

Surface Tension



LET THE SURFACE
AN INTRODUCTION

Surface Tension

TEN ARTISTS IN THE '90s

JUDY DARRAGH

LUISE FONG

IAN JERVIS

BARNARD McINTYRE

JUDY MILLAR

PETER ROCHE

ISOBEL THOM

RICHARD THOMPSON

BARBARA TUCK

MERVYN WILLIAMS

AUCKLAND CITY ART GALLERY
3 SEPTEMBER - 25 OCTOBER 1992

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



MONTANA

FOREWORD

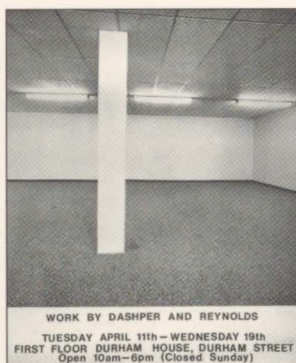
CHRISTOPHER JOHNSTONE – Director

I am always pleased when the Auckland City Art Gallery is able to organise an exhibition of new New Zealand art. Especially so when, as with *Surface tension*, it gives us an opportunity to show and make comment on the art of emerging artists and recent developments by established artists. The presentation of New Zealand contemporary art, from Auckland in particular, is one of the Gallery's foremost responsibilities, and it is our intention that exhibitions like *Surface tension* will be a regular feature of our future programming.

Surface tension has been organised by Christina Barton, a curator at the Gallery. It is a result of many hours of looking at and thinking about new art that she has seen in Auckland recently. I would like to thank her for putting the exhibition together and for her catalogue introduction. I must also thank the artists for their trust in her selection and their goodwill towards the project.

Finally our thanks are due to all of the lenders to the exhibition, since projects like this rely not only on the support of artists, but also that of private collectors and the dealer galleries.

The Gallery gratefully acknowledges the support of Montana Wines Limited and ECC Lighting.



Cover

The photograph used on the cover of this catalogue was first published in 1983 as a poster advertising an exhibition of paintings by Julian Dashper and John Reynolds. The poster illustrates the found space in Durham House (which had previously housed the Data Gallery), before the exhibition opened to the public.

John Reynolds and Julian Dashper held their first solo exhibitions in Auckland in 1979 and 1980 respectively. Following the demise of Auckland's alternative exhibition venues, Reynolds and Dashper went on to organise their own shows in temporary spaces outside the existing dealer and public gallery network.

AT THE SURFACE: AN INTRODUCTION

CHRISTINA BARTON

I have always thought of painting as skin, in a sense holding things back, 'in place', existing tensely over that that it represses... The metaphor is figurative (skin protecting the fragility of that that it conceals) but I want the result to be abstract: it transforms itself in the making from the idea of an organ (like a throbbing close to the chest) into an idea about just throbbing.

Ross Bleckner, 1990

These words of the American painter, Ross Bleckner, are emblematic of that which lies at the 'heart' of *Surface tension*. Simply put, this exhibition brings together the work of ten emerging and established artists who, in various ways, are currently engaged in practices which could be loosely termed 'abstract'. Although only seven of the ten could strictly be called painters, they all share with Bleckner, a particular attitude towards abstraction that complicates and confounds our usual understanding of the term.

Bleckner's analogies: of the painting's surface to skin, of its content to the body, and of his abstract intentions to the functions of a disembodied organ; re-figure painting as a process of embodiment (a rendering corporeal). It is a process that reformulates the terms, 'abstraction' and 'figuration', so that they are no longer perceived as opposites, but are recognised to be concepts that are inextricably intertwined. If this is true, then a modernist rhetoric that describes the evolution of art through the 20th century as the inevitable drive from figuration to abstraction must also be reviewed. These artists, then, are no longer charged with stripping away the outer and unnecessary trappings of art to reveal its essence, but rather, they are engaged in a constant play between a surface and that which putatively lies beneath it.

The artists in *Surface tension* share Bleckner's doubts: his characterisation of painting as an act of repression not revelation, his recognition of painting's absences rather than its presence. Sidestepping the formal, expressive or transcendental aims of modernist abstraction, they playfully, wilfully and sometimes poignantly wrestle with their medium's materiality, mining its surfaces to reveal what collects there. Using the phraseology of Australian curator, Natalie King, theirs is a 'borderline abstraction'.¹ It is a way of working that makes knowing reference to the language and look of high modernism, yet it is one which now recognises such modernism to be hopelessly compromised.

Judy Millar's large 'stripe' painting, *Ppp-op*, is such a work. A consciously clumsy, makeshift version of a generic modernist painting, *Ppp-op* recalls not only the kuru paintings of Gordon Walters (perhaps the 'father' to whom the title refers), but also the sublime stripes of Ross Bleckner or Philip Taaffe, who have pirated their forms from that somewhat debased modernist moment: *Op*. This abstract painting crackles, then, with the static of discordant voices, its surface a site for the momentary coherence of disparate (art) histories. Repeating the title, and looking more closely at the flippant way Millar has taped on (not painted) her stripes, I am convinced her intention is playfully ironic. She is a collector not a competitor.

Yet Judy Millar is also serious. She wants to invest painting with 'narrative force', to use painting as a means to connect 'collective memory and personal destiny'.² Her painting, then, is a bringing together and stilling of different painting 'events'; one of which is her own strategic intervention. David Carrier has described this compression of temporal moments as one of painting's 'implicit narratives'.³ He uses this term to shift attention from a purely formal reading of abstraction, venturing the possibility that meaning may reside elsewhere than in its spatial formations. Consider, then, how Millar's stripes describe a gesture, a movement of the hand and the body, that literally masks the ground on which the tape is laid. This 'other' narrative is of a process in time, an act of concealment that works in opposition to that stripping away that abstraction was meant to entail.

1. Natalie King, The subversive stitch, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne, 1991, p. 3

2. *Conversation with the artist*, 17 July 1992

3. David Carrier, 'David Reed: An abstract painter in the age of "postmodernism"', *Interpreting contemporary art*, (eds) S. Bann & W. Allen, Reaktion Books, London, 1991, p. 69

Millar's process is additive rather than subtractive, bound by its own materiality, but constantly giving way under the pressure of external forces. In a complementary but perhaps opposite direction, Isobel Thom plies her paint on top of things that already have a history. Most recently she has been making paintings with books, using them as a ground, joining them together and painting over their covers to make single images. Thom's consciously unsophisticated application, her downbeat smudges, dabs and patches, are a kind of preliterate doodling, a playful reminder of the supposed muteness of the visual. Put to such different use, these books are silenced, their contents sealed; they are for looking, not reading.

