

ART MONTHLY AUSTRALIA

JUNE 2004 NO 170

ISSN 1033 4025

ABN 90 008 651 385

Print Post Approved

PP 299436/00114

Subscription AUD\$70 (10 issues per year)

Asia Pacific and New Zealand AUD\$90

Rest of world AUD\$120 (airmail)

Published by **Art Monthly Australia Ltd**

a non-profit distributing company

Postal address:

LPO BOX 8321, ANU, ACTON, 2601

Situating at:

The Clocktower

ANU School of Art,

Childers Street, ACTON, ACT, 2601

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Printer National Capital Printing, Canberra.

Newsagent distribution Network Distribution Co.

Trade and subscription distribution

Canberra Mailing Centre.

Art Monthly Australia Ltd Board members**David Williams** (Chair and Treasurer),**Tim Bonyhady**, **Deborah Clark** (ex-officio)**Hannah Fink**, **Morag Fraser**, **Ian North**,**Suhanya Raffel** and **Imants Tillers**.**Art Monthly Australia** is assisted by the Visual Arts/Craft Board of the Australia Council and the ANU School of Art.

Front cover: AES+F (Russia), *Action Half Life, Episode 2 #14*, 2003, inkjet on canvas, 150x120cm. Courtesy of the artists. On exhibition in the Biennale of Sydney, from 4 June to 15 August. The Biennale is at these locations: the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Artspace, the Museum of Sydney, the Royal Botanic Gardens, and the Sydney Opera House.

Opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the publisher and editors, and readers are invited to make up their own minds on issues debated in *Art Monthly*. All letters are welcome.

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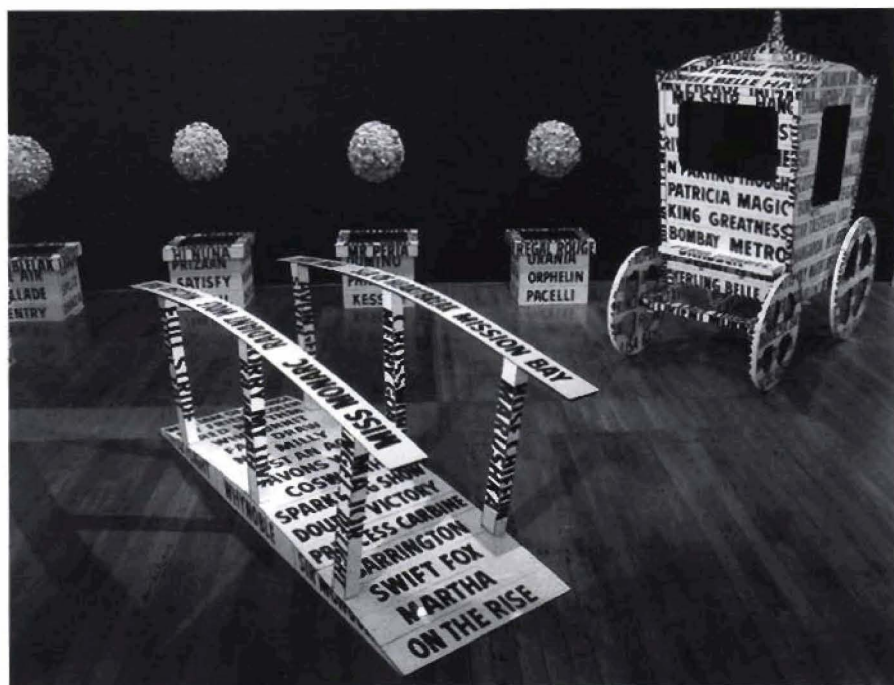
The University of Sydney

Public/Private

Tumatanui/Tumataiti:

The 2nd Auckland Triennial

STEPHEN NAYLOR



Lauren Lysaght (New Zealand/Aotearoa), *Trifecta*, 2003, mixed media installation. Courtesy of the artist and White Space Gallery, Auckland.

