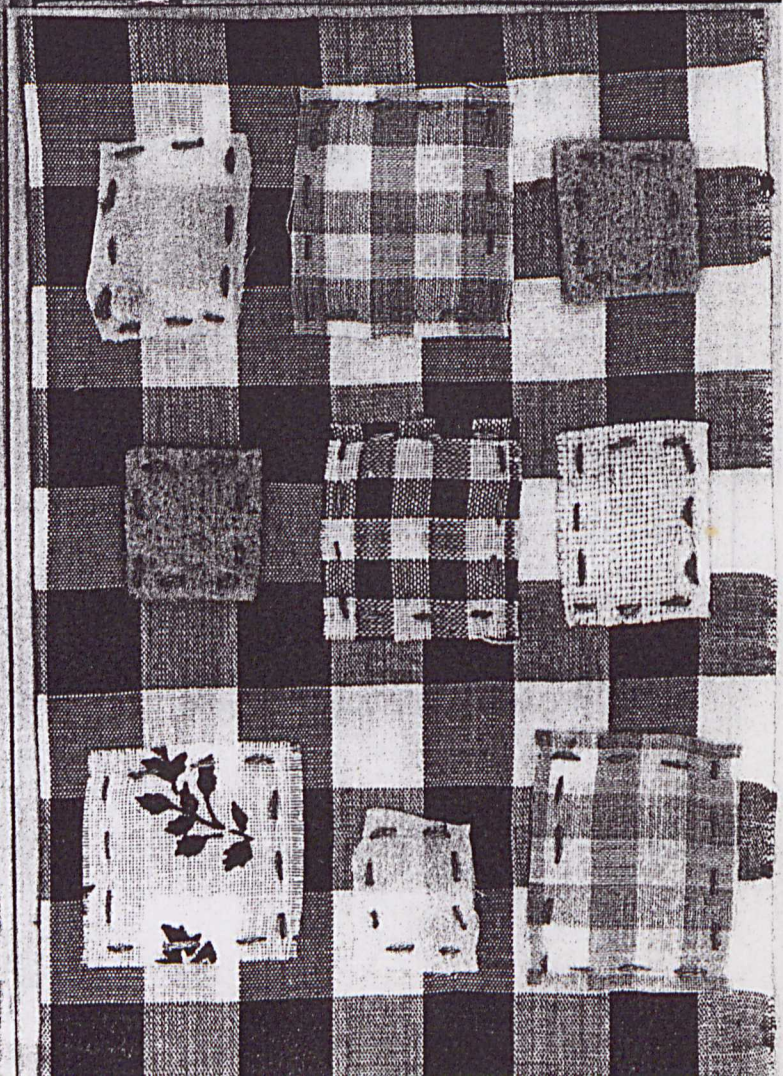
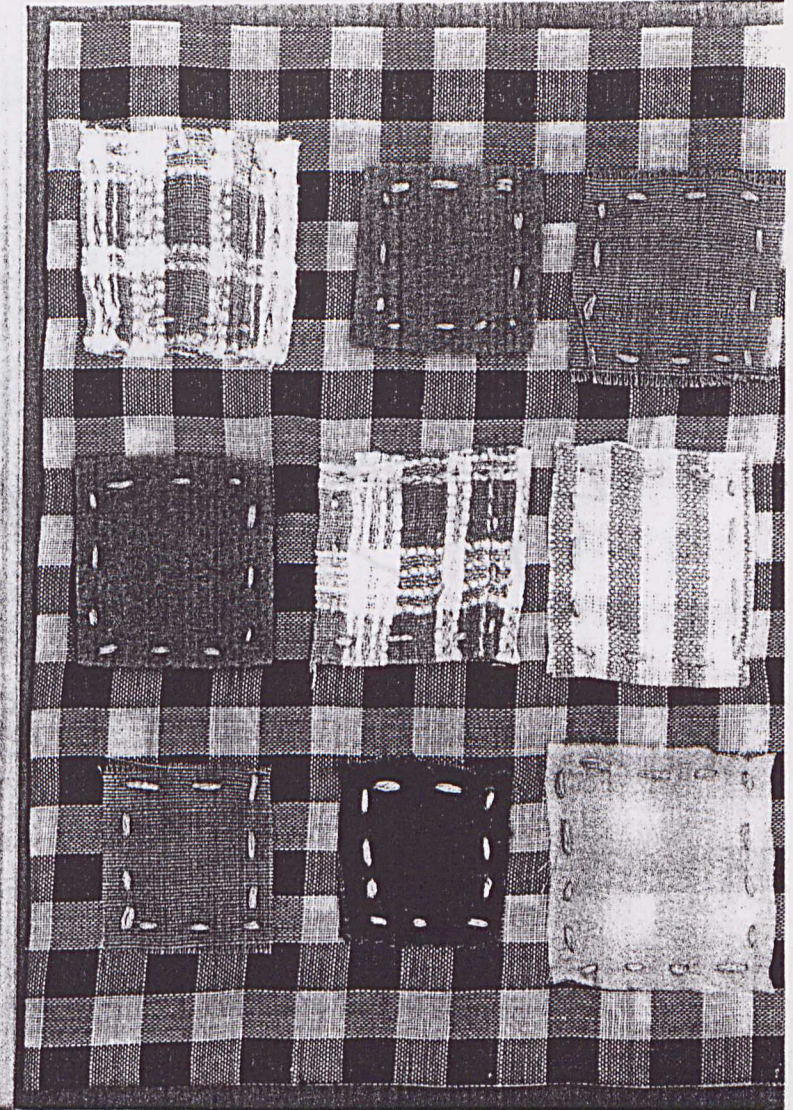
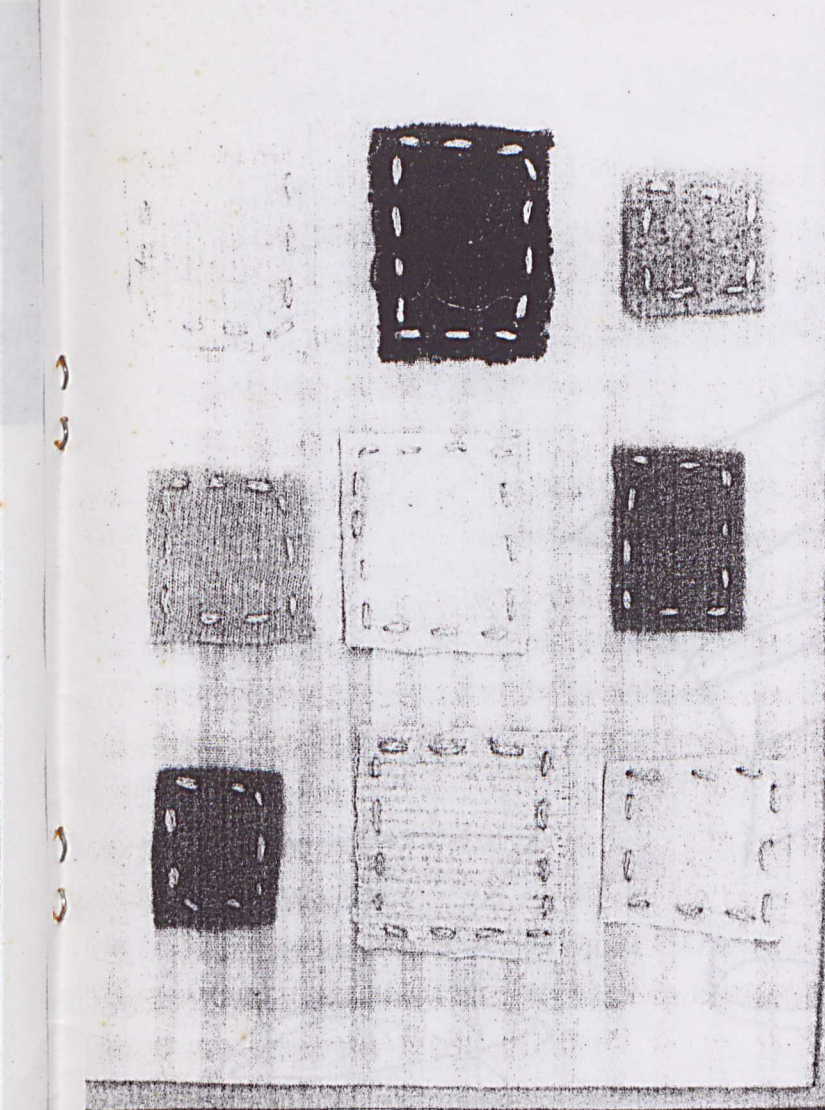