Thom's paintings describe the gap between reading and seeing, between the vehicles for communication and communication itself. We are left to wonder whether those words are still operative under the paint, silently muttering under its breath; or whether the painted marks now yield to signification, in place of, or as surrogates for, the texts beneath. This strange gap between surface and support undermines any formal relation of figure to ground. Neither illusionistic nor strictly two-dimensional, Thom's works metaphorically allude to a different conception of space. It is no surprise, then, that the blur of dots that explode across the surface of *In tune with the infinite (Part 1)* (not in the exhibition) resembles the 'snow' on a malfunctioning television set. For Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfé has described the space of television as a model for an interior that is 'infinite and multiplicitous', the 'space of a dream', where we look in – to see what is 'on' the screen.⁴

'Lamella', the word used by Barbara Tuck, to title her latest series of paintings, is a term that echoes this remodelled conception of space. Like the 'calcified layers of which bone is formed', a lamella is a thin membrane, a 'skin' that signifies not a single surface but a plurality. Tuck's painted surfaces mimic the lamella. Her paintings emerge as a laying over of one skin upon another. Less a building up than a meshing, Tuck rolls her medium on to canvas or aluminium sheets; plying on paint with a palette knife, only to scrape it back. At times she will mask sections between applications, denoting minor absences; or add marks, but half-heartedly, as if in passing. However 'worked', her surfaces remain insubstantially thin, like imprints or stains. Avoiding gestural facture, Tuck's process is more a kind of transfer, a displacement from here to there, as if the works now register traces that are of the world and not apart from it.

Each painting is made of multiple parts, not a single object, but a sentence from some larger syntax. Over time her works have opened out, spreading themselves in space, but pressing closer to the surface of the wall, as stretched canvas gives way to thin aluminium. They have now been invaded by the space around them, a reminder, perhaps, that, as Tuck herself has put it, 'things are only terminal points'.⁵ In a different vein, Ian Jervis's paintings postulate a continuum of the kind to which Barbara Tuck refers. His luridly vibrant paintings dramatise what he has described as the 'uneasy coalescence of matter',⁶ where paint itself enacts a coming-into-being, turning into tumescent form, yet constantly on the verge of vertiginous dissolution.

This tug from figuration to abstraction metaphorically and materially alludes to those forces Jervis perceives are at work in the physical world. From the metamorphoses that organic material undergoes: budding, flowering, fruiting; to the inchoate machinations of cells and systems, Jervis draws out, in febrile colours and heavily worked paint, his complex responses to the processes of growth and decay, the flux between order and chaos. His paintings are garish sets for some intergalactic scenario. Rather than recalling the sober illustrations in scientific literature, Jervis's off-key colour, the edgy melodramatics of his paintwork, resemble the fantasies of sci-fi, that taste-free genre that crowds in secondhand bookstores and comic shops.

Both Ian Jervis's quotation of popular sources and his reference to systems outside the closed-circuit of formalist art, are symptomatic of that general tendency, in *Surface tension*, to move away from the idea of painting as a flat, bounded surface, divorced from culture at large. Peter Roche's hybrid forms likewise transgress boundaries. His kinetic 'sculptures' hang on the wall like paintings, their lacquered surfaces giving way to bizarre mechanical extrusions. These are not just objects in space but erratic machines moving, spasmodically or continuously, in time. Roche is concerned that we recognise his 'elemental forms, rectilinear

4. Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfé, 'Non-representation in 1988: Meaning-production beyond the scope of the pious', *Arts magazine*, May 1988, p. 33

5. Barbara Tuck quoted by Richard Dale, *New Zealand Herald*, 12 July 1990, section 2, p. 2

6. Ian Jervis quoted by Allan Smith, 'The paintings of Ian Jervis', *Art New Zealand*, no. 54, Autumn 1990, p. 63

structures and emblematic components' as objects in the real world.⁷ These are not abstractions from, but analogies for, bodies, things and spaces in the world. By shifting from figuration to the generation of 'mechanical form', Roche reminds us of our relationship to the systems and technologies that structure our lives.

Most recently, Roche has used architectural plans to structure this work. In the process of transposition and enlargement onto the surface of each sculpture, Roche has discovered formal qualities that are oddly reminiscent of biological or anthropomorphic life. Roche requires that we simultaneously see the sculpture-as-object and the drawing-as-plan. With titles like *Fortress face* and *Land crab*, he makes explicit connections between nature and culture, the technological and the organic; objectifying these by adding kinetic components that exemplify some function implicit in his forms. Here, then, in these shifts from surface to structure, an embodiment occurs.

Despite his slick surfaces, their hard edges and electro-mechanical parts, Roche's sculptures have a somewhat 'retro' feel. Like props from the set of *1984*, they recall a modern age where fantasies of power were still founded on conventional mechanisms of control. Barnard McIntyre's sculptures also seem a little dated. Perhaps it is his choice of outmoded linoleum, the kind favoured for redecorating in the 1970s. Or the way his chequered surfaces optically pulse, playfully recalling M.C. Escher, that popular but unfashionable master of the perceptual conundrum.

McIntyre's objects quietly subvert their modern 'look' in other, more significant ways. His decision to use simulated substances undermines that central tenet of modernism: truth to materials, that demands the artist approach their chosen medium so as to coax out form from its natural properties. Like three-dimensional collages, these sculptures are both present and absent: their physical bulk undermined by their fake surfaces; their real-ness compromised by being 'a picture of something at the same time (as being) an object'.⁸

Somewhat scruffily put together, with not-quite symmetrical apertures that offer glimpses of empty interiors, McIntyre's objects refuse to conform to some inner logic. Each time we try to fix their structure, they seem to slip away, changing shape from every viewpoint. Barnard McIntyre is less concerned with 'truth to materials' than with a wholly contemporary desire to get the most out of what he uses. His is a recession economy, where what remains after each shape is cut, is utilised as the next component in the piecing together of form. Like a word in a sentence that relies for its meaning on that which surrounds it, McIntyre's sculptures make syntactical rather than substantive sense. They are propositions whose contingency renders them endlessly conditional.

Where Barnard McIntyre uses everyday household products like lino, formica and particle board; Richard Thompson gets from a paint retailer the paint mixes that customers reject. He is happy to use these colours, pleased to eschew the very decision-making on which the language of aesthetics is based. Thompson uses housepaint in various high-art contexts, either traditionally, as acrylic on canvas, or less conventionally, painted directly onto the white walls of the gallery's spaces. Anti-compositional, devoid of content and flat in the most common sense of the term, Thompson's 'paintings' are banal renditions of late modernist abstraction. They function as empty signs, waiting to be filled by the associations that adhere to them; their cheap colour sounding emptily, as if outside the bounds of discursivity. When placed in conjunction with his painting environments, the works do little more than articulate the spaces of a particular place, acquiring meaning only in their physical relation to the specifics of site. Thus, as Catherine Queloz has remarked, they 'introduce a notion of space in the wider generic sense: a utilitarian space, to move about in, pass through...'.⁹ Here painting is but a sign through which 'architecture' returns as a trace.

In the spirit of a more recent 'postmodern' abstraction, Thompson feels free to rummage through the annals of art history. Making no pretence to originality, he betrays his sources at every turn. With the same indifference as he chooses his colours, he quotes the likes of Gordon Walters, Julian Dashper, Daniel Buren and Oliver Mosset; turning them into commodities like any other. Judy Darragh is similarly an iconoclast. Her restitution of kitsch and its re-presentation within the contexts of art, questions distinctions between good and bad taste, upsetting the hierarchical relation of high to popular culture. Her antic hybridisations

7. Peter Roche, 'Structure and bodywork', In the forest of dream, Moët & Chandon Art Foundation, Auckland, 1990, p. 26

8. Richard Artschwager quoted by Joan Simon, 'Readymade abstraction/ Abstraction's realities', Abstraction in question, John and Mable Ringling Museums of Art, Sarasota, 1990, p. 21

9. Catherine Queloz on Gunther Fog, 'At the crossroads of disciplines: An economy of regard', Parkett, no 26, 1990, p. 58

remind us of the fate of all commodities within consumer culture, where the economies of desire render all products banal.

