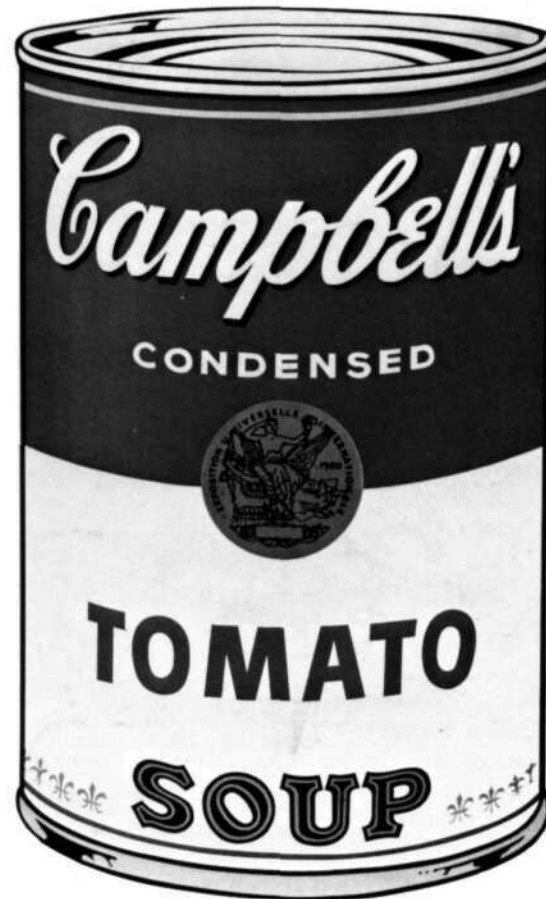


Quarterly



Quarterly

Rembrandt

Christ driving the Money Changers from the Temple

Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn was born in Leiden in 1606 and died in Amsterdam in 1669. His lifetime spans the great resurgence of commerce, industry and navigation that burgeoned in the Netherlands after that small country gained freedom following a long period of oppression by its Spanish overlords. With this return to liberty there was a flowering of literature, science, and the liberal arts that was to be unique in the history of Holland.

Rembrandt's prolific output of drawings, etchings and oil paintings represents the height of Dutch artistic achievement in the 17th Century. His name has become a household word for brilliance and ingenuity all over the world. The most eminent merchants, statesmen, scientists and theologians of his time commissioned him to paint their portraits. When he died he left a legacy of more than 600 oil paintings, 1500 drawings and 350 etchings, the latter being reproduced many times from copper plates during his life time and long after his death.

The Auckland City Art Gallery has recently been fortunate in acquiring one of Rembrandt's etchings in its original condition. It is a first state of four of *Christ driving the money changers from the temple* 1635 (Bartsch 69, Hind 1261). Many of Rembrandt's prints were so sought after in his life time that he had to re-etch the copper plate after it had been worn down by the pressure of the heavy press which was used to transfer the ink from the plate to specially prepared paper. Early impressions from a recently etched plate were described as being "first states". They are distinguished by a strong contrast between black and white, light and shade. They have more freshness, contrast and luminosity than later impressions from flattened plates. Our recent acquisition has all the

Cover Illustration

Andy Warhol (1930-) United States of America

Campbell's soup can. c!965

Screen print. Edition 44/250. 889 x 590mm. Acc.no. 1976/13

Stamped signature & ed.no.

desirable characteristics of a fine crisp early impression. It was almost certainly printed in 1635 by Rembrandt himself in his own studio. He was then 29. Ten years earlier at the age of 19 he had already painted the same dramatic subject in oils. The print is full of violent movement typical of the Dutch Baroque and full of Rembrandt's invention. At the same time it must be recognized that the artist was strongly influenced by designs of earlier artists most of them belonging to the Dutch, German, French or Italian schools. Rembrandt revelled in his large collection of the original works of his predecessors and he liberally borrowed from them since in his time no law of copyright existed.

If one compares the figure of Christ in Albrecht Durer's woodcut of the same subject from the *Small passion* (1511) one sees that Rembrandt borrowed Durer's design in reverse for the centre of his, etching. The scene in the temple shows the luminous figure of Christ surrounded by a scene of disorder which was probably the equivalent to a public market place of the times. In the foreground there is a rough hewn table full of coins upset by Christ who is swinging his whip at the traders. One man is rushing out carrying a heavy load of fruit on his head. On the right a runaway steer is dragging his drover on the floor behind him. In the right background a large group of Jewish dignitaries led by a rabbi holding a shepherd's crook is looking with distain at the chaotic scene enacted below them. Rembrandt who lived in the centre of the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam counted many of its inhabitants as his friends and he often used them as models for his Old and New Testament paintings and drawings.

This finest example of Rembrandt's work which comes from the collection of the 10th Viscount Downe (1903-65) was auctioned at Sotheby's in London 1970 and 1972. His was the finest English private collection of Rembrandt's etchings. It had been selected and assembled during its late owner's lifetime.

Dr Walter Auburn



Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) Dutch
Christ driving the money changers from the temple. 1635
Etching (1st state of 4)
136 x 171mm. Acc.no. 1967/36 Signed (LR) Rembrandt f.1635

William Beechey *Miss Windham*

The portrait of Miss Windham was bought with the kind assistance of the Auckland City Art Gallery Associates. Little or nothing has been written on Beechey since the very inadequate Roberts' biography of 1907. The following brief notes were gleaned from contemporary and other sources including Roberts.

- 1753 Born Burford, Oxfordshire, one of thirteen children. The parents died when the children were young and their upbringing was left to the uncle; a lawyer who tried to make Beechey into a lawyer. On one occasion Beechey escaped from the attic in which he had been locked for study purposes; he was last seen swimming a river to effect complete escape from the pursuing uncle. He begged his way to London where he worked briefly as a carriage painter. He eventually returned home to study law.
- 1772 Friendship with art students lead to his enrolment at the Royal Academy which at the time had been in existence for only four years. He was probably a pupil of Zoffany and is believed to have frequented Reynolds' studio.
- 1776 First exhibited at Royal Academy. In the next six years he changed his address six times.
- 1782 Seven years in Norwich doing portraits of gentry and conversation pieces in the style of Hogarth. Beechey was commissioned to paint a number of full-length portraits of prominent citizens for the civic collection. His first full-length portraits date from 1783. During this period he met and encouraged John Crome and as a result of this, Beechey was partly responsible for the birth of the Norwich school.
- 1787 Returned to London, apparently lured back by the extravagant promises of a rich and influential patroness. She let him down completely. Fifteen of sixteen portraits rejected by the Academy Council were exhibited by the dealer Vandergucht instead. The press commented favourably on these pictures but adversely criticized the Academy by suggesting that their action had been motivated by jealousy. The Academy records however show that Beechey had broken the rules by putting more than one painting in the one frame! This perhaps is the first hint of Beechey's rumbustical nature. At a much later date Lord Lyttelton let it be known that he hesitated to invite Beechey to parties because of his bad language. Towards the end of his life Beechey confessed that he had often had great cause to regret "his aptitude to talk carelessly and often imprudently from which he on reflection suffered while remembering it the following morning." (Farington v.8)
- 1790 First attracted the serious attention of the critics. Royal patronage began as a result of the following incident: When Beechey's portrait of Lord Cardigan was refused by the Hanging Committee, or the *pictorial hangmen* as they were referred to by the press, the good peer was so incensed that he sent the painting to Windsor for Royal inspection. The King not only approved of the work but sat for Beechey himself. From this moment on, Beechey's fortunes were secure.
- 1791 Beechey arrived at his final style.
- 1793 Beechey made ARA and official portraitist to Queen Charlotte. It was widely felt that Beechey was the only really original artist; all the rest being "diseased with all Sir Joshua Reynolds' worst habits." The drama and art critic John Williams (alias Anthony Pasquin) championed Beechey's cause, and Turner's too it so happened. He was a wild, funny but extremely astute critic; a sort of Paganini of criticism later accused of blackmailing actors. In private Sandby was Beechey's greatest friend and confident.
- 1795 The *Morning Chronical* praised Beechey for an "originality and taste ... seldom seen equalled." But John Opie on the other hand was heard to express surprise that Beechey had put up his prices to 30 guineas per head and complain that his work compared to Hoppner's and Lawrence's was "mediocre in taste and fashion" and that it was "fit only for sea captains and merchants." But Beechey was unpopular for other reasons too: apparently he had been prematurely introducing to society the then future second Mrs Beechey as his wife while still legally married to his first wife. Much later, after 1798 at least, Benjamin West told the King that Lady Beechey was not really Beechey's wife at all and that consequently she was not fit to be presented to the Queen. Beechey suffered the indignity of having to prove the legality of his marriage.
- 1796 Beechey vowed to exhibit no more if he was not made an RA, that is, a full member of the Royal Academy — a self styled elite group of forty members. The Associates, to which Beechey already belonged, were a supplementary group of smaller fry. And since new RAs could usually only be elected to replace dead ones, one may assume that academic deaths were eagerly awaited. In 200 years less than 10% of members have ever retired voluntarily while still (physically) alive.
- 1797 Beaten by Sawrey Gilpin, Beechey, still the Royal favourite, fails to get elected; a non-event commented on in the press

sympathetic to Beechey. The King is reported to have instructed Beechey "to laugh at the Academicians" if he was not elected, but Farington suggested this was "a silly story told by Beechey" At one time the King even sneered sarcastically that Beechey would probably never get an RA simply because he was the best painter. And it was rumoured that the King would order Beechey be made an RA, yet at the same time it was generally felt the King would not interfere with an election. Previously in 1790 the King's futile and embarrassing attempt to get Lawrence elected became a national affair. On that occasion the Academicians had voted against the King and a newspaper poet had written: "... those fellows have not learnt to crawl, to play the spaniel, lick the foot and fawn ..." At this stage Beechey is said to have resigned his Associateship, but there is no record of it. But his threat to withdraw from the 1797 annual exhibition was sensational since he was working on several Royal portraits at the time. As portrait painter to the Queen he enjoyed greater popularity than either Hoppner or Lawrence who even then were getting to be considered better painters. The King insisted that Beechey exhibit and compensated him for his election failure by commissioning the now famous equestrian portrait. Beechey still felt he had a chance of being elected and that the only real obstacle was his quarrel with Hoppner, who incidently was widely believed to be the King's son — a claim that Hoppner did nothing to dispel. The quarrel arose over an attempt on Hoppner's part to reduce the number of exhibits at the exhibition; Hoppner offered to remove one of his works if Beechey would do the same. Beechey was furious. Generally it seems that most of Beechey's "problems" arose because the King's idea of artistic excellence differed from the Academy's and because he took too literally his title of "Patron, Protector and Supporter" of the Academy — he interfered too much. But then since the Academy required its members to be of "fair moral character" it is just possible that Beechey was objected to on moral grounds.

Beechey went to Windsor to paint the Prince of Wurternburg, but was kept waiting so long that when the Prince finally agreed to sit, Beechey was on the point of leaving in a rage. During the sitting the Prince fidgeted so much that Beechey told the King to stand in such a position that the Prince would not have to keep turning his head to talk. Eventually the Prince left in a huff without looking at the painting, leaving the Princess to plead with Beechey to be more tactful.

On another occasion Beechey went to Windsor to petition the King for a knighthood, but the chief page not only refused to

see him but refused him lodging at the Queen's Lodge where he was accustomed to stay. He had to sleep in the bed of an absent page. He over-stayed his welcome, such as it was, and took a room in town. The King eventually saw him and agreed to the knighthood, provided that he, Beechey paid the £100 fee himself. This surprised Beechey very much since the King had on occasions been known to pay the fee himself.

1798 Beechey was elected RA, filling the vacancy left by William Hodges, and "for no apparent reason" knighted (Whitley v.2.p.217). Lawrence and Hoppner had done royal portraits but neither had been knighted. Some thought the knighthood was a reward for the equestrian portrait. Others said the Queen had pulled strings on his behalf. But according to another account connected with the equestrian portrait and told some eighty years later by Charles Catton's daughter, Beechey was hopeless at doing horses and got Catton to do them. Catton, the son of Charles Charles Catton RA, died in America. Catton heard some one come into the studio temporarily erected at the Royal Riding School for the purposes of painting the horse, and thinking it was Beechey, asked, "Well, how do you like the horse?" "Very well sir, very well indeed" came the prompt reply. When Catton turned round he saw not Beechey but the King. Then Beechey appeared and the farce was complete. Fortunately the King saw the funny side and later teased Beechey by saying he would knight Catton and made Beechey tell Catton this. Catton refused and the knighthood ricocheted back onto Beechey. Another reason suggested for the knighthood was that the King enjoyed acting perversely in the face of Establishment opinion. It was said that the King's illness (now more fully understood) caused him to behave like a spoilt child.

1799 Rivalry between Beechey, Lawrence, Hoppner and Opie reached its peak — all had Royal patronage.

1800 According to James Northcote, Beechey and six others, among them Sandby and Copley, decided to establish a club in opposition to that of the Royal Academy, and have it meet on the same days as the Academy Club. It was to meet at the Thatched House Tavern. The King approved the plan.

1802 Beechey went on record as voting against Turner in the matter of an RA.

1803 Beechey moved house to 13 Harley Street where Lady Beechey became known for holding parties more lavish than any of the others held by artists' wives. Lady Hamilton and her daughter by Nelson were guests. There were enormous internal rows at the Academy. Beechey appears to have layed low, though Copely

was suspended along with four others.

