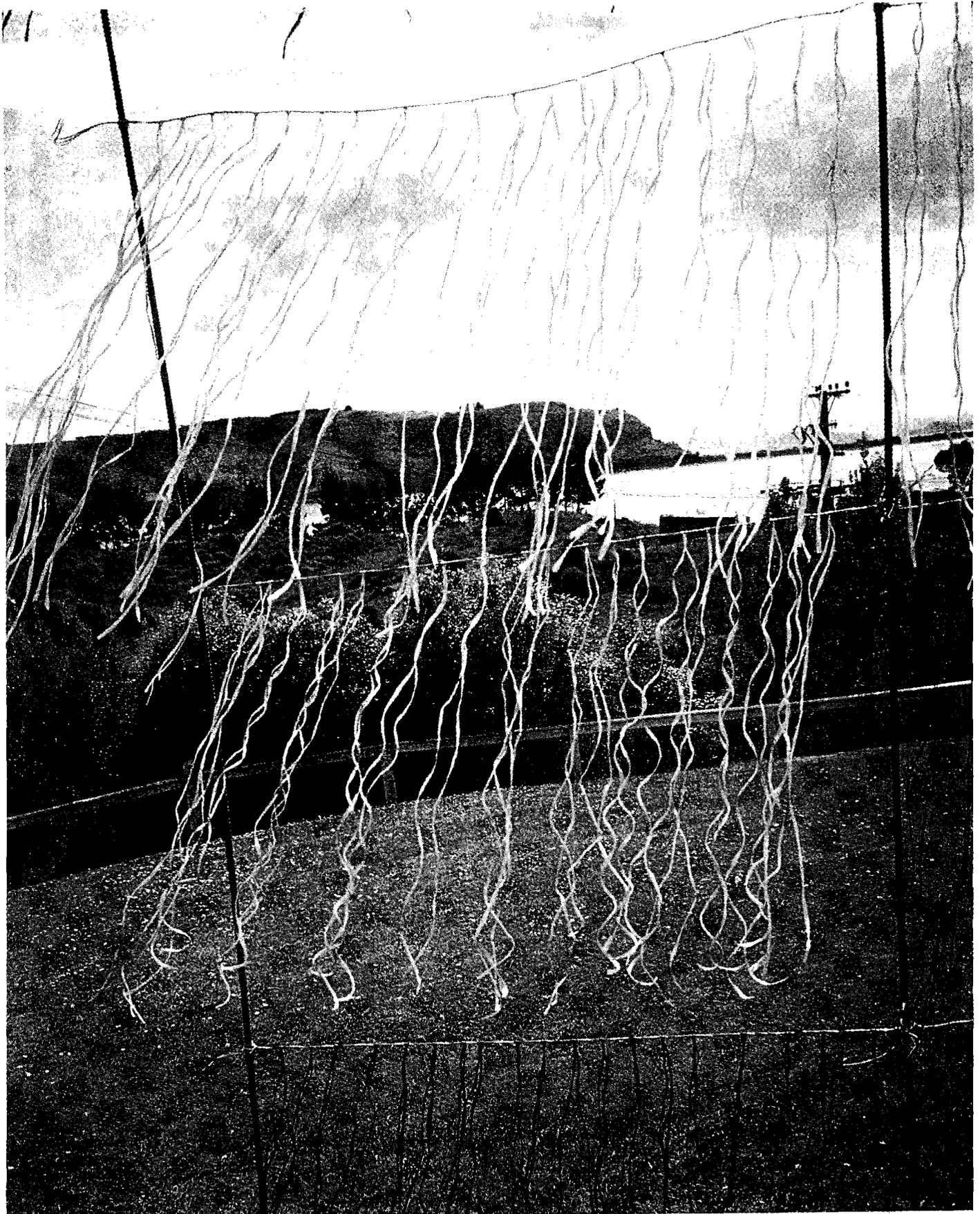


ART PROJECTS

Newsletter No. 10 December 1993



SIAP News

New Director for SIAP

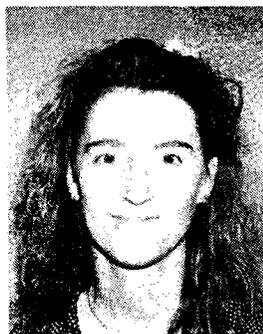
South Island Art Projects is delighted to announce the appointment of **Vivienne Stone** to the position of Director.

Over the last two years Vivienne has worked as the Community Arts Officer in Christchurch, bringing professionalism and communication skills to this position and the developing the profile of the visual arts as an important part of the broader cultural sphere.

Her experience includes management and promotion of a variety of film, theatre, multi-media and music events. She has also been Funding Manager for the Christchurch Women's Refuge Street Appeal 1991-1993.

As Christchurch Community Arts Officer Vivienne co-developed the **RE-VISIONS** Project and also participated in the 'public practices' Forum held by South Island Art Projects in Dunedin in October 1993. She is currently working on **T'Arting Up Town**, a programme of artists' works in empty shop windows in Christchurch. This project will involve the work of over 20 local artists and includes a catalogue documenting the works. Vivienne's main focus for the next six months will be the development of a temporary public siteworks project for **Christchurch Heritage Week 1994**.

The Trust welcomes Vivienne and looks forward to working with her in the future. Vivienne takes up her position as new Director on 6 December.



she was researcher for the RE-VISIONS Project. She stepped down to take her position as Director of Artspace in Auckland. We thank her for her contribution and look forward to working with her in future.

New Board Members

On a lighter note we would like to welcome **John Hurrell** to the Board. John makes a most welcome return to involvement with South Island Art Projects having been central to early discussions in the years preceding the formation of the Working Party. John is a well known and respected Christchurch artist and writer with a substantial knowledge of contemporary art in New Zealand and elsewhere.

I will also maintain and extend her commitment into 1994 by taking a position on the Board.

Jude Rae

Christchurch Heritage Week Project

Planning for South Island Art Projects' major 1994 project is well underway. The "Heritage Week Project" (working title only) will occur in Christchurch 23 - 29 May 1994, bringing a visual arts focus to Heritage Week - a city council festival celebrating local history.

Selected artists will be invited to present proposals for temporary site specific works which engage aspects of Christchurch's heritage.

Board Members Leaving

The South Island Art Projects Trust is losing three valued Board Members two of whom have been with the organisation from the start and all of whom have contributed substantially during their terms.

Tom Taylor has retired as Chairperson of the Trust and his contribution is noted with gratitude. He has guided those less experienced and disciplined of us through often complex discussions with intelligence and good humour, and giving generously of his time and energy. Evan Webb has agreed to the onerous task of "filling his shoes" as the next Chair.

Jonathan Smart is also retiring as a Board Member. Jonathan too has contributed most generously to the organisation and his enthusiasm and support will be sadly missed.

Lara Bowen has been a Board member for a relatively short time although she also contributed vigorously while

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Cover Image: Jacqueline Fraser's "Matakitaki", with a view of Otago Harbour from Otakou marae.

ART BULLETINS

NEW DIRECTOR FOR ARTSPACE (AUCKLAND)

Lara Bowen has recently taken the position of Director at Artspace in Auckland. Lara worked as a researcher for South Island Art Projects from November 1992 to March 1993 on the development of the RE-VISIONS Project. The Board of the South Island Art Projects Trust regretfully accepted her resignation as Board member and wishes her all the best in her new position.

