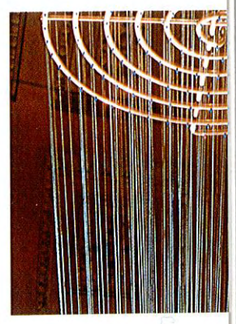
Chapter 5

The Expanded Field: Alternative Art Forms in the 1990s



THE EXPANDED FIELD: ALTERNATIVE ART FORMS IN THE 1990s

Bleak Cities: Recession and an Altered Art Landscape

This chapter maps a renewed interest in hybrid art forms: in the early 1990s installation, photography, video and performance had gained a relevance that reflected dramatic alterations in the art world and models of artistic practice.

If a belief in positive change temporarily reclaimed its place in discourse, as first China, then the whole of Eastern Europe, exploded in 1989, the expectation that the 1990s would be a "caring" rerun of the idealistic 1960s was easily shed in the face of the global recession, Tiananmen Square massacre and feudal tragedies that followed.

The economic boom of the 1980s, which had exaggerated the most mercantile tendencies of contemporary art in an expansive bedlam, failed. The collapse of the art market from 1990 onwards, and the closures of many commercial galleries throughout Australia, were accompanied by a reaction against the conservatising expectations of commercial spaces and art museums over the previous decade and a questioning of art and its institutions. The underlying reality of the economy of art remained conditioned by Cold War certitudes and by art's post-World War II merger with the entertainment industry.

The recession produced an altered landscape in which many commercial spaces foundered. Leading Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Brisbane galleries of the 1980s vanished or "downsized": in Melbourne, Powell Street, Realities, Girgis & Klym, Judith Pugh and Gore Street galleries closed, as the gallery district contracted to inner-suburban Richmond and Fitzroy; in Sydney, Garry Anderson and Macquarie galleries disappeared. Commercial galleries saw their clientele shrink to a few well-known corporations, idealistic private collectors and institutions. Other corporations that had patronised contemporary artists during the 1980s sold their collections: the Budget corporation, for example, was bankrupted, selling its collection at auction and absorbing considerable losses in the works' value. Low-rental alternatives reflected the inability of the commercial system to meet young artists' aspirations or to show more than a tiny fraction of the artists left unrepresented by gallery closures. These alternatives ranged from co-operative spaces such as Sydney's Pendulum, CBD and Selenium or Melbourne's Temple Studio and ether ohnetitel, to public access programs like Melbourne's Artroundtown and No Vacancy, which featured disused shopfronts filled by young artists.

Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art was finally opened during this period. From 1991, the MCA housed Sydney University's Power Bequest collection and a large program of temporary exhibitions from overseas and Australia in a magnificent Art Deco building located on Circular Quay. Private sponsorship raised a significant proportion of the MCA's money, attracted by the possession of a prestigious collection. The alternative museum option, attempted by other spaces such as PICA in Perth, ACCA in Melbourne, and Artspace in Sydney, was that of the *kunstverein* – an accommodation for cutting-edge art and changing exhibitions that could develop without the responsibilities or advantages of significant collections. These now sought to present difficult art in a period of uncertain funding. Most contemporary art spaces wanted state funding, even if both the MCA and the Melbourne Museum of Modern Art at the new, expanded Heide had been extraordinarily successful in garnering corporate support. The problem of fickle funding from both governments and private donors, combined with heightened artist

Previous page: detail from **5:25**.

5:1 Bill Henson, *Untitled*, 1979, b&w photograph. Courtesy Deutscher Fine Art, Melbourne and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

and audience expectations, haunted all museums during the 1990s.

At the same time as the art world began to collapse, artists were redefining the edges of art. As in the 1970s, they moved outside the boundaries of galleries, institutions and an unchanging economy of art, questioning not just what was acceptable as art but also whether art should survive at all. Unlike artists during previous centuries who earned their livelihood by specialising in one of a defined group of artistic genres (for example, landscape or portrait painting), many contemporary artists worked across mediums and genres. For several reasons, photography was central to this shift, both because of its iconic status within postmodernism – as the medium supremely able to describe and quote from other mediums – and because of its apparently self-evident capacity to objectively record.

The next section describes artists such as collaborative team Rose Farrell & George Parkin, and Bill Henson, who took photographs but, unlike earlier generations of photographers, neither printed their own images in a darkroom nor attached importance to the traditions of vintage photography or photojournalism. Instead, their works belonged to an increasingly heterodox mainstream of art that was no longer composed of paintings and sculptures but in which the division between opposites such as photography and performance art became blurred. Artists including Mike Parr, Joan Grounds and Lyndal Jones, whose work is discussed below, purposefully alternated between temporal forms, such as performance, and static, even conventional, installations. The last section of the chapter looks at Domenico de Clario and Jennifer Turpin, who often moved outside conventional galleries altogether, reconfiguring spaces with hybrid installations.

PHOTOGRAPHY, PRINTMAKING AND PERFORMANCE: CROSSING MEDIA

Postmodernism and the Importance of Photography

Photography was one of the means by which artists reflected a decay and fragmentation that now, at the start of the 1990s, took on the suspicious appearance of a *zeitgeist*. The elevation of the medium had been accomplished during the 1980s. According to many critics, photography had been the key medium in understanding postmodern art.[1] The

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1 Abigail Solomon Godeau, "Photography after Art Photography", in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art after Modernism; Rethinking Representation*, New Museum, New York, 1984, p. 80. Also see Douglas Crimp, "Pictures", *October* n.8, Spring 1979, pp. 75-88.
Here, I briefly recapitulate the arguments of American critics Douglas Crimp and Craig Owens. Both wrote in the early 1980s for the influential journal *October*. They theorised postmodern photography in essays that established the importance of a generation of artists including Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince.
To Donald Kuspit, however, in "Flak from the Radicals", also in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art after Modernism*, pp. 137-151, postmodern painting was best explained as a reaction *against* photography.

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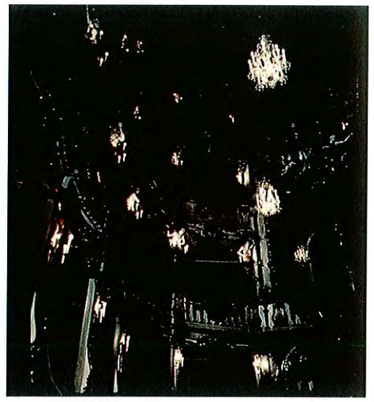

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5:2-4 Bill Henson, *Untitled*, 1983-84, Type C photograph. Courtesy Deutscher Fine Art, Melbourne and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

5:5 Bill Henson, *Untitled*, 1985-86, Type C photograph. Courtesy Deutscher Fine Art, Melbourne and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

5:6 Bill Henson, *The Paris Opera Project*, 1991, Type C photograph. Courtesy Deutscher Fine Art, Melbourne and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

theories behind the art discussed in the previous two chapters had been heavily influenced by a revaluation, in the United States, Europe and Australia, of the properties of photography. This conjunction of photography and theory was important because changing definitions of identity were central to the postmodern period. Postmodern art in the 1980s had taken on the qualities of photography. In the early 1990s, exhibitions of photographs – especially when presented as installations – were particularly favoured by contemporary art spaces and curators. Their selection by curators for large international survey exhibitions, including the Sydney Biennales, usually required the demonstration of an appropriation of authorship, a descent from post-object forms and an analysis of representation. Drawing on a postmodern analysis of photography such as Douglas Crimp's, artistic identity was seen as the effect of social forces and was marked by the diffusion of authority.

The disruption of canons of quality by error, the disorderly proliferation of originals and the unsurpassed ability of photographic and reproductive technologies to collapse the differences between high and low culture had been of considerable interest to *October* writers such as Douglas Crimp and Craig Owens, and to the Australian critics centred around Paul Taylor's *Art & Text*. Photography, according to Crimp and Owens, disrupted conventional notions of originality through its ability to reproduce already existing images. Photographs had documentary functions at odds with connoisseurship and the world of traditional art; they blurred the division between popular and elite culture. Photography, like video, was thus suited to the documentation of post-object forms as artists decisively turned towards transitory, temporary art forms such as performance and installation during the 1990s. The next few pages describe art that inhabited the zone between documentation and performance.