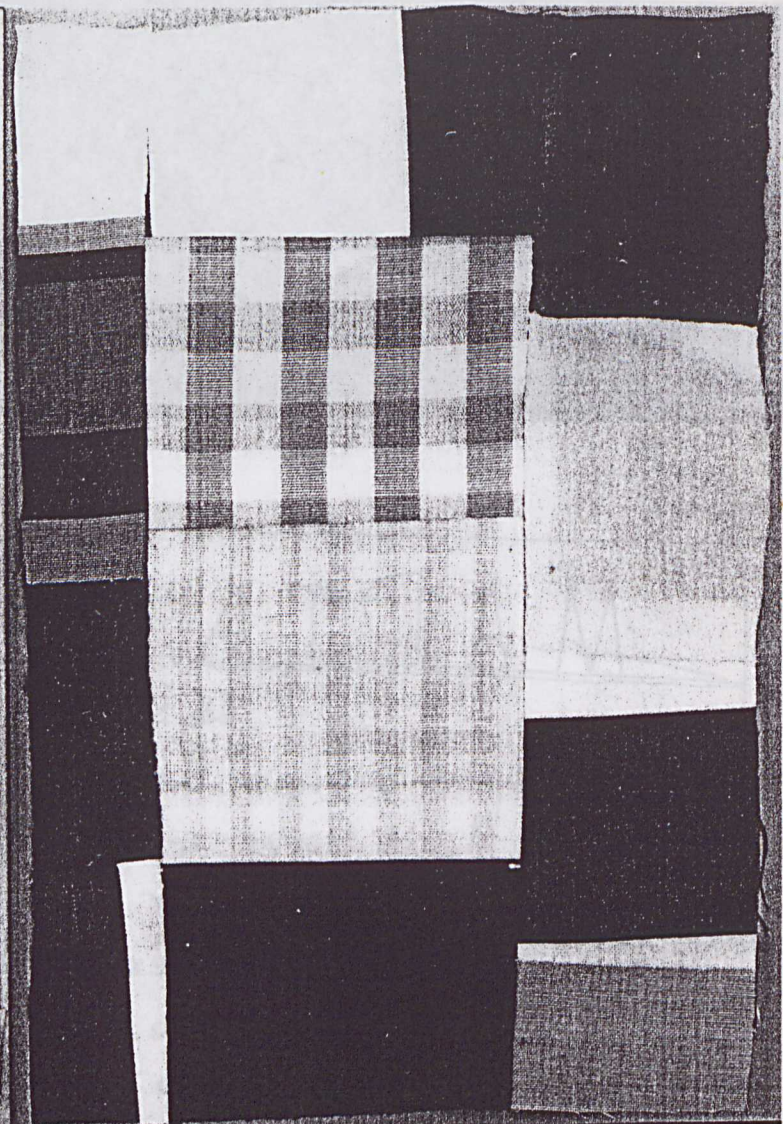
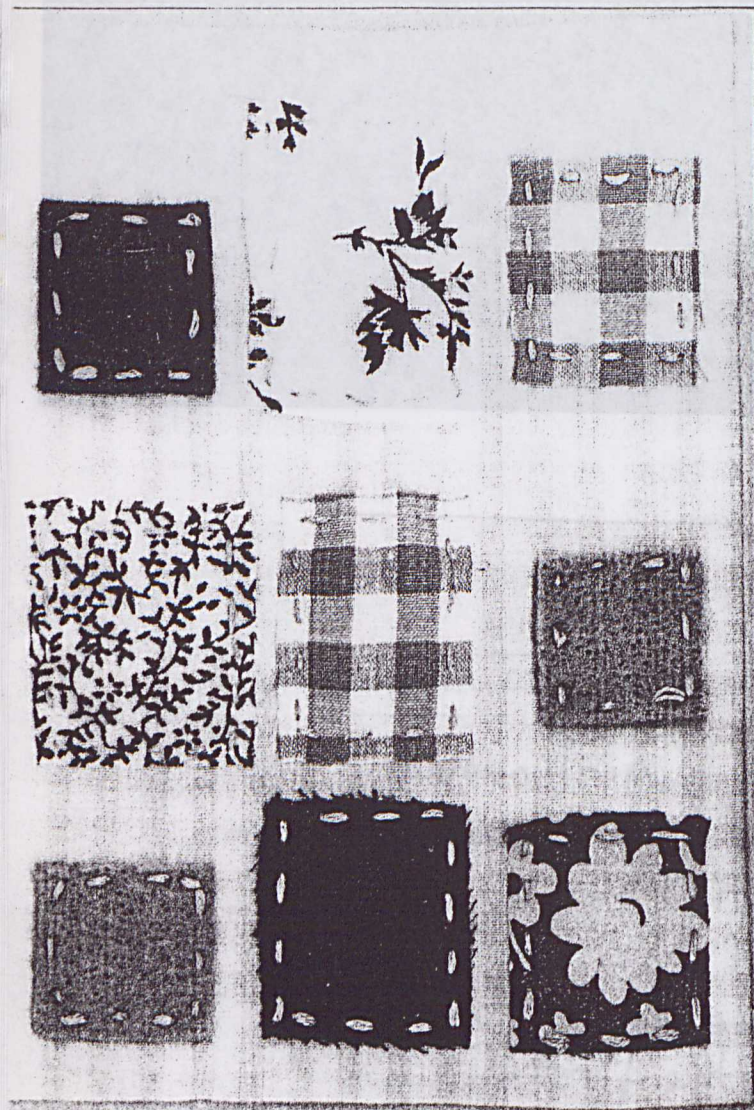
Written By H.M.N.