MOVING IMAGE CENTRE

Director of the new Moving Image Centre in Auckland, Keith Hill, has been visiting regional centres in New Zealand recently. As articulated in their recent newsletter the Moving Image Centre is presently concentrating on three main areas: Setting up film and video screening circuits around the country; organising a series of activities for 1994 including seminars, workshops, talks and special programmes; setting up a library, database and distribution system, mainly of work on VHS; sorting out the nuts and bolts of organising the centre, including long-term position. The launch of the Centre will be sometime in 1994.

For further information contact the Moving Image Centre, PO Box 106-097, Auckland ph/fax: (09) 373-2772

AMBA

The Arts Marketing Board of Aotearoa New Zealand was launched recently in Christchurch and elsewhere in NZ in a flurry of promotional promise. This organisation, apparently risen from the ashes of the Crafts Council, is funded by the Visual Arts Infrastructure Programme (as is SIAP). It will receive \$240,000 in 1994. AMBA identifies its main objectives as raising the profile of the visual arts, increasing audiences and increasing sales. The Board includes Albert Stafford (chair), Gordon Moller, Ian Fraser, John Marsh, Carole Shephard and Bruce Robinson. The Chief Executive is Virginia Green. Contact AMBA PO Box 5333, Wellington, tel: 04 4996560 fax: 04 4996522.

T'ARTING UP CHRISTCHURCH

T'Artng Up Town is a "temporary galleries" project which features artists working in vacant shop windows in Christchurch. The project was launched by Christchurch Community Arts Worker Viv Stone in October and featured work by Simon Endres, Margaret Dawson, Vivienne Montfort, Jude Rae, Julie Reilly and a collaborative piece by Mark McIntyre & John . T'Artng Up Town is based on a Melbourne project called No Vacancy which occurred in 1992. The second "wave" of artists includes Carolyn Menzies, Jim Speers, Don Fraser and Jonathan Bywater, Renee Boe, Linda James and Marianne Hargreaves.

QEII ARTS COUNCIL FELLOWSHIPS

Recipients for 1994 one year QEII Fellowships (\$24,000) are John Hurrell, Maureen Lander, Julia Morison, Ralph Paine, Peter Peryer, Ruth Watson, Tania White. Isabelle Thom and Luit Bieringa each received 6 month fellowships.

QEII/CANTERBURY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ART ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE '94

Canterbury Univ. School of Art has announced its joint QEII Artists in Residence for 1994. They are Grant Lingard, John Reynolds, Euan McLeod, Anne Noble, Bruce Conen, Giovanni Intra. Stuart Brisley will be Visiting Fellow July to September. Brisley is Reader in Intermedia at the Slade School of Fine Arts, London. Is this supposed to be gender balance? Keep on trying guys!

CULTURAL STUDIES CONFERENCE

The Cultural Studies Association of Australia will hold its 3rd Annual Conference at the Victoria University of Technology, Melbourne on 5 - 8 December. Under the title "Cultural Positions" it will focus on relations between speaking positions in minority and majority cultures, cultures of indigenous peoples, and national cultural formation and resistance.

NZ AT THE FRANKFURTER KUNSTVEREIN

A retrospective exhibition of Peter Peryer's photographic work at the Frankfurter Kunstverein in March/ April 1995 will coincide with an exhibition including the work of Ruth Watson, Julian Dashper, Peter Robinson, Jacqueline Fraser, Fiona Pardington, Michael Parekowhai and Luise Fong.

MONZ "CREATIVE LEADERS"

The Museum of New Zealand has appointed four "creative leaders" as the senior "ideas people" behind exhibitions. They are Wellington writer and art critic Ian Wedde, Auckland Museum Director Stuart Park, archeologist Janet Davidson and senior museum history curator Dr Geoff Hicks. Ian Wedde will be the visual arts specialist. Is this the advent of the "meta-curator"?

SOUNDWATCH '94

Soundwatch is a bi-annual festival organised by Artspace in Auckland which presents work exploring audio-visual possibilities. The dates for the next Soundwatch are 15 - 30 April 1994.

The festival is the largest of its kind presented in New Zealand and will involve work from the USA, Australia, Germany, Canada and New Zealand. Invited artists include Jacki Apple (USA, performance), Benoit Maubrey (Germany, Audio Ballerinas), Phil Dadson (NZ, performance), Paul Swadel (NZ, installation), Michael Saup (Germany, video), Mineko Grimmer (USA, installation), Nigel Helyer (Australia, installation/sound sculpture).

CANTERBURY SHORTS OUTDOORS

There will be a free outdoor film screening on Thursday 23 December in the Christchurch Arts Centre Market Square. There will be jazz music at 8.30pm and the film screening will take place at 9.30pm. Films by Gillian Grant, On a Dime Productions, Amanda Jenkins, Dierdre McKessar, May Trubuhovich, Jane Gratowski, Matthew Lawrence, Marc Jackson, Struan Ashby and Glenn Standring. Presented by the Boulevade Bakehouse, CHCH Community Arts and the Arts Centre.

Farewell to Jude Rae

It was with considerable regret and sadness that the Board recently accepted Jude Rae's retirement as Director of South Island Art Projects.

She has driven the ship for a long time. As part of the original Working Party alongside Ruth Watson, Stuart Griffiths and Evan Webb, she prepared lengthy written submissions for the Arts Council. And tirelessly lobbied for their implementation.

Increasing awareness of the ideas and issues that surround contemporary practice, and winning greater access for artists to Arts Council monies, have been the two broadest aspects of Jude Rae's vision. Spurred by these ideals and with Board acclamation, Jude has driven the length of the country several times in the last two years. Forums have been organised. Artists and administrators have been canvassed; regional and city council people tapped; and art schools and universities alerted to the presence and aims of South Island Art Projects.

She has put South Island Art Projects on the map. She has owned and driven its projects. The 'public practices' Project has been her crowning achievement and she has sewn the seeds for a major series of artists' projects in Christchurch next year as part of Heritage Week.

She has overseen two important publications: The Body of the Land and the forthcoming 'public practices' publication. And of course she has produced the newsletter - bimonthly for two years.

In between all this she has maintained an exhibition presence as a painter - both in solo shows and curated exhibitions like "Shadow of Style" and "Alter/Image". She will of course continue actively to paint (a proposition which as her dealer, I look forward to fondly), and her contribution to South Island Art Projects will be ongoing, as she liaises with the new Director Viv Stone, from her position on the Board.

So, the public face of South Island Art Projects will change. We say goodbye and thank you to Jude Rae. And welcome Viv Stone.

Jonathan Smart

South Island Art

Projects 1993

During 1993 South Island Art Projects presented the following screenings and events:

- **Kenneth Anger's "Hollywood Babylon"** screenings in Christchurch and Dunedin 15 and 16 April
- Screening of **Made in Australia** and **Made on Computer** introduced by **Gary Warner** - Christchurch and Dunedin 13, 14 and 17 May
- Facilitated **Rob Garrett's Town Meeting Project** 29 July and associated publication "Beautiful and So Inexpensive".
- Introduction and screening of **Shoot for the Contents** by **Trihn T. Mihn-ha** in Christchurch and Dunedin 19 and 20 August.
- **Shared Techlines** screened in Christchurch and Dunedin 15 and 16 September.
- National lecture tour by Australian curator and theorist **John Barrett-Lennard** to Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland.
- Screening of **Annie Goldson's** new film **WAKE** in Christchurch 2 November

The 'public practices' Project

'**public practices**' included a 3 day Forum in Dunedin (1, 2 & 3 October) with international visiting speakers Australian curator and theorist **John Barrett-Lennard** and artist administrator **Ian Hunter**, and Artists' Projects in Otago and Southland regional centres.