Darragh's most recent work, after a three-month visit to Spain, registers a new enthusiasm for the pared-down surfaces of modernist abstraction. Now, found objects and materials are chosen for their references to both the forms of a generic abstraction and to the vulgarised products of the tourist industry. *Made in Spain* features a wealth of knick-knacks and cheap souvenirs – castanets and combs, bull fighters and flamenco dancers – that are turned into 'readymades' that emblemise the most corny clichés of Spanish culture. If Darragh is interested in a particular culture's traffic in signs, she is also amused that her rifled booty can also resemble 'art'. Thus, what appears to be a generic grid of cream dots on a coloured ground is, in fact, just a piece of red or green polka-dot fabric, the stuff from which the *senoritas* of Seville make their flamenco dresses. In a seamless shift from surface to sign, Darragh re-situates abstraction within the wider workings of culture.

Judy Darragh's penchant for the fetishistic – hair pieces, combs and gloves – the displaced traces of an absent body; metaphorically allude to that notion of absence that lurks within *Surface tension*. Although her materials and her presentation radically differ from that of Darragh, Luise Fong is also dealing with absence. Over the last three years she has gradually removed all traces of the figure, irrevocably decomposing the final vestiges of her appropriated images in a melancholy meditation on the alienations implicit in representation. It is as if her paintings now have sucked in those myriad sources, sealing them within their amorphous, shifting surfaces; their traces now no more than tremorous ripples tugging beneath a fragile meniscus. Fong's absences are gendered 'feminine'. Choosing to defer rather than depict, she recognises the problems and pitfalls of women's place in representation. For her, equivocating is a way to 'speak' the feminine.

Fong alludes to her practice as a 'seeing through slit eyes'.¹⁰ Her *Half light* paintings are perhaps the products of such seeing. Split in two, each painting is a juxtaposition of colour, shape and texture. They butt together at a point that resembles a horizon line, yet in their meeting there is no resolution into a single 'view'. Their rifts are the impossible breach that looms between representation and reality, between a surface and the lack that lies beneath. If Luise Fong paints in a perpetual gloom, then Mervyn Williams works with the metaphysics of light. Yet now, in Williams's latest work, there is a doubt, a troubling reminder of a loss that occurs when representation replaces reality. For his paintings' extraordinary shimmer, their richly various surfaces, even that tense relation between figure and ground, are all entirely fictional. What we see is a tantalising mirage. Williams's paintings are almost as flat as photographs, their pathos that of the *trompe l'oeil*. In a gesture of recognition for what we have lost, we almost involuntarily reach out, to touch what we know is no longer there.

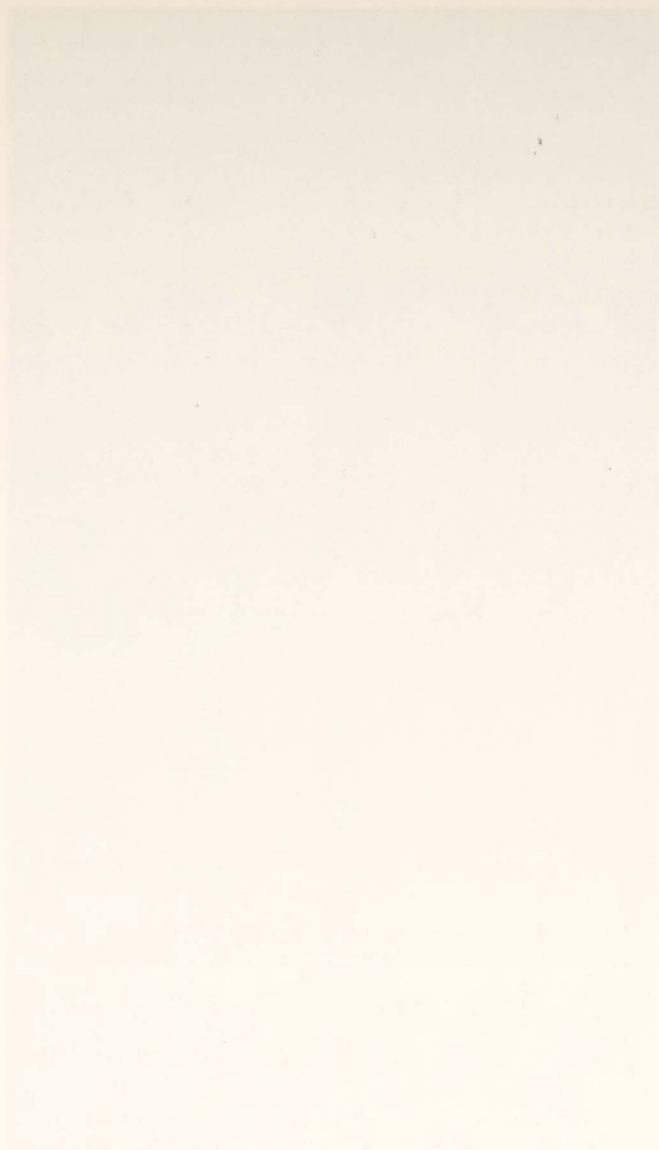
The proximity of Williams's paintings to photography is a fascinating instance of that 'second-degree' quality many critics have identified in recent abstraction. In his case, this intersection of two previously antithetical practices, derives from his recognition that he receives much of his information about painting in the form of reproductions – photographs in magazines and catalogues – that are 'images' distanced from any material reality. But it also marks a particular juncture, or perhaps rupture, in Williams's evolution as an artist. While artist-in-residence in Wanganui in 1988, Williams made a series of assemblages using found materials he collected from the dramatic beach-scapes at the mouth of the Wanganui River. These objects are, as Ian Wedde notes, the obverse of illusionistic painting.¹¹ Yet despite their obvious 'reality', they register, like photographs, an absence, a something-that-has-been. We are reminded of what is missing: the impress of time, where water and weather have left their marks, much like light when it is exposed to photographic emulsion.

Williams has set himself the task of finding a painterly equivalent that will adequately register such passing. It is an act of mourning that both acknowledges the altered circumstances for painting and requires a continuing commitment to its dilemmas. Such a stance is endemic to *Surface tension*. There is a recognition, here, of that oft-repeated 'crisis' that gathers around representation, yet also, a decision: to continue to work with those very forms that are in question. With irony, circumspection and even a faint glimmer of hope, these artists put their fingers to that pulse. □

10. From the artist's workbook, July 1992

11. Ian Wedde, 'Mervyn Williams: Painting with his feet in Wanganui', *Art New Zealand*, no 51, 1989, p. 63

THE ARTISTS



JUDY DARRAGH

Born 1957, Christchurch

1978 Graduated Diploma of Visual Communication and Design, Wellington Polytechnic

Lives and works in Auckland

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1986 *High tack*, Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington
- 1987 *New Zeal*, George Fraser Gallery, Auckland
Mz Zealaneous, Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington
- 1988 *Culturally flabby*, Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington
- 1989 *Southern delites*, Jonathan Jensen Gallery, Christchurch
Tic for tack, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
Yohohosho, Aberhart North Gallery, Auckland
Pacific Madonna, Window installation, Auckland City Art Gallery
- 1990 *X-cess*, Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton
Moderno update, Gregory Flint Gallery, Auckland
Change of tack, Catherine Scollay Gallery, Wellington
- 1991-2 *More taste than money*, Jonathan Jensen Gallery, Christchurch and Dunedin Public Art Gallery

