

THE REPEATED IMAGE

1 October - 28 November, 1986.

Brisbane Civic Art Gallery and Museum,
Brisbane City Hall.



PART TWO

An Exhibition from the
Griffith University Art Collection

Cover - Image from "Mammal-mammal (Untitled)" series
by Robert MacPherson, 1979-80.

Preface

The Griffith University Art Collection from which this exhibition is drawn consists of almost five hundred works in all media, most by contemporary Australian artists.

The collection has been acquired gradually since 1975 with funds consisting of .5% of capital building costs set aside for this purpose when the University was built. In addition, a number of local artists and benefactors have made donations to the collection, and the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council has made acquisitions grants. Contributions to these funds from the public, and donations of art under the Taxation Incentive Scheme for the Arts are always welcome. Individual works and exhibitions from the collection are available by arrangement for loan to schools, libraries, regional galleries and other public institutions. The remainder of the collection is on display in designated gallery areas throughout the University, and members of the public are always welcome to view the works in the beautiful natural bushland setting of the Griffith campus.

The primary media emphasis of the Griffith University Art Collection is in the area of works on paper, and the collection represents a substantial overview of Australian graphics and printmaking over the past ten years. For the last two years this emphasis has extended to the collection of photographs by Australian artists, including photo-documentation of experimental artworks such as performances and installations. The collection is catalogued, and is available for use by scholars for research purposes.

This exhibition, *The Repeated Image, Parts One and Two* is Griffith University's contribution to the 1986 Warana Festival, and has arisen from a history of cooperation with the Brisbane City Council which began with the *Twenty-One Australian Prints* exhibition in the Central City Library in 1984. The University has, despite its relative youth, established a reputation for supporting artistic activity in Queensland through its programs of public concerts, exhibitions, artist-in-residence positions, courses in film culture, community arts projects, workshops in the arts open to the general community, and well-equipped art studios available for use by local and visiting artists.

The Griffith University Works of Art Committee seeks in its policy for art acquisition and exhibition to assert the contemporary relevance of the visual arts and to make a local attempt at re-integrating art and the community. On the University campus the Committee aims to make works of art an integral part of the everyday working and learning environment. In exhibitions such as *The Repeated Image* the University offers access to focussed aspects of its art collection for a wider public.

On behalf of the Works of Art Committee I wish to thank Sarah Follent and Morris Low (Curator and Assistant Curator of the Griffith University Art Collection) who devised this exhibition, Carolyn Dodds (former Curator of the Griffith University Art Collection) who undertook valuable preparatory work on the exhibition, Monica Rimland (Secretary of the Works of Art Committee), and Pamela Whitlock (Acting Curator of the Brisbane Civic Art Gallery and Museum).

Dr Margriet Bonnin

Chairperson

Griffith University Works of Art Committee

The Repeated Image: Part Two

The paintings, photographs, prints, collages, and drawings in these two exhibitions from the Griffith University Art Collection have been loosely ordered under the rubric, *The Repeated Image*. The title highlights a number of themes which run through the exhibitions and which have been central to twentieth century art practice in the West. These are particularly the questioning of notions of individual authorship, of originality, of the value of hand-crafting, and more recently of the possibility of shared meaning, in the face of the mechanical production and reproduction of art, as well as the mass proliferation of all sorts of imagery in our media-sodden society.

The Repeated Image: Part One includes works made by mechanical and photochemical processes. It focuses particularly on photography and its relationship with art, nature, and reality, as well as its impact on representational codes and modes of perception.

The Repeated Image: Part Two, although more loosely structured and more wide-ranging in interests, relates to the same issues. It includes works which operate in series, which are made in multiple parts, which involve obsessive repetition or which reproduce already existing imagery. As with part one of the *Repeated Image* there are references and cross-references between these works threads of meaning, and interweaving interests which the viewer can construct or unravel, rather than a single unifying theme. Many of the works included, being made up of a number of parts, demand this same cumulative reading. Some of the series have characteristics similar to the systematic sequences and internal logic used by the minimalists like Sol Le Witt and Barnett Newman, others demand a more linear reading similar to filmic progression or the comic strip, and some have affinities with the meditative repetition of oriental art.

Robert MacPherson's "*Mammal-mammal (Untitled)*" 1979-80 is a single work made up of a series of seventy small images and is also part of a larger series which deals with similar issues. Despite the deceptive and indeed joyous simplicity of these images of mammals' heads, they set up a complex interplay of ideas. While individually they seduce, their seriality has a simultaneous distancing effect in the Brechtian manner, so that one is not psychologically enveloped by them but

engaged intellectually and aware of how they are constructed and how one reads them.