- 1804 On going to Windsor to restore his paintings, Beechey quarrelled with the King. Later he fell out with the King again and according to Farington who got it from Benjamin West, that appalling gossip, the King "rebuked him so severely that Beechey in his fright ran to the Queen, who also gave him such a reception that it caused him to faint or to have a sort of fit." West claimed that Beechey had brought the whole thing on himself by his "imprudent" behaviour and his constant feuding with the pages. Later the King claimed that Beechey had taken advantage of his illness by over-ordering and over-charging in the matter of some frames. Finally the King told Beechey he lacked colour sense and that he did not want any more of his paintings. Beechey stepped back into the group attending the King, took some snuff and was heard to mutter, "I've had enough to last me for some time."
- 1806 Beechey, along with Flaxman, Farington, Nollekens absent from the Academy exhibition. Most established artists, including Beechey, exhibited at the newly formed British Institution.
- 1809 Beechey's deputising for West as Academy President when the latter's gout was bad is some indication of Beechey's status, though Lawrence with youth on his side was to replace West when death replaced the gout.
- 1828 Painted the portrait of MISS WINDHAM. Beechey held an exhibition including works done thirty-nine years previously, one of which was seen by the *Atlas* critic as having been influenced by Gainsborough: "... it is to be regretted that Sir William did not paint fifty pictures of the same class . . . they would be worth all the acres of canvas he has covered with portraits of ladies. The Auckland City Art Gallery now possesses part of this acreage.
- 1836 Retires to Hamstead.
- 1839 Dies aged 86 survived by twelve of his eighteen children by two marriages.
- 1851 Beechey's eldest son Henry emigrated to New Zealand; but not in 1855 as stated by the National Biography. He arrived at Lyttleton on the *Castle Eden* on 7 February 1851 with his wife Harriet and family. He acquired the land now covered by Christchurch, but disposed of it before it became valuable. He died eleven years later aged 73 at his house in Governors Bay.

T.G.

References: Farington Diary
Whitley/1928/1930
Burke/1976
ACAG/file/letter/Turnbull Library/1976
Roberts/1907



Sir William Beechey, R.A. (1753-1839) British
Portrait of Miss Mary Christina Windham, fourth daughter of Admiral William Windham of Felbngg Hall, Norfolk.

Oil on canvas, 1270 x 1020mm. Acc.no. 1976/25

Previous collections:

- (i) Sitter and husband, Lt.Col.Richard Hare.
- (ii) Col. R.C.Hare (1844-1916) son of the above.
- (iii) Miss Dorothy Hare, daughter of the above.
- (iv) Miss K.M.Windham (d.1974) daughter of the above's brother, Reginald.

Andy Warhol

Campbell's Soup Can

It is being increasingly suggested in the literature these days, rightly or wrongly, that to survive wholely, some would say autistically, on its own terms, high art has had to abandon the world for the geriatric enclaves and intensive care units of the art museum, where visitors, overcome by high art/life differentials, turn cultural voyeur. However, Warhol by his affiliation with popular culture is well able to elude such charges and indeed survive well beyond the territories of these midgit cultural vaticans and liechtensteins; yet he has chosen not to — this curiously at a time when the avant garde's half-life is already so short that new ideas are no sooner born than they decay almost at once into the stable death of received opinion. Warhol is full of this sort of contradiction, which, because it is cultivated, may make his art appear cynical; and cynicism today, in politics at least, is "as American as blueberry pie". Also there are contradictions between his expressed ideal of an anonymous collective art and the promotion of his own art as an expensive platform for a signature. Warhol says painting is ". . .the reproduction of an art which has been designed to be reproduced. A great many prints can be made from a photographic plate, for example, and there is no sense in asking which is the authentic one. The moment the criterion of authority in art breaks down, the entire function of art is transformed. Its basis in *ritual* is replaced by a basis in another area of practice, namely, politics." (Crone, 1970.p. 10) These are fighting words, but unlike Haacke, Beuys and Smith etc., or even Goya and Grosz for that matter, Warhol has never taken his art into this area. He remains instead the dealers' child; though in fairness it should be mentioned that at the 1964 World Fair, Governor Rockefeller ordered down the mural poster *THIRTEEN MOST WANTED MEN* because it was too hot for the occasion. Warhol painted them out. But Warhol, furthering contradicton, emphatically denies any significance in his choice of imagery, much of which, apart from the commercial emblems and recent work, just so happens to have been connected one way or another with violence. But with imagery too thin formally anyway to carry much weight, meaning must inevitably recede into the circumstances of his art, namely the spectacular occupancy of the art category, and, for what it is worth, a pre-occupation in abstract with the mass produced image. Moreover there is the dialectical slight of hand at interviews etc., with which he attempts to block the old fashioned responses people may be tempted to make to his work. Yet as long as Warhol's work continues to be seen, hung, framed and dealt in, in old

fashioned ways and places, can people really be blamed for thinking of it in the way they would say Rembrandt or Picasso? Revolutionary art needs a revolutionary place to go; and Warhol's tragedy and perhaps that of many others is that they have no place to go but the bank. While Warhol's verbal diversionary tactics are all to the good, and in a sense represent the last fling of "art's sake" doctrines first leaked to the world during a lecture at the Sorbonne by Victor Cousin in 1818, they do nevertheless put him fairly and squarely into the burgeoning school of artists for whom words have gained the upper hand. A frenetic public life of words appears to be as necessary to the contemporary artist as bravura life styles were to the Romantics in their day. When the art/life differentials widen, words rush in to fill the gap to maintain illusions of integrity. The rise of Western criticism appears to relate to widening of this gap.

Though not as technically vain or as depressingly labour intensive, Warhol is as much a realist as the photo-realists he admires. Wyeth is one of his favourites. But if, contrary to his intentions we do take his imagery seriously, then his version of reality becomes the thing T.S. Eliot said we could not bear too much of. Otherwise Warhol's subject reverts to an abstract concept, that of mass production and its embodiment in an arbitrarily chosen set of emblems: news photographs, posters, wallpaper, postage stamps, bank notes, commercial packaging and labels etc. — in short, the visual background noise of our culture, most of which for reasons of mental economy we tend to forget and for reasons of superaffluence we dump and generally pollute with. Warhol coprophagously ingests this effluent of affluence and recycles it back to us as art. While Duchamp, with whom Warhol is often compared chose the more durable objects for his aesthetic canonisations and performed with high intellectual trumps up his sleeve that eventually brought on the divine indolence, Warhol remains the fetishist of mass produced ephemera and unceasingly persists in his modish role of an establishment Midias for whom art *ritual* has mindlessly interposed itself between the touching and the quite considerable gold. But Warhol's originality and genius lies more in the illusion created that his soup labels etc, are the originals of which all the millions of "real" labels in supermarkets are fakes. There is a certain grandeur in this idea, sending as it does, a salutary ripple of unease throughout the artlover's world. And the corollaries are legion; an obvious one being the proposition that the quality of our reaction to *CAMPBELL'S SOUP CAN* is a fairly accurate index to our feelings for our total culture — the underlying assumption here being the ancient notion that the whole is relected in its parts. Why else would relics of the cross be valued. That Warhol in his prime could generate ideas more successfully than most of his contemporaries, was, and still is something very much in his favour. Its hard to see how Warhol could be anything but didactic while people persist in the habit of thinking.

T.G.

Alexander Roche — a Glasgow Boy



Alexander Roche (1861-1921) British
A *Sabine Woman* oil on canvas 454 x 352mm.
Singed: Alexander Roche (LL)
Mackelvie Trust Collection

Glasgow in the late Nineteenth Century was the second city of the British Empire — a thriving, handsome metropolis deriving its prosperity from coal and iron, ships and railways, engineers and businessmen. And, for two decades in the 1880's and 1890's in Glasgow, a loose knit group of artists led the way in innovative painting in Britain — the Glasgow School, or better, since there was no unified style which would form a true school and since the name better expresses their independent spirit, the 'Glasgow Boys'. Among them was Ignatius Alexander Roche.

Roche, the son of a milliner, was born in Glasgow in 1861. He began to train as an architect, but developed an interest in painting and studied at the Glasgow School of Art in the evenings. Then in 1880 he gave up architecture and left for Paris where he studied painting at the Academic Julian under G.C.R. Boulanger and JJ. Lefbvre and at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts under J.L. Gerome. From these masters he gained his skill in draughtsmanship and in the handling of oil paint, but the instruction he received was purely academic. In Paris, however, he became a friend, among others, of John Lavery, later also a leading member of the Glasgow Boys, and together they fell under the influence of Bastien-Lepage.

Jules Bastien-Lepage had taken over the ideas of Edouard Manet and made them popular. From him and from Charles Daubigny and the painters of the Barbizon school, Roche and Lavery took the new ideas of *plein-air* realism back to Glasgow to convert such artists as James Guthrie and D.Y. Cameron. This was a middle of the road style of painting combining the natural colour, broad handling and lack of finish' of the later Impressionists with the draughtsmanship and perspective of the Academy. It satisfied a public demand for freshness and modernity in painting without going to the then incomprehensible extremes of insubstantial imagery of the *avant garde* Impressionists.

In 1881 Roche began to exhibit at the Glasgow Institute, at that time one of the best exhibition halls in Britain, where four years later he had his first big success with *The Dominie's Favourite*. In 1883 he returned to Glasgow and the following year joined the Glasgow Art Club.

At this time he was living and working in studios in Bath Street with W.Y. Macgregor, who was to have a great influence on Roche's development as a painter, and later with John Lavery. Other artists worked in these studios or in half a dozen other studios in the same street: E.A. Walton, Whitelaw Hamilton, James Guthrie, D.Y. Cameron, George Pirie, the sculptor Macgillivray, George Henry, James Paterson, Joseph Crawhall, Corsoq Morton and James McLachlan Nairn, the last soon to leave for New Zealand. All these artists were born between 1854 and 1865 and they formed a close-knit group. They, together with J.E. Christie, T. Millie Dow, Davis Gould, E.A. Hornel, William Kennedy,



Alexander Roche (1861-1921) British
Figlia di Maria oil on canvas 1003 x 762mm.
 Signed: Alexander Roche (LR); inscribed: No. 1. *Figlia di Maria* by Alexander Roche
 ARSA 31 St. Vincent Place Glasgow
 Mackelvie Trust Collection

Harrington Mann, Arthur Melville, Stuart Park, R. Macauley Stevenson and Grosvenor Thomas, were the 'Glasgow Boys'. The movement had begun with the landscapes of W. Y. Macgregor and

James Paterson and the watercolours of Arthur Melville. Macgregor in particular gave the movement its impetus through the life-class he started in his studio, to which the younger painters such as Guthrie, Walton, Lavery and Roche were drawn, and through his continual striving for and emphasis on individual expression.

The Glasgow Boys were responsible for the regeneration of Scottish painting and won, both collectively and individually, a wide reputation abroad in their own days. In Britain, however, they were at first largely ignored by the reactionary artistic establishment, who saw them as a threat rather than a promise, and then, having gained such acclaim abroad that they could no longer be ignored, were drawn slowly *holus bolus* into the ranks of the establishment itself so that the movement lost its impetus. Art historians too have neglected them, for in retrospect the Glasgow Boys were seen to be overshadowed by the histrionics of the French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist movements. The reaction in painting against realism and against the external subject matter was bound to count against the Boys, and the Post-Impressionist emphasis on colour and pyrotechnic expressionism has overwhelmed the more subtle and discrete works they produced. Only within the past ten years has a renewed interest in their achievements appeared, largely rekindled by a fine exhibition put on by the Scottish Arts Council in 1968 with its valuable catalogue.

In 1889 three works exhibited at the Glasgow Institute established Roche as a leading member of the Glasgow Boys, *Miss Lou*, *The Hill-top* and *Good King Wenceslas*. This last painting, exhibited again the following year at the New English Art Club in London and at Munich, shows the strong influence of Bastien-Lepage combined with an emphasis on decorative design, rich colour and a bold brush technique.

In 1891 Roche won a second class Gold Medal at Munich and other honours followed in succeeding years in Europe and the United States, a Gold Medal at Dresden in 1892, an honourable mention at the Paris Salon in the same year, a medal at Pittsburg in 1895 and again in 1898. This critical success was to be followed by many commissions in Britain and the United States, so that in some later years he spent as much time in the latter as the former. In 1893 he was elected Associate of the Royal Scottish Academy and in 1900 full Member, but by this time Roche had quit Glasgow for Edinburgh and the Glasgow Boys were scattered.

Roche painted figure subjects, landscapes and portraits and on his return to Glasgow from Paris he began to paint the figure out of doors instead of in the studio. In this way he, like the Barbizon painters and his idol Bastien-Lepage, could get the correct colour values in his work. A small village, Kirkintilloch, a few miles outside of Glasgow, became his base of operations.

It is to the five-year period before his move to Edinburgh in 1896 that the three Auckland paintings belong. They form part of the Mackelvie

Trust Collections and are all figure subjects.

The earliest, *Idyll*, was painted in 1892 and exhibited at the Grafton Gallery in that year and at the Berlin Kunst Akademie in 1895. It was later purchased by Sir George Reid, president of the Royal Scottish Academy, on behalf of the Mackelvie Trust Board. James L. Caw, in his *Scottish Painting Past and Present 1620-1908*, describes it as

"a group of maidens, a youth, and a young mother and her child set amid the fresh greenery and opening blossoms of early summer, beside a tranquil stream which mirrors the heavenly blue of May — there is a combination of blithe romance and spirituelle fascination, and also something of classic dignity, which make it his most memorable work, and one of the most beautiful produced in our generation".

Idyll is a fine example of Roche's concern with placing the human figure in a landscape setting. With its natural light and colouring it is an extremely subtle, understated work. It is thinly painted and sketchy in treatment. The canvas ground shows through in many places, particularly on the right, and the figures of the cow herder and his cattle are laid in with a few deft strokes. Even the principal figures are dealt with in summary fashion and there is the overall lack of emphasis that the Impressionists strived for, in which figures and landscape blend.