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1989 *Constructed intimacies*, Moet & Chandon Art Foundation touring exhibition
Occupied Zone, Installation series, Artspace, Auckland
- 1990 *Situation and style*, Jonathan Jensen Gallery, Christchurch
- 1991 *Intermedia: The face of change*, The Bathhouse, Rotorua
- 1991 *Cross pollination*, Artspace, Auckland
Home made home, Wellington City Art Gallery

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Eastmond, Elizabeth. 'High tack excess', *New Zealand Listener*, December 1987, p. 118

(eds) Clark, Trish and Wytan Curnow. *Pleasures and dangers: Artists of the '90s*, Longmans and Moet & Chandon Art Foundation, Auckland, 1992

Zelenka, Gloria. 'Judy goes to Spain', *Stamp*, no 27, January 1992, pp 14-15



detail from *Made in Spain*, 1992

MADE IN NZ MADE IN SPAIN

Readymaid

The portable packable studio and artworks. These 'pin-up' pieces can be assembled in a minute!

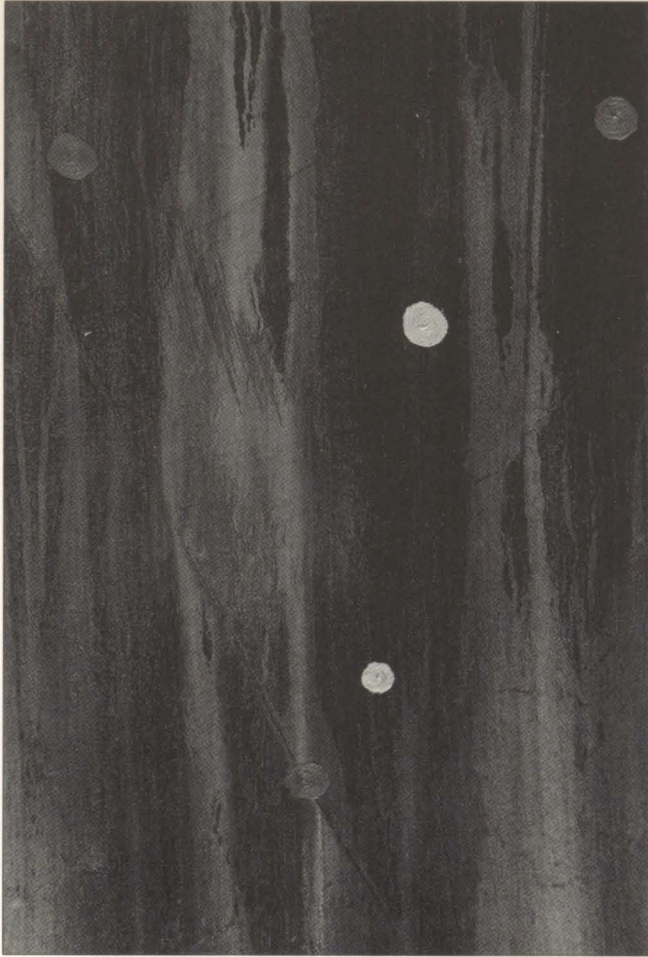
"Yessir - art ready to go!"

Quick Art. (To match the pace of the century.) Your own personal collage of objects selected especially for you by the artist. Readymades - made ready.

We can't help but be interested in these objects. Ugly, agreeable, tasteful or tacky - by isolating these familiar objects we give them new meanings and elevate them to art.

Judy Darragh, August 1992

BARBARA LUISE FONG



detail of *Smoke*, 1992

She had never felt exhilarated before but now she felt herself stirring. It seemed to her that the concealed shapes which had so long menaced her were casting off their ambiguous surfaces and revealing, not the perfect shapes of fear she had so long suspected beneath them, but soft, indeterminate, interior cores.

from Angela Carter's *Love*, 1987

Born 1964, Sandakan, Malaysia
1989 Graduated BFA, Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland

Lives and works in Auckland

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1989 *Past presence*, Fish Shop Gallery, Auckland
1990 *Recent works*, Brooker Gallery, Wellington
1991 *Recent works*, Claybrook Gallery, Auckland
Half-light paintings, Brooker Gallery, Wellington
1992 *Speak*, Window installation, Auckland City Art Gallery
Smoke, Claybrook Gallery, Auckland

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1985 *Decoration as camouflage*, installation with Diana Lee-Gobbitt, Last and First Cafe, Auckland
1988 *20,000 leagues*, Fish Shop Gallery, Auckland
1989 *Artistic collusion*, Pembridge, Auckland
Fascination, Brooker Gallery, Wellington
1990 *Art beat*, The Bathhouse, Rotorua
Pandora's box, Installation with Deborah Smith, George Fraser Gallery, Auckland
'exuberant, floating, dancing, mocking, childish and blissful art', George Fraser Gallery, Auckland
1991 *Catholic taste*, George Fraser Gallery, Auckland
Speaking through the crack in the mirror, Artspace, Auckland
1992 *Light sensitive*, Artspace, Auckland
After dark, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
Shadow of style: Eight new artists, Wellington City Art Gallery and Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Wellington and New Plymouth

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Zepke, Stephen. 'Black is black is black is black', catalogue essay, *Shadow of style: Eight new artists*, (eds) Gregory Burke and Robert Leonard, Wellington City Art Gallery and Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Wellington and New Plymouth, 1992

IAN JERVIS

Born 1952, Auckland
1974 Graduated BSc, University
of Auckland
1983 Graduated MFA, Elam
School of Fine Arts,
University of Auckland

Lives and works in Auckland

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

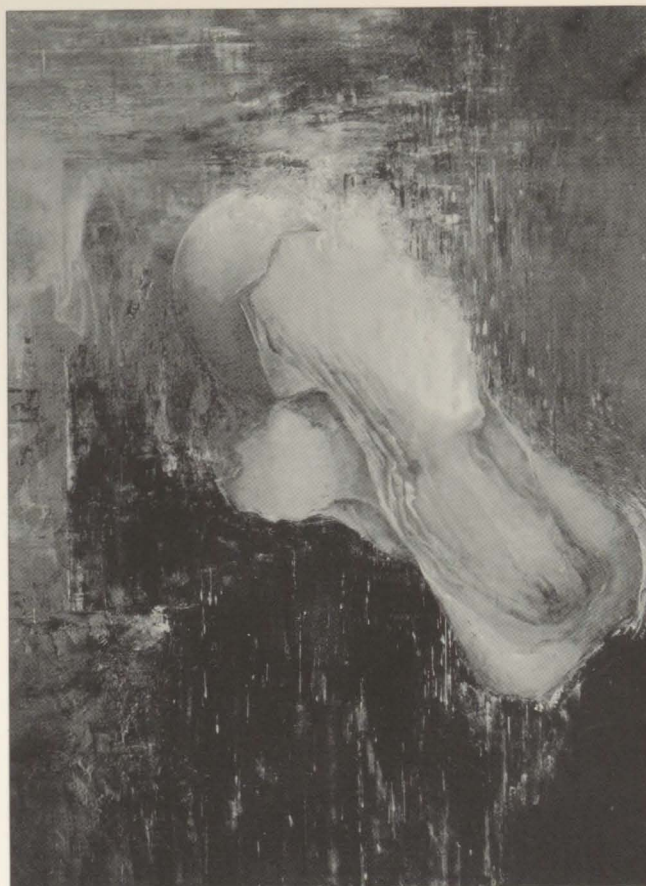
- 1982 *Drawings and paintings from
the estuary*, Denis Cohn
Gallery, Auckland
1984 *Images from estuaries and
harbour wasteland*, Denis
Cohn Gallery, Auckland
1985 Denis Cohn Gallery,
Auckland
1986 *Paintings*, Denis Cohn
Gallery, Auckland
Paintings, Janne Land Gallery,
Wellington
1987 *Paintings*, Room 11,
Auckland
New paintings and drawings,
Room 11, Auckland
1989 *Forms in landscape*, Fox
Gallery, Auckland
1991 *Conjectures*, Lazelle Gallery,
Auckland