Bill Henson: The Portraiture of Affect

The wide impact of Bill Henson's photographs was due in part to his intense sense of the contemporary and his understanding that photographs were themselves now seen differently, as a result of the critical transformations sketched above. He constructed an overwhelming sense of the contemporary – of history acting in the present – through the

presentation of subjects at the effect of, or subject to, overwhelming social and cultural forces; his particular genius was to present this as the *gravitas* of our age and his work therefore epitomised the status and ambition of postmodern photography. As Henson observed: "I see photography as just another medium. I don't like the idea of a photography ghetto."[2] His photographs presented imagery that symbolised the particular qualities and defects of our age: magisterial size, brittle beauty and melodramatic hyperreality. They were elaborately staged and, even when they appeared to be documentary records, were highly contrived and severely self-reflexive. He was one of Australia's best-known artists, showing with considerable critical success in many European galleries and selected to represent Australia at the 1995 Venice Biennale.

Henson's earlier photographs of figures standing in crowds were seen at the Guggenheim in 1984; they were a catalogue of urban resignation. His highly sensational polyptychs of young girls, junkies and naked street children, juxtaposed with views of Baroque palaces, were shown at the 1988 Venice Biennale. Later, Henson exhibited large montages of prostitutes, emergency workers and aerial New York views. More recently, he cut, slashed and reassembled enormous montages from photographs of young people lost in a post-Apocalypse wilderness of car yards and forests (their Eden resembled the paradise of French film-maker Jean-Luc Godard's cannibal hippies in his late 1960s film, *Weekend*). Henson's desire to image a particular quality – the contemporary – was clearly that of an artist attached to the anachronistic identities of *flâneur* and voyeur. His subjects were often beautiful, glamorous young women, photographed as if unaware of the camera. The historical impropriety of such flattery, in a period where most artists were aware of the politics and sexuality of representation, was artistically perverse and partly explained the wide appeal of his work. His political incorrectness was so conscious that it evaded straightforward criticism and discouraged easy imitation.

Henson's gravely elegant photographs insisted on the conundrum of self-possession, asserting a relation between vitrinous space, pathos and exaggerated chiaroscuro. His photographic series, *The Paris Opera Project*, 1991, exemplified a continuing deflection of photographic signs from social and political possibility. Instead, Henson's photographs aspired to mystery. This was achieved by prodigiously accomplished theatricality: outsized Type C prints were arranged in polyptych groups across darkened gallery walls. Pictures of men and women in evening dress, presumably members of an opera audience, were glimpsed in semi-darkness. These images alternated with luminous photographs of clouds at dusk, taken from the streets of an outer Melbourne suburb. The tableaux of opera patrons appeared to be staged; the darkness and their impassivity, as they acted out varying degrees of attentiveness and self-forgetfulness, ensured their detachment from our gaze. Like the performances they attended, Henson's subjects were idealised and theatrical. They were *types*. This emphasis was deliberate; Henson saturated colour, deepened tones and blurred focus. He suffused his images with an eroticism, similar to that of French painter Balthus, that led one to find voyeuristic *double entendres* everywhere, even, for example, in the repose of a young woman cradled in the lap of an older man who was, perhaps, her father.

If the photographs were an attempt to image the essence of modern life, then the carefully edited gestures stood for a symbolism of appearance. To what extent could audiences now empathise with such an abstraction of art from life and such wild claims for art? Henson's extraordinary aestheticisation was seen in the systematic deformation

2 Bill Henson, quoted in "Bill Henson's Life in Venice", *Artforce* n.84, June 1994, p.7.

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and reformation of subjects. The characteristics of Type C enlargement – diffuse particles of colour and disconnected illusion that come together at a distance – were also the methods of painters. His photograph of a woman's face emerging from darkness seemed drained of colour; she was distorted by shimmering light and obliterating dark. In Henson's *grand guignol*, white skin and expensive cloth dissolved into sensuous darkness and clusters of luminous colour.

The self-possessed subjects of *The Paris Opera Project* were also actors. Though equally drenched in darkness, unlike Henson's subjects in previous series they declared their threatening and bloodless status as alluring representations. He represented extreme types and classes of people. His photographs begged many moralistic and political questions. The earlier juxtapositions of a sexual underworld with the art of museums embodied a widely shared notion of cultural dislocation. In the darkening, millennial worlds of the 1990s, did images of richly dressed men and women present anything more than the individuality accessible to a privileged class seen through Henson's virtuosic manipulation of the cult of the individual? If blurred and darkened photographs often represent the dissolution of individual identity, then Henson's painterly works deliberately suppressed political difference by the appropriation of the social in an aesthetic cult of the spectacle.

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Rose Farrell & George Parkin: Installation, Photography and Artistic Collaboration

Similarly, the collaborative works of Rose Farrell and George Parkin combined the veracity of photography and the cultural authority of painting. Farrell & Parkin's work was a hybrid type of photography where spatial anomalies and positions became incredibly ambiguous. They made mural-sized photographs documenting bizarre installations built solely for the photographs, populated with costumed actors and then destroyed.

The installation in their enormous work, *Terra Firma 1616*, 1992, resembled a kind of reconstructed world, like a diorama. Each element in *Terra Firma 1616* was assembled from historical sources: 1616 was the date of Australia's "discovery" by Dutch explorer Dirk Hartog; William Shakespeare died; an obscure but important alchemical text had just been published; and a traditional street procession in provincial Germany was recorded by a book engraver. Real drapery in *Terra Firma 1616* was double-coded with its graphic representation; the actors' skin was so pallid with pancake make-up that startlingly bloodshot eyes and a single patch of gold leapt out in an otherwise monochromatic expanse of copper-toned black and white. The microcosmic clarity of their vast photographs overloaded the eye; the space, therefore, of the panoramic historical

5:7 Rose Farrell & George Parkin, *Terra Firma 1616*, 1992, Type C colour prints (5 panels), 122 x 460 cm. Courtesy Michael Wardell Gallery, Melbourne.

5:8 Rose Farrell & George Parkin, *A Passion for Maladies #3*, 1990, Type C colour photograph, 240 x 240 cm. Courtesy Michael Wardell Gallery, Melbourne.

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tableau collapsed like a ruined Potemkin village of images that seemed familiar but was not at all. The haloes of saints and angels in Farrell & Parkin's earlier photographs signalled the edges of presence and beauty. An increasingly didactic luminism, confirmed by obviously engraved pictorial sources and studio lighting, led in *Terra Firma 1616* to the appearance, but not necessarily the experience, of a spatial plenitude.

Although at first sight seamless, *Terra Firma 1616* was a collection of separate descriptions. Several perspectives, anamorphic distortions and light sources were montaged together. Deep space collapsed into shallow distance; four monstrous constructed heads intruded frontally into our space and, overall, proportions did not match. The razor's edge between passionate belief and credulity was the key to the significance of their photograph.

Farrell & Parkin recreated European metaphysics, science and alchemy at the periphery – specifically, at the Antipodes where everything was supposed to be upside-down or reversed. Their relationship to culture was anamorphic and traced a history of psychic pain through a parallax lens. Farrell's early photographs looked like film stills from a documentary history of modernist historical catastrophe, such as the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The collaborative Baroque figure compositions of 1988 featured tortured saints on grisaille rocks. *A Passion for Maladies*, 1990-91, was an extraordinary series of portraits of imaginary people in mute pain set amongst weird, Keinholz-like interiors. The figures were neither portraits nor ciphers, but punctuations and historical aberrations rendered in excruciatingly compelling detail.

The two artists collaborated on two types of phantom: firstly, a curatorial *corpus* of undefined gender; secondly, ghost-like bodies defined by surroundings and props. The studied, rebus-like appearance of the artists' scenes indicated deliberate over-calculation. Just as deep space collapsed into shallow distance, Farrell & Parkin depicted the emblems of civilisation as violent but fragile illusions.