Bigger than the Adelaide Biennial but smaller than the Biennale of Sydney, the 2nd Auckland Triennial was a coherent show of thirty-nine artists that took the theme of Public/Private and pursued it through a series of sub-themes: 'Identity and hybridity', 'Love, joy and despair...', 'Private desires', 'Public/private surveillance', 'Social structures', and 'The divided self'. The show utilised four gallery locations, the most significant being the New Gallery of the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki which displayed the majority of works in the exhibition in two levels of the old telephone exchange. This space was sensational for this type of show, and capitalised on its small intimate spaces. The other locations were ARTSPACE in Karangahape Road, and the University of Auckland galleries – the Gus Fisher Gallery and the George Fraser Gallery.

On the first level of the New Gallery the works seemed somewhat esoteric; we were greeted by Lauren Lysaght's (New Zealand) installation featuring racehorse names from bookmakers' betting rings made into symbolic models derived from traditional Pakeha

fairy tales.¹ Adjacent to Lysaght's *Trifecta* 2003, Lorna Simpson's (United States) engagement with the racial and gendered roles of the body was played out in an ironic large black and white LCD projection. *Call waiting* 1997, presented a scenario of telephone conversations that all become overlaid by the call waiting function. The humour and subtly gendered nature of these conversations initially confused the audience but eventually (as with much of Simpson's work) the narrative was revealed in all of its darkness.

Darkness pervaded the psychological probing in Kathy Temin's (Australia) video stills mounted on aluminium and grainy footage of cavorting figures dressed-up in koala suits – *Audition for a pair of koalas* (blue) 2002 – engaging in intimate play and acting out zoological fantasies. John Barbour's (The Netherlands/Australia) suite of works, *Joy* 2002, made from machine-embroidered fabrics, explored the concept of the un-made man – a difficult work to access without reading the catalogue essay. Barbour's exploration of power, conflict and the challenges of

society that result in destitution, crime and institutionalisation created a poignant and somewhat dour work of art, particularly with the spasmodic appearances of the words 'correctional services' on sections of the fabric.

After moving through these discrete spaces, most of the remainder of the works were presented in larger spaces with works of art by different artists grouped with each other. Some of the larger works, such as Mark Adams' (New Zealand/Aotearoa) large C type photographic prints of tattooed figures in domestic spaces, teased out ideas around the theme of public/private. Other smaller intimate pieces by Lonnie Hutchinson (New Zealand/Aotearoa) and Sangeeta Sandrasegar (Australia) provided viewers with opportunities to dwell on subtle, reflective works, but were easily overlooked in their thoroughfare location.

On initial viewing, the ground floor provided a range of culturally diverse works with a fairly loose connectivity with the public/private theme, however the show really developed a significant momentum upon entering the second level in the building. At the top of the staircase was Robert Pulie's (Australia) series of mirror forms creating dissymmetry through multiple reflections, *The promenaders* 2003-04. Alongside this divided-self installation were two huge colour photographs of hospital interiors by Neil Pardington (New Zealand/Aotearoa). The evocation of the institution evoked Foucault's writing, where technology and corporality meet under the veil of the clinic and bureaucratic systems. Pardington's *Operating theatre #1* 2003 (from his series *The clinic*), was filled with equipment to the point of clutter, but the image revealed a soulless empty space, de-personalised (not private), and this was even more pronounced in the *Post-Mortem Room #1*.

Despite its modest budget the Auckland Triennial was able to draw on the good reputations of its curators Ngahiraka Mason (New Zealand) and Ewen McDonald (Australia), and the generosity of the participating artists and their galleries. When I interviewed Ewen McDonald in April this year he spoke of the intention to have an exhibition with significant international participation and to include at least fifty percent of the artists from the Southern Hemisphere (New Zealand, Australia and South Africa). The drawback for the curators was to offer artists the opportunity of a visit to Auckland and its surrounding environs in a mutual gesture of goodwill and genuine dialogue and to participate in the exhibition opening and symposium.

The enticement obviously worked with artists such as Laurie Anderson (United States), who participated with her miniature DVD projection from 1997, *At the Shrink's*. A seemingly flippant anecdote that penetrated deeply into the *raison d'être* of 'The divided self', and revealed much about perceptual shifts and how pronounced they appear in this new century. Jenny Holzer (United States) also participated in the Triennial with

a large banner *The Future Is Stupid/ Humor Is A Release*, hung outside the Auckland Art Gallery, and part of her *Billboard* project 2004, which undermines existing social structures with through direct intervention.

