

on site

ON SITE

INSTALLATIONS BY

TOM ARTHUR
JULIE BROWN
ELIZABETH GOWER
HOSSEIN VALAMANESH

Tasmanian School of Art Gallery,
University of Tasmania,
Mt Nelson Campus, Hobart,

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PREFACE

Fundamental to the Tasmanian School of Art Gallery Committee's exhibition policy is the commitment to exhibit work from outside Tasmania. Normally the selected works are received in crates, unpacked and displayed. Occasionally the artist may be present to install the work or to participate in concurrent lectures/seminars. The latter can give greater meaning to the completed work, but rarely is there an opportunity to witness the work in progress.

The Gallery exists within an art school, and this exhibition was intended to extend the normal educative role of exhibitions. Each artist spent approximately two weeks "in residence", developing and completing a work. The piece didn't have to be "site specific", so preliminary work could commence prior to arrival. However, it was essential that further evolution took place on site. There was no intended thematic link between the four artists; but what they had in common was a body of work which illustrated an ability to participate within the exhibition's framework and an involvement in a range of disciplines (without any being easily categorized within any particular discipline).

The diversity proved to be a considerable asset. Not only did the audience gain an insight into the range of conceptual positions of four professional artists, but also into the individual pre-occupations and idiosyncracies of their particular art practice. Following their departure, we were left with major works within each of the artist's oeuvre.

Paul Zika
October 1984

INTRODUCTION

As Paul Zika has noted in the preface, Tom Arthur, Julie Brown, Elizabeth Gower and Hossein Valamanesh each developed an installed work in the Tasmanian School of Art Gallery over a period of about two weeks during September 1984. It was intended that their visits should overlap (Valamanesh in weeks one and two; Brown in weeks two and three; and Gower and Arthur in weeks three and four) and it was part of the brief for the exhibition that the works exhibited would be *developed* on site.

The way in which the exhibition was planned meant that all four artists were able to participate in lectures, seminars and group discussions and, looking back on the four weeks, there was a very real sense in which the multifarious meanings of the works *unfolded*, as the artists talked specifically about their installations and placed the work within the context of other work they had produced.

The effect of this discourse proved to be significant and the lessons salutary: the Gallery has mounted a large number of exhibitions in recent years which have brought in to Hobart the work of many artists working in Australia but this was one of the first times that an exhibition had been presented in which the notion of the 'production of art' was seen to be an *active* constituent in the meaning of the exhibition.

While often very specific curatorial positions have been deployed in various exhibitions in the bleak white space of the Tasmanian School of Art Gallery, it nevertheless remains true that the works of art have regularly been viewed as though the meaning was in some way immanent within the work itself. One reason for this might be adduced if one considers that so many

of the exhibitions brought to Hobart, which have been worked up as group shows (theme shows, if you like), have the 'look' of survey exhibitions and as Suzanne Davies and Richard Dunn argue in their article, "Grappling with Diversity: *Australian Perspectives 1983*":

Surveys imply a neutrality in their selection procedures, so varied are the demands placed upon them - young, mid-career, mature, established, unknown, inclusions from each State, white, black, women, painting, sculpture, video, photography, printmaking, installation, film and any combination of these. As a survey of recent art and thus an overview, [an exhibition like] *Perspecta* masks its selective practices underneath a cloak of the 'natural'. [1]

Survey exhibitions promote a view of the connections between works of art as casual rather than causal: too often, works of art are seen as unmediated forms of expression, the unsullied manifestations of artists' imaginations - inviolate; stylistic similarities and relationships in subject matter in works of art in these kinds of exhibitions are seen to be 'happy accidents'. But, quite apart from any thing else, the curator 'constructs' the way in which the work will be 'read' in an exhibition through selection, display and commentary.

It seems reasonable to argue that the second reason is predicated upon the first: it has to do with geographical location or rather a particular kind of consumption determined by geographical location. Clearly, distinctions can be made between the aims of a group/theme show and a survey exhibition but they become blurred if one is almost invariably experiencing works of art as 'one off' examples of the various artists' output.

A working knowledge of the conditions under-

pinning the production of particular art objects, an interest in the way in which the art objects are being presented to the public, and the way in which they are being read by an informed audience, serve to highlight the contrived nature of art exhibitions, to make the curator's intentions more overt, and to emphasise the ways in which the role of the artist as an 'individual creator' can be revealed as a fiction.

To claim to 'know' a work of art simply through the experience of what the object physically displays would seem to be an act of pure sophistry: it is simply not true that understanding a work of art is synonymous with appreciating it. As Janet Wolff in *The Social Production of Art* points out in the chapter "The Death of the Author":

Without accepting any simplistic theory of reflection, it can be shown that the perspective (or world-view) of any individual is not only biographically constructed, but also the personal mediation of a group consciousness. Conformist, rebellious, and even eccentric views are always a function of social position (which is often extremely complex) of the individual concerned. Ideas and beliefs which are proposed as value free or non-partisan are merely those ideas which have assumed the guise of universality, perceiving as natural social facts and relations which are in fact historically specific.[2]

Works of art, no less than books, carry these ideas and beliefs; they don't live in some kind of ahistorical realm of aesthetic experience; rather, they are *produced* by artists and, as Janet Wolff continues:

To this extent, then, art as a product of consciousness is also permeated with

ideology. And to that extent, too, what the author or artist says in the work of art is actually (or perhaps we should say *also*) the statement of a social group and its world-view.[3]

The many and various meanings of the work of art will be as many and various as the world-views of those who go to make up the audience which receives it; the work of art is not something which stands there somehow inviolate slowly releasing its store of meaning to the initiated (or the person with 'taste') until it is *emptied* of its meaning; it is precisely the opposite, accumulating meaning for as long as an audience is willing to address it (since the audience brings to bear upon it its many and various world-views).

It becomes clear therefore that the consumption of works of art is going to differ radically from place to place: meaning is constructed; access to the ideas and beliefs embodied in the work and access to the curator's intentions expose the futility of treating art objects as somehow transhistorical. The better informed the audience the more varied will be interpretations.

But, because of the nature of many of the thematic exhibitions mounted in Hobart which have addressed themselves to various issues in the contemporary visual arts in Australia, single works of art are often asked to carry a heavy burden. That the audience resorts to appreciation rather than discourse is very clearly the result of this. To a substantial degree, debate occurred in *On Site* because of the relatively simple expedient of bringing in the artists - the first people to fix meaning in the work.

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1. TOM ARTHUR: "The Entire Contents of a Gentleman's Room (det.)"

TOM ARTHUR THE ENTIRE CONTENTS OF A GENTLEMAN'S ROOM

Tom Arthur's installation consisted of a completely enclosed room, the contents of which could only be viewed through a small peephole off centre on one of the long walls of the 3030 x 6050 x 3700mm space (illus. 7, p. 19). The illustration roughly describes the viewer's position in relation to the installation: on the right hand wall hung a self portrait (illus. 1, p. 5) worked up into a collage from the infra red photographic image which had been a major component in the catalogue for Arthur's

Newcastle installation *Goodbye Carpet, Goodbye Small Door* (a photographic image in which the artist appeared withdrawn and introverted); a painted white mattress (with several black pieces of ticking left exposed)* was positioned directly below this, upon which lay the stuffed Large-Mouthed Bass which has figured in several of Arthur's installations now. Several dozen red-tipped arrows pierced the mattress, the fish, and the drapery which spread out from the mattress over the floor. Two paddles (already seen in Newcastle and in *It Will Stay Straight Because It's Only the Jar That Changes (Perspecta 1981)*) were propped up against the right hand wall.

The fish faced an obviously female skeleton positioned in a jet black circle, which echoed the ticking on the mattress; a shaft of blue wood 'spilled' out of the figure which was also penetrated by arrows. A blue robin's egg lay partly concealed in a conch shell positioned in the pelvic region of the figure. At the base of the back wall sat a collage, the major constituents of which were male and female naked figures. The collage had obviously fallen from its hook on the wall.

The white walls were absolutely pristine; a blank 'window' was positioned on the left hand wall; plaster cornice beneath which a tight band of flat rocks was compressed, formed the base of the walls rendering the room 'floorless'. Thirty-dimmed light bulbs illuminated the installation. A decaying fishlike form (with a second robin's egg) was placed in parallel to the bass, facing the figure; nine graphite rendered condoms, stuffed to overflowing with rice, seemed to be scudding across the floor towards the female figure (like metallic missiles). The floor itself was covered with a layer of flour and this heightened the pristine, floating quality of the room.