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5:9 Mike Parr, *No 2*, from *12 Untitled Self Portraits Set II*, 1990, suite of drypoint etchings, printer John Loane, 108 x 78 cm. Photograph: Gary Sommerfeld. Courtesy the artist and Viridian Press.

5:10 Mike Parr, *100 Breaths*, 1992-93, from *(Alphabet/Haemorrhage) Black Box of 100 Self-Portrait Etchings 2*, 1993, performance, Henderson Road, Alexandria. Photograph: Paul Green. Courtesy the artist.

Mike Parr: Printmaking and the Return to Performance

The lush historical consciousness of Henson's and Farrell & Parkin's photographs represented an ambitiousness for photography beyond its tradition of craft-conscious vintage prints. This tendency was extended in performance artists' appropriations of more permanent reproductive mediums such as photography and printmaking. Frequently, the intersection of documentation and event allowed an amplification of experience as significant as the performance itself.

Since the connotations of impression were so suggestive, it was probably inevitable that Mike Parr would turn first to large-scale drawing, which he included in complex installations, and then, decisively, to printmaking. His early performances were an exploration of the ambiguous edges of a Self which could be defined by marks – made on the world, or made on the body, quite literally, when the artist scarred himself with burning fuse wire. This fleeting condition could be provisionally resolved or recorded by marks on paper. Parr's self-portraits, such as *No 1*, from *12 Untitled Self Portraits Set II*, 1989, were not revelations of the Self through printmaking. They did not disclose much by way of individual character, personality or even the artist's physique. They were, instead, an aggrandisement of conventional conceptions of the Self to the point that they defeated the idea of a unique personality. Mike Parr did versions of himself. The subject – his face – initially suggested an affirmation of self-expressive subjectivity. However, the

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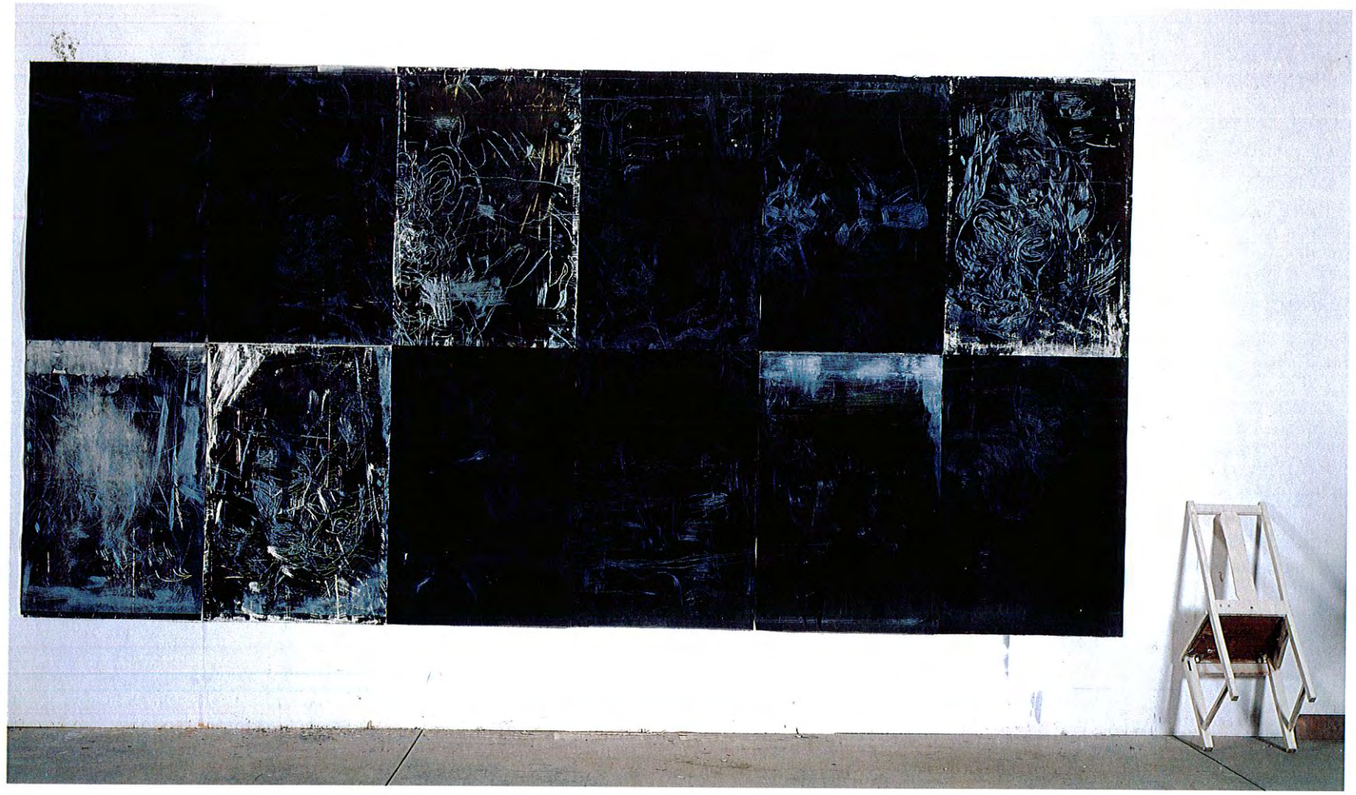
artist repeated his self-image in prints so often and so compulsively that it lost this naive signification. The face became an interrogation of his audience as much as a disclosure. The full force of repetition experienced in his long performances was made readily available through the production of reproducible but "unique" prints.

Parr thus took advantage of the authenticity of printmaking, which was established by the artist's signature and by his long-term collaboration with Melbourne master-printer John Loane. Credible identity was therefore deliberately constructed out of the curatorial activity of the print industry and the association with Loane's highly organised, entrepreneurial atelier. Printmaking was involved involuntarily in an unsettling game – the dismantling of familiar signs of originality. The virtuoso self-expression of Parr's individual prints was revealed as an arbitrary construction through extreme, spellbinding repetition: this was the antithesis of the familiar Romantic idea of paper as a *tabula rasa*, awaiting the unique imprint of the artist.

From 1992 onwards, Parr began to restage earlier works and initiate new performances. Like Jill Orr, whose performances were documented by photographers of exceptional sensitivity and who privately restaged public performances for these photographers, Parr was fortunate enough to collaborate with remarkable peers. *100 Breaths*, 1992-93, from *(Alphabet/Haemorrhage) Black Box of 100 Self-Portrait Etchings 2*, 1993, was recorded by Paul Green in photographs that recapitulated the evolution of Parr's performances into prints. Green's photographs documented successive moments as the artist lifted his self-portrait etchings from a solander box and, one by one, held them to his face, drawing in his breath, suspending the print in mid-air as he absorbed his own representation. The photographs documented a trajectory away from print-



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making into performances based on a *détournement* – a displacement of the meaning of Parr's collaboration with printmaker John Loane. Mike Parr's 1993 performance in Melbourne at Anna Schwartz Gallery included a retrospective enactment of his 1970s' performances. In what must have been an out-of-body experience for Parr, a counter-tenor stood in for the artist who, with his audience, watched the singer enunciate Parr's original words.

In a decade attracted to grunge, quick results and low-rent artistic options, the history of performance had become influential in a double-edged way. Not surprisingly, therefore, a fascination with death, cruelty and decay amongst young artists compelled a rereading of Mike Parr's performances and installations, and the recognition, in works such as *Minotaur the Lost Leader (Remnants of the Self Portrait Project) II*, 1994, that he was one of the most significant artists working in Australia from the 1970s onwards.

Joan Grounds: Fixing Ephemeral Sculpture

Since performances are ephemeral, they survive in photographs, videos and written descriptions; they linger in archives and artists' cupboards as props and memories. Performance artists Lyndal Jones and Joan Grounds were able to span and reconcile both 1970s feminist practices and the ambiguities of the 1990s; at the same time, they mapped out more inclusive forms of experimental art suggesting a spectrum of author/artists and a variety of artistic methods.