Once upon a time there was a girl named Maria. Maria loved sewing she had received a sewing basket for Christmas. She was sewing a sewing if her mother asked her to do a job she would say Oh I Must Sew this first. Her mother was pleased that she liked sewing. But not so pleased when Maria was late for school because of her sewing. Anyway she was not a very good sewer, that made things worse. Maria was sewing up some of her mother's good dresses.

Maria Maria Maria

Look what you've done,  
her mother would ~~be~~ cry.







# WHILE I WAS WAITING

by Elvis Richardson

It is a Wednesday morning and muggy outside, I have just arrived home from taking Henry to nursery school and have made my coffee (I'm on my second already), and checked my emails (the first of dozens of times I will check it today).

My dear friend Sally-Ann has been working full time these last two weeks and I miss terribly our morning phone chats where amongst life's trivial details we discuss one project or another that we have on the boil. Born of frustration and certain boredom with our available opportunities, we can't help but to cook up our own! Both being Capricorns probably helps. Having a desire to succeed and be doing something interesting with one's life draws us into many conversations about the annoyances of negotiating a career as an artist. We both agree how infuriating it is to be so dependant upon prizes and grants to make a measly living, and take grim account of the lack of financial security so apparent in our futures as artists.

An inevitable isolation was avoided when after winning a Samstag scholarship in 2000 I travelled to New York to attend Columbia University, where I met Sally-Ann Rowland, an artist from Adelaide and a fellow Samstag recipient. It was here we began to compare notes (so to speak) about our recent experiences with the Samstag, and debrief from the impact of what packing up one's life and making this change entailed, not to mention trying to figure out the lay of the land at both Columbia (where I was confused initially by the intensity of the program, and the expectations of my fellow students) and adapting to living in New York.

The Samstag for me was quite a shock after many years working as an artist, and being involved in artist run galleries. Desperate for any change or money to allow me to continue being an artist, I don't think I really thought through what the reality of having to do a degree program in another country would be like, and the adjustments I would be required to make. Claiming an inter-disciplinary MFA program, Columbia assigned us studios according to the materials category we applied un-

der. The first year of the course consisted of a long string of studio visits by one famous artist<sup>1</sup> or another, with whom I felt an expectation to spin my story on a dime, and pitch my line in the most entertaining fashion in the hope that I (like previous Columbia students) would be picked up by one Chelsea gallery or another, or perhaps curated into some exciting international show<sup>2</sup>! The second year brought a new Chair and a new program, with bi-weekly group crits and tutorials in addition to two or three individual studio visits and a one-week mentor group with a suitably successful artist each semester<sup>3</sup>, adding up to 25 contact hours a week - in addition to work fellowships and teaching assistant requirements. It was great to be working so hard, yet gruelling to submit to the Svengali nature of the course structure - the object being to break one's practice down and build it back up again. I was asked many times how my work had changed (or improved) since being at Columbia!

Gordon Samstag set up a substantial provision in his will for funding Australian artists "to study and develop their artistic capacities, skills and talents in New York, New York and its vicinity, or elsewhere outside of Australia" (according to my 2000 catalogue - although the web site has now dropped the 'New York' part of this statement). In an act of interpretation, the fund has been set up to cover only one year of each scholar's study, and only for a degree program. As any Samstag applicant discovers, there *are* no one-year degree programs in New York or the USA, and only a few options in Europe - which many choose, realizing vis a vis the application form and subsequent communications with the Samstag, (if lucky enough to win the scholarship), that a rare and privileged 'supplementary grant' from the Samstag is a certain carrot/stick situation best to be avoided. I believe the Samstag, even in its existing model, should acknowledge this discrepancy and fund the whole degree for each scholar (be it one or two years), and achieve an accountable outcome and tangible results for all involved - an actual MFA degree.



Elvis Richardson—

Bob After The Accident 1969  
Slide Show Land 2002-2009

It is interesting to note how many successful applicants to the Samstag have already completed an MFA at an Australian institution, as well as being (dare I say) 'established' - if that is to be measured via representation by a commercial gallery, or being exhibited in major museum shows. I don't believe these artists are dying to do another MFA elsewhere, but it seems to be one of the few avenues open for career-minded Australian artists to get ahead and add some spice to their resumes and lives. But why do so many Australian grants insist on this never-ending education of artists? (Considering that Australian art schools are continually downsizing and morphing into graphic arts departments, as they fight for recognition and funding by Australian educational institutions).

As I trawl the internet searching for money-making opportunities for artists, I am irritated by how nearly all of the most generous Australian awards, like the Samstag, stipulate further education and training - especially overseas - such as; the \$100,000 Helen Lempriere National Sculpture Award which requires that "the winner will use the grant to further their education and skill in sculpture", or the

\$30,000 Women and Arts Fellowship in NSW, which stipulates that "the fellowship may be put towards further study or training, particularly for courses that are not readily available in Australia, or courses where the expertise gained might benefit other women working in the arts in this State". All create a prescriptive structure for how artists acquire skills, and ignore the forced mobility artists are subject to as recipients. The impact of receiving an award that requires you to travel is considerable, and can have serious repercussions on an artist's current job/s, housing, relationships and standard of living - especially considering that most of these awards (particularly residencies) require substantial personal financial padding to achieve their aims. This all adds up to a considerable personal sacrifice, should one choose to apply.

I left Australia just as the GST came in, and since then the yearly tax return I would normally get (my own personal art fund), which allowed me to keep it all going, is no more. From what I understand, the new tax system demands I make a profit over \$20,000 from my art practice to be eligible to claim my art expenses<sup>4</sup>. As a conceptual, installation-

type artist, trying desperately to make work that will sell, I have become even more dependent on funding to survive; yet I continue my search. Another option for funding (should I have six months or more up my sleeve to wait for the outcome - that will solve my financial problems!) is the VACB New Work grant. The application draws me into explaining what I would make if I had the money to make it before I start making it - even though I have already managed to find a gallery to exhibit it in without having made it yet, but cannot afford to unless I get this grant application trap. There should be space for another entry on the New Work Grant form - 'The Work You Plan to Make if You Don't Get the Grant'.

Yet another award (sharing company with those already mentioned, with names forever attached to the description 'prestigious') is the 12 month studio residency at the PS1 Contemporary Art Centre, funded by the VACB. PS1 didn't offer Australia a studio in the 2003/04 International Studio Program, claiming that two short-listed applicants, as submitted by the Australia Council, was such a low number that it was undemocratic! (Go figure?) This is the second time that Australia has missed out on a PS1 studio. Bizarre rumours circulated about 'why?', and 'why Australia?' - Difficult artists, pissed-off directors, inflexible application guidelines, expansion agendas, and mismatched expectations. Many Australian artists don't apply for this residency because they see it as an 'established' opportunity (it is a long shot for one grant, when one may have a greater chance of success in a different category).

