

THE CHARTWELL COLLECTION: A SELECTION
20 DECEMBER 1996 - 16 FEBRUARY 1997

Chartwell

The Chartwell Collection



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INTRODUCTION

Established in 1974 by Hamilton businessman RBK Gardiner, the Chartwell Collection consists of nearly five hundred works of contemporary art from Australia and New Zealand. Since 1993, the Collection has been on loan to the Waikato Museum of Art and History Te Whare Taonga o Waikato in Hamilton. In a new arrangement, the Chartwell Collection will be gradually relocated to Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki over the next three years, where it will significantly enhance the Gallery's already strong contemporary art collections. New acquisitions for the

Chartwell Collection are currently coming directly to the Gallery, and a selection of these will be exhibited later in 1997. This exhibition is the first of many that the Gallery will present from the Chartwell Collection, both as a distinct collection within the Gallery and as part of the Gallery's overall collections. We are grateful to the Chartwell Trust for their faith in Auckland Art Gallery to act as custodian of this magnificent collection, and look forward to the rich opportunities it will provide for both partners.

Chris Saines

DIRECTOR

Giovanni Intra

Untitled 1995-96

acrylic on gesso

on paper

2800 x 2800 overall

cover

Mike Parr

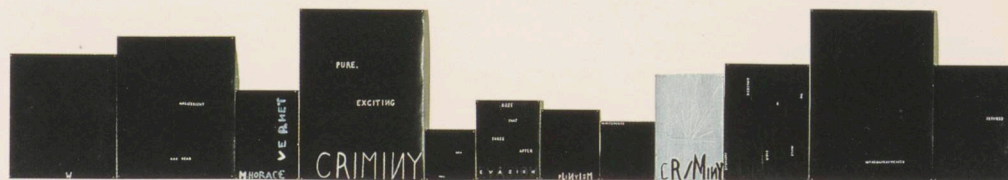
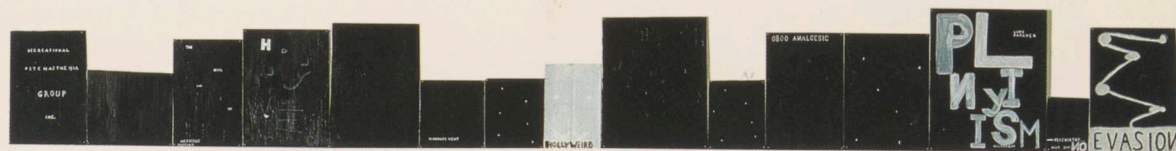
Elegnem sa Essitam

(The Breeze of Death) 1985

acrylic, pastel and charcoal

on canvas

2430 x 4800



Jeffrey Harris

28 Diptych 1987

oil and collage on canvas

2435 x 3640



THE SELF AND OTHER INVENTIONS:

A selection from the Chartwell Collection

This catalogue, and the exhibition it documents, represent a very broad slice through the riches of the Chartwell Collection. Although frequently characterised as predominantly a collection of expressionist works,¹ the Chartwell Collection is considerably more diverse than this. In presenting an overview of that diversity, this exhibition takes as its central focus one of the key-tropes of expressionism - the representation of the self. The exhibition brings together signature works from the collection, lesser known pieces and recent acquisitions, notably by younger artists. In doing so it provides an opportunity to examine how notions of the self have been staged and re-staged - both in practice and criticism - in Australian and New Zealand art during the past two decades.

Davida Allen's work is preoccupied with the artist's domestic situation, her lived and imagined experiences, memories and desires. Allen presents a kind of ongoing self portrait that is intimate and diaristic. Writing in the catalogue to Allen's 1987 retrospective exhibition, Atherton Nye characterises the artist's work as 'simple confessions of fears and fantasies [which] reveal the deepest and simplest aspects of her character and are therefore most intelligible to those souls which have those attributes.'²

Adopting a similar tone, Jeffrey Harris stated in a recent interview: 'Good painting is difficult and the enemy of theories, explanation and conversations... to me good art comes out of struggle and should show signs of that struggle.'³

That struggle - not just between interior and exterior realities - but between the styles of their representation is at the heart of Harris's *28 Diptych*. The painting is a transitional point in the body of Harris's work, between his early figuration and recent abstraction.

This rhetoric of expressionism, with its insistence on presence and authenticity in the unmediated representation of the self, finds critique in the work of Mike Parr. Begun in the early 1980s, Parr's *Self portrait project* is an almost obsessive exploration of the artist's own identity. Growing out of Parr's work as a performance artist during the seventies, his large self portrait drawings manipulate

making pins which hold Dwyer's fabric sculptures together.

Giovanni Intra's white-on-black text paintings have the "look" of sixties and seventies conceptual art and, within a New Zealand context, the painted biblical quotations of Colin McCahon. But Intra's work presents the high seriousness of neither, opting instead for a conspiratorial montage of fantasies: a recitation of experimental drugs, CIA plots, psychiatry and the influence of 'Hollyweird'. As Intra explains, 'Everyone who makes work has to live out the production of their own fantasy, it's an undeniable condition of practice. I do live the work, but in my own terms. There are aspects of my life where I do participate in areas which may be regarded as transgressive. But really, what is transgression? It has to rely on a concept of boundary, but culture isn't a wall and transgression isn't just the act of breaking it. What's to say the boundary isn't a fantasy in itself?'⁹