Joan Grounds began to incorporate the element of gradual change into her painstaking, beautiful installations. Grounds created sculptures, installations and films (including a collaboration with Aleks Danko, David Lourie and David Stewart, *we should call it a living room*, 1975) that incorporated significant performative aspects and, therefore, she continually blurred the boundaries of "performance artist". In a 1990 installation, *Bridge*, created over three weeks at Melbourne's 200 Gertrude Street Artists' Space, she built an environmental sculpture. The construction in the main space resembled a half-finished, suburban, plywood *merzbau*; in the gallery's second space, behind the shop-front window, she gradually reshaped a peat earthwork and adjusted the position of a partly dismembered violin. The work grew and changed over the exhibition's duration without ever apparently arriving at a definitive end.

Lyndal Jones: The Prediction Pieces

Lyndal Jones' performances dramatised a feminist and post-structural analysis of a troubled society. Her Prediction Pieces comprised ten performances produced over a decade in Australia, Tokyo, Los Angeles and Edinburgh. All used techniques of prediction – tarot, dice, weather forecasts – in performances involving slide projections, taped sound, television, dancers and actors.

More austere and self-reflexive than later works, the early Prediction Pieces introduced several motifs: fortune-tellers; video clips of the British royal wedding; weather reports; and a series of projected messages. Each performance began with the phrase "And as the sun sets slowly on the West". Warnings and jokes were interpolated throughout: "watch this space"; "forewarned is fore-armed"; "you will see stars"; "the end is very near". The messages operated on several levels. The sinking sun referred to the West's decay (several performances imaged the ascendancy of Japan or China); it also invoked the suspension of time, as in the now-generic story-teller's opening ("It was a dark and

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5:11 Mike Parr, *Minotaur the Lost Leader (Remnants of the Self Portrait Project) II*, 1994, suite of colour etching and relief printing from steel, painted chair, printer John Loane, each image 108 x 78 cm. Photograph: Gary Sommerfeld. Courtesy the artist and Viridian Press.

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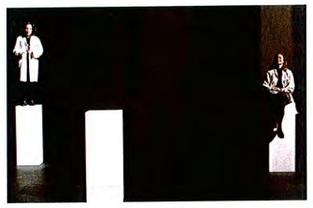

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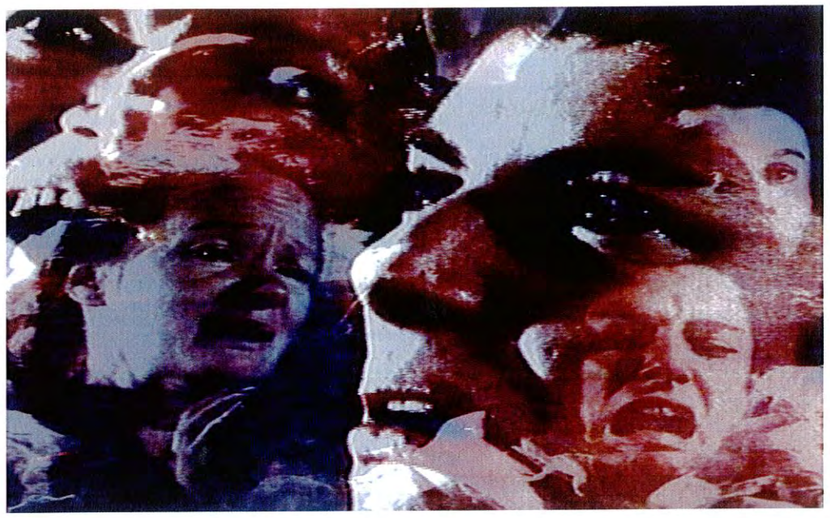
stormy night …"). *Prediction Piece 6: Pipe Dreaming*, 1988-89, examined representations of optimism but was fractured by the sounds of gunshots (coincidentally, the Tiananmen massacre occurred three weeks after its first performance). The first half of *Pipe Dreaming* was a highly romantic representation of revolution: Peking Opera costume dancing and actors declaiming Situationist speeches. The second half undercut this mood. The actors quoted Chekhov's mordant play *The Seagull* and a young Australian/Chinese artist read accounts of immigrant ordeals and authoritarian repression. *Pipe Dreaming* was fractured by more than gunfire: older actors and younger dancers moved separately around the stage; costumes and identities were chronologically mismatched. Cross-dressing between categories, generations, sexes and nationalities suggested identity in a state of flux. *Prediction Piece 10: As Time Goes By*, 1991, included images of the night sky, arguments about science and art, physicist Stephen Hawking's theory of time in reverse and, finally, an apple thrown in a wide arc across a darkened stage.

The issues that her theme of prediction addressed, from nuclear holocaust in the earlier performances to environmental catastrophe a decade later – were pretexts precisely because Jones' real attention was elsewhere. Feldenkreis therapy and postmodern dance oriented the way her performances unfolded: through vernacular movements and repetition. Characterised by a choreography of labour, they were like lectures that redirected the audience's attention. The Prediction Pieces dramatised the existing instability within our culture, and were thus explicitly pedagogical. Her early work was influenced by performance groups in London, like Welfare State. It was also a critique of that wave of 1970s feminist performances, rejecting the idea of exclusively female content and asserting the social construction of gender. Jones usually appeared as a commentator or story-teller, often in men's clothing. She observed that acts of prediction were "processes through which we arrange our future(s)". Although she was often described as questioning sexual identity, her Prediction Pieces became a meditation on nationality and historic global change. If the first works in her cycle were reductionist and formal, the later performances involved complicated choreography and large numbers of actors. Unorthodox eclecticism, and indifference to the idea that knowledge was gained through catharsis, showed in the artist's careful presentation of heterogeneous sources both in the performances themselves and in their representation, first in an archival exhibition of all the textual material and props at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art in 1992 and later by the incorporation of complex performance videos into installations. Jones was able to avoid the substitution of the Prediction Pieces by their video representation through enormously careful, patient "readings" of the elements in each performance. While Lyndal Jones' powerful performances explored the form of catalogues, they also denied the authority of classification.

John Gillies and The Sydney Front: Techno/Dumb/Show

Through documentation, the exemplary "truthfulness" of performance deteriorates. Video's and photography's capacity for near-infinite reproduction, the deterioration and increasing illegibility of images in replay, the inevitably severe editing of a time-based medium in text and images, and the falsification of artists' and critics' hindsight all invariably appear accidental. The Sydney Front's performances involved the use of documentation to create a video art work more expansive and amplified than any performance itself. *Techno/Dumb/Show*, 1991, was the result of collaborative work with



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5:12-13 Lyndal Jones , *Prediction Piece 1*, 1981, performance, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne. Photographs: John Dunkley-Smith.

5:14-15 Lyndal Jones (with DanceWorks), *Prediction Piece 6: Pipe Dreaming*, 1986, performance, George Fairfax Studio, Melbourne. Photographs: Suzanne Davies.

5:16-17 Lyndal Jones, *Prediction Piece 10: As Time Goes By*, 1992, performance, George Fairfax Studio, Melbourne. Photographs: Nanette Hassell.

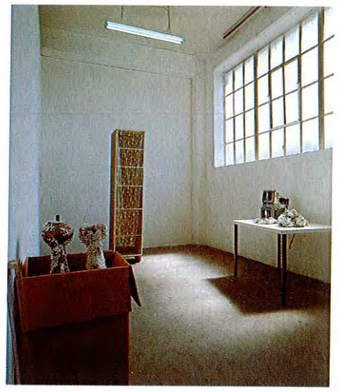
5:18 John Gillies and The Sydney Front, *Techno/Dumb/Show*, 1991, video still. Courtesy the artist.

5:19 Joan Grounds, *Pool* (detail), 1988, installation, mixed media, Performance Space, Sydney. Courtesy Annandale Galleries, Sydney.

John Gillies. Deceptively simple, it blurred the borders between installation and film: one large screen, two speakers, a dark installation space, and an experimental film screening. Originally a performance, the video was filmed painstakingly as a separate work over three months, during which performer John Gillies worked less as director than as participant.