Within the sub-theme of 'Love, joy and despair', Fiona Pardington (New Zealand/Aotearoa) presented a series of bird images along one wall and a screen-based work featuring a text exploring private obsessions emblazoned on a woman's back. Unfortunately the audio was obscured by the evocative sounds of Björk in Chris Cunningham's (United Kingdom) *Art is full of love* 1999, a video made for the song, which depicts two robots falling in love.

The sensuality of Cunningham was skewed by Polly Borland (Australia/United Kingdom) with her *Babies* 2000 series; the fetishist-infantilist fantasy of babyhood played by adults with pale pink and yellow costumes, toys, dummies, cots, nappies and baby powder. The accoutrements and props fail to counter the fat hairy legs, five o'clock shadows and self-conscious gaze of many of the members of this sub-culture. These works of aberrance clearly fitted in with the theme of private desires.

In the next room was Julia Morison's (New Zealand/Aotearoa) evocative black and white digital prints of a solitary tree and grey background, where the solitude and sublimity were challenged only by the ambiguity of the title: *There's too much juice in you yet for*



Mark Adams (New Zealand/Aotearoa), 21.5.2001 *Vanalkenswaard*, Eindhoven, Netherlands. Rene and Karina Persoons. *Tufuga tatatau: Sulu'ape Paulo and Sulu'ape Micel Thieme*, 2001, colour print. Courtesy of the artist.

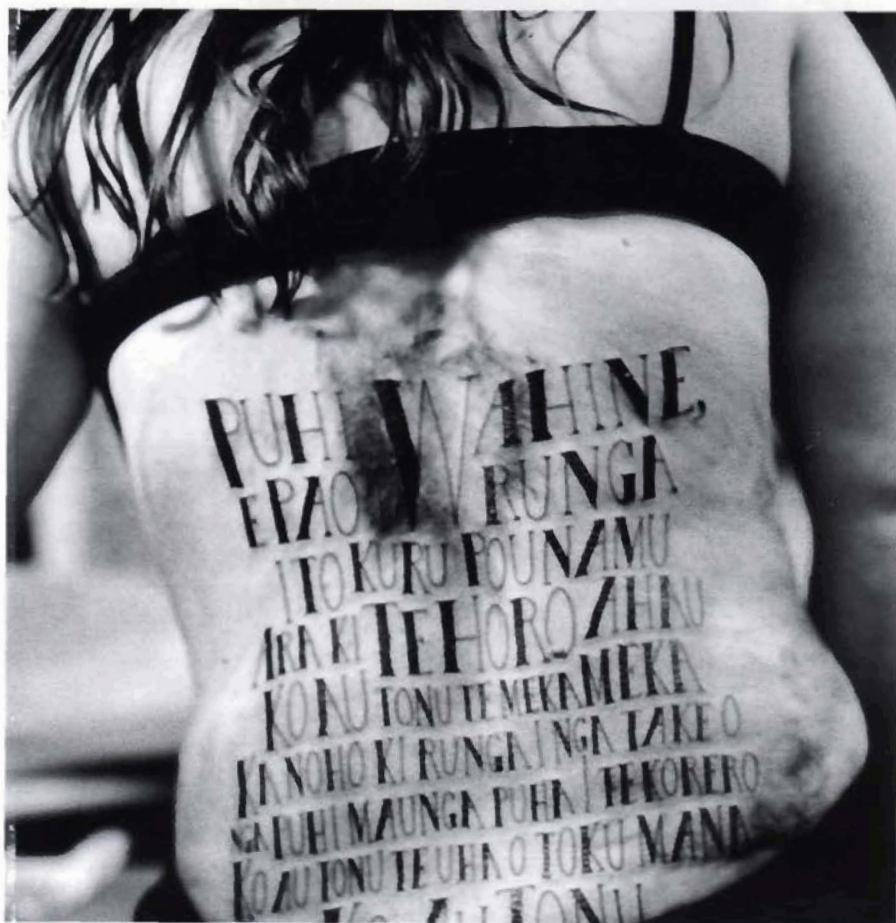
truth. To the left of this work hung a series of thirty-two small centre-fold prints, the works with their curvaceous milky frames pre-

sending symmetrical splayed labial forms created with a degree of technical control, but also with elements of chance.