It was this situation that inspired Sally-Ann (who, as the current Australian PS1 resident, is somewhat of an insider in the situation) and myself to cook up some activities of our own, and so we are curating a show of work on paper, called 'New York Calling', at the PS1 Australian studio. We reintroduced the Australian Consulate to the powers that be at PS1 after finding out the relationship had deteriorated five years previously. It was at this meeting that we discovered Australia wouldn't be get-

ting a studio the following year, and why. We both felt that ultimately it was a disservice by arts organizations to put such little effort into the maintenance of good relationships on behalf of Australian artists - many of whom would like this internationally 'prestigious' opportunity. The Consulate is providing the reception for our show, an occasion that we hope will make visible the talent of some Australian artists who have spent time in New York, and work against the tendency towards the invisibility of Australian artists at PS1. For this reason, I love having a partner in crime - while waiting for my art career to emerge, and for the results of my new work application, I can actually make things happen, after all. At the end of the day, thank @\$&\* for my most prized education - my ongoing self-education in artist run initiatives

[elvisrichardson.com](http://elvisrichardson.com)

<sup>1</sup>It was a requirement to be a famous artist to be on the full-time faculty and the large, changing adjunct faculty at Columbia. Artists who work in these positions are paid well, and it is imperative that successful artists be involved in MFA programs, as it keeps them relevant.

<sup>2</sup>A brief update of a few students in my class: Dana Shatz is now represented by *LFL Gallery*; she was curated in the *Arsenale* at the 2003 *Venice Biennale*, was reviewed in *Flash Art*, *Frieze* and *Art in America*; was the subject of a full article in *The Village Voice*, and had her show recommended in the *New York Times*, all since graduating 12 months ago. Kevin Zucker is represented by *Mary Boon Gallery*. Sean Dack won an MTV contest to direct a *Korn* video, and a documentary was made about his experience. Charlene Liu is represented by *Andrea Rosen Gallery* (where Ricky Swallow has shown); Kamrooz Aram and Will Kwan were curated in the *Prague Biennale* (by a faculty member); *Clandestine* and the international student show at the *Venice Biennale* showed the work of 3 Columbia students (also organized by a faculty member); Sarah Sweeney has a show at the *California Museum of Photography*. Basically an MFA program in the USA is the professional equivalent of an MBA, and is primarily about establishing yourself (and your network) as an 'on-the-scene' artist with the right 'pedigree'. Students at Columbia pay \$80,000 in school fees for a degree, and expect results - in that sense, it is very different to my experience doing an MFA in Australia - however, you must be willing to stay in New York to reap the benefits - which is, shall I say, not exactly easy; and the personal sacrifices continue.

<sup>3</sup>Artists and art writers I had the pleasure to meet with included - Roni Horn, Christian Boltanski, Alex Danko. Mark Dion, Robert Longo, Kara Walker, Liam Gillick, Matt Mullican, John Miller, Janine Antonio, Lynne Cook and Coco Fusco.

<sup>4</sup>Not to mention as an 'alien non-resident' tax status in the US, I am also unable to claim any of my art expenses, or even my dependents!



# Love's Labour's Lost: Friendship as a Curatorial Practice

by Sally-Ann Rowland

This article advocates exhibiting your friends as a curatorial practice. At first glance the subject seems more suited to an exposé than a reasoned defence. To proper children of objectivity, democracy and the French Revolution, a policy of exhibiting friends is nepotism and carries the attendant associations of unfair partiality, privilege and corruption sanctioned by something approximating the accident of birth. I don't aim to rescue nepotism, for as a child of ODFR myself, I also believe in Merit and object to the (now minimally reformed) House of Lords and the (very unchecked) career of George W. Bush. Rather, I want to pull friendship from underneath nepotism and argue for its contribution to the making and reception of artworks.

My interest in this subject was prompted by Suzanne Treister's work in *(The World May be) Fantastic*, the 2002 Sydney Biennale. Treister presented her continuing project *No Other Symptoms: Time Travelling with Rosalind Brodsky*. This is a multidimensional art work that orbits the figure of Rosalind Brodsky, a mid-21st century time-travelling researcher for the 'Institute of Miltitronics and Advanced Time Interventionality'. The work manifests as time-travelling costumes and attaché cases, paintings, a book and CD-ROM, music, installation, case histories, sculptures and experiments, each mode opening new avenues into which the work expands. Brodsky, originating as an alias for Treister herself, hosts a time-travel cooking show, is the lead singer of the band 'Rosalind Brodsky and the Satellites of Lvov', designs novelty vibrators and is a patient of Freud, Jung, Klein, Lacan and Kristeva. The work is built on beautiful flip-flops between reality and fantasy. Treister and Brodsky share a personal history, Brodsky's time travelling is repeatedly referred to as delusional and her employment with the Institute is a 'belief'. In one notable incident, Brodsky is stranded on the set of *Schindler's List* in an attempt to save her/Treister's grandparents from the Nazis. An extensive online component of this project is available at <http://ensemble.va.com.au/tableau/suzy/>.

*(The World May be) Fantastic* drew artists and collectives from twenty-three countries into a tableau of invention and histories where all manner of the fantastic collided with the real. The art practice of the Biennale's curator, Richard Grayson, has clear connections to the themes of alternative worlds, fantasy and irrational hypotheses chosen for the Biennale. Despite this, I felt Grayson's choice of this theme did not in a small part result from his personal history with Suzanne Treister. I was touched to have this confirmed in his candid discussion in the catalogue essay for the Biennale<sup>1</sup>.

I later talked about my enjoyment of this exhibition and was surprised to find my support for Suzanne Treister's presence was not widely shared. An awkward silence would follow, during which my partner in conversation evaluated the relative benefits of light conversation and critical argument only to respond in the manner of, 'You

know he received a lot of flack for that' with the insinuation that this was well deserved.

I project myself into a similar situation. I am beside someone for, say, ten years. Another artist whose CV, although substantial, is shorter and less international than my own. We put up with each other, help with deadlines and listen to each other's ideas. One day he is invited to curate a significant exhibition. He develops a theme that is a product of our collective practices and talks it through with me. I make suggestions and observations, well able to contribute to a topic that has occupied my thoughts for years - only to discover I am excluded from the exhibition because I am his lover. Say WHAT!?!?

In my own time-travelling fantasies, I'd like to return to the exhibition *Procrustean Bed* at the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide, Australia, in 1998. My presence in this exhibition produced many attendant (albeit whispered) slights, because I was 'with' its artist/curator, Kristian Burford. I wish the woman who had threatened to write this in her review had actually done so. I'd arrive in my own time-travelling costume to commend her insight with 'Yes', 'quite true', and, 'so he should'.

