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Errata

- p 7 line 36: "Louiseann" for "Louisann"
- p 20 line 38: "soundworks" for "soundsworks"
- p 35 line 6: "woman" for "women"
- p 36 line 18: "(House 1993-1994)" for "(Home 1993-1994)"
- p 46 lines 1, 3, 8 and 13: "Peirce" for "Pierce"
- p 52 line 19: "Apperly" for "Irving"
- p 52 footnote 115: "p. 99" for "p. 104"
- p 52 footnote 116: "p.104" for "p.33"
- p 62 line 11: "Sydney" for "Syndey"
- p 80 footnotes 201 and 203: "Colonial" for "Colonian"
- p 82 lines 28 and 31: "Khrushchev" for "Khruschev"
- p 82 footnote 221: "Khrushchev" for "Khruschev"
- p 124 footnote 368: "Retrospective" for "Retropective"
- p 125 footnote 370: "Retrospective" for "Retropective"
- p 145 line 42: "Bernadac" for "Hughes"
- p 156 footnote 467: space between "American" and "Table"
- p 157 line 27: "Dionysian" for "Dioysian"
- p 167 line 15: "Solomon" for "Solomom"
- p 170 line 7: "Masheck" for "Marsheck"
- p 170 line 14: "Malcolm" for "Malcom"
- p 171 line 20: "Woolley" for "Woolly"
- p 172 line 33: "Valldosera" for "Valdosera"
- p 176 line 31: "Whiteley" for "Whitely"
- p 179 line 17: "Clemenger" for "Clemeneger"
- p 180 line 23: "Retrospective" for "Retropective"
- p 182 line 14: "Manhattan" for "Manhattan"
- p 183 line 13: "Khrushchev" for "Khruschev"
- p 186 line 19: "Bourgeois" for "Bourgois"
- p 187 line 11: "Rosslynd" for "Rosslyn"

COLOURS OF THE KITCHEN CABINET

A studio exploration of memory, place, and
ritual arising from the domestic kitchen

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VOLUME I
COLOURS OF THE KITCHEN CABINET

In Memory
of
Lorna May Spooner
1913 - 2000

VOLUME I / Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet

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ABSTRACT

Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet is presented in two volumes. Volume I contains the exegesis structured as a performative discussion in parallel with the visual works and Volume II contains the thesis, the visual works and soundworks.

The exegetical documentation in Volume I provides evidence of a rhizomatic style of artistic research in which memory and forgetting, place and hearth, ritual and nourishment, presence and absence, intertwined with branches of knowledge, stimulate conceptual thought which translates on occasion into visual works. In the documentation the gaze is turned inward to explore the body, the entrails of the hearth, and from the discovered perspective of the interior the gaze searches out the shape of the exterior in an attempt to locate the whole in a social and political framework of utopian and dystopian views in which memory and the act of remembering are key ingredients. This documentation provides evidence of various kinds of collected memory; a gathered archive that has been subjected to change inasmuch as the memories have been processed, reinterpreted, reconstructed and reconceptualized. Sometimes this synthesis has influenced the making of artworks and at other times it has formed a background of ideas and atmospheres.

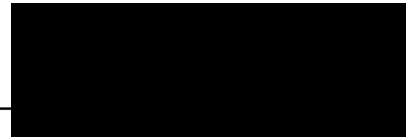
Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet sits notionally within the societal euphoria of the post-war housing boom and the decades that followed, as an allegory for change in both the personal and public domain. It was during this period that history, discovery, life, science and art accelerated while, simultaneously, innocence, optimism, truth and certainty diminished.

The visual works contained in Volume II consist of a series of sculptural objects that embody some of the circumstances and paradoxes of domestic experience. These experiences are mine, or variously those of my parents, other artists, and other women. Like the kitchen cabinet, the hoarder of consumables, I hoard these narratives as islands of disintegrating fragments. The gathered ideas are synthesized, perhaps in ways that remain inscrutable to me as an artist, in the hope of achieving a resonance, an agreement of images, materials and space that speak on a level more general than that of any particular source. In my attempts to write these memories into permanence I hover between things forgotten and things remembered: a space where truth becomes indeterminate. The visual works do not illustrate any given narrative. The intent is to explain and express visually ideas, concepts, codes and systems of an ever-changing world. The works reflect my search for the essence, feelings, sentiments and experiences and the sense of *the other* arising from the nexus between the unwritten and the unspoken.

The visual works and soundworks represent a synthesis of ideas and manifestations of memory. The ideas, while not necessarily new, are the subject of discovery in my research for this documentation and in my studio practice where the ideas gain a further original expression in the form of visual works distilled within the context of my experience.

STATEMENT

This documentation contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution and, to the best of my knowledge, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the documentation.



Greer Honeywill

31.1.03

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SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet began as a part-time Master of Arts study in 1998.

In 2000 the Master of Arts study was upgraded to a Doctoral study and in 2001 the study moved to full-time.

The commencement of this study signalled two major shifts. Return to University after an absence of more than thirty years and a radical change in studio practice. The decision to move from painting to experimentation with materials and sculptural forms; from the two-dimensional plane to the three-dimensional object, seemed to be based purely on personal intuition. However in the larger picture that decision merely echoed the shift referred to by the art historian and writer Briony Fer, who says 'sculpture became a way of thinking one's way out of the modernist paradigm of painting.'¹ That an intuitive change in studio practice can be seen as a reflection of an international discourse raises the issue of the collective memory and the way in which artists are affected by the convergence of ideas. To an extent ideas can be manipulated from the curatorial domain but that does not explain the mystery of why people begin to think in the same way at much the same time across continents. And what of ideas? Has everything been said? In our time is there room, despite the existing history of ideas, to create the new, the novel, the original?

The Russian philosopher Valery Podoroga in her work, *Visual Anthropology Workshops 1993-1994: Documentation of a Project/Project of Documentation*, published in *Moscow Art Magazine*, 2000, addresses the issue of what possibilities remain when so much has already been expressed. Against the existing auspicious history of ideas developed by artists, philosophers, poets and writers she says that we have one advantage 'the advantage of being in a time that is ours. This is the only advantage that we have.'² Podoroga advises us to move forward undaunted using our one advantage despite the possible risk that 'someone might tell you that your entire life and all your searchings amount to nothing but failure.'³ Freedom lies, she says, in working in our own time from our own perspective.⁴ And this narrow margin is all that is available to us in our attempt to create originality. The American academic and author David Gross, in his book *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting In late Modern Culture*, talks about the positive aspect of 'remembering one's own continuity in time...' and the benefit of this focus which he sees as our ability to achieve a 'degree of ontological security, some sense of who one has been in the past and still is in the present.'⁵

When one does remember, how have artists given this remembrance not only visual expression but a voice, and what role does gender play in this voice? The London-based commentator on contemporary art practice Jean Fisher laments the lack of emphasis on the female voice, especially in film. 'The inattention to aural experience in the construction of human subjectivity is undoubtedly coincidental with a general emphasis in critical debates on visual representation, an emphasis which is attributed to the priority given to vision in a Western culture dominated by patriarchal principles.'⁶ In Fisher's view we should not be surprised to find that since the late 60s 'and the development of non-traditional forms of art, women artists have found a creative space through technological media...' including projection, video, film, slide and multi-media performative works.⁷ Technology supports

¹Fer, B. 1997. *On Abstract Art*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p. 154

²Valery Podoroga. 'Visual Anthropology Workshop 1993-94: Documentation of a Project/Project of documentation'. *Fresh Cream: Contemporary Art in Culture*. 2000. Phaidon, London and New York, p.41

³loc. cit.

⁴ibid, p. 41

⁵Gross, D. 2000. *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture*. University of Massachusetts Press, USA, p. 2

⁶Jean Fisher. *Reflections on Echo: Sound by Woman Artists in Britain* (1989). Reckitt, H. and Phelan, P. 2001. *Art and Feminism*. Phaidon Press, London, pp. 247, 248

⁷ibid, p. 248

the representation of personal experience, by providing 'the means for re-narrating subjectivity and transforming a sense of selfhood...' from cultural stereotyping. Fisher is not wishing to imply that it is particularly feminine to narrate but women's storytelling 'reclaims the oral traditions of personal and collective memory as counter-narratives to the homogenizing and depoliticising histories of dominant discourse.'⁸ Television illustrates Fisher's point on a daily basis particularly during the reading of the news where, if there is a woman as a partner in a news team, she will always be in the support role. The voice of the male is seen as the voice of authority. Fisher poses the question — when in a film has a woman has been called upon to narrate? While Fisher quite rightly inspires a concern for the voice of woman in Western culture I am also interested in sound beyond the political. Sound as a medium, derived from our environment, constructed sounds, traditional sound (music) and text as sound are fertile ground for exploration.

Feminism is also a tenet of this study, however my view takes its gendered voice from the postmodern ground of the individual. The rise of individualism sits at odds with the one-rule-fits-all ethos of modernity that consigned us to the suburbs; creating larger and larger and quite separate states that we call home. The utopian views of the nineteenth-century feminists and their advocacy of co-operative housing and shared household tasks instead of solitary all-consuming drudgery were forgotten long ago. Individualism draws us away from the feminist activism of the 60s and away from the formation of strong intellectual schools of thought to focus on the power of the individual alone. Individualism does not presuppose that one cannot be a feminist it simply works against the linking of hands between like-minded people. And in one of the many contradictions and paradoxes to be found in this study, it is a state of forgetting that gives rise to individualism. If one chooses to stand-alone then the corollary is that one will feel, certainly for some of the time, a degree of loneliness.

The American-based art critic and author Robert Hughes in writing on Louise Bourgeois for *Time* in 1982, an article included in *Nothing if Not Critical: Selected essays on art and artists*, talks about visual expression that arises from the examination of the psyche 'as distinct from the familiar man-powered conventions of looking at [visual expression] from outside, from the eyeline of another gender.' Louise Bourgeois may have been one of the first to take this inward looking position, 'to rummage painfully between the layers of her own psyche,'⁹ as Hughes puts it, but current international art practice provides us with many examples of artists working from an inner perspective in association with various forms of memory. Artists like Ann Hamilton, Eulàlia Valldosera, Mona Hartoum and Rebecca Horn all utilize a range of media and technologies to support their works that often include narratives, text, performance, film and video. They exemplify Fisher's view of the place of the female voice in the gendered art discourse.

⁸Jean Fisher. *Reflections on Echo: Sound by Woman Artists in Britain* (1989). Reckitt, H. and Phelan, P. 2001. *Art and Feminism*. Phaidon Press, London, p. 249

⁹Hughes, R. 1992. *Nothing if Not Critical: Selected essays on Art and Artists*. Penguin, New York, pp. 285-287

SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION

1.2 INTRODUCTION TO COLOURS OF THE KITCHEN CABINET
VOLUME I

This Volume, one of two Volumes concerning *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet*, presents a discussion in parallel, and at times tangential, to the visual works presented in Volume II rather than a discussion of the actual visual works themselves. This discussion ranges across a network of ideas and crosses the conventional boundaries of time, although I speak from the fixed position of my own time. Within this discussion I employ as a device a degree of intentional slippage in the juxtaposition of the subjective with the objective and also a slippage in time in an attempt simultaneously to examine past and present ideas, reality and subjective perception. The discussion has been constructed in a manner that relates to performance or a performance monologue and therefore I view the documentation itself as a type of performative work in which the reader is invited to participate in my method by entering the landscape of ideas and discovering or connecting to his or her own storehouse of memories. The Indian-born academic, writer and socialist, Madan Sarup, in *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, contends that in a post-structuralist world 'reading has lost its status as a passive consumption of a product to become performance.'¹⁰ In the collaborative space that exists between the reader and the writer/performer there is a desire, as there is in theatre, to develop a voice, a vocabulary and an energy that communicates beyond the concrete through veils of atmospheres that encompass longing, sadness, irony and joy.

The substance of the performative discussion in this documentation is a tapestry of detours *en route* to the truth¹¹ composed of poetic ideas, remembrances, facts, fictions and truths related to the domestic domain and identity linked with documented shifts at an historical, societal and political level. It is like a tapestry weaving with the occasional darn, as there was on the day that I found a former collaborator, the new music composer and academic, Malcolm Fox, had died. As well as the sadness of the discovery of that event he was, as a consequence, lost to me in terms of collaboration on what I envisaged as the exploration of the sonic possibilities of this study. Helena Reckitt and Peggy Phelan preface a section of their book *Art and Feminism* with the following view of weaving as a metaphor and a signifier. 'As a conceit, weaving suggest[s] a simultaneous picking up of old strands, a making visible of previous invisible connections, and the undoing or unravelling of seemingly fixed histories.'¹²

Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet sits notionally within the societal euphoria of the post-war housing boom and the decades that followed as an allegory for change, and in some cases a lack of change, in both the public and personal domains. It was during this time that history, discovery, life, science and art accelerated while, simultaneously, innocence, optimism, truth and certainty evaporated.

As the Melbourne artist Robert Rooney would attest, a clear vantage point for speculation is important. In the 70s Rooney created serial sets of photographic works including *Holden Park* and *Scorched Almonds* for which he is well known. The Melbourne poet and critic, Gary Catalano, says of *Holden Park* that the images were, at least in part, '...concerned with the suburban environment and the daily rituals of domestic life.'¹³ In order to capture the ordinariness of the environment against which Rooney documented the parking of a Holden car, an iconic form within the anonymity of the suburbs, Rooney created a system to support the making of this work; a system that could be replicated over many sites but which could also be inclusive of the element of chance. In his photographic works Rooney was always clear about the fixed point from which he was making the observation.

¹⁰Sarup, M. 1993. *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism (Second Edition)*. The University of Georgia Press, Athens, p. 3

¹¹*loc. cit.*

¹²Reckitt, H. and Phelan, P. 2001. *Art and Feminism*. Phaidon Press, London, p. 280

¹³Catalano, G. 1997. *Building a Picture: Interviews with Australian Artists*. McGraw Hill, Sydney, p. 64

Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet is placed within the site that frames the circumstance — the domestic kitchen, the hearth of the post-war suburban home the only place of notional power available to a woman in the 1940s in the long night of gender inequality. In the selection of this site I explore not only the bricks and mortar meaning of the hearth and the hearth as metaphor but also the bodily meaning of hearth. The meaning that binds woman to hearth since woman is historically acknowledged as 'hearth and home'. The enticement employed to effect the union of woman and hearth has consistently been the hollow promise of happiness (ever after) which the French novelist, essayist and playwright Simone de Beauvoir says meant

the ideal of equilibrium in a life of immanence and repetition...A gilded mediocrity lacking ambition and passion, aimless days indefinitely repeated, life slips away gently towards death without questioning its purpose — this is what they meant by happiness.

Happiness was part of a bargain de Beauvoir says and the 'ideal of happiness has always taken material form in the house.'¹⁴

This documentation searches out interior space as opposed to a more dispassionate external viewpoint. This is essentially a study in which the gaze is turned inward to explore the body, the entrails of the hearth, and from the interior of the body I search out the shape of the exterior, attempting to locate the whole in a social and political framework of utopian and dystopian views in which memory and the act of remembering are key ingredients.

There existed within my family a story that, in the once constant retelling on family occasions, would seem to spring from an aperture of the kitchen cabinet, the controller of all family fictions. Once retold the story would return to its place within the shadows of the cabinet until the next telling. The story concerns a piano in a small kitchen, a man who practiced the piano every day for concerts he would never give and a baby that was delivered up to the darkness beneath the kitchen table every evening. This narrative was part of the collective memory of the family although the truth was a moveable feast. In the retelling, initial reactions to the strange kitchen scene were repressed or overwritten with new interpretations that replaced scorn and criticism with levity. The father of psychoanalysis, the Austrian-born neurologist, Sigmund Freud wrote in his essay on *Repression* that 'the objects to which men give most preference, their ideals, proceed from the same perceptions and experiences which they abhor...'¹⁵ Love and hate, truth and fiction reside in the same cabinet. The strange juxtaposition of elements in the family narrative and its power to ignite the imagination triggered a number of responses in relation to this study. The story influenced the attachment to the period (1945-1970), the selection of a clear vantage point, the hearth/woman, and it inspired an exploration of the importance of remembering and forgetting. The story also linked ideas of theatrical space, confinement and display, place, ritual, nurture, sustenance and the sonic.

The French philosophical theorist and novelist Georges Bataille (whose involvement with the Surrealist movement was eventually contested by the French artist André Breton who considered Bataille's writings too vulgar and abject in quality for the group) drew together the poetic metaphors of dust and tears in his essay *Figure Humaine (Human Face)*, *Documents no. 4*.

¹⁴de Beauvoir, S. 1997. Translated and Edited by H.M. Parshley. *The Second Sex*. Random House, London, pp. 466, 467

¹⁵Freud, S. 1984. *Repression*. *On Metapsychology*. Penguin Freud Library, Vol. II, Harmondsworth, p. 150

One of the illustrations accompanying the work was a photograph of a family gathered together for the occasion of a wedding in 1905. It may well be a photograph of family at a current wedding because the image is about concealment.¹⁶

The photograph, as Bataille sees it, is a picture not just of a provincial wedding, but of a mother and a father, as monsters which engender violence and impurity, and where beneath the veneer of order, there is trauma. It is the psychic scenario between the child and its mother and father that Bataille sets up as the frame in which modernity is played out.¹⁷

Inherent in what we see as our realities, our normality, we can find if we are brave enough to look a layer of repressed memory in which traces of the uncanny, the abject, the obsessive and the neurotic reside. In the catalogue published to support the British artist Damien Hirst's obsessive and neurotic exploration of the cadaver in his exhibition, *Theories, Models, Methods, Approaches, Assumptions, Results and Findings*, at Gagosian Gallery, New York in 2000, the following quote by the American novelist Gore Vidal was included.

Without memory, without art, with a memory that begins with each morning's wakings and ends with the night's sleep...[we] are able to achieve a numbness far more comforting to the spirit than the always dangerous and sometimes fatal exploration of self and world which was the aim of our old culture, now discarded. (*Two Sisters* 1964)¹⁸

Gross, following Freud, says that where painful or traumatic memories have not been discharged they may be repressed in the manner that Vidal suggests,

forcibly pushed out of consciousness. Such suppression or denial does not cause an affect to dissipate or fade away in the normal manner. Rather, the affect is frequently retained unconsciously. It survives below the surface of awareness, often becoming (because it is dammed up) even stronger and more disturbing than it was initially.¹⁹

Like Bataille's photograph the apparent normality of the hearth, its benign quality, conceals a range of unpalatable truths, realities and dangers. In his catalogue for *Theories, Models, Methods, Approaches, Assumptions, Results and Findings* Damien Hirst also included this insight from Freud.

The three sources from which our suffering comes: the superior power of nature, the feebleness of our own bodies and the inadequacies of the regulations which adjust the mutual relationships of human beings in the family, the state and society. (Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 1895)²⁰

¹⁶Fer, B. 1997. *On Abstract Art*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, pp. 85, 86

¹⁷*ibid.* p. 85

¹⁸Damien Hirst, *Theories, Models, Methods, Approaches, Assumptions, Results and Findings*. Edited by Damien Hirst and Jason Beard. Gagosian Gallery, New York, 23 September-16 December 2000, p. 99

¹⁹Gross, D. 2000. *Last Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture*. University of Massachusetts Press, USA, p. 41

²⁰Damien Hirst, *Theories, Models, Methods, Approaches, Assumptions, Results and Findings*. Edited by Damien Hirst and Jason Beard. Gagosian Gallery, New York, 23 September-16 December, 2000, p. 104

At the hearth we learn and develop rituals perhaps as a means of instituting systems into our life. A system can be learned, known, transmitted to others, shared, even loved. Ritual can be a displacement, a source of comfort, an anchor in a world where we have too much choice. Conversely ritual can be the result of some deep-seated psychological disturbance or repressed memory that inspires a neurotic response. Perhaps at the level of suburbia, ritual makes lighter the hideous and endless repetition of tasks spawned by the hearth.

SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION

1.3 INTRODUCTION TO COLOURS OF THE KITCHEN CABINET
VOLUME II

Volume II *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet* contains the visual works and soundworks that form the thesis of this documentation.

The visual works consist of a series of sculptural objects that seek to embody some of the circumstances but especially the paradoxes of domestic experience. These experiences are sometimes mine, sometimes those of my parents, other artists, and other women. The experiences are synthesized, perhaps in ways that remain inscrutable to me as an artist, in the hope of achieving a resonance, an agreement of images and materials and space that speak on a level more general than that of its sources. In the synthesis the act of remembering and the erosion and suppression of memory play an important role in the conceptualising of the visual works and soundworks.

David Gross, in reflecting on the position taken by the French writer Marcel Proust to the importance of remembering asserts that it was Proust's position that memory and remembering were of great significance and as a consequence placed a particular responsibility on the 'artistic personality.' According to Gross, Proust contended that 'the "artistic personality" had an obligation...to turn the raw material...into its "spiritual equivalent," which is to say, into a work of art.'²¹ Gross believes this premise sits at the core of Proust's work, *In Search of Time Lost*. When the narrator decides to convert memory into a novel the 'implication is that every individual has the responsibility...to seize upon his or her profoundest memories and transform them into aesthetic objects...that could then take up separate existence outside and beyond the self.'²² As Gross contends, to

a considerable extent, what an individual is or becomes is directly shaped... by one's own autobiographical events and the manner in which '...they are interpreted and made use of in later life. We are the things that happen to us, or rather what we make out of them. Of course, once events occur, they vanish into the past and are gone forever...' But we are a unique species possessing, as no other does, 'recollective abilities', and because of these abilities '...happenings from our past can be made present again...'²³

The visual works bring into focus aspects of memory and time and issues of gender, space, identity, ritual, and place. Like the once loved, free standing kitchen cabinet, the hoarder of consumables, I hoard the narratives of my life as fragments of memory that are slowly slipping away. In the attempt to write these memories into permanence I hover between things forgotten and things remembered so that truth becomes indeterminate.

The visual works do not seek to illustrate any given narrative but rather to express ideas visually. The works arise from my search for the essence, feelings, sentiments, experiences, the sense of the other that exists in the nexus between the unwritten and the unspoken, the familiar and the unfamiliar. The works occupy a space free of turbulence like single disconnected frames of a film. They are contemplative; they do not advance but rather they are imbued with a stillness allied to that of an actor on the stage caught between words and actions within the frame of the proscenium arch: meaning and truth hanging captive within the space between.

²¹Gross, D. 2000. *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture*. University of Massachusetts Press, USA, p. 50

²² *ibid.* p. 50

²³ *ibid.* p. 12

In scale the works maintain a relationship to the body of both the maker and the viewer and in their stillness, the wooden works in particular, present as sentinels or beacons, containers for forgotten rituals or fragments of memory: enigmatic vessels resonating with messages to be decoded by the viewer. Despite their apparent rigidity in form and structure the wooden works are full of contradictions. They are delicate and fragile, they have an uncertain hold on the earth and they are in the process of change, their unsealed surfaces transmogrifying in the atmosphere at the whim of the air breathed by the viewer and the air expelled by the viewer.

In creating a bodily relationship the forms became tall and narrow. This form parallels ideas expressed by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* in which he talks about the verticality of the house and the separation of the attic from the cellar which I choose to view, through the wooden works, as the separation of the intellect and the body.²⁴ This is also a form used by the French-born, American artist Louise Bourgeois in her drawings, *Femmes-maisons*, in the late 1940s. These drawings reinforce the relationship of the woman to house and hearth and examine the objectification and eroticism of the victim. The tower-like forms of the *Femmes-maisons* exhibit the apparent contradiction of both rigid and organic qualities.²⁵ In the 1960s the American artist Eva Hesse also used the tall narrow form, often neurotically bandaged, to create grid-like structures that were at once constructed and deconstructed, erased and reformed as she searched for the essence of her materials and the relationship between the multiple forms she produced. The American curator, critic, essayist and activist, Lucy Lippard quotes Hesse as saying 'repetition feels obsessive.' Lippard says the 'wrapping and binding and layering process...makes the viewer relive the intensity of the making in a manner far from the abstract or didactic way in which process is used by men'²⁶ Hesse's bandaged forms, such as, *Laocoon* 1966, also exhibit both rigid and organic qualities. Coincidentally, both Bourgeois and Hesse refer to the tower-like forms in their work as personages, a term that links the inanimate to the animate. I choose to appropriate the term in relation to the elevated wooden works that form part of the body of visual work for *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet*.

Textile works such as *Heavenly Tart* and *Consumer Music* reference the position of the womanly crafts in current art discourse. The Melbourne art historian Simon Gregg wrote in his essay accompanying *Stitching: An Artisan Approach*, an exhibition staged at RMIT as part of the cultural component of the Melbourne Fashion Festival, 2002,

The handcrafts of the home pierced the sphere of high arts patriarchy some time ago: Dada, Surrealism and Russian Constructivism all introduced women's domestic arts into the gallery to rupture historical distinctions between art and craft...The tradition of domestic arts in this context has since been enriched by the 60s counter-culture (stitching as an alternative art form) and 70s feminism (stitching as an oppositional art form).²⁷

The use of fabric and aspects of stitching and binding in Eva Hesse's work, evidence of the womanly crafts, can be also found in the work of a diverse range of artists. For instance the Colombian-born artist Doris Salcedo who often 'freezes' fragments of cloth in concrete as a poignant reminder of the 'disappeared', the Spanish artist Eulàlia Valldosera who uses cloth reminiscent of domestic sheets or hospital curtains as screens upon which to create shadow play, the American artist Liza Lou

²⁴Bachelard, G. 1994: *The Poetics of Space*. Translation, Jolas, M. Foreword, John R. Stilgoe, Beacon Press, Boston

²⁵Bernadac, M. 1996. Louise Bourgeois. Flammarion, New York, pp. 23, 24

²⁶Lippard, L. 1992. Eva Hesse. Da Capo Press, U.S.A, p. 209

²⁷Simon Gregg. *Stitching: An Artisan Approach*. *Stitching: An Artisan Approach*. RMIT, exhibition part of the cultural component of the Melbourne Fashion Festival, 12 March-28 March, 2002

who creates environments such as *Kitchen* painstakingly beaded using hundreds of workers and millions of beads and in the work of the Australian artist Rosslynd Piggott traces of traditional embroidery and sewing can be found. In her contemplative work, *Recollection* (1995), the London-based artist Mona Hartoum uses human hair because hair is 'a symbol of remembrance...'²⁸ On a small loom set on a table Hartoum effectively 'rewrites' her recollections into a new fabric. Hartoum's piece however is diminutive in comparison to the monumental pieces of Ann Hamilton in which hundreds, even thousands of shirts, metres of hand inscribed fabric or evidence of cooking can be found. The works of these women reflect aspects of the endless nature of ritual and the consumerist role for which women were groomed not only in post-war Australia but also in all western countries.

In the paper work *Bread of Heaven*, the found paper is lost to the search and recovery of the memory that holds the key to what once was. Despite their transmogrification the deconstructed and re-systematized Pianola rolls form a temporal landscape of eternal longing for the past while the restless movement of a domestic doyley in *Statement of the Possible* anxiously formulates a code to signify future potential.

There is a beauty, an embedded poetry in the ordinary, the everyday and the repetitive nature of daily life that does not occupy an heroic stage but rather a stage of diminishing returns where the comfort derived from small-scale domestic rituals somehow overcomes the otherwise abject possibilities of the domestic domain. And like the womanly crafts the poetic dimension found in the ordinary is not limited to my state or my country. It is a condition in common, the story of *everywoman* in western society. In considering the ordinary as a quality in her work the Australian artist Tracy Moffatt spoke in a radio interview with the ABC Radio National art critic Bruce James. The conversation centred on a body of work called *Scarred for Life* shown at the Biennale of Sydney 2000. *Scarred for Life* (1994) and *Scarred for Life II* (1999) comprise a series of photographs and text, each graphically depicting the recollection of an event so powerful it is remembered for life. The photograph is viewed as if a film still; each image tells a story in a highly theatrical manner with Moffatt's camera acting as the proscenium arch. For example *Scarred for Life II, Suicide Threat, 1982*, depicts a heavily pregnant woman in the living room of a middle class home. The woman holds a packet of matches in one hand and a lit cigarette between her fingers. She faces the camera as though she is about to leave the room walking away from an older, conservatively dressed, woman in the background. The text reads, 'She was forty-five, single and pregnant for the first time. When her mother found out, she said "If I wasn't a Catholic I'd commit suicide"'.²⁹ With the potency of advertising the image carries all the signifiers required by the viewer to make a connection; to experience the schism between the women. In the work Moffatt sets up the spectre of conflict and rivalry between women and especially conflict and rivalry between mothers and daughters. The American artist and feminist Miriam Shapiro wrote in an essay entitled 'The Education of Women as Artists: Project Womanhouse 1973', about the rivalry between mothers and daughters that can be found at the source of supposed nurture, the hearth:

it became obvious that the kitchen was a battleground where women fought with their mothers for their appropriate state of comfort and love, it was an arena where ostensibly the horn of plenty overflowed, but where in actuality the mother was acting out her bitterness over being imprisoned in a situation from

²⁸ Archer, M. Brett G. and de Zegher, C. 2001. *Mona Hartoum*. Phaidon, New York, pp. 97-99

²⁹ Biennale of Sydney 2000, Art Gallery of NSW (and other venues), Biennale of Sydney Ltd, 2000, pp. 84, 85

which she could not bring herself to escape and from which society would not encourage such an escape.³⁰

Moffatt told Bruce James that 'it took a lot of guts to make art that looks ordinary. Art made from things that look ordinary, made of ordinary things, ordinary moments.'³¹

The materials used in the making of the visual works for this study are in the main ordinary, common. The rugged twine from a mop, coarse parcel string, old enamel bowls, scrap timber, old kitchen graters are examples of materials selected for feel, surface, shine, or implication of threat. The materials are often chosen before I understand how they will be used and later the materials are subdued to the politics of making art.

The discovery of an old doyley in the belongings of a recently deceased Aunt, the last of my maternal relatives, and its presence within a work echoes the desire to hold fast her memory and yet the work is not about her but rather the potential that exists in each child. For hundreds of years people have pressed living flowers between the pages of books in a secretive and covert manner to stave off death and loss. But the very act inevitably results in death as the moisture and colour drain from the flower until all that remains is a fragile, colourless, memory of the reality. What remains is not truth but when the flower is viewed, the memory of the flower as it was in life re-establishes in the mind of the perpetrator. Pressing the flower is an act of entrapment of a beautiful thing that assures its death in order to keep alive the memory. This action parallels the paradox of the hearth.

Sound or sonic value is as important to my idea of art making as sound is to film. Sound animates space, creates atmosphere, intensifies emotion. The soundworks for this project contained on the two CDs are simply constructed from the material of memory. CD I *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet*, is a soundwork created from three strands of recorded narrative. Strand I consists of sound fragments from twelve autobiographical recollections read by Geraldine Cook, Head of Voice, Victorian College of the Arts. Strand II consists of sound fragments from the List Books referred to in Volume I, Section 5, 5.1 *Ritual (and Purification) in the Suburban Kitchen* read by the author and strand III consists of excerpts from the Country Women's Association publication, *The Housewives' Calendar of Puddings: A Pudding a Day for the Whole Year*, circa 1950s, read by Diana Marsland, cooking school director, Woodend, Victoria. Diana reads the method and ingredients of recipes selected at random from the book. In post production the three separate strands have been mixed or deconstructed to form a single strand, sonic landscape that emerges from the bowels of the cabinet when triggered by the viewer. The kitchen cabinet as the witness to the secrets of the hearth is no longer silent witness but the memory of past free-standing glory is rapidly failing, disintegrating into tiny fragments that animate the cabinet only briefly.

On CD II a series of twelve prose poems or recollections titled, *A Recollection a Month for the Whole Year*, are performed by Geraldine Cook. These random recollections from a life have been preserved within a new system, liberated from the human archive, in an attempt to save them from the inevitability of forgetting. The past is made present, automated for eternity. The CDs and full text of both soundworks are included in Volume II, Section I, 1.3 *The Soundworks*.

³⁰Miriam Schapiro, *The Education of Women as Artists: Project Womanhouse* (1973), Reckitt, H and Phelan, P. 2001. *Art and Feminism*. Phaidon Press, London, pp. 208, 209

³¹James, Bruce. Interview with Tracy Moffatt, 'Arts Today', ABC Radio National, 31 July, 2000

The appendix to Volume II includes in Section 2.2.1, reference to collections of artefacts gathered in the course of this study and used to support research, documentation and the making of visual works.

In Section 2.2.2 the full transcripts of the twelve interviews undertaken at the beginning of the project can be found, each in its way preserving memory that may become even more significant tomorrow than it is today.

SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION

1.4 ASPECTS OF METHOD: HARVESTING MEMORIES

While I am not seeking to make direct links between the documentation in Volume I and the visual works contained in Volume II particular methods emerged which are pertinent to the thinking that supports the visual works and may exhibit a degree of novelty. In this section I discuss the first of two larger projects, methodological exemplars, that bring particular approaches into play. This section looks at the framework for a series of interviews conducted as part of the research for *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet*. In the next section, 1.5 Aspects of Method: Systems and Collection, I look at the second project in which a specific system facilitated the collection of objects that came together as the raw data for a visual work.

From the outset memory, remembering and forgetting were critical ingredients of this study. As a society we are always searching our archives for answers and as the London based novelist, critic and cultural historian, Marina Warner, says in her catalogue essay 'Managing Monsters – Six Myths of our Time (1994)' for the exhibition-in-a-book, *Fresh Cream*,

The accelerating pace of change since the 1950s has magnified the influence, the power and the dissemination of myths. As everything changes, from the political map to the distribution of wealth, as human ingenuity leads to scientific breakthroughs which offer salvation and, at the same time, destruction, as strains on the family grow, the imagination hunts for stories to explain the pervasive malaise.³²

I was acutely aware that an overuse of personal narratives would lead to the assembly of a body of non-objective, introspective, autobiographical data. David Gross says there is a '...view that memory is not and cannot be as accurate as it was once assumed and thus cannot be relied upon neither for values, identity, nor any other aim or end in the same way that it...' has in the past.³³ He goes on to say that the '...prevailing opinion now seems to be that in most acts of remembering there is as much material from the present that is projected backward as there is material that comes authentically and indisputably from the past itself.'³⁴ With this weight of thinking against autobiography alone it seemed logical therefore that my data should be tested in some way or at least balanced against other stories that might confirm or deny my beliefs. The decision was made to conduct twelve interviews with various individuals connected by some thread to the hearth. The individuals were selected for the diversity of their opinions and insights rather than homogeneity. In 1998 my study began with the development of a list of people to interview and a list of questions to which I wanted responses. The list of questions was developed largely from my own intuitions towards the hearth in the period 1945-1970 and reflected post-war issues such as housing, the development of the suburbs, the physicality of the hearth, the role of women, familial interaction at the hearth, food, immigration, social and political attitudes.

Most of the gathered data remains current but there were two ideas that over time did not seem to fit the study. The first was based on the interaction of immigrant children with Australian children. Here I was following a line of thought influenced by the existence of a migrant hostel in my neighbourhood and my own interaction with Dutch and German children.

³²*Fresh Cream: Contemporary Art in Culture*. 2000. Phaidon, London and New York, p.47

³³Gross, D. 2000. *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture*. University of Massachusetts Press, USA, p. 3

³⁴*loc. cit.*

I wanted to explore one of the great mysteries: the spontaneous development of language that facilitated fluent exchange between children of three different nationalities with no language in common. Secondly, I was interested in establishing as fact that Chinese and Italian migrants were the primary influences on current Australian cuisine. In the selection of the interview subjects these propositions influenced my choice and the structure and trajectory of some questions.

It was important to conduct the interviews at the very outset of the study to allow any flow of inspiration back to the studio. The impact of this material on my thinking was unknown. All facets of the interview process from the development of the rationale, the questions, the selection of individuals, the method of conduct of the interview, the consent form and exit strategy were subject to application, approval and supervision by the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research on Humans (SCERH) at Monash University. My application was presented in February 1998, at the very beginning of my study, and approval was obtained to proceed.

Interview subjects were resident in South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria and all costs of the interview project, including travel and accommodation, were at my expense. To interview subjects in additional states or overseas would have necessitated applications for travel grants and would have delayed the lodging of the application with SCERH and this, in discussion with my Supervisor, Euan Heng, was deemed to be undesirable.

The selection of interview subjects began with four Australian artists, Jenny Watson, Robert Rooney, Fred Cress and Margaret Olley. Jenny Watson for her view of domestic life and her reflections as a woman making her way in the world. Robert Rooney initially for his highly systematised works titled *Kind Hearted Kitchen Garden*, and later for his breadth of interest that linked music, art and the 'theatre' of the absurd. Fred Cress for his depiction of the grim interactions between his family of protagonists at the table and for the insatiable appetites of his characters that cross the borders of socially acceptable behaviour as they cavort in the glare of the spotlight, frozen in the frame of the proscenium arch of the canvas. And Margaret Olley for her wisdom and experience as an artist and her ability to bring art and life as a seamless entity to the table accompanied by her exquisite eccentricities, her food and her practice of painting in the kitchen. To the artists I added the Head Curator of Australian Painting at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Barry Pearce, once a fellow art student and thespian, to expand the view from an art-centric position.

Three specialist food commentators were selected. The Italian cooking school director and olive oil expert, Rosa Matto, the Chinese cook, author and television presenter, Elizabeth Chong, and ex-restaurateur and more recently, food performance artist, Gay Bilson, all provided views from the hearth coloured by their diversity of experience. And the broadcaster and presenter of the ABC Radio National program, *The Comfort Zone*, which brings together an examination of architecture, design, food and landscape, Alan Saunders. Saunders has also written about food and the rise of a uniquely Australian cuisine.

Finally an architect, a playwright/performer and a primary producer completed the list. The Pritzker Prize winning Australian architect, Glenn Murcutt, brought his profound consideration to the aesthetic and human issues necessary to elevate the design of the hearth beyond the functional to a signifier of place and daily celebration. The photographer, playwright and performer, William Yang who, in his poignant landmark theatre piece, *Sadness*, managed ingeniously, to intertwine the search for his Chinese heritage as he journeyed to the hearth in the homes of various relatives with the documentation of the sad decline and loss of friends from HIV Aids, lent his view. I saw *Sadness* in 1991 as part of the Melbourne Festival and was still thinking about this highly acclaimed work in 1998. During the period of this study *Sadness* was made into a film which premiered at the Melbourne International Film Festival in 1999. And the central Victorian tomato grower Antonia Bruzzaniti lent her perspective from the point of view of an immigrant and as a producer of perfect tomatoes. The interview took the form of a face-to-face discussion based on the set questions approved by SCERH.

The estimated time required for the interview was two hours. Although I initially considered taping each interview and had approval to do so, intuition caused me to rethink this position in favour of hand writing each interview. This meant that I entered into a working relationship with each interview subject. I was aware from the outset that if the interview failed or I was unable to decode the notes that the process could not be repeated and under the agreement with SCERH I could not change my approved interview list without a new application and approval for each change. The rules imposed by SCERH were definite but in the end seemed fair under the circumstances and certainly focussed my attention on making the twelve interviews, and the subsequent approval of transcripts by the interview subjects, a success. General research, research specific to the interviews and the conduct, transcription and approval of transcripts took eighteen months of part-time study and resulted in an archive of approximately thirty thousand words of resource data which can be accessed in full in the appendix to Volume II *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet*.

During the gestation of the study, changes occurred in relation to the data. Firstly, it became clear that the focus on immigrant children and the establishment of the high ground contribution of Chinese and Italian cuisine to current Australian cuisine would divert too much from the central core, the hearth. Gradually I let these ideas slip away. For a time I considered writing this documentation, not as a performative discussion but as a play about a conversation that centred on the hearth; a technique that would have facilitated an active interplay between the responses of the interview subjects on the various topics. Although this is a valid approach I also let this idea drift away. In fact the entire interview process seemed to slip away for a year or two during the study especially since there was very little obvious relationship between my visual work and the interview data. In sanguine moments there were discussions about the interview project being allowed to drift away altogether. That is until I began to write this documentation and I realised two important things. First, that excerpts from the data could advance my discussion in a very positive, dynamic and poignant manner. And second that the interviews had helped narrow my view to the themes of theatre, nurture, sustenance and ritual, themes active in this documentation and the studio. It was the gestalt effect of my data measured against interview data that really solidified the themes as a viable way to explore what is a huge subject. Of course some may see the hearth as a limiting subject but not only is the hearth something other than it appears it is also a signifier of wider issues. It is the psychological dynamic caused by the manner in which the wider issues impact on the family, the signified, and the way these impacts are interpreted that becomes interesting.

SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION

1.5 ASPECTS OF METHOD: SYSTEMS AND COLLECTION

In Chapter 4, *The Theatre of the Heart(h)*, 4.4 *Theatrical Space*, I document the chance occurrences that led me to become interested in the kitchen grater as an object, a signifier and a material. The grater is an object imbued with much emotion since it has the capacity to shred not only the food items for which it was designed but also the user, an unintentional by-product of its function. As an intuitive response to chance occurrences I began to collect graters, flat, square, round, small, large, stainless steel and tin looking at their 'malevolent nature', their variety and their materiality. Over time I found myself particularly interested in the cylindrical grater made by *Willow Australia*. These tin graters have been made in the same manner for over one hundred years without a design change and are still available in the supermarket. Further, the perforations of the grater encouraged experimentation with a light source to explore the possible effect of shadows.

Studio focus moved to the forming of a work linking graters and working on the materiality of the objects to provoke a psychological response. The formulation of the idea for the work involved a visual parallel with the first of the works made for this study *Endless (damp dusting)*, an elongated kitchen mop with a head measuring five metres in length. I conjectured that three strands of graters should be constructed, each strand requiring forty graters, a total of one hundred and twenty graters, for the three strands. And each of these graters should bear the marks of its use. In other words I would avoid the new product.

The development of processes or systems for the gathering of materials, ideas, and recollections is an underlying motif in my work; evidence of this method is more obvious in some works than others. Like the New York based artist, Christo, all aspects of the journey from genesis to realisation are relevant and rendered transparent. For Christo his documentation is a critical part of the method and the saleable material that funds his projects. His large scale wrapping projects, for instance, took years to complete as he and his team dealt with bureaucrats and politicians enroute to approval. The wrapping of the Reichstag by Christo and Jeanne-Claude, although conceived in 1972 was not realised until 1995, some twenty-three years later.³⁵ In comparison the wrapping of the Pont-Neuf, Paris, took merely a decade from 1975-1985.³⁶ Every painstaking detail of the project, every letter and memo was archived as raw data for the accompanying book and exhibition. It was my understanding, however, that the collection of used cylindrical graters would in no way mirror the length of time Christo invested in his preparation but I would be proved wrong.

The intention was to source old graters from Opportunity Shops, junk shops, and Antique shops. In May 2000, I began the collection in earnest travelling to Kyneton, Chewton, Malmsbury and Castlemaine, in Central Victoria. A day's searching yielded only three graters which when added to the six in my studio made a total of nine with one hundred and eleven to go. The search continued in June 2000, in Woodend, Lancefield, Romsey, Kilmore and Daylesford; the task taking more than eight hours and once again only three graters resulted. The explanation for this poor showing was that there existed no more than one grater per household or deceased estate and since the grater frequently rusted it was often discarded given that the object was deemed to have little or no commercial value.

With the interview project I formulated a system that would enable me to repeat the process twelve times, each time in a new setting, in the same manner. The system covered the actual notebook in which I recorded the interview, the number and type of pens on hand, ways of timing the interview and so on. Clearly it was time to expand the system for this visual work to seek help from the

³⁵Laporte, D. 1986. *Christo*. Pantheon Books, New York, p. 83

³⁶*ibid.* p. 82

community, one of the bonuses of living in a rural region.

Having prepared some explanatory material I spoke to a journalist for a local newspaper servicing my locality, Sunbury and the Macedon Ranges. The journalist and a photographer subsequently visited my studio and a story appeared in the *Telegraph* in July 2000.³⁷

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Kitchen art: Greer Honeywill is on a mission to collect cylindrical cheese graters.

Grate expectations

By Sue Moses

DO you have an old cheese grater hidden away in a kitchen drawer?

Woodend artist Greer Honeywill has just the job for it.

She desperately needs to collect more than 100 cylindrical graters for an unusual artwork and has so far only managed to collect 20.

Her latest project examines the Australian kitchen from 1945 to 1970.

"It is part of the great Australian dream. After the

war the Australian dream and the suburbs developed.

"I am creating a sculptural installation work that requires more than 100 old cylindrical food graters," Honeywill said.

"Given that the domestic kitchen is such a source of inspiration for my work, it would make the piece even more special to me if it was shaped from the kitchen history of the district," she said.