In the catalogue notes to *Survey 10: Tom Arthur* (1979), the artist made the observation that his major installation for the Sydney Biennale exhibition *European Dialogue, Sameness Amidst Flux/ Private Amidst Public*(1979), was the 'final "chapter" in a narrative of three works. The first work entitled *The Fertilization of Drako Vulen's Cheeze Pizza*(1975) is in the permanent collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. The second work, *Untitled Site B* (1976) exists as a film from the original installation within the Sculpture Centre also in Sydney.'[4] Since then, however, three more 'chapters' have been added to the narrative. *It Will Stay Straight Because It's Only the Jar That Changes* was installed in *Perspecta 1981* (Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney); *Goodbye Carpet, Goodbye Small Door* was installed in Newcastle Region Art Gallery in 1983; the installation in *On Site* is the third.

Although Tom Arthur has been assiduous in providing descriptive catalogue notes to his works, *Goodbye Carpet* was the first instance in which a story (told by the artist) was introduced as a parallel text to the installation. The story which provides the parallel text to *The Entire Contents of a Gentleman's Room* (page 22) is similar in form.

While neither of the stories was intended to be translated literally, it nevertheless remains true that in the latter case the intense visual pictures created in the story have found a symbolic place in the installation.

The white of the room, the orange light, the energy of the figure Paul The Oilman, the Fish (as self-portrait and as a representation of the father) have all found their place in the installation. The space is like the floating dream space of the story although Arthur takes it out well beyond the story: the skeleton is

clearly a female one; and although the Bass carries the symbolic attributes of 'femaleness' with it, in the installation the fish seems male (spilling out its writhing life from 'death' if we wish to draw that meaning from the story). Where the story was focussed on death, the installation is equally focussed on sex (little death).

In other instances, the crossovers between story and installation *and* vice versa are kept tightly interwoven: the air of redolence in the story is replicated in the redolent air in the installation, created by the thick musty smell of the flour, a smell strongly reminiscent of stale semen, fermenting. The arrows, shafts of pure energy as Arthur describes them, remind one of the electric atmosphere of the hospital room in the story and at the same time the heightened experience of two *separate* beings (male and female) in the one room - the domains of the male and of the female (*pace* Duchamp).

Finally, the room seems also to be a complex metaphor for the mind/body of the artist himself, and this discloses a layer of meaning in the work which adds considerable poignancy to the self-portrait of the artist (the observer), watching at a distance the workings of his own mind ordering his dreams, desires and memories into a bearable construction of self.

* It is not without interest that this series of major works of Tom Arthur's seem to take as their starting point a drawing, *Nocturnal Emissions*(1974-1976), which the artist worked on for two years following his arrival in Australia. He has specifically drawn attention to the fact that this was an inordinately introverted period in his life, when he was drawing obsessively in an almost barren room, furnished with little more than a mattress. Also, he has said that the two 'figures', the skeleton and that represented by the fish on the mattress, can be read as one and the same thing - woman introduced into a male domain.



2. TOM ARTHUR: *THE ENTIRE CONTENTS OF A GENTLEMAN'S ROOM*

JULIE BROWN CHIASMUS

Like Tom Arthur, Julie Brown constructed a complete room (3030 x 7230 x 4840mm), although hers was lightproof and could be entered through heavy drapes. The long walls were painted white, the two end walls were painted black. Two large cibachromes (1830 x 1220mm/ 6' x 4') were mounted on one wall; mirroring these images both in size and position were two rear projection screens on the other end wall. The cibachromes each contained a bust of the artist, one constructed by matching two images of the left side of her face and shoulders, the other by matching two right sides. The backgrounds of the two cibachromes consisted of painted montages of the four elements - earth and water on the right, air and fire on the left.

The basic elements of the rear-projected slides were two profile images (again constructed) of the artist - these faced one another on the screens (illus.11, p.29) and in a regular sequence they appeared as discrete black and white images. However, the majority of the projected slides consisted of sandwiched images which used the profiles overlaid with other, colour, transparencies so that the semi-transparent parts of the profiles, the face and neck vividly carried the imagery of the colour transparencies. The sources of the imagery in the colour transparencies were very varied, ranging from fragments of landscapes and seascapes, fauna and flora, rock carvings, feathers and flames; several images were drawn from book illustrations of the work of Frida Kahlo and others from book illustrations of Archimboldo's fantastic portraits of the Emperor Maximilian.

At regular intervals in the sweep through the projected images (usually four pairs of colour transparencies followed by the black-and-white

profiles), the room was cast into complete darkness by the use of blank slides and a third projector then threw light over the cibachrome photographs for a minute or so before the room reverted to darkness and the projected images.

The final element in the installation was a sound tape the text of which has been reproduced in the catalogue. This prose poem was written by George Alexander as a piece *en bloc* which was then broken up by the author and artist into a spoken piece of intercourse. It was played continuously in the room.

This was the second 'parallel text' which George Alexander has written to go with work by Julie Brown. The other was for her exhibition *Persona & Shadow* [5] at the George Paton Gallery, Melbourne in June/July, 1984.

Julie Brown has been exhibiting for only a relatively short period of time: her first major solo exhibition was mounted at the I.C.A., Central Street, Sydney (*Disclosures [Surrogate I] - a Photographic Construct*) in 1982. The work took as its starting point a quotation from Susan Sontag, 'the painter constructs, the photographer discloses', and sought to explore the possibility of an 'alternative' photography which was not predicated upon the notion of the consumption of single images and what the images represent (in this case Julie Brown's naked body). In a complex installation, the main element was a paired series of works between which the viewer walked. Using self-timers, Julie Brown activated two cameras, one slung around her neck and the other on a tripod in the middle of her studio. She then proceeded to carry out a series of actions which are recorded by the static camera while the camera around her neck randomly recorded the studio. As John Delacour has said:

[The] viewer as voyeur is positioned

between the two cameras and subjected to their interrogatory gaze. The active engagement with the pictures necessary to decipher their structural code, followed by the unavoidable sense of being implicated in their production, denies the audience the passive consumption associated with single pictures on a wall. The necessity of the viewer's working with and through the pictures is one of Brown's most substantial achievements.[6]

After taking the reader through the work, commenting on the way in which Julie Brown introduces a surrogate image of herself, Delacour says:

The continual disjunctions - the number and range of pictures, the surrogate, mirrors, plastic, torn figures, the variety of postures, the play of color against black and white, the emotive connotations of the burning face, the strategy of pairs - place the audience in a position of double-edged interrogation: the questions we ask about the how and why of the work's construction are replaced by the questions the work asks about our attitudes and expectations. [7]

Much of Julie Brown's work since then has been engaged in an intelligent examination of the way in which photography can serve to dislocate various ideological constructs from the grasp of art history. In *Persona and Shadow*, her specific goal is to disrupt the nexus Virgin-Mother-Whore enshrined in the work of Edvard Munch. As George Alexander says:

Munch inhabited an agarophobic world of sick children and syphilitic mothers, where light poured into Norwegian fjords like blood from a butcher's pail. For the bachelor-machine of Munch, the life-force took the form of sexually aggressive

femininity. Woman as vampire, as trap, as wound-gateway to death, framed in warping, buckling colours smeared on with a spatula.

Virgin-Mother-Whore: these are classical codes of the social order that women are made to disappear into; the fantasy blueprint for sanctifying, pacifying and conquering what has always been seen as a threat to the future of the patriarchal cycle of Father-Son-Capital.[8]

Munch's images of women are amongst the most graphic examples of this 'sanctifying, pacifying and conquering' process which has dominated our patriarchal system and serves to subjugate one sex to the other. In a series of photomontages, Julie Brown places her photographed, fragmented self-image within the 'shadow' of several of Munch's famous *images of woman*: the outlines of his paintings *Puberty* and of the *Kiss* are described, for instance. *Aide memoires* have been introduced to link the self-portraits to the originals: in a memorable example, Julie Brown steps 'inside' the shadow of Munch's own self-portrait (the artist with his brushes) wearing a tie and shoes only, and carrying the tool of her profession, the camera, held at belly height.