Like some of the minimalist artists and the Russian constructivists, MacPherson's work is about the processes or building blocks of art making. Hence the inclusion of the brush, the tool of painting. The brush, with its pig's (or mammal's) bristles is part of the "mammal-mammal" cycle proposed by the title, as are the artist and viewer (both mammals), and of course the images. Thus all the processes operating in the work are included in an almost Zen-like unity. This is not by chance, as MacPherson has an abiding interest in oriental art and has produced a large body of work titled *The Year of the Pig*. These mammals, like the figures of the Zen masters, straddle the border of painting and drawing, being executed with a brush yet maintaining a strongly graphic, almost calligraphic spontaneity.

Kaye Green's lithograph and chine collé *Hill suite* 1984 has affinities with the reductive vision of some Buddhist art. The nine images are repeated with the addition of a "skin collage" of the finest Japanese hand made paper which adds translucent colour to these otherwise identical hills. Likewise, Max Miller's monochrome etched series *East Kangaloon* c. 1978 includes six separate but almost identical images, and resembles a series of Japanese scrolls or the divisions of a screen. These are views of cloudy valleys from a hilltop, and as with Kaye Green's tiny *Hill suite* we are at once drawn into their surfaces yet distanced by the divisions. This almost identical repetition of an image, a sort of progression to a formula, denies illusion as well as the self expression of gestural individualized marks, and, as in Zen landscape painting, seeks to create a "living emptiness", an absence which allows possible "lines of flight" rather than authorial presence and closure.

Fred Williams' *Landscape quartette* 1962, a complex monochrome etching and engraving repeated four times on a sheet, also has a reductive simplicity akin to oriental art which was one of Williams' longtime sources of inspiration. In this work the separate sections almost abut and form one image, each part reinforcing the subtle surface variations of the others, and their semi-abstract landscape effects.

Helen Lillecrapp-Fuller's series of small photographs, *Brisbane River (green)* 1982 are also quietly lyrical and meditative and like all her work no doubt have highly personal references which are inaccessible to the viewer. They are close-up shots of water and flotsam and give no indication of the location. The artist has inverted the "reality" of these photographs and drawn attention to the artifice of their construction by sewing stick-like objects onto the surface and including the needle. In more recent works she has literally sutured serial images together, in a way which parodies the seamless reality constructed by cinematic suturing.

Similarly, Maryrose Sinn's series *Untitled 1-3* 1980 and Nerissa Lea's *Room suite* 1985 have a sense of filmic or comic strip progression. Maryrose Sinn's symbolic sequence takes us from a highly ordered and literally stitched rational world through to one of deliberate chaos, fragmentation and fluidity. Nerissa Lea's lithographs with drawing, photocopy, and paper collage present a collision of visual codes which form a loose narrative series of imaginary people who inhabit the same room - human stereotypes entrapped and encoded by their own fears and society's manipulations.

Martin Munz's works relate literally to film. His stills from videos produced with Juan Davila, *Ned Kelly* 1983 and *I am hungry* 1984, retain a grainy, blurred "video surface" which bears witness to their mediation. *Comprador Joh* 1985, for example, which is obviously originally from a news item, is part of the collaborative video, and is here presented as a still photograph, framed for gallery consumption. It is a prime example of the proverbial "death of the author", and of the possibilities of manipulation and dislocation of our daily fare of information imagery.

Ray Beattie's series of colour etchings *An illustrated understanding of whole systems* 1978-81 refers back to the genre of illustrated scientific books. The text, which is identical in each work, appears in various scripts and languages and operates as much as a visual installation as it does verbally. Ray Beattie sets organic images, relics, and specimens over rigidly defining grids which speak of the "closure" of much so-called rational discourse as opposed to his holistic and open-ended series of "whole systems".

Madonna Staunton too, in her collage *Apple suite*, introduces a verbal dimension, but in the form of an unwritten script. Her "apples" are self adhesive stickers which speak of popular mass imagery, possibly advertising illustrations. These are juxtaposed with grid-like oriental writing paper which is replete with notions of hand-working, be it traditional Renaissance style drawing over an ordered grid, or delicate oriental script. Staunton presents a collision of representational codes, which negates clear meaning and exposes the relativity of all perceptions.

Tim Maguire's *Picnic* 1984 is one long image installed in multiple parts. It presents as a blown up detail of a larger picture and combines diverse genres. We see an ordinary picnic, a domestic genre, set in a panoramic vista which is pictured in the manner of the traditional sublime of landscape painting. The scale of this work is particularly significant in ordering our experience of it. It involves the spectator physically, rather than just visually, as one must move bodily along its length to read it, and it is one's own movement which determines the time sequence involved in reading.