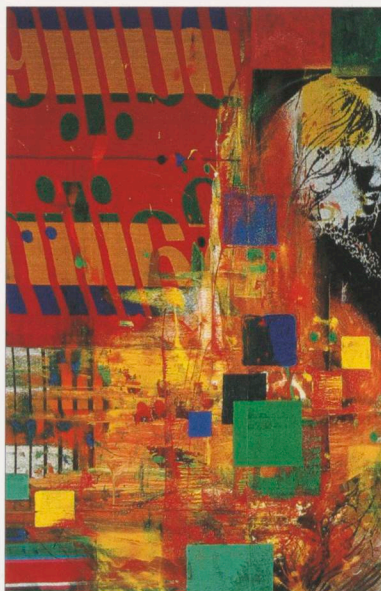
Dale Frank's work has continually blurred stylistic boundaries. Frank's enormously eclectic practice - veering from a hypnotic surrealism in the early eighties, to his current conceptual explorations - is represented in the Chartwell Collection by a combine painting entitled *Pop goes the weasel*. The work adopts familiar postmodern strategies of appropriation

and the interleaving of high and low cultural references: executed on beach towels, it carries the imprint of a late Hans Hoffman abstract. As Frank states: 'I find my concept of beauty very different from other people's. I cannot describe it for that would be putting forward another aesthetic institution... I don't like to call it kitsch because for many that is a bourgeois slag heap... Instead of the bourgeois slag heap it is more like the piles of raw materials to be processed and given a different definition... the raw materials for a whole new aestheticism.'⁹

The Chartwell Collection itself is engaged in this reconstituting of culture, as it disavows the rigidly nationalist outlook of many New Zealand collections and argues itself in a wider context. In this respect, it is no accident that Tony Tuckson should

be one of the central figures of the Collection. Tuckson, a major advocate for Aboriginal art in the fifties, left a considerable legacy as an artist, not just in a substantial body of work, but in his ideas about the traffic between cultures. Tuckson's work moved between the New York of the abstract expressionists and the outback, just as the Chartwell Collection today moves between the work, say, of Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri and John Reynolds. As collection founder RBK Gardiner stated in a recent interview: 'The visual artist points away from himself to the world and this is something I think that is part of the process of creating this collection.'¹⁰

William McAloon
Curator



Dale Frank

Pop goes the weasel

1989

acrylic on printed cotton

3000 x 2010



Mikala Dwyer

Addons 1995

gauze fabric and pins

installation variable

NOTES

1. Bruce Robinson 'Foreword' *Cross currents: Contemporary Australian and New Zealand art from the Chartwell Collection* Waikato Museum of Art and History/Te Whare Taonga o Waikato, Hamilton, 1991, p. 8.
2. Annette Hughes editor *Davida Allen: Survey exhibition* Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane, 1987, p. 8.
3. Jeffrey Harris unpublished interview with Rex Armstrong, 1995.
4. Bernice Murphy 'Babel/Nuremberg (The photographic winter in the wings of the Oedipal theatre part 4)' *The Australian Bicentennial Perspecta* Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1988, p. 74 (author's italics).
5. Mike Parr 'Beleaguered transcendence (The art of John Nixon)' *The Australian Bicentennial Perspecta*, p. 62.

6. Catherine Lumby 'John Nixon Interview' *On the beach* no. 13, 1988, quoted by Janet Shanks in 'Notes on the work of John Nixon (A reading - towards the gesamtkunstwerk)' *John Nixon: Tableaux* Deakin University Gallery, Geelong, 1991, np.
7. 'Twinkle twinkle little star: Midwest talks to Mikala Dwyer' *Midwest* 8, 1995, p. 51
8. Barbara Blake 'Giovanni Intra: Germ-free adolescence' *Art New Zealand* 70, 1994, p. 109.
9. Daniela Salvioni 'Combustible demarcations: The art of Dale Frank' *The Australian Bicentennial Perspecta*, p. 34.
10. quoted by Pat Baskett 'The art collection that walked' *New Zealand Herald* 28 December 1995, p. A13

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Davida Allen (born 1951)
Untitled no. 2 1983
crayon and pencil on paper
795 x 598 (framed)

Untitled no. 8 1983
crayon and pencil on paper
795 x 598 (framed)

Mikala Dwyer (born 1959)
Addons 1995
gauze fabric and pins
installation variable

Dale Frank (born 1959)
Pop goes the weasel 1989
acrylic on printed cotton
3000 x 2010

Jeffrey Harris (born 1949)
28 Diptych 1987
oil and collage on canvas
2435 x 3640

Giovanni Intra (born 1968)
Untitled 1995-96
acrylic on gesso on paper
2800 x 2800 overall

Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri
(born circa 1930)
Untitled 1994
acrylic on linen
1824 x 1523

John Nixon (born 1949)
Self-Portrait: Non Objective
composition (night) 1987
enamel and egg shell on hard-board
1905 x 1220

Mike Parr (born 1945)
Elegnem sa Essitam
(The Breeze of Death) 1985
acrylic, pastel and charcoal on canvas
2430 x 4800

SérAPHINE Pick (born 1964)
When (I was) 1996
oil and pencil on canvas
1830 x 1520

John Reynolds (born 1956)
Song of Songs 1991
oil pastel on paper
890 x 704 (framed)

Tony Tuckson (1921-1973)
Untitled no. 24 circa 1958-1964
gouache on paper
980 x 700

All dimensions are in millimetres, height x width.



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Mike Parr photograph: Waikato Museum of Art and History

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