Munch's paintings are dislocated from their historical position and brought through history to the present to be interrogated in contemporary terms.

Chiasmus takes off on a substantially different tack although, as Julie Brown has noted, a number of the ideas present in the recent work recur. She has spoken of the fact that the installation involves, to a considerable extent, the exploration of the notion of the female and male sides to her character. She makes the observation that we are all born with a sex



3. JULIE BROWN: *CHIASMUS*

determined by a particular configuration of genitals, but that the gender with which we choose to live out our lives is in fact determined sociologically. Particular kinds of human activity have traditionally been given masculine or feminine values: *the active*(male) and *the contemplative*(female) lives are good examples; all humans oscillate between the two. *Chiasmus* addresses this crossover in an interesting visual fashion - the two cibachromes depict the artist as 'rightsided' and 'leftsided' and there is a striking literal and figurative conjunction. The right hand portrait is a harsh and seemingly calculating one; the left hand one seems very much more reflective and passive. Julie Brown has also included the traditional elements which signify the active and contemplative lives - earth and water, fire and air (motifs which occur regularly in Archimboldo's work, which Julie Brown sees as an influence).

The 'crossover' is clearly constructed in the installation by the use of separate speakers for the separate voices in the soundtrack and by the way in which the viewer has to compile the visual information in the work by building up details from opposite walls. While on one level the installation makes a statement about female/male aspects of personality, it is also a work which deals with physical 'crossovers' (commented upon in the soundtrack): the work was conceived in Sydney and executed in Hobart (across the water), and it is also clear that the crossover refers to an exchange between Julie Brown and George Alexander.

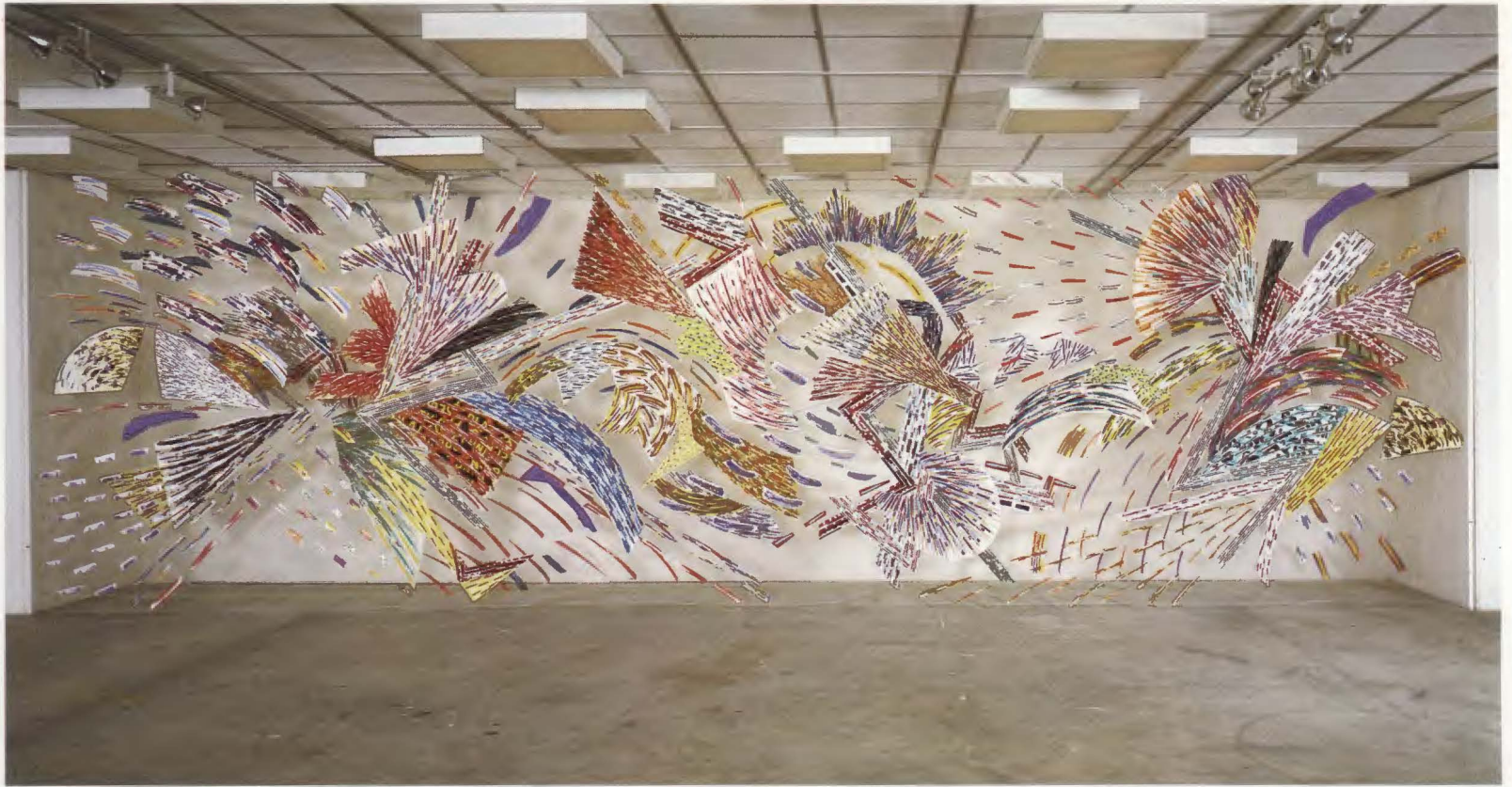
The rear-projected transparencies often give up evocative images - fish, whose eyes match the position of the artist's, fill the profiles; landscapes are seen through barred windows or fences; the sound poem is inscribed across the profiles in left- and right-handed script; Frida

Kahlo's self-portraits appear in several images;[9] similarly, Archimboldo's fantastic portraits of the Emperor Maximilian fashioned out of fruit or fish take over the artist's own portrait; images of earth, fire, air and water link the transparencies to the cibachromes.

There is a crossover between the internal 'world' of the artist and her external visage and here one can see a strong link between *Chiasmus* and *Disclosures* which goes to the centre of Julie Brown's oeuvre over the last few years. All of her work has dealt with self-portraiture, although it is avowedly not a photographic practice which claims to *reveal the subject* authoritatively in either single images or in sets of them. The kind of possession tendered to the viewer by the *photographic image-as-object of consumption* is something the artist is specifically trying to displace. In its place, Julie Brown has developed a self-portraiture which is multi-layered. In *Chiasmus* there is the very real sensation of having to construct the work (and its object - the subject) from within the work itself and as a result the viewer simply cannot passively consume what he or she is experiencing.

ELIZABETH GOWER ALL LIFE LONG.

The main component of Elizabeth Gower's large scale installation, *All Life Long*, was a multitude of shapes which she had made up by laboriously gluing together layer upon layer of strips, cut out of shredded magazines and promotional fliers. Colour was derived from both the printed material (bright yellow lettering, for instance) and from applied acrylic paint.



4. ELIZABETH GOWER: *ALL LIFE LONG*

The space allocated to the artist was a screen wall, 3030 x 9754mm; the area was transformed into a recess with the inclusion of a 3030 x 1219mm screen at either end. Originally, Elizabeth Gower had intended to produce a densely packed work on the screen wall but decided instead to utilise the recess and to suspend the work on tulle. The decision completely opened out the work which eventually took the form of three layers (two of tulle and the back wall). The two layers of tulle were hung from ceiling to floor along the full length of the space and the artist arranged the elements by pinning each shape to the tulle before taking each layer down for gluing.