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1983 Auckland University
Centennial Exhibitions, Elam
School of Fine Arts
1985 *Still life*, New Vision Gallery,
Auckland
1987 Team Macmillan Art Award,
ASA Gallery, Auckland
1988 Opening exhibition,
Gallery 5, Auckland

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Smith, Allan. 'The paintings of Ian
Jervis', *Art New Zealand*, no 54,
Autumn 1990, pp 60-63
Smith, Allan. *Conjectures*, exhibition
catalogue, Lazelle Gallery, 1991



Untitled, from the *Conjectures* series, 1992

And then, thought Krug, on top of everything, I am a slave of images. We speak of one thing being like some other thing when what we are really craving to do is to describe something that is like nothing on earth.

Professor Krug in Vladimir Nabokov's *Bend sinister*

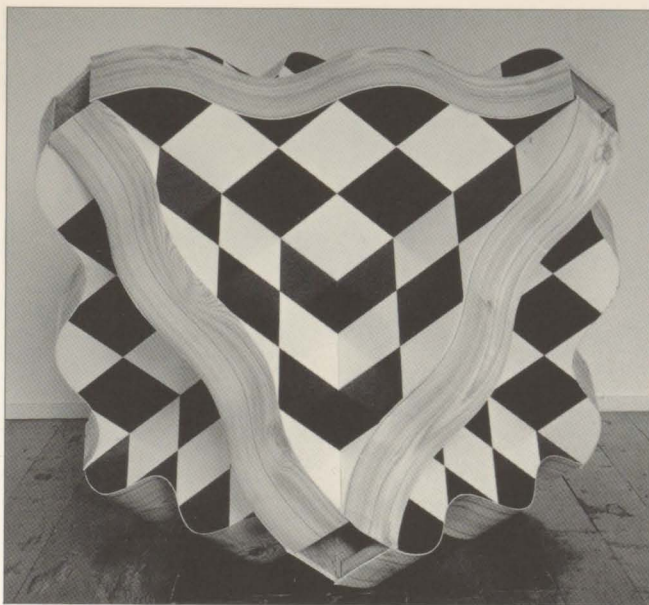
One big question, one broad interest, has directed the evolution of my work over a number of years. Of late I have collectively titled my images: *Conjectures*. Form proposed within the image constitutes a 'something' – a confluence of idea and pigment which, by the chanciness of its ontogeny, implies that it also might well not have been, or have been something entirely other. A contingent something; a something which implies a nothingness.

I would propose form which, like the 'standing wave' of a persistent (and probably shrill) tone of sound, might be tangibly evident, yet physically insubstantial. A vibrating void. Even as orderliness manifests itself as form, a covert dissonance must lurk and threaten. Implications of a tendency to entropy would suffice.

The paintings are made in the same way as I might talk about the imagery within them – with as much deliberation and concern, as much intense criticality, as much whimsy and chance.

Ian Jervis, 19 July 1992

BARNARD McINTYRE



Untitled, 1992

Long before I discovered a relationship with regular space-division through the Moorish artists of the Alhambra, I had already recognised it in myself. At the beginning I had no notion of how I might be able to build up my figures systematically. I knew no rules of the game and I tried, almost without knowing what I was about, to fit together congruent surfaces to which I tried to give animal shapes ... later the designing of new motifs gradually came with rather less struggle than in the early days, and yet this has remained a very strenuous occupation, a real mania to which I became enslaved and from which I can only with great difficulty free myself.

from M.C. Escher, *Periodic space-filling*
(*Regelmatige vlakverdeling*), Utrecht, 1958

Born 1961, Wellington

1985 Graduated BFA, Ilam School of Art, University of Canterbury, Christchurch

Lives and works in Auckland

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1987 Brooke-Gifford Gallery, Christchurch

1988 Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington

1991 Gow Langsford Gallery, Wellington

1992 Gregory Flint Gallery, Auckland

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1986 Visual Diaries Gallery, Wellington

1988 *Exhibits: The museum display and the encyclopaedia plate*, National Art Gallery and Artspace, Wellington and Auckland

1989 *Shifting ground*, Wellington City Art Gallery

Occupied zone, Installation series, Artspace, Auckland

1990 *Choice!*, Artspace, Auckland

1992 *Arx 3*, Artists' Regional Exchange, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth, Australia

Vogue/Vague: New Sculptors, CSA Gallery, Christchurch

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Leonard, Robert. 'Barnard McIntyre', catalogue essay, *Exhibits: The museum display and the encyclopaedia plate*, National Art Gallery and Artspace, Wellington and Auckland, 1988

McKenzie, Stuart A. 'Cross purposes: Three recent sculptures by Barnard McIntyre', *Art New Zealand*, no 62, Autumn 1992, pp 82-85

JUDY MILLAR

Born 1957, Auckland
1979 Graduated BFA, Elam School
of Fine Arts, University of
Auckland
1982 Graduated MFA, Elam
School of Fine Arts,
University of Auckland
Lives and works in Auckland

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1980 *Making tracks*, installation,
100m², Auckland
1981 *Works on paper*, 100m²,
Auckland
1986 Aberhart North Gallery,
Auckland
1987 Aberhart North Gallery,
Auckland
1988 Gow Langsford Gallery,
Auckland
1989 Gow Langsford Gallery,
Auckland
1990 Gow Langsford Gallery,
Auckland

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1980 *Women in the arts*, Outreach,
Auckland
1981 *Artworks*, Outreach,
Auckland
1982 *Four Elam graduates*, ASA
Gallery, Auckland
1983 Team McMillan Art Award,
ASA Gallery, Auckland
1990 Tokoroa Art Award
(winner), Tokoroa
100m²: *A ten year survey*,
Artspace, Auckland



detail from *The making of must*, 1992

There's always been a consistency throughout my work. It deals with structure, illusion, the real and the fictive, the tension between what we see and what we know, the boundary between the visually meaningful and meaningless, also sentimentality, memory and the dislocation of presence. It concerns itself with the act of making, the beauty of a surface and how we perceive.

That said, I make pictures that emerge, that grow from their making, and have their own set of rules. Making form my starting point or motif, I attempt to find content, to leave the motif behind and discover motivation; an initial ambivalent step taken that leads on, not planned nor asked for but necessary, an attempt at correctness.