Much of Honeywill's work has been exhibited around the world. However,

she has traded her city studio for quieter surrounds.

"I found myself making excuses to stay at home, to enjoy the wind and the trees," she said.

"It got to the point where I simply couldn't bring myself to leave Woodend each morning in order to work somewhere else."

A cottage at her historic Woodend property was converted to a studio and Honeywill says the mood of the countryside is apparent in her work.

"Now I have the best of

both worlds in the one beautiful place," she said.

"My work has also completely changed since going back to university."

Honeywill is completing her PhD in fine art at Monash University.

She will show *Urban Songs*, a small exhibition of her paintings, at Melbourne's Sofitel Hotel from September to December.

Honeywill invites anyone with a cylindrical grater they wish to donate or sell to call her on 5427 1984.

46 — TELEGRAPH, Tuesday 25 July 2000

Plate no.1 Moses, S. 2000 'Grate Expectations', *Telegraph*, 25 July

The story carried my telephone number and people were encouraged to call if they had an unwanted grater that they were willing to give or sell to the project. While the journalist's story was in several instances inaccurate and generally lacking in sophistication my telephone began to ring. Between late July and mid September I responded to the calls visiting thirty homes and collecting thirty-seven graters. To accomplish this task I further enlarged the method until the act of collection became as much a part of the method as the attainment of the grater.

³⁷Moses, S. 2000. 'Grate Expectations'. *Telegraph*, Sunbury and Macedon Ranges, Victoria, 25 July, p. 6

This change was necessitated by the fact that I had no street directory for the region with sufficient detail to locate many addresses and so I made detailed notes from the donor's directions on the telephone. In many cases the properties were in quite unpopulated rural areas where roads disintegrated into faint dirt tracks. In these locations it was impossible to seek assistance of any kind. While this may not seem remarkable, I do not have a good sense of direction and verbal directions are prone to misunderstandings, particularly on the part of the listener. Language became part of the method and the method became entrenched, a challenge to match the elusiveness of the graters. And I was successful on twenty-eight occasions out of thirty.

Donors consistently spoke of their personal connection with the grater as an object and I was surprised to find a strong sentimental attachment. They spoke of graters that had been handed down from their grandmothers and yet they were prepared to donate the grater for an artwork about which they knew very little. The generosity of the donors was humbling; particularly the kindness of an eighty-year-old woman who had bought herself a new grater in order to donate her old grater. Sometimes I met the donors over the telephone and collected the graters from the front step on an arranged day and at other times I sat in kitchens talking to the women and sharing tea and stories about life at the hearth. There was an aura of shared women's insights as covert as the ritual of the recipe written on the back of the envelope, a practice these women remembered fondly. Two women took particular interest, collecting graters from their friends, and one man responded to the story supplying two graters. The result was excellent. Such a response might not have been so forthcoming in a large city. While the offer was made to buy the graters, at no time did anyone accept money. This was not a transaction; it was an exchange based on the offer of support from one woman to another and I felt the support of these women in what they saw as a mysterious endeavour.

Friends also assisted, scouring shops in the city and suburbs and another twelve graters emerged. By mid of September I had a total of fifty-five used graters. Along the way I decided to collect sufficient new graters to begin experimentation. This seemingly simple task was also deceptive. *Willow Australia* supply *Kmart* with large quantities of their products. Today the grater exists in two forms — the original tin and a Teflon coated version in dark grey. Research was necessary to locate *Kmart* stores and it took several trips to build up a collection. Exactly two years from the day the idea emerged the work was assembled, installed and named *Embrace*.

In its final form the tubular strands emerge in a regiment, reminiscent of the tubes from a 'humidicrib', directly from the gallery wall. Like the tentacles of an octopus or strange automated umbilical cords the three strands fall 1.7 metres to the floor, the ends merging into a tangled knot. Each strand, now only thirty-four graters long, varying in character from the mellowness of the old graters, to the slimy quality of the new, to the patchwork of a mixed strand. The variation in the strands each punctuated by a series of kitchen skewers projects a distinctly different threat and a different notion of time. The extruded forms that resulted from joining the cylindrical graters in this way mimic the life-giving umbilical chord connecting mother and (female) child in the womb; a source of rich nutrition for the fragile unborn foetus or a denial of maternal care at the flick of a switch or a disconnection of the metal cord. As the (female) child grows the thorny connection between the two is masked by the dynamic and sensuous writhing of the serpentine forms of the piece twisted inextricably in the dance of life. Psychologically the ordinary became uncanny, *unheimlich*. Images of works by the American artist, Eva Hesse, using tangled threads in vertical grid-like forms travelled with me as I made the work and also images of works by the Sydney artist Hani Armanious whose use of everyday objects such as bread, rolls of duct tape, and plastic conduit reinterpret and reassess our relationship with the familiar, creating new readings. And inescapably, Duchamp's ready-mades touch on the embedded poetry in the product of repetition.

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7 NEWS

Picture: Sharon Waller

Embrace will be on show at Monash University's Caulfield campus from February 2 as part of the art and design faculty's Powder exhibition.

Plate no. 2 Author unknown, 'Artist's Grate Expectations', *Telegraph*, January 2001

At Monash University the Australian jeweller Marian Hosking introduced me to the work of the German jeweller, Otto Künzli, and I was surprised to find a parallel project, *Chain*, made from forty eight used or discarded wedding rings. Künzli preceded me in his use of the print media to assist him in the collection of the rings he sought, placing an advertisement with a headline declaring 'I collect rings'. This headline and a telephone number ran in the Munich daily newspapers on ten occasions in 1985. The response was forty-eight wedding rings; many accompanied by their personal histories. Künzli linked the rings, in various tones of gold, into a chain, eighty-five centimetres in length, '...these tiny, emotionally charged objects in all their variations...joined to produce a necklace of great formal beauty, of primal simplicity and power...Capable of evoking the powerful memories of death, love and separation, [and yet] the chain remains small enough to melt into the hand'.³⁸

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While our pathways were different our ideas converged and in practical terms we were both making chains. This would not be the first time I found my pathway leading to an intersection already crossed by another artist in a similar convergence of ideas.

The systems underlying the making of *Embrace* and the conduct of the interview project are indicative of methods that have parallels in other visual works recorded in Volume II *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet*. In general the systems are created to facilitate ideas rather than the system used for the generation of ideas. Collection as a method applies equally in this project to the collection of the intangible and the tangible.

SECTION 2

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART(H) IS

2.1 WOMAN, HOME AND THE BIRTH OF AN IDEA

Shocking as it may seem the much derided post-war suburbs in Australia were actually built on ideas, albeit ideas transplanted from another country, and these ideas in turn were founded on the desire for modernity, the new. As war ended, across the world the focus was the future and the past was to be a relinquished memory. The set of societal values that supported the suburbs would benefit many Australian couples by helping them to become home owners but the emotional cost to participate in the grand dream would be great. In this chapter I begin a journey through the metaphorical and factual landscape that entrapped women. I look at the form of the prize, the suburban home on a quarter of an acre and its lingering aftermath that gave birth to an idea that took decades to come to fruition in my studio.

The grand plan that would see the suburbs become the privileged manner of housing the family was born well before the massive post-war requirement for returning Australian soldiers in 1945. And the idea was international. While today the domestic house in the suburbs is applauded and reviled with equal vehemence there was a time when the clarion call of the suburbs seemed like a call to nature, a promise of a perfect life. An advertisement for the building products company Wunderlich Limited placed in *Art and Australia* in 1927³⁹ (see overleaf) trumpeted the advantages of a suburban house built with asbestos-cement sheets. This new product was presented as a versatile and economical building material for the ideal home in the suburbs. Advertising included imagery of an inviting 'Picturesque' cottage sheltered by a glade of trees under big skies. Man and nature in harmony. With the advantage of time we know that asbestos and quality human life, certainly for the miners at Wittenoom, in Western Australia, where the asbestos was mined, and possibly for the inhabitants of the asbestos-laden suburban house, is mutually exclusive. And so it begins — the never-ending list of pros and cons on every conceivable aspect of the subject of the development of the suburbs and the domestic dwelling within the suburbs.

Curiously the eminent American architect Frank Lloyd Wright was an advocate for the suburbs. In 1898 he even built his office onto his family home at Oak Park, Illinois and shaped his practice to support the theory that nurture should be at the heart of architectural practice. To Wright the suburbs represented nurture and so he moved from offices in the commercial centre of Chicago to practice in suburbia. But within a decade Wright would have a change of heart, deserting his theory, his practice, his wife and the home.⁴⁰ Perhaps this explains his rather dyspeptic view of the domestic domain expressed two decades later.

Any house is a far too complicated, clumsy, fussy, mechanical counterfeit of the human body...The whole interior is a kind of stomach that attempts to digest objects...The whole life of the average house, it seems, is a sort of indigestion. A body in ill repair, suffering indisposition — constant tinkering and doctoring to keep it alive. It is a marvel, we its infesters, do not go insane in it and with it. Perhaps it is a form of insanity we have put in it. Lucky we are able to get something else out of it, though we seldom get out of it alive ourselves.⁴¹

³⁹Wunderlich Limited. 1927. 'Decidedly Picturesque'. *Art in Australia*, Sydney Number, Third Series, June, No. 20, p. -

⁴⁰David Van Zanten. 'Frank Lloyd Wright's Kindergarten: Professional Practice and Sexual Roles'. Reed, C. et al. 1996. *Not At Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*. Thames and Hudson, London, pp. 92-97

⁴¹Frank Lloyd Wright. 'The Cardboard House' (1931). Wigley, M. 1997. *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, frontis page



Decidedly Picturesque

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Plate no. 3 'Decidedly Picturesque', *Art in Australia*, 1927

In 1946 the American artist Louise Bourgeois made a drawing of her home *Easton House*. It is a simple drawing, childlike, linear, a rectangular roof with a thin vertical chimney set above a rectangular façade punctuated by three windows and a door. Calling on her memory of things past she is quoted, forty-seven years later, as saying, 'this is an exact representation of the house in Connecticut that is still in the family. I think we were happy there.'⁴²

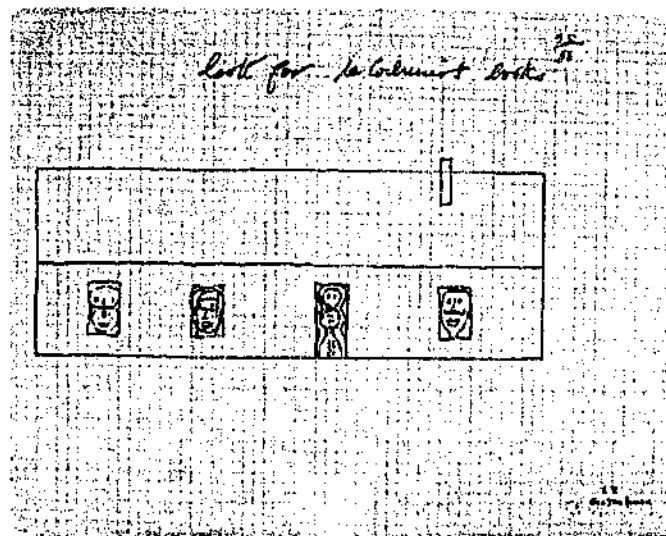


Plate no. 4 Louise Bourgeois, *Easton House*, 1946

⁴²Bourgeois, L. and Rinder, L. 1999. *Louise Bourgeois -- Drawings and Observations*. University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Berkley, and Bulfinch Press, Berkley, p. 58

In reality Bourgeois was not always happy in the bosom of her family constructing the occasional artwork in which she fantasised about the destruction of her father, (*The Destruction of the Father*, 1974), for example, but in this drawing each window is dominated by a smiling face. The house or the 'lair', as she prefers, forms an often-repeated theme within her work and a theme of great potency and prominence.⁴³ Bourgeois was not a child when she made the drawing of *Easton House* she was a thirty-five year old woman, an artist in her prime, using the established motif of the house in her art as a means by which she could project her conflicting feelings about family, love, connection, entrapment and guilt. The curator for twentieth-century art at the University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive at Berkley, Lawrence Rinder, writes in the introduction to the book he co-authored with the artist that the house as a motif for Bourgeois represents 'the site of dreams and daydreams, shelter and comfort, it is the site of infidelity, treachery, and abuse — it is the site of Family.'⁴⁴ For Bourgeois the Family with a capital 'F' is a fraught institution and the family home a lidded structure in which the full theatre of emotions becomes evident.

Not long after making *Easton House*, Bourgeois created a series of paintings, drawings and prints called *Femme-maison* in which we see a woman not merely inhabiting the house but having become a part of the house, trapped in the house, hiding in the house. Since the artist's work has such a strong emotional context it might be presumed that there is a very strong sense of self in the images of a woman trapped within the western world's most potent symbol of domesticity. The Professor of Architecture at The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College, London, Adrian Forty, in his book *Objects of Desire: Design and Society 1750-1980*, talks of the metaphorical relationship between the body of a woman and the home, citing Freud's assertion in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that the home is a 'potent symbol of female sexuality'. Forty maintains that as 'a metaphor for a woman's body, the house is an image long established in poetry, mythology and the unconscious...'⁴⁵ In *Femme-maison*, 1947, the top half of a female figure standing perfectly upright and facing the viewer is concealed within a house structure. Of the upper body only the arms protrude beyond the structure. One arm is raised in what may be construed as a wave as if to attract attention while the other hangs by her side. The bottom half of the figure is naked. During the series of interviews with Lawrence Rinder in 1994 and 1995 Bourgeois said of the image 'this woman is in a state of semiconsciousness' showing herself at 'the very moment she thinks she is hiding'⁴⁶ (see overleaf). The French curator, Marie-Laure Bernadac, in her book *Louise Bourgeois* talks about the *Femme-maisons* created by the artist saying 'people have interpreted these images as an allusion to the demands of domestic and family life made on an artist who found herself with three children to raise.'⁴⁷ But Bernadac does not entirely agree with this view suggesting 'it was more a question of [the artist] concretising a psychic state, an inner model rather than a feminist metaphor.'⁴⁸ Bourgeois constantly returns to woman, house and family as subject matter explored from both the perspective of the child and the viewpoint of mother. And very often the view of the adult is unloving, estranged, wracked with guilt or exuding a disconcerting menace. Bourgeois shows us that home and hearth are anything but benign.

In 1972 students from the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of Art, under the direction of the American artists and feminists Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro took this theme, the *Femme-maison* or *Womanhouse*, as the basis of a project that occupied the entire space of a derelict mansion in Los Angeles. The American academics, Sharon Haas and Christopher Reed, describe the

⁴³ Bourgeois, L. and Rinder, L. 1999. *Louise Bourgeois — Drawings and Observations*. University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Berkley, and Bullfinch Press, Berkley, p. 18

⁴⁴ *op.cit.*

⁴⁵ Forty, A. 1987. *Objects of Desire — Design and Society 1750-1980*. Thames and Hudson, London, p. 104

⁴⁶ Bourgeois, L. and Rinder, L. 1999. *Louise Bourgeois — Drawings and Observations*. University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Berkley, and Bullfinch Press, Berkley, pp. 44-45

⁴⁷ Bernadac, M. 1996. *Louise Bourgeois*. Flammarion, New York, pp. 23, 24

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 24

project as 'a walk-in rumination' on the lives of women.⁴⁹ 'Like the uncanny domestic architecture proposed by the Surrealists, *Womanhouse*...' they conclude 'aimed to disrupt the conventions that rendered the home familiar and banal.'⁵⁰ The writers quote the American historian and critic, Arlene Raven, in her summation of *Womanhouse* as effectively turning 'the house inside out...'; exposing the 'isolation and anger many women felt in the single-nuclear-family dwelling...' and the 'sadness which had been covered by the roofs...'⁵¹ *Womanhouse* opened to the public for four weeks and was seen by 10,000 visitors and yet it remains critically un-examined; a point that perplexes Haar and Reed given the project's 'anticipation of themes' that would be amplified by feminist artists in subsequent years.⁵²

Twenty one years after *Womanhouse*, the British installation artist, Rachel Whiteread, created a public sculpture in the form of a house (*Home* 1993-1994) and caused a sensation. Her point of view was not feminist but rather the observation of the power of the everyday object, expressed in the negative, to move an audience. Jon Bird (cited by Claire Doherty in her essay for the British exhibition, *Claustrophobia*) says that Whiteread's, *House*, offers 'a reassuring familiarity — we know this vocabulary and can imaginatively recreate the routines of daily life...' but at the same time we find a dislocation 'between perception and cognition; the uncanniness of the object...leaving the viewer estranged from everyday normality — the everyday becomes strange.'⁵³ With her haunting concrete casting of the interior space of an old terraced house, Whiteread takes us on a melancholic journey of absence, loss and yearning. Richard Shone comments poignantly on the ability of the work to encapsulate time as part of his catalogue essay, *From 'Freeze' to House: 1988-94*. 'Skinned of its precarious physical reality, *House* [implants] itself in the mind, an unforgettable image of arrested time.'⁵⁴ The American novelist A.M. Homes was moved to poetry by Whiteread's approach to the every day. In the poem *The Presence of Absence*, he writes of Whiteread's work.

Casting the social, the psychological, the deeply personal, Rachel Whiteread's sculptures are elegies to human experience, haunting monuments, documenting our losses, our bodies, our beds, the horrible beauty of the every day.⁵⁵

If I stand in front of the much-changed house at 52 Shannon Avenue, North Glenelg, South Australia, where I grew up I experience the disturbance between perception and cognition that Bird describes. This is my home, but it is not my home. I understand this object, this form, and yet I do not understand what I see. I am nothing to this object and yet it lives in me. It is familiar and yet disturbingly unfamiliar. It is uncanny.

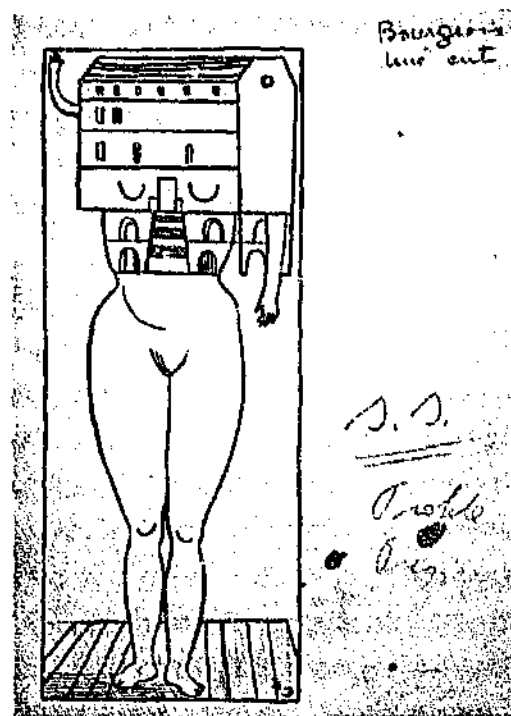


Plate no. 5 Louise Bourgeois, *Femme maison*, 1947

⁴⁹Sharon Haar and Christopher Reed, 'Coming Home: a Postscript on Postmodernism', Reed, C. et al. 1996, *Not At Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, Thames and Hudson, London, p. 255

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 256

⁵¹*op. cit.*

⁵²*op. cit.*

⁵³Doherty, Claire, Curator and Editor, 'Claustrophobia', Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 6 June-2 August, 1998, and other galleries, p. 17

⁵⁴Richard Shone, *From 'Freeze' to House: 1988-94*, *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection*, Thames and Hudson in association with the Royal Academy of Arts, London, 18 September-28 December, 1997, p. 24

⁵⁵A. M. Homes, *Music for Torching*, Rachel Whiteread, Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London, 29 October - 16 January, 1999, p. 35

The most prevalent view of the relationship of woman to house, however, is deeply entrenched, conservative, frequently patriarchal, and well documented. For example, in *Objects of Desire*, Adrian Forty cites the stylist Elsie de Wolfe in *The House in Good Taste*, published in 1913 in which she says we 'take it for granted that every woman is interested in houses — that she either has a house in course of construction, or dreams of having one, or has had a house long enough to wish it right'.⁵⁶ Eighty-eight years after de Wolfe made this statement we may well take offence but her statement illuminates two recognisable views about the woman/house/domesticity paradigm. Firstly, the woman as a major consumer emerging from the chrysalis in the post-industrial age carefully targeted and nurtured by commercial interests. In his essay exploring the consumerist edge of the home and the relationship of home to art, the writer David Greene says that the very word 'home' is beloved of advertising copywriters who use it to 'promote a vast warm blanket of material accoutrements' that build the 'idea' of home as a 'repository for memories, a forum for myth making, a zone of comfort and safety'.⁵⁷ The second view encapsulated within de Wolfe's statement is woman as a disenfranchised figure yearning for financial and social independence. In the early 1900s when de Wolfe made her comment a woman was entirely dependent on her husband; a state that did not begin to change significantly until the late 1960s. The British writer and feminist, Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own*, written in 1929, eloquently describes the position of women

She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband.⁵⁸

In this assemblage of views it becomes clear that the house as an object and the concept of home, with its connotations of warmth and succour, are loaded ideas and that the natural needs of women have been both exploited and encouraged by politicians and manufacturers alike. Within the bosom of the rising middle classes the notion of making a home grew in intensity throughout the first half of the twentieth-century. It became extremely desirable to not only make a home, but to own a home, an idea unheard of for the lower classes and rare among the middle classes prior to the end of World War II. While it could be argued that this new dream of ownership was shared as much by men as women, once attained, women became lost within the dream paradigm of home, family and duty.

My own interest in the romantic notion of home can be traced back to my unwomanly fifth year and a line of western facing esplanade houses between Henley Beach and Grange in South Australia. The houses were not new; they existed outside of the ideal. They were larger than our house and they had verandahs and large windows to the sea. Each journey to the local swimming pool meant that we would drive between the houses and the sea and the act of repetition etched in my mind unforgettable memories of a linear landscape of perfectly indifferent houses in a rundown beachside suburb. As a child it seems I was already infected with the aspirations of the adult. I developed an inexplicable desire to live behind any one of the facades facing the sea.

⁵⁶Forty, A. 1987, *Objects of Desire — Design and Society 1750-1980*, Thames and Hudson, London, p. 104

⁵⁷Greene, D.A. Guest Editor, 1996, 'Home', in *Art & The Home, Art & Design Profile*, No. 51, Academy Editions, London, p. 90

⁵⁸Woolf, V. 1945. *A Room Of One's Own*. Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria, p. 45

My parents were dismissive. But discord could not erase my interest and I continued to dream as we drove back to the shiny new suburb where we lived. My parents believed we already lived in a dream; one of the great dreams of this country; one of the great dreams of the western world. The Australian artist, Jenny Watson, recalls the energetic drive to inhabit the new. 'I remember this new phase...There was a real push to live in a new home. Old homes were somehow not good enough or second rate. I didn't realise at the time that the government was strongly supporting this attitude.'⁵⁹

In 1979, my child-like dreams of living on the esplanade seemingly forgotten, I became aware that as an artist I was constantly reviewing, editing, and adding to a storehouse of collected memories of life in suburbia, and more specifically, life at 52 Shannon Avenue. Shannon Avenue was an ordinary street in a new suburb developed by the South Australian Housing Trust on reclaimed coastal land. A copybook suburb developed in the dying stages of the 1940s to provide low cost post-war housing to couples previously unable to afford their own home. My parents would not have been able to buy into the dream if the political and social conditions of the time had been different, but the end of World War II precipitated explosive activity in the form of housing and immigration booms. The twin booms in turn rode on a raging current of post-industrial euphoria and the combination of these factors produced an atmosphere of overwhelming optimism. And in this hot-house atmosphere the term *great Australian dream* was born creating an all encompassing banner under which a cluster of personal, social, political and psychological concepts could be drawn together and invested with a shorthand meaning able to be communicated and understood by all Australians. In essence the term, *great Australian dream*, came to represent the concept of the freedom and dignity of man and that freedom found expression through home ownership.

The *dream* home was a freestanding structure built on a quarter acre block around which the proud owner could proclaim his territory by erecting a fence. It seemed that a new equation also emerged to amplify these feelings, *freedom = ownership, ownership = freedom*. In 1945, at the end of the 'war to end all wars', the notion of freedom epitomised by ownership had popular appeal as the soldiers returned to Australia filled with enthusiasm for the future. Two years later the first waves of immigrants from Europe and Britain would enter into the *dream* with the same enthusiasm. Writing about the development of housing in the forties and fifties, the social historian Peter Cuffley reflects on the fact that, 'we have tended to seek dignity through independence of home ownership, as if in a democracy each household were a separate state'⁶⁰ In an attempt to satisfy the unprecedented demand for housing while at the same time overcoming post-war shortages of materials the government placed limitations on the size of new houses, '1,200 square feet (111.48 square metres) for a timber house and 1,250 square feet (116.12 square metres) for one in brick, completed the recipe for an imposed austerity.' Cuffley points out, however, that the acceptance of this no-nonsense functionalism, 'was as much an imposed state as it was a fashionable philosophy.'⁶¹ The *great Australian dream* of the post-war era was not ephemeral it was quantifiable. It manifested as an essential object, a new object, occupying a regulation footprint of no more than 116.12 square metres and within that footprint the volume was divided into five rooms. It was stripped bare modernism: it represented freedom and dignity and it became, as the Melbourne academic and cultural theorist Nikos Papastergiadis asserts, a 'container of memories and a stable site of identification.'⁶² Decades passed until gradually the significance of the layers of the psychosocial dynamic, personal narrative and social history inherent in this concocted notion of home began to invade my consciousness.

⁵⁹Watson, J. (1999) Interview, 8 April

⁶⁰Cuffley, P. 1993. *Australian Houses of the Forties & Fifties*. The Five Mile Press, Victoria, p. 32

⁶¹*Ibid.* p. 73

⁶²Doherty, Claire. Curator and Editor, 'Claustrophobia', cites Nikos Papastergiadis in *Claustrophobia: we're not in Kansas anymore...*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 6 June-2 August, 1998 and other galleries, p. 12

The historian, Inga Clendinnan in her 1999 Boyer Lectures said that 'Reflection...liberates our imaginations to taste experiences other than our own...' in order 'to know ourselves more exactly, and more critically.'⁶³ And this is where the potential of this focus lies for me. The notion that reflection leads to understanding and that this understanding, borne of reflection, when translated into art, has the potential to provide an opportunity to collaborate with the viewer on a strangely familiar subject. This realization prompted me in 1979 to make a series of photographs of houses on twenty sites along the beachside esplanade west of Adelaide that had epitomised the *dream* for me as a five-year-old.



Plate no. 6 Greer Honeywill, 465 The Esplanade, Grange, 1979

Over the next fifteen years my notes and photographs were consistently set aside in favour of creating and directing multidisciplinary works of a different nature for the *Adelaide Festival* and the *Come Out Youth Festival*. Fluxus was the greatest influence on my work during this period. The German based Fluxus movement founded on the ideas of George Maciunas had come to mean by the seventies, events or performances incorporating 'a wealth of the most varied artistic activities.'⁶⁴ Adelaide at the time was somewhat resistant to the idea of multi-disciplinary works in the visual arts and we depended largely on the Adelaide Festival for insights into Fluxus. The artist Charlotte Moorman, a long-time collaborator of the artist Nam June Paik, provided just such an insight when she played her cello naked while sitting on a block of ice on the plaza of the Adelaide Festival Centre. In 1975 the Adelaide based new music composer, Malcolm Fox invited me to collaborate on a Fluxus-style concert by bringing my outdoor event, *Human Chess Tournament*, indoors as part of a new music concert. The ingenious score developed by Fox for this collaboration is discussed elsewhere in this document. Other performative works, which I created and directed over the next eight years, continued this flirtation with Fluxus and were performed on an ever-increasing scale in non-traditional spaces. Despite these distractions the research into the beachside houses was never misplaced and the idea lost none of its currency. In 1993 I drew out the research and began painting.

It was a very long journey to a realization that house, home, family, relationships and the role of women within this model, were subjects worthy of a lifetime of exploration. To sustain me on my journey I conjectured from the outset that by linking autobiography, collected biographical data, collected objects, images and sound, the present might mirror the past.

⁶³Clendinnan, I. 1999, *True Stories*, ABC Books, Sydney, p. 7

⁶⁴René Block, Introduction, Block, R., Bodenmüller, C. and Knapstein, G. *Fluxus: A Long Tale with Many Knots*, Fluxus in Germany 1962-1994, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart, 1997, p. 4

Commenting on the arts in post-war Britain, the journalist Bryan Appleyard quotes the British author and poet, Philip Larkin, as saying,

I write poems to preserve things I have seen/thought/felt..both for myself and for others, though I feel my primary responsibility is the experience itself, which I am trying to keep from oblivion for its own sake. Why I should do this I have no idea, though I think the impulse to preserve lies at the bottom of all art.⁶⁵

Output from the period, 1993-1995, resulted in a collaborative exhibition with a sound engineer and a photographer. The exhibition, *The Great Australian Dream* was staged in July 1995 at Gallery 101, Melbourne. My idiosyncratic painted narratives based on the experience of family and their relationship to the dream, Rodney Lowe's layered soundscape emanating from the dream, and Lynette Zeeng's photographic portraits and captured dialogue from individuals with first hand knowledge of the dream, were offered as an exploration of the past and present as a means of determining the status and future of the dream. In the process fragments of another time were both reflected upon and preserved. The Melbourne arts journalist Jason Steger began his review of the exhibition for *The Sunday Age* newspaper with a quote from the Australian architect, Robin Boyd. In his book, *Australia's Home*, Boyd says 'whenever an Australian boy spoke to an Australian girl of marriage, he meant, and she understood him to mean, a life in a five-roomed house.'⁶⁶ Boyd's scorn was unabated when it came to post-war vernacular housing and the effect it would inevitably have on the couple sequestered within, and he decided to do something about it. In 1947 as a young architect Boyd started *The Small Homes Service of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects*. Under his directorship *The Small Homes Service* offered couples a small architect designed home conforming to all of the regulations current at the time. *The Small Homes Service* was first accommodated at the SEC, the electricity utility, before moving to Myers, now a national department store chain known as Myer, and in 1951 it moved to the Collins Street headquarters of the Melbourne newspaper *The Age* becoming *The Small Homes Service of the RVIA in conjunction with The Age*. The prominent Melbourne architect and colleague of Robin Boyd, Neil Clerehan, remembers the early days before *The Small Homes Service* moved from Myers to *The Age*, 'Boyd was pretty clever; at Myers he was on twelve pounds a week when the usual rate for an architect was eight pounds.'⁶⁷

The designs offered by *The Small Homes Service* could be self-built or built by a professional. The Melbourne cooking authority, Ann Creber, one of Lynette Zeeng's photographic subjects for the *Great Australian Dream* exhibition, spoke of the design she and her husband Ron bought for fifteen pounds through *The Small Homes Service*.⁶⁸ Creber and her husband took the self-building route to home and hearth. In 1954 Neil Clerehan took over the directorship of *The Small Homes Service* from Boyd. Clerehan summarized by saying 'we felt evangelistic, bringing good design to the huddled masses, in contemporary colour...happiness for life. I don't know what went wrong.'⁶⁹ But things certainly did go wrong in the long term.

In the final analysis it was clear from the dialogue between Lynette Zeeng and her portrait subjects, and the comments of the viewers who visited the exhibition, that while the great *Australian dream* had not faded, it had changed shape and situation. The single house on a quarter acre block in the suburbs was no longer the central motif; instead the dream now embraced an apartment in a high-rise tower at the beach or a warehouse in the city with a balcony for a garden.

⁶⁵Appleyard, B. 1990. *The Pleasures of Peace*. Faber and Faber, London, p. 101

⁶⁶Steger, J. 1995. Putting the Great Australian Dream in the Picture! *The Sunday Age*, (Agenda), 16 July, p. 6

⁶⁷Clerehan, N. (1998) From notes made during an informal conversation, 1 June

⁶⁸Lynette Zeeng quotes Anne Creber, *The Great Australian Dream*, Gallery 101, Melbourne, 18 July - 5 August, 1995, p.12

⁶⁹Clerehan, N. (1998) From notes made during an informal conversation, 1 June

Fifty years after the birth of the Australian suburbs we discovered the *dream* still had currency within the community and in the process of the investigation I discovered a methodology for making art. In January 1999, after a period of twenty years, I took my camera to track change and went again in search of the esplanade houses on twenty sites. What I found was a once ignored beachside suburb reborn and the houses much changed or demolished. Only eight houses from the original photographs were found, and in place of the vanished twelve new units, new houses and hostel accommodation for the elderly stood in their place. And neither Boyd nor Clerehan would be pleased with the standard of



Plate no. 7 Greer Honeywill, 465 The Esplanade, Grange, 1999

architecture. The experience gained in the making of art using a method that allowed for the bringing together of different stands of memory, place and time, coupled with the experience of establishing and managing a collaborative process in a traditional visual arts space laid the foundation for future work within my art practice. Important also was the knowledge that a strong dialogue could be established with the viewer. While this had already been established through the performative works in non-traditional outdoor spaces such as streets, parks and open-air tennis centres, it was clear that on a smaller scale a similar relationship could be established indoors. On a personal level the paintings had only skated the surface of my recollections and in the completion of them more questions than answers arose. While the journey had in one sense been completed it was to begin again for this study with a new vision.

In the long night of inequality for women in this country there was only one space in the five-room recipe that allowed a woman any power at all. In this room, this village square, this furnace of alchemy, this symbolic heart, the entire family came together daily in the performance of the tidal theatre of life to be sustained, nurtured, repaired and educated in the rituals of life. This space, so frequently overlooked by architects in the period of this study, is the kitchen. And in this domain over a period of twenty-five years, from 1945 to 1970, I use the kitchen as a measure of time, a marker for change and a means of personal identification as I examine relationships, consumerism, family politics, social history, and the survival of the spirit. The artworks that form the thesis of this work do not set out to illustrate a definitive visual record of social history or kitchen design between 1945-1970 but rather to present a series of visual responses to questions which arise from the sifting and sorting, editing and reviewing, of my collections and then placing those responses in a context where they stimulate viewers to engage with their own storehouse of memories and their own experience of the hearth. In the discussion between Lawrence Rinder and Louise Bourgeois, the latter cites novelist Milan Kundera as saying, 'when you leave your childhood, your relationship to what you have left becomes very important. You develop a certain attachment for it. To affirm your identity, you make the past

— which in certain ways you hate — into a beautiful thing.⁷⁰ In the making of art inspired by the *dream* I survey a domain where the relationship of woman to *home* is intensely problematic, the five-room *dream* proving more of a prison; a silent enslaver, where social pressure, political expectations and the relentless landscape of drudgery kept, and continues to keep, women from fulfilling their personal dreams. In her essay *Professions for Women* written in 1931 Virginia Woolf addressed this issue from her perspective as a feminist and author. The myriad distractions of house, husband and home, were, she said, the province of *The Angel in the House* and in order to free herself to write, to achieve for herself, she had first to kill the Angel. Woolf described the Angel in words that could be applied to mothers of the post-war period. 'She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled at the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily.'⁷¹ The Australian artist Margaret Olley reinforces this position saying, 'women have to be more like men. In my day women had one eye on the baby, one eye on the pot and one eye ahead. Women need to learn to be more like men with their tunnel vision and sharp focus.'⁷² In her view women must be less distracted by the domestic expectations placed on them keeping in reserve enough to nurture their own dream as well as the family. The Angel at home in each of the suburban houses in the new subdivisions of the 40s and 50s needed in the words of Woolf 'to be killed', or at least subdued, but how do you kill the Angel when she may not even be recognised?

⁷⁰Bourgeois, L. and Rinder, L. 1999. *Louise Bourgeois — Drawings and Observations*. University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Berkley, and Bullfinch Press, Berkley, p. 24

⁷¹Woolf, V. 1995. *Professions for Women: Killing The Angel In The House: Seven Essays*, Penguin Group, Penguin Books, London, p. 3

⁷²Olley, M. (1998) Interview. 22 October

SECTION 2
HOME IS WHERE THE HEART(H) IS

22 HERALDING A NEW LANDSCAPE

When I began this study my intention was to use the coincidence of my birth as the foundation stone, the point from which all research would radiate. My birth date is not arbitrary but a very significant day in world terms. My mother was in labour as the *Enola Gay* dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima and as 7th August 1945 dawned, her second day of labour, she was relieved that her physician, my uncle, wanted to intercede. Japan on that day was reeling from the effect of the bomb counting the cost of war in shattered lives, devastation, destruction and a level of pollution hitherto unknown and there would be one more bomb before the world could heave a collective sigh of relief. The Australian architect, Glenn Murcutt, was nine when the war ended and he recalls watching the removal of the concrete triangular prisms placed on Sydney beaches to slow the unrealised Japanese invasion. 'It was a time that signalled the return of my father...a homecoming and a picking up of life again with both a mother and a father.'⁷³ Change was in the air and life would be different for the boy as it would be for everyone.

The city fathers around the country hastily organised celebratory fireworks to mark what must have been an overwhelming surge of community relief that the pain, suffering and separation of war were at an end. My mother always regretted that the long labour she endured meant that she could not be on the hospital balcony in Adelaide to watch the explosions of joy illuminate the night sky. But Glenn Murcutt enjoyed the fireworks from Sydney Harbour, 'I can remember being on the deck of a boat in the harbour. It was cool. These were the first big celebrations in my memory of our society, of Victory; they were beautiful.'⁷⁴ Overnight the war babies at the Adelaide hospital had become post-war babies. Not strictly baby boomers (they would take another nine months) but babies of peace facing a new world free of war. And with a speed that seemed impossible everything changed.

This I reasoned was a perfect beginning given my interest in the great *Australian dream* and its post-war birth. But as the research progressed for both artworks and writing there would be much change. In particular the realisation that there had been much preparation and rehearsal in the fifty years prior to August 1945 in establishing the form of housing that would become the privileged model of post-war society. There is no absolute beginning to the development of the great *Australian dream* rather a gradual evolution punctuated by clusters of brilliant ideas. In Britain and America the same themes were emerging and the growth of ideas in these countries would also have an influence on the way the *dream* would unfold in Australia. The housing boom that would spawn the new suburbs had in fact developed from ideas generated years before, just waiting for the right confluence of circumstances to create the momentum, as if paralleling our conflagration ecology; the need for fire to scorch the earth before plant germination can begin.

For fifty years and more, the germ of the *dream* had been in the minds of men awaiting the emergence of the catalyst; the unique situation that existed at the end of the war. The *dream* in those fifty years was ephemeral, un-named, and un-quantified. It remained a secret aspiration in the hearts and minds of people who never imagined they could have it. And then, as suddenly as the conclusion of the war, the twin booms of housing and immigration roared into being; fuelled primarily by the flood of returning soldiers, the baby boom that followed, and a new immigration policy that opened the gates in 1947 to ship-loads of immigrants from Britain and Europe.

⁷³Murcutt, G. (1998) Interview. 28 October

⁷⁴ibid.

In 1954 when architect Neil Clerehan took over *The Small Homes Service of the RVIA* based at *The Age* his view was that, 'the optimum was a house for everyone. In the post-war period there were so many families being formed, babies, and migration, that we thought it would last forever. It didn't but the effects of the post-war boom were felt right up to the 1970s.'⁷⁵ The tidal wave of desire and demand in the late 40s and into the 50s drove the building of the *dream* with such evangelical fervour that the urban sprawl, the heartland of the great *Australian dream*, began to eat away the bushland beyond our cities where, according to the historian, Richard Apperly, 'there was more than enough land for everyone' and the land was cheaper than in the city and in this open space houses 'could sit freely on their own blocks as they always had in country towns.'⁷⁶ With the advent of the suburbs, the 'street composition shifted from the "corridor" effect that was formed by two-storied terraces, to the twentieth-century suburban street with detached houses swimming in a sea of space.'⁷⁷ Apperly further observed that the sensibility changed and houses were seen as 'objects in space' rather than 'objects which define and enclose space.'⁷⁸ The fact that the suburbs took the form of detached houses swimming in a sea of space flew in the face of feminists, idealists, writers and visionaries working in the period 1870-1930 who warned of the inadequacy of that model to fulfil its sociological destiny. During this period architects, urban planners and developers contributed to the creation of challenging and innovative alternatives to the isolated single dwelling set within its fenced landscape. They advocated instead, the *Garden City* model and *Co-operative Quadrangles* with kitchenless apartments but, aside from isolated examples of successful developments, the ideas simply did not take hold.

One visionary who predated even the 1870s was Robert Owen. Owen and his 'Owenite' following built clusters of experimental co-operative housing communities in Britain beyond the filth of the industrial cities, attempting in the process to determine the ideal home and community based on his expressed belief 'that man's character is wholly determined by environment'. In *A New View of Society* (1813), Owen expressed this view and while his ideas on housing and community were not widely accepted they created an influential model.⁷⁹ He remains one of the first to consider the plight of women and the vast amount of household drudgery that he believed would be better shared in a co-operative environment. One of Owen's partners was a Quaker and the Quakers felt it essential to their beliefs that their followers live in co-operative communities. Unacceptable to Christians in Britain the Quakers moved to America where an offshoot called Shakers created successful communitarian villages based on co-operative ideals, religious and spiritual beliefs and work ethic. Political theorist Friedrich Engels in his *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880) 'recognised Shakerism as an important utopian socialist experiment. For Engels, the community was a forerunner of scientific socialism, the emerging Marxist movement that he predicted would eventually triumph over industrial capitalism'.⁸⁰ His prediction did not come to pass but Engels could not have foreseen the increasing emphasis on individualism that developed in the early twentieth-century and it was this emphasis that would effectively draw away from the co-operative model. In addition to the communitarian approach to living, the Shakers developed a minimalist aesthetic applied to buildings, furniture, decoration and utilitarian objects that became very influential as a first expression of form following function. In fact the Shakers could be viewed as precursors of early modernism.

⁷⁵Clerehan, N. (1998) From notes made during an informal conversation, 1 June

⁷⁶Richard Apperly, 'Two Centuries of Change Part One: The Federation Period'. Irving, R. Apperly, R. et al. 1985. *The History and Design of the Australian House*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp. 87, 88

⁷⁷*ibid.* p. 89

⁷⁸*ibid.* pp. 87, 89

⁷⁹Merriam G. & C. 1943. *Websters Biographical Dictionary*. A Merriam-Webster, Merriam Co., Springfield, USA, p. 1134

⁸⁰Swank, Scott T. 1999. *Shaker Life, Art, and Architecture: Hands to Work, Hearts to God*. Abbeville Press, New York, p. 14

During the period 1870-1930, the American feminists Melusina Fay Pierce and Charlotte Perkins Gilman were particularly influential in their critique of domestic life in the United States. In her book, *Cooperative Housekeeping: How Not to Do It and How to Do It, a Study in Sociology* (1884), Pierce railed against the 'costly and unnatural sacrifice' women made to 'the dusty drudgery of house ordering' and she demanded that women be paid for housework. She developed a two-part credo which she felt was essential for women's 'future happiness, progress [and the] elevation of their sex...' Firstly, women 'must earn their own living' and secondly, women 'must be organized among themselves'.⁸¹ Pierce was a trailblazer and well published but her views polarised special interest groups. The Professor of Architecture, Urbanism, and American Studies at Yale University, Dolores Hayden, noted in her book, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*, that Peirce took several incompatible popular ideas of her time — technological development, consumer cooperation, female separatism, and women's clubs — and forced them to their logical conclusion.⁸² The influence of Pierce was supplanted by that of Charlotte Perkins Gilman; a conservative woman, less strident in her criticism of men than Peirce.⁸³ In her book, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (1898), Gilman advocated 'collective kitchens, laundries, and child care centers which removed women's traditional tasks from the home'.⁸⁴ Hayden says that in the '1880s and 1890s, both home economists and authors of futuristic fiction tended to argue that human evolution would gradually bring about a society where technology lightened all labor and encouraged the socialization of domestic work...they prophesied cooperative housekeeping in some future time when human relations were perfected'.⁸⁵

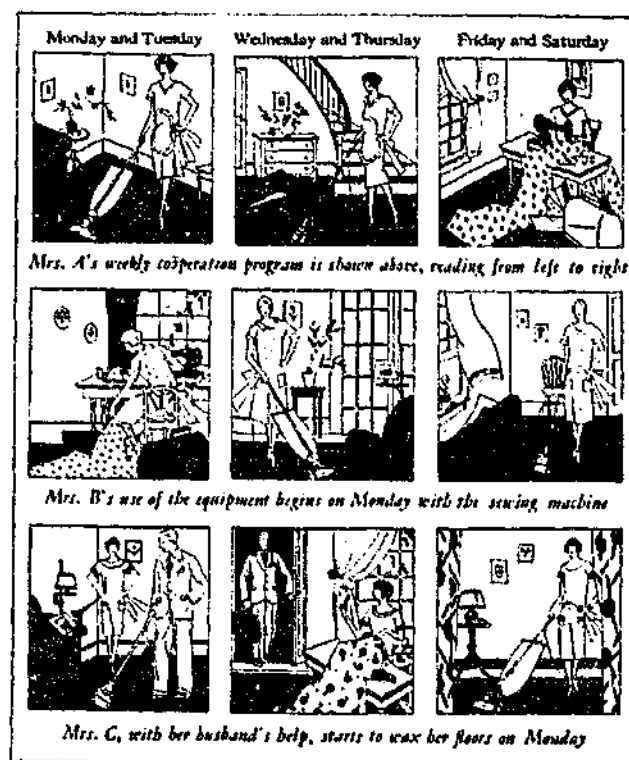


Plate no. 8 Woman's Home Companion, 'The New Housekeeping Based on Friendly Cooperation', June 1927

⁸¹ Hayden, D. 1981. *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, pp. 66-67

⁸² *ibid.* p. 89

⁸³ *ibid.* p. 184

⁸⁴ *ibid.* p. 229

⁸⁵ *ibid.* p. 184

Gilman was able to refine this notion by focussing on the ability of women to bring about change. In *The Home: Its Work and Influences* (1903) Gilman wrote that 'whosoever, man or woman, lives always in a small, dark place, is always guarded, protected, directed and restrained, will become inevitably narrowed and weakened by it. The woman is narrowed by the home and the man is narrowed by the woman.'⁸⁶ This introduces the notion raised in Mark Wigley's unpicking of architecture and philosophy in relation to the house that to 'be at home in such a space is precisely to be homeless.'⁸⁷ Wigley is taking a spatial and philosophical view while Hayden and Gilman are approaching the subject from a psychosocial point of view with decades in between but in the chilling convergence of views I see woman at once the house and homeless. While it may not be true today certainly in the period under investigation this was the truth; woman at home, in the home, *the* home but nevertheless homeless, at least in a metaphorical sense.