Artists' Projects:

- **Di ffrench** "Chesterfield" on Cape Warbrow - Oamaru
- **Jacqueline Fraser** "Matakitaki" at Otakou marae
- **Kaoru Hirabayashi** "Kototama" at the Lakes District Museum and Art Gallery
- **Siegfried Köglmeier** - "Landmarks" - Invercargill and the Southland Museum and Art Gallery
- **Vivian Lynn** - "The Gore Project" with residents of Gore
- **Russell Moses** "Stone Waka" at Back Beach, Port Chalmers

The 'public practices' Project

Recently in October South Island Art Projects launched 'public practices', its major project for 1993. The project consisted of Artists' Projects commissioned for Southland and Otago regional centres and a forum in Dunedin. Most of the artists' projects took the form of temporary site specific works in various "public spaces" and regional contexts.

Regional location was an important factor in the development of the project. Current arts council policy emphasis on "audience", the relationship between artists, art and communities, and questions concerning the nature of "the public" in contemporary art discourse all have relevance in the regional context.

The Artist's Projects

The artists' projects explored various roles of the artist in the community, ranging from "decentred" facilitating models which explored questions of local identity and civic structures, to more personal approaches which assumed the right of the artist to assert her or his subjectivity within and beyond cultural institutions. Such was **Siegfried Köglmeier's** "Landmarks" located in Invercargill. Small emblematic motifs representing the memories of the migrant occupied the open urban spaces of Invercargill in a ritualised staking out of the city witnessed by a motley crew of art students, artists and passersby. This was echoed by another installation (oddly but appropriately reminiscent of a "Tardis") inside the enormous white pyramid of the Southland Museum and Art Gallery, which provided the key to the exterior part of the work.

Russell Moses' installation at Back Beach, Port Chalmers, occupied land which was threatened by the Otago Port Authority. His "stone waka", constructed from beach rubble with local help, at once tidied the beach and functioned as a groyne to stop erosion. The metaphor is extended from physical to social environs, symbolising community resistance to the industrial incursions in Port Chalmers. The project also aimed to link the spiritual significance of the land to both the Maori and Pakeha maritime histories of the area.

Jacqueline Fraser's fragile, transitory work "Matakitaki" (the view) echoed the entrance to the Otakou marae, framing the entrance of the Otago harbour which can be seen from the marae. The location of the work raised questions about the homogeneity of the public, the social structures which govern access and various ways art functions within different communities and cultures.

Kototama - The Word Spirit, was the name of the work by Japanese artist and Otago Polytechnic Artist in Residence, **Kaoru Hirabayashi**, at the Lakes District Museum in Arrowtown. This exhibition extended her theme of language and Japanese script while the location of the work in Queenstown provided a cultural focus for the growing Japanese economic presence in the region. The artist was asked to design a bilingual poster for distribution in the Queenstown area, and targetting both locals and also Japanese residents and tourists. In an environment already heavily laden with bilingual signage the exhibition served as a reminder of both cultural difference and of the increasing importance of these economic links to the region.

Di ffrench's "Chesterfield" took the form of a '70's earth work reworked for the '90's with elements of the bizarre and the banal at once suggesting topiary and the work of Jeff Koons. Although the object itself is quite dominant, ffrench stressed that it was merely the residue of her exploration of various civic and social structures. This project was the one most heavily supported by local authorities, namely the Waitaki District Council, D.O.C., the Department of Justice and the Oamaru campus of the Otago Polytechnic School of Art. Together these institutions supplied site, materials, labour and resources for documentation.

When Wellington artist **Vivian Lynn** was approached to develop a project in **Gore** she decided to approach it along the lines of a project she was developing for **Dessau** in Germany. The project involved an exploration of the artist as facilitator, working with a nominated "field worker" and a group of interested residents. The conceptual framework provided by Lynn proposed "a shared political and aesthetic approach to think, debate and image the life space circumstances of the Gore people into their subject matter through an awareness of patriarchy, colonialism and feminisms".

The Gore project proceeded smoothly until the time of the forum where it became the focus of an incident which is described more fully below. Briefly, the photographic images which, like Di ffrench's Chesterfield, represented the residue of a project which was more "process" than "object-oriented" were removed from the foyer of the Dunedin centre where all the Artists Projects were documented for the 'public practices' Forum.

The Forum

The 'public practices' Forum was structured with a view to engaging practical as well as theoretical issues raised when artists work "in public". We hoped to achieve this by building the forum around the artists projects thereby achieving a practical focus which would also encourage regional participation in the ensuing discussion. The programme proceeded smoothly apart from the unfortunate cancellation by new Dunedin Public Art Gallery Director, **John McCormack**, and the disruption caused to the artists' presentations caused by the removal of Vivian Lynn's work.

Australian curator **John Barrett-Lennard** presented a paper titled "Abstract Universals, Specific Sites: Locating the Public in Public Art" which identified public space as the site of a complex interweaving of histories and codes. The myths surrounding of "the public" abound in assumptions of access and transparency which deny this complexity. **Ian Hunter's** paper "Immersion Strategies: Artists as process participants in the life world" questioned the viability of maintaining critical discourses within existing art-world structures and discussed a number of projects which present alternatives.

Many other interesting papers and perspectives were presented including that by Auckland architect **Sarah Treadwell** who outlined the concept of public space as gendered. **Gerard O'Regan** raised questions of access and ownership which reflected the oppressive nature of assumptions of homogeneity, and indicated the different role of art within Maori communities.

The audience ranged from between 60 to 80 despite the heat wave (Dunedin style) conditions. Response from the floor was quite vigorous and reflected a multiplicity of often divergent viewpoints.

The 'public practices' Publication

South Island Art Projects is currently working on a publication of selected papers and documentation of the artists' projects which we hope to have ready for distribution in early 1994. In the meantime we have published a number of articles in this newsletter which engage some of the issues raised at the forum including the one below which was presented by John Hurrell for panel discussion on Sunday 3 October.

Jude Rae

∞

Shadow Boxing: the Public, the Private, the Art Institutions

I ask myself why we are here, discussing these notions of 'public' and 'private, notions which it could be argued are fictions. Are we in fact 'shadow-boxing' and is it perhaps responsible, indeed reasonable, to suggest that there is no 'public', least of all when applied to the endeavours of artists - those artists I would romantically describe as 'true' as opposed to the 'calculatedly commercial'.

Such individuals I suspect, really in their 'heart of hearts' and despite what they may say to the contrary, in fact only make art for themselves - because it pleases them to do so. Of course they may also like to please an audience, make some money maybe, or be politically active and help the disempowered, but that is not what drives them on. That is not what provides their initial motivation. It is the pleasure of research and investigation. Thus many 'public practices' are really 'private practices'.