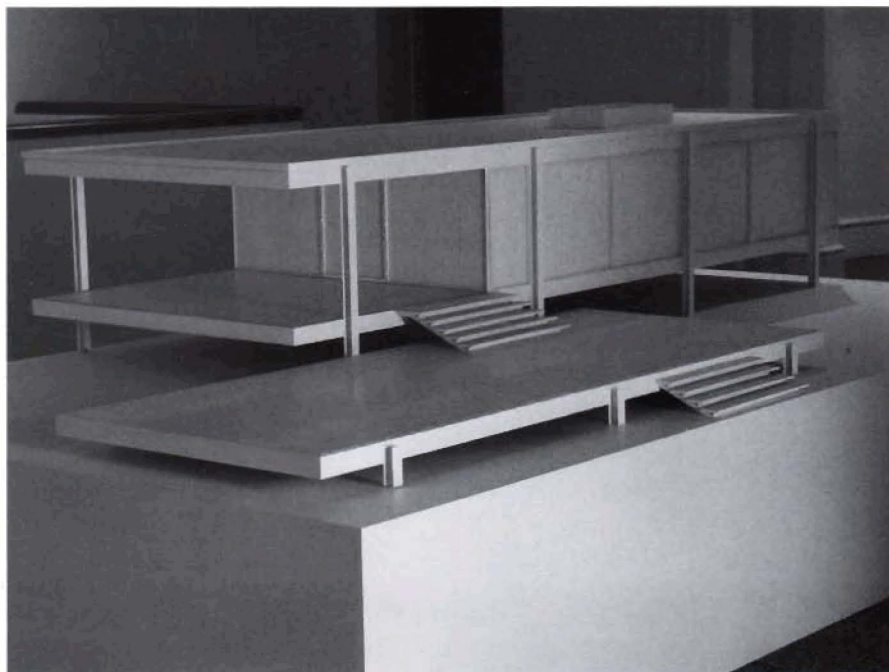
With a sense of not knowing where to look next Teresa Margolles (Sinoloa/Mexico) *Sounds of the Morgue* was one of the least visual works in the show. This did not reduce its graphic nature, as we eavesdrop through this sound installation, into the autopsy of some poor soul in Mexico City. We heard the noise of the handsaw removing the top of the cranium and then the sound of some highly viscous liquid seeping onto a metallic surface. After this, Catherine Rogers' (Australia) black and white ink jet prints of domestic interiors seemed rather innocuous despite the subtle beauty of representational spaces. Unfortunately the space acted more like a corridor as the audience was drawn towards the clacking 8mm projectors of Kao Chung-Li.

This Taiwanese artist was represented by two looped projections, the first exploring a solitary artist painting a model WW II aeroplane that continually morphed its form on the canvas into a crucifix. The other work, *The Castle*, explored war/peace and birth/death in a poetic montage of animated drawings edited along side actual filmed war footage. Underpinning the installation was an edited section of an American official discussing the virtues of war to uphold peace, intimating the withdrawal of some private rights for the public good. This work was particularly haunting in its poignancy.

Astute curatorial control positioned the work of et al. (New Zealand/Aotearoa). I was told that there had been some controversy with the work, drawing on its dour appearance of grey trolleys and two large port-a-loo



Fiona Pardington (New Zealand/Aotearoa), From the series *Puhi Wahine/Noble Woman*, 2004, gelatin silver print. Courtesy of the artist.



Callum Morton (Australia), *International Style*, 1999, wood, acrylic paint, aluminium, perspex, paper, sound. Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

obelisks with scrawled text asking 'why are they here?', 'who have they come for?' and 'when will they leave?'.