The installation reflects many of the principal concerns of the artist over the last decade. In 1981/82, Elizabeth Gower made the following observations about the way in which she works and the kinds of materials she uses in the magazine *Lip*:

The majority of my works over the last seven years have been large-scale, free hanging paper collages. I find the flat surface of the stretched canvas too restricting and uninspiring. I prefer to work into the surface and initially began sewing scraps of canvas together and weaving paper to create textured ground on which to paint. This freedom led me to experiment with diverse materials such as tissue and wax paper, twigs and resin, etc. in order to build up contrasts of texture and transparencies. By hanging the works in layers I could further emphasise the transparency and fragility of the materials. The scale and nature of materials I use means that many of my works are temporary installations.[10]

and a paragraph or so later she says:

My recent work has moved away from ... direct references and experimentation with materials to a more painterly expression and a response to present transient experiences. The process, however, of accumulating, sorting, and piecing together small repetitive fragments to make a whole is still an important recurring aspect of the works. My work is abstract, very personal and reflective of fleeting memories and emotional turmoils and optimisms.[11]

At the time she wrote this she was working on the series of beautiful layered collages made of acrylic and resin on paper which were shown at Coventry Gallery, Sydney and at Axiom Gallery in Melbourne and at *Perspecta 1981*. The works like *Leaning* (reproduced in the *Perspecta 1981* catalogue) incorporated several layers of transparent papers, each with vigorous and repetitive shapes (both positive and negative) - dew-drops, crosses, v-forms and tubular u-forms, calligraphic squiggles, wedges. Structurally they seemed taut - like half-closed fans on off-centre axes - but the layers of paper had a kind of milky transparency which appeared to hold the works in stasis.

By 1983, the changes foreshadowed in her article were to be seen in works like *One Stop Shopping* which was shown earlier this year at the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery in the Hugh Williamson Prize. This work, a dense collage of shredded posters and packaging on canvas (280 x 220mm), was dominated by strong wedges made up of not so random stripey and blocky strips of colour. The collages are very urban: zig-zags, ladder-forms, open passages and dead ends dominate and they are saturated with fragmentary information scavenged from the detritus of consumer society. They seem architectonically dense, no doubt because the architecture is like

that (she lives and works right in the centre of Melbourne), and one senses that the colour which looks arbitrary at first sight is in fact carefully premeditated.

Mid-City, the work illustrated (p.15) provides one of the best examples of this recent work. It has strong figurative elements, it gives up 'city information' in rough collage, it is about sharply defined movement. Where in earlier work, the layering was developed in such a way that what was below was very often subtly revealed as if through veils, here each new layer obscures what is below; we see only that which appears where the plane below runs out beyond that which overlaps it, like the poster that overlaps another on a billboard, or a building in a narrow street which blocks out the full view of another in the street beyond.

In the case of the installation in this exhibition, Elizabeth Gower has made the comment that she had brought the collaged elements down to Hobart with every intention of working on a large and very dense wall-piece (not unlike the recent series she had been working on in Melbourne). But circumstances were to change this: firstly, the recessed space opened up the possibility of working three-dimensionally using a standard width of tulle (3m wide); and she has commented upon the fact that watching the landscape from the studio window which looked out across mist-covered hills to Mt Wellington made a dense city-derived image a trifle absurd, and she decided to completely open out the work.

All Life Long retains much of its original inspiration: there are three major passages or elements in the work which seem to derive their imagery from dance (the elements read as figures in motion) and there are parallels to be drawn with Constructivist theatre and its design here;

the collaged shapes, built up from imagery taken from magazines, promotional catalogues and posters, gives a graphic and sometimes bizarre edge to the work (scraps of information from the social columns of *Vogue Australia*, for instance).

But the introduction of tulle has given the work transparency and volume and an open rhythmical movement. And while it is possible to see the work as containing congested passages (particularly at the centre of the two outside 'figures') the showerburst shapes seem to force the eye out and across the work. There are some lovely 'echoes' in the second layer which make movement, especially through the central configuration, extremely supple. The use of shadow (dancing shapes) has been exploited to great effect. Her concern to balance *description of materials* (up close the shapes seem quite rough, ready and literal) with a statement of considerable formal resolution is one which seems to work most successfully.

HOSSEIN VALAMANESH THE UNTOUCHABLE REBIRTH

Hossein Valamanesh's major work, *The Untouchable*, was the first work installed in the gallery. A circle, five metres in diameter, was described and a rim made up of wooden sections was fashioned to cover the circumference. The area described by the circle was completely covered by black hessian. At the centre sat a ceramic oil burner. At four equidistant points on the circumference the artist placed counterpoised bamboo pointers, swung on stubby wooden pivots. The artist counterpoised the bamboo rods by introducing dull grey ceramic bowls which slotted on to the poles. The precise poise of the rods, hovering at ninety degrees, almost



5. ELIZABETH GOWER: "Mid-City" (left) and "Bring About" (right), Installation at Christine Abrahams Gallery, 1983; both acrylic paint , posters and packaging on masonite.

touching the flame of the oilburner, was obtained by introducing small piles of red sand to each of the bowls. The work was not lit directly.

Rebirth, Valamanesh's second work, was constructed in an open area just outside the gallery on Mt Nelson. Like his major work, the elements of *Rebirth* were very simple: a rectangular shape was described using house bricks of reddish ochre; a bed of charcoal chips was introduced and the viewer's orientation was suggested by the placement of a 'headstone' at one end of the rectangle; three wooden, diamond-shaped containers formed the last three elements, into which the artist had placed patches of turf.

For over a decade now, Hossein Valamanesh has been working with a relatively simple lexicon of forms which recur consistently in his sculptures. They are abstract but their meaning seems to be quite accessible. All of the sculptural forms are used very economically.

Although on at least one occasion he has mounted a solo exhibition which has made a strongly political statement about Iran, his country of birth and youth (*Execution Piece*, Roundspace Gallery, Adelaide, 1981), he is much better known for the way in which he has drawn upon architectural and utilitarian forms and decorative elements which might loosely be described as 'middle eastern'. A caveat needs to be issued here though: the artist stresses that he is drawing much of his imagery from his responses to the country of his adoption.

In 1980, Valamanesh worked on an installation at the Festival Centre Gallery, Adelaide, and this large sculpture helps to summarise a number of the motifs which he uses. A large circle was described in red sand; two sets of crossed

bamboo poles supported a bamboo hammock which cradled a large perspex container filled with water; the hammock was suspended above a 'grave' form containing three patches of growing wheat; an oil burner hovered above the water container, suspended pyramidically by string between four more bamboo poles. The work expresses a simple statement of light and life (in life-giving water) and growth(out of decay) in a circular framework (a 'whole' and a cycle at the same time).

In 1981, Valamanesh produced *Well* (illustrated) in which the idea of a void was developed (a void at the bottom of which might be found water/life); notwithstanding its often rough and ready construction (a deliberate feature of much of Valamanesh's work), it is a structure made out of elegant cubiform, circular and concave shapes, both open and closed, fashioned from very basic materials - wood, clay, water and bamboo. Although a vertical work it is nevertheless a very *passive* work: the 'architecture' houses the main element, water, in an open and tangible manner (although the water is difficult to reach); it is architecture as receptacle rather than architecture as bold expression, as organiser of what lies within.

Well seems to inform *The Untouchable* as do the two beautiful works installed in a darkened room in the Mail Exchange buildings during Anzart-in-Hobart in 1983. In one of these Valamanesh incorporated gauze stretched on a cubic frame (an oil burner cast an ethereal light *within* the sculpture).

While the gauze has been abandoned in the present installation, the effect of the light burning in the centre of a space across which the viewer cannot reach is not dissimilar. Here light hovers in a 'void' at the centre of a circle (something complete), pointers 'frame' it



6. HOSSEIN VALAMANESH: *REBIRTH*

but do not touch it, they indicate the light through harmony and balance.

Rebirth addresses itself to another insistent motif in Valamanesh's oeuvre, a structure which is based upon a particular child's grave which, the artist stumbled across while he was a conscripted soldier in the Iranian army. His use of it has ranged from the simple form expressed in Hobart to another recent work which incorporated four 'beds' constructed out of poles and set on marble pedestals; on the first bed was placed a ceramic container, convex side up; on the second lay a cracked container; below the third lay dust; and below the fourth sprung wheat. The work was based upon the memory of the child's grave and on an experience the artist recalled of seeing an aged, emaciated Indian man lying on an open-weave stretcher bed.

Valamanesh's attitude towards life and what his sculpture should do in it is essentially a quietist one - *The Untouchable* is an excellent example of the meditative nature of so much of his work.

Elizabeth Gower has made the point that the way in which the exhibition *On Site* was set up meant that the artists had to 'carry out their thinking in public'.^[12] Coupled with this was the fact that all of the artists brought visual documentation which helped to place the installations in some kind of recent historical context. Both were curatorial intentions and were inspired by a belief that it might be feasible to expose the possible meanings of a group of works of art much more effectively by making the sources of their production more accessible.