Techno/Dumb/Show was a catalogue of effects and endurance requiring similar work from the audience. For twenty minutes the viewer was engulfed in a landslide of sounds and theatrical images: bells; crowds clapping; hysterical laughing and crying; people whispering into phones; performers staring at the camera or acting out exaggerated mannerisms; actors running. *Techno/Dumb/Show* was also a catalogue of performance actions – an athletic, gymnastic, aesthetic workout. Gillies and The Sydney Front mimicked the tropes of performance documentation with hypnotic urgency. The video was divided into a succession of episodes, each lasting about five minutes. The performers' exaggerated facial expressions and endurance were metaphors for the experience of experimental film. Montaged images succeeded each other in staccato succession: phone conversations turned into actors running; acrobats balancing on wires were succeeded by applauding crowds; spinning trapeze artists mutated into a hyperactive man conducting a phantom orchestra. The arbitrary collage was overtly manipulative: through juxtaposition, reality was produced as an effect of the most transparent artifice.

Like Japanese installation artists Complesso Plastico, Gillies and The Sydney Front fabricated a sense of urgent, expectant presence; their gestures were separated from their bodily signifiers by over-saturated colour, montage, and a soundtrack like a mutant aerobics session. The constant replacement of one image with another displaced and reattached meanings, as if the images were caught in a continually revolving door. Sheer speed produced the expansion and then collapse of bodily and facial signifiers. At the intersection of performance and installation, *Techno/Dumb/Show* generated a set of untruthful allusions to narrative that varied from each other in such a way that a mesmerising copy was preferable to any original.



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Parr's performance documentations, Grounds' installations, Jones' complex performances and John Gillies and The Sydney Front's videos were a considerable distance from unexceptional reification of the destabilised postmodern archive. Performance documentation gradually created hybrid works parallel to, but not coincident with, its original subjects.

INSTALLATION: THE ALIENATION OF ART

Domenico de Clario: The Post-industrial Dark Wood

During the early 1990s, contemporary artists habitually accepted an alienated relation to artistic language; this was seen at its most extreme in the fashionable intersection of grunge and installation, where a tacky garage-debris ethic bled into stylish reworkings of the forms of abstraction in, for example, the messy agglomerations of Sydney artists Hany Armanious and Mikala Dwyer.

Domenico de Clario's debris-strewn underworlds of the same period originated from the aesthetics of a much earlier period – from the early 1970s installations described in Chapter 1. Those anarchic works often involved random decisions and the transposition of grunge – the used paraphernalia of daily life and industry – into the domain of art. They had, then, many affinities with the work of the emerging Sydney artists. De Clario's objects were structured, unlike his earlier works or those of his young peers, by an alchemical conception of the human body. The urban architecture of his new installations was identified with separate elements of consciousness. Within each site, de Clario placed written fragments – often an extract from a book or a short story. His oblique clues were based on an awareness of the failure of previous artists to adequately deal with an ontology of minute experience. Anxiety, pathos and, paradoxically, plenitude coexisted with an intensity achieved by few other artists of the time. What distinguished de Clario's work, though it found parallels in installations by younger artists such as Armanious or Adam Cullen, was the reversal of the normal economy of critique. De Clario's work aimed at the mystification of its audience rather than the avant-garde desire to mobilise social consciousness: he observed that "Answers are for others. I can be the catalyst or initiator of different processes."[3]

Between 1990 and 1993, Domenico de Clario repeatedly presented, in slightly different forms, several installations. Each installation reworked the themes that spanned the artist's career. His lone nocturnal vigils in deserted industrial spaces moved far outside the circuit of public and commercial exhibition spaces. *Memory Palace (Machine-for-contacting-the-dead)*, 1991, was de Clario's first major installation for fifteen years. One part of the Melbourne version resembled a complex simulation of a seance; the other appropriated factory walls and ceilings as a vast Southern sky at night. The assemblages of each component refused to settle into either single, discrete images or a unified masterwork; they skirted the walls or sat in the space's centre as fixtures or furniture. Their relations to each other, the environment and the viewer were architectural; de Clario's alterations were extraordinarily subtle and often imperceptible, blurring the division between art and life. Since literal meaning vanishes in darkness (many of his installations of this period were only open after dusk), he was able to focus attention into moments of hyperalertness, like the experience of a child's game of hide-and-seek. His interventions were asymmetrical and unobtrusive: in *Memory Palace*, a scratched

3 Domenico de Clario, interview with the author, Melbourne, 1993.

diagram forced the awareness of another; the charcoal-black circle within a wall-drawing was in fact a cast shadow, the origin of which was suspended above one's head. Scale and a mark's position in space were thrown into doubt. *Memory Palace* and *Eleven Sons*, 1991, extracted sense from de Clario's emphasis on the elements of myth and history inherent in their constituent parts; connections occurred haphazardly. The sensations that arose for the viewer – of discovery – were immediately unstable. Domenico de Clario's focus on the threshold of experience was manifest in his fascination with sense and nonsense, invisibility and legibility. His interest in gateways and thresholds was seen in *Memory Palace* with the child-like notation "memory palace" posted at the factory entrance and at the installation's periphery. *Memory Palace* centred upon a sliver of intense brightness – an electric lamp hanging in blackness. Explosive points of light and eruptions of noise around it were quite logically organised: an electric blender bursting occasionally into action, a bubbling vat. Amidst a circle of chairs set as if for a séance, de Clario suspended a trembling chandelier, set in constant motion by ropes connected to an electric fan at the room's far end. Each of the four elements – earth, air, fire, and water – was represented by this garage-sale *bricolage*.

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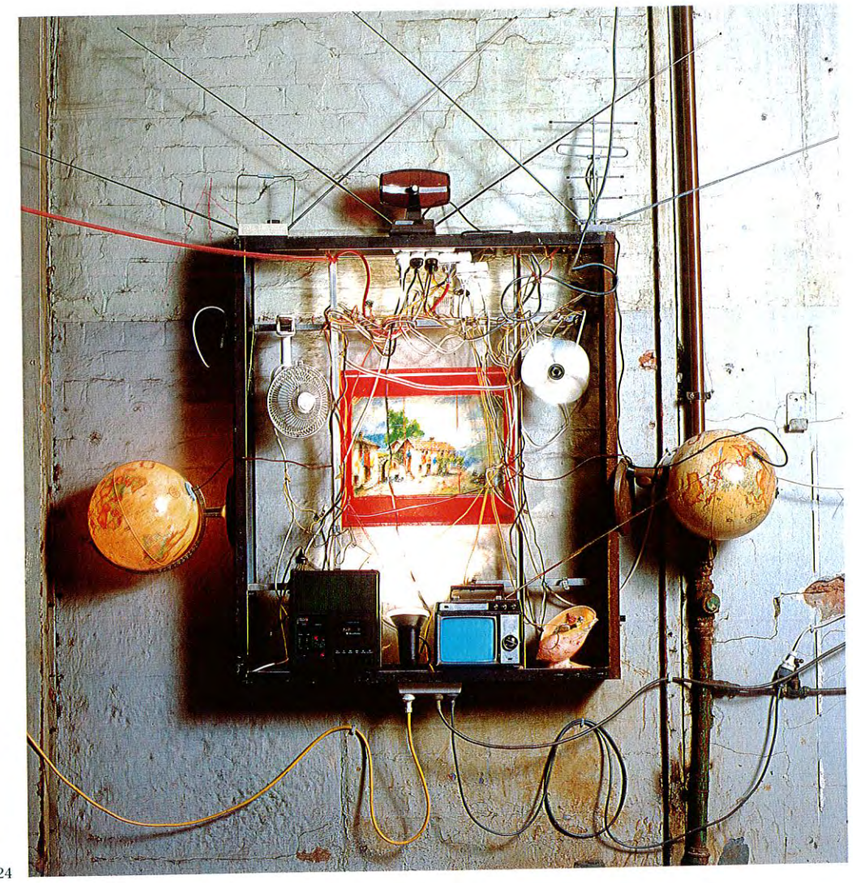
The outlandish constituents of de Clario's zone were not obviously at odds with



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5:20 Hany Armanious, *Relativity of Perfection*, 1992, installation, 9th Biennale of Sydney. Photograph: Ashley Barber. Courtesy Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney.