The second painting, *Figlia di Maria*, sometimes titled *One of the Procession*, was painted after Roche became Associate of the Royal Scottish Academy but before he moved to Edinburgh, thus between 1893 and 1896. This we learn from the inscription on the reverse: *Figlia di Maria by Alexander Roch ARSA 31 St. Vincent Place Glasgow*.

It also is thinly painted and sketchy in treatment, but the figure of the young woman is more developed than the figures in *Idyll*. There is the same lack of emphasis, however, and only the face, somewhat in shadow, separates from the background. The background is so sketchily treated as to be reduced almost to abstraction, yet it is obvious that the background was largely laid in before the figure, particularly in the upper half, and must therefore have held an important position in the artist's conception of the finished work.

The third painting is also of a woman, this *lime A Sabine Woman*. It is one of a number of paintings he did during his second visit to Italy in about 1894. The months he spent amongst the Sabine hills in the Apennines north-east of Rome, and the opportunity thus gained to paint a series of pictures of *contadine*, Italian peasant women, seem to have confirmed his tendency towards portraiture of women. He had done quite a lot of figure painting before this, but after his return from Italy and particularly after his move to Edinburgh in 1896, Roche turned increasingly to painting female portraits, a work in which he gained many commissions.

A Sabine Woman is thus intermediate between his earlier figure work and his later portraiture. It is far more developed than either of the other



Alexander Roche (1861-1921) British
Idyll 1892 oil on canvas 1841 x 1590mm.
Signed: *Alexander Roche* (LR)
Mackelvie Trust Collection

two paintings and the handling is tighter and more controlled. There is, however, the same overall lack of differentiation between subject and background, though the tonalities are darker, the same diffuse lighting which derives from his outdoor work, and the same tendency to reduce the background to abstraction.

Shortly after these were painted Alexander Roche moved away from Glasgow to Edinburgh, out of the orbit of the Glasgow Boys, nearly defunct by now anyway, and into the establishment that the Glasgow Boys had earlier derided. He carried with him an independence of spirit which continued evident in his many later portraits and which served him in good stead in 1908 when he suffered a stroke that paralysed his right hand and forced him, with great courage, to train his left hand to do the work. When he died in Edinburgh in 1921 the tide of art had swept on leaving him all but forgotten. He had to wait almost fifty years before regaining some of his earlier acclaim.

Eric Young

The Biennale

20 MARCH — 20 APRIL 1976

by John Tarlton

At the first Pan Pacific Biennale 1976 the once accepted classical definition of photography and its derivatives took a subordinate role to the possibilities attained by the artists' manipulation of all aspects of visual communication. Even those artists who worked within more conventional modes of image photography seemed preoccupied with the explorative powers of technique and overall presentation. The photograph as mere information source for the image's physical reality was gone, and in its place the artists presented works which were subjective, adventurous in their aesthetic, and unique.

Contemporary photography and its audio visual counterparts have established themselves as viable mediums for artistic expression. The ever changing attitudes concerning the validity of art forms allow exploration in many directions, and the modern artist is quick to grasp the possibilities inherent in photography and associated fields. He sees the intimacy, emotive power, and creative variants of new mediums which are not confined to one physical boundary (as in painting), or dependent upon relationships with space (as in sculpture). Contemporary audio visual artists create an environment of their own, as well as presenting an art form with a wider potential for distribution.

John Baldessari (USA) was represented by nineteen mounted photographs. Chosen images of still life motifs (glasses, ice cubes, etc . . .) and portraits dominated. Presentation varied from super realist, clinical focusing, to gentle monochromatic colour fields which, depending upon the discretion of the artist, could bathe the image in a gentle fog or dissolve it into total colour. Throughout the exhibited photographs Baldessari established artificial, subjective atmospheres, enabling ordinary still life images to attain an extraordinary visual importance.

Lynda Benglis (USA) exhibited two works. These were framed, regimanted poloroid photographs which represented an ambiguous series of events, and the exploration of environment. An interior and a male nude were photographed at different angles and depths. The photographs isolated form and space, establishing the whole interior by dissecting its various parts. Benglis' use of poloroid prints, and *her family album* presentation, produced a feeling of intimacy between artist and model. One looked at the photographs as voyeur, with an uneasy feeling that some secret bond had been broken.

Robert Gumming (USA) *Pen Point Choreography* was a series of paired photographs depicting a symmetrically placed male figure waving two large pen nib props. Inked directional lines were drawn onto the photographs, indicating the movements of a formalised, absurd semaphore or mechanised dance step.

The photographs and films of **Andrew Davie** (New Zealand) dealt with durations of time. In *his Blue Suede Shoes*, Davie utilised a sequence of photographs to document an event — the spray painting of a leg and shoe.

The eight Sculptograms of **Adrian Hall** (England) consisted of photographic prints of temporary sculpture pieces. Each large print was stamped and signed on the front, notating the works as Sculptograms and original works of art.

Experimentation with light and colour variations was the underlying theme of **Michael Harvey's** (USA) work. In the film *Sub Rosa*, Harvey used a woman, a dimly lit room, and a moving light beam to illuminate the various reds of the interior. In addition to visual references, the actress's narration presented the intellectual complexities of colour. For the presentation of mounted stills from the movie, an entire gallery wall was painted red, as were the photograph's mounts and frames. The total effect of this environment accentuated Harvey's exploration of colour. Harvey also used colour xerox. These acted like small paintings and created within the xeroxed images an unfamiliar graphic light, totally foreign to colour photography.

Skin of Your Eye (Seen), by **Arthur and Corrine Cantrill** (Australia), was a multi-screen, multi-projected event which included front and rear projectors, slides, and audio equipment. The entire project, according to the artists, was "... to deal with the various aspects of the refilming process: the relationship of projectors, screen, camera; the film strip of positive or negative; the colouring medium; the film frame; the projector gate; the projector lens; the projected image on the screen and the darkness around." The documentary story line was separated and explored in various sizes on a seven screened structure. Ideas were frozen, arbitrarily coloured, made larger or reduced in scale. The production was a total, in depth exploration of the complexities of manipulating the physical aspects of the film medium into a visual work of art.

John Henry's (New Zealand) video presentations were abstract colour patternings fused with instrumental music. The non-objective amoebic colour forms pulsated, fought with, and caressed the rhythms of recorded music. The properties of both audio and visual became integrated into one experience — an experience of light and sound.

Michael Nicholson (Australia) presented video and dealt with abstractions of colour and sympathetic sound.



Keigo Yamamoto (1936-) Japan
Video Game "Five Pins" (n.d.)
 TV monitor & camera/VTR cassette

Selwyn Lissack's (USA) holograms, according to the artist, are a "...method of recording visual information in a new form — that of interfering light wave. This wave front recording, after processing, will play back the original visual information with all the properties of real-time experience." Physically, the holograms were geometric light patterns projected in a third dimension. Some of the holograms employed kinetics, allowing the work to be viewed from all angles. Lissack considers holography as a "new visual tool" for the artist. It enables the artist to incorporate photographic techniques with the sculptural possibilities of the third dimension.

Satoshi Saito and **Tatsuo Kawaguchi** (Japan) exhibited large photographs. By using concrete steps and mirrors as subject matter, Saito recorded the variations in natural lighting and the effects of mirrored and reflected light. Fractioned, ambiguous perspectives and angles were also created by Saito's use of the photographed mirror.

Tatsuo Kawaguchi's *Cosmos* acted as reference maps to outer space. Constellations and celestial bodies dotted the otherwise black void background. Different stars were hand lettered.

Boyd Webb's (England) four colour photographs, with accompanying text mounted on card, dealt with innuendo and pun. The images constituted illustrations for the text, often using hand painted accents. The photographs, floating in large mats, resembled oversized story book pages for Webb's satirical and witty looks into the follies and absurdities of societal morality and behavioral patterns. Similar in presentation to Webb's photographs was the work of **Nicholas Spill** (New Zealand). These photographs were also accompanied by text. Spill's views, however, were more domestic and light hearted.

In **Tsuneo Nakai's** photographs, large, acutely focused hands projected into the picture plane, caressing and playing with the distant horizontal line of ocean. Perspective and space seemed flattened into a two dimensional format.

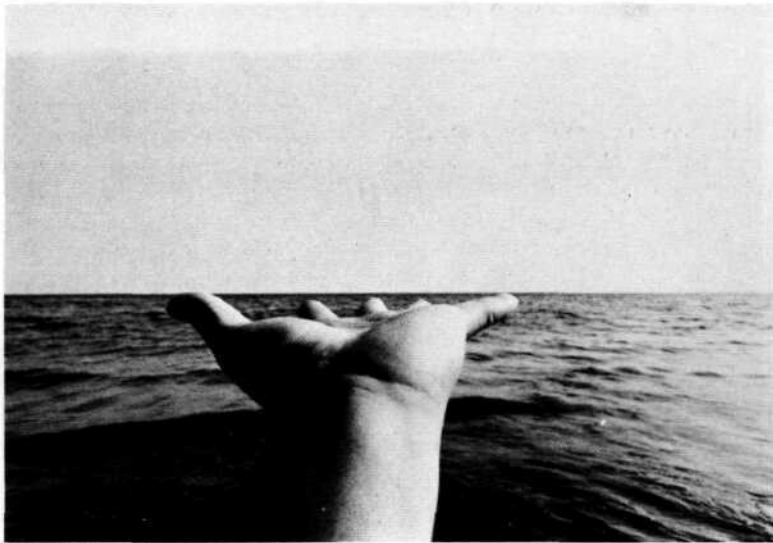
With *Loops*, **Francis Bennie** (Australia) used a projector and a spliced piece of positive and negative film as the art object. The looped film suspended from the projector to the wall. The duration of light was regulated as the film fed through the projector lamp.

One of the photographs of **Robert Rooney** (Australia) *The White Rug*, was an in depth investigation of a shag carpet. Small photographs were mounted together, producing a type of pictorial mosaic recording texture, shade, and various perspective angles.

Keigo Yamamoto's (Japan) video game "Five Pins" involved the interplay between a participant's sense of object placement and the reversal quality of the camera. Also his video film *Hand* had interesting metaphysical implications.



Keigo Yamamoto (1936-) Japan
Hand (1976-no.2)
Colour video



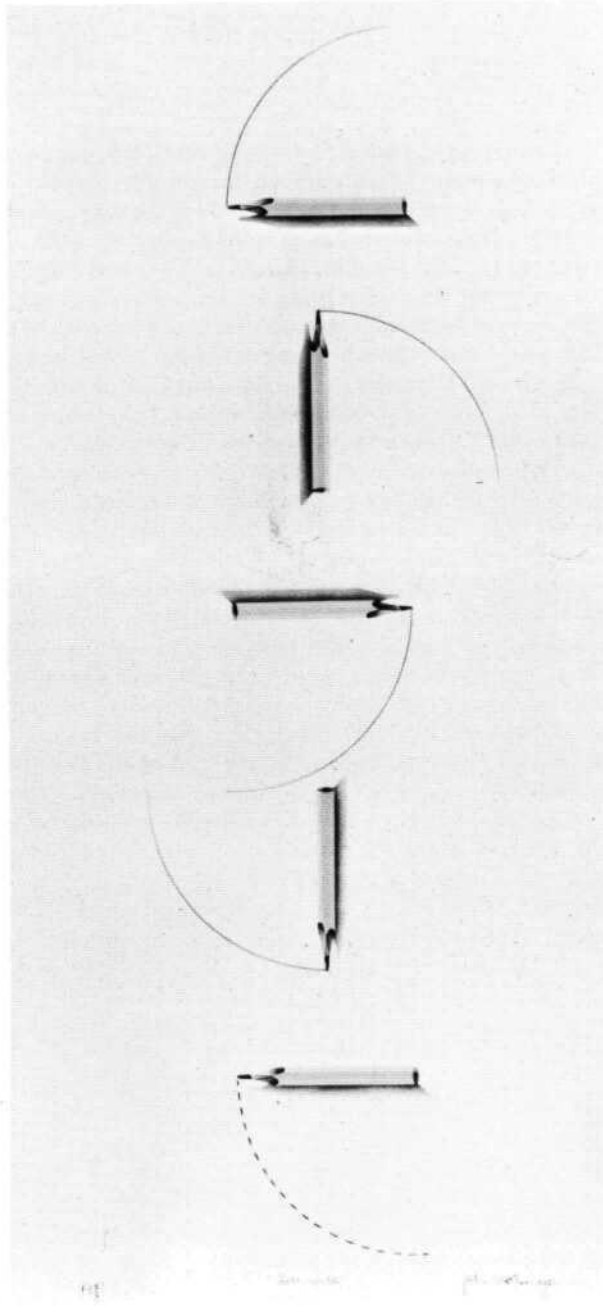
Tsuneo Nakai (1947-) Japan
Horizontal Line 1976
 Colour photographs (Set of five identically titled)

From Sun to Sun: Pin Hole Camera Work by Nobuo Yamanaka (Japan) was a series of grouped photographs taken through pin holes. The resulted effect was one of abstracted colour formations resembling kaleidoscopic tunnel- visioned prisms of light.

In New Zealand, where photography as a fine art is still in the awkward stage of artistic adolescence, the Biennale was a timely and well received exhibition. This was the first time in New Zealand that such audio visual and photographic experts had been assembled for exhibition. For our isolated photographers it was an opportunity to view new directions international trends in the rapidly expanding photographic fields, to use the exhibition as a guide and reference tool for future explorations, and to enable us to gauge our own domestic photographic growth.