Due to the intrinsically the intrinsic nature of their interiority though, knowledge of artists' inner drives is I suspect, beyond access. So it is useless to say this notion applies to 'all artists', 'some artists', or a cross section of artists'. These properties cannot be tested, only surmised.

Perhaps alternatively, there is no 'private', so that as according to post-structuralist theory, the subject is really decentred, with the self only the result of societal processes passing through it. So we find language speaking through a subject, there being no subject itself which speaks.

Thus I want to argue, talk of the 'public' or 'private' is incidental but not necessary.

What is in fact necessary is that artists watch closely what is happening in the art institutions. This is what I want to address now. You have to decide whether from now on, my 'shadow-boxing' metaphor is still applicable.

I am worried about our art institutions and what they may be turning into as so-called 'educational' systems.

These days one can notice profound but subtle changes in

television, that medium some might consider unrelated to the art world. With the growing preoccupation of the art institutions with marketing and audience numbers, it is obvious that the gap between the aims of national and municipal art institutions and television is lessening, in terms of their apparent interests in lobbying for capital and audiences.

In television, a recent development in our daily news reports has been for the language to cease any pretence at neutrality, and to actually direct the viewer how to respond emotionally, that is, how to feel when confronted with certain news items. No pluralism of publics is encouraged here, for only a single mono-voiced public is addressed. When heard in the art institutions, this voice has nothing to do with gender or race, but everything to do with a single morality and a notion of a perceived 'desirable' or 'appropriate' New Zealander. Whether it occurs deliberately or not, if it eventuates that a certain kind of artist is perceived as especially politically attractive for New Zealand's public art galleries, (and this is very easy to imagine) then how does this effect such artists' career strategies? How can they respond to the purveyors of a certain 'socially desirable' morality and governmental thought control?

In a recent Artforum interview, the ex-Yugoslavian Lacanian theorist, Slavov Zizek, happens to point out that private disobedience (such as speaking out against the state regime) coupled with public obedience (such as covering your shop front with government slogans on the 1st May) was exactly the way socialist systems functioned - for the private space contained nothing subversive.

"The ideal subject of real socialism was precisely the one who did not believe in the system, who had this distance built in. So the truly heroic thing to do was not to tell dirty stories but to publicly do some small thing that perturbed the ritual."

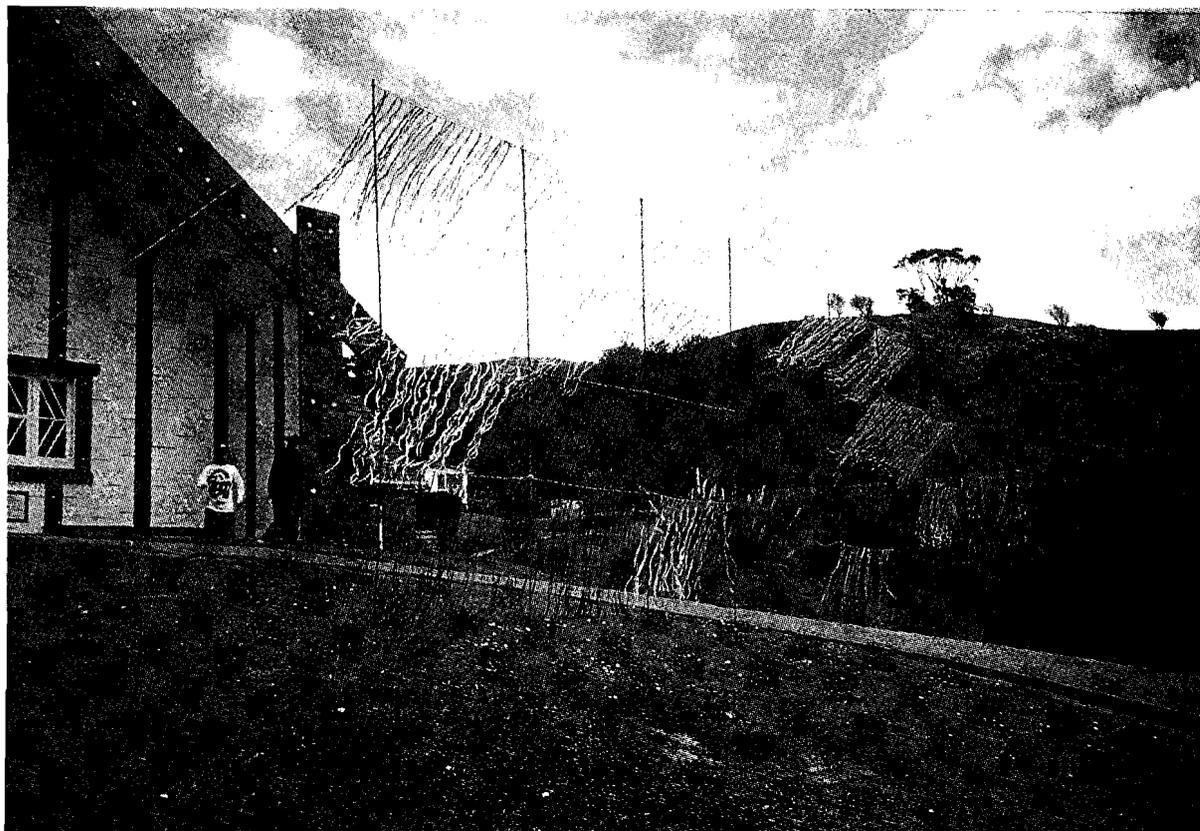
Because of the power directors and curators are seen to have, artists are apprehensive about being conspicuous as dissenting voices.

It seems to me that for artists to be endorsed by the art institutions of the future, they may have to mix private and publicly sanctioned voices together, to intertwine these positions together as a strategy. In this way they can ingratiate themselves within the gallery system by speaking what they see as desirable patter to curators and directors, and also furtively from within the work, wink, nod and nudge to their normally marginalized audiences with disguised private voices. I think this is distantly related to what Kristeva has called a 'Mennipean Discourse', a form of multi-vocal Roman oratory rich in asides and innuendo that functioned as satire. It combined contradictory elements of the tragic and comic, the scandalous and the academic, in a multi-tonal discourse.

As gallery directors try to promote the notion that there is a universally accepted 'New Zealand' ethos in an attempt to attract larger mono-voiced publics in the future, such techniques will become more and more prevalent.