Judy Millar, July 1992

PETER ROCHE



Flagstaff in Peter Roche's studio, Auckland, 1992

Roche keeps his kinetic cyborgs very much within the context of a militarised industrial society. Through them, he reveals a potential for violence harboured within man's irrational psychology. Their irrational and menacing appearance draws out the essentially primitive forces at work behind the construction and processes of industrial civilisation – fitting props, perhaps, for Kurtz's heart of darkness.

Bridget Sutherland, *Art and the machine*, 1992

Born 1957, Auckland

1979 Graduated BFA, Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland

Lives and works in Auckland.

PERFORMANCES

Peter Roche began his career as a performance artist. Between 1979 and 1984 he staged 25 performances in collaboration with Linda Buis.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1985 *Installation, Artworks*, Federal Street, Auckland

1986 *Drawing and sculpture*, RKS Art, Auckland

1987 *Sculpture and works on paper*, George Fraser Gallery, Auckland

1988 *Dome installation no 10*, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui
Sculpture and works on paper, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth
Six kinetic drawings, RKS Art, Auckland

1989 *Kinetic installation*, Star Art, Auckland
Up in arms, Gallery 5, Auckland
Transmutations, 33 1/3 Gallery, Wellington
Solarsphere, Window installation, Auckland City Art Gallery

1990-1 *Trophies and emblems: Kinetic sculpture*, Artspace, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, and Wellington City Art Gallery

1991 *Kinetic sculpture*, Fox Gallery, Auckland

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1986-7 *Auckland/Halifax exchange*, Eye Level Gallery and Artspace, Halifax, Nova Scotia and Auckland

1988 *Drawing analogies*, Wellington City Art Gallery

1990 *In the forest of dream*, Moet & Chandon Art Foundation touring exhibition

1991 *Catholic taste*, George Fraser Gallery, Auckland

1992 *Light sensitive*, Artspace, Auckland

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barton, Christina. 'Peter Roche and Linda Buis: Recent drawings and sculptures', *Art New Zealand*, no 42, Autumn 1987, pp 72-73

Roche, Peter. 'Structure and bodywork', artist's statement, *In the forest of dream*, Moet & Chandon Art Foundation, Auckland, 1990

Sutherland, Bridget, 'Known and unknown territories', catalogue essay, *Trophies and emblems: Kinetic sculpture*, Peter Roche, Auckland, 1990

Wedde, Ian. 'Peter Roche: Trophies and emblems', *Art New Zealand*, no 60, Spring 1990, pp 72-73

SOBEL THOM

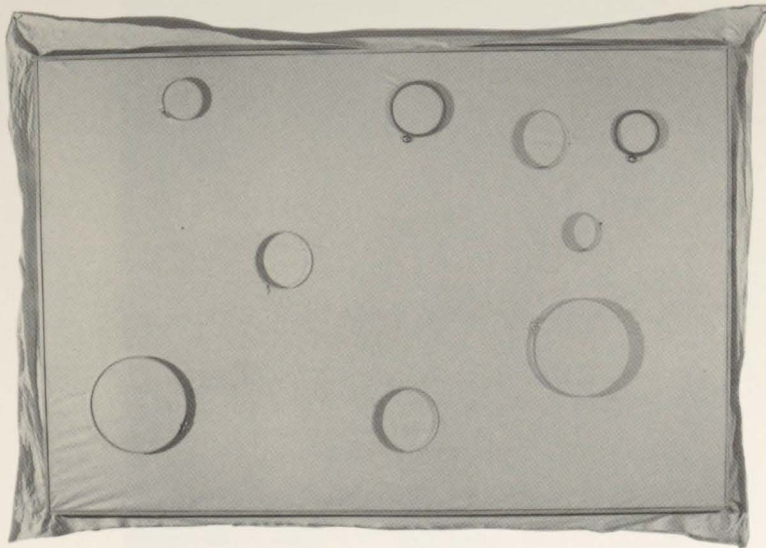
Born 1965, Auckland
 1988 Graduated BFA, Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland
 1990 Graduated MFA, Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland
 Lives and works in Wellington

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

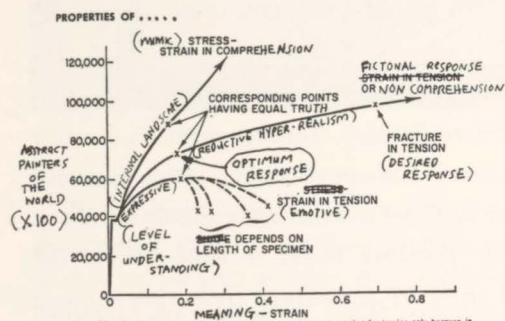
1990 Brooker Gallery, Wellington
 1992 Brooker Gallery, Wellington

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1988 Brooker Gallery, Wellington
 1989 Brooker Gallery, Wellington
 Pembridge, Auckland
 1990 Pembridge, Auckland
 1991-2 *Recline*, Brooker Gallery, Wellington
 1992 Brooker Gallery, Wellington (with Giovanni Intra and Kendal Heyes)

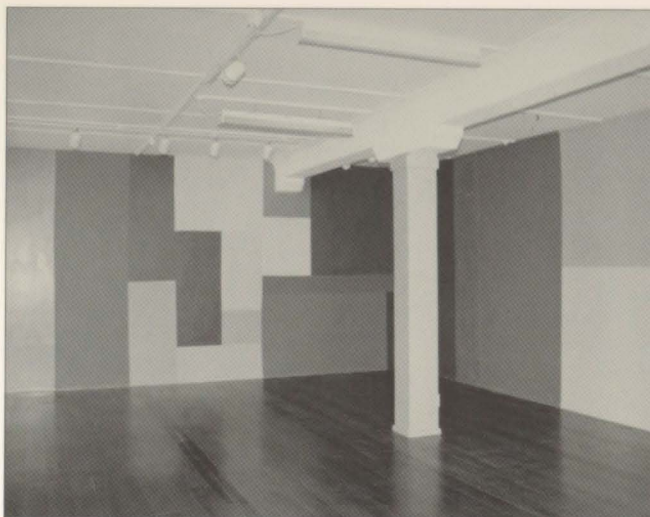


Untitled, 1992



drawing by Isobel Thom, July 1992

RICHARD THOMPSON



Installation view of *Rejects*, Lazelle Gallery, 1991

And when I see such paintings 'that are none', I tell myself that this 'new' geometric abstraction is, in a way, an instrument of vengeance, something which without shedding blood, without shedding signs, ridicules all ambient pathos of signs and messages, of violence and blood (including the violence of interpretation) that give 'meaning' to our life and to our pseudo-reality. Like a witticism, in its non-sensical and elliptical form, ridicules all the heavy armature of language and communication. Within this is a 'jouissance' and its irony entraps us in the impossible interaction between the painting and the viewer. We owe a debt of gratitude to some, including R. THOMPSON
Olivier Mosset for having maintained this very delicate balance without yielding to the nostalgic charm of painting; for having maintained this subtle line which, to tell the truth, is less akin to aestheticism and more to setting up a decoy. It is a strategy which must not and cannot avow its true nature; a strategy of thwarted exchange which deludes the senses, and which is, ultimately, perhaps the inheritance of that ritual tradition which has never truly merged with painting – that of trompe-l'oeil.