5:21 Hany Armanious, *Teleplastic Emanations*, 1991, Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney. Photograph: Ashley Barber. Courtesy Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney.

5:22 Mikala Dwyer, *woops!*, installation, 1994, Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney. Photograph: Ashley Barber. Courtesy Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney.

5:23 Domenico de Clario, *Message from the Emperor*, 1992, installation, basement, ADA House, Melbourne. Courtesy Michael Wardell Gallery, Melbourne.

5:24 Domenico de Clario, *Memory Palace (Machine-for-contacting-the-dead)*, 1991, installation, Cable House, Melbourne. Courtesy Michael Wardell Gallery, Melbourne.

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objective, scientific observation, since the works depended so heavily on natural forces like gravity, heat and hydraulics for their operation. They were, therefore, the physical incarnation of mental images that aimed to simulate reality. In *Memory Palace*, his inscription of words on doors and replacement of doorknobs with light globes suggested that de Clario's relationship to minimalist thought had become as perverse as his conception of sculpture as bizarre but verifiable *fantasia*. The ruined office-basement darkness of the Melbourne version of *Message from the Emperor*, 1992, cultivated confusion about where his work ended. After carefully inspecting the main room, one realised that through an almost invisible doorway there stretched another space. This contained nothing except, at its far end, a chair, a light bulb and a low table on which was pinned Kafka's short story of the same name. Close examination revealed subliminal, probably imagined, interventions almost everywhere. If the mind could have been described as the inhabitant of one room, the heart was located in another, in a pool of murky water, and the soul seen in a page from Kafka, hidden at the far end of that narrow passage.

During the first few months of 1993, de Clario presented a sequence of three installations. These were collectively titled *Components of an Expression Machine*. Firstly, de Clario converted the upstairs Fitzroy stockroom and gallery of Girgis & Klym, tracing the effects (on several lives) of Franz Kafka's phantom presence in Australia through recently discovered old correspondence, an antique embroidered dress, an electric fan and an old electric heater. A month later, he rented a vacant office (once his childhood home) in Collingwood and scattered photocopied memories of his first year in Australia across its walls, activating another circuit of an "Expression Machine". Finally, de Clario mapped the intersection of occult energy centres, the *chakras*, onto the architecture of an immense, ruined Pascoe Vale munitions factory, using a chandelier and a web of electric lights. At the end of one month, the artist retreated into an old caravan parked at the distant perimeter of the factory. At the postindustrial frontier of a black Melbourne night, each viewer discovered the luminous, spiritualised debris of suburban kitsch.

The system of de Clario's installations was a Medieval notion of inner faculties: through recombination and disjunction, new elements, creatures and senses could be created. De Clario appended a quotation by Max Jacob to the notes that he prepared for a 1991 exhibition *The Mendicant of Naples and Other Stories* at Mori Gallery, in Sydney: "When I lived in Naples there stood, at the door of my palace, a female mendicant to whom I used to pitch coins before mounting the coach. One day, suddenly perplexed by the fact that she never gave me any signal of thanks, I looked at her fixedly. It was then I saw that what I had taken for a mendicant was rather a wooden box, painted green, filled with red earth and some half-rotted banana peels."[4]

In their repeated incarnations, de Clario's installations were assembled from the found materials of suburbia, rust-belt industry and thrift shops. His systems were improvised rather than rigidly predetermined and were based on an accumulation of visual puns. This impression was reinforced by the interpolation of texts that accompanied each exhibition: short enigmatic narratives about the discovery of unexpected inner life. Often, the narratives blurred into parallel imaginary worlds. In the first of the three installations comprising *Components of an Expression Machine*, 1993, he tracked the miraculous coincidences between Franz Kafka, his fiancée Felice Bauer, a box of books, diaries and a beautifully embroidered dress (belonging to a "Franz Kafka", accidentally found in Australia and acquired by de Clario), and the intertwined lives of Kafka,

4 Max Jacob, quoted in artist's exhibition notes, *The Mendicant of Naples and Other Stories*, Mori Gallery, Sydney, July 1991, p. 1.

5:25 Domenico de Clario, *Components of an Expression Machine*, 1993, installation, Bradken foundry (third component of a three-site installation), Melbourne. Courtesy Michael Wardell Gallery, Melbourne.

Bauer, de Clario's family and two Australian immigrants, Frantisek Kafka and Felix Bauer. Old television antennae graced the arrangement of chairs in *Memory Palace* and this, the room's central séance motif, was an admonishment to receive messages and second-guess fate. In *Eleven Sons* the chairs reappeared as symbols of absence and cryptic clues to an uncertain text.

Domenico de Clario's installation at the National Gallery of Victoria, *The Seventh Ārit (Elemental Landscapes: 1975-1993)*, 1993, was a reinstatement of the exhibition that had been removed in 1975 two days after its opening. For its expanded reincarnation, de Clario brought together an eccentric collection of objects from the museum's vast holdings: European landscape paintings, a J. M. W. Turner, an Egyptian mummy, crockery from the cafeteria, sentimental Victorian narrative paintings, ladders from the maintenance department, antique musical instruments and dozens of clocks, mirrors, vessels, and chairs. These were combined with thrift-store junk – old electric fans, blenders and school-room globes – and an astonishing variety of electric lights and coloured neon tubes. A suspended crystal chandelier dipped into a mound of dust at the installation's centre; the dust had been collected for de Clario by conservators as they vacuumed paintings in the permanent collection. This dust was ninety per cent composed of skin cells and hair fragments shed by visitors and, on some of the European paintings, was more than one hundred years old. For de Clario, this material marked the interweaving of audience and art in a synthesis of bodily decay with the slow disintegration of paintings.

The dimly lit installation was divided into seven groupings, corresponding to the seven halls of the Egyptian underworld – or Ārits – where the soul, covered in the dust of the decayed body, was gradually purified over successive after-death initiations. The trope of death was present in two forms: de Clario's recreation of the ill-fated earlier work; and his attempt to confound the museum's anodyne enervation of spiritual intentions whilst participating in its reification of artistic immortality. His theosophical subject matter deliberately invited misinterpretation and overdetermination (his own included) and his themes – death, spirituality and the detritus of culture – were treated, somewhat crazily, as morphological elements within the conflation of different orders of description. The necromantic, red neon-light bathed grouping – an old four-poster bed, a painting depicting sleep, chairs incorporating seated sculpted figures, bronze dancing cupids and three landscape paintings embodying the Sublime – typified the artist's attempt to elaborate a museological praxis essentially similar in appearance but different in intention to that of *Arte Povera*. The artist's cosmic symbolism was very different to the stripped-down, often literary, Classicism of his Italian peers such as Kounellis and Paolini. De Clario sublimated Conceptualism's formal lessons, as well as its ambivalence about insertion into the museum, into a series of funereal tableaux.

The Seventh Ārit drew on the iconography of de Clario's *Expression Machine*, which was structured by hermetic theories of the human body. The former represented a desire to deal with the particular disorientation caused by the experience of art as a form of cultural capital – fluid, abstract and invisible. Objects from the museum and everyday life were employed not as aesthetic forms but because of their existing meanings. The double coding afforded by their original functions allowed them to embody new figures within de Clario's hyperactive, hyperintangible occult formations.

De Clario was not alone in deploying alternative languages of clairvoyance: Californian artist Barbara Bloom presented a typically Cal Arts version of *Arte Povera* in her installa-

5 U.S. artist Barbara Bloom trained at Cal Arts in Los Angeles; her principal lecturer was John Baldessari, an important precursor of much recent photo- and media-based art. She produced installations that were allegorical arrangements of precious objects and furniture, and artist's books that drew together fragments of texts and images from many different sources. Her works dealt with sight, blindness, paranormal phenomena and narcissism.

