

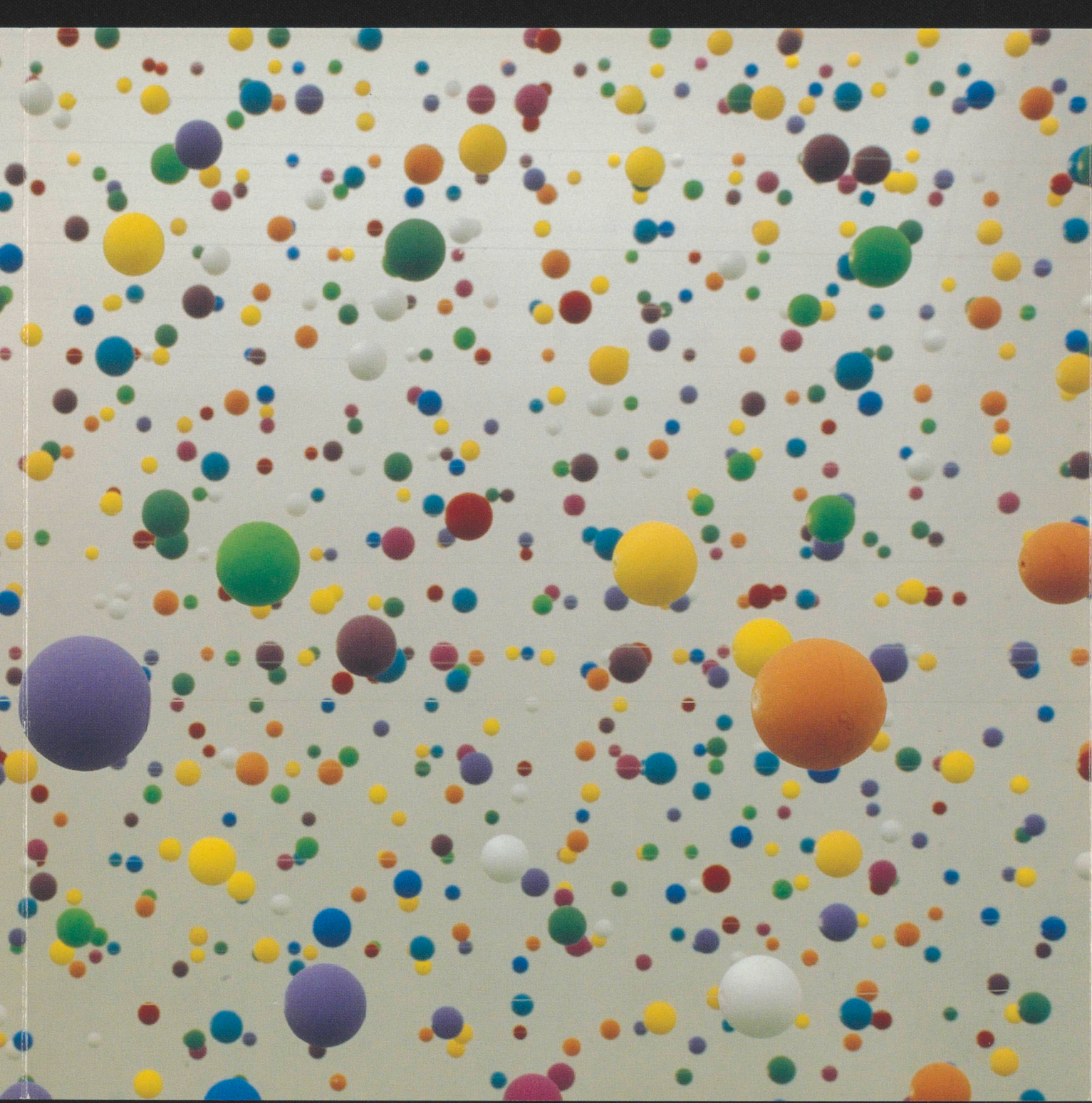


**NIKE SAVVAS**    SIMPLE DIVISION











## NIKE SAVVAS SIMPLE DIVISION

*'To bring time as a reality into our consciousness, to make it active and perceivable, we need the real movement of substantial masses removable in space.'*

NAUM GABO, 1927

'A parody of Seurat' is how Sydney artist Nike Savvas describes her 'pointillist' installation, *Simple Division*. Not Seurat's paintings per se, but his chromo-luminist theories and his reliance on scientific writings on the subject of the luminosity, intensity and harmony of colour.

The 5,000 polystyrene fishing floats, painted in a spectrum of acrylic colours, are strung on near-invisible nylon filaments according to a regular grid pattern on the flanking walls of the project space.