The decision to exhibit friends has effects that reach beyond the moral implications and daily consequences of placing loved ones on the bottom rung of a ladder of importance. Political theorist Paul Corcoran provides a useful theoretical framework in his paper, *'Liaisons dangereuses: Friends, Enemies & Others'*<sup>2</sup>. In this paper, Corcoran contrasted relationships at the high end of an emotional scale, friendship with its positive associations of affection and solidarity and enmity with its negative associations of hostility and destruction, to relationships at the low end of the scale. At this end were Corcoran's 'other' people<sup>3</sup>, relations characterized by a decided lack of emotional intensity and illustrated by the proverbial stranger who lives a mere two blocks away:

The 'others' I am talking about are people whom, for all practical and even moral purposes, we know nothing about: hardly know and indeed hardly care. In other words, I refer to strangers, foreigners - literally, as in the French, people who are *far away*... We barely know of their existence, much less their attributes<sup>4</sup>.

Corcoran situated strangers on the periphery of our awareness, a group considered capable of affecting only washy responses in the form of amusement for 'people watchers' or the passing annoyance of a long queue. He objected to Sartre's characterization of hell as 'other people', to instead posit that 'the people who make life hell for us are generally the people we know all too well, including the members of one's own family'<sup>5</sup>.

I found a pertinent illustration of Corcoran's analysis in my own experience as a student in Columbia University's Masters in Fine Art program. In a large part, this program consisted of private studio visits and group cri-

tiques of students' work with prominent members of the New York art world. I soon came to realize that the common ground I shared with these visitors due to our membership in the same professional group was insufficient to engender the mutual interest and open response anticipated in educational settings. My visit was one of a schedule of seven, Madame Whatnot in Studio 23 Blah-Blah, on a long afternoon. The first step towards success lay in conquering the featurelessness of anonymity and advance up the emotional scale to the position of a friend.

Our beliefs in the impropriety of emotion and subjectivity in public life, never mind an educational institution, makes these observations seem like a criticism. I should want the opinions of strangers for that is how I will know what my work is *really* worth. Oh. And God help the curator who blatantly exhibits her friends and lovers, clearly a case of too much post modernity. Illustrations of this view abound, from the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts who cautions artists against 'using friendship as a reason for defining an exhibition group'<sup>6</sup>, to Olu Oguibe's recent argument for Clement Greenberg's notion of the 'good eye' as a requisite for exhibition organizers<sup>7</sup>. I felt it personally demonstrated during a job interview with the Dallas Museum of Art - the interview took a decided turn for the worst when I responded to a question about judging artworks by discussing my attraction to objects that resonate with my own sensibility. It was here, in retrospect, I think I was expected to list components in the manner of the causes of the Second World War.

To which all I can say is that, driven almost batty by forcefully delivered and entirely contradictory judgments offered many times a week for some years, I can only conclude that some people will always like some things and other people will always like other things. It is quite impossible to please everybody and the objectively A+ artwork, agreed on even within the art world, does not exist. In the place of absolute victory measured by a stop watch, I feel art has room for most people to like some of it and it is not unusual for these groups to form around a similarity of sensibility. Friendship seems to accompany shared sensibilities, making it pretty likely for lovers who are artists to genuinely like the work of their partners, for friendship between artists to incorporate true pleasure in each other's work, and for friendship to follow from the enjoyment of an artist's work. So on this basis, I consider friendship a valid means for creating, for want of a better word, 'natural' groupings of artists and coherent exhibitions.

One of the reasons I feel this view is so difficult to swallow lies in the continuing presence of the dichotomy of public and private life. For however over-critiqued it maybe, it is the line between private and public which seems to convert friendship into nepotism and fraternity into favouritism: bedding people should occur in private for in public it is a metaphor for corruption<sup>8</sup>. It is interesting how many directors of commercial galleries unproblematically exhibit husbands, wives and lovers (nicely keeping 50% commissions in the family), yet

when the situation occurs in public spaces it is under a microscope. In the commercial (read 'private') art world, the attendant referents of intimacy, subjectivity and emotion are accepted. It seems denoted even by the company names of these spaces in their standard reiteration of the name of the owner of the gallery. Here we expect personal taste - if the individuals/spaces Mary Boone, Andrew Kreps or Roslyn Oxley aren't into our things we go away and try someone else. By contrast, public spaces with generic titles of The National Museum are held to the requirements of the public realm and are supposed to be locales of disconnection, rational discourse and objective judgment. But being a strong believer in the absence of this in art, I really think the only thing to do is abandon these expectations and trust instead in the capacity for systems of changing directors to ensure that our museums and public spaces support a variety of artworks that span many personal preferences.

Furthermore, by placing myself on the side of subjective judgment where maybe mummy loves Little Johnnie because he is a super child when viewed from certain directions, a curatorial practice that openly advocates the subjective can also incorporate a relocation of power back to the artist. With recourse to more staid feminist theory... it is noteworthy how comfortably the positions of the curator and the artist fit the categories of mental and manual labour, and so construct the artist as a site of subjectivity, intuition and, sadly, stupidity. The number of MFA graduates working in construction compared with art history MAs in museum jobs makes this depressingly clear<sup>9</sup>. In the case of the Biennale, I was interested how frequently its commentators relayed that Richard Grayson is an artist, and that this was the first occasion when an artist was chosen as the curator<sup>10</sup>. That this was a talking point was strange - Grayson has twenty years of art practice and exhibition management behind him - it wasn't as if the board appointed a farm-hand or microbiologist. Letting conspiracy theories take me away, perhaps it was Grayson's identity as an artist that opened the door for criticism of his choice to include Suzanne Treister. As an artist he was always already expected to lack the impartiality and objective distance prized in the curator<sup>11</sup>.

Luckily for me I guess, even if the position of the artist wasn't circumscribed by subjectivity, intuition and emotion, I would want it to be. I suppose I believe everyone is in this position anyway, even if they don't admit it, but regardless, taking these on board as a positive seems to open the way for friendship, and by so doing contributes, in the manner of artist-run spaces, to a reinstating of culture as something tied to the people that make and experience it, rather than an exercise of control from on high.

Minimal control, subjective judgment, and the selection of artists according to personal association have provided the framework for a number of curatorial projects organized by myself and an artist who is also a dear friend, Elvis Richardson. It is also the basis of an exhibition I am excited to do but doubt its ability to manifest. This is an exhibition of work by my lovers who are

artists, titled *Most of the Artists that I've Slept With*. The 'most' exonerates me from including people whose work I do not like (we all change our minds) and allows me to retain a small amount of mystery. Hats off to Tracey Emin for her capacity to let this go...