John Hurrell

'public practices' Artists' Projects



Jacqueline Fraser, *Matakitaki (the view)*, Otakou marae

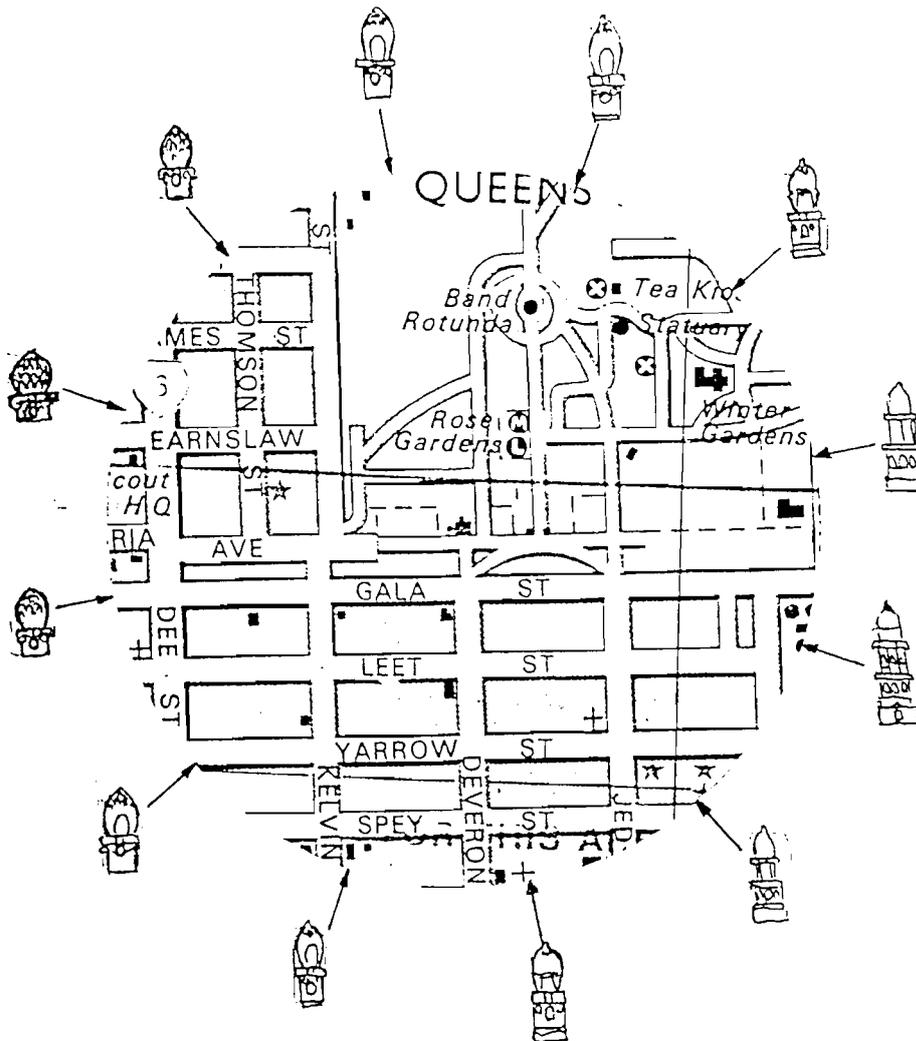


Di ffrench, '*Chesterfield*', Cape Wanbrow, Oamaru

'public practices' Artists' Projects

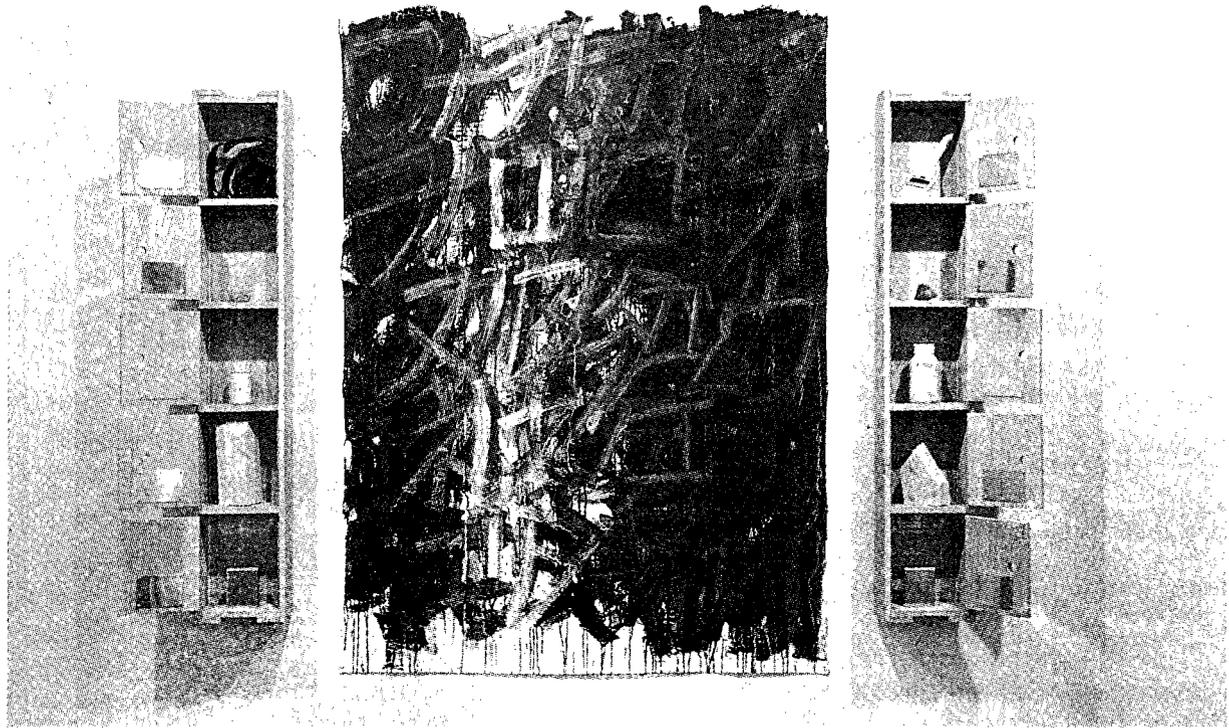


Siegfried Köglmeier's *Landmarks*, Emblematic motifs representing identifying monuments of his home town in East Germany, the Zurbelnuß, and the Watertower of Invercargill.



Siegfried Köglmeier's *Landmarks*, Location plan for exterior installation.

'public practices' Artists' Projects



Kaoru Hirabayashi, *Here I am, there are you*, Installation at the Lakes District Museum.



Russell Moses' *stone waka*, Back Beach, Port Chalmers.

The Gore Project

The Gore Project was the focus of an incident which occurred on day two of the 'public practices' forum. Wellington artist Vivian Lynn was commissioned to develop a project in Gore. Community Arts Worker Susan Wilson acted as field worker facilitating a group of Gore residents who were interested in participating in the project. The framework for the project was based on a model which proposed "a shared political and aesthetic approach to think, debate and image the life space circumstances of the Gore people into their subject matter through an awareness of patriarchy, colonialism and feminisms".

All the Artists' Projects were documented for display in the foyer of the Fullwood Room where the forum was held. The display of Vivian Lynn's documentation was delayed and appeared on the second day of the forum. It consisted of written material constituting the conceptual framework of the project as well a display of photographs and text compiled by a group of Gore residents.

Having seen the documentation only briefly on Saturday morning forum participants returned from lunch to find that the photographs had been removed by Jim Geddes (Director of the Eastern Southland Gallery) and Susan Wilson both of whom had been participants the project. The removal of the photographs prevented the forum audience from seeing and understanding the project, caused the artist great distress and prevented documentation of the work necessary for her research and sponsorship commitments. Although the nature of the grievance remained obscure it was clear that the gesture was meant to express the sense of dissatisfaction with South Island Art Projects and the 'public practices' Project rather than with Vivian Lynn. Later communication indicated that the difficulty lay with questions of "access" and "ownership" of culture and cultural material; that the forum did not present the opportunity for these individuals to "find a voice".