Just as apartment living is gaining in influence today, Hayden points to the development of early models of the apartment hotel regarded as the ideal model for the domestic home. By 1870 the prevailing ideal was 'the apartment house or apartment hotel...' which was presented as the 'building type for liberation.' Women would leave the cooking to the hotel kitchen and the cleaning to the housekeeping staff — unlike most apartment living today. The apartment hotel, however, was a mode of living that only the well heeled could afford and this weakened its position as an influential model.⁸⁸

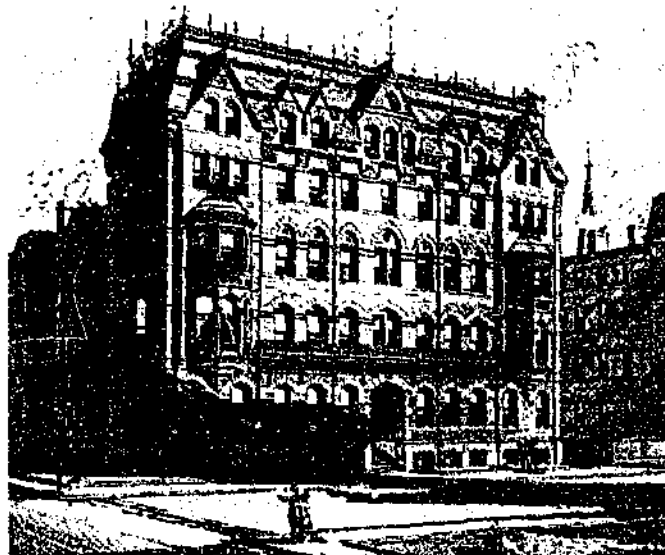


Plate no. 9 *American Architect and Building News*, Cummings & Sears, architects, Hotel Kempton, Boston, 1877

In Boston the Hotel Kempton, designed by Cummings and Sears in the late 1870s, was indicative of the approach taken at the time.

The British town planner and businessman who would become the founder of the Garden City Movement, Ebenezer Howard (later Sir Ebenezer Howard), admired the ideas of American writer Edward Bellamy who wrote a best selling book called *Looking Backwards 2000 — 1887* (1888) in which the hero, 'Julian West', 'falls asleep in 1887 and wakes up in Boston in the year 2000 [where the] fictional solution to the crises of an industrialized United States' is presented as a blend of 'conventional Beaux-Arts city planning and unconventional uses of futuristic technology.'⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Hayden, D. 1981. *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p. 183

⁸⁷ Wigley, M. 1997. *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p. 98

⁸⁸ Hayden, D. 1981. *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p. 229

⁸⁹ *ibid.* p. 136

The American feminist Marie Howland's vision on the other hand was coloured by her liberal views on sexuality and the influences of her milieu, 'cultural radicals, trade unionists, sex reformers and socialists in France, the United States and Mexico.'⁹⁰ Both Bellamy and Howland championed the *Garden City* model with its key characteristics, 'garden apartments, with central dining room and kitchen.'

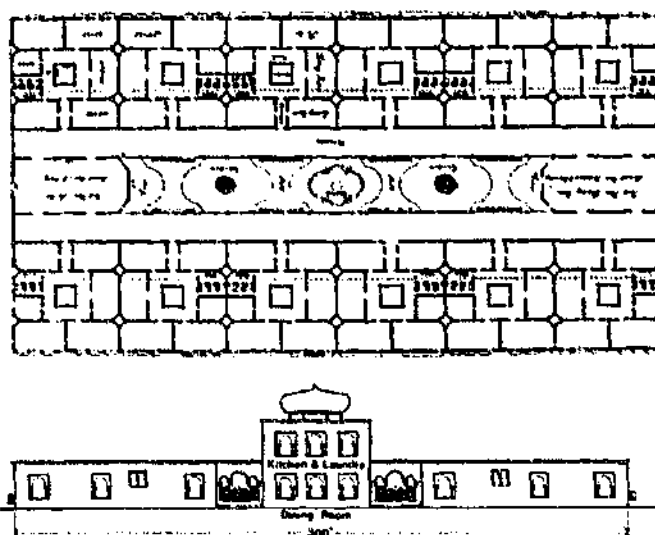


Plate no. 10 Howland, Deery, and Owen, *Plan for one-story courtyard houses*, 1885

Of the experimental housing Hayden points to, three 'geographical centers...where experiments were made which ranged in size from two families to several hundred, and in style from neo-Tudor half timbering to International Style concrete and glass.' The centres were London (1898-1922), Los Angeles (1910-1922) and New York City (1917-1930) and

debates on these issues thrived among designers associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement, the Garden Cities Movement, the trade union cooperative housing movement, and the Regional Planning Association of America. This period of architectural innovation reveals a great proliferation of experimental housing prototypes, some projects demonstrating subtle social planning, and others great technical ingenuity.⁹¹

Even the author HG Wells weighed into the ideal home debate. H.G. Wells and Ebenezer Howard belonged to the Fabian intellectual circle in England in which Charlotte Perkins Gilman was 'so well received in 1896 and 1898 when she visited Britain.'⁹² In *A Modern Utopia* Wells 'fantasised about kitchenless dwellings'. Gilman's notions of collective kitchens suited Wells and he encouraged Howard, by then a leading advocate of co-operative housing, to build *Homesgarth*, the first *Co-operative Quadrangle*, in Letchworth that included thirty-two kitchenless apartments (see overleaf). HG Wells was such a passionate believer that he said 'in a few short years all ordinary houses would be out of date and not saleable at any price.'⁹³ Wells did not turn out to be the prophet of communitarianism but Howard's model impressed the architect Le Corbusier who 'made extensive marginal notes about Co-operative Quadrangles' in his study of Howard's work.

⁹⁰Hayden, D. 1981. *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*. The MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, p. 91

⁹¹*ibid.* p. 230

⁹²*ibid.* p. 231

⁹³*loc. cit.*

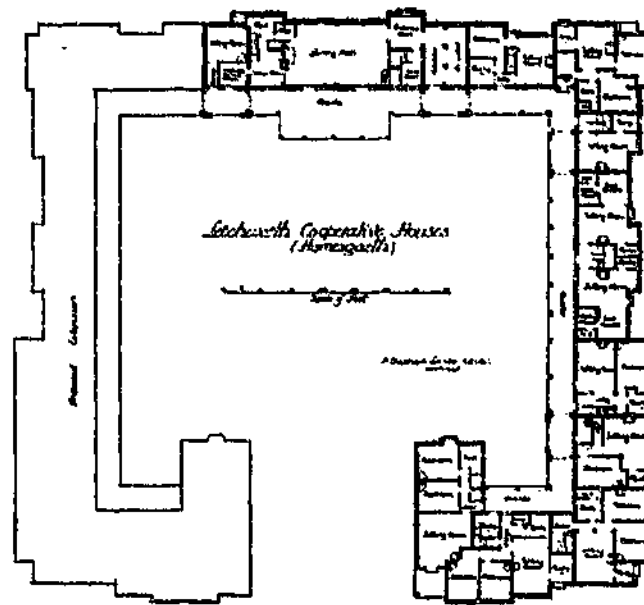


Plate no. 11 A. Clapham Lander, architect, Homesgarth Cooperative Quadrangle, 1909-1913



Plate no. 12 A. Clapham Lander, architect, Homesgarth Cooperative Quadrangle, 1909-1913

While some of the experimental villages exist today they were not the overwhelming success that they could have been; 'they never spurred the mass demand for such facilities'⁹⁴ and in the end as Hayden records in her notes to the chapter 'Homes Without Kitchens and Towns Without Housework' critics referred to the kitchenless apartment as a fad.⁹⁵ The fine ideals of co-operative housing were also presented as anti-Christian because 'the family as an "institution of God", was thought to be undermined because women did not do their own housework in these environments.'⁹⁶ But there were believers who recognised the immense amount of repetitive drudgery that keeping house entails for the housewife and with exciting ideas and a passionate desire to create the ideal domestic model they looked for alternatives to the isolated home swimming in a sea of space.

In this brief sampling of ideas that developed in the decades before World War II one housing form cannot be overlooked. The style owes little to the visionary feminists and urban planners instead presenting as a single-family dwelling. Developed in California, the style was called the Californian Bungalow and it had significance for Australia as architects searched for a suitable building form for our climate. The arts and infrastructure advisor, Maisy Stapleton, highlights an 'article in "Building" magazine in 1908, *The Building of a Bungalow; a style that Should be Popular in Australia*' that heralded the new style. The Californian Bungalow form spread across Australia from the work of Kenneth Milne in South Australia from about 1906.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Hayden, D. 1981. *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p. 237

⁹⁵ *ibid.* p. 336

⁹⁶ *ibid.* p. 23

⁹⁷ Maisy Stapleton, 'Two Centuries of Change Part One: Between The Wars - Shrinking in Comfort', Irving, R., Apperly, R. et al. 1985. *The History and Design of the Australian House*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 118

Eventually a whole suburb of Californian Bungalows sprang up in Allenby Gardens, west of Adelaide, where my grandparents settled from Kalgoorlie in the 1920s. The Californian Bungalow was the face of the twentieth-century suburbs in the interwar years and the 'feminist's critique of the home as an isolated domestic workplace was...forgotten'⁹⁸ in favour of independence and lust for individualism. Housewives dreamt of their own home -- a dream that 'fuelled the imagination more than visions of fine architecture.' The 'all-electric dream home seemed to symbolise the development of the future as one by one miraculous appliances were introduced...the electric toaster, cooker, kettle.'⁹⁹ The domain of women had become 'a product of both patriarchy and industrial capitalism...'¹⁰⁰ and women, thoroughly seduced by new technology and desire would be the losers.

What happened to all the grand scale thinking? In America it all ended abruptly in 1931 with the Hoover Commission report on *Home Building and Home Ownership* in which the report advocated 'single-family home ownership...'. This was a 'decisive ideological defeat for feminists and urban planners interested in housing design.'¹⁰¹ The free market economy with its new consumer focus was the clear winner. In Australia, Government-sponsored mortgages were made available to support the legion of new homeowners headed for the suburbs and they could not recall Gilman, Pierce, Howard, their colleagues, or their thinking.

In the new Australian suburbs of the 40s and 50s Robin Boyd will be forever linked with the subject he derided. It is said that Boyd coined the term, *great Australian dream*, although this is difficult to determine exactly because the term drifted swiftly into the spoken vernacular. Perhaps Boyd used it as an ironic reference to the proliferation of post-war vernacular building stock he so abhorred or perhaps it grew from the title of his book *Australian Dream*. Whatever the truth Boyd was right to disparage the suburban home which in its 'stripped-down form...had few redeeming qualities. Further, the organization of the space of the house, which had admirably accommodated the earlier lifestyle was unsuitable and too restrictive for the increased social freedom of the mores of the new era.'¹⁰² But the nomenclature, *great Australian dream*, played perfectly into the hands of the optimistic community, journalists who love to tidy ideas into boxes with neat labels, and advertising men who would come to exploit the *dream*.

The *dream* has proven fertile ground for both artists and performers in the half-century from the 1950s. The Australian artist John Brack was among the first to focus on the post-war building boom as appropriate subject matter. This was a new subject, light years from the accepted depictions of the vast Australian landscape that traditionally filled canvases. In paintings such as *Unmade Road* (1955) and *The Short Street* (1953) Brack derided the 'sterile materialization' of post-war suburban development,¹⁰³ while the actor Barry Humphries, in his newly established career, created *Edna Everage*¹⁰⁴, the ultimate suburbanite from Moonee Ponds, as a theatrical device through which he could explore the suburbs he so thoroughly detested. In the sixties Robert Rooney and Dale Hickey and, later, [Howard] Arkley, Bill Henson and Jenny Watson discovered the terracotta-tiled roofs and the architecture of Australia's true 'nature'¹⁰⁵. Authors Ashley Crawford and Ray Edgar contend that this landscape of the suburbs, which Arkley revered, held 'greater relevance than the bush to most

⁹⁸Hayden, D. 1981. *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, pp. 294, 295

⁹⁹Maisy Stapleton. 'Two Centuries of Change Part One: Between The Wars - Shrinking in Comfort'. Irving, R., Apperly, R. et al. 1985. *The History and Design of the Australian House*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne pp. 124, 118

¹⁰⁰Hayden, D. 1981. *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p. 296

¹⁰¹*Ibid.* pp. 8, 10

¹⁰²Jennifer Taylor. 'Two Centuries of Change Part One: Beyond the 50s'. Irving, R., Apperly, R. et al. 1985. *The History and Design of the Australian House*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 145

¹⁰³Lindsay, Robert. 'John Brack - A Retrospective Exhibition', National Gallery of Victoria, 1987, p. 13

¹⁰⁴Cuffley, P. 1993. *Australian Houses of the Forties & Fifties*. The Five Mile Press, Victoria, p. 31

¹⁰⁵Crawford, A. and Edgar, R. 1999. *Spray: the work of Howard Arkley*. A World Art Book/Craftsman House Sydney, p. 78

Australians.¹⁰⁶ For Brack it was not only the suburban landscape but also 'the rituals of art and living' that captured his attention. Ronald Millar wrote of Brack's ability to explore both the joy and the pain of life in the new landscape commenting on the *Wedding* series and the artist's wry celebration of 'the joyful anatomy of a wedding and the joyless wedding of anatomies' that he conjectured suburban marriage and monogamy promised.¹⁰⁷ This potential for psychodrama that Brack found in the new post-war suburbs intersects with my current viewpoint. Brack observed closely, collected information, synthesised it and developed a highly original manner of visual commentary; dispensed on the run, as he was living within the *dream*. Peter Cuffley describes this time as a 'period of contentment, a happy preoccupation with family and community life that has...' now taken on a strange dreamlike quality, mostly representing good times, with a few disturbing elements and only the occasional nightmare'.¹⁰⁸ Cuffley's implication that looking back on one's life experience risks a certain inaccuracy and nostalgia leads me to balance my experiences, which are highly subjective, with the social history of the day to form bitter sweet questions which I explore in my artworks.

Although my chosen focus for this project is the kitchen, the journey through historical paradigms for living, the relationship of home to women, enlightened and creative thinking in Australia and abroad on what might best support women and the family in terms of housing, and a brief look at styles of architecture that preceded the Australian suburban post-war house, was necessary in order to come to terms with the container in which the kitchen was positioned. In essence it was necessary to understand the lineage of the container before the suburban kitchen could be accessed and when that was achieved it was necessary to examine the beliefs and values of the time in order to test my memories against fact. In the course of this research it became clear that an artificial date, no matter how pertinent, was a poor premise for a beginning. So many ideas had been explored in the decades before 1945, and despite the fact that governments backed a solution that favoured consumerism, capitalism and individualism, it was this background of developed ideas that enabled the great *Australian dream* to get off the starting blocks so rapidly.

In Australia two hundred years of experimentation in building forms helped shape the vernacular suburban house. Robert Irving in the Introduction to his book, *The History and Design of the Australian House*, quotes the nineteenth-century English art critic and writer on sociological issues, John Ruskin, who contended that buildings and houses, especially houses, were 'documents embedded in time'.¹⁰⁹ Certainly the new houses that constituted the Australian suburbs would be no exception, each in its way a small museum of 'documents' able to be decoded by the generations that followed. But the architecture of these museums would be 'shaped not only by conscious design and developing technology, but also by environmental forces such as climate and available materials'.¹¹⁰ In the post-war climate of extreme demand, supply was an acute problem reminiscent of that faced two hundred years earlier by the first settlers to Australia as they attempted to transplant a Georgian cool climate sensibility in a hot, harsh country. Inevitably the neat symmetry of the Georgian house would need to give way to protection from the harsh summer sun and eventually the verandah would be born from influences as far afield as India and Portugal.¹¹¹ By the 1800s the Victorian verandah had become popular. 'What was new was the development of the verandah into a 'piazza' or open-air living room'.¹¹² The cookery school director and expert on olive oil, Rosa Matto, spoke of her Italian parents immigrating to Australia in 1953 and settling in an old bluestone house in South Australia's suburban Prospect. Matto can remember her father knocking out a wall of the Prospect house to

¹⁰⁶Crawford, A. and Edgar, R. 1999. *Spray: the work of Howard Arkley*. A World Art Book/Craftsman House Sydney, p. 78

¹⁰⁷Millar, Ronald. 1971. *The Art of John Brack*. Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, p. 13

¹⁰⁸Cuffley, P. 1993. *Australian Houses of the Forties & Fifties*. The Five Mile Press, Victoria, p. 23

¹⁰⁹Irving, R., Apperly, R. et al. 1985. *The History and Design of the Australian House*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 7

¹¹⁰*ibid.* p. 33

¹¹¹*ibid.* p. 51

¹¹²*ibid.* p. 67

make a cooling verandah. 'My father called it a little piazza' she said.¹¹³ The verandah, piazza, or any other external embellishment that might afford protection from the sun and act as an extension to the internal living areas, would become an ideological sticking point as architects tried to fit the five-room recipe into a footprint of no more than 116.12 square metres.

The search for the appropriate architectural response to the environment and the ongoing search for an Australian style of architecture have been on the table since the arrival of the first colonists and in many ways continues today. Later, the architect Glenn Murcutt would look at the verandah with different eyes. Philip Drew in *Leaves of Iron* presents Murcutt's view of the verandah as a space mediating 'between the contrasts of outside and inside, between nature and the dwelling'¹¹⁴ Murcutt's verandahs are more like rooms without walls extending the living space of the house and transitioning between inside and outside. They owe much to traditional Japanese design and Greek temple pavilions. In post-war Australia the drive for austerity meant the luxury of a verandah would be sacrificed. At 52 Shannon Avenue the verandah had all but disappeared and what remained was a small front porch and a small back porch lacking in poetry and not at all like a Greek temple pavilion.

Since the arrival of the first colonists and the building of the first Georgian-style houses there have been many changes in the design of the domestic dwelling in Australia and we have proved enthusiasts of change, willingly embracing influences from other countries. 'During the 1890s, Australian Architecture started to exhibit symptoms of "multiple eclecticism" as it absorbed features from both British and American eclectic architecture' writes the historian Richard Apperly and the stylistic mix was completed by a dash of second-hand Art Nouveau. Irving cites a prominent South Australia landmark, *Carclew*, set on the highest point of North Adelaide overlooking the city as an 'exuberantly complex house...which shows not only some French Provincial details such as the round tower, but also strong influence of the American Stick style of the 1870s.'¹¹⁵ To a child growing up in the 50s *Carclew* was a castle every bit as exciting as any one of Ludwig II of Bavaria's castles. This grand house was built for the wealthy Bonython family and their servants and while it was extraordinary to Adelaide there were other examples of this willingness to embrace many styles — *Tay Creggan* in Hawthorn, Victoria, for example. When *Carclew* became an Arts Centre in the 70s, opening its doors to the working classes, I recall the then art critic for the Adelaide Advertiser, David Dolan, writing that the architecture was a 'gallimaufry of styles'. But *Carclew*, *Tay Creggan* and the other exuberantly eccentric medleys built by the rich were far from the dwellings of ordinary people and light years from the suburbs. In every age there are two basic kinds of houses: the tutored or designed, which are always a minority; and the untutored, or vernacular, which form the majority.¹¹⁶

In the suburbs, Peter Cuffley lists the interior styles prevalent between 1940 and 1960 as 'Conventional, Cottage Style, Colonial, Georgian Revival, Art Moderne or Art Deco, Eclectic or Classic Modern, Organic, International Style, Post-War Contemporary...'¹¹⁷ My parents, struggling to make ends meet, hardly identified with these labels. They seemed to cross Colonial and Georgian Revival with plain and simple austerity. In post-war Australia the suburbs were exploding with little houses, frequently one design filling a street and rarely, if ever, an architect's hand to guide the design. The Melbourne crime writer, Vivienne Ulman, is quoted as saying that when she was a child and 'went to a friend's house...' she 'didn't have to ask where the toilet was because their house was identical.'¹¹⁸ Which reminds me of the conclusion of the conversation between Alice and Humpty Dumpty in *Alice*

¹¹³Matto, R. (1999) Interview. 10 January

¹¹⁴Drew, P. 1996. *Leaves of Iron*, Glenn Murcutt: Pioneer of an Australian Architectural Form. The Law Book Company Limited/Harper Collins Publishers Pty. Ltd, Sydney, p. 31

¹¹⁵Richard Apperly. 'Two Centuries of Change Part One: The Federation Period'. Irving, R., Apperly, R. et al. 1985. *The History and Design of the Australian House*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 104

¹¹⁶*ibid.* p. 33

¹¹⁷Cuffley, P. 1993. *Australian Houses of the Forties & Fifties*. The Five Mile Press, Victoria, p. 165

¹¹⁸'The Great Australian Dream', Gallery 101, Melbourne, 1995, p. 11

Through the looking Glass. Alice says politely, 'Good-bye, till we meet again!' to which Humpty Dumpty responds, 'I shouldn't know you again if we did meet, you're so exactly like other people.'¹¹⁹ As if Alice is a post-war suburban house with exactly the same features as the one next door and the one across the street. The Head Curator of Australian Painting at the AGNSW, Barry Pearce, recalls this sameness in the suburbs; 'my mother managed to get a Housing Trust house for rent at Woodville Gardens in one of the new 'dream' suburbs. It was a red brick house with tiny rooms. All the houses were the same design but it was your own space, a chance for some happiness. In the end it became a place to escape from...'¹²⁰ Despite the efforts of Robin Boyd and his colleagues to bring some architectural influence to bear, *The Age Small Homes Service* was the only successful incarnation of his idea although it was tried in all states.

On an international level there were rare domestic dwellings created by visionary architects that exemplified an intellectual and philosophical approach to the creation of 'home'. The architect Le Corbusier refined his notion of 'the machine in the garden'¹²¹ in the Villa Savoye where his 'five-point canon of column, grid, free plan, free elevation, strip window and roof garden' is apparent.¹²² Frank Lloyd Wright took a strongly opposing view extracting 'his entire philosophy from the theme of art and craft versus the machine'¹²³ while Mies van der Rohe would perfect the glass box in the landscape with his Farnsworth House, arguably the ultimate domestic modernist building. In 1922 the Viennese-born architect Rudolph Schindler, an advocate of the International Style, designed a co-operative house to be built in Hollywood. The house was to be shared by Schindler, his wife, and a second couple who were close friends of the Schindler's (see overleaf). In what he hoped would become a prototype for contemporary living, the architect created a series of shared spaces and a private space or 'studio' for each person. Privacy, he believed, was a necessary 'background for...life'. The kitchen in this experimental dwelling would be shared and the women would take turns to cook. It all sounded quite idealistic, however in his design Schindler privileged the male studios over the studio spaces for the women. In order to circulate through the centre of the house the private spaces of the women were violated by traffic.¹²⁴ This led to a breakdown in relationship between the couples and to Schindler's own divorce. The shape of the container is a crucial consideration. Schindler was skilled, intelligent, able to access on an international level best practice theory and still his model failed to support the psychological needs of the inhabitants. It would seem that once the parameters of domestic life are fixed, as they are with bricks and mortar, those parameters have a telling effect on the family. The fixed container shapes the way we live, the way we respond to the world and the way we interact with each other.

In Australia, the architect Harry Seidler would design a house for his mother, Rose, that would firmly insert modernism into the Australian domestic landscape. The urban myth, however, would be made of vernacular stock, ordinary, plain, small, which their inhabitants would see, in the beginning, as thoroughly modern repositories for new household appliances. There would be no discussion at all about private space and the relationship of privacy and contemplation to life — there simply was no space in the five-room recipe for a verandah or privacy. Like Pearce's mother, my parents saw their opportunity to access low-cost housing as a chance for some happiness. They felt lucky.

¹¹⁹ Carroll, L. (nd.), *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through The Looking Glass*. Bramhall House, New York, pp. 275, 276.

¹²⁰ Pearce, B. (1998) Interview. 23 October.

¹²¹ Steele, J. 1997. *Architecture Today*. Phaidon Press, London, p. 212.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 178.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

¹²⁴ Hayden, D. 1981. *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p. 248.

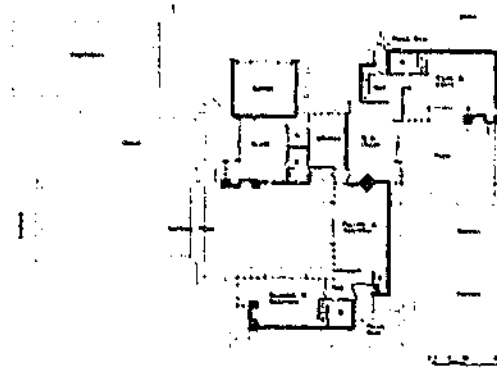


Plate no. 13 Rudolph M. Schindler, *Cooperative dwelling, Kings Road, Hollywood, 1922.*

SECTION 2

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART(H) IS

2.3 BEHAVIOUR AND BELIEFS IN THE NEW LANDSCAPE

Within the section, *Home Is Where The Heart(h) Is*, a wide-ranging palette of contextual matters is laid out. The first chapter in this section dealt with the domestic home as gendered space which influenced the development of an idea that took decades to mature and the early development of a methodology for art-making based on collection, memory, time, and place. The second chapter sampled from the history of ideas that eventually gave birth to the suburbs filled with single-family dwellings floating in a sea of space, isolated islands in the idealised domestic landscape. And in this chapter the beliefs of the post-war era are examined. Once the couples poured into the suburbs to take up occupancy of the houses, to inhabit the containers that all looked the same, by what beliefs did they live? What were their values and who determined them? On the journey to the kitchen it was important to know what the prevailing beliefs were, as a measure and as means of understanding why escape from the predetermined recipe for life in the suburbs seemed impossible.

My mother did try to escape. One afternoon in 1955 when it all got too oppressive she packed a small case. Wearing a patterned dress and one of those strange hats, fashionable at the time, with a brim but no crown, she left the house. My father and I watched from the front porch as she walked down the street. He told me she would come back and by dinnertime he was proved right. Life was very predictable at the time, roles were clear-cut and a woman's place was in the home and kitchen no matter what hardship she had to face. And my mother understood that as a deserting wife she would have no rights and deep down she knew she could not leave two small children with an alcoholic.

In search of the big picture I looked at Inga Clendinnen's, *True Stories*, in which she talks of nations as 'imaginary communities'. Drawing power for her ideas from Benedict Anderson's book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) she explores the need for a commonly held view to form the glue that binds together a diverse democratic nation. When she speaks of nations Clendinnen is speaking of democratic nations as richly diverse as our own. Her view is that nations 'cannot hold together unless they share a common vision as to how the world works, what constitutes the good life, what behaviour is worthy of respect, what behaviour is shameful.' In appraising past lives through this envelope she believes that, 'the study of history can encourage civic virtue.'²⁵ While Clendinnen's view on this may not be currently popular, and she admits as much in her book, it does shed some light on one of the great social engineering projects of our time. For this experiment to work there was no doubt that commonly held views had to take root, without equivocation, across the middle and lower classes in Australia. A one rule fits all approach to life. The modernist approach.

It was the development of the new industrial economy, capitalism and the emergence of consumerism that created the need for this great experiment and the impact was felt not only in the sphere of the worker but also in the realm of social and domestic life in the late nineteenth-century. Reformers, politicians and pressure groups cooperated to shape attitudes and behaviour in the social and domestic sphere while the rise of Modernism as an ideal, and the new technologies supporting the ideal, changed the shape of the stage on which life would be played out. For our nation the birth of this change occurred in post industrial Britain and rippled across the ocean to affect us just as powerfully. The progress of the experiment continued into the twentieth-century, and while slowed by economic depression and World War II, the momentum could not be stopped. At the end of the war in 1945 Australians looked at the world with new eyes.

²⁵Clendinnen, I. 1999. *True Stories*. ABC Books, Sydney, pp. 7, 8

What they saw, or thought they saw, was coloured by ideas that had been gestating for more than fifty years. The time was now right to embrace change, Modernism, new technology and new social and domestic attitudes. In the enthusiasm to embrace change, to accept the common vision, questions were not asked about who was pulling the strings.

My parents were unaware they were merely cogs in the machine of social reformation on the pathway to modernizing the Australian family. But change is as inevitable as the dawning of a new day. In the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century modernity was the mission and the mission would only be temporarily stayed. Once obstacles were removed, the relentless pace of transformation continued on all fronts and the factory floor would prove a potent and surprising influence on women and the home. The writer Adrian Forty in his book, *Objects of Desire*, expresses the view that, 'the most important change within the last century in the ideas constituting the home has been the shift from its role as a source of moral welfare to one of physical welfare, represented in visible terms by its turning from a place of beauty into one of efficiency.'¹²⁶ He goes on to discuss the origin of this change.

The history of scientific management goes back to the 1880s, when Frederick Taylor began his studies of factory work. He realised that wasted movements, misdirected effort and badly designed tools and equipment prevented most workers from operating with maximum efficiency...Taylor assumed that there was an optimum method for each job and that the task of managers was to discover "the one best way", record the time it took and set it as a standard rate. For the Taylor system to work, the labour process needed already to have been divided into stages, for it depended on perfecting each worker's handling of a single task; Taylor believed that a worker who had to perform too many tasks would never reach the optimum rate for any of them.¹²⁷

In his book, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, (1911), Frederick Taylor outlined his ideas based on his experience in heavy industry, his desire to improve conditions for workers and an eye to maximising profits. His theories were based on time and motion — all movements related to a task could be reduced to their simplest repetitive form, able to be timed and quantified, thereby having a positive effect on both productivity and a profits. Taylor became a hero of American industry and the term 'Taylorism' was applied to the vigorous wave of industry reform based on his theories. British author and critic, John Berger, in his book, *About Looking*, included a chapter called, *Why Look at Animals?* In this chapter he alludes briefly to Frederick Taylor's work. Berger judges Taylor's approach harshly asserting that almost 'all modern techniques of social conditioning were first established with animal experiments.' Through animal behaviour experimentation, he contends, 'men have been reduced to isolated productive and consuming units.'¹²⁸

Criticism notwithstanding, Taylor had an outspoken advocate in the form of the self proclaimed American efficiency expert, Christine Fredericks, who took his ideas and placed them firmly in the domestic sphere. The home was becoming particularly vulnerable to the notion of efficiency and Fredericks was among 'the key ideologues of the anti-feminist, pro-consumption, suburban home. In her book *Household Engineering: Scientific Management in the Home*, published in 1920, Fredericks

¹²⁶Forty, A. 1987. *Objects of Desire — Design and Society 1750-1980*. Thames and Hudson, London, p. 108

¹²⁷*Ibid*, pp. 122, 123

¹²⁸Berger, J. 1991. *About Looking*. Vintage International, New York, pp.13, 14

attempted to apply Taylor's ideas about scientific management to housework. Although this was a scientific impossibility.¹²⁹ The academic, and author of *The Architecture of the Uncanny*, Anthony Vidler writes that 'in the taylorised settings of the 1920s and 1930s, the home was to be retooled to produce a generation of engineers and technocrats, the women smoothly integrating time and motion into the carefully calculated spaces of a 'kitchen-house-factory''¹³⁰ Adrian Forty claims 'frequent references to the kitchen as a workshop and to domestic appliances as tools reinforced the analogy between home and factory.'¹³¹ Forty also says that the making of kitchen appliances that mirrored factory equipment was a marketing device common in the 1950s and one that, 'militated against notions of home as a place separate from work' especially when 'appliances began to be bought by people who actually spent a large part of their lives working in factories.'¹³² In her 'Applecroft Efficiency Experiment Kitchen' on Long Island Christine Fredericks tested products and conducted experiments that she documented thoroughly. 'Few of her ideas outlived her, but she is at least partly responsible for some of the domestic arrangements we now take for granted, [such as] the height of countertops, design of kitchen workspace, proximity of sinks and stoves and refrigerators, [and the placement] of windows and cupboards in the kitchen.'¹³³ (see overleaf) But Fredericks had yet another surprise for the housewife. She will be forever remembered for her stance on consumerism proclaiming it as 'the greatest ideal that America has to give to the world: the idea that workmen and the masses be looked upon not simply as workers or producers, but as consumers.'¹³⁴ In her book *Selling Mrs Consumer*, published in 1929, and dedicated to Herbert Hoover, she outlines 'advertising techniques aimed at what she called women's suggestibility, passivity and their "inferiority complexes".'¹³⁵ The American journalist, Margaret Horsfield, commenting on Fredericks, says housing 'did not imply shelter to her but rather endless possibilities for sales...This was the final corruption of home economics, representing not women's interests but business' interests in manipulating women, their homes, and their families.'¹³⁶ Physically and psychologically women were at the mercy of Fredericks' ideas. Her propositions had great appeal for 'American industrialists and businessmen who believed that the acceptance of a large number of women in the paid labor force on a permanent basis would destroy the American economy.'¹³⁷ Politicians were also aligned with this belief. Together industrialists, businessmen and politicians maintained the pressure for women to remain at home, bearing children and learning to be the new consumers. Adrian Forty says, 'In Western societies in the early twentieth-century, it came to be assumed that the only way for women to achieve fulfilment and recognition as women was by being successful in the role of housewives and mothers, an assumption that only began to be questioned openly in the 1960s.'¹³⁸

In Australia the same attitudes prevailed. This was an alarmingly paternalistic view that consigned women to the home and actively discouraged them from entering the workforce. They would be made to feel guilty for neglecting their family if they did. The Senior Research Associate at Curtin University and author of *Wifework*, Susan Maushart, recalls the railing of an anonymous

¹²⁹ Hayden, D. 1981. *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p. 285

¹³⁰ Anthony Vidler. 'Homes for Cyborgs', Reed, C. et al. 1996. *Not At Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*. Thames and Hudson, London, p. 174

¹³¹ Forty, A. 1987. *Objects of Desire — Design and Society 1750-1980*. Thames and Hudson, London, pp. 216, 217

¹³² *ibid.* pp. 216, 217

¹³³ Horsfield, M. 1998. *Bringing the Dust: The Joys of Housework*. St. Martin's Press, New York, pp. 116, 117

¹³⁴ Hayden, D. 1981. *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, p. 280

¹³⁵ *ibid.* p. 285

¹³⁶ Horsfield, M. 1998. *Bringing the Dust: The Joys of Housework*. St. Martin's Press, New York, p. 148

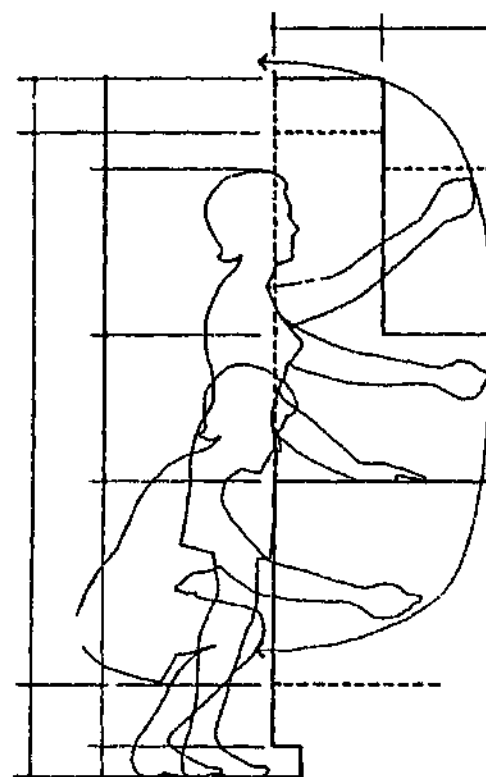
¹³⁷ Hayden, D. 1981. *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts pp. 282, 283

¹³⁸ Forty, A. 1987. *Objects of Desire — Design and Society 1750-1980*. Thames and Hudson, London, p. 208

husband in a 'March 1959 issue of the *Australian Women's Weekly*.' It seems the man's wife had gone out to work and he hated it. He felt betrayed and neglected. Women were meant to be at home taking care of their husbands, children and houses. Maushart also includes this quote from Father D.F. Miller, published in the *Catholic Weekly* in 1953, 'A young woman becoming a wife should think of her new state not as one that is to make her happy but as one in which she is to make her husband happy.'¹³⁹

Such was the apparent magnitude and importance of their task in the home that women would need to be educated to the role of housewife and germ fighting house-worker. The aim was to ensure that women were taught to prepare meals with the efficiency of the production line, while managing the domestic environment with scientific precision. Even the school curriculum reflected this thinking, albeit slowly. At primary school in the early 50s I was entreated to study *Domestic Arts* (St Leonards Primary School, S.A.) while in secondary school (Brighton High School, S.A.) in the late 50s, I spent two years studying *Home Science* before the name changed to *Home Economics*. Education strained to change, to create the right support for the right sort of housewife, and she was not to be artful or even natural but scientific in her approach to managing the family. And if not entirely scientific, then economically sound in her daily management of the budget. Women would begin to live 'the contradiction between being *natural* women, domestic and maternal, and being *modern*, organized and efficient'.¹⁴⁰

In the late nineteenth-century working class women were the particular targets of this new domestic vision but the middle class, who would aspire to live in the burgeoning suburbs, took on the vision as though it had been designed for them. And gathering like storm clouds behind the emergence of this new socio economic group, the middle class, were the reformers of the late nineteenth-century. The Australian academic, Kerreen Reiger, says these reformers were frequently Presbyterian or Methodists, non-conformists who had broken with the traditional church. She contends that their 'motivation combined religious and charitable compassion with fears of working-class unrest'.¹⁴¹ Groups like the Temperance Union, for instance, aimed to stop men from drinking but they failed my father who would always be found ordering drinks as the clock struck six in the days of the six o'clock swill (later he would become a pillar of Alcoholics Anonymous). The phenomenon of the six o'clock swill was one of the great social problems of our country in the first half of the



Time and motion analysis of woman in a kitchen

Consumptionism . . . the greatest idea that America has to give to the world; the idea that workmen and the masses be looked upon not simply as workers or producers, but as consumers.
— Christine Frederick, *Selling Mrs. Consumer*. 1929

Plate no. 14 Artist unknown, *Time and motion analysis of woman in a kitchen*, circa 1929

¹³⁹Maushart, S. 2001. *Wifework: what marriage really means for women*. Text Publishing, Victoria, pp. 92, 137

¹⁴⁰Reiger, K. M. 1985. *The Disenchantment of the Home – Modernizing the Australian Family 1880-1940*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 216

¹⁴¹*ibid.* p. 33

twentieth-century. The effect on the family unit every bit as devastating as the current preoccupation with poker machines and drugs. Behind the religious zealots and reformers were the bureaucrats, theorists and specialists who emerged to create legislation that would govern every part of family life. This legislation was inevitably coloured by the Christian ideals of the reformers and bureaucrats who shaped legislation.

Organised religion and Church-going were an important part of the ideal modern society. My father's stalwart denial of religion and his declaration that he was an agnostic meant that our family's ability to fit into the neat pattern of accepted behaviour in the post-war suburbs would be challenged from the very beginning, especially when the sin of alcoholism became obvious. While my mother was a Methodist, and a believer, she did not attend church although she sent her children to Sunday school. On this score they both stood outside the accepted model of behaviour. The strength with which the reformers and bureaucrats imposed the new model of social and domestic behaviour meant that judgement and guilt would attach to all who fell short of the mark.

In the research for this project the religious and social agendas permeate reading and interviews conducted as research. The agendas are inescapable since they shaped the behaviour of the community of the time, and more specifically, my family and the families of the research subjects. It is not unusual therefore that these influences invade the artwork on a conscious and unconscious level giving rise to an atmosphere of religiosity that is either accepted or denied within individual artworks. As Horsfield comments the 'evolution of the improbable figure of the gloriously clean housewife has a long and tangled history. The age-old insistence on purity common to so many religions lies beneath the surface...the notion of attaining the spiritual cleanliness so repeatedly referred to in the Bible.'¹²

In her book, *The Disenchantment of the Home*, Kerreen Reiger examines the proliferation of state and community-based services that sprang up in Australia to support the domestic sphere of the new social order. Services such as clinics for infant welfare, domestic science teaching, kindergartens, and child guidance all developed in support of the new vision. While these services were initially aimed at the education of the working class, she believes that 'middle-class families adopted their message with the greatest zeal.'¹³ The services were linked to the responsibilities of women. In the division of labour within the home the woman's tasks were clear. She must be housewife, child bearer, child rearer and support to the working husband. So much of the measurable success of the new social order rested on women's shoulders. There, were of course, benefits for women arising from the proliferation of services; the most beneficial being the focus on childbirth, which had in previous decades been problematic and often unhygienic. Reiger quotes the debate on the Maternity Allowance Bill, 25 September 1912, during which it was stated that the production of healthy children was the civic duty of all women and that the children were seen as, 'an asset of the State'¹⁴ however, the persistence of poor wages at the time militated against the married woman staying at home, bearing and caring for children. Eventually political lobbying resulted in a Government payment or Child Endowment. A set amount was paid per child; an incentive for families to succumb to the social order and a fillip to low wages. For my mother this was a lifeline in the constant struggle to manage the domestic budget to meet expectations. Given that it was the woman who was deemed responsible for feeding, clothing and keeping her children warm, the Endowment was of great assistance.

Success within the defined model, however, often fell short of the mark. The Australian restaurateur and more recently food performance artist, Gay Bilson, clearly recalls the 1950s and the

¹²Horsfield, M. 1998. *Biting the Dust: The Joys of Housework*. St. Martin's Press, New York, p. 48

¹³Reiger, K. M. 1985. *The Disenchantment of the Home - Modernizing the Australian Family 1880-1940*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 213

¹⁴Maternity Allowance Bill 25 September, 1912. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (1912, p.3438). Reiger, K. M. 1985.

The Disenchantment of the Home - Modernizing the Australian Family 1880-1940. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p.110

daily struggle of a woman who fell short of the scientific model in the management of her budget. 'My Mother 'was a hopeless manager of the household money and food was often short. When we had tomatoes we were only able to have two slices rather than a whole tomato.'¹⁴⁵ Barry Pearce, also remembers food being short. Pearce was the only child of a single parent family, his father killed in action only months before the war ended.

It was a hard life for my mother trying to survive on a war widow's pension. When I was a young boy she didn't want to leave me to work but it was necessary. Money would run out and there would be no food. She placed a weekly order with the local grocer that could be covered by her pension. If we ran out of food she would send me to the grocer to ask for food from the next week's order. I can remember the men in the shop going behind a screen, whispering and sniggering that Mrs Pearce had to send her son to get food. There was incredible pain associated with asking the grocer.¹⁴⁶

Maisy Stapleton in her examination of the development of the Australian house during the interwar period refers to a general down-scaling within society. The effects of the First World War, Depression and low wages had a dampening effect on the dreams of all Australians. While the candle still burned brightly for the emerging dream of home ownership, for 'many it became a status symbol, "chic" and "terribly modern", to abandon the suburban house and garden and move to the edge of the city for life in a flat'. Closer to the truth may be that 'flats were a welcome alternative to a room in a boarding-house.'¹⁴⁷ Stapleton points out that even magazines such as *Australian Home Beautiful* were singing the praises of the compact, space saving, flat in the decade before my parents married.¹⁴⁸ This influence was apparently not lost on my parents who, in 1941, fitted in with the prevailing thinking by settling in a flat on the edge of the city.