Jonathan Holmes
October 1984

FOOTNOTES

1. Davies, Suzanne, and Richard Dunn, "Grappling with Diversity: Australian Perspectives 1983", ART NETWORK, 10, Winter 1983, p.11.
2. Wolff, Janet, THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF ART, Macmillan, 1981, p.119.
3. ibid.
4. cited in Lindsay, Robert, SURVEY 10: TOM ARTHUR, Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria, 1979.
5. Alexander, George, JULIE BROWN: PERSONA & SHADOW, Melbourne, George Paton Gallery, 1984.
6. Delacour, John, "Julie Brown's Disclosures - In Context, Out of the Biennale", ART NETWORK, 7, Spring 1982, p.34.
7. ibid., p.35.
8. op.cit. George Alexander.
9. Julie Brown has commented on the influence of the important article written by Terry Smith: "Marginality & Modernity: The Case of Frida Kahlo" in LIP, Melbourne, 1984, and of Hayden Herrera's biography of Frida Kahlo, FRIDA, New York, Harper & Rowe, 1983.
10. Gower, Elizabeth in "Feminism and Art Practice: Six Statements", LIP, Melbourne, 1981/82, p.9.
11. ibid.
12. Gower, Elizabeth, Lecture, Tasmanian School of Art, Hobart, September, 1984.

* * * * *

LIST OF WORKS

TOM ARTHUR

THE ENTIRE CONTENTS OF A GENTLEMAN'S ROOM;

Mixed Media;

1984;

Installation size: 3030 x 6050 x 3700mm

JULIE BROWN

CHIASMUS;

"Time is a man, space is a woman, and her masculine portion" (William Blake: *Vision of the Last Judgement*).

Mixed Media;

1984;

Installation size: 3030 x 6050 x 3700mm;

cibachrome and rear projection screen sizes: 1830 x 1220mm.

ELIZABETH GOWER

ALL LIFE LONG;

Mixed Media;

1984;

Installation size: 3030 x 9700 x 1200mm.

HOSSEIN VALAMANESH

THE UNTOUCHABLE;

Mixed media;

1984;

Size: 150 x 5000 x 5000mm.

REBIRTH;

Mixed Media;

1984;

Size: 110 x 1865 x 930mm.

Height, Width then Depth.



7. Exterior view of TOM ARTHUR'S
"The Entire Contents of a Gentle-
man's Room".

TOM ARTHUR

Born 1946, Brockton, Massachusetts, U.S.A.
Lives in Sydney.

STUDIED

1964-69 School of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
1965-69 Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS - SOLO

1973 Travelling Scholarship, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
1976 Sculpture Centre, Sydney.
1979 SURVEY 10: TOM ARTHUR, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
1983 GOODBYE CARPET, GOODBYE SMALL DOOR, Newcastle Region Art Gallery.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS - GROUP

1973 Harold Ernst Galleries, Boston, Massachusetts.
1974 FOUR YOUNGER ARTISTS, Bonython Galleries, Sydney.
1975 PROJECT 3: OBJECTS, (with John Armstrong and Aleks Danko), Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
1976 Sydney College of the Arts (with Ed Douglas).
1977 ANGLISS INVITATIONAL PRIZE, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
1978 Travelling Crafts Exhibition, Crafts Board, Australia Council.
LOST AND FOUND, Ewing and George Paton Galleries, University of Melbourne.
1979 BIENNALE OF SYDNEY: EUROPEAN DIALOGUE, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
1980 OBJECTS TO HUMAN SCALE, travelling crafts exhibition, Crafts Board, Australia Council.
1981 8 x 3 x 2, Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education, Sydney.
AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTA 1981, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
RELICS AND RITUALS, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

ANIMALS AND ANIMISM, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne.

1982 OPENING EXHIBITION, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney.
AUSTRALIAN JEWELLERY, touring exhibition (Europe).
EUREKA! ARTISTS FROM AUSTRALIA, Serpentine Gallery, London.
1983 FIVE WORKS, Wollongong City Art Gallery, Wollongong, New South Wales.
ATTITUDES TO DRAWING, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, City Art Institute, Sydney.
DRAWING, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney.
1984 2D x 3D, Irving Sculpture Gallery, Sydney.

REPRESENTED

Private collections in the United States and Australia; Australian National Gallery, Canberra; National Gallery of Victoria; Australia Council; Art Gallery of South Australia; Art Gallery of New South Wales; Newcastle Region Art Gallery.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Arthur, Tom, Artist's statement in EUREKA! ARTISTS FROM AUSTRALIA (catalogue), London, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1982.
Arthur, Tom, and Tony Maniaty, GOODBYE CARPET, GOODBYE SMALL DOOR (catalogue), Newcastle, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, 1983.
Bonython, Kym, Modern Australian Painting: 1970-1975, Rigby, 1976.
Burke, Janine, LOST AND FOUND (catalogue), Melbourne, Ewing and George Paton Galleries, 1978.

Catalano, Gary, "The Withheld and the Unmasked", ART AND AUSTRALIA, vol.17, no. 2., 1979.

Gablick, Suzi, "Report from Australia", ART IN AMERICA, vol.69, no.1, January, 1981.

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Lindsay, Robert, PROJECT 3: OBJECTS(catalogue broad sheet), Sydney, A.G.N.S.W.,1975.

Lindsay, Robert, "Tom Arthur", ART AND AUSTRALIA, vol.14, no.2, 1976.

Lindsay, Robert, SURVEY 10: TOM ARTHUR(catalogue broad sheet), Melbourne, N.G.V., 1979.

Lindsay, Robert, RELICS AND RITUALS(catalogue broad sheet), Melbourne, N.G.V., 1981.

Lynn, Elwyn, "The Sydney Biennale",ART INTERNATIONAL, vol.xxiii, nos.3-4, 1979.

McIntyre, Arthur, "Australian Art in the 1970's", THE VISUAL ART (2nd ed), Jacaranda Press, 1980.

McIntyre, Arthur, 2D X 3D(catalogue), Sydney, Irving Sculpture Gallery,1984.

Morgan, Stuart, "Kangaroo Court", ART NETWORK, no.7, Spring, 1982.

Murphy, Bernice, AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTA 1981(catalogue), Sydney, A.G.N.S.W., 1981.

Paroissien, Leon, AUSTRALIAN ART REVIEW 2, Sydney, Warner, 1983.

Richards, Dick, AUSTRALIAN JEWELLERY(catalogue), Sydney, Crafts Board, Australia Council, 1982.

Scarlett, Ken, AUSTRALIAN SCULPTORS, Nelson, 1980.

Underhill, Nancy, "40 Ans d'Art en Australie", ART PRESS, Paris, No.74, October, 1983.

Waterlow,Nick, "Eureka", FLASH ART, no.108, Summer, 1982.



8. TOM ARTHUR: "The Entire Contents of a Gentleman's Room"(detail).

THE ENTIRE CONTENTS OF A GENTLEMAN'S ROOM.

There were two Oilmen where I lived. One was my friend Albert's Uncle Joe, the other was Paul The Oilman. Paul The Oilman was a Greek. Whenever he delivered oil to our house, my father would always wait until he left, then he would go downstairs into the cellar and stick a piece of wire into the oil drum, take it out, and closely look at it. I used to use the oil drum as a play house sometimes too.

A long time after this, my brother and I went to visit my father who was in the same rest home as Paul The Oilman. This was only a few weeks before Paul The Oilman died. The room they were in looked stained like old photographs do when they become a dull orange. It had many windows, each glowing through the drawn shades that were trying to keep the hot afternoon sun out. There were lots of beds in the room, all empty except for the few which held old people who had a kind of crusty white stuff caked onto their open eyes and mouths. I remember feeling like I was in dry water up to my chest with all these white things floating in and around me. Everything was flat except for the two bolt upright skeleton men wrapped in bed sheet diapers, each one sitting in a urine stain circle with the mattress showing through. They were like two, bony, old Platos pointing and shouting obscenities at each other in tongues long forgotten. The nurse asked my brother if the two of them had known each other before.

I think that it was only a few months after this that the telephone rang in the middle of the night. I knew what it was.