These issues did not go unexamined within the context of the 'public practices' Forum. It could be argued that indeed, within the narrow range of the visual arts, these were central concerns of the forum. Gerard O'Regan raised questions of access and ownership from a bicultural perspective on Friday in the first session. While they are issues of central importance to the development of biculturalism in New Zealand, "access" and "ownership" are also relevant to perspectives reflecting inequalities of gender and class. Both these perspectives emerged within the forum discussion.

The irony of the incident is notable. The aim of the 'public practices' Project was to explore new models for artists to work "in public" with existing community structures - an aim which inevitably raises questions of access. The artists' projects and the forum were developed as far as possible with a commitment to the regional context while also aspiring to engage issues central to contemporary art discourse. One of the notable features of the forum was the multiplicity of voices raised and the clear articulation of different perspectives from within a regional context.

Jim Geddes and Susan Wilson are both involved in the visual arts and work as arts administrators. They were invited to speak at the forum on the Saturday afternoon. As speakers they were granted free entry. They attended the

forum for little more than an hour (on Saturday morning), removing the work during lunch before they were due to speak on Saturday afternoon. It is difficult to see what more could have been done to give them access. Perhaps we have to have the courage to speak in order to find our voice.

Jude Rae

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The High Street Space...Continued.

Last month the High Street Space in Christchurch had its first birthday. Throughout the year the project has consolidated its position among contemporary galleries in Christchurch and continues to provide a rapid series of shows by emerging artists. The most recent has been the six "Under My Skin" installations curated by Lara Bowen.

High Street will continue to operate in 1994 due to the generous support of Michael's Restaurant. However our budget is even less than a shoe string and it is now necessary to charge a small weekly fee of \$25.00 for the use of the space to cover electricity and general maintenance. Future strategies may involve applications for QEII funding towards a part-time coordinators position. We also need more people to become involved with the project to ensure its continued success.

Maddie Leach will no longer be the contact person in 1994 so please send enquiries to:

High St Space PO Box 3733 Christchurch 1.

The Boulevard Bakehouse and the
Christchurch Community Arts Council
in association with
the Arts Centre
present

CANTERBURY SHORTS



A free outdoor film screening
in the Arts Centre Market Square
Thursday 23 December
with jazz music 8.30pm
film screening **9.30pm**

U N D E R C A P R I C O R N

AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ART, POLITICS AND CULTURE

Under Capricorn is New Zealand's first major international symposium on art, politics and culture. On the broad platform of the question 'Is art a European idea?', the symposium will discuss how well current ideas of art accommodate cultural difference. Participants from the Pacific region, Australia, Japan, the Philippines, as well as Europe and North America will join Maori and Pakeha New Zealand contributors to examine these issues. Entrenched oppositions of art to craft, East to West, contemporary to traditional, authentic to appropriated, will be examined. New Zealand's bi-cultural perspective will be factored into broader international questions. International speakers confirmed include:

Thomas McEvilly - leading American art writer, contributing writer to Artforum, eloquent critic of the Eurocentrism of the contemporary art system.

Marian Pastor Roces - acclaimed Philippine writer and curator, a specialist in textiles. She runs Planetary Inc, producing television programmes on social/cultural issues.

Rudi Fuchs - director of the Stedelijk Museum of Modern Art in Amsterdam and curator of the forthcoming Carnegie Biennale.

Diane Losche - Australian critic/teacher, specialist in Melanesian art.

Vivian Johnson - Australian writer, teacher and curator, specialist in Aboriginal artists of the Western Desert.

Thierry De Duve - French writer, organising a new Ecole des Beaux Arts for the City of Paris.

Others participants include Peter Cleave, Wystan Curnow, Eugenio Dittborn, Simon During, Julie Ewington, Heleanor Feltham, Annie Goldson, Brett Graham, Tony Green, Paki Harrison, John Hay, Roger Horrocks, Lani Hunter, Laleen Jayamanne, T Kaori Kitao, Robert Leonard, Lawrence McDonald, Yasumasa Morimura, Hisahi Muroi, Bernice Murphy, Gregor Nicholas, Tipene O'Regan, Michael Parekowhai, Francis Pound, Lisa Riehana, Emily Schuster, Megan Tamati Quenelle, Diggeress Te Kanawa, Tapaeru Tereroa, Allan Thomas, Imants Tillers, Keiko Torigoe, Paul Walker, Cliff Whiting, Whitireia Soul.

Programme and registration information is available from the NZ International Festival of the Arts, PO Box 10-113, Wellington

Ph: (04) 471 1164 Fax: (04) 473 0149

Full registration: \$150 Friends: \$120 Unwaged/Students: \$50

Session tickets full: \$15 Friends: \$12 Unwaged/Students: \$5

A Town Meeting Project Fragments of a Reply to Evan Webb

Evan Webb's review of the Town Meeting Project in Dunedin appeared in the last South Island Art Projects Newsletter (#9: August 1993) along with a courtesy notice that I would reply. This response is only a fragment of that possible however, and thus contributes to, rather than resolving, ongoing discussions between myself and Evan Webb and others associated with and interested in the event. Several of the issues addressed by Webb in his review are discussed more fully in my essay which accompanies the published transcript of the Town Meeting in the booklet Beautiful and So Inexpensive: A Town Meeting Project which has been distributed mainly in Dunedin. There are three issues that I wish to discuss by way of what could be loosely termed a reply: nostalgic evocations of community in the name "Town Meeting", publicness, and power.

Firstly, as is Webb, I am interested in the ambivalence of the notion of a Town Meeting which might evoke "by-gone days when communities were small and parochial." Such a notion of a Town Meeting, as Evan Webb observes, may be associated with an idea of true democracy brought about by the reciprocal obligations of a face-to-face community. What therefore does it mean to call a Town Meeting in a city where who constitutes that meeting is unknown? What does it mean to call such a meeting in which there may be (to everyone present) as many strangers as there are familiar faces?

While in name, it may appear romantic in its evocation of the face-to-face community, the evident practicalities of dialogue between strangers are critically different. Ways of speaking and acting in such a meeting are different from the forms of speech and decision making possible in the parochial setting. This ambivalence between the expectation of participation (evoked by the rhetoric of community) and the problematics of distance and diversity which actually characterise the social, amounts to an opportunistic interruption. I would propose that the small face-to-face community is not an adequate model in itself for a better society and a participatory democracy. As Iris Young has argued: *Too often people in political groups take mutual friendship to be a goal of the group and thus find themselves wanting as a group when they do not achieve such commonality. Such a desire for community often channels energy away from the political goal, and also produces a clique atmosphere which keeps groups small and turns potential members away. A more acceptable politics would acknowledge that members of an organisation do not understand one another as they understand themselves and would accept this distance without closing it into exclusion.*¹

In imagining social ideals, it is thus insufficient to naturalise any imagined opposition between the collective and the individual, or between the relations of strangers in the city and the face-to-face relations of the community. A politics of difference, participatory and heterogeneous democracy, must take regard of the city as something other than just alienating and oppressive. *People enjoy cities, that is where strangers are thrown together.*² We must conceive of an unoppressive city, of relationships between strangers who do not understand one another transparently and immediately, who do not assume a prescriptive commonality, unity and closeness. This is not to reject the desires for closeness, security and belonging that dispose people to the idea of community, but to question the problematic suppositions upon which these expectations are based; and to question the suitability of the parochial community as a model for politics. The actuality of the Town Meeting's diverse constituency may have suggested alternative possibilities to some.