6 See Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991.

tions of the late 1980s, one of which was exhibited in the 1990 Sydney Biennale.[5] Bloom's play with the postponement of understanding illuminated de Clario's installations. David Salle once observed that Barbara Bloom was the perfect hostess; de Clario, then, was the sloppiest of hosts. What kind of messy house, after all, was comprised by these installations? De Clario posed a metaphysical proposition: consciousness was a palace of memories; inside its walls were many unopened rooms. He was acutely aware of the inevitable aestheticisation of consciousness in contemporary art, and deliberately exaggerated that process through calculated mystification.

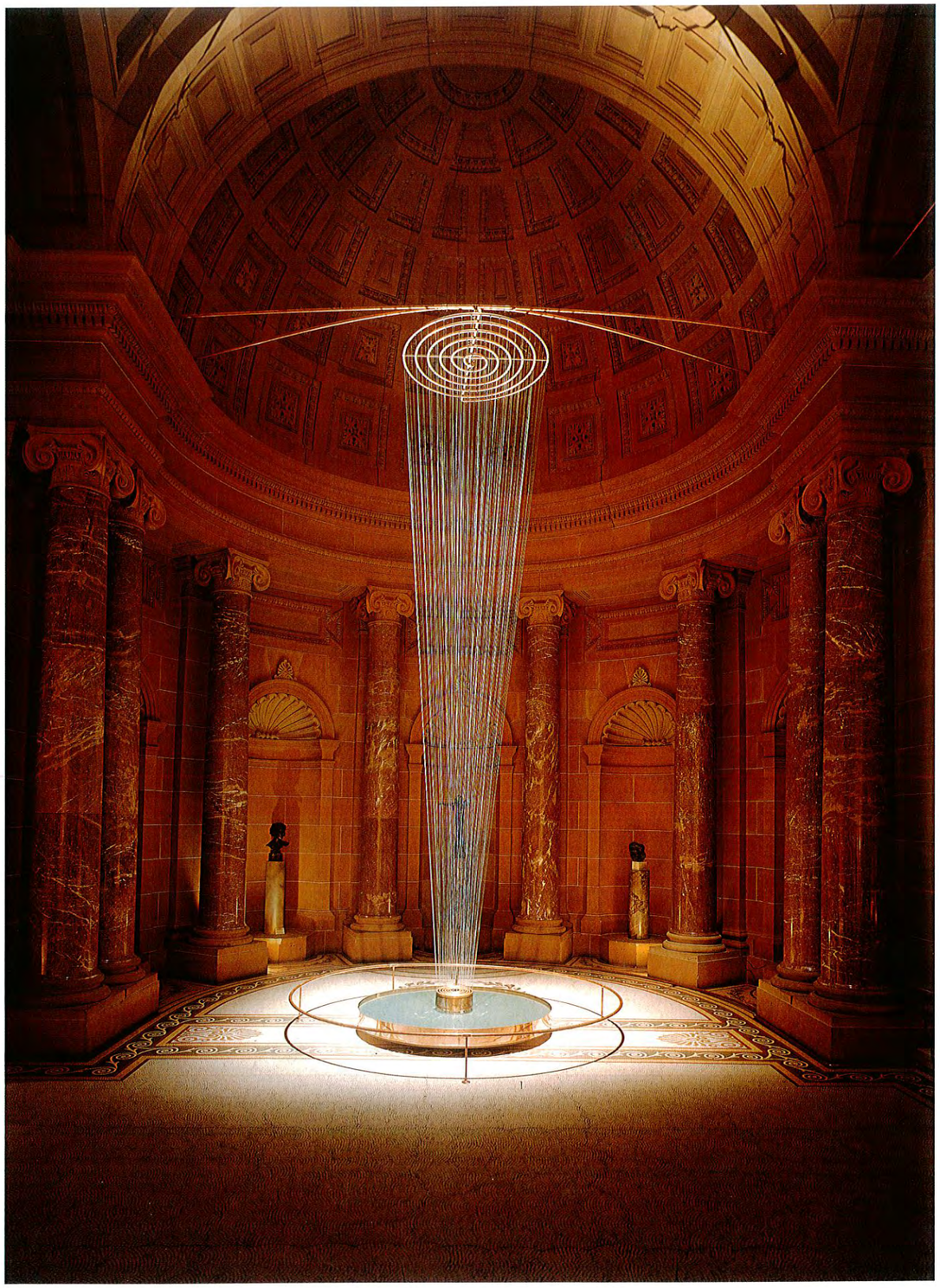
Why did Domenico de Clario insist on mystification? Firstly, controlled blurring and obscuring of meaning was a way through which many contemporary artists avoided the seduction and commodification that had corrupted "radical" signification by the late 1980s. Although mystification was customarily taken for a simple paralysis of judgement, it was also a stage in the enlargement of understanding, as Stephen Greenblatt observed.[6] As artists from Duchamp onwards realised, the metaphysical could be anything whatsoever. Calculated mystification, in the grotesque, messy zone of Domenico de Clario's installations, stood in for the poetic during a period in which the ability of humanist metaphors to engage us in their older meanings was corroded by the consumerist spectacle of late-capitalist society. Even though the cynical *flâneur* – the street-wise voyeur – was glamorised in discourse during the 1980s, the *flâneur* was *persona non grata* on the boulevards of the hermetic city, as the European Fluxus artists had understood.

Domenico de Clario was always out of step with his environment. He was, however, tuned like a seismograph to shifts in art. He consistently registered the tremors of change too early for these movements to be recognised as anything other than autobiography: there was no critical context for his Night Paintings when they were first shown in the 1970s. These landscapes, painted outdoors at night, were incorporated in de Clario's installations as the deliberate demonstration of extreme subjectivity within larger texts. Just as the *Arte Povera* movement was engaged in a perpetual flirtation with the formally evocative nature of its materials, de Clario employed paintings as both found objects and untrustworthy indices of sensation. Domenico de Clario was deliberately moving outside determinism and intentionality, away from the phenomenological origin of his art. His installations insisted on the ability of the imagination to wander at will, recombining the elements of art and industry into precise diagrams of flux, motion and transformation: an unreliable but verifiable science of the inner senses.

Jennifer Turpin: Ecology and Artifice

Jennifer Turpin dramatised natural processes in a theatre of depth and surface, incorporating the element of water and the idea of darkness in vast, subtle installations. Her curtains of water were weightless structures comprising barely visible threads, along which water descended in a continuous stream of tiny droplets. Turpin's installations were the embodiment of multiple metaphors, as mutable as a bizarre pun. They oscillated in a kind of *temps perdu* between the demonstration of dangerous forces and a luminous suspension of normal bodily sensation: the five Water Works, 1990-93, resembled action-painting made concrete but subjected to the laws of hydraulics and gravity. The earlier unpredictable, moving assemblage of chair, ladders and flotation tanks, *Shifting Ground*, 1988, was subjected to tidal forces obsessively and energetically repeating themselves; their cycles had no end and no purpose. If reality were trapped in a continuous,

5:26 Jennifer Turpin, *Water Works III* (detail), 1991, installation of water, nylon threads, copper pipes and tank, 6 metres high x 1.7 metres base tank diameter, Australian Perspecta 1991, Art Gallery of New South Wales. Courtesy the artist.



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7 Jennifer Turpin, interview with the author, Sydney, November 1993.

8 Jennifer Turpin, interview with the author, Sydney, November 1993.

5:27 Jennifer Turpin, *Water Works IV*, 1992, installation of water, nylon threads, copper pipes and tank, in 10 x 19 m. room, Annandale Galleries, Sydney. Courtesy the artist.

fluid zone between mythology and history, then the flow of time looked like Jennifer Turpin's installations.

At the entrance to the Art Gallery of New South Wales during the 1991 Australian Perspecta, Jennifer Turpin's two towering installations of water and wire, *Water Works III*, 1991, converted neo-Classic alcoves into aqueous shrines. As water ran down curtains of nylon filament to small artificial ponds, the light on moving droplets of water transformed the installations into two dematerialised webs of illumination – one in the shape of a hemispheric curtain, the other an inverted cone. This transfiguration of the gallery's antechamber was first of all a wonder. Unseen hydraulic forces produced a suspension of belief; water was directed through space along a fixed path. Transparent lines of watery movement were in turn a grille through which the gallery's marble columns and masonry domes were decontextualised into cavernous fantasy. Turpin's curtains of water disoriented and unnamed. Water was transparent and elusive; the agency of light created the primary impression of an intangible, disorienting, negative space in the shape of a temple. Like English sculptor Rachel Whiteread, whose plaster and rubber casts of ordinary objects and interiors came to prominence during the same period and were similarly substantial but ultimately intangible, Turpin's installations always referred to the spaces of somewhere else. Whiteread's and Turpin's works actively courted misinterpretation.