I started thinking about all kinds of things, like the story my sister told me about the first time my father went out to buy a pair of

shoes on his own in America. When the shoeman asked him what size shoe he wore, he answered - "a half past nine".

I thought about the room which my father and I used to sleep in and about how I used to go fishing with my friends, and about the time a photograph of me holding up a fish I had caught was in the newspaper. It was the same fish I stuffed with plaster, and wood, and straw, and the glass eye I bought for it. It took me a while to do, and when I finished I put it on a piece of wood, and hung it up on the wall next to my bed. It looked good but it smelled.

One morning, lying in bed, trying to wake up, I was looking at the fish, and I saw all of those white things crawling out of its eye. Just then my father sat up in his bed on the other side of the room, and began yelling at me in Albanian to "throw the damn fish away.....it's rotten". His pajama legs were all crumpled up over his knees, showing his legs wrapped in tight skin coloured cloth bandages.

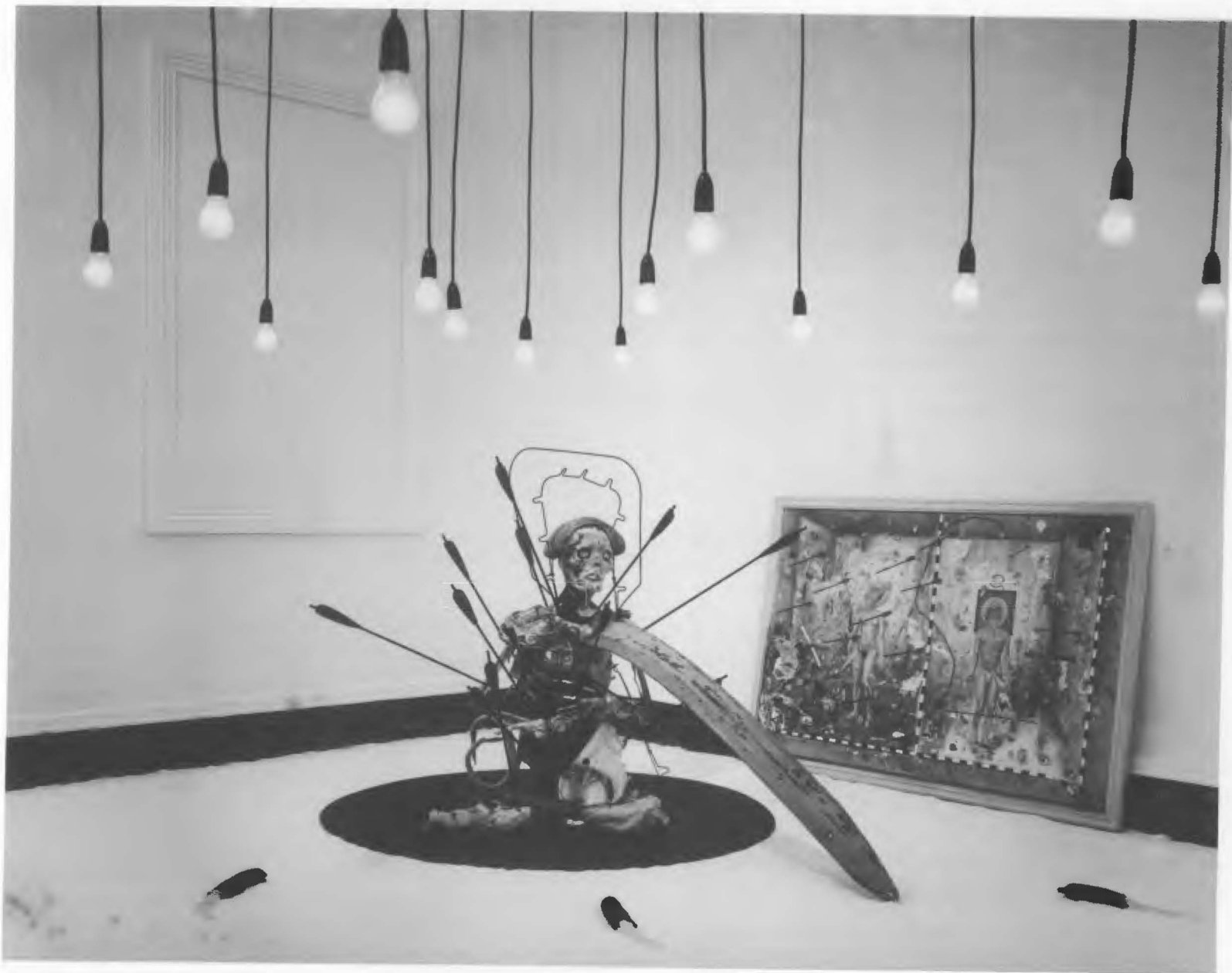
HE WAS THERE!
HE KNEW!

He was there in all of those hidden magazines with the brown pictures of all those piles of dead people being burned, and buried in huge holes with white stuff sprinkled all over them.

He told me to never ever look in that bottom drawer of his dresser.

Now I know why.

Tom Arthur
October 1984.



9. TOM ARTHUR: "The Entire Contents of a Gentleman's Room"(detail).

JULIE BROWN

Born 1950, Lismore, N.S.W.,
Lives in Sydney.

STUDIED

1969-71 University of Queensland.
1974 East Sydney Technical College.
1975 Tinsheds, University of Sydney.
1976 City Art Institute, Sydney.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS - SOLO

1982 DISCLOSURES (SURROGATE I) - A PHOTOGRAPHIC CON-
STRUCT, I.C.A., Central Street, Sydney.
1983 MYTH AND MEMORY - THE ECLECTIC DREAM, Roslyn
Oxley Gallery, Sydney.
1984 PERSONA AND SHADOW, The Developed Image
(Adelaide Festival Exhibition).
PERSONA AND SHADOW, George Paton Gallery,
Melbourne.
PERSONA AND SHADOW, Roslyn Oxley Gallery, Sydney.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS - GROUP

1982 CONTEMPORARY COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHY, Newcastle
Region Art Gallery.
1983 A.U.S.T.R.A.L.I.A., Zona Gallery, Florence.
AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTA 1983, Art Gallery of New
South Wales (PHOENIX - SURROGATE 2).

PRIZES

1983 Lady Fairfax Open Photography Prize, Art Gallery
of New South Wales.

REPRESENTED

Art Gallery of New South Wales; Australian National Gallery,
Canberra.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, George, PERSONA AND SHADOW (Catalogue),
Melbourne, George Paton Gallery, 1984.
AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTA 1983, (Exhibition catalogue), Sydney,
Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1983.
A.U.S.T.R.A.L.I.A., Zona Gallery, Florence.

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL (Catalogue: introduction by Ian North),
Adelaide, 1984.
Brereton, Kurt, "Persona and Shadow (Adelaide)",
PHOTOFILE, Winter, 1984.
Douglas, Ed, "Persona and Shadow (Adelaide)", ARTLINK,
Winter, 1984.
Davies, Suzanne, and Dunn, Richard, "Australian Perspecta",
ART NETWORK, Winter, 1983.
Delacour, John, "Julie Brown's Disclosures - in Context,
Out of the Biennale", ART NETWORK, No.7, Spring,
1982.
Krell, Alan, "Australian Perspecta", ART AND AUSTRALIA,
Summer, 1983.
Maloon, Terence, "Disclosures", SYDNEY MORNING HERALD,
1982.
.. "Myth and Memory", SYDNEY MORNING HERALD, 1983.
.. "Persona and Shadow", SYDNEY MORNING HERALD,
1984.
McFarlane, Robert, "Myth and Memory", AUSTRALIAN, 1983.
Willis, Anne-Marie, "Photography Review", AUSTRALIAN ART
REVIEW, No.2, 1983.
Wright, William, "Australian Perspecta", STUDIO INTER
NATIONAL, Summer, 1983.

Notes on CHIASMUS supplied by the artist.

'Chiasmus' ("Crossing"); Antimetabole; Commutatio. The term
is derived from the Greek letter X (Chi) whose shape, if the
two halves of the construction are rendered in separate
verses, resembles:

A . B . From the text of the Installation -
'Between you and me,
Between me and you'.
B . A .