I have always enjoyed Tracey Emin's work and the moments of similarity with my own concerns. But when she writes the names of all her lovers on the inside of a tent, and this is one of her art works, (*Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963-1995*) she makes a powerful disclosure - but is also rather unkind to all the people who have their names displayed. Their knickers are also round their ankles but unlike Ms Emin, they receive no professional advantage. To curate a show of people I have slept with gives these artists career opportunities denied to Tracey Emin's lovers because these people, (however good you are Darling), have not reached the heights of Mathew Barney. A show in Chelsea, I would think, is not to be poo-poo-ed. However there are difficulties that are likely to prevent its realization. Many people don't like to be reminded of the passing of virgin brides and there is the inevitable rivalry between one lover and the previous...never mind relationships that are now utterly dysfunctional. Those I have mentioned it to are not into it at all. 'Even if you can put in anything you want? And it can be as big as you want? And even if it is at a really good space? In New York?' - still all negative, but some promises to think about it.

So while the jury is out on that little project, I'll finish by recalling Paul Corcoran's distinction, and choose any day the mutual investment and solidarity of friendship, with all its potential for great disaster for my art practice and curatorial work. For (as Elvis said to me some years ago) - what is the point of any of this anyway, if you don't have friends to share it with?

<sup>1</sup>The exhibition concentrates on projects and approaches that are fantastic, partial, various, suggestive ... My long held fascination with these concerns has been significantly expanded through the seven years I had spent following the evolution of the work *No Other Symptoms - Time Travelling with Rosalind Brodsky* by my partner Suzanne Treister. Richard Grayson, "Grasshopper Worlds", catalogue essay, (*The World May Be*) *Fantastic*, 2002 Biennale of Sydney, p. 11

<sup>2</sup>P. Corcoran "Liaisons dangereuses: Friends, Enemies & Others", unpublished paper, University of Adelaide, April 2003

<sup>3</sup>To be distinguished from the categorization of the 'Other' known to feminist, post-colonial and Orientalist critique

<sup>4</sup>Corcoran, pp 9-10

<sup>5</sup>Corcoran, p 9

<sup>6</sup>Artists are cautioned against using friendship as a reason for defining an exhibition group.

[http://www.artsmia.org/collection/maep\\_how.cfm](http://www.artsmia.org/collection/maep_how.cfm)

<sup>7</sup>...one requisite of curating is that the curator should have what Clement Greenberg would call a "good eye". ... Obviously, not everyone has a good eye, be they curator or artist. In fact, most artists working today do not even possess the eye to tell when their own work is successful, let alone determine successful works made by others.' Olu Oguibe, online commentary for 'The Next Documenta Should Be Curated By An Artist', *Flash Art International*, June 15 2003. [http://www.e-flux.com/projects/next\\_doc/index.html](http://www.e-flux.com/projects/next_doc/index.html)

<sup>8</sup>Corcoran, p 3

<sup>9</sup>Practical art education is a soft option from high school through graduate school. I went to art school shortly following the 'Dawkins Reforms' which abracadabra-ed the Australian higher education portfolio to create a large number of 'new' universities. What this actually

entailed was the amalgamation of technical colleges and their re-labelling as universities, subsequently converting certificate and diploma courses into degree courses. The current conservative government in Australia is working to reverse this, but at this point, students of manual labour, from nursing to fine art, continue to receive university degrees for their efforts. So far prejudice has not surprisingly outlived nomenclature. A Masters in Fine Art degree is peanuts beside that of almost every other field. This is not an Australian peculiarity. I left my MFA at Columbia with the mistaken belief that with this degree, combined with experience exhibiting, writing and curating, I had equivalent knowledge to an art history MA and could enter museum and curatorial work. Following the endless train of rejection letters and watching fellow MFAs work in construction, carpentry and *Barnes and Nobles*, the relationship between practical knowledge and book learning was made pretty clear.

<sup>10</sup>A similar situation can be seen in the excitement whipped up by Flash Art over the issue of having an artist curate the next *Documenta* - [http://www.e-flux.com/projects/next\\_doc/index.html](http://www.e-flux.com/projects/next_doc/index.html)

<sup>11</sup>The belief in the artist's lack comes through in the instructions for exhibition proposals on the website for the non-profit exhibition space, Apex Art, in New York. The single instruction that is stressed with bold typeface reads: 'Please note that we do not accept proposals for one person shows from artists or curators and discourage artists acting as curators from including their own work'. Besides the assertion of pretence in the words 'acting as', the subtext of this instruction implies the limited vision of the artist, someone too focused on his or her own production to be able to see beyond it.

## HOUSEWORK

An interview with Sarah Goffman

**Do you enjoy doing the housework?**

Not very much, no.

**What is your most favoured housework task?**

Jiffing the sink.

**And least favoured?**

Scrubbing the toilet.

**When you're washing up, which is first - cutlery or glasses?**

Glasses.

**Do you use detergent on the dishes, and if so - do you feel it's important to rinse the detergent off?**

Absolutely.

**Do you dry the dishes, or let them drain and then air dry?**

I'm a drainer. I think that it would be better to dry them with the linen, but I really don't care that much.

**Is there a particular style of tea towel that you prefer?**

Linen.

**What about ironing? Are you an ironer?**

Absolutely not, never. Except my hair.

**Truly?**

Yeah, to get the kinks out.

**Do you use a powdered clothes detergent, or a liquid?**

Both.

**Do you listen to music when you clean, or watch TV?**

Um, I'll have music on, but like, I'm not listening to it, it's just on.

**What about the sink? Do you like to use Jif, or is there some other product that you prefer?**

Oh I'm a Jif girl, yeah. I was brought up on Jif, but I converted to bi carb of soda and vinegar, white vinegar, for a while. And that was working, but somehow, Jif...I was really aware that it was better to use these products than Jif, but it's come back into my life, and...and it's convenience, but I feel guilty when I do use it, yeah.

**What do you use for your kitchen sponge?**

I want to recommend the Vleda sponge. It's green, it costs a little more, but the scourer action of it is phenomenal, and the sponge capacity is out of this world, really.

**Is it important to have a separate cloth in the bathroom for wiping down the toilet rim, and lid, etc, and one for the sink, tiles, shower?**

Yeah, didn't you see my little arrangement out there? There's one in the toilet, there's a few in the bathroom, there's a couple in the kitchen. Each has designated purposes.

**Do you ever wash the shower down while you're using it?**

Oh yeah, I did that this morning!

**What kind of vacuum cleaner do you prefer - the upright push around type, or drag around hose style?**

Oh, I wish I could afford a vacuum cleaner - my most preferable one is the back-pack, but I've got one of the drag-around styles. It sucks.

**Which one part of the house would you say it is most important to have clean at all times? For example - the kitchen sink, the toilet, the kitchen floor, the sheets...?**

Oh, oh...it depends on where I am. The kitchen is pretty important, yeah, because I'm cooking and eating in there. But the living room is - the living room table is the place that I think I clean the most. Because I sit there. Yeah. The bathroom only if people are coming.