By the time my parents entered into the suburban dreamscape mass media and advertising had developed a strength of voice that was previously unheard of. The moralist tones of the reformers and the bureaucrats were trumpeted to a susceptible community through a range of new voices. Even women's magazines channelled their political messages to the housewife increasing the pressure for conformity, reinforcing correct behaviours and creating an unreal world which women were expected to inhabit. But there would always be the occasional voice of dissent. The art historian and journalist Elizabeth Butel writes about such a voice in her book *Margaret Preston: The Art of Constant Rearrangement*. Butel cites Daniel Thomas, former Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia, (in his catalogue 'Introduction' for the *Treanias Smith Collection*), as saying Preston was 'Australia's foremost woman painter between the wars'¹⁴⁹ Butel goes on to say that Preston, born in Adelaide in 1875, was a forceful individual. 'Talented, adventurous and certainly the most vociferous of the women artists, Preston differed from her compatriots in her strident demands for recognition — not simply for her own art but for the many theories she held about Australia's atrophy.'¹⁵⁰ In an article published in *Art in Australia*, entitled 'Australian Artists Versus Art' she begins with an assertive flourish. 'This is an age of technical expertness, commercialism and imitativeness! Science reigns supreme.'¹⁵¹ In the article she goes on to argue for the individuality of the artist, which she believed was suppressed

¹⁴⁵Bilson, G. (1998) Interview. 30 October

¹⁴⁶Pearce, B. (1998) Interview. 23 October

¹⁴⁷Maisy Stapleton, 'Shrinking in Comfort', Irving, R. et al. *The History and Design of the Australian House*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1985, p.132

¹⁴⁸loc cit.

¹⁴⁹Butel, E. 1985. *Margaret Preston — The Art of Constant Rearrangement*. Penguin Books in Association with the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Victoria, p. 1

¹⁵⁰ibid. p.1

¹⁵¹Preston, M. 1928. 'Australian Artists Versus Art'. *Art in Australia*, Third series, number twenty-six, pp. -

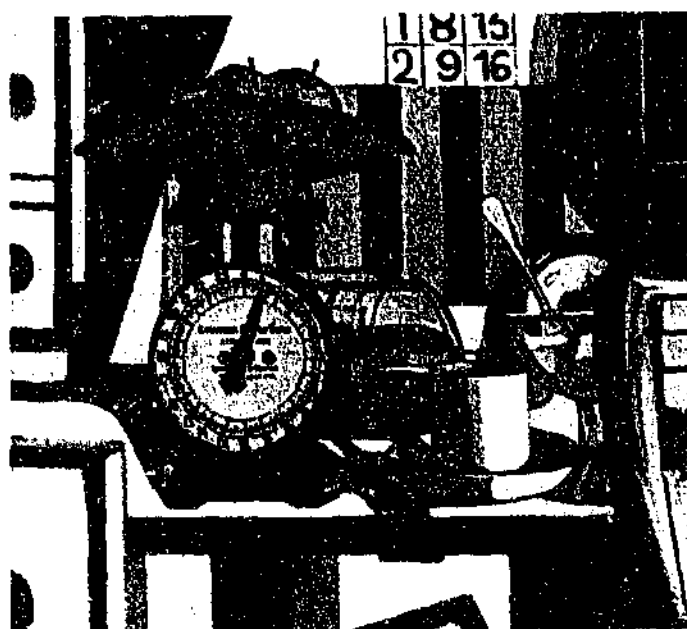


Plate no. 15 Margaret Preston, 'Still Life', *Art in Australia*, 1927

by Science; she raged against the cultural shadow of Britain and called for the preservation of the idea in art. Margaret Preston may not have been a great writer but she did have ideas and a tireless approach to promoting them. Butel says that, 'women's magazines of the 1920s...were manuals of economic and efficient behaviour and purveyors of advertising that would determine how and where money should be spent. In addition, they...promoted the arrival of modern technology'¹⁵² In short, women's magazines were immensely influential. Margaret Preston, Butel notes, was 'regularly featured in women's magazines that advocated the new technology as liberation from the kitchen-sink reality.'¹⁵³ While Preston was preaching liberation from repetitive drudgery the magazines of the time were creating consumption arousal that would stock kitchens with gadgets that claimed to lighten the load of the full-time stay-at-home housewife. Preston's main vehicles were, *Art in Australia*, *The Home* and *Australia National Journal*, all published by Ure Smith in Sydney.¹⁵⁴ This was an inspired selection providing her with a broad, predominantly female audience, on the one hand and an art educated audience on the other. Butel cites Mary Eagle ('Sydney in the 1920s' in *Studies in Australian Art*, edited by Ann Galbally and Margaret Plant) as saying, 'more space was devoted to articles by, or about, Margaret Preston than any other artist.'¹⁵⁵ In 1945 the Prestons moved into Hotel Mosman where they spent the next fourteen years...Their suite of rooms included a bedroom, a bathroom and one other room, always called Mrs Prestons studio. There was no sitting room and all meals were had in the dining-room¹⁵⁶ The American feminists would have been pleased. The Prestons' living arrangements echo the aspirations of the *Co-operative Quadrangles* or apartment hotels of the late nineteenth-century. Meals were provided in the central dining room, staff took care of the cleaning of the suite and the couple could, with ease, leave their hotel for extended periods to travel. In short Margaret Preston was a liberated woman. She had the ability to stand outside the prescribed behaviour for women and this made her different from the majority of women in the suburbs who lacked Preston's self confidence in the face of so much pressure to conform.

Preston brings to mind an artist of a different kind, the landscape gardener, Edna Walling.

¹⁵²Butel, E. 1985. *Margaret Preston — The Art of Constant Rearrangement*. Penguin Books in Association with the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Victoria, p. 27

¹⁵³*ibid.* p. 28

¹⁵⁴*ibid.* p. 22

¹⁵⁵Butel, E. 1985. *Margaret Preston — The Art of Constant Rearrangement*. Penguin Books in Association with the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Victoria, p. 22

¹⁵⁶*ibid.* p. 62

No less an individual, Walling, a graduate of Burnley Horticultural College, Melbourne, purchased a hectare of farmland at Mooroolbark, outside of Melbourne. 'On this land she built her first home, Sonning, a simple rustic cottage utilising local stone and materials.'¹⁵⁷ To this land she added seven hectares, principally to preserve her environment. 'Edna borrowed heavily to purchase the land and embarked on a remarkable excursion into subdivision that was far ahead of its time...Even today, such harmonious rural residential developments are uncommon.'¹⁵⁸ The name given to the development was *Bickleigh Vale* and between 1920 and 1945 Walling guided the building of a cluster of houses set within magnificent gardens. When the land was subdivided and sold Walling became involved in the 'the unusual practice of approving prospective purchasers, who had to agree to a house and garden of Miss Walling's design.'¹⁵⁹ Of the design of the house, or cottage as she preferred, 'correct proportions of windows and doors, the heights of ceilings, and roof lines, all aimed at creating a cottage of restful simplicity.'¹⁶⁰ This development of sixteen cottages at *Bickleigh Vale* 'is on the register of The National Estate, the inventory of the Australian Heritage Commission. The National Trust lists it as a "classified landscape", while the Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority designates the village as being of "high regional historical significance."¹⁶¹ This recognition may be due in part to a skill Walling shared with Preston. She was a keen writer, photographer and promoter of her ideas, and a regular contributor to the influential women's magazine *The Australian Home Beautiful* in which she shared her ideas about the harmony that could be achieved between architecture and planting. It can be said of both women that the legacy of publication has assured their place in history, where others of equal ability, but lacking the skill to write or publish, may have been overlooked. Certainly there has been some criticism in that vein in reference to both women. Self-promotion through the print media, as we refer to it today, was a new invention at the time. Advertisers, however, were quick to recognise the potential of the media and through the pages of newspapers and magazines they pursued women relentlessly. Preston and Walling, were extraordinary, different, part of a small minority; in a time when women were required to be the same, think the same, do the same. Their level of free-thinking light-years from the deeply entrenched conservative ideas that took root in the suburbs.



Plate no. 16 Edna Walling, For the property of F. P. King, Rockhampton, Q., 1926

¹⁵⁷Dixon, T. and Churchill, J. 1990. *Gardens In Time: In the Footsteps of Edna Walling*. Collins/Angus & Robertson, New South Wales, pp. 6, 8

¹⁵⁸*ibid.* p. 8

¹⁵⁹*loc. cit.*

¹⁶⁰*ibid.* pp. 8, 9

¹⁶¹*ibid.* p. 15

Magazines published in the 1940s including the *Australian Home Journal* were exactly the kinds of publication that placed pressure on women to toe the line and contributed to the building of the unreal world in which women were consigned for life. The *Australian Home Journal*, published in Sydney by James Russell, carried a banner headline or motherhood statement on the cover of each issue. Sampling from issues printed between 1946 and 1948 headlines such as, 'Put More "Prod" in Production' (February 1st 1947), and 'Let's all Work Together For Good' (May 1st 1946) aimed to keep the family focus on working and consuming. While, 'Home Grown Population is Best' (June 2nd 1947), and 'Competition Prevents Imposition' (August 2nd 1948), ventured into the political debates of the



Plate no. 17 *Australian Home Journal*, 'Home Grown Population is Best'. 2 June, 1947

time. Motherhood statements such as, 'Better Save than Spend' (July 1st 1946), 'Unnecessary Bargains are Pickpockets' (March 1st 1946), 'That Forgotten Word – Economy' (July 1st 1948) and, 'Prices Soar! So Are Housewives' (March 1st 1947) focused on encouraging the housewife to be a good economic manager, thrifty, and aware.

Inside the magazine the monthly diet of advertising, recipes, sewing and knitting patterns, and household tips was leavened by information about American film stars and fictional stories of romantic love. In the issue dated June 2nd 1947, the short story, *Shadow of Love*, by Monica Ewer, ends with the following dialogue. 'Terry looked at Rex as one man looks at another.' 'I've said it before to-night...but women are things even great lawyers can't understand.' 'It's easy,' said Rex... 'Easy. All women really want is love.'¹⁶² In post-war Australia women were seen as raw material to be gratefully moulded, Pygmalion-like, by Rex or any man, into the perfect model of a housewife and mother – modern, efficient, hygienic and feminine. In return their husbands, for whom women must

¹⁶²Ewer, M. 1947. 'Shadow of Love'. *Australian Home Journal*, 2 June, p. 10-13, 50

create a restful safe haven, would repay their efforts with 'love'. In middle class Australia marriage was based on the modern concept of love and free choice rather than a contract. Susan Maushart, says of love-based marriage, 'historians regard it as a culturally peculiar development that arose in northwestern Europe no more than two centuries ago.'¹⁶³ Marriage in post-war Australia was for life since the church and the state frowned on divorce — couples were bound together for the children and by social constructs such as protection and service. In *Wifework* Maushart recounts a deliciously dark but humorous scene from *Gone With The Wind* where Rhett Butler tries to win the twice-widowed Scarlett as his bride. 'Did you ever think of marrying for fun?' he proposes with a leer. 'Marriage? Fun?' Scarlett practically splutters. 'Fiddledee-deel Fun for men, you mean!'¹⁶⁴

Women's magazines, as new and seductive instruments of communication, had the power to reinforce the prevailing social, political and religious attitudes. And implicit in these messages was the powerful invitation to consume, to respond to the vast numbers of messages advertisers placed in magazines. This approach played on women's 'suggestibility, passivity and their "inferiority" complexes', as Christine Fredericks put it in her book *Selling Mrs Consumer*. The propagandist nature of women's magazines has not waned over the ensuing half-century. In fact they have proliferated, moving opportunistically into the male domain. Lifestyle magazines tell us what to aspire to, how to create an impressive environment and what to cook. While issues based magazines such as *Cleo*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Dolly*, and traditional women's magazines such as *The Australian Women's Weekly* and *Women's Day* continue to mould their current audiences in much the same way the *Australian Home Journal* did fifty years ago.

On the current subject of the home cook as a 'restaurant chef', Gay Bilson is very clear. Bilson will be remembered as the priestess of 'High Nouvelle Cuisine' in the 80s and 90s. From her base at Berowra Waters Inn she and her then husband, Tony Bilson, and later, chef Janni Kyritsis, were extremely influential in the development of the Australian palate and the education of a generation of young chefs. Bilson is angry about the current crop of magazines that imply the home cook can create meals of restaurant quality saying, 'Food magazines are bullshit. They're about fashion, money and status.' 'They pretend they're about food to cook at home' when they're really about, 'marketing'.¹⁶⁵ And when the home cook fails guilt sets in. Little has changed in fifty years. The manipulation of the consumer remains the name of the game where magazines and advertising is concerned and while social and political attitudes have changed, magazines remain at the ready to exploit for profit.

Looking back at the great social experiment that shaped the lives of generations of Australian suburban dwellers we can see Inga Clendinnen's view at work. Her belief in nations needing a common vision in order to hold together translates in this case to keeping the community biddable. But it could hardly have been anticipated that the very people being manipulated would be such eager participants in the vision. It is this apparent agreement, particularly by women, to be strapped into a restrictive social and domestic harness that fascinates me as an artist and raises questions about my Mother, her life and choices, and my own rejection of the harness in a social landscape where choices were beginning to emerge. For my mother, oppression of choice shaped her life just as surely as breadth of choice shaped mine. Choice, however, is not entirely redemptive. Too much choice can impose a different form of oppression. For example, when the Catholic Church allowed nuns to wear street dress, many of the nuns felt betrayed, lost, confused. Many didn't want to exercise their right of choice; they wanted to stay in their medieval garb, which they knew. They did not want to make a

¹⁶³Maushart, S. 2001. *Wifework: what marriage really means for women*. Text Publishing, Victoria, p. 73

¹⁶⁴*ibid.* p. 222

¹⁶⁵Bilson, G. (1998) Interview. 30 October

choice each day about what to wear. From the 1960s a new generation of feminists fought to liberate women but, like the nuns, not everyone wanted to be liberated.

Simone de Beauvoir believed that 'in order to find hearth and home within oneself, one must first have found self-realization in works or deeds.'⁶⁶ My mother never found the solace of 'hearth and home within' and yet her deeds were surely sufficient. Unfortunately unpaid work was seen as being of no value, one must be paid for work for it to have meaning and value: and yet in reality so much paid work is devoid of meaning. To the end my mother remained 'the Angel in the house' living a life of constant sacrifice, a pawn in the great social experiment of the day. Between 1945, when I was born, and 1964, when I left home my mother prepared no less than 20,805 meals for the family and that was only part of her full-time unpaid job as a housewife. But she left behind a legacy, her story, one story among many arising from the post-war suburbs.

Within the socially, morally and philosophically restrictive pattern of life there was the occasional woman like Margaret Preston or Edna Walling who would burst from the mould. Individuality cannot be entirely suppressed on a large scale or even a small scale. The women of the suburbs made cooking, sewing and knitting, the home crafts, tasks through which they could express themselves. My mother loved to cook. While she may not have been a creative cook she was precise, neat and successful and her sewing and knitting also reflected these characteristics. She could feed and clothe with confidence. Like the life of a cut flower the memory of these homely crafts has been short. Domestic work doesn't last and therefore it is difficult to find appreciation in the immediate or the long term. Women often clung together in groups where their shared experiences seemed supportive and crafts could be documented and archived to extend the history of their collective work. Organizations like the Country Women's Association were important but groups are not for everyone and the focus of the CWA was not the post-war suburbs but the isolated woman on the land. To outsiders there was a covert quality to organizations like the CWA. These organizations required decoding because of their inward views but never-the-less they helped to preserve women's work and make it tangible for later generations who could not identify with the struggles of life in the post-war suburbs. On a world scale there is a revival of interest in women's work, the domestic crafts and life past.

The life of my father could not have been in sharper contrast to that of my mother. When my father was not at work or mowing the lawns he spent his time in solitude painting or practicing the piano — he was never short of avenues to express his individuality. And like most men in the suburbs he left everything else to my mother; the Angel in The House.

⁶⁶de Beauvoir, S. 1997. Translated and Edited by HM Parshley. *The Second Sex*. Random House, London, p. 468

SECTION 3
THE HEART(H) IN SUBURBIA

3.1 THE SHRINKING HEART(H)

Change in our life is inevitable and, although at any measured time it may seem we are standing still, every aspect of our life is subject to change: the way we look, our beliefs, even our language. It is not surprising therefore to find that the humble post-war kitchen was also a candidate for change. Like Alice it was about to shrink but unlike Alice it would be forced to shrink from necessity and as the kitchen decreased in size unbearable pressure would be placed on two of the most loved symbols of the kitchen, the freestanding kitchen cabinet and the kitchen table. The interior space of the kitchen exemplifies the idea put forward by Nikos Papastergiadis that 'irrespective of its location, the home is the sacred place from which everything else is mapped.'¹⁶⁷ While the kitchen was not the whole it was, irrespective of its actual physical location, the centre or heart of the home in the suburbs, the engine room of what would become a streamlined, space saving, no nonsense production centre. A highly politicised place lined with museum-like vitrines containing consumables and memories to be released by measured spoonfuls according to the recipe of life.

The concept of the cabinet as an essential home museum, a necessary kitchen aid to the housewife/apothecary is both tantalizing and practical. Where else would the housewife store her consumables, her raw ingredients, her secret recipes, even her purse, after the demise of the pantry? In the post-war recipe there was no room for a pantry and little room for loose furniture. Walls were lined instead with space saving, fitted cupboards linked to benches for easy cleaning in the small space allocated to the kitchen. Sometimes the cupboards had small round holes in the front fitted with flywire for ventilation. Jenny Watson spent her early childhood in the Edwardian house owned by her mother's parents in Mont Albert where she recalls the kitchen as small 'but it had a big pantry with a little window with a flywire cover; primitive refrigeration in a way. There was a cellar with a trapdoor and deep dark shelves. It was fantastically designed. The size of the pantry had a lot to do with the woman not having to go to the shops too often; about being self-sufficient.'¹⁶⁸ A pantry it seems has much in common with the walk-in robe of today; a cabinet in which you can be concealed, a cabinet in which you can hide. But in the new suburbs, with the shrinking kitchen there would be no hiding. And with the demise of both the pantry and the capacious freestanding kitchen cabinet, shopping on a daily basis would become a necessity.

No matter the form of the kitchen cabinet, the interior space and the secretive interiors of drawers is always gendered space, female, intimate, lovingly ordered. This ordering of interior space and its meanings is a theme the philosopher Gaston Bachelard explored in his book *The Poetics of Space*. He wrote that the ordering of the interior space of the wardrobe for instance is 'not merely geometrical; it can also remember the family history.'¹⁶⁹ A capacity shared by the kitchen cabinet that exists in a timeless duality of interior space and exterior space. But unlike the wardrobe, the kitchen cabinet is not vibrating with closeted sexuality; rather it is biddable, complicit, and incapable of passing judgement. It is however a capable, if passive, witness to the actions of life and in return this anthropomorphised cabinet lays bare, through its glass filled apertures, fragments of its bounty. The intensity of the kitchen cabinet's direct gaze is softened by the romance and secretiveness of the colours stored behind the glass. Where there is no glass the cabinet presents as opaque and forbidding with solid closed doors defying trespass and no glimpse of what lies within. Either way, the kitchen cabinet is a catalogue of family memories tainted with the spectre of control, for the cabinet belonged to *Her* and the order, contents and uses were determined solely at *Her* discretion.

In February 1999 something strange and unexplained occurred. As a new resident to

¹⁶⁷Doherty, Claire. Curator and Editor. 'Claustrophobia' cites Nikos Papastergiadis in *Claustrophobia: we're not in Kansas anymore...* Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 6 June-2 August, 1998, and other galleries, p. 13

¹⁶⁸Watson, J. (1999) Interview. 8 April

¹⁶⁹Bachelard, G. 1994. Translation, Jolas, M. Foreword, John R. Stilgoe. *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press, Boston, p. 79

Woodend in Central Victoria I noticed in the local paper an advertisement. An auction, apparently a regular affair, was to be held in the rooms of the auctioneers H. Ferris Pty. Ltd. in neighbouring Kyneton. Amid a densely typed list of items to be auctioned I immediately saw, as if there was no other listing, 'two 1940s kitchen cabinets'. Today I look at the list of items (I still have the original advertisement) and have to search for the item. I drove to Kyneton as if compelled to attend the viewing prior to auction and found that the austerity of one of the two cabinets interested me as a found object. The cabinet spoke to me. It was surreal. I seemed somehow to be part of a series of events over which I had little control but in which I became a willing participant. The next day, despite spirited bidding, I secured the whispering cabinet for \$280. The entire auction was a piece of theatre that had repeatedly been rehearsed and performed by the players and was at once genuinely funny in that archetypal laconic Australian manner, boring for long stretches and at times tragic. It was a parade of memories out of context, ghosts disturbed; an event full of pathos. Intimacy and secrecy were stripped away to reveal the sex of the object, the bulging underbelly paraded for all to see as part of a jocular script. But I couldn't leave. The British novelist and mythographer Marina Warner in writing about the British artist Richard Wentworth and the way in which he locates the ready made, the discarded, the new in order to incorporate them into his works says;

The idea of trailing through the streets, chancing upon the meaningful and the marvelous, shares a great deal with André Breton's procedure in *Nadja*, the 1923 novel which turns Paris into a legible city, where love and magic and significance lie around to hand, as '*hasard objectif*' ('objective chance'), for those who have the eyes to see and respond to them and register them.¹⁷⁰

Not since that day have I noticed an advertisement for the auctioneers in the local paper although I understand they continue their work. And I have not attended another auction in Kyneton or anywhere else. It was an intriguing set of circumstances that played on my curiosity about the kitchen cabinet. But in the studio how would I view my new purchase?

The Australian travel writer Susan Kurosawa wrote about a cabinet which she called her container of memories in an article titled *Wanders never cease - A cabinet of curiosities is more an aide-mémoire*. In the article she calls her cabinet a 'Wunderkammer'. This term can be traced back to the sixteenth-century and German speaking Europe where an increasing interest in the natural world led to a need to archive properly collected specimens. 'Wunder' — means wonder or natural wonder and 'Kammer' means cabinet. 'I first found mention of the 'Wunderkammer' in early eighteenth-century literature, described by the German philosopher Leibniz as "a cabinet of curiosities", a place

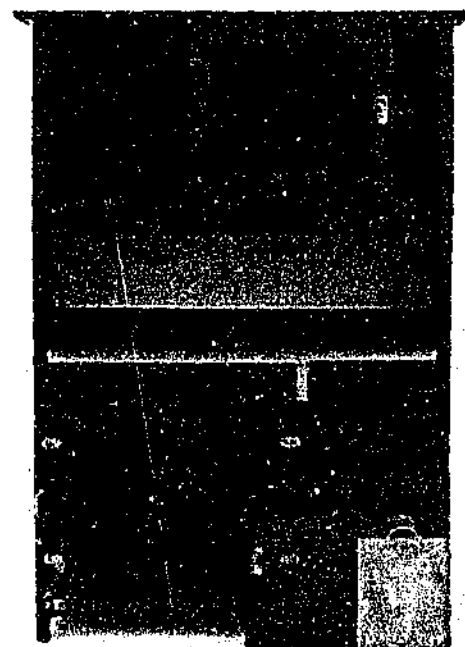


Plate no. 18 Kitchen Cabinet, circa 1940

¹⁷⁰ Warner, Marina. 1993. 'Richard Wentworth', Thames and Hudson in association with the Serpentine Gallery, London, 6 November-4 January 1994, and other galleries, p. 9

where items of personal value can be kept and in the grander circumstances, identified and displayed' writes Kurosawa. Her personal version of the 'Wunderkammer' has many draws, 'like a herbalist's cabinet' and in each draw she places the 'ephemera' of her travels. Each time she wants to relive a particular journey all she has to do is open the drawer and the portal to reverie beckons.¹⁷¹ Leibniz was a German philosopher and mathematician born in 1646. His scholarly interests were diverse and among them his interest in the natural world and his theory about the connectedness of all things. For Leibniz the 'Wunderkammer' had a scientific purpose. His 'Wunderkammer' stood as a precursor or antecedent to the Natural History Museums of today rather than a record of the personal or a demonstration of wealth and scholarship, although the latter was popular where it could be afforded. It is said that, when Rembrandt applied for bankruptcy in 1656 and his personal possessions were catalogued in readiness for sale, among his possessions was a 'Wunderkammer' filled with carefully selected artefacts that would have positioned him in society as a scholarly man, a substantial man of aesthetics aware of the world. Collections and cabinets reveal so much about an owner in the same way that a Stubbs horse is more about personal politics than horse flesh. The term 'Wunderkammer' could certainly be bestowed on the kitchen cabinet with its penchant for concealment and surprise. It could also be argued that the new electric windowless cabinet called a refrigerator was a truer cabinet of curiosity and wonder.

The advent of the refrigerator meant the end of a relationship with the leather-clad man who regularly delivered the block of ice, for the ice chest, held in the vice-like grip of an instrument that looked as though it had been forged in the Dark Ages. There was something frightening about the iceman and a strong sense of the other as he moved through our intimate space. His size in relation to the kitchen, his determined movements, his silence, the smell of the ice, the dripping of the water onto the clean Linoleum were manifestations of his visit and they made the kitchen seem as strange as a crime scene. For a moment domestic intimacy was disrupted by old world industry. Barry Pearce remembers the iceman. 'We had an ice chest and the iceman came every day with a horse-drawn vehicle, like the milkman with his ladle and big milk container, filling the billy left on the front porch.' And then there was the day that the electric windowless dream arrived. 'What a joy. We bought Kiaora cordial essence in raspberry and lime and mixed up big quantities with endless sugar. Whenever the fridge was opened the fridge light would illuminate the red and green fluid giving it a sort of glow. It was a cordial weekend that first weekend. All red and green.'¹⁷² Rosa Matto remembers with affection the transition from ice chest to fridge.

We had an ice-chest that was enameled in green and white. A man called Bob would bring the ice. He was a Rabbiter and Bottle-o as well. Later we got a Kelvinator fridge in cream, all rounded and curvaceous with the word 'Kelvinator' in chrome across the front. I always loved the chrome lettering. We were the first of the families in our street to have a fridge. The neighbours would ask if they could put their ice cream in our freezer. Mum wrapped each brick of ice cream up in newspaper and wrote the house number on the parcel because all ice cream looked the same then. The families would come and get their ice cream and then bring it back for storing until it was all gone.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Kurosawa, S. 2001. 'Wanders will never cease — A cabinet of curiosities is more than an aide-memoire'. *The Australian Magazine*, 24-25 March, p. 51

¹⁷² Pearce, B. (1998) Interview, 23 October

¹⁷³ Matto, R. (1999) Interview, 10 January

In the late 70s I was introduced to the 'Wunderkammer' as gallery by the then Director of the Adelaide Festival Centre Gallery, Silver Harris. This 'Wunderkammer', or more correctly 'Kunstkammer', originated in 1978 in Zürich, the brainchild of the Bern artist Herbert Distel and called *The Museum of Drawers*. In his catalogue essay the author, freelance art critic and gallery director, Peter Killer, discusses Distel's method and the outcome. Having secured a narrow vertical haberdashery unit with twenty glass fronted drawers and five hundred miniature apertures each 5.5cm wide, 4.3cm deep and 4.2cm high Distel decided to create a miniature museum of modern art. 'Distel sprayed the wooden furniture white, covered the references to sewing goods and made it look like a piece of Knoll furniture' says Killer. Then Distel wrote to artists around the world with the express purpose of gaining their support in the form of a miniature installation for the museum. Of the five hundred works by prominent twentieth-century artists 'nearly all the contributions were created expressly for the museum', a task that took six years. On the subject of Distel's method, Killer believes that it is not unusual or even rare since 'a large number of artists systematically

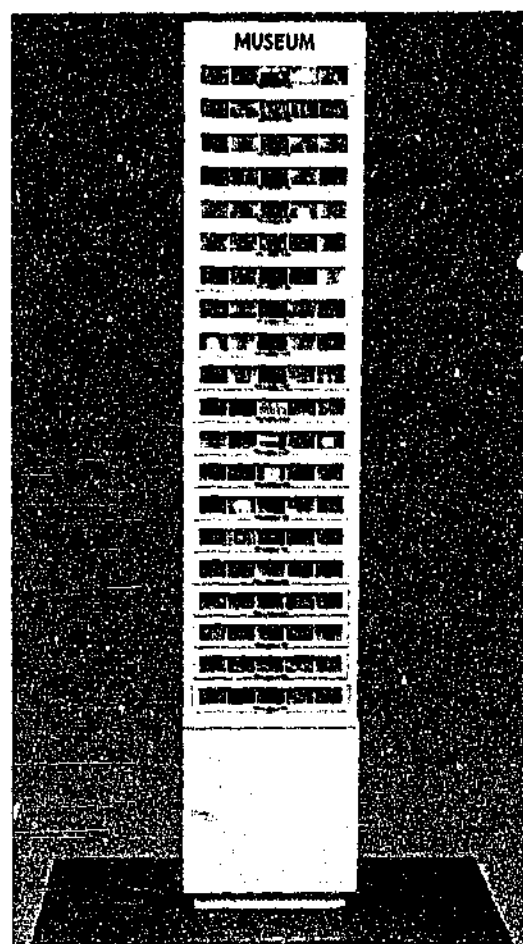


Plate no.19 Herbert Distel,
'The Museum of Drawers', 1978

collect and document works of art and consistently analyse certain manifestations of the present and the past.' And Killer can't resist the obvious reference to Lewis Carroll's, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The participating artists, says Killer, 'force us to change our standards and make us see a stamp-sized picture as if it was a large scale work.'¹⁷⁴ *The Museum of Drawers* looks like a piece of modernist architecture; a point not lost on Distel who created a publicity photograph of the city skyline which included the museum of drawers at the same scale as other skyscrapers — an ever present reminder that the museum may be small and yet it represents a world of contemporary knowledge.

The South American sculptor Doris Salcedo works with the allure of the secretive cabinet, transforming her 'Wunderkammers' by filling the interior space with cement and rendering the barely readable contents preserved, permanent, crushed, unable to participate in the ebb and flow of life. (see overleaf) The function of the container and the contained is lost, memory is fixed and new meanings are sought. In her art she searches for the means to identify the dispossessed and the disappeared; trawling for aspects of the personal to signify a life that has been extinguished at the hands of corruption, lawlessness and poverty in Colombia in the twenty-first-century. In conversation with the New York based poet and curator, Carlos Basualdo, Salcedo expressed her enthusiasm for 'the concept of "social sculpture", the possibility of giving form to society through art. I found the possibility of integrating my political awareness with sculpture. I discovered how materials have the capacity to convey specific meanings.'¹⁷⁵ Salcedo's works are powerful and yet receding, full of yearning for the loss of rights, freedoms and life itself.

¹⁷⁴ Killer, Peter. However, she soon realized that she was swimming in the pool of tears she had wept when she was nine feet high (Lewis Carroll: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*). Distel, Herbert. 'The Museum of Drawers', Kunsthaus, Zürich, 1978, pp. 17-19

¹⁷⁵ Princethal, D., Basualdo, C and Huyssen, A. 2000. *Doris Salcedo*. Phaidon, London, p. 10

At the end of the war in 1945 we find the freestanding kitchen cabinet at the end of its life as everything began to shrink to balance the overwhelming need for housing with the limited building resources available. Maisy Stapleton writes that this trend towards smaller houses and smaller kitchens in particular actually began decades before with what she saw as a levelling of society during World War I. 'Houses diminished rapidly' she wrote and the kitchen was to display 'the most remarkable changes in planning.' The activities of the kitchen were to be systematised. 'Ideas of labour saving...soon created logical "work stations" for each stage of food preparation and introduced fitted cupboards and sufficient storage, so that cooking equipment lay close to hand.'¹⁷⁶ The kitchen shrank rather like Lewis Carroll's Alice after she drank from the bottle labelled *drink me*. Alice found the potion had 'a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast turkey, toffy, and hot buttered toast' that was not at all unpleasant. After drinking the potion she felt a 'curious feeling' and then she said 'I must be shutting up like a telescope! And so it was indeed: she was now only ten inches high' small enough to get through the little door that led 'into that lovely garden.'¹⁷⁷



Plate no. 20 Doris Salcedo, *Untitled* (cement cabinet), 1995

In 1954 the focus of the architect Neil Clerehan was 'a house for everyone'¹⁷⁸ in the new suburbs and with post-war shortages this meant all building materials would be rationed. Each new suburban home therefore would shrink to a prescribed footprint of 111.48 square metres for a timber house and 116.12 square metres for one in brick.¹⁷⁹ Kitchens were frequently reduced to the minimum area allowed 7.43 square metres.¹⁸⁰ And this would have a dramatic effect on the hearth. The kitchen cabinet would be forced against the wall; its free form morphing into space efficient permanently fitted cupboards. It would maintain its role but in a new sanitized and rigidly controlled configuration.

The pressure to transform the freestanding kitchen cabinet into fitted wall cabinets also threatened the kitchen table; that beloved piece of furniture, the symbol of family community so often used by artists like the Jewish painter Yosl Bergner and Australian artist Margaret Preston as a metaphorical stage. The curator and art historian Lucy Soutter writes about the African-American artist photographer Carrie Mae Weems and her use of the kitchen table to locate work that 'combines the social concerns of a documentary with the empathetic potential of fiction'. In *The Kitchen Table Series* Weems explores the representation of African-American women and in the image, *Untitled (Eating Lobster)*, she explores the specific issue of the tension inherent in unequal partnerships particularly the successful woman paired with the unsuccessful man. 'The photographs of the female character...as lover, mother and friend provide vital context for the images in which she is alone' with the ever present central light and the table. There is a sense of danger lurking, of imminence, perhaps

¹⁷⁶Maisy Stapleton, 'Shrinking in Comfort', Irving, R. et al. 1985. *The History and Design of the Australian House*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 117

¹⁷⁷Carroll, L. (nd.). *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through The Looking Glass*. Bramhall House, New York, pp. 31, 32

¹⁷⁸Clerehan, N. (1998) From notes made during an informal conversation, 1 June

¹⁷⁹Cuffley, P. 1993. *Australian Houses of the Forties & Fifties*. The Five Mile Press, Victoria, p. 73

¹⁸⁰*ibid.* p. 76

the spectre of the uncontrolled rage of a man who feels useless even when the female character alone faces the camera with confidence declaring with her pose that the 'kitchen, long considered a trap for



Plate no. 21 Carrie Mae Weems, *Untitled (Eating Lobster)*, 1990

women, [had become] a setting for personal discovery.¹⁸¹ In *Art and Feminism* the authors Helena Reckitt, a contemporary feminist theorist, and the writer Peggy Phelan quote Carrie Mae Weems in an article *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics*, 1995, in which Weems says 'all the pieces in the *Kitchen Table* series highlighted "the Gaze"...using that as the beginning and the turning point...to start creating space in which black women are looking back...and challenging all those assumptions about the gaze, and also questioning who is in fact looking.'¹⁸²

The versatile kitchen table, able to say so much in its role as stage, would in the post-war years, in many instances, shrink to a fixed surface in a space-efficient dinette with built in bench seats in order to fit into a corner of the new kitchen. The loss of the table balanced against the attainment of the dream home. But there were variations in post-war design and my parents chose the house with the kitchen that would accommodate a table although my mother would mourn the lack of a separate dining room all her life.

In 1922 at the Bauhaus, work had begun to develop a design for standardised modern houses efficient in terms of building materials, time taken for construction, and the ability to comply with housing regulations. The design for the dwellings would showcase the modernist aesthetic of the Bauhaus and the ability of the school to design inventive low cost accommodation 'cheap but healthy' supported by their doctrine of 'systematization'. Standardization of the building elements will result in new housing units and sections of cities having a uniform character. There is no danger of monotony...their "beauty" will be assured by properly used material and clear, simple construction...the standardization of parts will not limit individual design (*Gestaltung*) which we are striving to achieve' the authors of the catalogue *Bauhaus* quote Walter Gropius in 'Wohnhausindustrie' (in *Bauhaus*

¹⁸¹Lucy Soutter, *By Any Means Necessary – Document and Fiction in the Work of Carrie Mae Weems*, *Art & The Home. Art & Design Profile*, No 51, Greene, D. Guest Editor, Academy Editions, London, pp. 71-74

¹⁸²Reckitt, H. and Phelan, P. 2001, *Art and Feminism*, Phaidon Press, London, p. 137

books no. 3, Munich, no date, p. 13).¹⁸³ In the same year Georg Muche, a master at the Bauhaus from 1919, began work on an experimental house of his own design. The house was intended for himself but it became the centrepiece of the first big exhibition held by the Bauhaus in 1923, an exhibition Gropius hoped would create a stronger working relationship between industry and the school. The interiors for the experimental house were created by the Bauhaus workshops and included a kitchen that 'conforms with modern housing requirements by means of new principles of form'.¹⁸⁴ It was a precursor of things to come. The designs and doctrines of the Bauhaus and its masters entered the lives of the Australian middle class in the late forties and remain with us today.

The kitchen as place is open to stereotyping built on personal experience, memory, cultural and social imprinting and the effect of mass media. The concept of kitchen is therefore an amalgam of information; a fiction that varies considerably from culture to culture as it always has through history. In 1956 with the introduction of television, life in Australia would never be quite the same. Curator of *Claustrophobia*, Claire Doherty, quotes the American television journalist Bill Moyers in her essay about the American artist Mark Bennett. Moyers writes in *Channels* published in October 1981 that he regards television as the 'campfire around which our nation-tribe sits to weave and re-weave its traditions and tales'. Moyers, says Doherty, sees television as 'our primary cultural storyteller'.¹⁸⁵ Australian children grew up on a steady diet of American social values, stereotypes and material possessions to which we were expected to aspire. Programs such as *Leave It To Beaver*, and *The Brady Bunch* confirmed the role of the housewife/homemaker; they set a standard for the way she should look and illustrated the effortless grace with which all housewives were expected to complete their domestic chores. Mark Bennett, in his works that take the form of architectural-style drawings, brings to life spaces that we know as well as our own homes: the apartment of Ricky and Lucy Ricardo, the home of Ward and June Cleaver, the home of the Cunningham's, and the Munster's.¹⁸⁶ In the *Home of Mike and Carol Brady*, 1986-95, we see the kitchen as an 'ideal workplace for the two cooks, Carol and Alice, who often work together to prepare the meals. Done in birch cabinetry and orange Formica countertops, the kitchen features a dishwasher, refrigerator/freezer, double ovens and an indoor barbecue grill'¹⁸⁷ (see overleaf). Not quite available or affordable for the battlers in the Australian suburbs in the 50s, but television helped mould a new generation of super consumers, unaffected by the great depression, war or hardship, who wanted to leave the constriction and sameness of the suburbs in search of the good life.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York seeking ways to assist visitors to experience its vast collections while avoiding gallery fatigue has created thematic tours that lead visitors to discover certain artefacts in the collection rather like a treasure hunt. The most popular of the

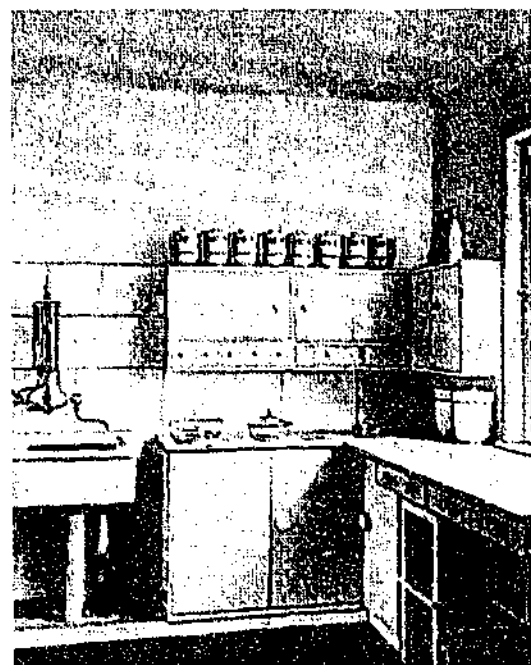


Plate no. 22 Georg Muche,
Kitchen Erected for the Exhibition, 1923

¹⁸³Bitterberg, Karl-Georg, Editor of the Australian version, *Bauhaus*, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart, in collaboration with the Visual Arts Board, Australia Council for the Arts, 1975, p. 77

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 73, 78

¹⁸⁵Doherty, Claire, Curator and Editor, *Claustrophobia*, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 6 June - 2 August, 1998, and other galleries, pp. 34-37

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 37

¹⁸⁷Author unknown, 1996, 'Mark Bennett', *Art & The Home*, *Art & Design Profile* No 51, Greene, D. Guest Editor, Academy Editions, London, p. 33

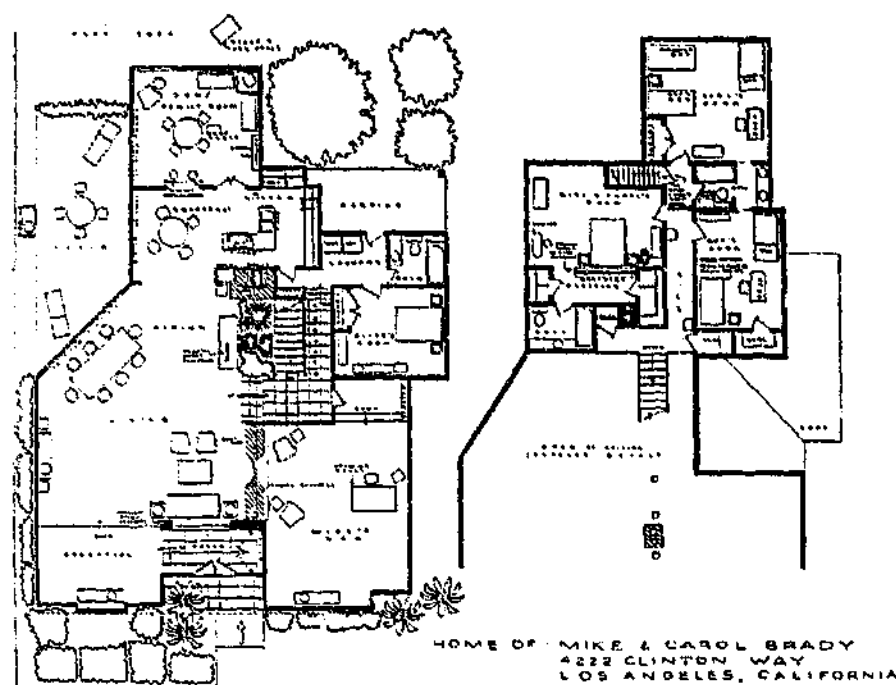


Plate no. 23 Mark Bennett, Home of Mike and Carol Brady (detail), 1986-1995

thematic tours is *Food and Visual Culture*. An illustrated booklet is supplied to keep participants focused and before they know it they have experienced four thousand years of kitchen culture and history through the discovery of art and artefacts. The tour was devised by Deborah L. Krohn who wrote in the preface, 'Many of the works of art visible in the permanent collection of the Museum represent the production, consumption, or service of food in different periods and cultures. Food is essential for human life and is thus one of the most compelling subjects for art from the ancient world to our own times'. In January 1999 I took this tour and discovered paintings by Peter Paul Rubens, Breugel The Elder, Frans Hals, Edward Hopper and Charles Ensor and a forged kitchen hearth from the Middle Ages which confirmed the surprising fact that 'cooking techniques did not change radically between the Bronze Age and the advent of electricity, since the principles were the same: applying heat to foodstuffs changes and renders edible many types of food.'¹⁸⁸ Sculptures and vessels in wood, iron, clay, glass, gold and silver from ancient Egypt to eighteenth-century France completed the tour.