'Optic Chiasma' - The fibres of the inner, nasal, sides of
the retinas cross behind the eyes - at the optic chiasma - and
go to opposite sides of the back of the brain. This visual
region at the back of the brain is known as the 'area
striata'. The central region of the 'area striata' is known
as the 'visual projection' area. A stimulating electrode in
surrounding regions of the 'striata area' may elicit visual
memories, even complete scenes coming vividly before the eyes.



10. JULIE BROWN: "Chiasmus" (6 sets of illustrations selected from the colour transparencies).

I.
She would leave with the night.
The ship leaves the mouth of the river.
Between the two heads.
With its reflected ripples carries them
off.
Waving.
Waving their handkerchiefs.
She looks at you.
And then she doesn't look at you.
She says:
I have now come with you
I have taken you.

Which is no water.

It is not a crossing, it is not across.
It is all that is not said.
Between you.
Between me.

And right.

Between you.

We have the same way to go.
To the next depth.
And the next.

She leaves with the night.

Between the two heads.

Carries them off waving.

Waving their handkerchiefs.

You have now come with me.
Across the water.
You have taken me.

ACROSS THE WATER.

I have now come with you to that place
which should have fire but has not.

And me.
And you.

BETWEEN TWO HEADS.
BETWEEN TWO SPEAKERS.
Left.

WE SEEK A BRIDGE BETWEEN US.

And me.
BETWEEN ME AND YOU
The same way to go.
The last always.

* * *

II.
She looks at you.
The shifting vapours on the ship make
you see figures.

And then she doesn't look at you.

Lost cities. Defeated tribes.
Histories of humiliations.

WE SEEK A BRIDGE BETWEEN US.

The fire before the first fire tells of

death.
And the next.
In order to advance we walk the
treadmill of ourselves.

Wet to dry.
Yin to Yang.
Push to shove.

I am a half-warmed fish.
I am a nice man.

She says:

She says:
You have no aim.
She is black as the eucalypt tree in
the shade of a mountain. Her hair is
made of leaves.
You are in what you say.
Where is now?
She asks:

The sea.
She asks:

Behind the wall.
She falls asleep again.
The body gets in the mind and before
long you're dreaming of land and water.
Close your eyes, what do you see?
Ether mask.

The last always.

Every meeting happens in the middle of
a bridge.
Eye to eye.
Pleasure and pain.
Hate to love.
I am a half-formed wish.

You are an ice man.
The shifting vapours on the ship make me
see figures.
What would I say if I had a voice,
who says this, saying it's me?
I have no name.

Where am I?

Now is where I am.
What are we hearing?
You say:

Where is it?
You say:

Ether mask.
Ether vertigo.
Triangles, rectangles, pyramids, prisms.
Fire going away, coming back.
One fire going, two fire going, three fire
going.
One fire going away, two fire going away,
four going away. Tongues of fire, up and up,

electrocutions.

When you're alive it's the outside of
fire that you see. Here on the other
side, the back of black is white,
the back of green red ochre.

Now you don't.

faster faster, burnings, hangings,

Now you see it.

NOW YOU DON'T

* * *

III.

She looks at you and then she doesn't
look at you.

To the next depth.

It is not a crossing, it is not across.
The crossing lies.
Sydney.

Stand against me and then stare well
through me then .
The last always.
And the next.

The crossing lies between two points.
Hobart.

LIKE A FIGURE OF SPEECH

Step not across, for then into my mouth,
into my eyes you fall.
My eyes my mouth my waving hands my hove
handkerchief.

THE SHIP FLOATS BACK TO THEM.

While still receding.
The moon crippled by refraction.
The flicks rippling the other way.
Time tricks them. Whizzes back an inch
or two on its reel.
Makes one ask a remembered question.
Makes the other give a forgotten
answer.

Reflection.

A remembered question.

A forgotten answer.

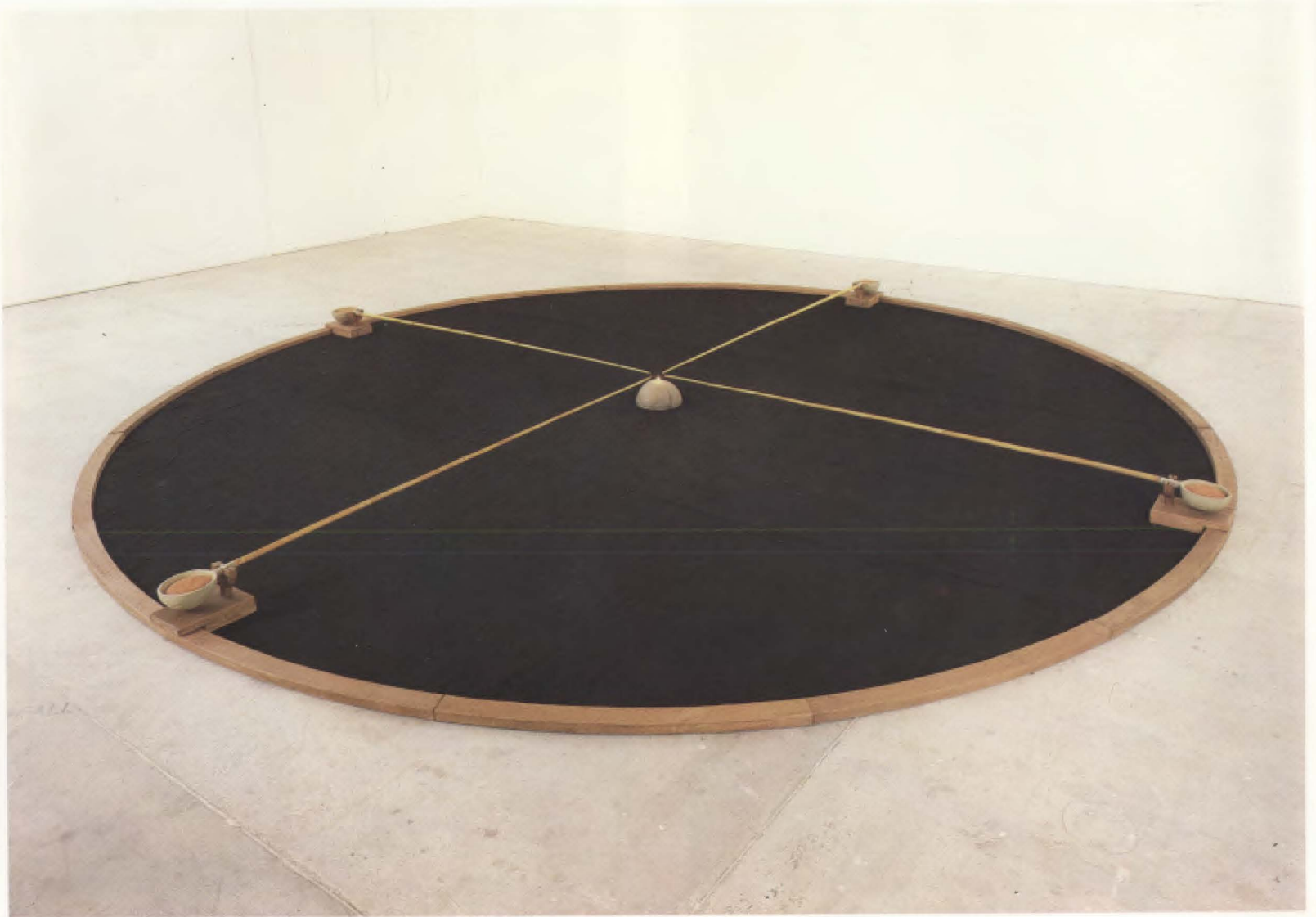
OUR SHORT PROGRESS HAS BEEN CANCELLED.

The surface of my imagination slips like
a tape recording things passed.
I have now crossed with you.
That is no wall.

You have now crossed with me.
You have crossed the wall.



11. JULIE BROWN: "Chiasmus" (detail).



12. HOSSEIN VALAMANESH: *THE UNTOUCHABLE*

HOSSEIN VALAMANESH

Born 1949 in Tehran, Iran;
Emigrated to Australia 1973;
Living in Adelaide.

STUDIED

1970 Graduated, School of Fine Art, Tehran.
1974 Travelled to Central Australia as Art Advisor with
Aboriginal children.
1977 Graduated, South Australian School of Art.