"eve"



"sarah"



"elizabeth"



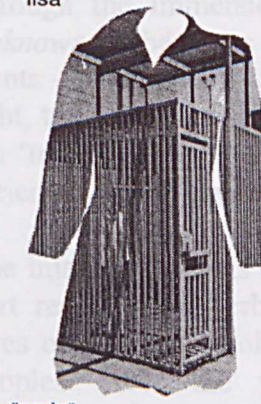
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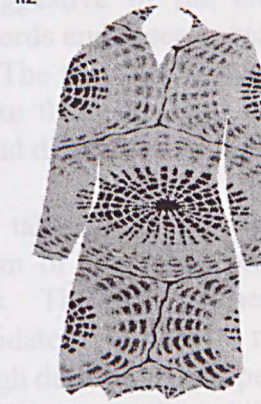
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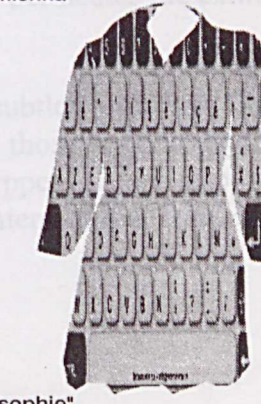
"carla"



"mishka"



"maria"



"sophie"

...hey there fancy pants, play the songs that make us dance... (ween)

## REVIEWS

### Sydney Move

reviewed by Ally Young

### Destination Unknown 3: Zoe Ali & Christos Tsiolkas

reviewed by Jane Trengrove

### Museum of Emotion: Fiona Macdonald

reviewed by Jane O'Neill

### SYDNEY MOVE

160 King St Newtown

Reviewed by Ally Young

Everyone knows you can buy clothes according to several philosophies. One is to purchase a few 'key' (expensive) pieces per season and mix n' match them, resulting in a restrained, disciplined wardrobe and a streamlined quality look. Another more budget-conscious approach is to purchase fewer (if any) of these 'key' pieces, then splurge on cheaper items – chain store or second hand clothes, resulting in a greater number of clothing combinations and outfit variety.

Most people I know take the second approach, not only because it's cheaper, but because while cheap clothes may not last long (and look a little more ill-fitting, or crumple sooner), chain store designs can, these days, be really nice – good copies of designer styles.

At my age, however, I feel the need to be a little more discerning about what I will wear from the chain store selection. Sportsgirl designs are often really good, I'll admit, but as a thirty-something year old, I don't want to come face to face with a fifteen year old in the same outfit. Also, there's a sense that while you're looking at ten pairs of identical (cheap-but-ok) earrings on the rack in the store, there are literally THOUSANDS more of these earrings being sold on racks in branches just kilometres down the road, throughout the city AND the rest of the country. This is depressing.

I recently found a way out of this bind when I discovered a local store, 'Sydney Move'. The prices on the clothes in here are very reasonable – you can get, like, two tops for twenty five dollars – yet there isn't a huge number of the same item on the rack. In fact, there is often only ONE – this, despite the fact that the clothes are obviously mass produced.

Not only are the items seemingly one-off (I guess there must be thousands more in shops in Korea and Japan... but at least they're not HERE), they're also really quirky and stylish. When I was there I bought a large tote bag made from a woven artificial fibre (the kind of bag you could carry a whole picnic to the beach in) with a blue and white check pattern on one side, and on the other side a printed circle design reminiscent of sixties abstract art, with 'I am not conscious of any fashion' printed above and below it. At ten dollars, it was a must-have for me... unique, cheap, functional and stylish.

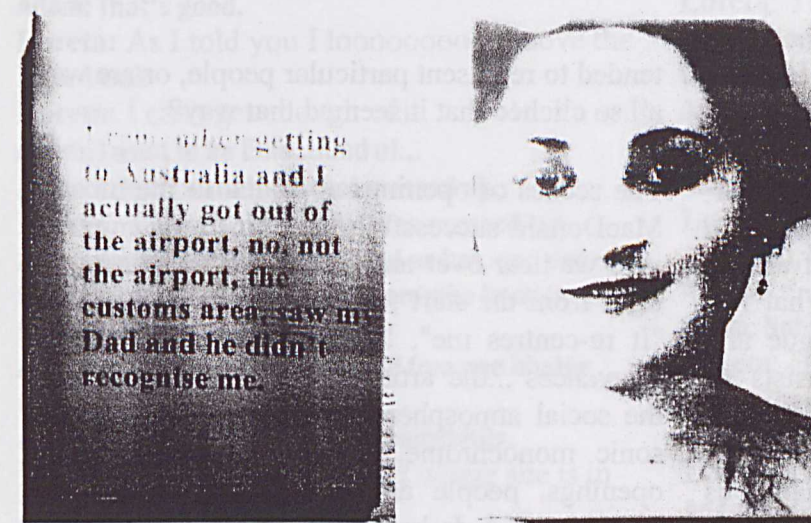
The shop also stocks earrings (really nice, really cheap), hair bands, house accessories, stationery, toys and shoes. Perhaps the only problem with this place is that because the items are produced for an Asian market (one assumes), the sizes are a little on the small side...I haven't tried any of the shoes, but I have a feeling I'd be hard pressed to find a size that fit. Otherwise, I reckon I could shop at 'Sydney Move' exclusively, until I hit middle age.

### Destination Unknown 3:

ZOE ALI & CHRISTOS TSIOLKAS

WEST SPACE June 2003

Reviewed by Jane Trengrove



I met with Zoe Ali at West Space and spoke to her about the exhibition *Destination Unknown 3*, which is part of a long-term series of collaborations with writer Christos Tsiolkas. The *Destination* series are reflections on the theme of exile, migration and journey.

Both having Greek parentage, Ali and Tsiolkas have a close association, sharing views on the vexed complexities of migration and identity. Eventually they decided to make a three-part project combining written texts and photographic images to create visual installations.

As distressing immigration issues arose at the time of the *Tampa* crisis, Ali and Tsiolkas felt they would make their work available to a broad viewing audience and sought public art spaces. Tsiolkas was attracted to the idea of working visually and publicly, in contrast to his usual non-visible private practice of writing. *Destination Unknown 1* was sited at City Lights, (a series of elevated light boxes). *Destination Unknown 2*, located in the viewing windows of Platform Exhibition Space at Spencer Street Station, and finally *Destination Unknown 3*, at West Space Gallery.

The installation comprises approximately 60 cyanotypes including text and photographs. Ali processes the cyanotypes by treating

Arches paper with photosensitive chemicals and then exposing it to light for many hours to achieve images, either words or photographs. The paper is then carefully folded over small stretchers and secured, and then images and texts are installed around the space to form a narrative. The soft blue colour of the cyanotypes varies depending on the chemical saturation of each work.

Through the immersion process, *Destination Unknown 3* becomes suggestive of the elements – air and water. Words and faces appear light, transient, unfixed. The texts and images are 'travelling lightly' like their subjects' experiences of journeying and displacement.