This systematic separation of the coloured balls in space defies the optical mixing on which Seurat's divisionist technique was based, while the constant agitation of the balls by electric fans induces a kinetic vibration: Seurat's scientific approach to colour is updated to the quantum era. Savvas has subverted the fixity of congealed spots of paint on a 2-D surface and exploded the corpuscles of colour into a psychotropic 3-D space where they agitate like magnified molecules of gas, ceaselessly interacting.

This agitation is an objective realisation of an optical effect that in the neo-impressionists' paintings was an essentially subjective experience. Terms such as

shimmering, vibrating, scintillating and quivering were used in a liberal way to describe sensations rather than observations, as in the appropriately colourful passage by Felix Fenéon (1891) in reference to Seurat's paintings:

*'A pigmentary hue is weak and drab compared to a hue born of optical mixture; the latter mysteriously vivified by a perpetual process of recombination, shimmers, elastic, opulent and lustrous... Consequently one might speculate on the prerogatives of optical mixture. All the constituent coloured elements will combine without muddying. Their polychrome mass of small dots is ordered according to the play of light and dark: justifying the perspective, making the air quiver over the scenes. The relief is continuously formed: the antagonistic energies of hues are coloured from the lines of collision and beyond... The flight of each colour is free and the interdependence of each is strict: the painting is unified under their surge.'*

An inverted alphabet on the rear wall of the installation effects a similar subversion of rationality, dispersing the grammatical elements in a chaotic cloud. Posed against the dynamic experience of the clouds of quivering colours, language is atomised and rendered ineffectual.