EXHIBITIONS - SOLO

1972 Shiraz University, Tehran.
1977 Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide.
1980 Festival Centre Gallery, Adelaide.
1981 Bonython Art Gallery, Adelaide.
Praxis Gallery, Perth.
EXECUTION INSTALLATION, Roundspace Gallery,
Adelaide.
1983 Bonython Art Gallery, Adelaide.

EXHIBITIONS - GROUP

1978 GROUP SHOW, Royal Art Society of South Australia,
Adelaide University Gallery.
1979 INSTALLATION, Experimental Art Foundation (April
/May Show).
FOUR YOUNG ARTISTS, Contemporary Art Society
Gallery, Adelaide.
1980 Designed ROUNDSPACE PROJECT for Adelaide
Festival of Art - Alternatives (Dwelling),
sponsored by the Art Gallery of South Australia.
Canberra Group Exhibition, Arts Council Gallery.
INSTALLATION, Roundspace Gallery, Adelaide.
1981 FIRST AUSTRALIAN SCULPTURE TRIENNALE, Latrobe
University, Melbourne.
CENTENARY EXHIBITION, Art Gallery of South
Australia.
RELICS AND RITUALS, National Gallery of Victoria.
Art Gallery of Western Australia.
1982 Roundspace Members' Festival Exhibition.
1983 INSTALLATION, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney.

SURVEY OF RECENT SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SCULPTURE, Art
Gallery of South Australia.

1983 ANZART-IN-HOBART, Hobart.
1984 26 CHARACTERS - Artists' Week, Adelaide.
SMALL WONDERS, Roundspace Members' Show,
Adelaide Festival.
AUSTRALIAN SCULPTURE, Art Gallery of Western
Australia.

AWARDS

1976 Lidums' Art Gallery Prize for Students.
1978 Protege Prize, Masters' Choice Exhibition,
Adelaide Festival of Arts.
1979-80 Visual Arts Board Grant.
1980 Artist-in-residence, Praxis, Western Australia.
1982 Visual Arts Board Grant.
1983 Artist-in-residence, Mt Gambier, South Australia.

COMMISSIONS

1982- Commission for an environmental sculpture at
1984 South Australian College of Arts and Education

REPRESENTED

National Gallery of Victoria; Art Gallery of South Aus-
tralia; Adelaide College of Arts and Education; Artbank; Art
Gallery of Western Australia; Western Australian Institute
of Technology; Australian National Gallery, Canberra.

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26/6/1982; 5/10/1983).
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Autumn 1983; vol.21, no.3, Autumn 1984.
ARTLINK, vol.1, no.4., Autumn, 1983; vol.2, no.2,
May-June 1982; vol.3, no.5, Autumn, 1984.
ART NETWORK, 3-4, 1981.
ASPECT, no.29/30, Autumn 1984.
AUSTRALIAN (19/7/1978; 17/7/1981; 5/10/1983;
19-20/5/1984).
IKEBANA OHARA (Japan) (no.393, 8/1983).
NEWS(S.A.) (20/8/1980).
WORDS AND VISIONS, no.13/14, Summer, 1983.



13. HOSSEIN VALAMANESH: "Well", 1981; clay, wood, water, bamboo; 1800 x 560 X 560mm.



14. ELIZABETH GOWER: "One Stop Shopping",
1983; shredded posters on canvas; 2800 x
2000mm.

ELIZABETH GOWER

Born 1952 in Adelaide, South Australia.
Lives in Melbourne.

STUDIED

1970-73 Prahran College of Advanced Education.
1974 Mercer House Teachers College, Melbourne.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS - SOLO

1975 Hawthorn City Art Gallery, Melbourne.
1976 Central Street Gallery, Sydney.
Ewing and George Paton Galleries, University of Melbourne.
1977 Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne.
1980 Axiom Gallery, Melbourne.
1981 Coventry Gallery, Sydney.
Axiom Gallery, Melbourne.
1982 Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane.
Axiom Gallery, Melbourne.
1983 Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS - GROUP

1975 WOMEN IN ART, Western Australian Institute of Technology, Perth.
1976 EAST COAST DRAWING - TOWARDS SOME DEFINITIONS, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane.
1977 THE WOMEN'S SHOW, Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide.
PROJECT 20: FABRIC IN ART, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
1978 AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS, Cunningham/Ward Gallery, New York.
WORKS ON PAPER, Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne.
TREASURES OF A DECADE, 1968-1978, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
SELECTIONS FROM THE MICHELL ENDOWMENT, National Gallery of Victoria Melbourne.
LOST AND FOUND - OBJECTS AND IMAGES, Ewing and George Paton Galleries, University of Melbourne.
FIVE MELBOURNE ARTISTS, Coventry Gallery, Sydney.
THE MAP SHOW, Ewing and George Paton Galleries, Melbourne.

1979 BIENNALE OF SYDNEY: EUROPEAN DIALOGUE, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
THREE ARTISTS, Powell Street Gallery, Melbourne.
THE JOHN MCCAUGHEY MEMORIAL ART PRIZE, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
1980 DRAWN AND QUARTERED: AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY PAPERWORKS, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (Adelaide Festival exhibition).
1981 AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTA 1981, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
TEN YEARS, George Paton Gallery, University of Melbourne, Melbourne.
1983 THE JOHN MCCAUGHEY MEMORIAL ART PRIZE, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
RECENT AUSTRALIAN PAINTING: A SURVEY, 1970-1983, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.
1984 HUGH WILLIAMSON PRIZE, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat.
CHANGING HEMISPHERES: TWO ERAS OF AUSTRALIAN ART ABROAD, University Gallery, Melbourne.
ISOLAUSTRALIA, Gallery Lillo, Venice.

REPRESENTED

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Shepparton Arts Centre, Victoria; Sale Regional Arts Centre, Victoria; Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, Ballarat; Artbank; Australian National Gallery, Canberra.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrahams, Christine, "Women in Art", BULLETIN, Melbourne, National Gallery Society of Victoria, 1979.
Burke, Janine, "Deneutralizing the Mainstream - Three Women Painters", ARTS MELBOURNE, no.5, 1977.
Burke, Janine, "Bringing it all back home: some thoughts on recent abstract painting", ART AND AUSTRALIA, vol.18, no.4., 1981.
Gower, Elizabeth, "Six Women Artists", MEANJIN, Melbourne, vol.38, no.3, 1979 (ed. Janine Burke).
Gower, Elizabeth, "Feminism and Art", LIP, 1981-82.
Lindsay, Robert, "Elizabeth Gower", TREASURES OF A DECADE, 1968-1978, Melbourne, N.G.V., 1978.
Murphy, Bernice, AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTA 1981 (catalogue), Sydney, A.G.N.S.W., 1981.

Stavrianos, Wendy, "Artist's Choice", ART AND AUSTRALIA,
vol.21, no.1, 1983.

Taylor, Paul, ANYTHING GOES: ART IN AUSTRALIA, 1970-1980,
Melbourne, 1984.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

It is a strange contradiction that in our society we are daily compelled to rework, reorganize and transform the present for an ever brighter, more prosperous future while at the same time we support (through our silence) governments that can annihilate this future at any moment.

The installation in the show parallels this oscillation between optimism and pessimism.

Over a long period of time the work was laboriously built-up by layers of thin strips of shredded media pulp. It can appear to be both calm and chaotic, controlled and whimsical, weaving in and out of itself or abruptly congesting, fanning out or converging in. But the overriding ambience, I hope, is that it is undoubtedly alive and kicking.

But not for long. By nature of the materials used and the scale, the work is a short-lived endeavour. It is doomed to perish like the rest of us. Enjoy it while you can!

Elizabeth Gower,
October 1984.

ON SITE

TASMANIAN SCHOOL OF ART GALLERY COMMITTEE.

Lutz Presser (Chairperson)
Pat Brassington (Secretary)

Ian Atherton
Moirra Corby
Cliff Dolliver

Jonathan Holmes
Milan Milojevic
Gayle Pollard
Glen Puster
David Stephenson
Paul Zika

Exhibition Curators: Paul Zika
Jonathan Holmes

Catalogue Design and
Typesetting: Jonathan Holmes
Poster Design: Ian Atherton
Printing: Specialty Press
Photography: John Farrow

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Jill Scott

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