This long history of cultural differences inspired a book called *The Cook's Room - A Celebration of the Heart of the Home* edited by an organiser of the Oxford Symposium of Food and Cookery, Alan Davidson. The book comprises an assembly of essays by eminent people on the subject of the kitchen. The essays draw attention to the vast cultural differences and meanings embodied in this single word and Davidson marvels at the ability of this singular word in turn to encompass so much difference. All 'European words for kitchen come from the Latin verb *coquere*, to cook' says Davidson. Despite a colourful history the word has always 'kept its original meaning...a kitchen is always a place where cooking is done, mostly for humans, but also for animals.'¹⁸⁹

When the first waves of European migrants arrived on our shores in 1947 Australia began to experience, at first very uncomfortably, the effects of different cultures. The fruits of the kitchen seemed to occupy the visible heart of difference. Initial resistance to Italian food for instance was all but forgotten by the 70s the appropriateness to our climate eventually breaking down prejudice as we took the ingredients and methods to heart as our own. In truth cultural differences have

¹⁸⁸ Krohn, D. L. *Food and Visual Culture*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, pp. 16

¹⁸⁹ Davidson, A. Editor. 1991. *The Cook's Room: a celebration of the hearth of the Home*. Doubleday, Sydney, pp. 9, 10

always existed in Australia but the scale of the immigration program effectively brought traditional Australian cooks face to face with a range of ingredients and practices never before considered.

Rosa Matto recalled her parents' need to grow vegetables and herbs such as zucchini, broccoli, eggplant and basil in their garden in suburban Prospect because these staples of Italian cooking were not available in the shops in the 50s. Vegetables in excess of the needs of the family were given to neighbours, often in gratitude for help but, since the neighbours did not recognise the vegetables and didn't know what to do with them, Matto's mother started cooking complete dishes to overcome the problem.¹⁹⁰ Italian migrants often turned their front gardens into vegetable gardens a practice that sent shock waves through the conservative white Anglo-Saxon community.

The Woodend tomato farmer, Antonia Bruzzaniti, spent her early childhood in Calabria, Italy where she was born. Life there was hard and in sharp contrast to her new life in Australia. Bruzzaniti came to Australia with her mother and siblings in 1966 to be reunited with her father who had immigrated in 1962 in order to prepare the way and establish himself in the new country. She was amazed at the abundant supply of meat. 'There was food in the cupboards because my mother shopped every week. My father went to the market. He bought home boxes of fruit! We had everything. Chocolate! I made chocolate sandwiches with a block of chocolate between two slices of bread. We had everything we didn't have in Italy, but too much. It was heaven.'¹⁹¹

The author, cookery school director and television presenter, Elizabeth Chong, recalls the dishes of her childhood as 'simple, with earthy favours and the dried ingredients of rural China; dried tiger lilies, dried turnip shreds, dried shrimps', ingredients she still uses today. Chong was born in China and came to Australia with her parents in 1934. She had little experience of food outside her own culture. Recalling an occasion in her mid teens staying with an Australian friend, she said 'I remember we had rabbit stew...I have liked it ever since. I was amazed at the home and the table setting, it was so fancy. Lots of cutlery and crockery with flowers, it was not our way. There were home made scones and jam and cream in crystal dishes. Because in our culture we have a little of everything I mixed jam and cream with rabbit stew.' In the 50s, Australians started to become interested in Chinese food although Chong says more from curiosity and with a slightly averted eye. 'There was always a gap between what they wanted to know and we wanted to tell' said Chong.¹⁹² Rosa Matto recalled her family's first experience of Chinese food on a trip to Melbourne at Christmas time.

Christmas Eve dinner was always a special Italian thing but on this occasion the only place open was Chinese. There were no Italian restaurants open, they would have been home cooking eel and other Christmas foods. We had fried rice, sweet and sour pork with pineapple in it and a red sauce. It was so bizarre but it was good. My Mother wouldn't eat it because Italians are not supposed to eat meat on Christmas Eve. I thought I was going to die and go to hell. I was about twelve.¹⁹³

The author and broadcaster Alan Saunders, while researching his foreword to the book *Australian Food: a celebration of the new cuisine*, lamented the lack of a powerful spokesperson for Chinese cuisine.

We have Chinese restaurants but we have no examples of famous Chinese

¹⁹⁰Matto, R. (1999) Interview. 10 January

¹⁹¹Bruzzaniti, A. (1999) Interview. 7 March

¹⁹²Chong, E. (1998) Interview. 5 June

¹⁹³Matto, R. (1999) Interview. 10 January

chefs in Australia despite the long establishment of Chinese restaurants. We have no equivalent of say David Thompson (Thai cuisine) or Tetsuya Wakuda (Japanese cuisine). Perhaps Cheong Liew although he represents much more than Chinese cooking. Chinese restaurants have flourished by providing European style Chinese cuisine. In essence they cleverly gave us what we wanted and they continue to do that.¹⁹⁴

And in wry Australian humour Saunders' assertion is supported by the anecdote told by the actor, writer, radio and television presenter, John Doyle, in the guise of his outspoken alter ego, the doyen of all things sporting, 'Rampaging' Roy Slaven. Recalling his first encounter with Chinese food for Annette Shun Wah and Greg Aitkin's book, *Banquet – Ten Courses to Harmony* Slaven situates his experience at a wedding reception held in a Chinese Restaurant owed by Johnny Lim in Lithgow in the 60s a time when people did not eat out on a regular basis. Slaven, a very tongue in cheek character, is quoted as saying,

Without being unkind, perhaps Johnny Lim toned things down for the Lithgow palate. I mean sweet and sour was as wild as it got. And it was very popular. Johnny used to put those Golden Circle pineapple pieces in it, which really set people back on their heels...I think Johnny was very comfortable working with tins. Baby corn came out of tins, the carrots came out of tins, the mushrooms... you know the hardest job in his kitchen was the one opening all the tins.¹⁹⁵

In the grand sweep of history we might think of the great forums as residing in ancient Rome or their more contemporary iteration, the Village Squares of the medieval period. These were essential places in which oration, religious pageantry, commerce, entertainment and displays of arms and political power, brought people together to work, prosper, survive and fail amid exchanges of money, views and information. The need for the centralised forum with all its redolent meanings diminished over the centuries constantly changing until it reached the present forms of the old forum; sporting arenas, entertainment complexes, shopping centres and the like and, in the parlance of the private sector, some aspects of the forum were taken *in-house*. The need for some echo of the village square remained important to the human psyche and it is this echo that I refer to as having been taken *in-house*. Of the five-room recipe for the post-war suburban house the kitchen became the 'new' village square. The kitchen became the new forum for family exchange, nurture, sustenance and ritual on a daily basis.

In Britain, America, pockets of Europe and Australia, the pressure to move to individual kingdoms with their own scaled-down forums would be the same. The vernacular home in the suburbs was a dream come true for hundreds of thousands of couples who could not have dared to dream about home ownership. And each new home enshrined its own forum, albeit a small one, in which the suburban housewife played the leading role cast by government, without support, into a drama that would ensure that she felt the sting of some or all of the seven suburban ills; isolation, boredom, frustration, anger, fatigue, anxiety and guilt. The dream had a bite and the new inhabitants of the suburbs would find that sadness and happiness co-habited within the same dream played out

¹⁹⁴Saunders, A. (1999) Interview. 15 April

¹⁹⁵Shun Wah, A. & Aitkin, G. 1999, *Banquet: Ten courses to harmony*, Doubleday, New South Wales and Auckland, pp. 49, 50

on the *in-house* stage.

The kitchen marks the sentimental heart of the home, the theatre of nurture, woman's domain, and it also marks the last vestige of the open hearth as a place to cook; the theatre of sustenance, woman's work. And in the gathering of the family to eat or wash dishes, the highly ritualised nature of our lives becomes evident.

Gay Bilson speaks of the importance of the frame when she talks about the appearance of food. In her 1998 event *Loaves & Fishes* for the Adelaide Festival she developed a feast for two thousand people. 'It was about feeding a community. A theatrical performance that lived outside the proscenium arch and fitted within Robyn Archer's theme, *The Sacred and Profane*.' Fish was the focal point of the feast; 'I wanted fish that looked like a fish with a head, frame and tail.'¹⁹⁶ The frame is to the fish as the skeleton is to the human body and in parallel the dream home is given shape and support by its own form of frame. This rude but honest wooden frame has its own simple beauty and strength and I am not the first to love this measured structure before it is clad and made house – before the fakery and the politics emerge. Through the eyes of the kitchen cabinet and the measured intervals of the frame life can be viewed as if through a lens or a proscenium arch. We struggle with the manifestations of this vision, the remembrances, the fragments of ordinary life lived at a particular time. How do we preserve this evidence of our society, our culture and who we are before the memories fade and change as they inevitably do, even in the telling?

¹⁹⁶Bilson, G. (1998) Interview, 30 October

SECTION 3
THE HEART(H) IN SUBURBIA

3.2 THE RESTLESS HEART(H)

Gay Bilson is a woman experienced in the ritual of serving food on a big scale. Initially as a restaurateur and more recently as a food performance artist where she creates feasts for thousands at a time. Gay maintains that to her 'kitchen equals hearth'.¹⁹⁷ There is something of the primitive in this statement that connects with fire, ancient Greece and the Goddess Hestia. One of the twelve Olympian deities, Hestia was worshipped 'as goddess of the family hearth'.¹⁹⁸ Hearth being that place where the fire is lit and the cooking done. In the past the hearth has also been the source of warmth and comfort for those unable to afford to maintain separate fires simply to warm. Warmth and hearth are closely aligned. While our contemporary 'fire' may have been tamed, as the *Food and Visual Culture* tour of the Metropolitan Museum in New York demonstrated, 'cooking techniques did not change radically between the Bronze Age and the advent of electricity'.¹⁹⁹ Antonia Bruzzaniti can still remember the open indoor hearth in her native Calabria and today we experience the remnant of this open hearth in the form of wood fired ovens most often found in restaurants although Bruzzaniti's father is an excellent builder of ovens for the baking of bread at home.²⁰⁰ It is perhaps the association with fire and the changes that take place in the food as a result of fiery contact that conjures up images of the housewife as apothecary. But what is certain is that fire and its unpredictable nature kept the kitchen out of doors for a long time.

In the last two hundred years the kitchen has been pushed this way and that, stretched, shrunk and exploded. It is always on the move as though it has a will of its own moving from the outhouse to the main house and occupying various positions within the house in its constant search for the prime position. In her essay on *The Colonial Kitchen* author Phyllis Murphy says that from settlement to Federation 'the kitchen...was like an isolated island and austere slave house, burning a fire fifteen hours or more a day to feed and sustain its dependents'.²⁰¹ Vulnerability to fire saw the kitchen relegated to a lean-to, outhouse or simply out of doors. According to Glenn Murcutt 'the kitchen was separated from the house...because it often burnt down...There was a desire to save the rest of the house by sacrificing the kitchen'.²⁰² However, once the fire was tamed the kitchen achieved entry into the home. Phyllis Murphy notes that by the end of the nineteenth-century there had been a transformation from 'austere slave house'²⁰³ to a 'sophisticated food factory' with gas stove, cold water plumbing and the promise of electricity.²⁰⁴ And at the 'beginning of the twentieth-century the kitchen was a much more specialized room, now an integral part of the house plan'.²⁰⁵

But the positioning within the house was problematic. The kitchen was usually placed at the rear of the house, where it stood forlorn for many years, a 'Cinderella',²⁰⁶ generally facing west according to the Australian design commentator, Babette Hayes. She claims the kitchen simply failed to excite the imagination of architects.²⁰⁷ If the kitchen is the beating heart of the home then why was there an absence of architectural dialogue about this critical space? Glenn Murcutt feels the answer lies in the fact that the role of the architect is to 'respond to the requirements described by the client...the client directs and influences the spaces. If a client has no interest in the preparation of food, for example, then the kitchen space won't be more than functional or operational. We take our instruction and also, at times, inspiration from the client' he said.

¹⁹⁷Bilson, G. (1998) Interview. 30 October

¹⁹⁸Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2002. *Every ripple in history...* Standard Edition CD, Serial numbers:720520052768

¹⁹⁹Krohn, D. L. *Food and Visual Culture*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. pp. 1-6

²⁰⁰Bruzzaniti, a. (1999) Interview. 7 March

²⁰¹Phyllis Murphy, 'The Colonial Kitchen'. Irving, R., Apperly, R. et al. 1985. *The History and Design of the Australian House*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 233

²⁰²Murcutt, G. (1998) Interview. 28 October

²⁰³Phyllis Murphy, 'The Colonial Kitchen'. Irving, R., Apperly, R. et al. 1985. *The History and Design of the Australian House*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 233

²⁰⁴loc. cit.

²⁰⁵ibid. p. 247

²⁰⁶Hayes, B. and Hersey, A. 1978. 'The kitchen'. *Design for living in Australia*, Hodder and Stoughton Sydney, p. 75

²⁰⁷op.cit.

Murcutt also drew my attention to a comment made by the great modernist architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe that 'with every good building there was a very good client'.²⁰⁸ If that is so surely the successful American nephrologist, Dr Edith Farnsworth, must have been a very good client because the Farnsworth House is celebrated around the world. Client and architect met in 1945 in Chicago where 'Mies was...head of the Department of Architecture at the Armour Institute of Technology (later Illinois Institute of Technology), a position he had held since his arrival in the USA in 1938'. Farnsworth commissioned Mies to build a weekend house outside of Chicago, at Plano, Illinois on the banks of the Fox River and the steel and glass pavilion that resulted has become an international icon. Differences of opinion on issues such as budget blowouts, time delays and the determination of the architect to ignore aspects of privacy in favour of capitalising on the immediacy of the landscape, eventually fractured the relationship between architect and client. Farnsworth came to hate the house, although she lived in it for nearly twenty years, but the lack of privacy afforded by the design and the effect on all aspects of her life sat at the heart of her grievances.

I don't keep a garbage can under my sink. Do you know why? Because you can see the whole 'kitchen' from the road on the way in here and the can would spoil the appearance of the whole house. So I hide it in the closet farther down from the sink. Mies talks about 'free space'; but his space is very fixed. I can't even put a clothes hanger in my house without considering how it affects everything from outside.

This bitter comment by Farnsworth is quoted by the author Alice T. Friedman in her essay 'Domestic Differences: Edith Farnsworth, Mies van der Rohe, and the Gendered Body', and arises from an interview between Farnsworth and journalist Joseph A. Barry which appeared in *Home Beautiful*, Vol. 95 (May 1953), 172-73; 266-72.²⁰⁹ It would seem the determination of the form and function of the kitchen has the ability to polarise. It is a 'Cinderella' to some and a power play to others. The Melbourne art critic and academic Robert Nelson says that as 'the status of women slowly improved (e.g. through the campaign for universal suffrage), the kitchen gained greater authority on the ground-plan'.²¹⁰ By the 1920s for instance fortunes were improving for the hearth. In the Californian Bungalows of the 20s, like my grandparent's house in Allenby Gardens, the kitchens were 'equal in scale and lighting to the living-rooms and bedrooms'.²¹¹ These kitchens 'were designed to accommodate a large kitchen table around which the family could comfortably congregate'.²¹²

During the housing boom of the 50s the kitchen suffered a setback in size allocation although the housewife seemed happy enough. According to Nelson women of the 50s and 60s were 'the most enthusiastic victims of modernism'.²¹³ Women were no longer able to sit at a kitchen table while completing their tasks since the room was now too small for a table and what passed for a table was built-in to a nook separated from the kitchen and its functions. Women became isolated from the family in their new 'gadget-filled' kitchens.²¹⁴ Attention was diverted from the merits of the accommodation by the perceived need to consume: a constant pressure to fill the kitchen with shiny new appliances. The politics of possession, consumerism, patriarchy, and rationalisation would keep the hearth in check for some time to come.

²⁰⁸Murcutt, G. (1998) Interview. 28 October

²⁰⁹Alice T. Friedman, 'Domestic Differences: Edith Farnsworth, Mies van der Rohe, and the Gendered Body', Reed, C. et al. 1996. *Not At Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*. Thames and Hudson, London, p. 188

²¹⁰Nelson, R. 1992. *Expressions of Purpose in Industrial Design*. Monash University, Melbourne, p.40

²¹¹loc. cit.

²¹²loc. cit.

²¹³loc. cit.

²¹⁴loc. cit.

The British architectural historian and Cambridge academic, Nicholas Bullock, wrote in an essay titled *First the Kitchen - then the Façade* of similar issues in post-war Germany in the late 40s and 50s. 'At a time of national shortage and reconstruction when the problems of housing were seen to be one of the central issues of social policy, the form of the house was clearly too important to be left to architects alone.'²¹⁵ German feminists were demanding that the functions of the kitchen be considered first rather than fitting, even forcing, the kitchen into a predetermined design. The German organization Reichsforschungsgesellschaft für Wirtschaftlichkeit im Bau- und Wohnungswesen founded in 1928 took this to heart instigating 'collaboration between architects, housewives' associations, production engineers, and all those concerned with the production of kitchen fittings and household equipment'²¹⁶ but despite the work of this organization and many others including the work of the Bauhaus (mentioned in the previous chapter) the costs to implement new ideas often caused them to drift out of reach. And the fine idea of designing from the kitchen out was lost along the way.

In 1959 during the height of Cold War tensions between Russia and the US, the fruits of materialism in the form of kitchen gadgetry inspired a heated debate between Vice President, Richard Nixon, and the Russian Premier, Nikita Khrushchev. Their accidental meeting in a model kitchen, part of the American National Exhibition in Moscow demonstrating the 'advantages of capitalism'²¹⁷ and the American way of life, sparked the headline, *The Cold War's Great Battlefield: the Kitchen*. The American Vice President 'extolled the benefits of democracy as exemplified by household appliances. Nixon implicitly claimed that the American capitalist system, by surpassing the Soviet system in the provision of consumer goods to all, had created a truly classless society.'²¹⁸ Khrushchev on the other hand thought the exhibition, 'a display of wasteful excess and bourgeois living. Where were the American Sputniks?'²¹⁹ At the core of the argument was the threat to, 'Home and Hearth' in an Atomic age.²²⁰ As the two men exchanged views and Nixon pointed a finger at the chest of Khrushchev the 'American company, Ampex, was demonstrating the first videotape recorder: thus the exchange was captured on videotape' which was shown extensively in the US.²²¹ Nixon's standing in the polls rose after the incident because Nixon appeared to be standing up to Khrushchev. But the videotape was not all that made this incident famous. The photographer Elliott Erwitt, a member of the Magnum photo agency, captured a still image of the exchange between the two men and this picture made him famous. 'Pictures can lie. It looked like Nixon was being forceful' he said of the image where in fact the level of conversation was more like we eat meat while you eat cabbage.²²² The *Kitchen Debate*, as this incident between Nixon and Khrushchev came to be called, with its political, social, material, and theatrical imperatives, is a dramatic example of the ordinary exchanges that took place in the kitchen on a daily basis. It reinforces the notion of the 50s kitchen as the scaled down village square, a 'theatre', providing the space and opportunity for spirited dialogue set against a lavish backdrop of continuous



Plate no. 24 Elliott Erwitt, *Kitchen Debate*, photograph for Magnum, 1959

²¹⁵Bullock, N. 1988. 'First The Kitchen'. *Journal of Design History*. Vol. 1, Issues. 3 and 4, Oxford University Press, UK, p. 177

²¹⁶*ibid.* p. 185

²¹⁷Cécile Whiting. 'Pop at Home'. Reed, C. et al. 1996. *Not At Home: The Suppression of Domesticity In Modern Art and Architecture*. Thames and Hudson, London, p. 224

²¹⁸*ibid.* p. 224

²¹⁹Author unknown. 1999. *The Cold War's Great Battlefield: the Kitchen*. http://satiearts.usf.edu/~jaho/mod_pol_icons/Kitchen1.html (14 November 1999, 7:40pm)

²²⁰*ibid.*

²²¹Author unknown. 1999. *The Nixon-Khrushchev Kitchen Debate, July 25, 1959* <http://www.rarey.com/sites/alumfalls/newsreel/kitchen.html> (14 November 1999, 7:26pm)

²²²Hammond, Graeme. 2000. 'Point and Snap'. *Sunday Herald Sun*, 20 February, p. 9

and conspicuous, consumption.

The hearth of the post-war suburbs was an evolving place but what did this intimate space look like in the 40s and 50s? What were the key attributes of thinking that actually filtered down into the everyday vernacular house? We know already that in Barry Pearce's house there was an ice chest that later gave way to a new refrigerator. He adds that there was 'Laminex, or Contact with a Laminex pattern, on all surfaces. The stove was gas and set in a recess and the ice chest was in the corner. There was a small sink, which later had an instant hot water service above it.²²³ In the five-room recipe, with three rooms designated as bedrooms, little space was left for living and as Pearce indicates life was 'conducted in three rooms' of the Woodville Gardens house in South Australia.

The kitchen was the place where all discussions occurred around the green Laminex table with the thin chrome legs. There was a tiny living room and a back verandah that was covered in partly with fly wire and partly with tin... The kitchen was painted in glossy paint. The Housing Trust liked cream and green. My mother painted the cupboards herself... Much later I got her to change the paintwork to one of the new pastel colours like pale pink but there was always the green Laminex table. The Lino was off white with spangles of silver and gold and faint lines. There was even Lino in the living room at first but later there was carpet.²²⁴

Peter Cuffley states that in the immediate post-war period the approach to colour was conservative. 'Creams and ivories were to maintain, in the post-war years, much of the favour they held in the late 1930s and 40s' but 'that did not eclipse the desire for colour.'²²⁵ Cuffley says that 'comparatively affluent households were usually the first to have the latest gadgets, gleaming appliances, bright new furniture and modern kitchens, with every drawer and cupboard painted in different colours.'²²⁶ The painting of the doors and drawers in different colours was a misuse of the ideals of the Dutch born artist Piet Mondrian whose popular and often reproduced works *Broadway Boogie Woogie* and *Victory Boogie Woogie* crossed from high art to the domestic in the 50s. Mondrian sought purity in his work stripping bare his compositions until an elemental grid of intersecting horizontals and verticals was all that remained. To this grid he added colour restricted to red,

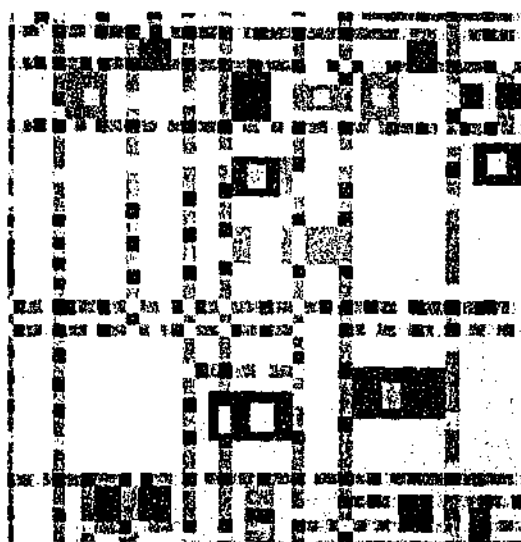


Plate no. 25 Mondrian, *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, 1942-3

²²³ Pearce, B. (1998) Interview, 23 October

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ Cuffley, P. 1993. *Australian Houses of the Forties & Fifties*. The Five Mile Press, Victoria, p. 191

²²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 29

yellow and blue. His surfaces were 'shoon', the Dutch word for "clean" and "beautiful".²²⁷ In essence they were an evocation of the term 'cleanliness is next to godliness' and a reflection of his Dutch Calvinist background. Indeed his works inspire a relationship with the clean and pure lines of Shaker furniture. In the 1940s he escaped the bombing in London to live in New York where he was inspired by the 'pulsating city life, and new rhythms of American music'²²⁸, jazz in particular. Here he created *Broadway Boogie Woogie* and *Victory Boogie Woogie* shortly before his death. Mondrian's work had a profound influence on mid-twentieth-century domestic interior decoration; his works consumed and reproduced by a capitalist system in a manner that was anything but pure.²²⁹ Cuffley says that by the 'mid-1950s the colour revolution was beginning to affect conventional interiors so that two, three or four bold colours might be used in one room. The popular combinations were now rich pinks with charcoal grey, yellow with orange, deep pink with blue-lilac, orange with blue-lilac, lime green with terracotta, turquoise with lemon, to list just a few.'²³⁰

Robert Rooney remembers the building of a new kitchen in his parent's East Hawthorn home, in Victoria. It was built in the 50s 'an original kitchen of the period' in which the bench tops were covered in yellow Laminex,

with flecks of what looked like frosting on aluminium and aluminium edging. The floor was covered with Lino tiles in a ribbon design. It included square and triangular pieces of yellow alternating with blue, which was laid in such a way as to create the illusion of a ribbon being bent around in a spiral. The design was surrounded by grey. My mother had seen the design in a *Home Beautiful* magazine. Ceramic tiles for the kitchen were a grey, yellow and blue combination.²³¹

Rooney believes his mother was very happy in her new kitchen. 'Things didn't necessarily change' he said. 'She continued to cook the usual things although she did join the *Gadget of the Month Club* and accumulated a lot of useless things.' Later the pattern on the Lino and other domestic patterns found in rugs, carpet and knitting patterns served as inspiration for Rooney's paintings such as the *Kind-hearted Kitchen-garden* series painted in the second half of the 60s.²³²

When her grandparents' Edwardian house in Mont Albert, Victoria, was sold Jenny Watson moved with her family to a small house in the Dandenongs: new but not brand new.

It was a fibro cottage. It had a wood stove in the kitchen and we ate in the kitchen. It was much more 60s in appearance with a Laminex table and padded chairs. There was a built-in bench seat with a glass panel above it so you could see into the lounge. I liked that. There were happy times in the fibro house. That's where I got interested in horses.²³³

Later the family moved closer to the city to a weatherboard house in Box Hill.

The house in Box Hill was a standard weatherboard house built in the 50s. Not very nurturing. The kitchen had three doors off it...The kitchen with the three doors was the cooking and sitting hub of the Box Hill house. My parent's house

²²⁷Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2002. *Every ripple in history...* Standard Edition CD, Serial numbers:720520052768

²²⁸*ibid.*

²²⁹Symonds, MK., Portley, C. and Phillips, RE. 1972. *The Visual Arts*. The Jacaranda Press, Milton, Queensland, p. 140

²³⁰Cuffley, P. 1993. *Australian Houses of the Forties & Fifties*. The Five Mile Press, Victoria, p. 191

²³¹Rooney, R. (1998) Interview. 6 November

²³²*ibid.*

²³³Watson, J. (1999) Interview. 8 April

and others like it were built for quickly housing people. It was an economical home...The kitchen was pale green with white doors. There was 60s Lino with a pattern that looked like separate tiles but wasn't. Green Laminex benches and table setting. It was OK, functional.²³⁴

In South Australia the Matto family lived at suburban Prospect in a Victorian period house and Rosa Matto's recollections of the various changes made to the kitchen are like a time capsule of contemporary thinking in the 40s, 50s and early 60s.

The kitchen was a big room with the sink at the window. There was a small workbench and a big kitchen cabinet with lead light doors. The first cabinet was very attractive but the updated version in chrome and white painted timber was very modern. My father had very contemporary taste. He got rid of anything that reminded him of home. He liked space saving furniture. Everything had an extra purpose. Everything had a place. He was quite regimented. There was a big table in the middle. It was chrome with red sparkly Laminex. Later it was changed to green Laminex, and then Laminex that was silvery white with flecks of gold. But the chairs were always the same, red vinyl with black piping. The kitchen was in that format for a long time until we knocked down the wall between the kitchen and the dining room. Later the kitchen changed to an island across a third of the space, which separated the cooking and eating areas.²³⁵

When the Matto family moved house, still within the suburb of Prospect, they moved into an 'ideal' – a modern cream brick house.

In the cream brick house the kitchen was much the same. Benches all round the walls with drawers at the top and cupboards beneath. A big window and a sink... all very open. Then we divided it after two years with a low bench to separate cooking from eating. My mother still lives there. If my mother moves it will be for a bigger kitchen table so that we can all sit around it.²³⁶

These glimpses of past kitchens help to build the image of the suburban post-war kitchen and the fixtures, colours, textures and style that we, as the emerging generation, struggled against to attain, in the affluent 90s, a gleaming streamlined industrial style of kitchen, bleached white, stainless steel lined and with benches made from stone or precious timbers. Today restaurants capitalising on nostalgia look to the 50s and 60s for inspiration as they create a hearth atmosphere that seems softer and friendlier than the contemporary open kitchen of restaurants where the chefs are actors performing for an audience. And in domestic design the soft edges that were banished in favour of squared edges are now being rounded again. For example many of the latest European refrigerators have soft curved edges as they did in the 50s and 60s and colour is returning to 'whitegoods'. The cycle continues. The key difference between the post-war era and the present can be measured in our vastly improved economic situation. In the post-war period the gadgets purchased for the kitchen were the main markers of affluence whereas today the entire kitchen and contents has become a site indicating affluence.

²³⁴Watson, J. (1999) Interview. 8 April

²³⁵Matto, R. (1999) Interview. 10 January

²³⁶*ibid.*

According to Robert Nelson the 'ultimate in post-war architecture was a servery — a hole in the wall, that is, with a little ledge for resting dishes — by which the kitchen was hooked up to the dining room, as though by conveyor belt.'²³⁷ The new 50s kitchen in the Rooney household had just such a servery. The servery heralded the next step for the hearth that had been cooling its heels mostly in cramped conditions in the hottest part of the house for some time.

As we move focus to the vernacular suburban houses of the mid 60s we see the gradual 'removal' of the wall between the kitchen and dining room as the open plan interior gained in popularity. And by the 70s and 80s the 'motif of the servery' and the wall was largely eliminated.²³⁸ The open plan interior brought the kitchen well and truly out into the open separated from eating by a low bench or bar structure, often incorporating sink and appliances.²³⁹ The housewife was no longer isolated from her family. During the 70s and 80s houses began to increase in size and this impacted favourably on the kitchen. Babette Hayes says that it 'took a long time and many fashion changes in housing before the kitchen gained any status. It was probably because our social order changed that and technology made kitchens potentially more attractive and architects began to take a more reasoned interest in them.'²⁴⁰ The kitchen, she observed in 1978, slowly 'moved to a better, cooler position in the house and now has in a modern house the central position it deserves as the hub and heart of the house.'²⁴¹

The hearth however was not satisfied with what looked like the best position possible and there was evidence that in architect designed houses the notion that the design should start from the kitchen was revisited. By the late 70s the hearth had moved with the aid of architects into the mathematical heart of the house with rooms radiating from the kitchen. The housewife was now visible from all angles, and everything she did was scrutinized. It was not long before the housewife demanded a little more privacy sending the kitchen into a retreat from the mathematical heart of the house. This was a minor set back for the hearth in the rare tutored home in which a centralised kitchen had been attempted and the contemporary kitchen settled into a prime position in the suburbs enlarging to accommodate the biggest and most expensive European appliances of the day and becoming engorged with collections of gadgets that would position the household within society in much the same way as a 'Wunderkammer'. Kitchens today are larded with markers of affluence such as stone benches, stainless steel, marble and precious timbers. Not content with domestic appliances the hearth began consuming the finest commercial ranges available because current lifestyle magazines informed housewives that they could produce restaurant quality food at home without the need for any experience.

In our diverse society it is not surprising that alternative journeys presented themselves for the hearth. For example in America in the last two decades, particularly in the cities, one such journey centres on the kitchenless apartment. In this move the hearth completes a full circuit travelling from the outhouse to the centre of the house and right out the other side. Jenny Watson noticed this phenomenon on her visits to New York. 'I have met a number of male artists in America who say very quickly and quite surprisingly "I don't have a kitchen." Perhaps it is a denial of domestic issues in their life, cooking is not a priority.'²⁴² In fact the kitchenless apartment is not gendered; it exists for singles and married couples alike and in the acceptance of this style of living, the owners are making a political statement about their priorities and the pace of their lifestyle. In Australia, kitchenless apartments are not as yet a reality but certainly in the design of city apartments in Melbourne and Sydney in particular, the hearth has been once again reduced in scale to a very smooth open and stylish format focussed

²³⁷Nelson, R. 1992. *Expressions of Purpose in Industrial Design*. Monash University, Melbourne, p. 40

²³⁸loc. cit.

²³⁹loc. cit.

²⁴⁰Hayes, B. & Hersey, A. 1978. 'The kitchen'. *Design for living in Australia*. Hodder and Stoughton Sydney, p. 75

²⁴¹loc. cit.

²⁴²Watson, J. (1999) interview. 8 Apr

more on finishes and expensive equipment than practicality. Any discussion of the kitchenless apartment returns us to the 1870s and Robert Owen's clusters of experimental co-operative houses in Britain, the Shakers and their communitarian villages in America, H.G. Wells and his fantasy of the kitchenless dwelling in his book *A Modern Utopia* and Ebenezer Howard's co-operative quadrangles. The whole vision and innovation in experimental housing prototypes developed in the nineteenth-century and discussed in chapter 2.1 *Heralding a New Landscape*.

The American astrophysicist turned campaigner for sustainable culture, Dr Robert Gilman, believes that housing 'around the world still falls generally into...three broad categories.' These are the 'isolated single family dwelling', the 'institutional, multi-household dwelling' and the 'village/neighbourhood, which combines distinct households with strong social and practical relations between neighbours and is the most common pre-industrial mode of dwelling.'²⁴³ In postmodern society Gilman says the isolated single family dwelling 'is not based in a sustainable reality...Urban and suburban sprawls are grossly wasteful of land, transportation, energy, and time, factors we can no longer afford to ignore.' The dream home of the post-war suburbs' he says 'is now looking like a 'nightmare.'²⁴⁴ The multi household dwelling is still on the drawing board as it has been for more than one hundred and fifty years but, while society privileges individualism living in communities with shared facilities may be difficult to make reality. The village/neighbourhood, however, is alive and well albeit in pockets of self-selecting groups of people. SoHo, New York is one such example of a village/neighbourhood where an individual can live among like-minded friends, own an apartment (kitchenless or otherwise) and live and work in the neighbourhood with minimal interaction outside the neighbourhood. It is an old model that still holds currency, encourages higher density living than the suburban model and supports a return to city living adjacent to work. But the dream will not fade in the near future because ownership = freedom and freedom = ownership and we continue to cling to Cuffley's notion of the owned home as a 'separate state.'²⁴⁵

Gay Bilson rails against those who cannot accept change. The nature of the kitchen is changing...The kitchen as hearth will never be the same again. All things change. Cries for a return to the warm kitchen and domestic meals with the stove the provider of warmth, ignore change. Writers in magazines I deplore take up this cry.²⁴⁶ But dreams are resilient, hard to crush, and reality often too hard to face. As always the artist deals with the issues of the day. In the mid 70s the Irish/American artist Patricia Patterson began making detailed reconstructions of the kitchens of her native Aran in order to relive the warmth of the hearth and ease the feelings of displacement that she felt living between two contrasting cultures. In 1989 while working as Senior Editor for Andy Warhol's magazine *Inside*, Robert Walsh, now Legal Affairs Editor for *Vanity Fair* interviewed Patterson about the making of these full-scale reconstructions complete with doors, windows and painted views through. The first object was a cupboard, then a stove, and then a very simple black mantel. I did them from drawings and photographs; I'd been wanting to build them for a long while. The small objects on the mantel and the kettle I just searched around for, but I found things that are remarkably close to the ones on Aran.²⁴⁷ In 1983 Patterson presented her first installation at the San Diego Museum. Walsh says of Patterson's hearth reconstructions that 'there is...a sense of being displaced, of shuttling between realms, of hovering like an unseen witness to intimate moments. Scenes of everyday life.'²⁴⁸

The American artist Liza Lou has a split view when it comes to the hearth. Lou has created

²⁴³Gilman, R. 1986. *Finding Home - A look at roots and possibilities for habitat*. <http://www.context.org/ICLB/IC14/Gilman.htm>, pp. 1, 2 (28 June 2002, 7.20pm)

²⁴⁴Gilman, R. 1986. *Finding Home - A look at roots and possibilities for habitat*. <http://www.context.org/ICLB/IC14/Gilman.htm>, p.4 (28 June 2002, 7.20pm)

²⁴⁵Cuffley, P. 1993. *Australia: Houses of the Forties & Fifties*. The Five Mile Press, Victoria, p. 32.

²⁴⁶Bilson, G. (1998) Interview. 30 October

²⁴⁷Walsh, R. 1989. Barbara Patterson. *Inside*. Vol. XIX, No. 5, Frederick W. Hughes, Publisher/Editorial Director, New York, p. 81

²⁴⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 82-83

two large-scale works depicting the interior hearth and the exterior hearth and she has done this using countless bugle beads as her medium. The works are *Kitchen*, created between 1991 and 1995 and *Backyard* created between 1995 and 1997. The latter work celebrates the backyard barbecue hearth with the appropriate range of suburban semiotics including the barbecue and the set table around which the family will gather to break bread. In his catalogue essay *Splendour in the Grass - Liza Lou and the Cultivation of Beauty*, the American poet and art critic, Peter Schjeldahl writes that the '1990s have seen the collapse of nearly all traditional rationales of art-making...Our time gives the artist nowhere



Plate no. 26 Liza Lou, *Kitchen*, 1991-1995



Plate no. 27 Liza Lou, *Kitchen* (detail), 1991-1995

to start and nothing to master, then wants miracles. Lou's *Kitchen*, seems to me an anti-miracle, spectacularly refusing to fill any bill not its own. It is fundamentally hermetic, an armoured refuge of personal initiative, though affected by such art-world pressures as the early-nineties fashion for social

criticism.²⁴⁹ The American art critic, writer, lecturer and curator, Marcia Tucker, sees the works as creating 'a new kind of site for the American dream, a critical and seductive locus at the far reaches of the imagination' in her catalogue essay *Adventures in Liza Land*.²⁵⁰ These dazzling and playful works constructed in real scale, like the works of Patterson, could be 'righteously satirical' according to Schjeldahl.²⁵¹ There is also a surreal element combined with a sense of gorging on the luscious. Perhaps these works are the ultimate in artistic eye candy. Lou's works, says Schjeldahl, demonstrate that she 'is forthrightly feminist in familiar ways of valorising "women's work"...and, at least in the *Kitchen*, of calling attention to female stereotypes.'²⁵² Perhaps, he says of *Backyard*, 'Lou's inspired choice of a ubiquitous, humble subject for the magnificent, frozen hosanna of this work fulfils Charles Baudelaire's definition of beauty as a fusion of the eternal and the fleeting, the exalted and the everyday.'²⁵³ Both artists view the hearth with affection and a longing for the way it was. Whatever form it takes in the future and wherever it may rest within the home there will always be affection for the hearth.

In the 80s, cartoonist Mary Leunig explored the issues of housewife, mother, lover, and creative muse in her book of drawings entitled *There's no place like home*. She has the last 'word' on the relationship of woman to hearth.²⁵⁴



Plate no. 28 Mary Leunig, *Untitled*, 1983

²⁴⁹Peter Schjeldahl, *Splendour in the grass – Liza Lou and the Cultivation of Beauty*, in 'Liza Lou', Smart Art Press, Volume IV, No. 33, Santa Monica, in association with Santa Monica Museum of Art, 1998, p. 14

²⁵⁰Marcia Tucker, *Adventures in Liza Land*, 'Liza Lou', Smart Art Press, Volume IV, No. 33, Santa Monica, in association with Santa Monica Museum of Art, 1998, p. 60

²⁵¹Peter Schjeldahl, *Splendour in the grass – Liza Lou and the Cultivation of Beauty*, 'Liza Lou', Smart Art Press, Volume IV, No. 33, Santa Monica, in association with Santa Monica Museum of Art, 1998, p. 17

²⁵²*ibid.*, p. 19

²⁵³*ibid.*, p. 34

²⁵⁴Leunig, M. 1983. *There's No Place like Home*, Penguin Books, Melbourne, p. -

SECTION 4
THE THEATRE OF THE HEART(H)

4.1 REVERBERATION AND DREAMS

In previous chapters I have written about the house as object about the history and sociology that impacted on the post-war suburban house, societal pressures placed on a willing middle class, the objectification of women as servants of home and family and the rise and rise of the domestic hearth. These are grounded subjects, concrete subjects. In this chapter the concept of house becomes less the planned and quantified geometry documented by Peter Cuffley in his book *Australian Houses of the Forties & Fifties* and more a domain of the imagination. In the imagination houses can be created without bricks or mortar. These intangible structures might be composed of breath, air, wind, sound, or light. They are ephemeral constructions of the mind woven from dreams, daydreams and memories and yet these mind-made constructions are capable of providing solace, warmth and comfort to the human soul.

The philosopher Gaston Bachelard in his book *The Poetics of Space* wrote about this phenomenon of the mind-made house of reverie and the power of three manifestations able to stimulate in humankind the building of such a house. He begins by discussing the power of the aural stimulus on the collective consciousness to unlock a state of mind or image. A quality of sound so powerful that it seems to reverberate from our origins to the present. Sound forgotten but at the same time remembered, submerged somewhere in the soul but never lost. In particular Bachelard refers to Thoreau's assertion that the sound of a horn echoing through the forest is capable of unlocking a response that evokes, in all who hear it, a powerful response built on the feeling of warmth, comfort and 'common friendship'. Bachelard then relates the mystery of this universal response to another image the often-romanticised notion of the purity of solitude in the isolated forest hut of the hermit. And if the warming glow of a candle should be shining from the window of the hut in the dark forest this for Bachelard would complete a trilogy of psychological triggers that he considered to be the most powerful known to humanity. This idea is exemplified, Bachelard said, by the writing of Henri Bachelin in *Le serviteur* where the author daydreams that the house of his father is a warm, well-lit, protective hut thereby creating for himself an imagined house/hut able to provide psychological protection from the cold reality. Bachelard confers upon these images, aural and visual alike, the status of legend in terms of their ability to speak to the collective consciousness.²⁵⁵ These issues sit at the heart of *Hut* a work by the Australian artist Karen Ward winner of the inaugural 'The Helen Lempriere National Sculpture Award' in 2001.²⁵⁶ (see overleaf) The most ordinary newspaper journalism on the subject of Ward's prize winning work took me, as Bachelard predicted, and Bachelin dreamed, to a highly romanticised, small, well-lit, protective hut in the forest. Not Ward's hut but a habitable hut of my own imagination.

Surely non-European communities unused to the sound of the horn in the forest must have an equivalent aural translation. Perhaps every man or woman has a personal 'horn', a sound that provides the same experience of warmth, security and intimacy every time it is heard.²⁵⁷ Basing my thinking on the notion that we each have a personal horn it is immediately apparent that my 'horn' is the sound of the piano. The striking of a taught wire that sets the atmosphere alight with quivering ripples is an experience in both sound and sensuality raising questions of logic and the poetic. How does one catch a quivering ripple on the cheek? How does one touch the sound? The sound of the piano is beloved of many but few were nurtured as I was by the instrument. For me the piano became 'mother's milk'. And from the sounds and sensations stimulated by the piano keyboard a further construction was made. My 'horn' always stimulates the building of a mind-made house/hut habitable only by me, seen

²⁵⁵Bachelard, G. 1994. Translation, Jolas, M. Foreword, John R. Stilgoe. *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press, Boston, pp. 30-33

²⁵⁶The Helen Lempriere National Sculpture Award, Melbourne, 2002, p. 3

²⁵⁷Bachelard, G. 1994. Translation, Jolas, M. Foreword, John R. Stilgoe. *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press, Boston, p. 32

only by me, providing comfort only to me.

In the recollection, *Prospects* (page 52, Vol. II) reference is made to the kitchen in the small flat my parents shared when they first married in 1941. Forced into this small over utilized space was my paternal grandmother's piano, the piano on which my father played every day of his life. And with this highly ritualised daily playing came a rising sadness that his recognition as a child prodigy, his performances with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, had not translated into success. But his passion for the piano, forever known as the piano in the kitchen, never abated. In Bachelard's terms my first house of psychological protection was an aural house as warm and comforting as any cosy hut. It was a house constructed of remembered sound and atmospheric reverberation that still connects directly to the soul. There is no claim of exact remembrance of music played to a newborn baby

however what is embedded in my soul is the remembered comfort, warmth and spirit derived from the aural stimulus. Every evening as a newborn baby I bathed in the vibrations as I lay in my pram under the kitchen table a controversial space-saving practice my mother instigated to keep me near, keep the light out of my eyes and keep me out of the way. There simply was no room to move in a tiny kitchen that housed a table and a piano. For three years the sounds came to me as I lay under the kitchen table. The piano was so close. All that separated the pram from the sound and vibration was a piece of cloth. The placing of the pram under the table was a ritual that rendered the extraordinary ordinary. And the sound of the piano became as much a part of the everyday as the beating of my own heart, the wetness of my tears and the warmth of mother's milk. Imagine daily existence without the singing of birds? It would have been just as impossible to imagine life without the sounds of my father playing Beethoven sonatas.