Michael Harvey (1944-) U.S.A.
Sub Rosa (c1974)
 Seven colour photographs — stills from 16mm film of same name



David Brown, Phil Dadson, Liz England, John Lethbridge, Leon Narbey, Bruce Barber, Kim Gray, Maree Horner, David Mealing, Roger Peters, Gray Nichol, Mike Bajko . . . this list in the making is of artists under thirty whose work singles them out. As it happens, they aren't painters, they aren't sculptors as sculptors used to be. Their work is little known. Not because they are young — that's no great impediment in New Zealand. They do show in out of the way places however. Like Whatipu Beach, Mildura (Australia), Epsom Showgrounds, the School of Fine Arts. They do not make saleable objects but assemblages, environments, events, video-tapes. Painsstaking in what they do, they are not prolific. And their work has a way of defeating expectation. All would be reasons. Good art is concerned with where consciousness can go from here. It gives you a hard time, puts the pressure on. If you're taken in by it, it won't go soft on you. The artists on my list believe this. I'd have them better known, and their work more readily got at.

Dealer galleries do not give much show time to unsaleable works. Barry Lett Galleries have, in recent years, shown established and visiting non-commercial artists like Jim Allen, Ti Parks, Keiron Lyons, Billy Apple and Adrian Hall. It's up to public galleries to make room for the younger locals. Those outside of Auckland have taken precious little interest; here we've seen Narbey's "Light Environment" (1972) and "Four Men in a Boat" (1974) which included Bruce Barber and Phil Dadson as well as Keiron Lyons and Jim Allen. But "Project Programme 1975", with almost three months and the two first floor galleries given over — that was a real beginning. Ernest Smith, the new director, came here from the Dalhousie Art Gallery, and Halifax was, in the early seventies, a way station of the North American avant-garde. The idea for the Programme was his. It was John Maynard who developed it. He'd directed the Govett-Brewster Gallery in its first years (1970-1) and made New Plymouth *the* place to see new Auckland sculpture. More particularly, he commissioned work from Narbey and Brown, and exhibited photographs of work by a number of young Elam students. For the Programme Maynard invited Jim Allen, Bruce Barber, John Lethbridge, Kim Gray, Roger Peters and David Mealing. Also Maree Horner and Terry Smith, the Australian Art and Language artist, but they had to decline. Each had \$ 1000 for his project and the documentation that would follow. The Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council put up half the money.

What follows is a discussion of five of the six projects. I regret that I have been unable to find the time to include an account of Kim Gray's fine piece. The work of these artists has received little or no public discussion and so I have tried here to include some reference to each artist's previous work.

First up on the Programme was John Lethbridge, sculptor for the first time. Already known as painter and print-maker (there have been six one-man shows since 1970, in Wellington, Auckland and Sydney) this show is no casual outing but an event some time in the making. In 1972 Lethbridge, then 24, took himself back to school, to the sculpture department at Auckland's School of Fine Arts. He sees no necessary conflict between his painting and sculpture; his project, as it happened, coincided with an exhibition of new paintings at the Harrington.

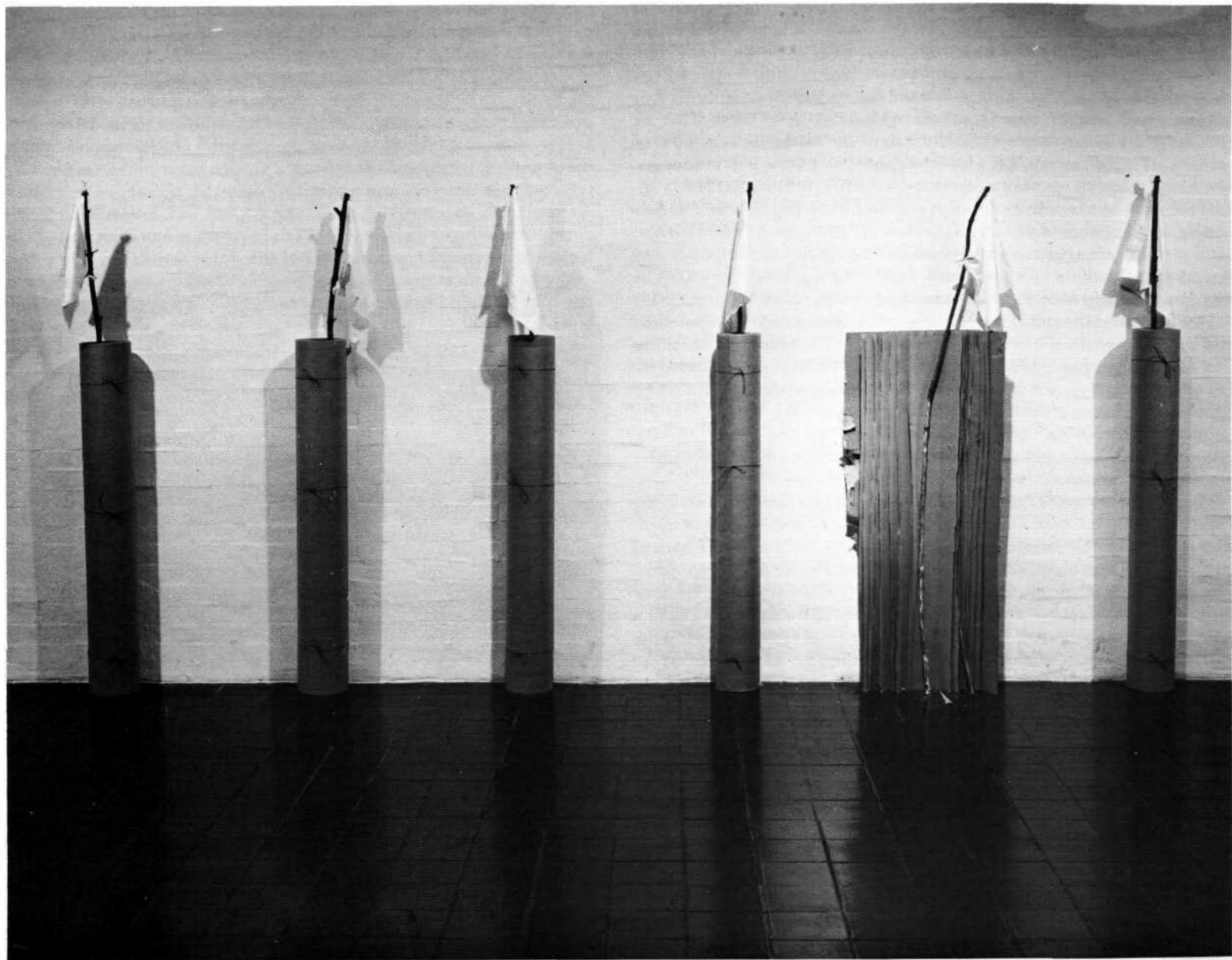
That show, called USED PENCILS, was worth seeing first. The elements were simple; these were paintings of pencils that included real pencil marks. But the combinations complicated, ie. we've got this sharply realistic rendering of a pencil on a white ground. The shadow it casts shows that it is not resting on this ground, which is maybe a rendering of white paper. Just beyond one end of it are some real pencil marks. A fictitious pencil makes real marks? These are *used* pencils, after all. Near the other, also sharpened, end, a real pencil line's been drawn across the depicted pencil. *Where* is that line? Which pencil drew it? It could mark a pivot point from which the other marks were made. If so, first the pencil's airbrushed on, then the line drawn, then the marks made. Two apparently incompatible kinds of space are at work. Then, there's this irony: what's fictitious is the tool (pencil) for making fictions, what is literal (the marks) is what is usually the fiction. Many of the paintings consist of a very similar pencil/mark motif repeated, with minor variations, down the length of a narrow canvas. The best of them are the less logical and least repetitious. Take this one: there are three pencils; beneath the point of each there's a real pencil line as long as the pencil. One pencil's been crossed out (rejected?) once, one line twice, and one three times. How many pencils were involved in this operation? Or in the previous one which made the lines? How about the ticks (marks of approval?)? The line thus graced is not one made by an approved pencil. These are unanswerable questions. On first take what's tight about the paintings is the simplicity with which they keep the viewer busy with his looking.

These works implicitly take heed of the limits and freedoms found for the art by mainline American abstract painting, but aren't about painting in the same sense. They are not retinal (Duchamp), or optical (Fried), not committed to the medium as such. That pencils may be depicted the way these are is an hypothetical claim only — one of several which get concepts off the ground. It's because painting is for him a medium for developing ideas that Lethbridge sees no necessary conflict between his painting and sculpture. This is not to say, however, the sculpture won't

put pressure on his painting. The best of the Project pieces are stronger than anything I've seen him do. And, although my account of USED PENCILS necessarily falls short, I would argue that the sculpture attempts the kind of reach of reference no longer aimed for in the paintings.

The title piece, *FORMAL ENEMA ENIGMA*, goes somewhat like this: photo of a man, formally attired, standing to attention, facing us with a paper bag over his head. Clothes maketh the man, a form, an enigma. In next this same faceless man now sits looking our way. He has adopted a rather less formal position. In the third, he's bending right over, head in his bag on the floor, arse to the viewer. Formally dressed or not, shoving your arse in someone's face isn't very nice. Needs the shit taken out of him, who does he think he is anyway? John Lethbridge, gentleman artist, is my guess. The poster for the show has four photos: those in this piece, preceded by one of the same man without a bag over his face. It is in fact a photo of Mr. Lethbridge himself. He offers us his form — art maketh the artist — an enigma? Well, look, the guy wants to get something out of his system. While he's bending over ostrich-like head in his bag, shove in an enema, find out what's on his mind. It's a bit distasteful to us, though lets confess it normally comes to this in such cases. And rather painful for him, though if he's not used to it by now he never will be. Now on the floor we've three bags full of sand; the first of which stands upright and takes its first injection, the second's had two, the third, three. We've numbered them what's more. And carefully connected our attempts. The third bag's collapsed, burst at the bottom — which's natural enough since if you add liquid it'll soften the paper and increase the weight of the sand. The form has broken, there's sand on the floor and . . . it's a nasty mess frankly, a mixture of his and our intentions for the work. But, on the side of the bag, we have complete the construction we've placed on the work. It's not the most satisfactory outcome. Uneasy about the metaphor, we're disinclined to acquiesce further by, say, tasting with the finger the mess on the floor. Rather, what we take with us is the form assumed by our efforts to transcend that of the work — the drawing on the broken bag. That's indicated by the rest of the work which consists of the two available permutations of the sequence, permutations which correspond to our construction, reassert formality without rendering the work any the less enigmatic.

It's not the most satisfactory narrative. Too confident and convoluted to be true. Maybe it picks out the undoubted ironies and metaphors of the piece too casually. It's actually no easy matter to catch the precise force of Lethbridge's wit in this work. I'd like, for instance to find the words for each of the curious juxtapositions of man and bag of sand. For they've won me over. Another critic would do better. Whether he'd come up with an account of the whole any the less convoluted — I have my doubts.



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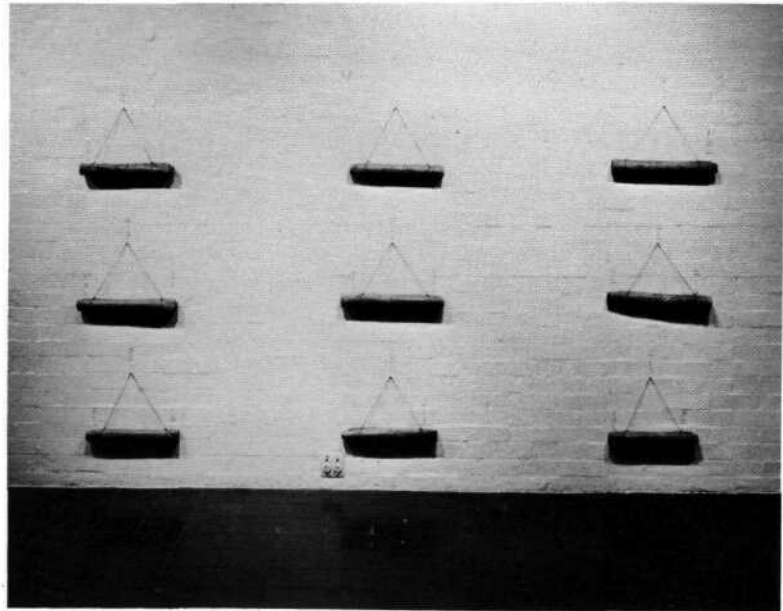
FORMAL ENEMA ENIGMA has features shared by most of the works in the show. The structure of each involves a series of steps — often three cues to viewer participation in, identification with, the work. They commonly subject the work to a set of permutations making it increasingly self-referential and thus distanced from the viewer. To one degree or another each work is a proposal that prescribes limits as to what we presume to know. At a more particular level the works are organised by means of association. As with metaphor, it's a two-way process. Lethbridge has an eye for the specific properties (definitions) and original contexts (derivations) of the objects and materials he chooses. Secondly, he is concerned with the local contexts set up by the often curious and startling juxtapositions of objects and materials. Local contexts may be taken to be those of a particular work or of a group of works. The language analogy is not casual; titles, when we have them, enter the body of the work and the full range of connotation, denotation, and potential for punning is brought into play. Lethbridge prefers the most unassuming of materials: paper bags, corrugated card, jute, wax, grease, charcoal, water, sticks, string, sand and the like. Black, white or dun in colour, and processed to some degree or other, they remain *basic* in feel, not too distanced from their natural origins. Related to this quality are the constant allusions to the body and bodily functions: nose-blowing, smell, feeding, digestion/excretion, body height and so on.