The images and texts are taken from the passport records and verbatim of migrating relatives of Ali and Tsiolkas. The facts of these peoples' lives are validated by their representation. And although delicate and impermanent, unremitting truth permeates the exhibition.

*Destination Unknown 3* subtly counters Government policy regarding those seeking asylum in this country and the slippery nature of political spin in the murky waters of the *Tampa* affair.

## MUSEUM OF EMOTION

FIONA MACDONALD

ACMI CINEMAS July 2, 2003

Reviewed by Jane O'Neill

Given that almost every aspect of life must have inspired an artwork, it is surprising that everyday interactions between artists themselves have not been explored more thoroughly. Fiona MacDonald's soap opera is set in the galleries, studios, and bedrooms of artists, and poses the following question: "What lies behind this veil of meaningless dialogue and contrived situations?" The piece consists of nine short episodes, and serves to characterise the life of contemporary art. It includes gallery fights, phenomenological musings, malicious gossip, bar flies and bad sex. MacDonald draws upon the clichés of monomaniacal behaviour still so rife in artistic circles. In other words, she reveals what a hopeless bunch we really are.

I had always suspected that the art scene is essentially tribal, with variations on the same persona existing in each city. The inventory of characters in *Museum of Emotion* proves this theory right. There was the art dealer, who mistook her artists' creativity for her own; the boring administrator, parroting what he'd heard at an opening the night before and asserting the ideas as though he'd researched them for years; the seductress, dressed up to the nines, chiming in with nods of agreement and enthusiastic pouts. There was Clay, the fast-talking art star (played by Callum Morton), gaining points at openings by nodding in the right direction, and justifying his abstracted corporate identity as "free from logic". There was Burnt Hand (played by Constanze Zikos), grinding on about his damaged hand and how he may never be able to paint again. And finally, who hasn't abided the tiresome antics of the multi-media optimist - played here as a "positivist conceptual collaborator". This character reminded me of a kind of 'born-again Christian' artist, grinding on with a mantra that no-one cares about enough to agree or disagree. At this point I felt tricked by the series - were the characters in-

tended to represent particular people, or are we all so clichéd that it seemed that way?

The scenes of openings appealed to me most - MacDonald successfully combined the mutterings we hear over and over: "I'm supporting it right from the start", "I'm trying to pull back", "It re-centres me", "I'm going to outline my grievances"...the artist seemed to suggest that the social atmosphere of an opening is like a sonic monochrome. It also revealed that at openings, people are mostly just talking to themselves. A darker aspect of the series was a segment where the screen was blacked out but for a stream of white text which ran along the bottom. The narrative here consisted of the unacknowledged silent observations that we make at openings. Love was confused with ambition. A vendetta was plotted. And people's movements were charted with precision. These insightful observations seemed to sum up the paranoia that is bred from dealing with people on professional and personal levels.

Not that it was enjoyable. The episodes were rife with kooky graphics, mysterious gurgle music and plots that go nowhere. As I left the 'state of the art' auditorium at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, I couldn't help feeling that I'd paid penance for every art video I'd ever ignored.

# adam & loreta

**Adam:** How are youse?

**Loreta:** Good fanks

**Adam:** That's good.

**Loreta:** As I told you I loooooooove the Edie book

**Loreta:** I can't get enough of it

**Adam:** I want to be Edie...kind of...

**Adam:** I don't want to be that messed up.

**Loreta:** The whole family was messed up

**Adam:** But I want to look as good as her, and dance famously, and design my own wardrobe in an inspirational fashion...

**Adam:** And go wild and crazy and free and bludge money off people.

**Adam:** And lose all sense of responsibility.

**Loreta:** I'm not up to the part where she is in NY yet

**Loreta:** I'm reading about Bobby

**Loreta:** He was one troubled soul

**Adam:** Truly.

**Adam:** I'd forgotten about him. Her brother?

**Loreta:** Yes

**Loreta:** Really good looking but an absolute nutter

**Loreta:** And what about the father??

**Loreta:** There was a major nut

**Adam:** Yes, he was a major nut.

**Adam:** Oh, do you know what, I felt so silly when I buzzed you to wake you up that morning...

**Loreta:** Why did you feel silly?

**Adam:** I found myself waving at the intercom speaker, while yelling 'bye!'

**Adam:** Would have looked stupid.

**Adam:** Waving.

**Adam:** At a speaker.

**Loreta:** But I'm sure no one was around

**Adam:** I hope not.

**Adam:** It was very early.

**Adam:** I can't wait to watch that show tonight, is it called 'Punked'?

**Loreta:** Yes

**Adam:** Are you gonna watch it?

**Loreta:** I believe I will

**Loreta:** Ashton Kutcher is hot

**Adam:** A bit clean for me.

**Loreta:** Clean is good

**Adam:** No, I like dirty.

**Loreta:** He's dating Demi Moore

**Loreta:** What are we having for dinner on Sunday night?

**Adam:** I don't know, it's funny, I was just thinking

what we could have for dinner Sunday night...

**Adam:** Did you watch Oliver's Twist?

**Loreta:** Yes

**Adam:** I love that show.

**Loreta:** He was on Oprah yesterday arvo

**Adam:** NO WAY!!!!!!

**Adam:** I wish I'd seen it!

**Adam:** What did he say? What did he say?

**Loreta:** Him and Nigella Lawson

**Adam:** Oh, he shouldn't have shared the stage with Nigella.

**Adam:** Not that I don't like Nigella.

**Loreta:** He cooked three dishes

**Adam:** They didn't grill him about his private life, his emotions?

**Loreta:** No, it was a cooking show

**Adam:** Oh. That's ok that I missed it then.

**Adam:** What about how the audience cheers like they've won the lottery when they get a free book or kit or something, at the end of every show?

**Loreta:** The audience virtually has an orgasm over any old thing

**Adam:** True.

**Loreta:** I went to the dentist this morning and now the left side of my face is numb

**Loreta:** I look like I've had a stroke

**Adam:** Bugger.

**Adam:** Do you look like you've had a stroke, or FEEL like it?

**Loreta:** BOTH!

**Adam:** Damn.

**Loreta:** When I first arrived at work people were laughing at me

**Adam:** Have you been watching that show about people who have to travel to different countries and they get instructions on things to do?

**Loreta:** No, I've seen small bits of it before

**Adam:** Like, all different pairs of people - some engaged virgins, some models, some clowns...some mates.

**Adam:** It's good but I only saw a bit last night. They were in India the night before, it was horrific.

**Adam:** They had to go to a stinking outdoor fish market and find a pile of fish and pick out twenty of the same kind of fish...and put them in a big basket and carry them back to a truck. In a hurry. And not get any different kinds of fish in there.

**Adam:** I'm going now.

**Loreta:** Okey dokes

**Adam:** I'll see you Sunday night...

**Loreta:** Stay gold, Ponyboy



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