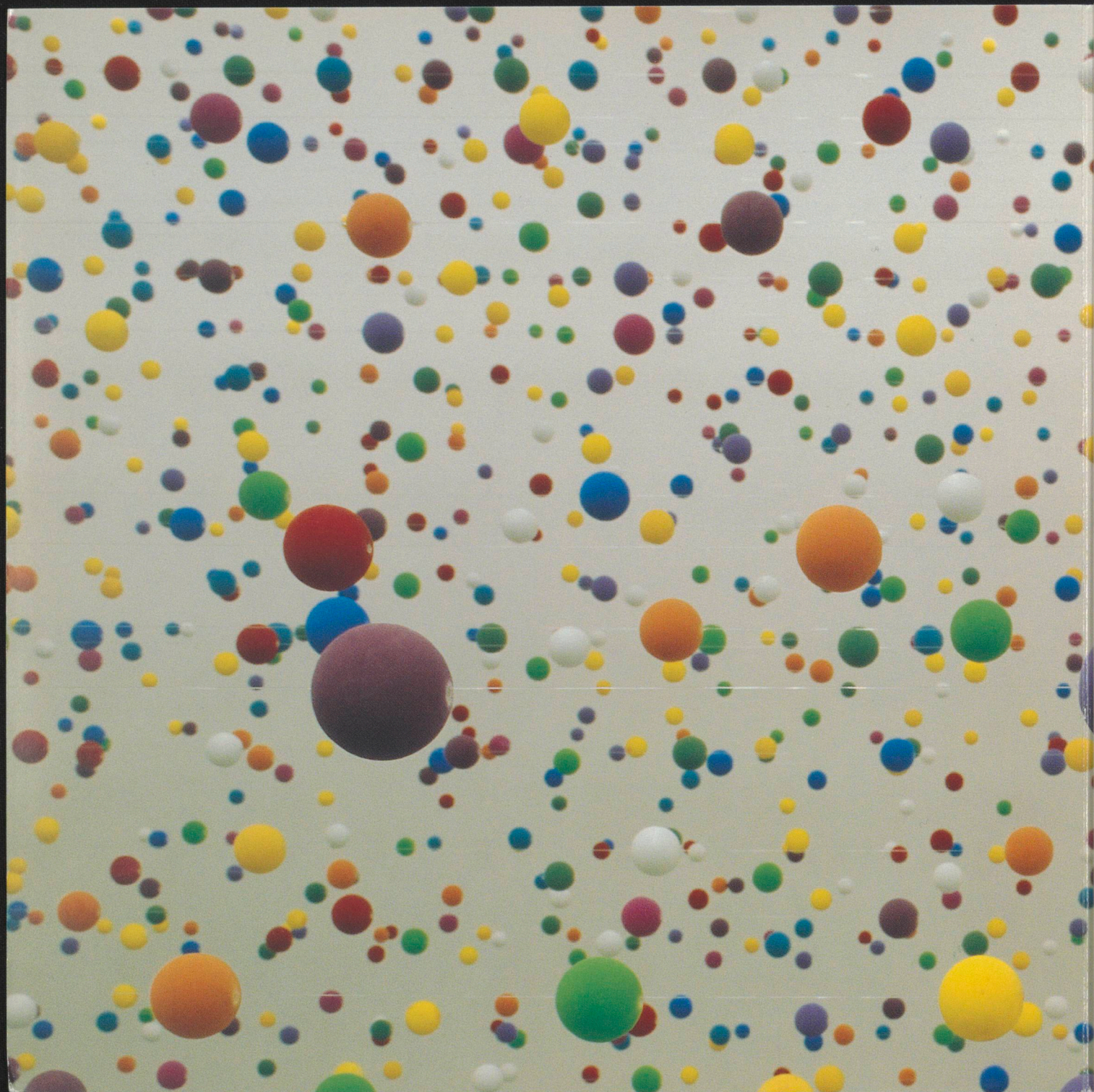
ANDREW BOGLE

This page and front cover: *Simple Division* 1994-96  
Polystyrene spheres, nylon filament, paint, acetate, vinyl, electric fans.  
Dimensions variable.

Back cover: Nike Savvas installing *Simple Division*.

*Simple Division* has been gifted to the Gallery by the Friends of the Gallery Acquisitions Trust.







## NIKE SAVVAS

Nike Savvas was born in Sydney in 1964. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Visual Arts) degree from the Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney in 1988, followed by a Graduate Diploma in Visual Arts in 1990 and a Graduate Diploma of Education in 1992. In 1994 she graduated Master of Fine Arts from the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales. In 1996 Savvas was awarded the Anne and Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship, which will allow her to take up an associate research studentship at Goldsmith's College, University of London, in 1996-97. She currently lives in Sydney.

### Solo Exhibitions

- 1990 *Alternative Endings* First Draft West, Sydney
- 1991 *Ichthyoid* (collaboration with Nicole Mather)  
Performance Space, Sydney
- 1992 *Communique* Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
- 1993 *Communique* Canberra Contemporary Artspace,  
Canberra  
*Untitled 1992 24 Hour Art*, Darwin
- 1994 *nice bubbles* 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne  
*Round* CBD Gallery, Sydney
- 1995 *Untitled 1994* College of Fine Arts, University of  
Sydney  
*Head Boy* CBD Gallery, Sydney  
*nice bubbles II* Cairns Regional Gallery, Cairns
- 1996 *Fuzzy Logic* (collaboration with Stephen Little)  
Artspace, Sydney  
*Onement One* CBD Gallery, Sydney

### Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1989 *First Sight, First Draft*, Sydney  
*Origins + Identity* Bondi Pavilion, Sydney  
*Passion* Sylvester Studios, Sydney
- 1990 *Mist from the Chest A Glass of Water*, Brisbane  
*Abstract Papers* First Draft, Sydney  
*No Milburn + Arté* Gallery, Brisbane

- 1991 *Prelude to the End of the Millennium* Sylvester  
Studios, Sydney
- 1992 *Op. Art Ars Multiplicata*, Sydney  
*Artworkz Four* Gallery 101, Melbourne  
*Boy Without Organs* First Draft West, Sydney  
*Between Cultures* Gallery 77, Sydney  
*1985-1991* First Draft West, Sydney
- 1993 *Luminaries* Monash University Gallery, Melbourne  
*Rad Scunge* Karyn Lovegrove Gallery, Melbourne  
*SHIRT-HEAD* Mori Annexe, Sydney  
*Australian Perspecta 93* Art Gallery of NSW,  
Sydney
- 1994 *House* Canberra  
*600,000 hours* EAF, Adelaide  
*Bet Your Life* Annandale Galleries, Sydney  
*Coexistence* Artspace, Sydney  
*Critique* First Draft, Sydney  
*Re-placing Australian Painting* Teststrip, Auckland
- 1995 *Hong Kong-Sydney* Fringe Club Gallery,  
Hong Kong  
*Topos-Occupied Space* Artspace, Sydney  
*Untitled* College of Fine Arts, Paddington

### Selected Bibliography

- Adam Geczy 'First Sight' *Eyeline* 11 Autumn 1990
- Adam Geczy 'Quantifying New Colours: Nike Savvas' *Eyeline* 15  
Winter 1991
- Anne Wallace 'Communique' *Eyeline* 20 Summer 1992
- George Alexander 'Communique' *Australian Perspecta* Art  
Gallery of New South Wales 1993
- Ben Curnow 'Formal Functions' *Art and Text* 49 Sept. 1994
- Melissa Chiu 'Nike Savvas: Round' *Eyeline* 27 1995
- Marina Buecks 'Nice bubbles' *Barfly* August 31, 1995
- Andrew Bogle *Transformers* Auckland Art Gallery, 1996





*Simple Division* was an artist's project for the Auckland Art Gallery, 2 April – 28 July 1996  
 Curator Andrew Bogle    Photography John McIver    Design Chad Taylor    ISBN 0 86463 206 1