The often-told truth about this practice, and the story of my father as prodigy raise questions. The family narrative developed thus. My paternal grandmother, a passable player of classical music, recognising the ability of her youngest and most favoured son presented him to a legendary teacher at the Adelaide Conservatorium of Music. From the Conservatorium the boy emerged in a dark blue velvet suit and lace collar to make his debut with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra playing Beethoven. But my father did not go on to be a concert pianist and the unanswered why of this hung in the air until he died. There were clippings and programs, the story goes, but when his beloved mother died my father was so distraught that he burnt all of the artefacts that linked him to his mother's dream and his failure to deliver the promise. Was this oft-whispered story a myth or reality? Was it true or did the family merely wish it to be true? Was this a 'house' in which they chose to live? I have no proof save the knowledge of my first house, this house of sound and trembling atmospherics that reached under the table to penetrate the soul of a baby.

Later, deep in the post-war suburb of Glenelg, I would ask my father to play me to sleep at night. Since the nomenclature of the music was unknown to me I would hum the first few bars of favourite Beethoven sonatas, and he would oblige. In the suburbs the piano had moved from the idiosyncratic confines of the kitchen and its limitations as a concert stage to a more practical position in the living room and from this rarely used room the sounds drifted into my bedroom, into my bed, which he had painted with magic creatures and fairies, and into my soul. Each night he played Beethoven sonatas from an antique book on his mother's piano and I am made child again: whenever I hear the sounds of these sonatas. In the midst of a busy day I crawl into my house of sound to feel

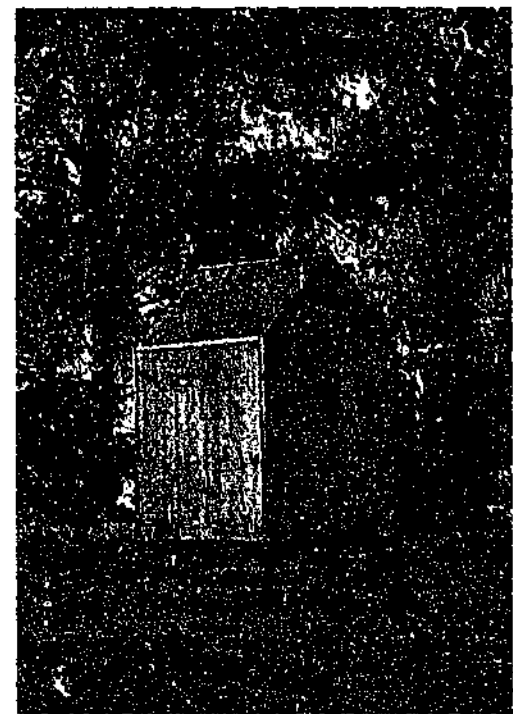


Plate no. 29 Karen Ward, *Hut*, 2001

the warmth to catch the imagined caress of the vibrating atmosphere, to dream, to muse, and no-one knows for I am happily solitary in my hut in the forest with the lighted candle at the window and the sounds of the horn echoing through the forest.

In October 2001 while attending a concert by the Welsh-born, American composer, musician and singer, John Cale, I became fixated by the shadow under the grand piano set on the bare stage and it reminded me of a D.H. Lawrence poem.

Piano

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me:
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong

To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.²⁵⁸

Singing around the piano was cheap entertainment in post-war Australia and exemplified the *make do* attitude of the day. Whatever Lawrence might have called it we called it a *singsong*. As a child attuned to classical music the rather florid playing of my aunt and the cloying sentimentality of the lyrics of the most popular songs were quite distasteful but there was in the mixing of male and female voices as they crowded around the piano a textural sound that had the same effect on me as the horn for Thoreau. This is the sound of family. An unselfconscious sound, an abandoned sound, a sound made from the sum total of everyone singing their hearts out irrespective of the general harmony. Occasionally my father would agree to play for the *singsong* but he lent an inevitable formality to the playing that made the singers anxious and more subdued and this memory leads me to recall another house of my childhood linked with a piano.

This mind-made house was created in response to the bastard piano, as my father called it, the one that could be played by anyone. All that was required was the tenacity and strength to peddle continuously. My father loathed it, this bastard piano, but on occasion with reasonable grace he would play it as a real piano complaining of the dreadful tone. The instrument that inspired the building of another ephemeral house of the imagination was the Pianola of my Aunt, Clarice Ruby Paine. In this house the Pianola was always associated with special occasions, feasting and other children. In the aftermath of a hearty lunch the men would disappear into the cavernous garden shed

²⁵⁸Lawrence, D.H. 1916. *New Poems*, 'Piano', <http://www.bartleby.com/128/21.html>, (5 August 2001, 1:39pm)

while the adult women cleared the table and washed the dishes in the literal house. Set free of parental supervision, in our own world, we played the machine relentlessly, each player taking turns to peddle until they begged to rest their aching muscles and then another would continue to press music from its desiccated memory. We would sing loudly following the printed words as they scrolled down. This was technology gone mad but high technology none-the-less. This was technology mocking the real piano. There was a sense of tyranny about this for family and guests alike particularly when popular music was more to the taste of visitors than Beethoven or Bach. My father saw the Pianola as the anti-Christ a vehicle for the delivery of nothing more than crass entertainment. A magic box with jiggling keys responding to muscle rather than touch. The Pianola was in fact a symptom of the rising cult of consumerism; in this case the magical qualities of music made over as business. Once the machine was purchased there was a voracious appetite created for new tunes to play. Cabinets were made to house the vast collections of Pianola rolls collected by households who could afford this technological marvel and new tunes were produced regularly for an audience of receptive consumers. But, like the home organ, this was a cul-de-sac for the music business rather than the mainstream. Records (the phonogram) and radio (wireless) proved vastly more popular. In his essay accompanying the catalogue *Sonic Boom: The Art of Sound* the British musician, writer and sound curator David Toop in tracing the influences and inspirations for contemporary sound noted this growing threat. 'Musical instruments such as the piano — embodiments of the aesthetic values of European art music — were threatened by challenges from the electrical world of the radio, the phonograph or the Theremin.'²⁵⁹ And while the Theremin did not remain a real threat, radio and record players confirmed their position in contemporary culture. David Toop in his catalogue essay reminds us that 'music is as ancient as human culture...Music marks death, marriage and other rites of passage, yet in a digital age musical production and participation are melting into the virtual sphere, leaving only nostalgic echoes of life when it was fleshy, physical and acoustically imperfect.'²⁶⁰ By the 1930s, according to *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the vogue for the Pianola originally patented in 1897 was in decline but on special occasions in Clarice Ruby's living room we were still pumping Stravinsky's *Etude for Pianola* and operatic marvels such as *Favourite Strains from Rigoletto* well into the late 1950s.²⁶¹

There is a piano embedded in my soul and I am not alone in falling under its spell. The piano inspired D.H. Lawrence to poetry and the American author Frank Conroy to write a novel called *Body and Soul*. Conroy set his novel in New York during the 1940s ostensibly to facilitate the telling of a story about a prodigious talent that blossomed into a concert pianist. In reality the book romances the piano as a character and creates for the author opportunities to explore the mathematics underlying the 12-tone method of composition pioneered by the Austrian-American composer Arnold Schoenberg, as opposed to the tonal composers like Chopin, Mozart and Beethoven favoured by my father.²⁶² Conroy was himself a jazz musician so it is not surprising that in his writing he cultivates opportunities to explore the aural landscape and structure of music. And as Wilfrid Blunt writes in *The Dream King* the piano can also be significant as a delusion. Princess Alexandra, Aunt to Ludwig II of Bavaria, held an 'unshakable conviction that she had once swallowed a grand piano made of glass.'²⁶³ This is a phantasmagoric image.

In her book *Sound Sculpture — intersections in sound and sculpture in Australian artworks*, the Australian sound artist and composer Ros Bandt looks at the relationship between musical instruments and artists and the sonic value that can be located within existing instruments and

²⁵⁹Toop, D. *Sonic Boom: The Art of Sound*, Hayward Gallery, London, 27 April - 18 June, 2000, p.118

²⁶⁰*Ibid.* p. 107

²⁶¹*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2002. 'Every ripple in history...' Standard Edition CD, Serial numbers: 720520052768

²⁶²Conroy, F. 1989. *Body & Soul*, Delta, New York

²⁶³Blunt, W. 1973. *The Dream King*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria, Australia, p.16

found objects. 'Musical instruments such as grand pianos are items of powerful social and cultural significance...this can be seen in Ross Bolleter's work with ruined pianos.' In reference to Bolleter's work with disintegrating and decaying pianos Bandt poses the question 'when does a piano cease to be a piano?'²⁶⁴ The grand piano has been a motif for Australian conceptual artist Ken Unsworth who, in his piece *Rapture* (1994), part of the collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, focuses on the grandeur of the elevated instrument with its seven key boards incapable of sound because it is stuffed with hay and burnt sheet music.²⁶⁵ Unsworth dedicates his ongoing studio investigation of the piano to his wife Elizabeth herself a classical pianist.

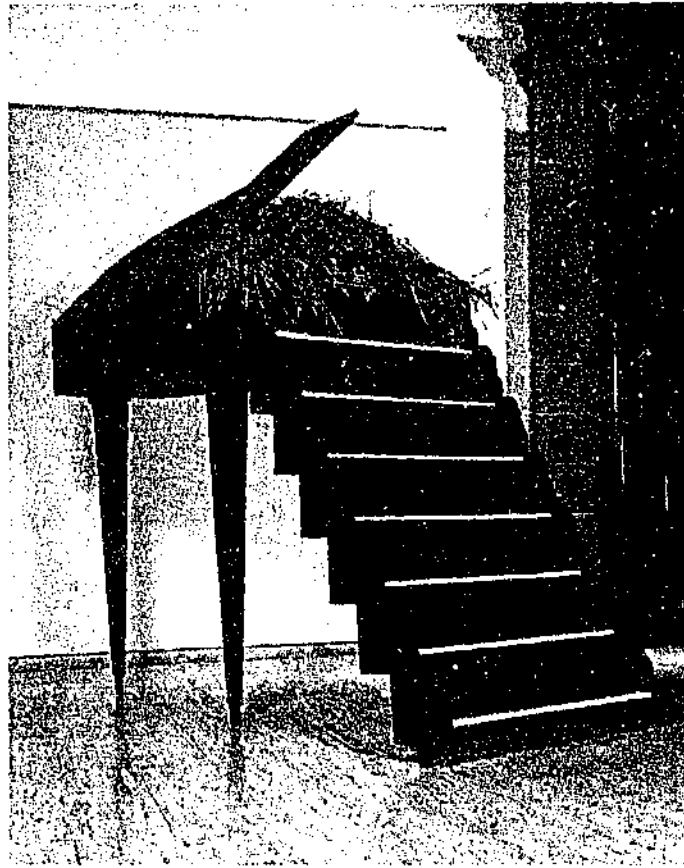


Plate no. 30 Ken Unsworth, *Rapture*, 1994

The German-born artist, Rebecca Horn, described by the Director of the Guggenheim Museum, SoHo, Thomas Krens, in 1993, at the time of the staging of her exhibition, *Rebecca Horn: The Inferno-Paradiso Switch*, as an artist who has built a career avoiding 'aesthetic categorization' went on to speak of the breadth of Horn's work as a

sculptor who devises surreal extensions to the human body, a performance artist who directs full-length feature films, a poet who constructs elaborate mechanical sculptures, Horn gracefully shifts from one creative genre to the next. Yet however interdisciplinary her work may seem, it is all finely interwoven; themes of human vulnerability, emotional fragility, and sexuality pervade the narrative that courses through and binds together each of her separate productions.²⁶⁶

And woven into her films and flights of mechanical fantasy is a sonic value whether it manifests as a

²⁶⁴Bandt, R. 2001. *Sound Sculpture: Intersections in sound and sculpture in Australian artworks*. Craftsman House, Sydney, pp. 40-41

²⁶⁵Smith, Jason and Kent, Rachel. Introduction, 'Contemporaries'. The Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne in association with the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1999, pp. 22-23

²⁶⁶Krens, Thomas. Foreword, 'Rebecca Horn'. Guggenheim Museum, SoHo, New York, 1994, p. 9

small mechanical piano in the film *Der Eintänzer*, a flight of thirty-six typewriters hung from the ceiling tapping out different rhythms in the installation *Chorus of the Locusts I* (*Chor der Heuschrecken I*, 1991), a full-size grand piano suspended, upside down from the ceiling in *Concert for Anarchy*, 1990, (or the same piano played obsessively in the film *Buster's Bedroom*, 1990), or a flight of mechanically played violins in the installation *River of the Moon: Room of Lovers* (*El río de la luna: Habitación des los*

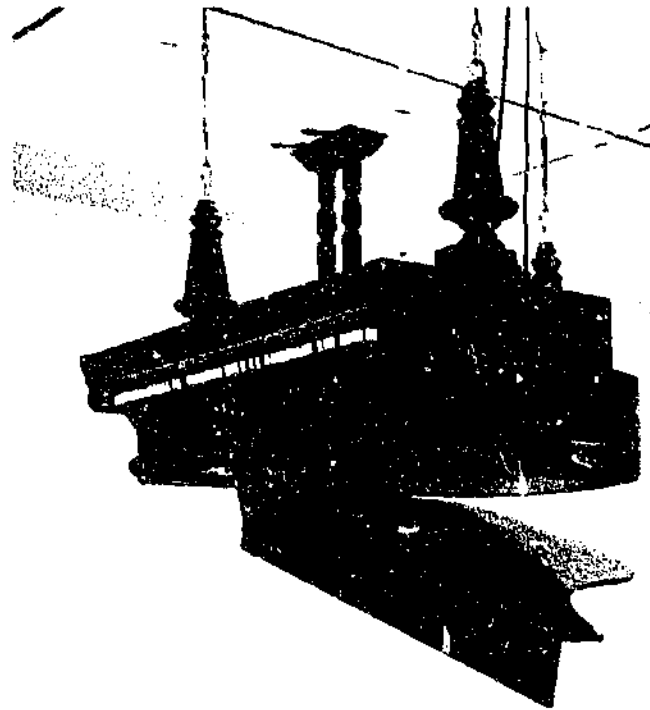


Plate no. 31 Rebecca Horn, *Concert for Anarchy*, 1990



Plate no. 32 Rebecca Horn, grand piano as it appears in the film, *Buster's Bedroom*, (1990)

amantes), 1992. Horn's work has a theatrical and rhythmical basis and often the pattern of sound is set by no more than the movement of her machines. But whatever sonic value or conventional music she uses the sound has an important psychological role to play in her work. Horn's work also draws inspiration from the surrealism of the Spanish film Director, Luis Bunuel, and the absurd and obsessive work of Buster Keaton whose life-long love of machines infects Horn's imagination. The curator Germano Celant, in his catalogue essay, *The Divine Comedy of Rebecca Horn*, says that Horn's work is

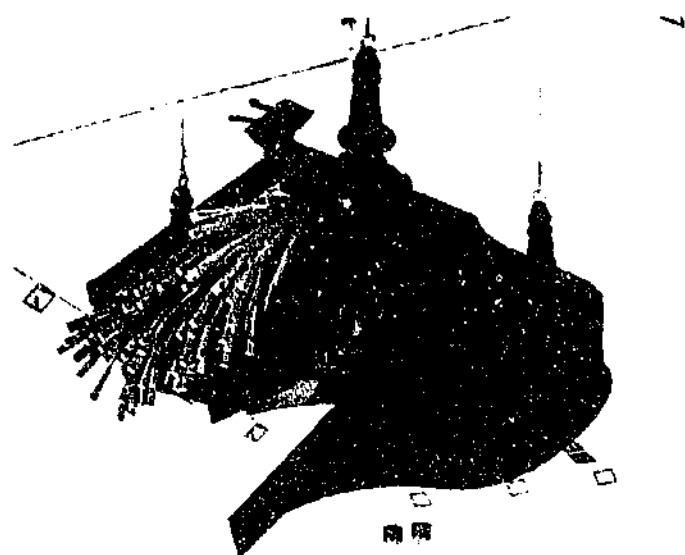


Plate no. 34 Rebecca Horn, *Floating Souls*, 1990



Plate no. 33 Rebecca Horn, *Rebel Moon (a lune rebelle)*, 1991

based on 'memory...malady and obsession...'³⁶⁷ Certainly memory and obsession are key ingredients in my practice although I don't share the interest in malady that Horn developed from her lengthy stay in a sanatorium as a young woman with respiratory illness.

The mystery of the child prodigy, the baby in the dark theatre under the kitchen table, the swallowed glass piano and the Pianola played by a ghostly presence are part of the particularly theatrical archive of gathered truths and day-dreams, ideas and images that travel with me providing shadows, moods and arbitrary templates that shape my vision and influence the making of my artworks. As Frank Conroy puts it 'Life happens to all of us. Art answers back.'³⁶⁸ Experiences, memories and daydreams mediate vision just as effectively as a camera or a proscenium arch that marks for an audience the actors space, the stage. On stage through the aegis of the arch a temporary landscape is created; an unreal world into which the audience ventures, leaving their real world behind for the period of the performance. But the conceptual notion of the real and unreal coalescing

³⁶⁷ Rebecca Horn, *Rebecca Horn: The Interior Paradise Switch*, Guggenheim Museum, SoHo, New York, 1994, p. 52

³⁶⁸ Conroy, F., 1997. Frank Conroy, Director, *The Workshop*, University of Iowa, <http://www.uiowa.edu/~www/frank.htm>, (8 April 2002, 10.36am)

simultaneously in time within a shared volume or space is intoxicating. This is a notion that extends my concept of theatre, stage and proscenium arch, tools of the unreal, as I project them into the real world where, for instance, the kitchen becomes a stage, a lens through which to experience aspects that reinforce our humanness. If we consider the realm of sound sculpture the concept of stage is endlessly liberated or melted into the real world and the concepts of structure, volume, form, time and space become abstract notions. In her exploration of contemporary issues in sound sculpture Ros Bandt speaks of the full and simultaneous engagement of the senses, the memories that might be released as a result of this sensual experience and the acknowledgement that the past and present can exist simultaneously.

The listener is challenged by the number of different signals and the quantity of sensory information that may emanate from the work. The artist shapes these strands in particular ways to be decoded simultaneously.

As duration of time is critical to the works, a sense of past and present can cohabit in the continuous present of the listening event²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹Bandt, R. 2001. *Sound Sculpture: Intersections in sound and sculpture in Australian artworks*. Craftsman House, Sydney, p. 12

SECTION 4
THE THEATRE OF THE HEART(H)

4.2 SHADOWS, MOODS AND MASKS

My father was not only a pianist but also a painter. He was of the self taught school with natural ability but he worked at painting and drawing with the same dedication he applied to the piano. A key influence for my father was the South Australian painter Horace Trener. The artist Jeffrey Smart in his memoir *Not Quite Straight* says of Trener that he was 'probably the best painter in South Australia...[and] a great character.'²⁷⁰ and Barry Pearce in his essay 'Out of Adelaide' in the catalogue for the *Jeffrey Smart retrospective* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1999 says of the artist 'Trener's emotional synthesis of landscape experience into paint, in the Adelaide hills and the Tuscan-like coastal village of Willunga, reached a pitch unmatched by any other plein-airist in Australia.'²⁷¹ My father had other influences, the painters Charles Conder and Walter Withers of the Australian Impressionist school and, further afield, the Fauves and their precursors the Nabis and the French painter Bonnard. My Father was a member and Fellow of the Royal South Australian Society of Arts and within his milieu he was well respected. He exhibited consistently in group and solos shows at the Royal Society of Arts and with his dealer Walter Wotzke at Hahndorf in the Adelaide hills. During his life he had no other dealer and between the two men there existed only a handshake agreement and yet there was never any bad blood. It was an arrangement that worked for them. Art, artists, painting trips to the Port Adelaide docks or the country were events as much in evidence as my father's music and yet somehow they distilled into 'the shed' where my father painted. All activity in 'the shed', was secretive, intimate, silent. In Bachelard's terms the shed was a shell into which my father withdrew and while he sojourned in the intimacy of the shell he was 'preparing a "way out" back to the sound-filled house.'²⁷² In this way he would slide back and forth between the two domains like a man with two completely separate lives. This duality invites a closer look at the relationship of music and art.

It is not uncommon for artists to be musicians or to have a particular interest in music (and the reverse), nor is this in any way a new phenomenon. David Toop in his catalogue essay for *Sonic Boom* at the Hayward Gallery, London, quotes the author Karin v. Maur in *The Sound of Painting* (1999) when she writes that musicians, composers and artists 'have frequently gleaned new ideas from an approximation to, or borrowings from, procedures used in the sibling art.'²⁷³ Toop goes further, alluding to multidisciplinary practices rather than simply allied practices saying 'sound art - sound combined with visual art practices - is not a novelty. Its relevance seems to grow as the material world fades to the immaterial, fluid condition of music.'²⁷⁴ However, long before we began to threaten our own corporeal presence with new technology capable of generating its own sound without a performer, artists and musicians were looking at ways to deconstruct image making and the stage by removing boundaries.

From the 'high art' echelon the most repeated example of this phenomenon was the Russian-born artist Wassily Kandinsky. In the creation of his lyrical abstract works and his geometric abstractions Kandinsky was in continual search for qualities that he found evident in the language of music. He saw in the language of music the ability to express ideas and to evoke deep emotions on an abstract plane and he wanted to develop a language of painting where line, colour and form, would perform in the same manner. He theorised that once his art was 'liberated from representational service...[he] was free to pursue those melodies of colour and rhythms of line which elicit "the response of the human soul."²⁷⁵ In 1911 as founder of *Der Blaue Reiter*, Kandinsky 'initiated an art of musical harmony and mystical fusion.'²⁷⁶ He experimented with new forms of notation for his music theories

²⁷⁰Smart, J. 1996. *Not Quite Straight: A memoir*. William Heinemann, Port Melbourne, Australia, p. 127

²⁷¹Barry Pearce, 'Out of Adelaide', Capon, E. 1999. *Jeffrey Smart Retrospective*. Art Gallery of New South Wales, p. 22

²⁷²Bachelard, G. 1994. Translation, Jolas, M. Foreword, John R. Stilgoe. *The Poetics of Space*. Beacon Press, Boston, p. 111

²⁷³Toop, D. 'Sonic Boom: The Art of Sound', Hayward Gallery, London, 2000, p. 107

²⁷⁴loc. cit.

²⁷⁵Leymarie, J. Translated by Emmons, J. 1959. *Fauvism*. Skira, Paris, p. 145

²⁷⁶loc. cit.

as they applied to his studio practice, documenting these ideas, among others, in his treatise *Point and Line to Plane* written in 1926. The American author and Professor of Art History Joseph Masheck, writing about the visual scores created by the contemporary American artist Germaine Keller, draws from Kandinsky's text referring to the author's theory on the use of repeated vertical lines in suites as a means of conveying 'primitive' or complex rhythms. Masheck likens the clustering of these parallel lines at different intervals to the appearance of the common barcode; a series of parallel vertical lines which when decoded quantifies the cost of a product.²⁷⁷ Kandinsky had no idea that he was creating the possibility of a language that would become the currency of the day in the fifty years after his death in 1944, although there would be less poetry in this new language of the retailer. Kandinsky was searching for a more abstract means of music notation drawing on the pictorial in an attempt to achieve a closer alliance with the poetic and the same can be said of his paintings in which

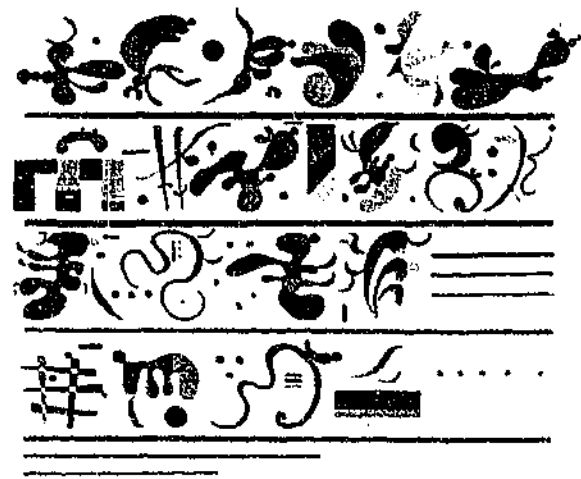


Plate no. 35 Wassily Kandinsky, *Succession*, 1935

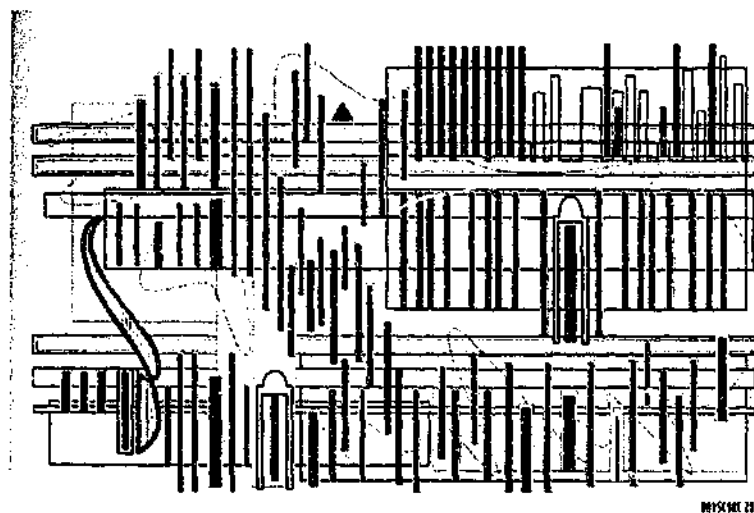


Plate no. 36 Germaine Keller, *Dayscore*, 202, circa 1990

he sought to use the purity of colour as a way of evoking for the viewer the stimulus of aural sound. And he was exploring these issues at much the same time as two important events were occurred. In 1921 the Austrian-American composer Arnold Schoenberg discovered the 12-tone method of composing music that, some four decades later, inspired Frank Conroy to write *Body and Soul* and in the year preceding Schoenberg's discovery the French composer and eccentric Erik Satie presented, in an art gallery, his first piece of *Musique d'Ameublement* (Furniture Music), "music not to be listened to", now seen as one of the beginnings of Ambient music.²⁷⁸ René Block in her lecture, 'Fluxus Music: an everyday event', a transcript of which is included within the catalogue for *Fluxus - A Long Tale with Many Knots - Fluxus in Germany 1962-1994* notes that Satie wanted the music to 'be like furniture in the

²⁷⁷Keller, G. Text by Masheck, J. 1999. *The Book of Scores*. St Marks Position Press, New York, p. 11

²⁷⁸Volta, O. Editor. 1996. *Atlas Arkhive Documents of the Avant-Garde Number: 5, Erik Satie: A Mamma's Notebook*. Atlas Press, London, p. 14

room, permanent and natural. The space itself [becoming] an important part of the composition.' In the thinking of these men, Kandinsky, Satie and Schoenberg, space and time, sound and environment were held to be important in the development of new music.²⁷⁹ They were engaged in the act of breaking down prevalent conventions albeit in different ways in search of new solutions for a modern society. And while this was happening in Europe, Australia was not without an inventive mind to lead the way. The Melbourne born composer and musician Percy Grainger may have been born sixteen years after Kandinsky and Satie and eight years after Schoenberg but from the beginning he demonstrated a keen interest in creating new ways to think about music. Ros Bandt refers to Grainger's interest in 'free music' and mechanical sound inventions in her book *Sound Sculpture: intersections in sound and sculpture in Australian artworks*. 'Sound sculpture' says Bandt, 'is an audio-visual, time dependent artform which has a history in Australia reaching back to the 1950s and before, with the works of Percy Grainger.'²⁸⁰ It was the environment that captured Grainger's attention and he invented machines on which to play his 'free music'. 'Grainger's early fascination with mechanical sound-emitting objects and machines began as early as 1890 when he was inspired by the lapping of the water at Albert Park and Brighton Beach in Melbourne and by the wind in the Adelaide Hills. He heard the environment and wanted to translate it into music.'²⁸¹ 'His sketch for 'Sea-Songs' Style, written in 1907 for piano and then in 1922 for Pianola, was a short piece calling for a different metre in every bar...This was his first example of beatless music, music he believed was best performed by machines...This seminal piece redefines music as sound design...'²⁸²

Joseph Masheck in *The Book of Scores* refers to Schoenberg's experimentation with 'pictographic symbols' as he explored approaches to notation.²⁸³ Erik Satie was no less interested in new forms of music and notation of music and he conducted his explorations very much as an individual. The writer Ornella Volta writes that despite his strongly held independence from any group or movement 'at different times a wide range of schools including Symbolism, Cubism, Neo-Classicism, Dada, Surrealism, conceptual art, repetitive music, minimalism, Fluxus, New Age, and Ambient music, have seen him as one of theirs.'²⁸⁴ 'Satie never wrote an opera or large symphonic work. His writings are rarely more than one page long...and his true model was the business letter.'²⁸⁵ In using the 'keep it short' sentiment of the business letter as a model for music composition Satie places himself less in the mystic and poetic camp and more in the theatre of the absurd and the ironic. He once sent himself a letter making an appointment with himself for the following day and 'he carefully presented to himself his own day dreams, by writing them up in the style of small advertisements.'²⁸⁶ Satie published many of his advertisements and others were archived behind his piano. He fantasised about castles and grand houses built entirely of cast iron creating word images and floor plans to make real his imaginings. (see overleaf) In his essay for *Sonic Boom* David Toop writes that Satie's love of brevity can be seen clearly in *Vexations*. His

use of stasis and repetition, heard in *extremis* in *Vexations*, his piano piece of one short phrase repeated 840 times, was a rejection of the grand stories of romanticism. Music was allowed to stand still, to dwell in one place until both performer and listeners were enveloped in trance and each sound was mutated

²⁷⁹Rene Block, *Fluxus Music: an everyday event*. Block, R., Knapstein, G. and Bodenmüller, C., 'Fluxus - A Long Tale with Many Knots - Fluxus in Germany 1962-1994', Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart, 1997, p. 34

²⁸⁰Bandt, R. 2001. *Sound Sculpture: Intersections in sound and sculpture in Australian artworks*. Craftsman House, Sydney, p. 12

²⁸¹*ibid.* p. 50

²⁸²*loc. cit.*

²⁸³Keller, G. Text by Masheck, J. 1999. *The Book of Scores*. St Marks Position Press, New York, p. 13

²⁸⁴Volta, O. Editor. 1996. *Atlas Arkhive Documents of the Avant-Garde Number 5, Erik Satie: A Mamma's Notebook*. Atlas Press, London, p.9

²⁸⁵*ibid.* p. 11

²⁸⁶*ibid.* p. 10

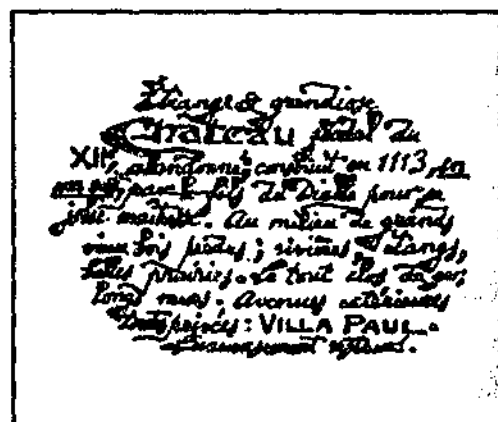


Plate no. 37 Erik Satie, *Strange, Grandiose, Feudal Castle*, date unknown

by human perception, rather than the composer's will. With *Vexations* Satie was creating a kind of machine or installation.²⁸⁷

Satie looked at everything in new and novel ways. 'With Satie, something begins that we could describe as "conceptual music". And the beginnings of "visual music" lie here too'²⁸⁸ writes René Block.

Schoenberg and Satie were cited as influences by Fluxus the beginnings of which can be traced back to a festival organised by George Maciunas in West Germany in 1962 including in its first offering "action music" pieces and "happenings," "...events" and compositions of "concrete music."²⁸⁹ 'Given its many diverse sources and forms of expression, Fluxus repeatedly eluded ultimate attempts at definition and definitive art historical categorization.'²⁹⁰ However Block, Knapstein and Bodenmüller who curated and prepared the exhibition *Fluxus - A Long Tale with Many Knots - Fluxus in Germany 1962 - 1994* have researched what they believe is a satisfactory reference for Fluxus.

If one searches contemporary thought for concepts that might characterize the unsystematic, intermediary and ephemeral nature of Fluxus, one encounters, for example, the concept of the "rhizome", taken from Botany by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The "rhizome", so the philosopher and the psychoanalyst describe in their book "A Thousand Plateaus", "can take on the most disparate forms, from a branch spreading in all directions on the surface to a compression in bulbs and tubercles..." 'A rhizome is neither a beginning nor an end, it is always in the middle, between things, a connection, intermezzo...'²⁹¹

Block proffers 'the assertion that Fluxus, like no other direction in modern art, has transformed the understanding and the meaning of music and has visualized musical forms.'²⁹² The American composer/performer John Cage was a lynchpin in the ideas armoury of Fluxus. Block cites an interview in which Maciunas summarises the role of Cage. 'We have the idea of indeterminacy and simultaneity and concretism and noise coming from Futurism... Then we have the idea of Ready-made and concept art coming from Marcel Duchamp. Okay, we have the idea of collage and concretism coming from Dadaists... They all end up with John Cage with his prepared piano, which is really a collage of sounds.'²⁹³ The highly original Cage studied music under Arnold Schoenberg and began composing using the 12-tone method gradually moving from atonal music to more experimental ideas using his 'prepared piano' — 'a piano modified by objects placed between its strings in order to produce

²⁸⁷Toop, D. *Sonic Boom: The Art of Sound*. Hayward Gallery, London, 2000, p. 109.

²⁸⁸René Block. *Fluxus Music: an everyday event*. Block, R., Knapstein, G. and Bodenmüller, C. *Fluxus - A Long Tale with Many Knots - Fluxus in Germany 1962-1994*. Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart, 1997, p. 34

²⁸⁹*ibid.* p. 4

²⁹⁰*ibid.* p. 5

²⁹¹*ibid.* p. 34

²⁹²*ibid.* p. 30

²⁹³*ibid.* p. 34

percussive and otherworldly sound effects²⁹⁴ Cage was already confident of his ideas by the time he met Maciunas. In his works he included chance or aleatoric possibilities and he communicated these ideas to the American choreographer Merce Cunningham with whom he collaborated for many years.

Cage sensed where music and sound were going. The Fluxus movement proposed musical events that questioned all definitions of music, using settings that relocated art into unfamiliar, absurd and even impossible environments. Pianos were fed hay or demolished guitars were dragged along the streets of New York.²⁹⁵ Cage's pivotal composition (4' 33'') was inspired by Zen Buddhism, by his experience in the Harvard University anechoic chamber where he heard the sounds of his own nervous system and circulating blood which led him to the conclusion that silence did not exist²⁹⁶ Cage was a liberator crashing through constraints and pioneering new ideas in music and music notation. And

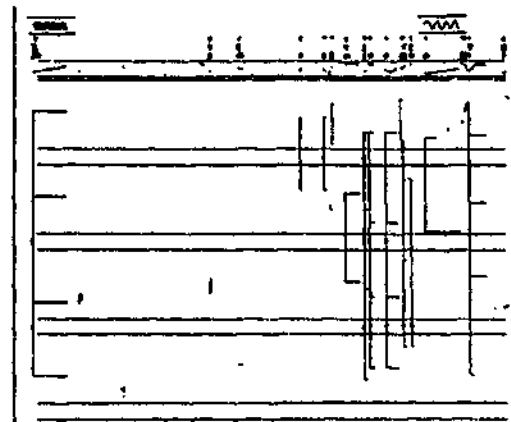


Plate no. 38 John Cage, 26'1.1499'', 1955

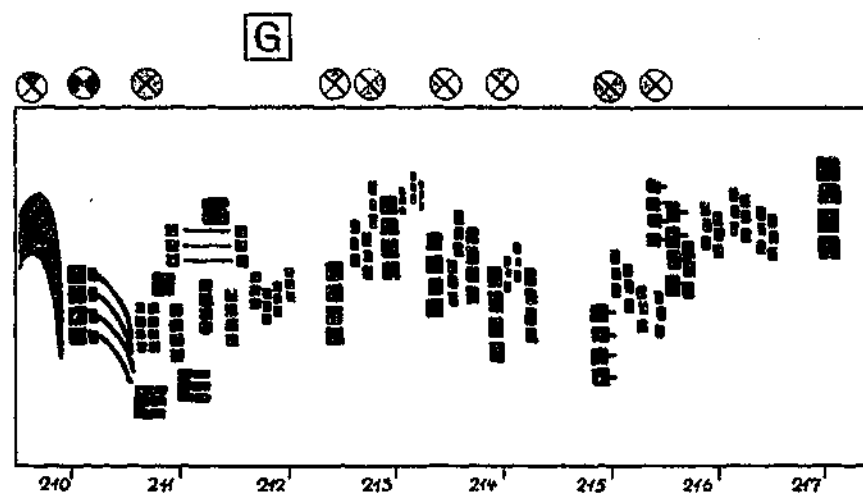


Plate no. 39 Gyorgy Ligeti, Score for Artikulation (detail), 1958

when he finished others continued using his legacy as a point of departure.

In time the influence of Fluxus flowed to Australia and over the next decade the ideas and the individual artists resonated in this country rather than the name Fluxus. There was the memorable performance of Charlotte Moorman playing the cello as she sat naked on a block of ice on the plaza of the Adelaide Festival Centre during the 1976 Adelaide Festival, and Nam June Paik, John Cage, and Merce Cunningham made their mark in different but often no less shocking ways. A small contingent of Fluxus artists participated in the 3rd Biennale of Sydney, *European Dialogue*, in 1979 including Nam

²⁹⁴Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2002. 'Every ripple in history...', Standard Edition CD, Serial numbers:720520052768

²⁹⁵Toop, D. Sonic Boom: The Art of Sound'. Hayward Gallery, London, 2000, p. 116

²⁹⁶ibid. p. 114

June Paik, Daniel Spoerri, Joseph Beuys, George Brecht, and John Cage, and the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide staged performances and screened films and videos of the work of various artists involved with or inspired by Fluxus. We could not remain unchanged. I collaborated with the New Music composer and Lecturer in Music at the University of Adelaide, Malcolm Fox in 1975 on a piece of 'audio-financial' theatre for the 1975 Come Out Festival based at the Adelaide Festival Centre. The piece took equal billing with a work by John Cage for transistor radios. It was hoped that Malcolm and I would continue this sound collaboration within this project (albeit with a thirty six year pause) but sadly Fox died a year before I attempted contact on the subject in 1999. Fox wrote about the collaboration in 1976 saying that the creative process had the ability to amaze – 'a series of disconnected ideas, a decision taken on impulse - often seem to weld themselves together in an artistic unity in a way which is seldom apparent at the time.' Collaborations based on the game of chess and 'musical games' were not new. For instance John Cage and Marcel Duchamp collaborated on a giant electronic chess board 'in which the movement of pieces triggered electronic sounds and there are many other examples across the arts.'²⁹⁷ Fox composed a three movement framework ingeniously acknowledging the sponsor of the festival, the then Savings Bank of South Australia, which listed sixty four suburban branches in their 1974 annual report - addresses and telephone numbers of the branches, for instance, were coded into music but the musicians were in the final analysis dependent on



Plate no. 40 Malcolm Fox/Greer Honeywill, *Cheque-Mate*, 1975

the chance moves of the 'chess pieces' and the resulting confrontation on the board and on the stage. George Maciunas wrote in his manifesto *Neo-Dada in the United States* that:

everyday actions, objects and sounds that occur accidentally and spontaneously are to be accepted unchanged. Instead of setting down a composition, it is incumbent upon the artist to create the "framework" alone "in which nature is left to develop its form in its own way." Obviously, in so doing, the separation of art into genres such as literature, painting, sculpture and music is given up in favour of an all-encompassing "space-time continuum."²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷Fox, M. 1976. 'Cheque-Mate: An Experiment in Audio-financial Music-theatre'. *ASEA Bulletin*, May 1976, National Office, Torrens College of Advanced Education, Underdale, SA, p.7

²⁹⁸Toop, D. 'Sonic Boom: The Art of Sound', Hayward Gallery, London, 2000, p. 21

The Melbourne artist Robert Rooney is a further example of both the artist/musician and the influence of Cage and his contemporaries.

I'd always been mad about music from as early as I can remember. From age eight to eleven, I used to fill manuscript books with pretend music, or play on my Tonette, a plastic ocarina-like instrument, or a set of blocks with tuned bells inside which shook. When I was twelve on a holiday in Gippsland I used to pretend I was playing the piano in a communal games room of a holiday place with cottages and I think an early caravan park. Somebody there heard me and suggested that I should learn the piano.²⁹⁹

The piano came in the form of a Christmas gift in 1949 and classical lessons began. 'I wanted to be a composer' he told the poet and critic Gary Catalano in an interview for Catalano's book *Building a Picture*.³⁰⁰ At fourteen Rooney participated in an Eisteddfod but did not enjoy the experience. 'I couldn't stand all the mothers with hot-water bottles complaining that this particular eisteddfod didn't give money as a prize.'³⁰¹ But Rooney did not give up music instead he independently developed his interest in contemporary music including the innovative composers Satie and Schoenberg rather than the classical composers and later the work of Cage.³⁰² Rooney also developed his interest in jazz 'experimenting with the notion of combining jazz with elements of contemporary music' something he focused on in the late 50s as he completed his visual art studies.³⁰³ In 1963 Rooney met the jazz trumpeter Barry McKimm at a Melbourne jazz club along with bass player, Syd Clayton and the three began to work together writing, performing and recording. They did this until the late 1960s when Rooney began to place his primary focus on painting. During the early 60s Rooney was interested in indeterminacy and chance music or aleatoric music using the experience of composers such as Cage as an impetus for his own highly original improvisations. 'In 1964, Rooney wrote his first graphic score, *Synops*; this piece clearly indicates what would become Rooney's general approach to indeterminacy; scores that allowed for freedom within a tightly notated framework.'³⁰⁴ In surveying the legacy of the

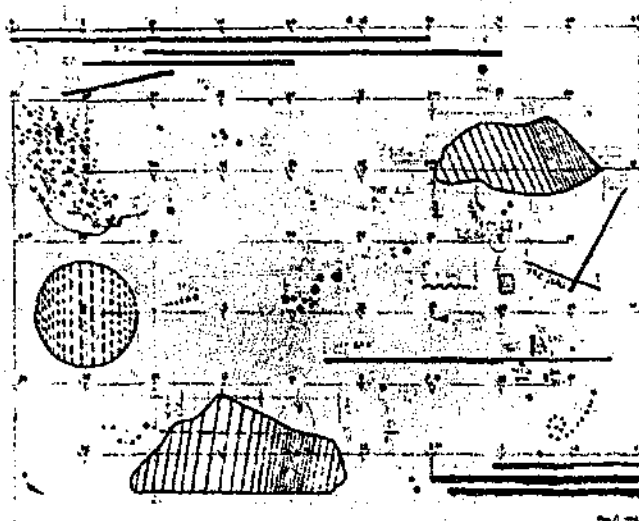


Plate no. 41 Robert Rooney, *Score: Parts/Second Landscape for instruments*, 25 April 1968

²⁹⁹Rooney, R. (1998) Interview, 6 November

³⁰⁰Catalano, G. 1997. *Building a Picture: Interviews with Australian Artists*. McGraw Hill, Australia, p. 68

³⁰¹*ibid.* p. 68

³⁰²John Whiteoak, *Robert Rooney and the McKimm/Rooney/Clayton Music Collaboration: Melbourne: 1960s*. Duncan, J. Curator, 'From The Homefront: Robert Rooney works 1953-1988', Monash University Gallery, Clayton, Victoria, 1990, p. 17

³⁰³*ibid.* p. 6

³⁰⁴*ibid.* p. 17

McKimm/Rooney/Cayton collaboration the author Dr John Whiteoak in his catalogue essay for the Robert Rooney retrospective *From the Homefront* says 'they represent an outstanding cutting edge in a jazz environment which, up to that particular time, all too often compromised unashamed and direct style imitation'.³⁰⁵

As curator of the exhibition *Sonic Boom* David Toop brought together artists with a 'commitment to working with sound'...who 'articulate physical space' in their works which were shown, heard and experienced at the Hayward Gallery in London in 2000.³⁰⁶ Toop maintains that 'music of the past 100 years has been characterized by a feeling of immersion. Musical boundaries have spread until they are no longer clear. Music has become a field, a landscape, an environment, a scent, an ocean.' An ocean Toop sees as restlessly fuelled by rapid developments in technology, media, cinema and the full sonic possibilities of our everyday environment. One of the best-known artists in the exhibition is the British composer, visual artist, performer, and producer (for musicians like David Bowie, John Cale and U2) Brian Eno. Eno is a pioneer of Ambient music which he describes as 'an environmental tint, a background that could be listened to at various levels of attention or simply ignored'.³⁰⁷ Eno, like other artists in *Sonic Boom*, is now interested in generative music, 'compositions that are not precisely specified in advance but which create themselves continually and without repetition'.³⁰⁸ Eno's sound, video and light installations have been exhibited at the Venice Biennale, and the Center Georges Pompidou, Paris. With Eno and the other artists selected for *Sonic Boom* Toop was searching for the experiential, a total engagement of the senses and all that such a state implies in time, memory, and space.