Take this one: *UNTITLED* (six coils of corrugated card tied with string wrap six branches with a white hankerchief knotted to the top of each. The fifth has been cut open to expose the rest of the branch the bark of which as been stripped.) Transformations/violations? All the elements are derived from or are natural products, vegetation in one form or another. The branches' twigs have been lopped; they've been cut to a certain length. Cardboard from wood, handkerchief from cotton. Did the knife that cut the cardboard also strip the bark? This is a hidden fact, an enigma. Stripped of their natural protection do the branches now sport a man-made protection made, ironically, from processed tress? Are they bandaged? An academic question perhaps, since these aren't trees but dead limbs. On this artificial tree handkerchiefs are foliage, replacing leaves, natural flags on lopped off twigs. Man-made flags proclaiming a tree transformed. But a white flag? That's a sign of surrender, or distress signal. Put out by a distressed tree? Let's start over. Two groups of three. In the first group the ambiguous signal of this man-sized motif is repeated, insisted upon indeed. The second seems likely to repeat the recalcitrance when, suddenly the enema is performed. Far from resolving the ambiguities, the performer now finds himself implicated. Did he likewise strip the branch of its real bark? The last coil restates — who can deny it? — the enigma.

Between this piece and the title work we have *INFALLIBLE GUESS WORK*. It is related to both. Again we have rolls, this time hung horizon-

tally from nails by strings also tied to each end of the rolls. They're like paintings. However, sealed in wax and hung in such a way that even if they were unrolled they'd obscure one another — they appear to be irrevocably hidden. That being the case it's suggested that we try to guess their contents by assigning different numerical sequences to each of the three points described by the string. The triangle thus formed is the same as that we made on the third bag of the title work and it is again a fallible, if not absurd, measure to be left with. On the other hand, no enema is resorted to in this work and it therefore offers an alternative procedure. As this is only guesswork, there is no 1,2,3, but with nine rolls the other permutations may be exhausted. Thus the work acquires an impeccable form and a content replacing that of the single canvas.

Works like these two, and there are several others, lack the ambitious reach of the title work and, say *SPOON-FED*, but are, I'd hazard, the more successful.



3

BRUCE BARBER: STOCKS AND BONDS: OCTOBER 21-29

STOCKS AND BONDS — a performance plus catalogue complement/supplement, *ON THE STOCKS*. What is a performance? Aimed at recent art, the word picks up some of the attributes of the works it is intended for, such as their being "post-object", one-off events. But misses out on others. Such as the tendency to complicate, attenuate or otherwise revise the viewer/work dichotomy. Associations with contemporary music and dance are OK, those with drama less so. Precedents are there in Dada cabaret, Futurist theatre, Surrealist demonstrations and Happenings. Although current performance art is less the sideshow, more part of the main event — modernism's latest shakedown.

Dance? Dancers and musicians took part in five evenings of performance art at Pavilion K, Epsom Showgrounds. That was 1975, same year Bruce Barber worked with *DANCE IN NEW DIMENSIONS*. And music? That's much more important. Largely because of Phil Dadson, a Cardew alumnus who, in 1970, incepted the local Twig of the British Scratch Orchestra. His 1971 pieces: *PURPOSELESS WORK I: SWEEPING KARE KARE BEACH*, *EARTHWORKS*, and *REARRANGEMENT FOR ORCHESTRA* (this last being performed by the Scratch Orchestra (S.O.) for the *Young Contemporaries* exhibition) — these were New Zealand's first performances. These had more in common with S.O. activities than either had with more conventional forms of sculpture or music. Committed to group improvisation activities, the Orchestra was based at Elam and so provided a natural home and training ground for artists interested in performance work. In S.O. "rites", performer/audience distinctions tended towards the ad hoc. As did instrumentation. Performers assumed roles, undertook tasks, always with regard to the group. Compositions prescribed procedures for making things happen, not for having them heard, or seen, stated. To one degree or another, the performance works of Barber and Dadson have had the same features.

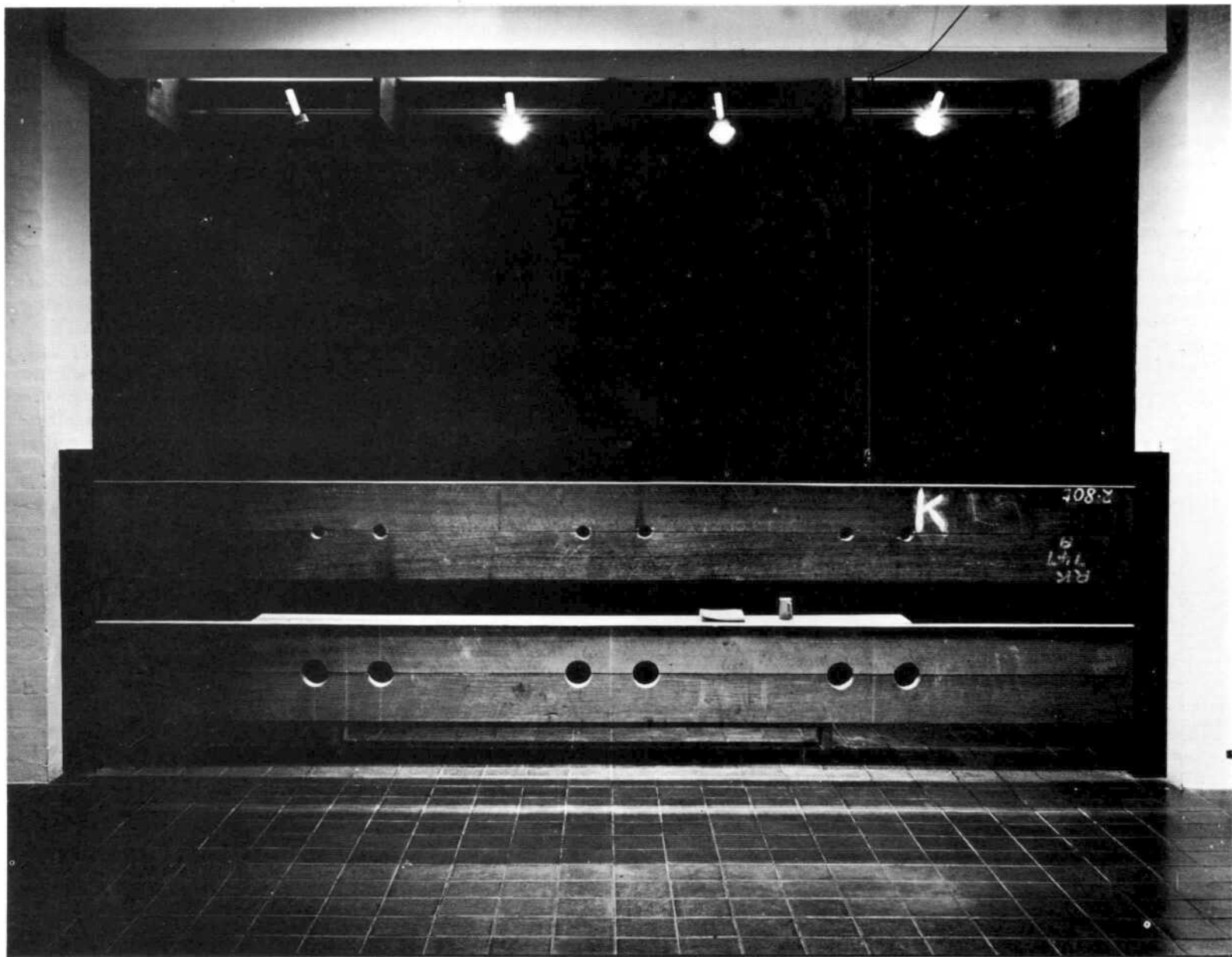
Bruce Barber was with the Orchestra from the start and, (with Geoff Chappie, Gray Nichol another sculptor and Phil Dadson) a member of touring quartet, "From Scratch" which, in 1974, took over where the Orchestra seemed to have left off. *MT EDEN CRATER PERFORMANCE* (1973), his second, had as a starting point and integral element Scratch's annual Mt. Eden Crater Winter Solstice Drumming rite. It gathered up much else besides. *WHATIPU BEACH PERFORMANCE*, his first, yielded roles and equipment. * *INFLUX* (1972)) was a decided influence. ** The work of a group (including Kim Gray and Roger Peters) *INFLUX* took place in Bledisloe Place, centre city. Those are the words: took, place in, X Place. Extensive audio-vi-sual measurement and analysis of the site led to procedures designed to extrapolate something of its ontological fullness. Activities were carried out, new materials intro-

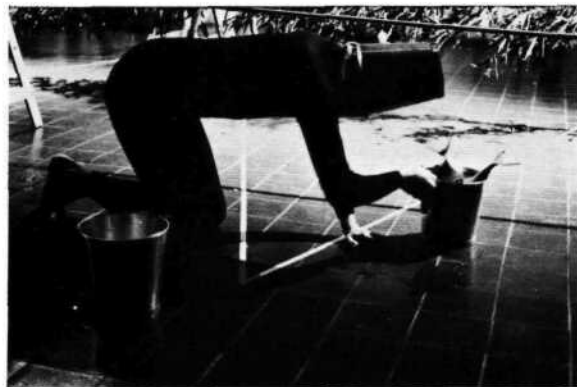
duced, processes initiated, documentation fed back again. *MT EDEN CRATER* again a group searched out a site — a natural one this time — and with audio-visual gear. Extraneous material — largely verbal (cultural) in this instance — was introduced. An audience was found, either by the way on site where it was to an extent assimilated by the work, or more conventionally with the subsequent documentation show. *INFLUX* lasted a week, *MT EDEN CRATER* eight hours; each being long enough for its procedures to weave in and out of "normal" time.

Both works were authentically busy, never uncool; each articulated a site with direct actions that could, at the same time, be cunningly allusive. To the viewer they offered, at times, compelling experiences. But just because of that the viewer was, in the event, something of an outsider who lacked the focus for his involvement enjoyed by even minor performers and who found the documents, after the event. Doubtless drawing on his Scratch Orchestra experience, Bruce Barber likes to plot participants along a line, active at one end, passive at the other. But works as extensive in time occupied, and in range of activities involved, and as inclusive in intention as these, offer too little and too much to the passive witness. That would be my claim. Certainly, Barber's performances since then have been briefer, had fewer performers, and have addressed themselves not to a site but to an audience clearly briefed (through seating arrangements etc.) as to its role.

The "Blind Master" — MC and Master Tape Bearer — from *WHATIPU BEACH* was the central figure in *MT EDEN CRATER*. He, in white boiler suit topped off with yellow pumpkin head, he who was lumbered with his tape-machine and mike, roped to his red-coated seeing-eye guide, picked his way, testily, across caldera country, guided by sounds around and his own proprioception. His was a highly specialised attentiveness, but representative. Contrived of a set of natural and artificial checks and releases, it characterised, in extreme form, each performer's encounter with the site and was focus for the empathy that linked them all. Since *MT. EDEN CRATER*, the "Blind Master" has not been lost sight of. He's become, in his metamorphoses, Barber's epidermis whose task with a bucket of water and two dead fish required him to negotiate a tricky obstacle course. He was the blind-folded, sleeper-footed traveller in *LIKE A BAT OUT A HELL* (1975), and the petty offender/artist who was locked in the stocks in the City Gallery for 48 hours (*STOCKS AND BONDS*).

Barber writes: "I believe that I am working towards a position where paradoxically . . . in the act of overloading or the deprivation of sensory (physical) and intellectual experience, I am thereby enlarging my own and others' capacity for sensory and intellectual stimulation." The aim is: expanded consciousness. A sensory specialisation results in a heightened sensitivity to the concrete particulars of the chosen field of experience. For us, the enlargement comes through empathy, vicarious experience





5

of the performer's physical efforts to master his space. But watch that "paradoxically." Friends may betray anxieties (Can you breathe OK? Did you get any sleep?), but we're not sorry for him. His ordeal may be real enough, but he's asked for it; his get-up may be functional, it strikes us as a touch farcical, a touch gruesome, sadomasochistic. And so, too, is our participation. We are the willing witnesses and we want, we desire, him to complete his task. Sitting still we watch, intensely involved in his blind struggles to his, for us, simple goal. Thus something like complicity, not pity, conditions and feeds our empathy. Could it be that of the two the feeling of complicity is the more binding? I'll not labour the point, because any work which puts a performer through an ordeal must give off a like feeling. The relevance to STOCKS AND BONDS shouldn't be overlooked; while the performer's confinement is far less demanding on the viewer than in, say, BUCKET ACTION, his assumption of the role of victim is explicit.

To see how a touch may locate consciousness at the tips of the fingers, how part of a trestle, say, may indicate the disposition of the physical world, to sharpen the sense of what it is to be in the world. To take such note of another's actions, as if the "Master Tape Bearer" gave us instant replay, to be at that time *of* his blindness, to sharpen the sense of what it is to be in the world with other selves. Such are the experiences that come from this distribution of roles: I am the Blind Master, as you are his witness. Being of the same stuff as the viewer's experience, performance art addresses that experience with a directness object art cannot equal and just because of that it may seem no medium at all. Even supposing this were the case, the performance artist faces this fact: his work throws into high relief the structured nature of the art viewer's behaviour. We're talking about etiquette. So another way of coming at the concerns prompted by the Blind Master is to be much more explicit about the social nature of role distribution. Hence BOX AND COX (1974). Bruce Barber writes on his invitation: "Although this is a contrived situation, you the audience . . . may assume that the space defined is our home. If you consider yourself our friend, then you may enter our home at your own pleasure. If not a friend you may enter only by spoken or written invitation from my wife or myself. This act will divide the audience into categories of friends and non-friends. The option is yours to adopt an attitude." Home is a host and a square of chairs. And a TV of course: videotape of two boxers in a ring, sparring — what both role-players are letting themselves in for. An art gallery provides a home for art works, is a place where, during visiting hours, art lovers may make their acquaintance. STOCKS AND BONDS is another work about the roles of performer and viewer, and of the institution proper to their encounter. As is common with self-reflexive works, the viewer's participation in these two more nearly equals that of the performer than in Barber's other pieces.