Jenny Watson, Mike Parr, John Nixon and Suzanne Archer all use repetitive motifs which can be seen as self portraits or as representative of the artist. Watson, Parr and Nixon have made many works using these same images, while in the series from which the work in this exhibition comes, Suzanne Archer depicts various objects which can be seen as extensions of herself. For instance, using items of her own clothing and objects from her environment, *Happy shoes, sad shoes* 1982-83 includes her real shoes and their painted mirror image, both of which she invests with personality. So we see the artist and her art and they are one and the same thing. The inclusion of real objects helps collapse the distinction between reality and illusion.

Likewise, Jenny Watson's *Serenity* 1984, presents a self-contained image and reflection of one of her often and lovingly depicted horses. The horse becomes an embodiment of her dreams and fantasies, presenting the possibility of escape into a world of romantic innocence and unity. The sense of primal innocence is reinforced by the title of the series *Cave Paintings*, to which this work belongs, and also by Watson's deliberately childish drawing style. However the scratchy style, the unstretched fabric with its exposed areas, and the flashes of vibrant colour all draw our attention to the work's construction and disallow a complete illusion.

Mike Parr's large drawing *Geghena E Reghena (Perspective as sword and ceiling), Geghena (Self portrait as a dream)* 1983 is literally a self portrait. It is one of many variously distorted images, dealing with self identity and body image, as well as with the languages of art. Here the artist's dream or mask-like face "rotates" on the left, while in the vigorous gestural drawing on the right, a disembodied arm or phallus appears, in reference to the artist's congenitally deformed arm and his sexuality - subjects which have recurred in many of Parr's performances and drawings. Parr juxtaposes inconsistent styles and so exposes the work's constructed artifice.

John Nixon's *Untitled* series of iconic crosses and smoke stacks is part of a large body of works which are variations on this motif and theme. This particular work combines references to Malevich and the early Russian formalists, with notions of idealized labour.

John Young's *A local mirage*, is a photograph of Malevich's work with a reflection captured by chance. In both repeating and reflecting this well known work it comments ironically on the lost aura of original art works, particularly much reproduced ones like this, in the face of photographic reproduction. It exemplifies the illusory, mirage-like status of "reality".

Margaret Morgan, Janenne Eaton and Ruth Waller are represented by works which belong to larger groups dealing with the same subjects and using the same motifs. Margaret Morgan's collage *Supermarket* repeats an image of a number of empty shopping trolleys, a motif which recurs throughout this series on consumer society, and which in her vocabulary take on human characteristics. They sit amid both real and pictured consumer detritus - all images borrowed from low art sources.

Janenne Eaton's *Canberra I* 1982, is part of a series of works dealing in similar vein with our capital cities. There are a number which relate to Canberra, all of which actually depict various areas of the carpark of the Australian National Gallery, and present depopulated claustrophobic bunker-like spaces which seem to embody the stultifying weight of bureaucracy.

Ruth Waller's *"Disappeared" portraits 1* presents a series of similar images on a single sheet. These are copies of photographs circulated by Amnesty International of people who have "disappeared" in Central and South America - political prisoners taken into custody with no warrant, trial and so on. The work resembles identification photographs pinned to a board, a series of "traces" of lost lives. Her dense overworking which almost obscures the images is a neat analogy of their euphemistically described "disappearance", and its expressive quality sets up subtle tensions in a work which relies on photography for its form and subject matter.

Clearly the works included in this exhibition draw together a multitude of artistic concerns and practices. However the two main currents which interweave around them are the changes wrought on art in the arms of technology and the media, and an interest in the great art traditions of the East. Both of these involve in different ways a decreased authority of the artist, and a correspondingly increased participation of the spectator in constructing meaning. It is hoped that viewers of *The Repeated Image Parts One and Two* will draw their own threads through these selections of works from the Griffith University Art Collection.

Sarah Follent
September, 1986.

CATALOGUE

Brackets are used where the date is known but not inscribed on the work.

All measurements are given in centimetres, height before width. The abbreviation "comp." refers to composition outline dimensions and "irreg." follows the measurements of works which are uneven or irregular in shape.

SUZANNE ARCHER

Born Guildford, Surrey, England, 1945

Arrived Australia 1965

Happy shoes, sad shoes 1982-83

Collage of muslin, sand, torn paper and synthetic polymer paint

Two sheets, each 101.5 x 66.5 cm

Overall 101.5 x 133.0 cm

Acquired 1983 with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council

RAY BEATTIE

Born Belfast, Ireland, 1949

Arrived Australia 1967

An illustrated understanding of whole systems series 1978-1981

Colour etching and colour screenprint

Twelve sheets, each 76.0 x 53.0 cm

Gift of the artist, 1981

JANENNE EATON

Born Melbourne, 1950

Canberra I 1982

Graphite and carbon on paper on canvas

185.4 x 215.4 cm

Acquired 1984 with the assistance of the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council

KAYE L. GREEN

Born Tasmania, 1953

Hill suite 1-9 1984

Lithograph and chine collé

Nine sheets, each approx. 15.8 x 20.3 cm

Purchased 1984

NERISSA LEA

Born N.S.W., 1959

Room suite 1985

Lithograph, graphite, coloured pencils, photocopy and collage of cut paper.