Fluxus was largely unknown to the conservative post-war middle class living in the suburbs in the mid 60s although mass production techniques united the suburbs with art in ways never considered by the artist; such as the vogue for mass produced Kandinsky prints. Robert Rooney wrote an essay for *Cinema Papers* published in July 1987, pp. 26-27, in which he talks about works of art discovered as part of the set decoration or plot of popular television sitcoms. He cites an episode of *Mr Ed* in which the subject of abstract art is raised and one of the characters is given an abstract painting that Rooney says 'looks suspiciously like a Kandinsky'.³⁰⁹ In the late 50s and 60s television had the power to set values and benchmarks of acceptability within a cultural or social context a situation that has not changed today. The press and electronic media as information, infotainment and entertainment remain powerful cultural indicators and a heady societal drug.

I have strayed a long way from Bachelard and the horn but aspects of the poetic and daydreams journey with me as I call upon this strange lineage of music, sound, performance and art that stretches from the kitchen sonatas to John Cage and on to the construction of the sound for this project and the presentation of my artworks in the theatre of the white box. In the meantime artists like Germaine Keller continue to create imagery that looks like a score but cannot be played, while others make mute instruments that were once capable of a sonic value and yet others create landscapes from the cacophony of our everyday environment, sound that is then liberated to reproduce itself without repetition until the equipment breaks down.

³⁰⁵ John Whiteoak, *Robert Rooney and the McKimm/Rooney/Cayton Music Collaboration: Melbourne: 1960s*. Duncan, J. Curator. 'From The Homefront: Robert Rooney works 1953-1988', Monash University Gallery, Clayton, Victoria 1990, p. 20

³⁰⁶ Toop, D. *Sonic Boom: The Art of Sound*, Hayward Gallery, London, 2000, p. 16

³⁰⁷ *ibid.* p. 120

³⁰⁸ *ibid.* p. 39

³⁰⁹ Duncan, J. Curator. 'From The Homefront: Robert Rooney works 1953-1988', Monash University Gallery, Clayton, Victoria 1990, p. 33

SECTION 4
THE THEATRE OF THE HEART(H)

4.3 ASPECTS OF PLACE

In this chapter I explore the spirit of place and space and in particular the notion of a specifically designated space that has the potential to change. I focus on the idea of ordinary space that is capable of becoming *the other*, space that lives in the imagination, space that transmogrifies into magical or theatrical space by the consensual activity that occurs within that space. In this charged domain there is the possibility of chance occurrence — the aleatory. While the mind is ranging over the current and famous artist/musicians such as David Bowie, Brian Ferry, the individual members of Australian band *Mental as Anything*, and Reg Mombassa in particular, I move from the poetic capability of music and sound to fully engage the senses to the idea of place and space as equally potent inspirations for narrative and the engagement of the senses.

For inspiration I draw on an artist of a different kind. The winner of the prestigious Pritzker Prize, an international award presented to an architect. This award, writes Australian journalist Joe Rollo, places the architect 'on the world stage alongside some of the great architects of the twentieth-century. He joins the likes of Philip Johnson, Tadao Ando, Renzo Piano, Luis Barrágan, Sir Norman Foster and Frank Gehry.'³¹⁰ I refer to the Australian architect Glenn Murcutt who was awarded the Pritzker Prize in 2002. Glenn Murcutt spoke to me about the relationship of the individual to the vast landscape of our country. In his opinion we seek to identify place in order to locate ourselves within the landscape. 'Prospect and refuge are necessary components of place'³¹¹ says Murcutt.

Placed in a field, the tablecloth defines place. In an open field with a basket of food, where do I go to make a place? A tree, maybe, or a clearing...Each time we put down a cloth it separates the edible from the inedible. Establishes place. Shadow can define place. Shadow from an umbrella or a tree. Shadow in sunlight equals place. A tree equals place, a secure place. Pattern equals security.³¹²

These are spiritual and poetic ideas and Murcutt applies this thinking to the creation of place and enclosure investing one particular space within the paradigm of shelter with its full theatrical potential. 'A kitchen is like a stage set. It is not complete without people. When it is empty it lies in waiting.'³¹³ Given an overlay of Louise Bourgeois' poisonous ideas of 'home and family' and the views of Virginia Woolf these words take on the hue of the abject, as if the kitchen itself is a predator and on occasion within this project that has indeed been my argument. But Murcutt in no way invokes the abject. He is full of enthusiasm for the theatre and community of family. 'In the kitchen, chairs in a group are place' says Murcutt.

In 1974 I designed a kitchen that I can't better [Marie I. Short house, Crescent Head, NSW, purchased by Murcutt in 1980]. It has a bench like a table. A communicative place. One must smell the cooking. People often ask about the mess — it's not mess but things out of place. For the moment. Lights focus on kitchen activity and then when we move to the dining table the lights are off in the kitchen and on over the dining table. Involvement is important. The ideal is an environment where everyone pitches in without formality. Great events, great celebrations of life, happen in this space.³¹⁴

³¹⁰Rollo, J. 2002 'A worthy addition to the ranks of the great'. *The Sunday Age (Agenda)*, 12 May, p. 4

³¹¹Murcutt, G. (1998) Interview, 28 October

³¹²*ibid.*

³¹³*ibid.*

³¹⁴*ibid.*

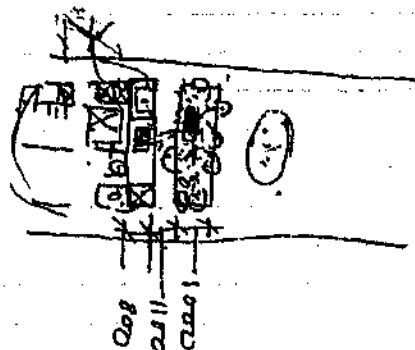


Plate no. 42 Glenn Murcutt, 'In 1974 I designed a kitchen I can't better', 1999



Plate no. 43 Glenn Murcutt, Section of Kitchen, Crescent Head, 1974

In his Hayward Gallery exhibition, David Toop included the English artists/composers/performers *Greyworld* who work with 'found, recuperated and remembered sound'. Their interactive installations encourage an audience to become participators by generating, listening and reacting to sounds extracted from the everyday environment.³¹⁵ Glenn Murcutt hears acutely the sounds that emanate from the environment (natural and man-made) and when I asked him if he associated any particular sound with the domestic kitchen he waxed near onomatopœic.

The kitchen is alive with sound. Steam from a cappuccino machine, water boiling, the crackling of food frying in woks, the sound of wood on timber, beating, pounding, and cutting. The click clack of pots, the sounds of rapid movement. Turning and lifting of food, sliding pots on the cook top, doors opening, cutlery drawers, metal implements on timber, glasses, the corking of bottles, the glugging sound as you pour wine. The sound of metal touching glass as it does when I spoon out chilli paste. The "splop" from bottles, the sound of cans being opened, metal on metal, the pop of the beer as you lift the cap. You hear people cursing sometimes. You hear people tasting, sniffing, smelling food. Footsteps, talking, doors opening, fridge opening. Sounds of the floor. Sounds of garbage lids, plastic or tin lids, water taps turning, topping up, beating, rolling, patting things down. Natural sounds like wind. The sounds of sun expanding metal. Trees touching windows. The sound of an extraction fan. The 'song' of slicing.³¹⁶

Murcutt's words are full of the 'sensible' and the 'poetic'; ideals he holds close in his work. And his comments were optimistic for great communion in the theatre of his perfect kitchen.³¹⁷

In this place where many of our cultural myths arise I have found a theatre of sound, a theatre of the performative and physical theatre. The interaction between my parents, the productivity, bustle and aromas of my mother's baking days, the tears for my lost goldfish as it flapped about on the linoleum floor gasping for air when the tip of the hot iron collided with the fishbowl (in the post-war suburban house, where else was one to iron but in the kitchen?). And there were rare and wild occasions when the kitchen table and chairs were taken outside altogether and neighbours would

³¹⁵Toop, D. *Sonic Boom: The Art of Sound*, Hayward Gallery, London, 2000, p. 46

³¹⁶Murcutt, G. (1998) Interview, 28 October

³¹⁷Wilmoth, P. 2002. 'The Tin Man', *The Sunday Age (Agenda)*, 12 May, p. 1

arrive; the women in swirling circular skirts and petticoats. The radio would blare to the Caller's commands and in this way the kitchen was transformed in a moment into a miniature dance hall for the parading square dancers. The space so tiny; this was surely my first theatre of the absurd. There was much hilarity, much bumping and colliding, beer drinking and smoking. The absurdity of my father, suburban doyen of the high arts, attempting this folly in the kitchen to the strains of country and western music that he detested embroidered a lasting image. And I can see myself sitting cross-legged on the floor in the hallway, out of harm's way, my hair in small white plaits, looking up as the women swirled and the men leered.

Barry Pearce lived in a suburban house very like the house of my childhood. We lived similar lives, as much as anyone can, in separate suburbs and ended up in the same course at the South Australian School of Art. In the suburbs the houses were small but the memories were often large; stretched wide like the screen in a cinema. Pearce in several instances expressed amazement at 'the smallness of the space that was the kitchen and yet there were visitors' he said. 'Conversations always took place in the kitchen. Sometimes there were six or seven people in the kitchen at the one time. Often playing cards.'¹⁸ Pearce, like me, had a somewhat strained relationship with his mother, a situation that still causes him pain. With a sense of atonement he has preserved memories of his mother that remain quite filmic; not unusual since the major escapism of the 50s and the early 60s was film.

Cinemas in Australia were scaled and decorated in a grand and opulent manner often with a fantastical or exotic sensibility. They were highly decorated places of distraction, entertainment and unimaginable comfort. This was not home; this was quite another place a dream palace. In Australia everyone wanted to be a movie star. And it seemed all movie stars were smokers. Smoking had an extremely sexy and liberating aura and looking now at old movies of the time the amount of smoking was extraordinary. The young Barry Pearce was susceptible to a little glamour.

My mother was a smoker. I remember her sitting at the table with a cigarette in her mouth and the smoke drifting up through her glasses. I liked watching her at these times. She seemed larger than life...like a film star. In that little kitchen we would have gambling nights. The visitors would sit around the table betting, thinking, and smoking. And the room would fill with smoke. Like something out of Dostoevsky's *The Gambler*...I still love being with smokers because it reminds me of her. Sometimes she would be sitting at the green Laminex table and smoking. She would ask me something then pause followed by a suck on her cigarette. The slow and deliberate sequence made her look like Einstein. I feel sad at the passing of the cigarette.

For Pearce the kitchen became a film set in which his beautiful, glamorous, card-playing mother was the star. 'You should read Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*...the detailed descriptions will remind you of the area you are exploring. And the Russian plays. They're all about the kitchen'¹⁹ Pearce advised. My mind wandered to Chekhov and the plays with which I was familiar, *The Seagull*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *Three Sisters* and on to Russian theatre design, a particular interest during drama studies in the 60s. The cinematic image of Pearce's mother in the kitchen at the Laminex table could have flowed directly from the Naturalism concept born at the Moscow Art Theatre founded by Konstantin Stanislavsky

¹⁸Pearce, B. (1998) Interview. 28 October

¹⁹*ibid.*

and Vladimir Nemirovitch in the dying stages of the nineteenth-century. Kenneth Rowell, the late Australian stage designer, believed that it was a 'paradox' that modern stage design and to a certain extent direction was so clearly rooted in the Russian theatre when such freethinking and invention seemed out of step with a totalitarian regime.³²⁰ Russia seemed a crucible of rich and often conflicting ideas. The famed Artistic Director of the Ballets Russes, Serge Pavlovich Diaghilev, also had a great effect on early twentieth-century stage design. Diaghilev believed in striking the 'perfect balance of dance, music and painting as a collective whole' and in his early years managed to attain a purity of ideas that became increasingly hard to achieve as audiences forced him to attend to the constant thrill of the new for his dance company.³²¹ And Kandinsky reappears in his search for 'melodies of colour and rhythms of line which elicit "the response of the human soul"'³²² Kandinsky's place in the history of art overshadows his deep and abiding love of the theatre and his search for what he saw as the basis for theatre of the future — a democratic balance between sound, colour and movement. 'In his longer essay *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1914), Kandinsky set out in complex intellectual terms how this theatre, based on spirituality rather than materiality, could be constructed.'³²³ In 1922 when Kandinsky took up a teaching appointment at the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany, he tested his ideas with Oskar Schlemmer who was the head of Theatre Studies.³²⁴ At the Bauhaus there was interest in a wide range of theories for the theatre of the future. Ideas included projections, light theatre and especially the possible range of movements of the human body, metaphysical movement and the transformation of the figure into 'walking' or 'human architecture'. In 1925 Schlemmer explored the range of human movement through a series of drawings which he called figurines and in 1926 he created a dance diagram (choreographic notation) for a 'gesture dance' that looks surprisingly like a precursor to a John Cage pictorial music score or a choreographic notation for a Merce Cunningham dance. Schlemmer noted in his diary on May 1929 that he had 'as much awe as respect for any kind of action of the human body, particularly on stage, this special world of life, of make-believe, this second reality in which everything is enveloped by the radiance of magic.'³²⁵ The theories of the Bauhaus distilled into ideas which rather than providing a proscriptive solution to the future became a source of inspiration on a world scale³²⁶ (see overleaf). The American musician John Cage and the American dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham for instance, were both influenced by the Bauhaus; most likely by teachers who moved from Germany to America during the Nazi period. The young Cunningham honed his ability working as a soloist with the legendary dancer and choreographer Martha Graham leaving her company in 1945 to begin a long association with Cage and later to establish his own company built on his approach to movement. Cunningham developed a unique language of movement for his dancers that arose from his interest in the abstract qualities of movement explored at the Bauhaus, movement as pattern and architecture and the development of dance using aleatoric or chance sequences of movement dictated by the toss of a coin. His works frequently placed his athletic dancers on a bare stage in the simplest of costumes, lit often by a drenching even light. For Cunningham nothing was to interfere with the experience of the patterns of movement arising from dictated chance devoid of sentimentality, emotion and narrative.

While the modernist post-war suburban landscape gradually took shape (borrowing ideas from the Bauhaus without realising) and rural Australia sat squarely on the sheep's back, an ocean away a war-weary Britain was beginning to rebuild from the destruction of World War II its artists and writers searching in the rubble for truth and reality. It has been said that the task of rebuilding was

³²⁰Rowell, K. 1968. *Stage Design*. Studio Vista, London/Reinhold Art Paperback, New York, p. 13

³²¹*ibid.* p. 16

³²²Leymarie, J. Translated by Emmons, J. 1959. *Fauvism*. Skira, Paris, p. 145

³²³Encyclopaedia Britannica. 2002. 'Every ripple in history...'. Standard Edition CD, Serial numbers: 720520052768

³²⁴Bitterberg, Karl-Georg. Editor of the Australian version, *Bauhaus*, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart, in conjunction with the Visual Arts Board, Australia Council for the Arts, 1975, p. 27

³²⁵*ibid.* p. 85

³²⁶*ibid.* pp. 52 - 55

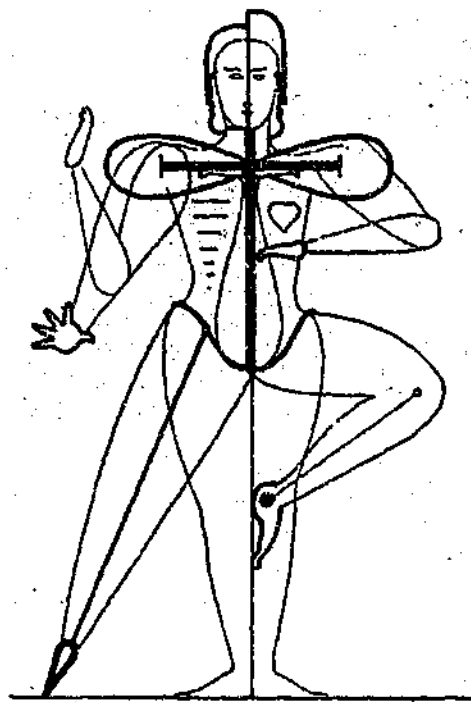


Plate no. 44 Oskar Schlemmer, *Figure 'De-materialization' (Metaphysical Form of Expression)*, 1925

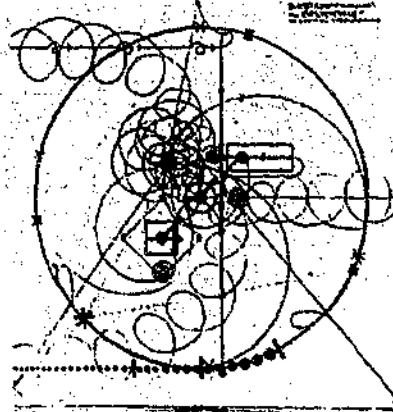


Plate no. 45 Oskar Schlemmer, *Dance Diagram for Gesture Dance*, 1926

so vast that the arts were rebuilt before the architecture. The arts as a form of escapism were capable of feeding the soul of the British public and capable of creating a distraction from harsher realities. In this climate it was not unexpected that the focus of theatre would be on

Revivals of well-tried successes, elegant comedies and worthy productions of the classics...The theatre was basking in a late Romantic twilight but it was suspected that the theatre of the future would be different. In England the new playwrights - as yet unheralded — were preparing for an onslaught on the rigid monopolies of the commercial theatre.³²⁷

And the British playwright John Osborne was key among the onslaught. Like John Brack in Australia the British new guard saw truth in the everyday struggle for existence and they often focused squarely on the more squalid aspects of survival rather than the distractions of the romantic or baroque. The British writer and critic Andrew Graham-Dixon sees this focus as giving rise to, 'dyspeptic memorials to bedsitland, to the milieu of the stained lavatory and the table piled high with

³²⁷Rowell, K. 1968 *Stage Design*. Studio Vista, London/Reinhold Art Paperback, New York, p. 35

dishes...³²⁸ Because of their preoccupation with 'dirt, dinginess and seediness'³²⁹ four British painters, John Bratby, Derrick Greaves, Edward Middleditch and Jack Smith, were labelled derisively, the *Kitchen Sink School*.³³⁰ And with the first performance of John Osborne's, *Look Back in Anger*, in 1956, the term *Kitchen Sink Theatre* was born and this term would take on a particular sense of irony during the 1967 rehearsals of his play in an insignificant post-war suburban kitchen in Glenelg, Australia.

Barry Pearce shared with me an interest in theatre in the 60s and early 70s a time when Adelaide had a fine reputation for quality theatre. Pearce worked on occasion for *Theatre 62*, a respected contemporary theatre in Adelaide appearing in Dylan Thomas' *Under Milkwood*, *The Milk Train Doesn't stop Here Any More*, and *Let's Murder Vivaldi*. Pearce was a convincing and intelligent actor and quite possibly could have made a decision to take that path as a career but instead he built on his experience, passion and education becoming, in his early twenties, a Curator at the Art Gallery of South Australia. He was relatively new to the job when I was considering the cast for my examination production of John Osborne's groundbreaking play *Look Back in Anger*. It was Pearce I sought for the lead role of the tragic Jimmy Porter, a character the British author Bryan Appleyard feels strongly, from his perspective in the 90s, 'has nothing to say'.³³¹ Appleyard's book *The Pleasures of Peace* deals with the changing landscape of the arts in post-war Britain and on the subject of Osborne, Appleyard is quite harsh. 'Osborne's innovations with the play' he feels 'were rhetorical rather than formal...What Osborne had been looking for and had discovered was a way of being theatrical with new words: *Look Back in Anger* was simply Osborne's way of making recognisable drama out of nothing – a kind of circus of disbelief'.³³² Perhaps there is something in his criticism since Osborne records in the directions to the players that Porter must be played with a vehemence that is 'almost non-committal'.³³³ In post-war Britain Osborne's theatre of rhetoric was light-years from cosy romanticism even if Appleyard believed the play to be full of 'pessimistic cultural generalizations'.³³⁴ Eleven years after its first performance in Britain *Look Back in Anger* was still in the vanguard of innovative theatre in Australia, still relevant and sharp. Thirty-five years later the prevailing perception is that Appleyard's perspective is accurate. Like the works of the *Kitchen Sink School* the play is rarely on show. The British-born author and broadcaster Alan Saunders discussed with me his interest in English film, drama and decorative arts of the period 1945 - 1956. He recognised, as Rowell did, that much of the theatre at the time was sumptuously detailed but flawed

reaction against wartime austerity expressed in a baroque form. The lush films of Powell and Pressburger presented an intricate view of life...Very decorative in style...The 'Kitchen Sink' stuff was a reaction against this and the restrictive literary culture run by second-generation Bloomsbury'ites...John Osborne was saying, "this is the reality"! His play, *Look Back In Anger* was astounding at the time, a call to arms. While today we might view it as appallingly sentimental, at the time sides were being taken. When I think of the 'Kitchen Sink School' I always think of something ugly like square sided sinks, stained with water dripping from the taps.³³⁵

Saunders struggled for words that would adequately describe his disgust for the squalor and ugliness so often depicted by the *Kitchen Sink* painters Bratby, Greaves, Middleditch and Smith. Bratby's painting

³²⁸Graham Dixon, A. 1996. *A History of British Art*. BBC Books, London, pp. 222, 223

³²⁹*ibid.* p. 222

³³⁰Spalding, Julian. 'The Forgotten Fifties', Sheffield Arts Department, Sheffield, 1984, p. 6

³³¹Appleyard, B. 1990. *The Pleasures of Peace*. Faber and Faber, London, p. 107

³³²*ibid.* p. 108

³³³Osborne, J. 1956. *Look Back in Anger*. Samuel French, London, p. 7

³³⁴Appleyard, B. 1990. *The Pleasures of Peace*. Faber and Faber, London, p. 283

³³⁵Saunders, A. (1999) Interview. 15 April

Jean at the Basin, 1955, painted a year before the staging of Osborne's play evokes, even after so much time, the feeling of the grimy bed-sit of Jimmy Porter and his wife Alison. The pictorial subject of the toilet or lavatory, the very words differentiating social class, was quite shocking. 'Bratby had painted...two large paintings of lavatories the previous year which had created a considerable stir. This rather bleak painting shows the artist's wife in the bathroom of the house in Carlisle where the couple were living.'³³⁶

A private rehearsal space for *Look Back in Anger* was problematic and the final solution brought life, theatre and the domestic together. Once again the kitchen furniture at Shannon Avenue moved to make way for the 'set' while as Director I resumed the position in the hall occupied years before watching the swirling circular skirts of the square dancers. It was a cheap and convenient solution, which is all that can be said in its favour. In effect the many rehearsals took place in a space that was smaller than a twelve foot by twelve-foot stall for a horse. Nevertheless the cast put their hearts and souls into the task and they did well. At the after-performance critique one of the Drama lecturers expressed surprise that the actors, with their obvious capability, had not used more of the stage. This was followed by explanations of *Kitchen Sink* drama rehearsed within the confines of the suburban hearth. It was this incident, the collision of theatrical space and domestic space, and the fracturing of truth, reality, illusion and time that made me ask Pearce to be an interview subject thirty or more years on. While Pearce has only hazy recollection of an incident that sits at the front of my mind,



Plate no. 46 John Bratby, *Jean at Basin*, 1955

he did say that he could also remember another occasion when rehearsals were conducted in the kitchen. 'I can recall rehearsing a scene with Barbara West [a prominent actor in Adelaide at the time] in the kitchen of the house I shared with two friends in Norwood. I can remember kissing Barbara in the kitchen and throwing cups. All part of the script'³³⁷ Even in the late 60s the children of the suburbs like Pearce and myself were still making do with instant coffee and rehearsals in the kitchen.

In the course of our interview I asked Pearce if there was an Australian equivalent to the British *Kitchen Sink School* of art or theatre and he said there was no equivalent. 'There are good painters of interiors but generally our culture is more oriented to gaze out of doors. The impulse is for external not internal' he said.

³³⁶Robin Gibson and John Bratby, 'John Bratby Portraits', National Portrait Gallery, Publications, London, 1991, p.54

³³⁷Pearce, B. (1998) Interview, 28 October

There have been a lot of Australian painters who have used the kitchen as subject matter. Edwin Tanner used kitchen implements in his pictures. John Brack has painted every room including the kitchen. Brian Dunlop, Margaret Olley. I remember Margaret Olley's house in both human and gastronomic terms. She paints in the kitchen. A meal at Margaret Olley's is one of the great occasions in one's life. Dale Hickey and his coffee cups, Grace Cossington Smith, Margaret Preston, especially the painting with the blue scales based on a Leger work. David Strachan probably included the kitchen as part of the rest of house, and John Olsen did paintings of paella, and perhaps in Brett Whiteley's work there may have been a glimpse of the kitchen, although I'm not sure. I recall Donald Friend painted *Tiled Stove at Hill End*.³³⁸

Before leaving the subject of the *Kitchen Sink School* it is interesting to note that Robert Rooney, for a short time focussed on paintings by British artists from this period held in the National Gallery of Victoria. The following is a long quote, left in Rooney's words, but it does point to the troubling change in attitudes that time and fashion can affect. Just as John Osborne was once acknowledged as new and shocking but is now viewed as 'appallingly sentimental', so time has changed the view of the *Kitchen Sink* painters. Even the late John Bratby came to feel differently about his work. 'Looking back a quarter of a century later, we can see the sad, deprived character of these paintings, and maybe we recoil and reject them. For they are not a celebration of life. They are not life enhancing. Even I find a lot of my own work of that period hard to reconcile to' he said in a catalogue essay for *The Forgotten Fifties*.³³⁹ Rooney first became interested

after seeing their work reproduced in *Studio* magazine in the 1950s. The National Gallery of Victoria had acquired paintings and drawings by John Bratby, Jack Smith and Edward Middleditch in the late 50s. But in the 1980s, when I started writing art reviews for *The Age*, they (like a lot of modern British art, including Michael Andrews' *All Night Long*) weren't on display. I wrote several pieces in which I suggested that, as there was considerable interest in realism and expressionism, they should be brought out of storage. When I spoke about this to the curator responsible for European art, she replied that overseas visitors would think the Gallery backward if they were put on display. I knew that Canberra and other state Galleries, and some private collectors, had works by these and other artists, so I began to research an exhibition of *Kitchen Sink* works (and some related European works by Bernard Buffet and others). As the only *Kitchen Sink* artist missing from local collections was Derrick Greaves, I wrote to Graves Gallery in Sheffield, which had one I thought would look good in the show. They wrote back to say that by coincidence they were preparing a *Kitchen Sink* show and asked me to supply a list of works in Australian collections. They also wanted to know if they had influenced any Australian artists. I sent lists and reproductions from my files. After much opposition from Jack Smith, who didn't want to be connected with the group anymore, the show *The Kitchen Sink Painters* was held

³³⁸Pearce, B. (1998) Interview. 28 October

³³⁹John Bratby, *Painting in the Fifties*. Spalding, Julian. *The Forgotten Fifties*. Sheffield Arts Department, Sheffield, 1984, p. 46

at the Mayor Gallery, London in 1991. No paintings or drawings from Australia were included, nor was my minor contribution acknowledged.³⁴⁰

While Rooney now looks at this episode dispassionately, although it clearly irritated him at the time, it is an example of the way in which I gather-in new fragments and then seek to join them to existing fragments within my archive in an almost obsessive manner. And when links are made they are 'refiled' in my constant search for answers that may have a physical outcome in art works.

³⁴⁰Rooney, R. (1989) Interview. 6 November

SECTION 4
THE THEATRE OF THE HEART(H)

4.4 THEATRICAL SPACE

Among the many artists researched for this study three were chosen for their approach to space. Each of the selected artists has approached the traditional rectangle as a stage exploring in their work the possibilities of theatrical space. The artists are Indian born, Australian figurative painter Fred Cress, the Israeli artist, Yosl Bergner, who for a time lived in Australia, and Australian painter, John Bratby. The works of these artists reflect a preoccupation with the narrative, theatrical space and the dynamics of human interaction. In this chapter the work of Fred Cress and Yosl Bergner are discussed at length while the work of Bratby is discussed here and in earlier chapters. Interest in the exploration of theatrical space in art is by no means confined to these artists or to painters alone however each of the chosen artists links in individual ways to this study.

I am constantly pulled, as if in the embrace of a tidal rip, to artists, performers and musicians whose work includes a strong element of autobiography. It is a characteristic sensed in advance of any intellectual engagement. Fred Cress was collected into my study in this way and my recollection of his survey exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1995 provided the catalyst. The survey show covered seven years from the Archibald Prize winning portrait of fellow artist John Beard, painted in 1988, to work completed in 1995. All works were made after his extraordinary decision to change the philosophical and practical position of his studio practice. The exhibition was full of impact consisting of huge paintings and drawings that seemed to be writhing across the gallery walls.

In the first chapter of *Stages*, Dr Alan Krell's monograph on Cress, there is a painting called *Woman at Sink*, 1958,³⁴¹ which reflects the influence of the *Kitchen Sink School*, and John Bratby in particular, on the young Cress. The picture has since been destroyed but its approach can be likened to Bratby's *Still life with Chip Frier*³⁴², *Three People at a Table*, 1955³⁴³ and *Jean and still life in front of window*.³⁴⁴ 'English painters I admired were Bratby, Middleditch and Jack Smith. Of the British Kitchen Sink painters John Bratby's style influenced me...I painted *Woman at Sink*, in the style of Bratby.'³⁴⁵



Plate no. 47 Fred Cress, *Woman at Sink*, 1958

A relationship could be made between the 'table top' pictures Bratby painted in 1954 and Cress' eating pictures, which he began in the late 80s. Bratby says of his 'table top' pictures, 'I used the same table every time, and eating equipment from the kitchen of the house. The works were therefore absolutely contrived'.³⁴⁶ Cress' eating pictures are



Plate no. 48 John Bratby, *Jean and Still Life in Front of Window*, 1954

³⁴¹Krell, A. 1989. *Fred Cress: Stages*. Wild and Woolley, Glebe NSW, p. 2

³⁴²Spalding, Julian. *The Forgotten Fifties*. Sheffield Arts Department, Sheffield, 1984, p. 17

³⁴³Robin Gibson and John Bratby. *John Bratby Portraits*. National Portrait Gallery Publications, London, 1991, p. 18

³⁴⁴*Ibid.* p. 17

³⁴⁵Cress, F. (1999) Interview. 24 March

³⁴⁶Robin Gibson and John Bratby. *John Bratby Portraits*. National Portrait Gallery Publications, London, 1991, p. 53

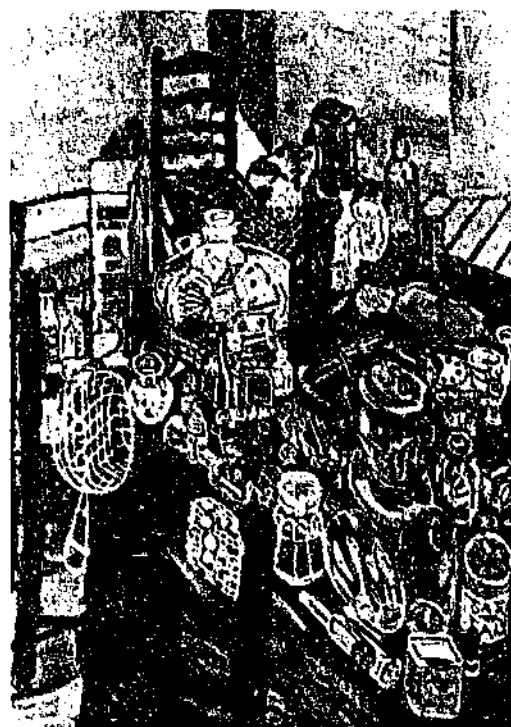


Plate no. 49 John Bratby, *Still Life with Chip Frier*, 1954



Plate no. 50 John Bratby, *Three People at a Table*, 1955

no less contrived although they do not follow the Bratby recipe. The early influence of Bratby faded, however, as Cress moved into lyrical abstraction and the depiction of theatrical space. Krell frames his monograph on Cress by saying that the title, *Stages*, can be viewed in several ways.

Most obviously, it refers to a distinct moment in a process of development. A stage, of course, also denotes a platform on which a performance takes place. More precisely, it is thought of as that area in a theatre behind the proscenium arch. This arch, like the physical boundaries of a painting or drawing - the edges - demarcates the 'real' world of the audience from the fiction of the actor. The proscenium arch invites and sanctions play.³⁴⁷

And within the proscenium Cress' paintings gradually filled with theatrical elements and eventually figures until in the late 80s they were crammed with seething humanity reminiscent of Breughel or Bosch and the transformation of an abstract painter to a narrative figurative painter was complete. It is Cress' work, made at the very end of the 70s and through the 80s, that more obviously explores theatrical space, although in some of his lusciously coloured abstracts painted prior to this period there is an implication of interest in theatrical space. In his book, *Fred Cress*, launched in Melbourne in 2001, the author, Gavin Fry quotes Edmund Capon, Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales and author of the catalogue essay for *Survey 1988 - 1995*, as saying Cress' 'paintings are hardly forgiving of either viewer or subject', the relentless focus and content of the works amounting to a 'resilient and subtle assault on our sensitivities'.³⁴⁸ In these paintings Cress depicts, often in a melodramatic manner, our worst vices, our most unflattering profile and our nastiest habits. There is an unrestrained sexuality at play in the way the figures interact and in the vile things they do with food which plays a role in suggesting the depths of depravity that, as a civilization, we seek to suppress but which comes so clearly into focus in the theatre of war where inhuman acts perpetrated on innocent people are somehow sanctioned as necessary. The Cress pictures depict people at war with each other, people

³⁴⁷ Krell, A. 1989. *Fred Cress: Stages*. Wild and Woolley, Glebe NSW, p. IX

³⁴⁸ Fry, G. 2000. *Fred Cress - Paintings 1965-2000*. The Beagle Press, Sydney, p. 114

engaged in libidinous behaviour and people engaged in secretive and often dishonest acts. They brim with irony, black humour and the immense theatrical spectacle of life as Cress sees it. And despite the heightened reality we do not escape without a little of the metaphorical mud sticking.

Fred Cress has not always been a narrative figurative painter. In fact he enjoyed a successful career as a highly respected, while sometimes controversial, abstract painter. In the 70s when Cress was building a reputation he found a champion in the form of Patrick McCaughey, the then new and precocious art critic at *The Age*, in Melbourne. Gavin Fry quotes from McCaughey's review of Cress' Chapman Powell Street exhibition, 23 May 1973, in which the critic waxes lyrical about Cress being 'one of the best new painters in the country', referring to Cress' 'impressive' and 'original' use of colour.³⁴⁹ McCaughey ensured Cress was represented in the influential international touring exhibition, *Ten Australians*, and McCaughey's lavish support continued including, in 1975, an article for the July-September edition of the influential *Art and Australia* magazine. Much later, when McCaughey became the Director of the National Gallery of Victoria, he persuaded the private owner of one of Cress' most influential pictures of this period, *Lauriston*, to donate it to the gallery. In all this reputation building support McCaughey was enshrining the notion that he felt was central in Cress' work, that of 'putting aside the dominance of drawing' in support of 'painterliness'.³⁵⁰ In Cress' beautiful works of the 70s there was not a figure to be seen, but this did not mean that his paintings were free from the narrative.

In 1976 Cress and his family moved from Melbourne to Sydney. The artist was enjoying success although there were, as there always had been, strong detractors. Despite the voices raised in opposition recognition for Cress came in 1979 when he was selected by the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council as artist-in-residence at the State University of New York. Cress remained in America for eighteen months producing paintings in that time, which Gavin Fry quotes McCaughey as saying, have a 'portrait like intensity'.³⁵¹ A perspicacious remark in the light of Cress' later move to figurative painting. Alan Krell quotes from the review by the American painter Addison Parks published in *ARTS Magazine*, April 1980, on Cress' exhibition at the Ludlow-Hyland Gallery in New York. In this review Parks writes that this is 'painting at its truest, as it can only be: the struggle that pushes beyond the wall of facts and opens a hole into the core of human experience.' In the same piece Parks also alludes to 'something frightening' in the images.³⁵² Krell notes that the American painter Robert Berling, in his review of the same exhibition for *Art in America*, 'discerns an anthropomorphic quality in the forms, or "figures" that emerge from the paint'.³⁵³ And tellingly Krell also points to the fact that 'the work looks forward to an increasing autobiographical focus'.³⁵⁴ During this period the relationship between Cress and his wife became strained and on their return in 1980 Cress found himself 'without a job, a dealer, an exhibition in sight and absolutely broke'.³⁵⁵ Cress felt a failure, suffered from depression and a skin rash that kept him at home. In this dark mood Cress had to begin the painful process of regeneration and as part of this development he began to focus on two works by Balthus. One in particular, *The Guitar Lesson*, first exhibited in 1934, shows a 'graphic depiction of a strange sexual encounter between a twelve-year-old girl and a young woman' (see overleaf) in an ordinary middle class room in the middle of what might otherwise have been a perfectly ordinary lesson in music. Behind the closed door the subjects are secretly attending to quite different lessons. In the theatre of this small room Balthus mixes fact and fantasy in a murky and quite shocking way. And the piano is not far away. We see the piano sneaking in from the edge of *The Guitar Lesson*³⁵⁷ and it seems

³⁴⁹Fry, G. 2000. *Fred Cress – Paintings 1965-2000*. The Beagle Press, Sydney, p. 72.

³⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 81.

³⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 91.

³⁵²Krell, A. 1989. *Fred Cress: Stages*. Wild and Woolley, Glebe NSW, p. 42.

³⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 44.

³⁵⁴*loc. cit.*

³⁵⁵Fry, G. 2000. *Fred Cress – Paintings 1965-2000*. The Beagle Press, Sydney, p. 93.

³⁵⁶*loc. cit.*

³⁵⁷Krell, A. 1989. *Fred Cress: Stages*. Wild and Woolley, Glebe NSW, p. 54, plate 42.

to insinuate itself into Cress' later works such as *Tycoon*, 2000³⁵⁸ where a street performer manipulates a piano playing puppet in the form of a suit-wearing dog and *Tell Tales 17*, 1988³⁵⁹, where the piano attempts to shelter from a room filled to overflowing with malevolent domestic disturbance. There is logic to the inclusion of a musical instrument. Like Frank Conroy, Cress spent his early days playing jazz which he adored but which he eventually gave up to concentrate on painting.

Trying to find his feet, his confidence and his place in Australian art in the post New York months a conversation over lunch in 1983 with friend Russell Mears, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Sydney becomes particularly important. The subject of the conversation was secrets.³⁶⁰ Cress began to synthesise his influences and from this point began developing pictures in which drawing became increasingly important. The window, drapery, bindings, curtain rings, enclosed spaces and mediated space became constant elements in the quite theatrical works that began to emerge.

In the first half of the 80s Cress worked through his major series *Stages*. In the interview with Cress he spoke about the emphasis he was beginning to place on the many kinds of secrets that we are all a party to. Later Cress would add food to the equation



Plate no. 51 Balthus, *The Guitar Lesson*, 1933



Plate no. 52 Fred Cress, *Tell Tales 17*, 1988



Plate no. 53 Fred Cress, *Stages 3*, 1985

with incredible effect - 'the subject of secrecy emerged... This precedes my eating pictures. I had been cooking for a while and had not put together food and secrecy.'³⁶¹ The secrecy-centred *Stages* series depicted narrative images full of theatricality but not yet figurative. They were full of luscious colour

³⁵⁸Fry, G. 2000. *Fred Cress – Paintings 1965-2000*. The Beagle Press, Sydney, p. 172

³⁵⁹*ibid.* p.11

³⁶⁰Krell, A. 1989. *Fred Cress: Stages*. Wild and Woolley, Glebe NSW, p. 59

³⁶¹Cress, F. (1999) Interview. 24 March



Plate no. 54 Fred Cress, *Stages 8*, 1985

and perfectly embroidered implication and with the emergence of these paintings Cress once again polarised both his audience and critics. The artist had forsaken the search for truth and purity through modernism turning his back on the abstract and the perfect painterly surface in preference for narrative images inflamed with a sense of immanence, of something sinister about to happen, or the opposite, the aftermath of a disturbing incident. Cress was now making the viewer complicit in the intimate and secretive aspects of the work, forcing the viewer to become a voyeur or witness to an intensely private world, rather like the audience to a play. These were pictures about people, other people, but the viewer was necessary; like the obligatory witness to a hasty Las Vegas wedding. Krell believes that 'the "poetry of possession" and the poetry of desire" are temporarily united in [this] work. That it is an uncertain and necessarily short-lived union would seem to be an underlying idea.'³⁶² The series *Tell Tales*, painted in 1988, was completed during the final stages of the disintegration of his marriage and precipitated a seminal decision in his professional career. As his marriage died his images became populated with venomous characters. The spectre of the figure that McCaughey and the American critic Robert Berling had foreshadowed was now very much in the frame and on the stage. At fifty, with a new life in front of him, he made a decision to embrace figuration. 'I was at a crossroads but felt the figurative subject was so strong that I just had to do it. When I became a figurative painter I lost my buyers and audience overnight, it was a shock. To make matters worse I had decided to become a *narrative figurative painter*.'³⁶³ The die was cast and from that point Cress honed his cast of theatrical characters, the perpetrators of outrageous acts of intimacy in public. In the late 80s Cress eventually brought together food and secrets for his disturbing eating pictures. 'I focused on the dining table. I could see what was happening, the shapes of eyes, hands, the placement of knives. Everything was laid out and everything had such potential symbolic meaning. There were male and female symbols in simple cut fruit shapes. The table was laden with possibilities'³⁶⁴ (see overleaf) Alan Krell quotes Bernard Smith as saying that in the best of Cress' work he found 'the vitality and menace of Goya.'³⁶⁵ This reference would have had great appeal for Cress, given that Goya is his favourite artist. In the interview Cress enjoyed pointing out that Goya himself experienced a major change in his work at the age of fifty.³⁶⁶

While Cress' work is not a direct influence, he provided a theatrical context, a heightened viewpoint from which to consider behaviour, relationships and the psychological dynamic within

³⁶²Krell, A. 1989. *Fred Cress: Stages*. Wild and Woolley, Glebe NSW, p. 105

³⁶³Cress, F. (1999) Interview. 24 March

³⁶⁴Ibid.

³⁶⁵Krell, A. 1989. *Fred Cress: Stages*. Wild and Woolley, Glebe NSW, p. 5

³⁶⁶Cress, F. (1999) Interview. 24 March

the family and extended family. Cress' canvases are full of characters pushed to the extreme, people who have become actors inhabiting a stage, and they are all caught in the act of behaving badly. This work provided a mediated view shaped by Cress, an aperture through which I could peer in the early part of this study, enabling me to act as a 'voyeur' in order to consider ideas and concepts, meanings and values as I endeavoured to develop a critical basis for my studio work.

The child at Shannon Avenue locked into her shadowy secret place carefully assembling models of C19th proscenium arch theatres from books with die cut pages would have taken delight in assembling Cress' cast of characters across the newly constructed stage.

Yosl Bergner was 'summoned' to play a role in a most accidental manner. During my interview with Margaret Olley at her home in Paddington, in October 1998, she used a pewter coffee pot to illustrate what she considered beautiful form indicating the kind of object she loves to paint. She likened the vessel to a gourd in its sensual and curvaceous shape. The fullness of the belly of the pot was contrasted by an extremely fine spout set at right angles to the body in an absurd fashion, its pouring end completed with a flange like a pair of collagen enhanced lips. The object was not only beautiful but also humorous, as much a 'person' as a pot.³⁶⁷ It was Olley's passionate explanation of the relevance of the pot that made that moment so memorable. In the library of the Art Gallery of New South Wales I found a book quite by accident on Yosl Bergner while searching for a reference on Brack. The book fell open at a page that seemed to be inhabited by Margaret Olley's pewter coffee pot, so instead I took the tome to the reading table. And that is how chance brought Yosl Bergner into this study. Despite the accidental nature of the circumstances, both at Olley's and the library, an artwork emerged, as part of my current body of work, which owes its existence to these happy accidents.