The Auckland Triennial forged an alliance with the University of Auckland Galleries, thus broadening the potential spaces to present more site-specific works. At the George Fraser Gallery, which is generally used by students from the Elam School of Fine Arts at the University, Thando Mama (South Africa) presented a screen-based work entitled *[box-in]* 2003, whilst Louisa Bufardeci (Australia) orchestrated a series of semi interactive mapping projects with a group of students, that were planned to evolve over the duration of the Triennial.

The Gus Fisher Gallery hosted some significant works, the first being Callum Morton's (Australia) digital prints of architectural structures, and his fabulous work *International style* 1999, which features a scale model replica of the famous Farnsworth House, designed by Mies van der Rohe and built from 1946 to 1951, which lights up and screams. William Kentridge's (South Africa) *Ubu tells the truth* 1997 explored the truth commission in South Africa, showing a series of animations of surveillance, power, violence and innocence. His animated drawings and strong narrative straddled fantasy, pathos, horror, comedy and drama and make his work a genre in itself. Jane & Louise Wilson (United Kingdom) had been lured to undertake a residency in Christchurch and

were able to show their 1997 video installation *Stasi City*. The work employed four LCD projections into two corners which were synched together to create a chilling flow of images.

The other gem at the Gus Fisher Gallery was Yuan Goang-Ming's (Taiwan) installation *The reasons for insomnia* 1998. Here we saw a stark room dimly lit with a solitary bed; by touching the bed post the LCD above the bed begins a series of harrowing projections. First the pillow rises as if it were a lung inhaling and exhaling, then a red spot grows from the foot of the bed, spreading a blood stain across the white sheet and eventually over the pillow. A ripping sound pierces the room as the sheet is torn in a single slash, and then a shadow emerges from the bottom corner creeping under the sheet towards the pillow. Following this the light dims and as if a scanner is activated, a brilliant bluish tinged light moves across the sheet then back in the opposite direction. The final violation was the two dark spots that appear mid way down the sheet, they grow as the sound of crackling flames become louder then the flames begin to consume the sheet, growing broader then disappearing without a trace.

The final location in the Triennial was ARTSPACE, which was located about a kilometre away from the other venues at the opposite end of the city precinct of Auckland. Here the curators had chosen to expose the soft underbelly of public/private aspects of

social space.² Big questions were being explored, especially the baggage associated with suburbia as a western paradigm. Sean Snyder (United States/Germany), in his work *Shanghai links*, created a site-specific video installation based on a contrived suburb (Pyongyang) that was created in Shanghai. The belief that a 'Western' suburb in this Chinese city would attract investors to spend between five and ten million dollars on a single home that was 'completely Western' (even to the point of shipping the components over to China in containers) was utterly flawed and is apparently now bankrupt.

The other works at ARTSPACE continued to critique relationships to place and how social spaces can be manipulated through zoning and planning regimes. Ava Seymour (New Zealand/Aotearoa), Emily Mafile'o (New Zealand/Tonga) and Jakob Kolding (Denmark) worked on similar themes, exploring social issues and locations such as suburbs, apartment blocks and the grunge of inner city zones (as yet un-colonised by the upwardly mobile). Much of the work focused on sub-culture manifestations such as skate boarding, tattooing, porn shops, graffiti, domestic violence and the omnipresent surveillance camera. The global sense of space explored in Louisa Bufardeci's *Governing values* 2003-04 could stand in as the epitaph for the triennial. The reductive nature of representing the world through obscure official statistical data³ shifts our perceptual understanding of our spatial relationship to whole, giving the private individual only semblances of identification of who we now are.

Notes

- 1 Zeplin, P. 'Private Night/mares', in *Public/Private Tumatanui/Tumataiti*, 2004, Auckland Art Gallery, pp 88-89.
- 2 am referring to the Lefebvre concept of *Spatial Practice* where space is conceived (experienced) as a range of discernable phenomena including buildings, town planning, commerce, and interrelationships between people and objects.
- 3 Troup, C. 'The Scope of Governing Values', *Public/Private Tumatanui/Tumataiti*, Auckland Art Gallery, p 36.

Public/Private Tumatanui/Tumataiti: The 2nd Auckland Triennial was at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki and other locations from 20 March to 30 May this year.

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