Performance is a medium, or rather it is several. Look at titles. I know

no studies of the conventions of titling art works. Take two abstract painters: Don Peebles numbers and dates his work, Gordon Walters names his (*Genealogy*, for instance). Not on the canvas, or the frame even. Colin McCahon's titles go on the canvas, sometimes cover much of it. Is a title documentation, and is documentation (such as the shows that followed INFLUX or MT EDEN CRATER) title? STOCKS AND BONDS has a 22 page title? For Peebles the title is of a sign system not merely distinct from but alien to that of his work but for Barber it belongs to one of several his performances may employ. Titling involves an unusual not to say aberrant use of language. Words get meanings from their local grammatical and semantic contexts; temporarily robbed of such contexts, titles are pressed into the service of vast and specific contents called novels, paintings, performances. Consequently, their potential for polysemy is abnormally great, and by choosing colloquial expressions and hunting out puns, Bruce Barber has, since BUCKET ACTION, sought to exploit that potential. BOX AND COX (alternatively titled: My wife and I would like you to adopt an attitude . . .) is a colloquialism defined in the invitation: "an arrangement whereby a space is never occupied by the two inhabitants of that space simultaneously." Thus it describes the two performers (husband and wife) alternately adopting the role of host. More generally, it poses the question about relationships that is the subject of the work. More particularly again, care is taken to identify husband as Box, wife as Cox — we guess that's how it is in Morton's comedy whence the expression derives. But take the liberty of reading them as words for genitalia, then what? On the video, two do occupy the same place at the same time, but "box", and in the fighting sense are (formally) enemies, not (formally) friends. Thus, the title enters the work variously, ambiguously, comprehensively. It is a verbal knot that holds together a large but loose package of information.

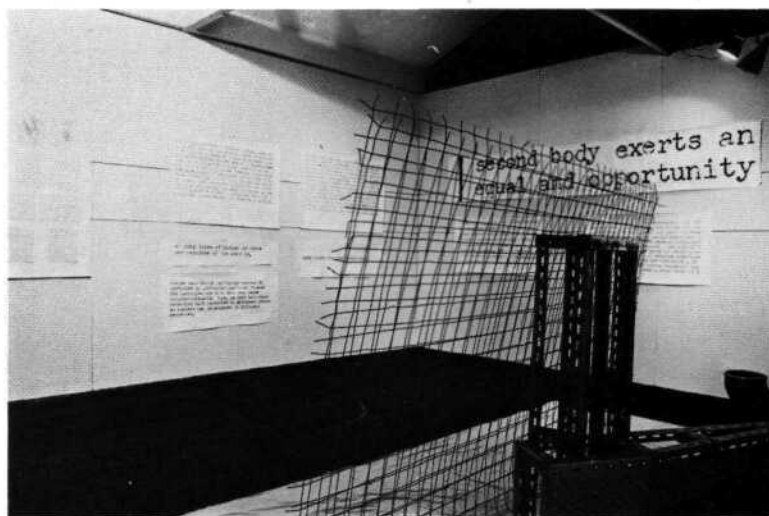
STOCKS AND BONDS is another such knot. It means "financial assets and liabilities," although the installation appears to rule out that definition, to suggest instead: two means of physical restraint. But the catalogue reminds us that the stocks belonged in the marketplace, tells us the gallery paid the artist to put himself in the stocks and that he, in his turn, paid the gallery for an attendant to look after his over night. Tells us that the performance encompassed United Nations Day (for respite from international disorder) and Labour Day (for respite from business) and his mother's birthday (for the artist's stock and bond). So both readings, at least, apply, and the connections between them are various. The catalogue/complement is a compilation of very diverse, often fragmentary texts which set or sustain in motion trains of thought on aspects of law and economics as they may be applied to art.

Assuming the gallery is in the business of contemporary idolatry, and that the artist finds this offensive, Barber asks whether the gallery or the work are egalitarian. The installation is made of his assumptions: the

stocks and its occupant make explicit the gallery's business, while the PA (public address) and closed circuit TV systems, by breaking the spatial and temporal confines of the institution, make explicit the bid to disrupt the business-as-usual. The gallery has perhaps been neutralised. Do all viewers now have an equal opportunity to participate fully in the work, to come at the kind of issues and questions raised up in the catalogue? The answer has to be no. Rather the performance served largely to reinforce the artist's assumptions. It's reported that friends brought him flowers and played him music, whereas others came to stare, their participation being largely confined to the expression of a curiosity as to whether the gallery was about its proper business. At one point, the artist shouted at a group of viewers and ordered them out. "I am tired of people coming and staring at me," he said. He wished, it was reported, that people would not focus on the money angle.— Reporters had the same curiosity, took it in fact to an appropriate authority. Mr. Anderton (City Council Cultural Affairs Committee) said the exhibition "sounded zany." "If anyone thinks I'm crazy, they're not looking hard enough for meaning," insisted the artist) Told the cost and Mr. Barber's intention to make people think, Mr. Anderton said: "Maybe putting money into making people think could be worth it." An extraordinary statement, however it was meant, and a resounding answer to the artist's question. "Whatever the answer however, the success of STOCKS AND BONDS did not depend on it. That was its strength. What counted was the interaction of performance and complement, the first being brilliantly conceived and the second full of suggestive if somewhat cryptic wit.

*For documentation of these two early pieces and BUCKET ACTION, see *New Art, Some Recent New Zealand Sculpture*, ed. Jim Allen & Wystan Curnow, forthcoming from Heinemann Educational.

"See Bruce Barber's article, "Influx or Done Time in Bledisloe" in SEED 5. (1972).



6

JIM ALLEN: O-AR PART II: NOVEMBER 11-19

Most of Jim Allen's work from 1969 on has been environmental; that's to say, he has made enclosures the viewer is expected to physically enter. *O-AR* thus continues a well-established interest. The claims his enclosures make on the viewer are typically gentle. They're not designed to box or hem the viewer in. Where rigid structures are used they amount to little more than the sparest metal or wire frame. Preferred materials are plastic sheeting, calico or hessian, light, even liquid — materials that are soft, light, easily penetrated by body or eye. Such gentle materials may not, however, be all come-hither. All five environmental structures in *SMALL WORLDS* (1969) provoked without necessarily permitting a tactile, as well as a visual, encounter. By its very delicacy, "Environment I" for example — a work consisting of a plane of small silver balls hung at belly height from the ceiling on plastic threads — refused all but the most tentative intrusion.

ARENA (1970) was a spare labyrinth of barb wire stretched first at eye, then at groin and knee levels. As such, it was the least gentle of Allen's enclosures. It was there to be entered though, which was not the case with the "SHELTERS" — too-small hessian tents surrounded by chopped barb wire, in the same show. Subsequent versions of "ARENA" exhibited in New Plymouth and Mildura had rope where wire had been. He feared, perhaps, that its aggressiveness could be read too simply. There was, for instance, this progression: he who braved the wire and reached the centre was the least threatened of participants, the most protected. Had he now fenced himself in against intruders? I'm keen on this irony since it turns the didacticism that lurks in the environmental format back on itself. I'm assuming that a successful modern work must grant both viewer and art work a proper freedom, proper to the perpetually compromised nature of experience. In so far as enclosures may seem machines for processing the viewer they subvert these freedoms. Jim Allen's enclosures do not intimidate the viewer — his works are arguments for opennesses of one kind or another. His only temptations have been to seduce him or her. No such temptations are at work in *O-AR*. This two-part work is Allen's major sculptural statement to date. Taking what he wants from Post-Minimalist art, he builds on what he's done before. And more: getting at right angles to himself, he sharply clarifies the direction of his work. Part I, shown at Barry Lett Galleries during July, 1975, is, at first sight, a disconcertingly informal, even empty work. It consists of two canvas sheets covering most of the gallery floor, a heap of manuka sticks on one end, and, on the other, some reinforcing metal, a metal footplate, and some wire netting. And pinned to the wall are sheets of paper covered with typewritten statements blown up to various sizes, graphs, mathematical calligraphy. On the face of it, none of this stuff would seem to constitute sculpture, but all of it may be read as having to



7

do with sculpture, — as material for the making of it or as ideas for making or viewing sculpture. In what sense is this material about sculpture itself sculpture? What we've got is another environment. The two sheets leave a pathway around the walls which invites us to walk around the gallery, with our backs to the things on the floor, reading what's on the walls. This written material is pinned more or less at eye level. This way the separation of ideas about, and the materials of, sculpture is literally emphasised. Some texts, however, are so enlarged that they may be read a distance — across a corner, or the room — so that we're encouraged to relate ideas and materials. We can look through the grid formed by the reinforcing steel to the piece of graph paper on the opposite wall, or, from the other side of the room, through the same grid to the calligraphy. In this way the connection between ideas about, and the materials of, sculpture, is literally emphasised.

Connection, separation: there is a conflict here that cannot be fully resolved. Part I would seem to systematically subvert or frustrate the patterns it sets up. The children's writing is schoolwork done at home: CAT/SAT/MAT/ "playfully" covered with rubber stamps of approval. A piece of paper is covered with semi-intelligible sentence fragments from an appropriate philosophical text. Here, then, we have words to pattern the world — from the least to the most sophisticated — treated "playfully". Put to further use. Words caught half-way, about either to lapse into their former coherence or assume a new. Next to a transcript of an artist describing an example of his own sculpture we've got a sheet of calculations for the stress systems of a piece of sculpture. But it's not the same work. And so it goes. Discursive but not didactic, Part I holds in suspension a wealth of connections and separations.

Two metaphors need attention. This is an enclosure that discusses the materials (words and things) of the artist's intentions for sculpture in terms of materials as enclosures. Since Allen's last major work was in a show called FOUR MEN IN A BOAT I conclude the title means "oar", something dipped in, pulled on, lifted out, and dipped in again, that keeps us going. A word for how Allen sees his art, and for how we respond to this work. The dash after the "O" suggests a pun-verbal coincidence, chance connection — "or" spelt aloud, "or" as in either/or". A word for options, alternatives, free play with systems, pattern, enclosures.

On first dipping in to O-AR PART II, it's the difference from Part I that impresses. This is a simple and powerful physical statement. And it's familiar in format. Another labyrinth, negotiating which the viewer passes from the relatively constricting passage formed by the blank white right wall of the righthand first floor gallery on the one hand, and the black polythene sheet the artist slung the length (almost) of the gallery on the other, on to the next corridor broken open on his left by the doorway through to the lefthand gallery. Then to the corridor in that gallery

formed by the this-time transparent polythene sheet slung its length (almost), and to the final corridor which has most access ways of all. Another labyrinth with a familiar progression. Breath-taking in its efficiency, particularly to those sensitized to the space by Billy Apple's earlier use of it, it is airy and has a grandness of scale that embarrassed the Hansell's prize entries next door on the Mezzanine floor. The simplicity of the work is more apparent than real; what makes it appear simple is in fact what makes it complex — the scale. Little of it can be seen at one time from one position and a change in position can dramatically change, add to, our experience of it.

Of course, we'd quite misunderstand Part I, if we expected Part II to somehow complete it. Part II is the kind of work Part I should generate but as such, points to further parts, parts of a never to be completed whole. To what extent Part I will thus remain a kind of seminal statement is a question that will only be answered by later works. Let's come at the problem this way: in Part II Jim Allen realises the intentions of Part I in terms of immediate physical experiences. In the one, space is organised to show how we are to take words, in the other to show how we are to take place. In the one, the viewer can move steadily around the walls only to find as many cross-references as sequences of statement. In the other, he will find the route already described isn't compulsory, that there are in fact as many as six separate exits and entrances to the pattern. In the one, it is the wealth of contexts that makes it impossible to see "the whole", in the other it's the physical structure of the piece that obscures it. And in canvassing these analogies I now begin to distinguish Part II from previous enclosures. Unlike "Arena", this work is not independent of its given situation which is itself an enclosure, a well-established system if you like. These two insubstantial curtains casually and temporarily taped to the lighting system, rough out an alternative. The artist put his "or" in. In both parts, then, he has introduced into the body of his art materials previously alien to it. And that's how it should go from here.



ROGER PETERS: SONGS OF THE EARTH. NOVEMBER
24-DECEMBER 2

Roger Peters does not use artists' materials. His works seem to comprise things-of-the-world caught in the act of resolutely being themselves. Here is an artist without medium or style. Video, rocks, sacks, flames, wood, oil, propane, gas, wire . . . etc. His show had a remarkably diverse look. Little was done to each object; Peters seems reluctant to manipulate what is on hand.

However, certain obvious orderings pointed towards the songs the artist would have these things sing. Many of the pieces were ordered by number. THE ROCKS had three scoria rocks; its companion piece THE RINGS, three limestone blocks. RAMP three wooden slats, the two ladders six rungs, the SACK RACK, eighteen sacks. Threes or multiples of the same. The LADDERS had the same form; both were fed by electricity which issued, in the one in heat, in the other in light. THE RINGS gave off electric light, THE ROCKS, gas heat. The rocks were sedimentary in the one, igneous in the other. Works at one end of the gallery were to do with heat, at the other end with light. But the TV screen in the "light" end showed a cold, snowy woodland scene. And so on. SONGS OF THE EARTH would respond to a method of comparison and contrast; it was an exhibition of works each of which contributed to a context in terms of which any of the works could be read.

What kind of art language was this? Peters' work is hardly abstract. Those yet to see a content specific to abstract art have not tired of prophesizing a return to realism. But, rewarded with photo-realism, soft-core surrealism, and the like which have surfaced during the current shake up of modernist styles, they have missed the expansion of discourse taking place under the aegis of sculpture. For instance, extrapolations of the temporal circumstance required by conventional sculpture into environments and performances have opened sculpture to ideas of narrative and argument suppressed in painting well before the advent of abstraction. Sculpture as an art of substance has recently brought more of the world directly into its fictions. All the projects under review bear witness to this. Moreover assemblages, or installations of things-in-the-world, as in the projects of Lethbridge, Gray and Peters, are representational works of a kind. Made up of found objects they nevertheless represent those classes of objects to which they belong. Narrative, argument, representation - all these put into the sculptor's hands a greater variety and range of discourse.