Jean Baudrillard, *The object that is none*

Born 1965, Auckland
1988 Graduated BFA, Elam School of Fine Art, University of Auckland
1990 Graduated MFA, Elam School of Fine Art, University of Auckland
Lives and works in Auckland

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1990 *Landmarks*, Brooker Gallery, Wellington
Lazelle Gallery, Auckland
1991 *Art colours*, Lazelle Gallery, Auckland

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1989 Brooker Gallery, Wellington
Lazelle Gallery, Auckland
1990 Brooker Gallery, Wellington
Lazelle Gallery, Auckland
'exuberant, floating, dancing, mocking, childish and blissful art', George Fraser Gallery, Auckland
1992 *Light sensitive*, Artspace, Auckland

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

(ed.) Thompson, Richard. *Original copies*, publication in conjunction with exhibition of international fax art, Lazelle Gallery, 1991

BARBARA TUCK

Born 1943, Hamilton
 1965 Graduated DipFA, Elam
 School of Fine Arts,
 University of Auckland
 Lives and works in Auckland

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1978 Barry Lett Galleries,
Auckland
- 1980 RKS Art, Auckland
- 1984 RKS Art, Auckland
- 1986 Bosshard Gallery, Dunedin
- 1987 Peter McLeavey Gallery,
Wellington
- 1988 Aberhart North Gallery,
Auckland
- 1989 Aberhart North Gallery,
Auckland
- 1990 Aberhart North Gallery,
Auckland
Peter McLeavey Gallery,
Wellington
- 1991 Aberhart North Gallery,
Auckland
- 1992 Peter McLeavey Gallery,
Wellington

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1966 Vulcan Gallery, Auckland
- 1980 *Women in the arts*, Outreach,
Auckland
- 1983 *Artist in focus*, Auckland City
Art Gallery (with Gillian
Chaplin)
- 1986 *Content/Context*, Shed 11,
Wellington
- 1991 *Acquisitions in context*,
Auckland City Art Gallery

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Johnson, Alexa. 'Gillian Chaplin and
 Barbara Tuck: Prints and an
 installation, *Double doors*', *Art New
 Zealand*, no 30, Autumn 1984,
 pp 40-41



pause 1989

lamella (lə'melə) *n.*, *pl.* -lae (-li:) or -las. **1.** a thin layer, plate, or membrane, esp. any of the calcified layers of which bone is formed. **2. Botany.** **a.** any of the spore-bearing gills of a mushroom. **b.** any of the membranes in a chloroplast. **c.** Also called: **middle lamella.** a layer of pectin cementing together adjacent cells. **3.** one of a number of timber, metal, or concrete members connected along a pattern of intersecting diagonal lines to form a framed vaulted roof structure. **4.** any thin sheet of material or thin layer in a fluid. [C17: New Latin, from Latin, diminutive of *lāmīna* thin plate] —**la'mellar**, **lamellate** ('læmi,leɪt, -lɪt; lə'meɪleɪt, -lɪt), or **lamellose** (lə'meləʊs, 'læmi,ləʊs) *adj.* —**la'mellarly** or **'lamellately** *adv.* —**'lamel,lated** *adj.* —**lamel'lation** *n.* —**lamellosity** (,læmə'lɒsɪtɪ) *n.*

MERVYN WILLIAMS



Covenant, 1990

The experiencing of a work of art then, is not merely a matter of aesthetic taste; it is also a matter of reacting to a proposition about the nature of reality that is implicitly or explicitly shadowed forth in the work.

Thomas McEvilly, *Artforum*, 1982

Like all my work, these paintings are concerned with perception, the nature of reality. For most of us this consists principally of what we see, either directly or as images. These images, usually photographic, are of course once removed from reality, they bear its imprint, its shadow, but they are in fact second-hand. In this regard they parallel memory – perceptions revisited, appearances reassembled from the fragments that remain in the mind.

Condensing reality into two dimensions clearly affects the appearance of things but it seems also to distil something of their essence. That is perhaps what the photograph records and the memory files away.

Looking back to the methods of earlier painters I have created illusions of texture, spatial depth and chiaroscuro which impart to these paintings some of that essence, that tantalising trace of reality that gives photography its evocative power.

Mervyn Williams, August 1992

Born 1940, Whakatane

1957-8 Studied part-time at Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland

Lives and works in Auckland

Mervyn Williams has exhibited regularly in group and solo shows since the mid 1960s. This is a selected exhibition history and bibliography from 1975 only.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

1975 *Paintings and drawings*, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland; 1979 *Recent paintings*, Barry Lett Galleries, Auckland; 1980 *Recent paintings*, Elva Bett Gallery, Wellington; 1981 *Recent paintings*, RKS Art, Auckland; 1982 *Recent paintings*, Louise Beale Gallery, Wellington; 1983 *Twelve gouaches*, New Vision Gallery, Auckland; 1984 *Recent paintings*, Louise Beale Gallery, Wellington; 1986 *Recent paintings*, Louise Beale Gallery, Wellington; 1987 *Recent paintings*, Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland; 1988 *Works in progress*, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui; 1989 *Works on paper*, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North; *Wood works Wanganui*, Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland; *In a different light*, Portfolio Gallery, Auckland; *Points of departure*, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui; 1992 *From darkness to light*, Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1976 *New Zealand drawing*, Auckland City Art Gallery; 1978 *Auckland painters*, Auckland City Art Gallery; 1979 *New Zealand drawing*, CSA Gallery, Christchurch; 1982 *Seven painters/The Eighties*, Sarjeant Gallery touring exhibition; 1983 *Aspects of New Zealand art: The Grid*, Auckland City Art Gallery touring exhibition; 1984 Two-person show with Gordon Walters, CSA Gallery, Christchurch; 1988 *Faith + works*, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North; 1990 *Out of the woods*, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Schulz, Derek. 'Some observations on the work of seven painters', catalogue essay, *Seven painters/The Eighties*, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui, 1982
Bogle, Andrew. 'Mervyn Williams', catalogue essay, *Aspects of New Zealand art: The grid*, Auckland City Art Gallery, 1983, pp 20-21
Dunn, Michael. 'Mervyn Williams: A vision of light', *Art New Zealand*, no 36, 1985, pp 32-35
Wedde, 'Mervyn Williams: Painting with his feet in Wanganui', *Art New Zealand*, no 51, 1989, pp 62-65
Panaho, Rangihiroa. 'Wanganui: The environment, the spiritual', catalogue essay, *Points of departure*, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui, 1989
Williams, Mervyn. 'Between darkness and light', catalogue essay, Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland, 1992

LIST OF WORKS

JUDY DARRAGH

Three little wigs 1990
found objects, vinyl and plastic tubing
335 x 120 x 100 mm (each)
Private collection

Made in Spain 1992
various found objects
2700 x 3200 mm (overall)
Courtesy of the artist with assistance
from the QEII Arts Council of
New Zealand

LUISE FONG

Half light I 1991
oil on board
505 x 490 mm
Collection of the Art Attack Art
Cooperative, Wellington

Half light II 1991
oil on board
510 x 490 mm
Courtesy of the artist and
Brooker Gallery

Half light III 1991
oil on board
515 x 495 mm
Private collection

Half light IV 1991
oil on board
505 x 490 mm
Private collection

Half light V 1991
oil on board
525 x 495 mm
Courtesy of the artist and
Claybrook Gallery