In addition, I propose that a radical politics should not begin with an idea of change as *the negation of what is already at hand*; rather it should seek to make something good from the many elements of the given. Agreeing with Evan Webb, I would argue that nostalgic appeals for the recuperation of a lost past, utopian projections of a hoped-for future are inadequate. We cannot return to small communities, nor can we support a vision which requires the dismantling of the city. Aspects of the future we imagine must be found in what is at hand.

Secondly, it seems to me that Webb assumes he and I might be talking about the same thing when we use the term "public". I don't think we are. Webb declares that publics do not pre-exist. But thereafter he asserts that "even with the best intentions, the constitution of a public is always, to a degree, at the expense of its power." His first statement I agree with, but after that I am left wondering what his notions of power and publicness are. Later his review states that publics "are only brought into existence when someone speaks on their behalf and in so doing defines them." So here, I want to briefly sketch a publicness that is purposefully at odds with Webb's notion of a public on whose behalf someone might speak.

The Town Meeting I think demonstrated both the possibilities and problematics of the constitution of a performative public. "Public" in this sense is neither conceived as a place nor as a body. The meeting venue was not occupied as if already public territory, and it should not be imagined that it became public space. Rather, as it is normally a private commercial gallery space, holding the meeting was a tactical and temporary interruption, causing a disruption of the site's order by exposing it to a fragment of a future event - wider public debate. Nor was a public invited as a body, as if it

¹ Iris Marion Young, "The Ideal Community and the Politics of Difference", in Linda J. Nicholson, (ed.), (1990), Feminism/Postmodernism, New York and London: Routledge, p312.

² Ibid, p316.

existed prior to the meeting. This idea of the public as a body is one inferred for instance by any reference to a "general public", as if such a unified and homogeneous body existed; and, especially as if it existed apart from the artist or arts communities.

Territorial and corporeal notions of the public, and the implied representativeness of these constructs, have been severely compromised by demonstrations of their actual exclusiveness. Too frequently, territories and bodies nominated as public erroneously imply a public that is unproblematically all-inclusive, universal, freely accessible, and metaphorically and actually in the open. Yet urban studies have shown so-called public spaces in the city to be gendered and increasingly privatised territories. So too, the public as body has been revealed to be particularly exclusive in its characteristics. In political discourses the "body politic" turns out to be male, educated and capitalised. In the medical and legal discourses of epidemiology and AIDS legislation resources are coordinated to protect a "public health" body that is in fact the already privileged body of the white heterosexual male. Given their unrepresentativeness, if "the public" then is construed as either body or territory, how is this useful in realising ideals of democracy? For me these concepts often block the transformative impulse. They are sites too readily surveyed, regulated and re-developed in the production of docile bodies, and hierarchies perpetuating the status quo.

If a public existed at all in the holding of the meeting, for the duration of the meeting, then it was a public formed in and by a multiplicity of individual actions (including the decision to attend the meeting, and to speak despite, or because of, the recording equipment). It was not a public prior to the meeting, not a public because of where it was. Publicness was produced in the performance, in the actions of individuals straining to achieve effects in relation to others. Through innovative action and speech, *...this self attains identity - becomes a "who" - by acting. For the sake of "who" it might become, it risks the dangers of the radically contingent public realm where anything can happen, where the consequences of action are "boundless" and unpredictable, where "not life but the world is at stake."*³ Purposeful, yet not a unity; in agreement and yet a multiplicity of voices and differentiated wills; a group yet one without a name. Rejecting body and site, what we are left with as "public" is *a notion of action as an event, an agonistic [strained, aiming at effect] disruption of the ordinary sequence of things, a site of resistance ... a challenge to the normalising rules that seek to constitute, govern, and control various behaviours.*⁴

It will be apparent that within such a notion of publicness there is no room for separating people, who might also be artists, or arts administrators, or critics, or academics, as such, from the so-called "general public". The public is not an amorphous non-specialised mass, nor is publicness an audience rôle. Surprisingly, this rhetoric of exclusion, talk of "them and us", problematically flavoured much of the discussion at the South Island Art Projects '**public practices**' forum in Dunedin.

And lastly, there is the question of how one conceptualises power and relations of power. Webb seems to adopt a notion of power which is something that is held over, or done to, people. Whatever its advantages, this structuralist focusing on the restraints of agency does not necessarily help people see ways of getting round those restraints and negotiating the present as the "becoming-better-future". The narrow focus casts individuals in largely mono-dimensional rôles and relations - as possessors of power, or victims of its misuse. There is, in this, what Michel Foucault identifies as a certain aesthetic and moral choice: *power is bad, ugly, poor, sterile, monotonous and dead; and what power is exercised upon is right, good and rich.*⁵ This may not be what Webb intends, but for me it is inferred by his discussion of the defining or representative agent, and the rôle of the social anthropologist. While such dualism (possessor and victim) can be provisionally useful, what is not allowed for in this model of power is the way individuals occupy a multiplicity of rôles and positions that may both consent to and resist particular circulations of power. When it comes to power, it is not sufficient only to ask "who exercises power?" but also to ask "how does it happen?" In other words, to be interested beyond the designation of all decision makers, to be interested in why and how the decision was made, how it came to be accepted by everybody, and how it is that it hurts a particular category of person. *[Q]uestioning over and over again what is taken for granted as self-evident ... reminding oneself and others of the unchangeability of change itself. Disturbing thereby one's own thinking habits, dissipating what has become familiar and clichéd....*⁶

Rob Garrett

³ Bonnie Honig, "Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity", in Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, (eds.), (1992), *Feminists Theorise the Political*, New York and London: Routledge, p.219.

⁴ *Ibid*, p.224.

⁵ Michel Foucault, (1977) "Power and Sex", an interview with Bernard-Henri Lévy, in Lawrence D. Kritzman, (ed.), and Alan Sheridan, *et al*, (trans.), (1988), *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, New York and London, Routledge, p.120.

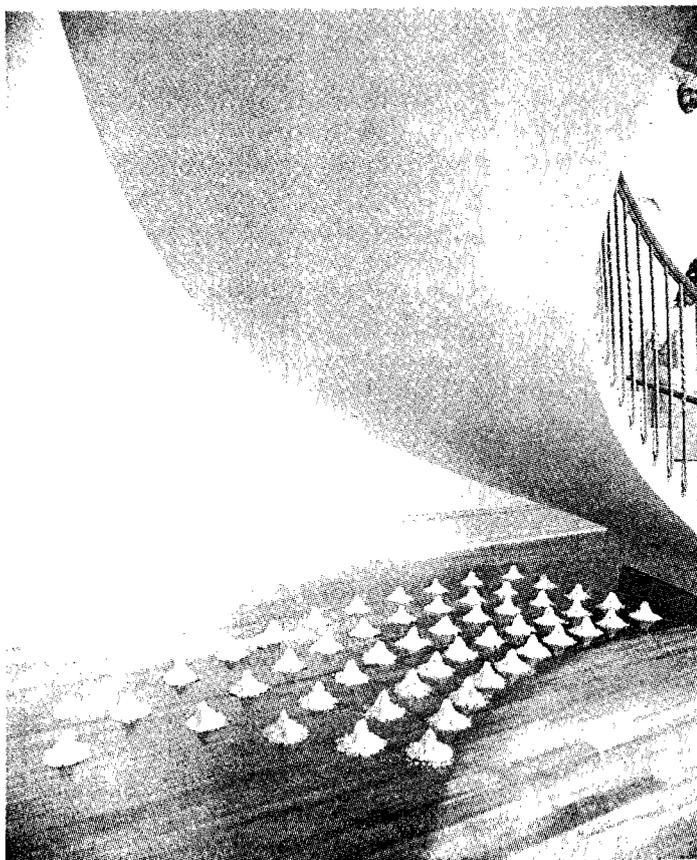
⁶ Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Cotton and Iron", in Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Cornel West, (eds.), (1990), *Out There: Marginalisation and Contemporary Cultures*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, p332.