Turpin's machines also had an evident but inscrutable purpose of their own that saved them from the quiescent, well-meaning funk of ecological art – they were simultaneously anthropomorphic and efficient, a characteristic shared with German sculptor Rebecca Horn's constructions. Both artists presented the machine as feminised, and their works were able to embody the impersonality of natural processes but elicit uncomfortably sentimental emotions of wonder and amusement amongst viewers. Jennifer Turpin's *Shifting Ground* was a device that transmitted movement from Sydney Harbour, underneath Pier 2/3 at Walsh Bay, upwards through an elaborate apparatus of uprooted pine trees mounted on an old lift cage, from which an arc of four ladders, cables and pulleys spread into the warehouse interior. As water levels in Sydney Harbour fluctuated, a flotation tank underneath the gallery space transmitted haptic and often violent oscillations along the pulleys and spasmodically moving ladders hinged to an old chair at the termination of Turpin's assemblage; in Turpin's words, "It was nothing until the movement of the Harbour set the whole thing in motion. It was an amplification of what was going on beneath the building."[7] She avoided the consciousness of catharsis altogether: sensation, instead, occurred as a series of plateaux. The furniture's violent movement in *Shifting Ground* was both arbitrary and repetitively cyclic.

Avoiding crescendos, Turpin's webs of water neither began nor ended. Even though they were a colonisation of each building, her Water Works were far from architecturally imperial: on the one hand, they disoriented because the agency of light creates a more primary impression than that of water; on the other, their effect was substantial but ultimately intangible. The artist observed: "There is always a certain degree of trickery with water; the pieces play havoc with the notion of a large body of water. The water is broken up into such small components – a myriad of slow-flowing droplets that render insubstantial the whole physical element."[8]

As installations, the Water Works were landscapes within landscapes. They cooled their gallery spaces by several degrees, so audiences experienced a subtle but nonethe-

less noticeable temperature drop upon entry. Even though the Water Works provided the impression of continuous harmonic motion, their expansive, spatial flow, like an enclosed waterfall, was disproportionately silent, as if the sense of hearing had been turned either off or up towards a white noise that resembled deafness. Turpin's watery curtains were screens through which the viewer could see the world as an extremely distanced glimpse: Turpin felt that the Water Works' closest affinities were with moments in art history and in particular, with the landscapes of Poussin and Claude. Space became a cultural projection screen: it was not for nothing that her works also recalled the aqueous medium of video and, specifically, the spellbinding video installations of American artist Bill Viola.

The poignancy of Turpin's Water Works lay in our awareness that, at the edges of metropolitan desire, on the brink of another millennium, traditional metaphors of the body and its transcendence became so unlikely that their reappearance was as exotic as it was unreliable. The unnerving mechanics of fluids in motion caused water to apparently defy gravity: if Turpin's liquid curtains offered this transcendent cultural memory, then *Shifting Ground* provided the reverse – it mimicked the vertiginous bodily sensation of a descent like that of fallen angels from heaven.

Turpin often placed her installations inside old industrial buildings near the waterfront of Sydney, the city in which she lived, and they seemed to promise access to a much vaster body of water – the Harbour – through hidden, subterranean passages. Turpin proposed a project to install another *Water Works* in one of Sydney's enormous, emptied underground water storage reservoirs, which were constructed towards the end of the last century. She said "the grand scheme was to have curtains of water parted, like the Art Gallery of New South Wales piece, *Water Works II,* 1991, but connecting every single one of the columns in the underground reservoir, suggesting a vast body of water through veils".

Dark netherworlds of storage and elimination underneath the modern metropolis featured in photography, film and art from Felix Nadar's 19th century photographs of Paris catacombs, onwards through Carol Reed's post-war film noir, *The Third Man*, to Peter Weir's eerie cult film, *The Last Wave.* In all these instances, the underground was a place beyond the reference points of normal life as well as a separate, autonomous world characterised by constant movement. Nadar's 1861 Paris sewers were images of the rapid circulation of waste and the reticulation of the dead to new resting places. Occupied Vienna's sewers, in Reed's 1949 film, were the scene of corrupt negotiations, escapes and mysteries. Turpin's installations were also characterised by their immediate replacement of normal experience with unfamiliar references and by their deployment of perpetual motion, the imagery of flight and the perception of dark depths. In 1993, Turpin worked on plans for the renovation of Sydney's Luna Park, and drew up designs for a "Dark Cave" ride.

The postmodern analysis of identity as a construction, traced in Chapter 3, cast new light on the way representation was now seen, but its perpetual rehearsal obscured the particularity of each experience of the stream of art itself. Turpin's works held more nuance. They staged ideas but, rather than transcribing thought, they presented the work of natural processes as a play of artifice directed by a scenographer. Art critic Edward Colless proposed the term "scenography" in opposition to the normal identification of installations with philosophy and conceptualism; Turpin's works, like Domenico de

Clario's architectural interventions, were essentially scenic. Meaning was manufactured through suggestion because Turpin's motifs were submerged. The sculptural arcs of the Water Works were camouflaged by shimmering water droplets that hid precise dimensions and surfaces. Because of the attenuated motion of the drops, water appeared to flow upward; the ability of the viewer to discriminate between physical cause and false physics was blurred. Turpin displaced the properties of one element onto another and was attracted to the ambiguity of certain physical phenomena – wave motion, surface tension and gravity.

Jennifer Turpin's installations were literal embodiments of many metaphors found in discussions about art. They were motivated by a variety of representational problems. The multiplicity of their parts – seen, most obviously, in the webs of thread of the Water Works – was peculiar because of the parity of each constituent part and the absence of climactic drama. The Water Works were composed of opaque signs entangled in a forest of transparent moving artifice. Turpin's installations did not exist to convey pragmatic information as does a map or a manifesto, even though they looked like engineering diagrams come to life. Space traced by water, and the connection of architectural levels in *Shifting Ground*, represented the inscription of a set of aesthetic desires. The references were not to things represented (to the phenomenology of colonised spaces or to metaphorical bodies). Instead, they referred to negotiations and protocols: water apparently floated upwards; sculptural space became a theatre in which perspective was displaced by transparency. Turpin's installations embodied a visual refutation of the proposition that modern and postmodern art should acknowledge the opacity of representational acts. Her works were both transparent and referential; they were Heraclitan counter-memories.

How could we explain the wilful mystification offered by Jennifer Turpin and Domenico de Clario? According to Gary Wills, wonder and disbelief were fundamental terms in the West's colonial discourse during the Age of Exploration.[9] Stephen Greenblatt explained that "wonder" was a double-edged phenomenon: it prompted curiosity but made one recoil in horror from the *monstrum*.[10] Thirteenth-century Dominican monk St Albert the Great discussed the heart-stopping *prodigium* of a natural anomaly, which led to a suspension of the desire for knowledge. The interregnum of wonder, Wills and Greenblatt argued, became a kind of paralysis of the will. On the other hand, this suspension was also, according to St Albert, "the movement of the man who does not know on his way to finding out". According to Greenblatt, the sense of wonder and mystification had a history that changes over time.[11] This experience was the inverse of the quality of resonance – the appreciation of the complex, dynamic forces and causes from which an object emerges – that often became a totalising determinism within postmodern art of the 1980s. Both Turpin and de Clario insisted on the metaphoric and literal suspension of time, belief, process, and materials.

9 Gary Wills, "Man of the Year", *New York Review of Books* v.38 n.19, 21 November 1991, pp. 12-18.

10 Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions*.

11 Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder", in I. Karp and S. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Cultures*, Smithsonian Institution Publications, Washington, 1990, pp. 42-56.