The distinctive structures used by Lethbridge, Gray and Peters go back to Duchamp and those influenced by him: "(I) . . . *tried in the that big glass to find a completely personal and new means of expression; the final product was to be a wedding of mental and visual reactions; in other words, the ideas in the Class are more important than the actual realization . . . My research was in the direction of*

finding some way of expressing myself without taking one of those labels, and yet produce something that would be an inner product of myself." Set beside the large Glass, and beside the formalist art of the sixties, this statement is less commonplace than it sounds. Duchamp's example helped stop in its tracks an art of unprecedented ontological purity. The marriage of idea and form he mentions was not made in heaven — the ceremony was improvised; it was a marriage of convenience which permitted things of the mind and world to enter the work more variously and directly than before. Here that celebrated by THE PLASMA CAST-IRON FOAM CO. PRESENTS ADRIAN REGINALD HALL at the Barry Lett Galleries in 1971 was a major event. There was this work: forty-nine knee high concrete building blocks painted green three-quarters of their height arranged in regular rows filling an alcove; except for one row on the other side of one alcove wall. It worked as such; for Hall the physical realization of the work is usually as important as the idea. With the title LOW TIDE . . . BONE DRY, A CONCRETE STATEMENT CONCERNING WADING, it became a metaphor with a physical tenor/vehicle, and a verbal tenor/vehicle. A context of related materials: (i) walls, bricks, wood, (ii) clock, biographical documents etc. permitted further associations to do with making, measuring and identity. Thus each work was held together by information blatantly derived from outside the work itself. Lethbridge and Peters are two of several younger artists who have developed ways of putting a work or an exhibition together which owe much to Hall.

SONGS OF THE EARTH was an exhibition of thematically related assemblages of found objects. Functional and/or functioning they were functionally presented. Yet each was in a sense, unusable. THE COAL was simply a large wooden box with a rope handle at either end; it was clearly far too heavy to be lifted by two men when full. That's a bit of a puzzle? The three fluorescent light rings were attached to limestone blocks as if for lifting? From lifting to climbing: who would climb glass rungs, or rungs of glowing radiator bars? RAMP was of little value as such (it, too, had rope handles). What was the use of the warm oil bath? The image on the video receiver was static. *Where* are such objects to be found? Not in the world after all? These works, in fact, spoke as much for themselves as for the uses to which, in some sense, they are usually put. In resisting our use they enter the art context.

SONGS OF THE EARTH may seem an odd title for a collection of working pseudomodels of the technological uses to which man puts natural materials and forces. *These* are songs? Let's see about that. About their being man-made works fashioned by industry and/or art from the earth. The oil bath was spotlighted, otherwise the show lit itself and dramatically. Flames flickered, gas hissed, heat radiated. What had become of the gallery's customary stillness?

Or, perhaps, it was the earth itself which sang? The title raised without



resolving that ambiguity. The artist celebrated less what we know — the results of harnessing nature for our own purposes — than what we forget: that which is harnessed. The gas flames nestled on volcanic rocks, reminders of sources of fire and gas. Also evoked were bodily needs for and uses of energy: heat, light, lifting and climbing. All in all these were elegant essays on energy sidetracked from common purposes so we might review again what we do with what we've got. And if Peters' reluctance to manipulate what is on hand is rather more apparent than real it is real enough to be taken as an exemplary attitude.

SONG OF THE EARTH was Peters' first one-man show. Not a prolific artist — several of these works date from his Elam show of 1974 — he is clearly immensely careful and already accomplished.

DAVID MEALING: A JUMBLE SALE: DECEMBER 5-12

A typical item:

ART GALLERY USE 'A DISGRACE' AND 'A SUCCESS' // The latest exhibition at the Auckland City Gallery, a jumble sale, came in for some criticism at the Auckland City Council meeting last night// Mr. W.J.H. Clark thought it was a disgrace for a building like the art gallery to be used for a jumble sale// He said he had visited the jumble sale and could see nothing artistic in it.// The Deputy Mayor, Dr. R.H.L. Ferguson, said the sale had been a success if it got Mr. Clark to visit the gallery.

This was a jumble sale all right. No question about that. But was it art? Aestheticians as different in their persuasions as, say, George Dickie and Morse Peckham, have come around to this conclusion: art may be best defined not as the product of artistic behaviour, nor as something possessing certain essential attributes, but as that which offers an occasion for the playing of the art perceiver's role. I'm assuming the Art Gallery staff took David Mealing's JUMBLE SALE/ A MARKETPLACE to be such an occasion. It is *my* assumption. This certainly was a work of art.

Whether it was a good work — well, that's another question. When Mr. Clark says it's a disgrace for the art gallery to be used for a jumble sale, he is saying one thing: art galleries are for art, not for that which is not art. But when he says he visited the jumble sale and found nothing artistic in it, he is saying another: art galleries are *for good* art. Though I doubt he saw the distinction. This is a commonplace confusion reflecting the idolatry of art as an amenity of gentility. Value is located less in works, more in how they are housed, in architecture and interior decoration. Robert Gilmore: "If you think of the Art Gallery ... as a place of beauty stay away until next week/// In the name of art the place has been made into a scruffy rubbish bazaar plus propaganda centre." If it did nothing else, Mealing's work brought certain snobberies to the surface.

Let's take another: Mr. Ernest Smith, Director of the Gallery: "And

I've never before seen so many Maoris and Islanders in the gallery." Last week a Birkenhead friend of mine put his house contents up for sale and an Islander came all the way from Otahuhu to find out if he'd any old shoes to sell, and my friend gave him old shoes and some clothes as well. I mean, some people, many of them Islanders and Maoris, have to get most of their stuff at jumble sales, be they in Birkenhead, the Karangahape Road Car Park, or the City Art Gallery. And I do question the right of the Art Gallery to add such people to its attendance figures. By suggesting this was "not so much a work of art as a social commentary" was the Director acting under false pretences, and was he getting out of his depth?

This was work of art all right. No question about it. But was it a jumble sale? This was a found event. A jumble-sale the dictionary is "a sale of miscellaneous cheap or secondhand articles at a charitable bazaar or the like." It works this way: some non-profit organisation devoted to the alleviation of some suffering, the righting of some wrong, the solution of some problem, the doing of some good — it needs money. Supporters donate articles for sale which, on a set date and place (like a school or church hall, a mall or car park), are then sold at rock bottom prices to those who need or relish such bargains and/or desire to thus aid the cause. Money matters, but is here subordinate to what's an occasion for showing support for a common cause. Mealing's sale was distinguished only by the unusual diversity of organisations involved. From the Auckland Embroiderers Guild to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, from the N.Z. Rationalist Association Inc. to the Divine Light Mission, from the N.Z. Family Planning Association to the Foundation for the Protection of the Unborn Child. Andre Breton, discussing *L'objet trouve*, wrote "Objects thus reconstructed share this in common with each other: deriving from everyday things, they differ from them simply by a change of role." The same may be said of the found event. In its new role the object or event now provides an occasion for us to play the art perceiver's role. A rather special occasion, for in playing our role we must take into our account the fact that the object or event concerned is normally the occasion for the playing of quite other roles. Our attention is directed less to the thing itself, more to its transformation caused by the shift of context. Robert Gilmore found scruffy rubbish, whereas I found a rich, mildly funky atmosphere that suggested 1950s Happenings, but neither response is very relevant. Rather, we'd both do better to ask: is a jumble-sale like an exhibition? Is not an art gallery a non-profit organisation devoted to the alleviation of some suffering, ... the doing of some good, and don't the supporters of the gallery (say the Art Gallery Associates) donate works they've bought to the gallery where, during visiting hours, at rock bottom prices (slice of rates or small admission charge), we may take what we want from them because we need to or because we support the cause of art. The analogy's got its limitations, yet it has to be chased

up. Without it Mealing's insinuation that, like it or lump it, an art gallery is a socially committed or compromised institution, that putting on jumble-sales is a more honest and relevant action for it to take — these claims are weakened if not missed entirely.

Mealing quotes Yoko Ono: "All people are artists — it's just that some think they are not because they have been told by society they are not" And says himself that the "participation in the jumble sale of 55 groups, organisations and individuals representing various social attitudes, beliefs and opinions is simply an expression of the creative impulses inherent in the art and lives of New Zealanders." That's to say participants chosen represented those who have resisted society's categorisation of themselves as non-artists. The transformation effected by the jumble sale conferred upon the participants the title of artist. These were not cultural heroes, past and present, but common or garden enthusiasts, nuts, stirrers much like you and me were we to have the courage of our convictions, or the courage to have them at all. Each group of artists gathered (literally) beneath a banner which proclaimed a view of the world, and behind a heap of old clothes, magazines etc — a medium of expression and exchange. A positive response to a work (a purchase) represented a contribution not to more "art" (jumble-sales) but to the real art of social change.

A JUMBLE SALE was a criticism of art gallery art which relied for its recognition on the making of analogies which, in its turn relied on an appreciation of the art perceiver's role. Also, a celebration of an exemplary mode of exchange; as such it was still reliant of these recognitions.

This found event differed from Duchamp's notorious found object, the urinal; viewers were scandalised by that work, but none of them pissed in it and I've already suggested that many of Mealing's customers undoubtedly did just that. They had no idea of the art perceiver's role, no idea they'd bought their old shoes from artists. On the other hand, those who went for art and met, to their disgust, a jumble-sale, had this commonplace problem: Uninformed by, say, the artist's properly raucous summary of current art polemics in his catalogue to an earlier event (BLOOD, THE RIVER OF LIFE, Building Centre, 1973), they were caught napping. Even to the informed, however, A JUMBLE SALE may have been a disappointment. For my money there are precious few creative impulses inherent in the art and lives of New Zealanders or, for that matter, Eskimos, Frenchmen or Chinamen. I make this counterclaim: social attitudes, beliefs, opinions express not creative but uncreative impulses and that may be just as well, creativity is dynamite and the unenviable possession of very few. The energies represented by the participants in this exhibition are something else again. I can salute them without relinquishing my claim. Moreover A JUMBLE SALE failed significantly or decisively to release those energies into my space. Its initial impact passed too rapidly, leaving one high and dry with theory.

I'm forced to the conclusion that attempts to transcend the art context by a manipulation of that context tend to be self-defeating. STOCKS AND BONDS provided for such a contingency, A JUMBLE SALE did not.

- 1 John Lethbridge (1948-) New Zealand
Fall Circle 1975 (USED PENCILS SERIES)
Offset lithograph. 660 x 331 mm. Ace no. 1976/12
Signed
- 2 John Lethbridge. *Untitled*. Project Programme 1/ACAG/1976
- 3 John Lethbridge. *Infallible Guesswork*. Project Programme 1/ACAG/1976
- 4 Bruce Barber. *On the Stocks*, a general view. Project Programme 2/ACAG 1976
- 5 Bruce Barber. *Bucket Action* Auckland City Art Gallery Festival April 1974.
- 6 Jim Allen. *O-AR part 1*, a general view. Barry Lett Gallery/1976
- 7 Jim Allen. *O-AR part 2*. Project Programme 4/ACAG 1976
- 8 Roger Peters. *Songs of the Earth*. A general view. Project Programme 5/ACAG 1976
- 9 David Mealing. *Jumble Show*, a general view. Project Programme 6/ACAG 1976

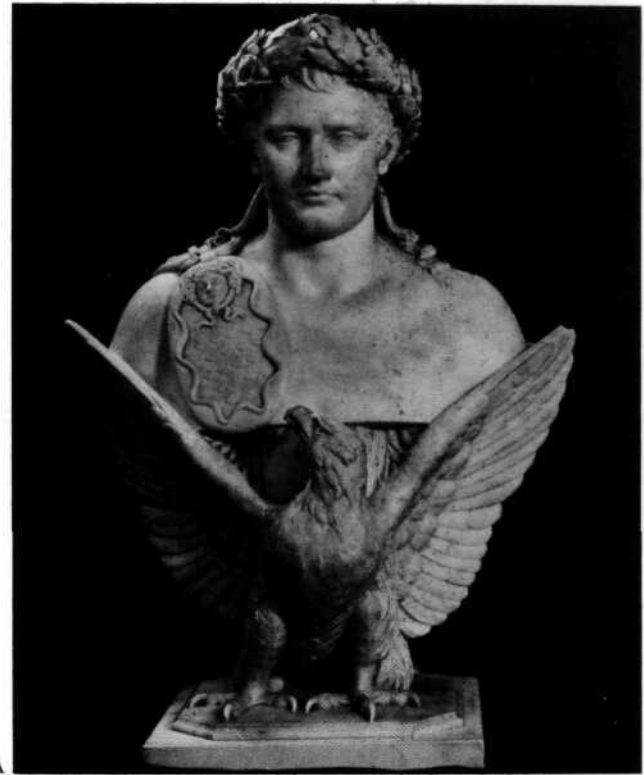
Bertel Thorvaldsen

Napoleon I

Originally owned by Princess Eugenie (1826-1920) Napoleon III's wife, Thorvaldsen's NAPOLEON I was given to the ACAG in 1927 by Moss Davis. As lot 542 in the Hamilton Palace sale of 1882 it fetched £640, bought by Greenshields. Titian, Mantegna, Bronzino and Perugino fetched similar prices.

With Hans Andersen, Soren Kierkegaard and others, Thorvaldsen was part of Denmark's *guldalderen* or Golden Age, centred on Copenhagen. Born in 1768 or 1770 (there is doubt as to the year) the son of an immigrant figure-head carver, he rose from comparative poverty to the highest social position possible for an artist, though little of this huge reputation remains now except perhaps among neoclassical scholars and down in the suburbs of present day Denmark where reproductions of the plaques NIGHT and DAY do duty as domestic wall ornament. At least one Auckland shop has NIGHT as part of its window display.