The 1993 Artist in Residence Scheme at Otago Polytechnic

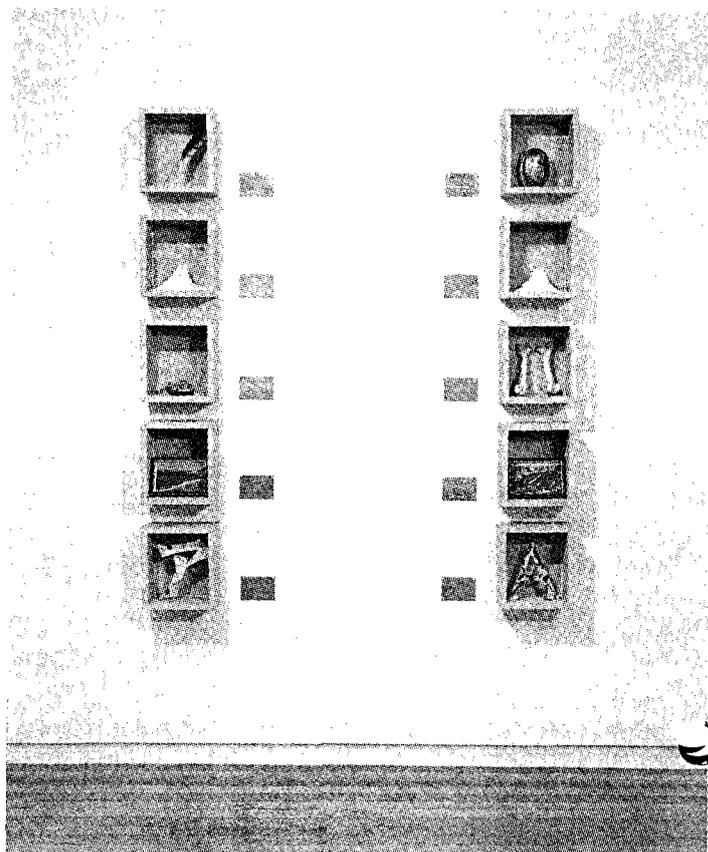
Since 1985 the School of Art, Otago Polytechnic (along with other institutional partners offering administrative and financial support - the Hocken Library, Dunedin Public Art Gallery and the QEII Arts Council) has run an Artist-in-Residence programme. A studio and living accommodation for the visiting artist which were originally in the plans of the School's new buildings will not be built as planned because of space restrictions, and so it is unlikely that the scheme will continue beyond 1994.

This year the scheme has worked well to provide interaction between resident artists and students as well as intermeshing with South Island Art Projects 'public practices' Artists' Projects. There have been three Artists-in-Residence at the School of Art in 1993. The first was Pauline Rhodes who offered students the opportunity to follow her site-specific installation process through lectures and demonstrations. Derrick Cherrie's residency was next and coincided with the Govett-Brewster commissioned exhibition "Supraluxe Suite" being shown at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. Finally the first International Artist in Residence from outside Australasia, Kaoru Hirabayashi, left Dunedin in November having taken up the residency in August.

Two of Hirabayashi's works, *51 sounds - Cut Outs* 1991 and *Sounds - Doors III*, dealing with the Japanese syllabary or alphabet of 51 different sounds, had previously been exhibited in Dunedin in early 1992 as part of **Zones of Love: Contemporary Art From Japan**. Hirabayashi gave a lecture at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery to coincide



51 Sounds: Dots, Installation by Dunedin artist-in-residence Kaoru



Here am I, there are you: Subjects and objects, Installation by Kaoru Hirabayashi, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1993.

with that show and was invited to apply for the residency. On her return to Otago this year a group of her works was first exhibited in Arrowtown (17 September - 19 October) at the Lakes District Museum as one of the 'public practices' Artists' Projects, and then sent to Auckland where it forms part of the artist's exhibition at Gow Langsford Gallery. Gallery Kobayashi in Tokyo where Hirabayashi initially exhibited this work hosted a Neil Dawson exhibition as part of a New Zealand/Japan art exchange. A third New Zealand exhibition of Hirabayashi's work was held at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery 16 October - 12 November 1993. Both this and the Arrowtown exhibition were titled **KOTOTAMA: The Word Spirit**.

In the Dunedin exhibition *The Word Spirit: Poem* (made while the artist was in Dunedin) and *The Word Spirit: Shelves* were works that seemed closest to her *Zones of Love* pieces. Both comprised 51 separate collaged and putty formed pieces with characters abstracted from the Japanese language. *Poem* was less finite, and used a light touch of text while *Shelves* had engraved metal plaques screwed alongside the 51 wooden boxes. *Poem* also took found graphic material, both texts and xeroxed zoological and botanical engravings and recombined them to form a new lexicon. Evocative phrases from the same poem surfaced in both works, for example: "The form, created softly fans outward".

But this show and the one in Arrowtown also included site-specific elements. At the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, using space carved out by the shadow cast by the stair leading to the mezzanine level in the Sargood Wing, Hirabayashi arranged fifty-one small piles of salt on the floor. Upstairs where the three large works were installed on the walls salt

was used again on the floor. Two piles punctuated the wall mirroring a work in two columns on the other side of the room which was made during the period of the Dunedin residency. Entitled *Here am I, there are you: subjects and objects*, this work played off distance and presence, the personal and the generic, with (for example) in one box, a postcard from Hirabayashi's home town of Enoshima framed alongside one of the Octagon. Similarities could be seen in the oppositions created with a Japanese character paired with the letter A pointing to how the script of any language is a form of abstraction. The shape of an A is arbitrary and related to its specific meaning as a sound only by history and habit. The same is partially true of a Japanese pictogram, although it is an abstraction in a more obvious sense. This work also showed Hirabayashi exploring the power of language across cultures to set up subject/object relationships between the namer and the named which has been part of her overall theme before but never dealt with as explicitly as it is here.

Cooperation between a number of different institutions (including tireless Japanese/English interpretation by Keiko Garrity) made the Hirabayashi residency beneficial for all parties. Next year two artists from Ireland have been invited to take up the residency - for six months we host Marion O'Donnell, a stone sculptor who works with large scale environmental installations and was visiting artist at Whitirea Community Polytechnic in Porirua in 1993. Overlapping with O'Donnell is Catherine West, a ceramicist, and they are followed by Dan Whelan, an American printmaker, as the School of Art continues to target international artists of standing for the Dunedin residency. (cont...>>>)
(cont...)

The Artist in residence scheme has provided tremendous stimulus to both staff and students at the School of Art for the past eight years. Its imminent demise is regrettable.

Linda Tyler

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