Five sheets, 1 to 4 each from 44.0 to 44.7 x 59.0 to 61.8 cm comp., sheet 5 56.7 x 75.8 cm comp.

Purchased 1986

HELEN LILLECRAPP-FULLER

Born Adelaide, 1949

Brisbane River (green) 1982

Two panels of four gelatin silver photographs, hand-coloured, with collage of coloured cotton thread and found objects

Two panels, each 7.8 x 51.8 cm comp.

Purchased 1982

ROBERT MACPHERSON

Born Brisbane, 1937

"Mammal-mammal (Untitled)" 1979-80

Brush and ink on yellow bond paper with house painting brush in lidded box

Seventy sheets, each 29.5 x 21.0 cm

One 10.0 cm width brush
One box, 32.6 x 24.5 x 5.2 cm
Purchased 1985

TIM MAGUIRE

Born Surrey, England, 1958
Arrived Australia 1959

Picnic (1984)

Charcoal
Fifteen sheets, each 77.3 x 56.0 cm
Overall 77.3 x 840.0 cm
Acquired 1984 with the assistance of the
Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council

MAX MILLER

Born Wellington, N.S.W., 1940
East Kangaloon (c. 1978)
Colour etching and aquatint
Six sheets, each approx. 98.5 x 50.1
cm irreg.
Purchased 1978

MARGARET MORGAN

Born Sydney, 1958
Supermarket 1983
Coloured chalks, fibre-tipped pen,
pencil and synthetic polymer paint with
collage of found objects
Sheet 170.0 x 157.0 cm irreg.
Acquired 1984 with the assistance of the
Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council

MARTIN MUNZ

Born Melbourne, 1946
Two type C colour photographs, stills
from colour video "I am hungry" by
Juan Davila and Martin Munz, 1984,
3 mins. length
Disobedience 1985
30.3 x 39.6 cm comp.

Comprador Joh 1985

30.1 x 39.3 cm comp.
Purchased 1986
Type C colour photograph, still from
colour video "Ned Kelly" by Juan
Davila and Martin Munz, 1983, 3.5 mins.
length
A republic for Australia 1985
30.2 x 39.5 cm comp.
Purchased 1986

JOHN NIXON

Born Sydney, 1949
Untitled (c. 1984)
Gouache, oil, charcoal, crayon and pencil
on thick wove paper and cream cardboard
Five sheets, each from 18.3 to 18.8 x 13.2
to 13.9 cm
Purchased 1984

MIKE PARR

Born Sydney, 1945
*Geghena E Reghena (Perspective as sword
and ceiling), Geghena (Self portrait as
a dream)* (1983)
Charcoal
Sheet 183.8 x 272.0 cm
Acquired 1984 with the assistance of the
Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council

MARYROSE SINN

Born Melbourne, 1953
Untitled 1-3 1980
Coloured pencils with collage of torn
paper and coloured cotton thread
Three sheets, sheet 1 54.5 x 73.5 cm
comp., sheet 2 46.0 x 103.5 cm comp.,
sheet 3 54.0 x 73.7 cm comp.
Purchased 1982

MADONNA STAUNTON

Born Murwillumbah, N.S.W., 1938

Apple suite 1978

Collage of readymade pressure-sensitive
cellophane coated images of apples and
gridded oriental writing paper on
coloured paper

Four sheets, each 27.3 x 24.6 cm comp.

Purchased 1978

RUTH WALLER

Born Sydney, 1955

"Disappeared" portraits 1 (1985-86)

Charcoal

94.0 x 77.0 cm comp.

Purchased 1986

JENNY WATSON

Born Melbourne, 1951

Serenity (1984)

Oil on vilene fabric

190.5 x 96.0 cm comp.

Acquired 1984 with the assistance of the
Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council

FRED WILLIAMS

Born Melbourne, 1927

Died 1982

Landscape quartette (1962)

Aquatint, engraving and drypoint

Four plates, overall 25.1 x 18.6 cm comp.

Purchased 1981

JOHN YOUNG

Born Hong Kong, 1956

Arrived Australia 1968

A local mirage 1982-83

Cibachrome colour photograph

Sheet 40.5 x 50.5 cm

Purchased 1985