By showing promise in less prestigious craft classes at the Academy (1781-93) he got the attention and guidance of the neoclassicist Abildgaard, an admirer of Fuseli, though his official teacher was Johannes Wiedevelt. Fifteen years later, a gold medal and state travel grant saw him in Rome, then a melting pot of radical ideas in the way Paris was early in this century. To celebrate Rome's impact on his wintry Northern mind he called his arrival date his "Roman Birthday"; in his own words: "the snow thawed from my eyes." And his going there as he was to return forty years later by battleship epitomizes the official status enjoyed by certain forms of art. He quickly joined a hermetic group of avant garde and aristocratic friends; of these the most influential on him were two other Danes: Carstehs the painter and Georg Zoega, archaeologist and Papal envoy. But oddly he never went to Greece to see first hand and in context the art he got to esteem so much; though probably he felt he had no need to go there, since the practice of looting ensured that ample Greece statuary was either already in the Eternal City or eternally passing through it north to the Nordic countries where the bizarre phenomenon of the so-called *neoclassic archeologic* was most fanatical — its fanaticism seemed to vary in direct proportion to the distance from the digging. Pieces from the Temple of Aphaia in Aegina (Munich) were a case in point and Thorvaldsen's reputation both as sculptor and scholar can be gauged by the fact that King Ludwig asked him to restore them. But according to the Encyclopaedia of World Art, "this close occupation with Greek originals left its mark on Thorvaldsen's work and unfortunately on the Greek originals as well". They have since been de-



thorvaldsenized. Thorvaldsen did a roaring trade "restoring old and damaged sculptures, supplying heads and limbs for torsos and completing busts of which only the heads remained. He claimed that he never noted how much of these works was his own and how much original and that even he found it impossible to draw a distinction afterwards." (Arnau, 1961) Eventually Thorvaldsen's Greek obsession was to become so intense that his work seemed bent on nothing but vindicating Winckelmann's doctrine that beauty, like good drinking water should be tasteless (History of Ancient Art/1764/Ch.2)

Official recognition came in the form of a professorship at the Danish Academy (1805) and then the Directorship from 1833-44; posts held open for him until he returned to Denmark thirty-three years later! With his grant exhausted the return home seemed inevitable, but just as he was entering his carriage an aptly named Thomas Hope miraculously appeared and commissioned a work that was to occupy him on and off for 25 years; a marble version of the plaster sketch of Jason which Canova had admired so much. Canova's blessing fuelled Thorvaldsen's rocketing fame and commissions poured in from then on, mainly from English-



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C

men. The trip home was postponed and in 1812 he was commissioned to do a hundred foot long frieze depicting Alexander the Great entering Babylon to mark Napoleon's Rome visit. He astonished every one by modelling it in three months and earned the nickname, "Patriarch of the Bas Reliefs".

Just before finally acceding to mounting pressure from Danish quarters to return home in 1819, there is reason to believe he suffered some kind of personal crisis, though it is hard to say whether this was caused by a temporary loss of neoclassical nerve, the unsettling presence of a virulent strain of German romanticism in the city, or by his amatory affairs which forever unresolved were causing scandal abroad and guilt within. But whatever the reasons, the trip was timely and a huge success; along the route kings and emperors heaped him with honours and with so many orders for work that by the time he returned to Rome in 1820 he was having to employ forty assistants to operate the pointing machines used to copy plaster sketches into marble. His factory was a must on the Grand Tourists itinerary. Like Schubert, he was an idol of the Bierdermier

period. Mendelssohn was said to have played for him as he worked and with Canova dead he was practically on God's right hand. But the crisis he had suffered was not by-productive in the creative sense. His work which according to the taste of the times, critics have either praised for noble calm or rubbished as empty adaptations of classical form tailored for the Establishment, stubbornly refused to evolve. He had remained so long myopically wrapped in the minutiae of archaeological exactitude, as to be totally immune to both the inner self and the surrounding world of revolution, war, plague, riots to mention just a few of the things that were almost literally on his doorstep. In his drawings and plaster sketches we glimpse a private romanticism which publically he had to suppress to keep up neoclassical appearances. Romanticism had been fully operational like this in private long before going public as a movement. While neoclassicism certainly derives from a superficial grasp of the logic and poise of an ancient culture, romanticism, may, with equal justification but less obviously and with less scholarly sanction, be said to have come in part from a discovery of the darker side of that culture: the shaman's

world of oracles, orphism, animism and the tantric ecstasy of poet and seer. However, in spite of themselves, the great neoclassicists, painters especially, pressured the facade of neoclassical decorum sufficiently to crack it slightly. Ingres made hair-line cracks Corot's late portraits turned to gaping fissures. With Picasso only the foundations were left. But Thorvaldsen, barely mentioned in today's art histories played no part in this. He simply fell victim to the twin horsemen of the artist's apocalypse: Stylistic Cul-de-Sac and Over-Staffed-Order-Book.

However the period following his return to Rome was extremely prolific with notable among its works the BYRON MONUMENT at Trinity College, Cambridge (Byron sat for this in 1817 and complained his face had not been made sad enough), the POPE PIUS VII FUNERAL MONUMENT in St. Peter's Rome (a remarkable commission for a protestant to get), the COPERNICUS MONUMENT in Warsaw, the GUTTENBERG MONUMENT in Mainz, and the SCHILLER MONUMENT in Stuttgart to name just a few.

In 1838 the Danes staged a triumphant homecoming. The warship sent to get him was met at Copenhagen by a floating carnival of orchestras, choirs and mythological figures made by the city's guilds. And as if to order, both a rainbow and an aurora borealis appeared over the scene which must have strained the credulity of even Hans Andersen in the crowd. Thorvaldsen spent his last six years in seclusion away from the idolizing crowds with Baronesse Stampe who provided both congenial company and a studio. He died in 1844 at the theatre. His tomb is also the Thorvaldsen Museum.

Thorvaldsen was probably no better or worse than all the rest of his fellow practitioners: Flaxman, Banks, Canova, Sergei, Schadow, Powers, Chaudet etc. — these days one would need the perceptual acuity of a chicken sexer to tell them apart. To the modern sensibility a room full of this stuff tends to be a depressing sight. And with their only achievement a negative one, that of reducing a magnificent affair of form, light, myth and landscape, to something completely out of context and fit only for the dreary atelier, we look around for scholarly excuses for this so futilely diligent a band. They had, after all cleared the way not for Rodin who detoured back to Michelangelo for ideas, but for the garden gnome.

T.G.

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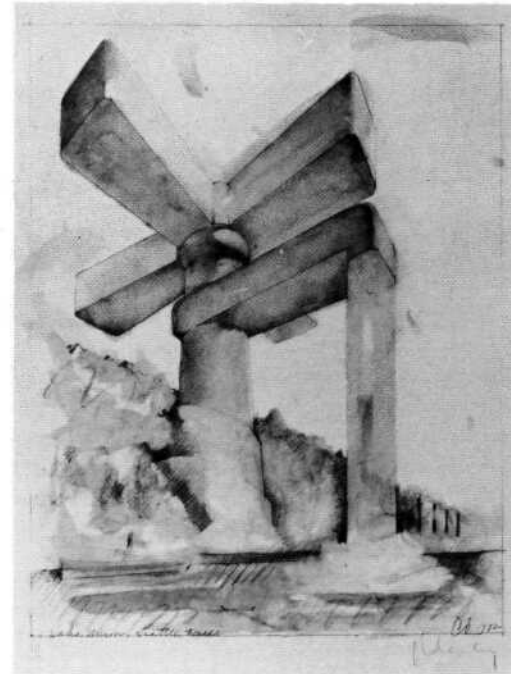
A, B, C. Bertel Thorvaldsen (1768-1884) Danish
Napoleon 1 (c!820)
 Marble 1009mm. Acc.no. 1927/2711

Claes Oldenburg

TWO PRINTS

The two Claes Oldenburg prints — *Proposal for a Colossal Monument in the Form of a Sink Faucet for Lake Union Seattle* (1972)¹ and the *Study for a Monument in the Heroic/Erotic/Academic/Comics Style* (1974-5)² were purchased by the Auckland City Council for the ACAG Permanent Collection in 1975 and 1974 respectively.

The *Faucet* is a halftone, offset lithograph from a pencil and wash study on paper; the *HIEIAC* an etching after a ballpoint pen drawing (26" x 40") Oldenburg made in 1965. The two prints are fine examples of the versatility of the artist's graphic style and though concerned with the common form (Monument) they display two quite different treatments of it. While the *Faucet* belongs to a whole family



Oldenburg Claes (1929-) U.S.A.
Proposal for Colossal Structure in the Form of a Sink Faucet for Lake Union, Seattle, Washington
 1972
 Offset lithograph. Edition 217/300 822 x 625mm Acc. no. 1976/45
 Signed below plate.



Oldenburg Claes (1929-) U.S.A.
Study for a Monument in the Heroic/Erotic/Academic/Comics Styles 1976/75
Etching. Edition 35/60 660 x 889mm Ace. No. 1976/45
Signed by artist.

of proposed Monuments which are closely related in their subjects — consumer commodities, household appliances and foodstuffs — the *HIEIAC Monument* remains something of an anomaly. Its eroticism, for example, is totally explicit in contradistinction to the implied or concealed eroticism of the majority of Oldenburg's metaphorical constructions such as the phallic lipsticks, electric cake mixers and soft drainpipes of the Sixties.

The *HIE/A/C* represents a climactic orgiastic vision; a conglomeration of figures and appendages composing a sort of matrix in the shape of the male genital. If one considers the implications of an imagined erection and unveiling of this monumental, limp organ, some measure of the farcical humour of the work can be appreciated. Ironically the *HIEIAC* belongs as much to the genus Soft Sculpture (to which it is obviously related on account of its limpness) as to the genus Monuments to which it also belongs by title.

In the original ballpoint pen study³ from which the print derives, the central group of figures is surrounded by peripheral sketches of dismembered heads and members in a variety of sexual permutations. However a number of these have been eliminated from the print, possibly by erasure at the diapositive stage or even from the plate prior to etching. The resultant effect is more unified and decidedly more sculptural than in the ballpoint pen study. Nevertheless the *HIEIAC* lacks the *integritas* or oneness of the majority of Oldenburg's constructions since it is composed of several individual figures; despite the fact that these, collectively, comprise a single form. In this respect the *HIE/A/C* is almost unique amongst Oldenburg's works. As an anatomical fragment it has counterparts in the *Thames Knees* (1966) and the *Tunnel in the Form of a Nose* (1968). Yet these can easily be apprehended as separate entities; even if they are fragments. They possess a wholeness which characterizes almost all Oldenburg's works. His object constructions and even the fragments, have an individual existence, even though they are torn and isolated from their contexts. But the *HIEIAC* is ambiguously both an individual anatomical fragment and a collection of individual figures. The complete figure, incidentally, is almost totally absent from Oldenburg's works after 1961 until the time of the *H/E/A/C* study where it reappears as a metaphorical device. The *H/E/A/C* can be viewed as a metaphor for a national malady, the symptoms being an insatiable craving for diversion and titillation. Oldenburg's garish, enamelled, plaster and burlap parodies of cakestuffs (of dubious nutritive value) highlighted one aspect of the compulsion — the oral obsession. The *H/E/A/C* is the symbolic sublimation of a national compulsion, which is more than purely sexual, and describes the state of degeneration Oldenburg felt the country had sunk into.

Oldenburg's Monuments are profane totems for a materialistic

society; a parody of the classical monument and its socio-political relevance, and a humorous allusion to the spiritual desolation of an affluent materialistic society. And yet at the same time they are often, particularly in the case of the "object monuments", a celebration of the inherent abstract beauty of certain utilitarian or non-art commodities. In this respect they owe something to the *objet trouve* and readymades of Marcel Duchamp. The magnification of small objects to colossal proportions effects a pronounced loss of verisimilitude, particularly at close quarters; on the other, hand it enhances and reinforces the abstract forms of the object. Thus the striking visual effect of the Seattle *Faucet*, were it ever realised, would doubtless be the play of light on its enormous reflective geometric forms and the spectacle of the waterfall issuing from it.

As a rule Oldenburg adapts his Monuments to a predetermined site. Or the site even stimulates the concept. In other words the Monument and its environs is a unity. Thus the Seattle *Faucet* proper embraces the whole of Lake Union which becomes a metaphor for a washbasin the faucet presides over. In much the same way Oldenburg's proposed *Colossal Monument for London's Thames* — an enormous floating brass ball attached by a hinged rod to London Bridge and free to rise and fall with the tide — is an allusion to the then polluted state of the river. Hence the monument in its totality embraces the whole of London which by implication is personified as a sick being fouling itself.

The complementary Thames and Lake Union Monuments can be seen as colossal concrete testimonies to their respective cities' civic pride, or degree of it.

In its style the Seattle *Faucet* closely resembles those renderings by industrial designers for projected items of manufacture and is closely related to a pencil study for a *Doormeyer Mixer*⁴ of the same year. Yet both drawings depart from the prevalent style employed by Oldenburg for renderings of proposed Soft Sculptures and Monuments, which is characterised by additional tonal effects, usually pencil shading and/or wash. Instead their style is of a pronounced linear type without the usually associated tonal effects. The line is much freer and more continuous and in parts runs like a piece of string.

Andrew Bogle

1. Referred to as *Faucet* in this article

2. Referred to as *HIEIAC* in this article

3. Owned by the artist. Illustrated in: Barbara Rose/Claes Oldenburg/MOMA/1970/p.164

4. Pencil drawing/30" x 22"VCollection Emily S. Rauh/St. Louis

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