Half light VI 1991
oil on board
525 x 495 mm
Courtesy of the artist and
Claybrook Gallery

Half light VIII 1991
oil on board
525 x 495 mm
Courtesy of the artist and
Claybrook Gallery

Smoke 1992
mixed media on board
1206 x 1600 mm
Courtesy of the artist and
Claybrook Gallery

IAN JERVIS

Hierarchies and homologies
1989
oil on linen
1150 x 1200 mm

Untitled 1991
from the Conjectures series
oil on linen
1400 x 1200 mm

Untitled 1991
from the Conjectures series
oil on linen
1600 x 1400 mm

Untitled 1992
from the Conjectures series
oil on linen
1600 x 1200 mm

All works courtesy of the artist

BARNARD McINTYRE

Untitled 1992
mixed media
1350 x 1350 x 1350 mm

Untitled 1992
mixed media
1350 x 1950 x 1350 mm

Untitled 1992
mixed media
800 x 800 x 800 mm

*All works courtesy of the artist
and Gregory Flint Gallery*

JUDY MILLAR

The star nursery (Stella) 1990
oil, shellac and paper on canvas
2470 x 1700 mm
Collection of Michael and
Claudia Pearce

Ppp-op 1990
black tape, acrylic and gesso on
canvas
2470 x 1700 mm
Courtesy of the artist and Gow
Langsford Gallery, Auckland

The making of must 1992
acrylic on card, wood panels,
black and white rice
2700 x 3200 x 900 mm
Collection of the artist

PETER ROCHE

Flagstaff 1992
mixed media incorporating
electromechanical components
2440 x 2280 x 100 mm

Land crab 1992
mixed media incorporating
electromechanical components
1920 x 2280 x 100 mm

Fortress face 1992
mixed media incorporating
electromechanical components
2180 x 2280 x 170 mm

All courtesy of the artist and
Fox Gallery

ISOBEL THOM

**Training in literary
appreciation no II** 1992
oil on 75 books
1300 x 2010 mm
Collection of the artist

RICHARD THOMPSON

Art colours 1992
acrylic, acrylic on canvas,
TV monitors
dimensions variable
An installation made for Surface
tension (video images with special
thanks to Tim and Philippe)

BARBARA TUCK

Gamut no III 1991
oil on canvas (12 panels)
510 x 410 mm (each)
Courtesy of the artist and
Peter McLeavey Gallery

Gamut no II 1991
oil on canvas (6 panels)
650 x 540 mm (each)
Courtesy of the artist and
Aberhart North Gallery

Lamella no IV 1991
oil on aluminium (9 panels)
430 x 600 mm (each)
Courtesy of the artist and
Aberhart North Gallery

MERVYN WILLIAMS

Toward the unknown sea
1991
acrylic on canvas
2700 x 1200 mm
Collection of A.T. and J.B. Gibbs

Beyond darkness 1991
acrylic on canvas
765 x 620 mm
Courtesy of the artist and Gow
Langsford Gallery, Auckland

Sailing to Byzantium 1991
acrylic on canvas
1900 x 1675 mm
Collection of Jennifer Lin

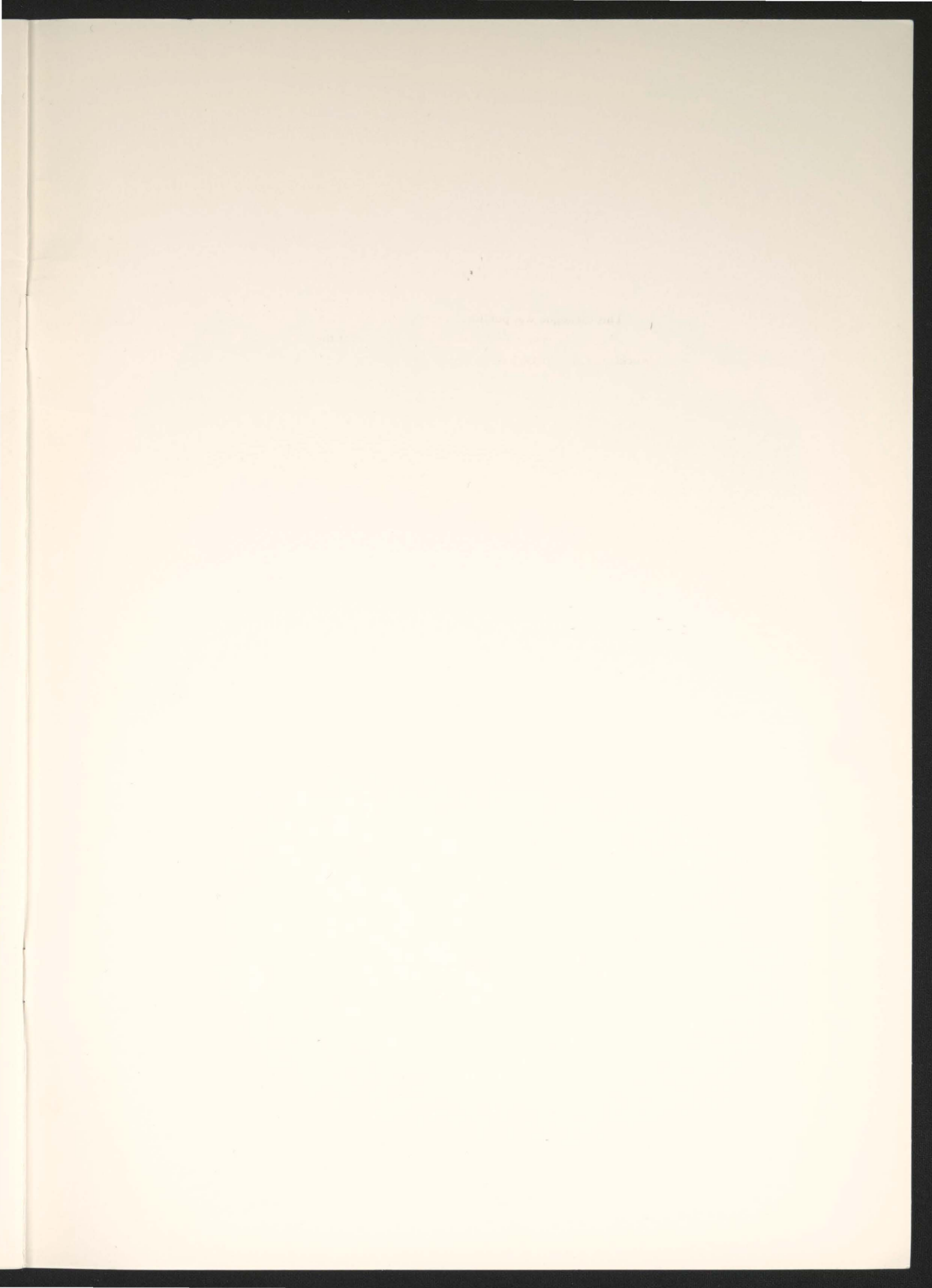
Covenant 1990
acrylic on canvas (diptych)
1150 x 1302 mm (overall)
Courtesy of the artist and Gow
Langsford Gallery, Auckland

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JUDY DARRAGH

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BARBARA TUCK

MERVYN WILLIAMS