Bergner, like Cress, is a narrative figurative painter interested in the theatrical conventions of a rectangle whose edges form a proscenium arch through which we observe a civilization of characters. There are other parallels that can be drawn between the two artists. 'Francisco Goya is a favourite painter'³⁶⁸ and Bergner is a compulsive documenter. According to the great Hebrew playwright, Nissim Aloni, 'his pictures are a record of his days, he turns his years into windows through which he can observe his cellars and his attics from a look-out point in the present, as far as the eye reaches.'³⁶⁹ The reference Aloni makes to cellars and attics is almost certainly inspired by the writings of the philosopher Gaston Bachelard. The window also became a recurring motif in



Plate no. 55 Fred Cress, *Breakfast Long Ago*, 1988

* Olley, M. (1998) Interview, 22 October

**Rubin, Carmela, Curator and Editor, 'Yosl Bergner: A Retrospective', Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2000, p. 253

****ibid.* p. 246

Fred Cress' works. Bergner spent much of his life on the move 'from Vienna, where he was born, to Poland, where he grew up and went to school, to Australia where he sheltered from the threat of Nazi persecution and finally - after spells in Paris, Montreal and New York - to the newly-born state of Israel where he decided to settle.'³⁷⁰ Bergner was born the son of the Yiddish poet Melech Ravitch, a man of stature in Jewish literary circles, but a man of such sternness with his son the artist has spent his life avoiding any written documentation of the eight decades of his life instead using the canvas as a means of conveying all histories and ideas. Clive Sinclair in his catalogue essay for the Yosl Bergner *A Retrospective* puts it this way, Bergner 'may have eschewed the pen, but each of his paintings implies an entire drama. Even his inanimate objects brim with dramatic potential.'³⁷¹

In 1939, while the young Bergner was living in Australia he painted a small picture in browns called, *Citizen, Australia*, which is held in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia. It is a powerful but joyless study of a man foraging in a bin for scraps of food. It was this style of painting that earned him the nomenclature of 'Social Realist'. Bergner 'saw paintings not as mere decoration but as a way to change the world.'³⁷² Unlike his Australian contemporaries he had already seen the



Plate no. 56 Yosl Bergner: *Citizen Australia*, 1939

effects of persecution in Europe and felt the sadness of the dispossessed. Later Bergner would move away from 'Social Realism' in favour of the 'suggestion of theatrical space.' Rodi Bineth-Perry in his essay *Painterly Aspects and the Subject*, notes Bergner's approach to the 'suggestion of theatrical space' by establishing

the volume of the stage: a steep, diminished perspective in which the front plane rises almost to the top edge of the picture. The different objects are arranged on this plane in such a way that what is higher is in fact further away from the

³⁷⁰ Rubin, Carmela. Curator and Editor. 'Yosl Bergner: A Retrospective'. Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2000, p. 286

³⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 244

³⁷² *Ibid.* p. 280

eye of the observer. It is a perspective which has something naive about it and is reminiscent of the early paintings of the Middle Ages. It is also a pictorial approach which suits Bergner as a designer for the theatre.³⁷³

This approach is clearly demonstrated in the paintings that became the focus of my attention. In the 60s, inspired by the enactment of Christian rituals in Spain at Easter and Christmas, Bergner chose to make his audience look again at the traditions and content of the Christian narratives by dispensing with a human cast and replacing them with animated kitchen objects which he placed carefully in theatrical space. The images 'redolent of religious atmosphere...childhood memories...the history of the Jews in Spain...and the horrors of the Inquisition'³⁷⁴ are influenced by his reaction to the massive works of Goya, El Greco and Velázquez, which Bergner was experiencing for the first time. But the pathos that can be found in the images is leavened for the viewer by humour and aspects of the absurd. Pictures such as *Crossing The Sea* (1974),³⁷⁵ (see overleaf) which depicts the epic parting of the Red Sea on a tabletop stage, and *Betrayal* (1971),³⁷⁶ where Christ is left a marked man in the Garden of Gethsemane, are typical. The flat kitchen grater, 'always wounded' is the central character, the Christ figure. These paintings are not only set within the context of an imagined proscenium arch, but are in essence theatrical. The artist has cast the battered and anthropomorphised kitchen objects as ensemble actors, on a stage dedicated to the theatre of the absurd. Viewing these paintings by Yosl Bergner re-activated the events at Margaret Olley's house and set in train a series of connected thoughts and desires. I was now wedded to the kitchen grater as an object and as a means of imparting the physical sensation of discord and hurt.

Discord and a sense of the theatrical are elements at play in the work of John Brack. Coincidentally Brack and Bergner were both born in 1920, and all three artists were influenced by modernism. In the introduction to Ronald Millar's book, *John Brack*, the artist is quoted in 1970 as saying 'Lyrical romanticism or a cry of despair. So much of modern painting. Yet there is something else. It depends neither on harmonies, relationships nor emotional overstatements, but on the disconnections, imbalances, discords which are part of life itself. This can have its own kind of beauty.'³⁷⁷ 'In his early exhibitions Brack was a chronicler of suburbia'³⁷⁸ lampooning both the new house in the suburbs and the life that was led in this new landscape. 'Within the bricks and mortar of the Australian dream social rituals and realities of living in Brack's work are measured out, if not in coffee spoons, then by the geometry of each day.'³⁷⁹ Later Brack would also



Plate no. 57 Yosl Bergner, *Betrayal*, 1971

³⁷³ Bineth-Perry, R. 1981. Painterly Aspects and the Subject. *Yosl Bergner: Paintings 1938-1980*. Keter Publishing House, Jerusalem, p. 183

³⁷⁴ Rubin, Carmela. Curator and Editor. 'Yosl Bergner: A Retrospective'. Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2000, pp. 273-274

³⁷⁵ Yosl Bergner. 1981. 'Crossing The Sea'. *Yosl Bergner: Paintings 1938-1980*. Keter Publishing House, Jerusalem, p. 99

³⁷⁶ Yosl Bergner. 1981. *Betrayal*. *Yosl Bergner: Paintings 1938-1980*. Keter Publishing House, Jerusalem, p. 101

³⁷⁷ Millar, R. 1971. *John Brack*. Lansdowne Press, Australia, p. 1

³⁷⁸ Lindsay, R. 'John Brack - A Retrospective'. National Gallery of Victoria, 1987, p. 13

³⁷⁹ loc. cit.



Plate no. 58 Yosl Bergner, *Crossing the Sea (Destination X no. 2)*, 1974

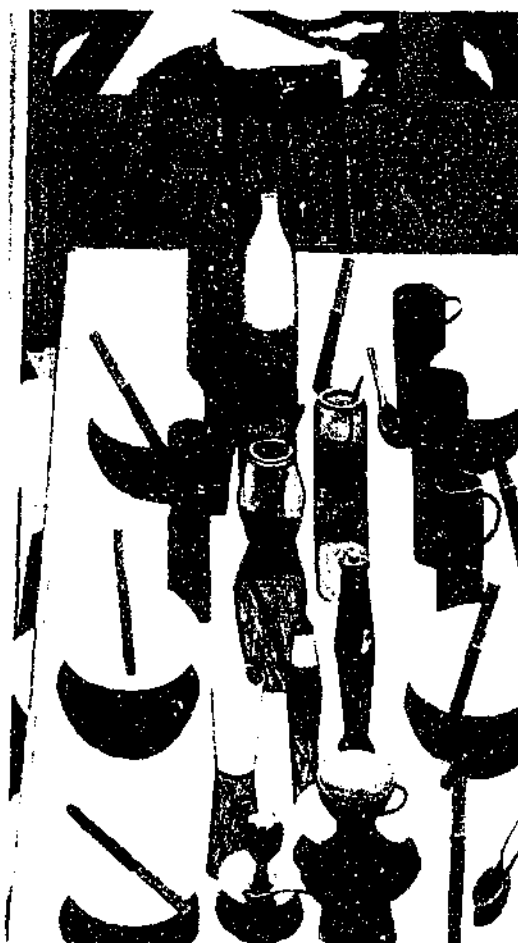


Plate no. 59 John Brack, *The Breakfast Table*, 1958

anthropomorphise objects set in theatrical space creating an 'interplay of identities between people and objects.'³⁰⁰ Spoons, surgical equipment, pencils and walking sticks replace the figure in the same way that the grater and other kitchen objects replace the figure in Bergner's paintings. And, like Bergner, the paintings retain a peculiarly human feel, despite the substitution, cynicism and the irony.

³⁰⁰ Millar, R. 1971, *John Brack*. Lansdowne Press, Australia, p. 20

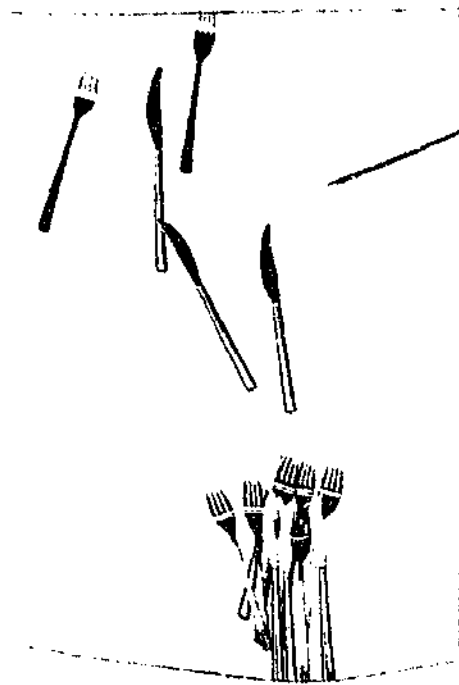


Plate no. 60 John Brack, *Knives, Forks and Pencil*, 1974

Man made tools for his needs with his talent, but afterwards these tools are endowed with a life of their own, and they change shape and content as man changes the shape of his life and his world outlook. The shape and the matter of a spice-box or a frying pan are evidence of the hand that made them, and they become the testimony of the painter.³⁸¹

The Jewish gallery owner and curator, Gershon Bineth, wrote these words about Yosl Bergner but they apply equally well to Brack and his use of inanimate objects. On the subject of inspiration, Brack is quoted as saying that as 'with the impetus of reading or listening to music or any other experience that forces you to put something on the canvas, it is the transformation in the rectangle rather than in the head that matters most'.³⁸² Brack vigorously opposed the idea of intellectualising or theorising the rectangle.

Cress, Brack and Bergner all share the eye of the chronicler; their works evoking the great French nineteenth-century chronicler Daumier. The viewpoints of these artists intersect at certain points as they explore the shadows and light, values and longing of human existence choosing, irony, wit and humour as they substitute the real for the other to create visual metaphors that penetrate the psyche of the viewer.

With every interview for this study, in the spirit of support, there would



Plate no. 61 Honoré Daumier, *Scapin and Sylvestre*, 1863-65

³⁸¹ Bineth, G. and Aloni, N. 1969. *Yosl Bergner: Paintings 1963-1968*. Bineth Publishers, Jerusalem, p. 8

³⁸² Millar, R. 1971. *John Brack*. Lansdowne Press, Australia, p. 20

inevitably be suggestions for further research and all were followed up with one exception; Barry Pearce's recommendation that I read Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. This suggestion was put aside until 25 October, 2000, when, while in New York, I had the chance opportunity to attend *Proust Recaptured* at the Lincoln Center. For one performance only, some of America's finest writers and scholars, supported by actors and musicians, came together to explore the life and work of Marcel Proust. Authors on Proust such as Roger Shattuck, William C. Carter, Edmund White, Lydia Davis, writers of non-fiction and fiction such as William Gass, Robert Stone, Nadine Gordimer, Marilynne Robinson and André Aciman, and theatre arts writer, Robert Blumenfeld all examined a different and delicious perspective on Proust in their individual presentations. Expatriate Australian actor Zoe Caldwell with John Shea and Louise Sorel read excerpts from Proust and excerpts of music and song of the time completed the evocation. From that point in time my three volumes of Proust's many-volumed masterpiece *In Search of Lost Time* (*Swann's Way*, *Within a Budding Grove* and *The Guermantes Way*), all translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin and revised by D. J. Enright, have been close to hand. Proust's description of his narrator consuming a piece of familiar pastry which he had dipped into tea and the effect of this simple act, combined with the sensation of taste to recall a memory so powerfully that it could be re-lived is often quoted. 'And as soon as I recognised the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom...the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set...and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I used to be sent before lunch, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine.' This and much more 'sprang into being...from my cup of tea.'³⁸³ Proust's notion that the senses can unlock memory became important to the way in which I viewed this study and to particular works such as *Heavenly Tart*.

Edmund White, who took part in *Proust Recaptured*, is currently writing a biography on Proust called *You always get what you want when you no longer want it*. Perhaps I was more fortunate I discovered Proust at just the right time for him to become a most opportune influence.

³⁸³Proust, M. 1992. Translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. Revised by D.J. Enright. *In Search of Lost Time*. Volume 1. *Swann's Way*. The Modern Library. New York, pp. 63, 64

SECTION 5

THE HEART(H) AS A CRADLE OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUES

5.1 RITUAL (AND PURIFICATION) IN THE SUBURBAN KITCHEN

In reflecting on the development of the suburban house in the post-war period and on the prevailing social, historical and psychological implications, three themes emerged as relevant to my art practice. These themes have emerged in a fluid and intuitive manner from the initial research with twelve interview subjects and from the research that supported the interviews, the writing of this documentation and the making of the artworks. The first of these themes is the highly ritualised nature of the kitchen; the most obvious rituals being the daily sharing of meals followed by the ritual of washing up. The second is nurture. In the period under consideration the kitchen was a versatile space used for many practices as diverse as minor medical repairs, the cutting of hair, ironing, homework assistance, a forum for entertainment and as a platform for views on politics and the world. Lessons in life, it seems, were learned in the bosom of the kitchen. Finally, the theme of sustenance emerged. Fuelled by the beliefs of Christine Fredericks and her colleagues who maintained women must do their bit by consuming relentlessly — just how did the housewife cope with the balancing of her tight budget and the need to consume in order to sustain her family? Her proven capability and efficiency depended on a weekly balancing of the budget and a warming and nourishing meal on the table.

The themes layer onto the exploration of a range of theatrical possibilities including, time, space, language and the relationship between viewer and object (actor). Further, the theatrical considerations extend to the performative, and non-performative possibilities of the artworks and to the aural possibilities measured against the absence of sound. Like most thematic explorations the themes do not remain vertical for long: they branch out in a rhizomatic manner; they become horizontal and vertical, mixing ritual with sustenance, sustenance with the kitchen martyr, nurture with ritual and so on, because emotions and responses are not compartmentalised: they are part of the landscape of life even though I may wish to place a spotlight for a moment on specific actions, behaviours and beliefs.

In this chapter I look at the first themes; ideas related to rituals arising from the domestic kitchen and ask myself 'what is ritual?' Ritual is the constant rehearsal and repetition of the familiar for the sake of social and psychological cohesion. A ritual is a system in which the participants believe in the rightness of the repetition. A ritual is learned behaviour repeated at regular intervals, short or long, involving any number of performers; the performers enter into the ritual in the knowledge that there is some reward or psychological gain to be achieved. Ritual is a form of transactional behaviour, of one's own devising or not, that mimics the religious rites with which it has been linked, at least as a word, since the sixteenth-century although the roots of ritual practice, or rites, extend backwards into Roman antiquity. In the development of this documentation and the accompanying artworks a dusty layer of religiosity emerges as a memory of the social attitudes existing between 1945 and 1970. I have not attempted to evoke religiosity but the spectre has arisen spontaneously and consistently from the interviews and research and is evident in titles of artworks such as *Cleansing and Atonement*, *Judgement and Redemption* and *Bread of Heaven*. The fear of judgement that clearly existed in another time visits me uninvited. It is alien, strange, fascinating. It sits in curious juxtaposition to our postmodern society in the throes of drifting away from organised religion. And yet there is collective memory that stores remnants of religious doctrine and in accessing recollections of the past this remnant religiosity becomes evident while at the same time not necessarily retaining the original significance, meaning or relevance.

Margaret Horsfield in her book, *Biting The Dust: The Joys of Housework* contends that the 'age-old insistence on purity common to so many religions lies beneath the surface here; the notion of

attaining the spiritual cleanliness so repeatedly referred to in the Bible.³⁸⁴ In a chapter entitled *Happy and Glorious: The Impossible Image of the Housewife*, Horsfield refers to Psalm 51 of the Old Testament.³⁸⁵ I searched for the Psalm in a bible, inscribed by various ancestors, that is now part of my family archive. In the Psalm the penitent asks to be cleansed or washed in exchange for forgiveness and the remission of sin – 'blot out my transgressions.'³⁸⁶ Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.³⁸⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.³⁸⁸ This is an example of transactional behaviour and the desire for approval. Horsfield contends that the 'desire for a clean, pure heart – a clear conscience if you will – can translate into the struggle against dirt and the pursuit of a clean home.'³⁸⁹ While the housewife may simply have been on a constant mission to re-order her domain it was not uncommon for this action to sit at the heart of her own evaluation of self worth. Glenn Murcutt believes the linking of whiteness, godliness and cleanliness might be a worrying reflection of colour prejudice.³⁹⁰ The Department of Immigration and Multiculturalism and Indigenous Affairs maintains a website that provides background on the 'White Australia Policy' that placed Australia in the forefront of colour prejudice. From this site one is reminded that in 1919 Prime Minister William Morris Hughes referred publicly to the policy as 'the greatest thing we have achieved'.³⁹¹ In 1947 *Australian Home Journal* ran above the masthead the following statement: 'Home Grown Population is Best'. This was but one example from that era of politics and advertising engineering beliefs in society. But the realisation that immigration was a benefit and that Australia must demonstrate less colour prejudice in order to take its place in the world meant the policy would have to be removed. Australia would have to let go of its hold on the belief that whiteness was a measure of godliness and race supremacy. The 'White Australia Policy' was dismantled over a period of twenty-five years beginning in 1949 and ending in 1973.³⁹² When we look at the current debates surrounding immigration, however, it must be concluded that Australia remains strangely uncomfortable with immigration despite the years of pluralist rhetoric. Despite Murcutt's concern about our colour prejudice and the very real issues associated with the development of a cohesive multicultural society immigration has brought about a new exploration of food and its origins.

Continuing the focus on whiteness and cleanliness, Horsfield's reference to Psalm 51 and the herb Hyssop or *Hyssopus officinalis* sparked a small investigation. It is not easy to locate Hyssop at general nurseries today but it is available in specialist herb nurseries. The British food writer, Arabella Boxer, and the British horticulturalist, Phillipa Back in their book *The Herb Book* list hyssop as an 'ancient herb...used in the Middle East many years before Christ. Its strong flavour and aroma led to the use of hyssop in the preserving of meat and medicinally as a cleansing herb.'³⁹³ Boxer and Back also point to the use of Hyssop in the secular domain where it is used as a flavouring in Chartreuse, much less popular now than the 50s and 60s when the brilliant green or yellow colour seemed to mark it as decadent.

It was most likely water and hyssop that was used by the Roman prefect and Governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, to cleanse himself of his actions in condemning Christ to death by crucifixion. And this powerful symbolic act has been rehearsed constantly as entertainment since 1927 when Cecil B. DeMille directed *King of Kings* as a silent movie. In 1961 Nicholas Ray directed a remake of the film

³⁸⁴Horsfield, M. 1998. *Biting the Dust: The Joys of Housework*. St Martin's Press, New York, p. 48

³⁸⁵loc. cit.

³⁸⁶The Holy Bible: containing the Old and New Testaments, 'The Book of Genesis', Reprinted at the Oxford University Press for the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1912, London, line 1, p. 614

³⁸⁷loc. cit. line 2

³⁸⁸loc. cit. line 7

³⁸⁹Horsfield, M. 1998. *Biting the Dust: The Joys of Housework*. St. Martin's Press, New York, p. 48

³⁹⁰Murcutt, G. (1998) Interview, 28 October

³⁹¹Author unknown, 2001, Department of immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Fact sheet 8, 'Abolition of the "White Australia" Policy' <http://www.immigov.au/facts/08abolition.htm>, p. 2 (19 July 2002, 10:34pm)

³⁹²ibid. p. 1

³⁹³Boxer, A. and Back, P. 1985. *The Herb Book*. Peering Books, London, p. 43

and the religious epic found a strong following in Australia. Exactly a decade later Andrew Lloyd Webber and Timothy Rice opened their innovative rock opera, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, on Broadway. Webber and Rice concentrated on the last seven days in the life of Christ and as a result Pontius Pilate became more prominent and his symbolic act was given even more theatrical status. The Adelaide Festival in 1972 hosted an outdoor concert version of *Jesus Christ Superstar* and in the 80s the full rock opera version toured Australia and the world and a less successful film version was made. One might have concluded that after so long the interest in the enactment of the story might have waned when in 1992 *Jesus Christ Superstar the Concert*, was reborn to be staged in arenas around Australia. Many thousands of people rocked along to an ancient Christian story quite remote from our present society and culture.

Why do I raise the subject of Pontius Pilate? Pilate is for me a symbol of the daily ritual of cleansing that takes place in the kitchen: the washing of the dishes. In the *Recollection* entitled *The Enamel Bowl* (page 54, Vol. II) I refer to my paternal uncle and his manner of conducting the ritual. There was an underscoring of guilt in the conduct of this ritual because my uncle, the oldest of three boys and one girl, was given life tenure of the family home provided he support and maintain his intellectually handicapped sister. The uncle was unmarried and this seemed a satisfactory solution. When my handicapped Aunt died in 1970 my uncle continued to live in the house until he died twenty years later. By then my uncle had outlived all his siblings, effectively depriving them of any access to their inheritance. There was always an undercurrent of unease with the arrangement that seemed to flavour family gatherings where my uncle would cook a hearty meal and then lead the washing of the dishes. Family members would act as the chorus, wiping and putting away the dishes. It was always the same. But despite the mutterings no one had a better solution. Somehow in the act of washing the dishes my uncle was washing his hands of any further obligation to family members. Although family gatherings in the big old house were amicable, the simmering tone of adult resentment resonated with a child who was forever watching the rituals of life and uneasy personal interactions. The artwork *Memento Mori* is infused with these and other thoughts about the temporal, the corporeal, sacrifice, and death (pages 13 and 14, Vol. II).

William Yang relates the ritual of the kitchen sink to the ordering of his life. 'When my life is in order the dishes are always washed' said Yang.³⁹⁴ And this ordering he does by hand. Babette Hayes wrote in *Design for living in Australia* in 1978 about the lack of dishwashers in general use in the Australian domestic kitchen. 'There is still a tendency to regard washing up as a "good" occupation, particularly for children, who in some way are supposed to gain from the experience. Fortunately this idea is breaking down' she said.³⁹⁵

In 1972 the Australian artist Eric Thake made a humorous comment that linked dishwashing and the Sydney Opera House, then nearing completion after sixteen years. In so doing Thake linked the ordinary with the extraordinary. The work took the form of a black and white linocut depicting a pile of dishes draining on the sink. Thake looked at this pile of everyday objects but saw instead the architectural form. He named the work *An Opera House in Every Home*. The image has more recently been appropriated by the Art Gallery of New South Wales and reproduced on aprons and teatowls. Thake died in 1982 so we don't know what he would have made of the commercialisation of his work but we are left with his gentle sense of humour laced with irony. The fact that Thake's

³⁹⁴Yang, W. (1998) Interview. 24 November

³⁹⁵Hayes, B. and Hersey, A. 1978. *Design for Living in Australia*. Hodder and Stoughton, Sydney, p. 75



Plate no. 62 Eric Thake, *An Opera House in Every Home*, 1972

imagery has been appropriated is indicative of the ability of this work to speak to the widest possible audience. And advertisers drive the appropriation on some thirty years after the work was made. For example the City of Sydney has established a website to encourage late night dining in restaurants and as a by-product of this activity aims to keep the city active later. *The Eat Streets at Night* program is characterised by a photograph composed of various kitchen objects. Large graters, a whisk, an orange squeezer and pepper and salt shakers cluster in the background emulating city buildings while two small graters and a toast rack allude to the Sydney Harbour bridge. In the foreground there is a plate on which an arrangement of dishes is made to look like the Opera House. And in the May 2000 edition of *Australian House and Gardens* the manufacturer, Clark, places dishes amid foaming water in their 'Monaco' stainless steel sink and again the assembly recalls the Thake Opera House. Thake touched a nerve with his work that is repeatedly quoted by people who may not even know the original source. The Thake-style pile of dishes in the form of the iconic building has now crossed over from art to a vernacular image and this transformation seems to be supported by the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Liza Lou reminds us in a playful manner of the tedium of the ritual of dishwashing in her work *Kitchen*. In a detail of the larger installation, the beaded dishes bobbing in the swirling beaded water remind us of the never-ending demands of the ritual.

In the second half of the nineteenth-century advertisers were quick to relate cleanliness in the home to godliness. Slogans and products were aggressively marketed to the housewife. Margaret Horsfield talks about the early 'domestic crusaders' and their polemics saying that they 'saw themselves in all earnestness as leaders of a movement, "high priestesses of the new religion of right living", as household scientists and engineers and sanitarians.'³⁹⁶ Little has changed. Today the kitchen must be cleaned with a wide range of products each attending to a particular problem in the kitchen and apparently no kitchen can be truly germ or bacteria free or



Plate no. 63 Liza Lou, *Kitchen*, (detail) 1991-1995

³⁹⁶Horsfield, M. 1998, *Biting the Dust: The Joys of Housework*, St. Martin's Press, New York, p. 105

clean if this army of products is not used. Guilt, it seems, lingers just around the corner of the kitchen cabinet even today. Margaret Horsfield quotes the American feminist Betty Friedan who in 1963 wrote *The Feminine Mystique* in which she maintains 'cleaning house has become an activity for which no politically correct woman in her right mind would dare show much enthusiasm.'³⁹⁷ Friedan talks of the 'ghastly legacy' of housework and 'shows how advertisers have manipulated women into taking ridiculously exaggerated pride and interest in such ordinary activities as washing dishes and floors.'³⁹⁸ Shades of Christine Fredericks. Margaret Olley would agree with Friedan because she does not allow cleaning to become an issue. 'I call the dust patina. If someone is coming I put some fresh green leaves out and leave it at that.'³⁹⁹ Olley's stand parallels that taken by the British eccentric, Quentin Crisp, noted for his autobiography entitled *The Naked Civil Servant*. Crisp took a non-interventionist attitude to dust and Horsfield quotes him as saying 'after the first four years the dirt doesn't get any worse.'⁴⁰⁰ Taking what Horsfield claims as an attention-getting stand Crisp said 'I decided...that I would never become a thrall to rituals of domesticity...Squalor became my natural setting. I felt it was only by a series of unfortunate accidents that till now I had always lived in the captivity of hygiene.'⁴⁰¹

Surprisingly of the twelve interview subjects, all said that they did not have rituals or obsessive notions about cleaning and they couldn't point to rituals or obsessiveness in their parents. Fred Cress, while claiming no obsessive or ritualised behaviour did say that he vacuumed because 'women can't do that...I give the kitchen a clean when it needs a big clean, once monthly, practically with a toothbrush. I'm the one that empties the cutlery drawer and vacuums the crumbs out of it but I'm not obsessive about cleaning.'⁴⁰² I'd like to be as hard line as Olley or Crisp but perhaps to avoid the requirement of courage I decided thirty-two years ago to employ assistance. Like Crisp I don't want to be in thrall to rituals of domesticity but unlike Crisp I do want the dust moved. I notice the smell each week that my brain identifies as clean. Horsfield says the 'smells, the rituals, the sounds, the sensations of cleaning house are, for many of us, the stuff of powerful childhood memories.'⁴⁰³

My mother was all ritual and quite obsessive especially about some aspects of cleaning in the kitchen. In the *Recollection, Obsession*, (page 55, Vol. II) I talk about my mother's inability to leave the house for any length of time without first putting the kitchen chairs on the table and mopping the floor with a string mop and bucket of hot water. But this was not necessarily an act of cleaning. The floor was already clean because this ritual may well have been carried out the day before; this was about judgement, or more importantly, avoiding judgement. My mother was afraid that if something happened to her while she was out, strangers might come to the house and adjudicate her life's work as a housewife. For her the kitchen floor presented as the means by which such judgement could be made. The tones of sadness, absurdity, and hopelessness, inherent in this act are gathered as reference for an artwork called *Endless (damp dusting)*, (pages 11 and 12, Vol. II). My mother could never have seen the Opera House in Eric Thake's pile of dishes nor the patterns water makes on lino tiles as the mop swishes from side to side, because she was constantly operating within a self-imposed program that left her eternally short of time. Hers was a life dedicated to obligation, to the attainment of good housekeeping, to the daily slog. Her sense of self was defined by her performance of obligatory, never-ending tasks both self imposed and imagined. For a lifetime she looked over her shoulder for a judgement and finding no one there returned to her program with renewed vigour.

'Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition...' Simone de Beauvoir maintained. In Greek mythology Sisyphus cheated death only to be punished in Hades

³⁹⁷Horsfield, M. 1998. *Biting the Dust: The Joys of Housework*. St. Martin's Press, New York, p. 5

³⁹⁸loc. cit.

³⁹⁹Olley, M. (1998) Interview. 22 October

⁴⁰⁰Horsfield, M. 1998. *Biting the Dust: The Joys of Housework*. St. Martin's Press, New York, p. 13

⁴⁰¹loc. cit.

⁴⁰²Cress, F. (1999) Interview. 24 March

⁴⁰³Horsfield, M. 1998. *Biting the Dust: The Joys of Housework*. St. Martin's Press, New York p. 31

by eternally having to roll a huge stone up a hill. When he reached the top the stone would fall to the bottom and the process continued without end. It is a perfect analogy; 'the clean becomes soiled, the soiled is made clean, over and over, day after day. The housewife wears herself out marking time: she makes nothing, simply perpetuates the present. She never senses conquest of a positive Good, but rather indefinite struggle against negative Evil,' de Beauvoir continues.⁴⁰⁴

Truly obsessive behaviour is destructive and this is explored in a work created by the American team of Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, called *Bad Press: Dissident Ironing*, shown at the Venice Biennale in 1996 (see overleaf). The installation consisted of twenty exquisitely folded, and twisted business shirts placed under glass with text.⁴⁰⁵ The text variously related to the number of threads per inch of the shirt fabric, washing techniques, advertising for shirts and quotes from the *Journal of Obsessive Compulsive Disorders*. For example:

When patient 'X' began ironing an article of clothing, she could not stop until she collapsed from exhaustion. She would, meticulously, and without pause, press out the most imperceptible wrinkles, repeating the same area over and over again. The wrinkles could never be completely removed, thus the job could never be properly finished according to her expectations, as new wrinkles would inevitably be introduced into the garment by the task of ironing itself.

Journal of Obsessive Compulsive Disorders ⁴⁰⁶

In this work the artists have traded the 'functional for the dysfunctional' in a wall installation where the text fades and returns as the sequenced lights create an almost hypnotic state in the viewer that parallels the obsessive state of patient 'X'. Diller and Scofidio, both Professors of Architecture, maintain a practice that fuses the visual and performing arts, installation and architecture. In 1987 they created *the withDrawing Room*, for the Capp Street Project in San Francisco: an installation constructed from discarded domestic objects of a familiar nature such as chairs, table and a bed. These objects were re-assembled and inserted into the existing domestic architecture. Once assembled and inducted into new systems the objects began to display a perverse behaviour 'in order to reveal their sinister interdependence in the domestic system.'⁴⁰⁷ The chairs and table cling to the ceiling instead of the floor, a bed breaks into two and tracks its path, backwards and forwards, making and unmaking marks which can be 'transcribed as the automatic writing of generations of readymades. These calculations take as their starting point the clearly distinguished systems identified by modernist technique: the system of the object, of the body, of the optical, and finally of the home.'⁴⁰⁸

The expatriate Australian academic, feminist and author Germaine Greer, made the forecast in *The Whole Woman* that by the end of the twentieth-century 'housework should have been abolished. In a sane world meaningless repetition of non-productive activity would be seen to be a variety of

⁴⁰⁴ de Beauvoir, S. 1997. Translated and Edited by HM Parshley. *The Second Sex*, Random House, London, p. 470

⁴⁰⁵ Author unknown. '6th International Architecture Exhibition: Sensing the Future — The architect as seismograph', *Emerging Voices: Liz Diller + Ricardo Scofidio*, La Biennale di Venezia, Electra, 1996 pp. 184, 185

⁴⁰⁶ Author unknown. '6th International Architecture Exhibition: Sensing the Future — The architect as seismograph', *La Biennale di Venezia*, 1996, no page reference given for the quotation from the *Journal of Obsessive Compulsive Disorders* in the work exhibited by Liz Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, p. 185

⁴⁰⁷ Anthony Vidler. 'Homes for Cyborgs', Reed, C. et al. 1996. *Not At Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*. Thames and Hudson, London, pp. 174-178

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid.* p. 170

obsessive-compulsive disorder.⁴⁰⁹ She goes on to describe humorous ways in which the cleaning addict, once unmasked, would be committed to therapy and cure and suggested that controls should be set in place at supermarkets to identify those who bought too many cleaning products. And not forgetting advertisers and manufacturers of ever proliferating ranges of products these people she said would be prosecuted for 'luring people into heavier and heavier reliance' on the products.⁴¹⁰ What a pity Greer's prediction, albeit tongue in cheek, did not come true. In her chapter on housework Greer also derides the Sorbonne academic, Professor Jean-Claude Kaufman for presenting housework as a 'deep sensual experience.' Kaufman is quite gender specific in that he understands the 'sensual experience' is felt by women but not by men.⁴¹¹

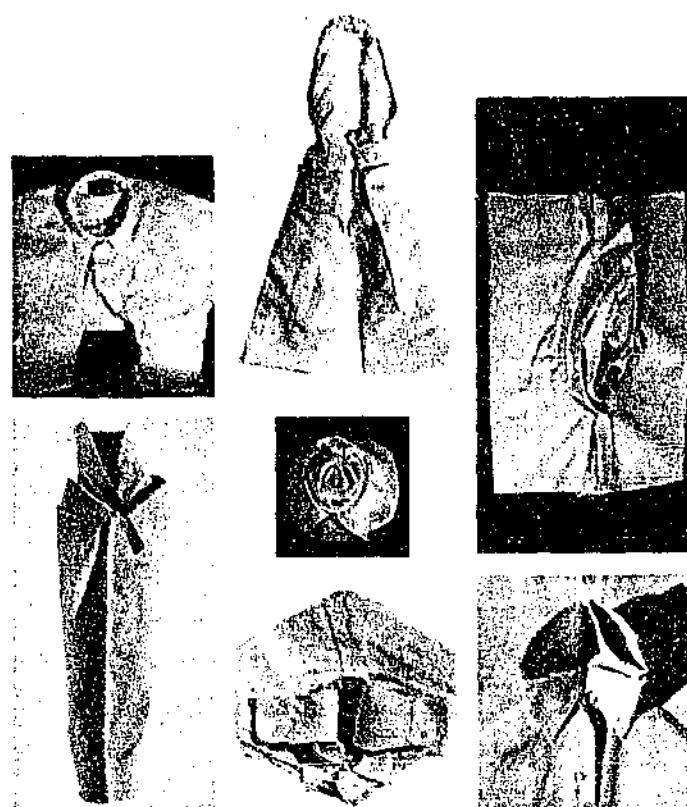


Plate no. 64 Liz Diller and Ricardo Scodidio,
Bad Press Dissident Ironing, 1993 (detail)

Clearly I am drawn to the ritual as a repetitive motif and especially those rituals that push the boundary into obsessive behaviour. Do I exhibit any learnt traits? The answer is firstly no since I have fought in every way to be liberated from the mundane but I have in the flight from the rituals of the post-war suburban house created new behaviours just as ritualistic and possibly obsessive. In 1969 when I first married I decided that shopping would be done weekly to minimise time lost to the task. But having made that decision I had little understanding of how I would get through the week without finding myself short of ingredients or cleaners and therefore needing to return to the supermarket, greengrocer, or butcher. What would be cooked? How would I know what I needed for a period of seven days? Like the American installation artist, Ann Hamilton, and her massive works that require large teams of assistants or Herbert Distel's approach to the five hundred miniature drawers in his haberdashery unit, I analysed the process until all the components were located. Once I had the components I could construct a system. Firstly it was necessary to make a list of possible meals for the week. This was reasonably long to provide variety and avoid linking a day of the week with a specific meal in the way that past generations of women allocated a specific day to a specific cleaning task. For example washing on Monday. Each of the 'possible' recipes was broken down into ingredients required. Secondly, a list was made of all cleaners and other supermarket items required regularly for the household. Now I could compile a list for a specific week. Each list for the week including supermarket, greengrocer, butcher, chemist and discretionary items and took at least three pages in the spiral bound notebook I had chosen. A Spirax No 563B book provided room for approximately twenty-five weeks while a No 563A notebook held about twelve weeks. The preparation of the list followed by the single weekly shopping expedition was sexually transmitted from the first marriage

⁴⁰⁹Greer, G. 1999. *The Whole Woman*. Doubleday a Division of Transworld Publishers, Sydney, p. 129

⁴¹⁰loc. cit.

⁴¹¹loc. cit.

in 1969 to the second in 1977, until I stopped shopping altogether somewhere in the early eighties and my husband did the shopping as part of the division of labour in the household. This was his decision since he did all the cooking and preferred to take longer to select items and ingredients. The ritual of the list book was in active operation for thirty years until 1999 when my husband decided to take a much freer approach to the purchase of food and the preparation of menus. It still exists but it is not in regular use. I have sixteen notebooks that together record more than five years of our eating habits and our consumption patterns. Along the way a leather cover was made for the book to slip onto and once or twice the book was lost but it always found its way back to us. Of course friends lampooned the ritual of the list book claiming it reduced spontaneity and caused the same things to be eaten all the time. They pointed to the model of frequent smaller trips to the supermarket as a superior approach. However, the accumulated data remains to provide the raw material for the artwork *Consumer Music*. (pages 39-41 Vol. II) In the recounting of this story the performance of a ritual links with consumerism and sustenance illustrating the manner in which themes are constantly intertwined.

Shared living is such a difficult activity that at some time very early in a relationship a negotiation needs to occur to arrive at the appropriate division of labour, agreement on shared tasks and expressed expectations about cleaning the house. Clear task allocation means less angst and an easier life. But between the genders there is often too much sexual and psychological politics to complete a satisfactory negotiation. Where this happens it is assured that the woman will be left 'holding the baby'. In her book *The Whole Woman*, Greer, writes about the attempts of advertisers to blur the gender boundaries on housework. 'Advertisers...who tried to buck the stereotype and show men spraying Harpic under the rim of the toilet very soon realised their mistake. Nowadays it is always a woman who pops the meal in the microwave, whips off her apron, uncorks the wine, lights the candles and waits.'¹² And with a flourish she concludes, 'there is no magazine called *Man at Home*.'¹³ In 1999, the *New York Times* ran an article under the headline 'Till Dust Do Us Part'. It seems 'the ideal of domestic bliss conveyed by most shelter magazines' is not accurate according to

'the Soap and Detergent Association's new national survey. Almost half of the people surveyed have fought with a partner over cleaning, and 1 in 10 have separated over things like whose turn it is was to mop up. The most common complaints are that one partner vacuums and dusts around items instead of moving them (41 percent of respondents), one partner doesn't clean up after using the kitchen (39 percent) or bath (38 percent) and leaves streaks on windows and mirrors (24 percent). Men, who estimated they did only 35 percent of the cleaning, scored particularly badly; a quarter admitted they couldn't handle a single cleaning task on their own. Sandra Beckwith, who helped compile the questions (put to a sample of 573 people), said women do the majority of the housework "even if they are out working 40 to 50 hours a week." She advises women: "Train a man to clean! Think of it as an investment." Her own solution, however, has been to hire a maid.'¹⁴

The great thing about a ritual is that once established or recognised it is no longer considered, it requires no depth of thought because the foundation is there, all that is required is the repetition of the ritual to keep it alive. Rituals can take any form from family celebrations to the way one sets the table

¹²Greer, G. 1999. *The Whole Woman*. Doubleday a Division of Transworld Publishers, Sydney, p. 133

¹³loc. cit.

¹⁴Author unknown. 1999. 'Till Dust Do Us Part'. *The New York Times*, (House and Home), 28 January, p.p. F3

each evening or, taking a leaf out of Fred Cress' approach, the way the cutlery drawer is cleaned. There have always been rituals in the suburbs. Our longing to cluster, to participate, is the key to personal benefit. In giving ourselves to the ritual we have the ability to experience a psychological benefit as part of the shared transaction. On the other hand individual rituals have the potential to become self destructive solo performances like that of the obsessive ironer in *Bad Press: Dissident Ironing*.

SECTION 5

THE HEART(H) AS A CRADLE OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUES

5.2 NURTURE AND DENIAL

If we enclose a group of people, a family, within a limited space for a long period of time, measured by years rather than months, a hothouse atmosphere will develop. In this atmosphere the psychological dynamic between the individuals will change constantly and the outcome of this change will often manifest in the temporary or permanent rupturing of relationships. The family is not physically trapped within the limitations of the space. Each member of the family can come and go but they are constrained to one physical site that they inhabit, one site in which the family as tribe lives together, one site called home. In other words they keep returning to the site that they understand as their place in a constant search for identity. This is the dynamic of the family, the fuel for so much of the work of Louise Bourgeois. And this is the fuel that keeps current audiences glued to the simulation of so-called 'reality television' like *Big Brother* looking for the cracks that appear in the 'family' as though we need or want to be shocked by our own inadequate behaviour as human beings; or want to be reassured by observing the inadequacies of others.

The hearth generates paradox — safety and seduction; shelter and brutality; nurture and rejection. And it is here by the warming fires of the hearth that we encounter a particularly insidious threat, the threat to children, both physical and psychological, from their own parents. The threat to children from their own parents is not a new idea but it was not until Sigmund Freud opened the way to discussion that the subject moved from the shadows to recognition. Since the late nineteenth-century much has been written on the subject of parents that harm their children but in this chapter I will confine myself to one particular relationship, that of the mother and the daughter.

The essayist Danielle Ramsey in her chapter titled 'Feminism and Psychoanalysis' for *The Routledge Critical Dictionary of Feminism and Postfeminism* says that 'identity is intimately bound up with our notions of sexuality and gender and it is Freud's understanding of the construction of our psychic life, primarily through his notion of the unconscious shaping of familial relations, that makes him one of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth-century.'¹⁵ The ground breaking theories of Freud, who invented what he saw as a 'new science', that of psychoanalysis, have been interesting to feminists, Ramsey believes, because 'Freud sees "masculinity" and "femininity" as largely cultural categories or social constructs...Freud's whole theory is a rejection of biological determinism, hence its interest for feminists who want to argue against certain ideas of feminism as natural.'¹⁶ Freud's theories included his view of sublimation, the neurotic consequences of sexual repression, the Oedipus complex and the consequences for male and female children, displacement and condensation necessitating the interpretation of dreams and infantile sexuality, and these ideas remain prominent in feminist theoretical debate.

Critical views expressed about Freud's work include those of the American scholar and psychoanalyst, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson who, in 1980 was appointed Project Director of the Freud Archives. Masson developed a belief based on access to previously unavailable materials contained within the archive that Freud suppressed for unscientific reasons his late nineteenth-century discovery of prevalent infantile seduction in Vienna. By suppressing this evidence Freud essentially left children at risk of sexual abuse that the Psychiatric Director of the Women's Mental Health Collective, Somerville, Massachusetts, Judith Lewis Herman, conjectured in her book *Father-Daughter Incest* published in 1981 might be as high as one in every three women in the general population. The consequences of Freud's decision so incensed Masson that he wrote *The Assault on the Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory*, published in 1984. The London-based practising psychoanalyst and author

¹⁵Danielle Ramsey, 'Feminism and Psychoanalysis', Gamble, S. Editor, 2000. *The Routledge Critical Dictionary of Feminism and Postfeminism*. Routledge, New York, p. 169

¹⁶*loc. cit.*

Charles Rycroft reviewed Masson's book for the New York Review of Books on 12 August 1984 under the headline 'A Case of Hysteria'. In the review Rycroft, according to Masson, takes a position of 'unenlightened indignation' occasioning Masson's letter to the Editors dated 16 August 1984 outlining the reasons for writing the book and defending certain criticisms put by Rycroft. Freud and his ideas remain controversial.⁴¹⁷

It is against the background of Freud's theories that Simone de Beauvoir wrote *The Second Sex* in 1949. de Beauvoir was hostile to Freudian thinking from the beginning says Danielle Ramsey because 'she saw Freud's theories of femininity as deeply suspect, both a product of and an ideological bolster to the patriarchal society into which Freud had been born.'⁴¹⁸ The former Research Fellow and Director of the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit at the University of Warwick, Sadie Plant, in her essay 'zeros + ones: Digital Women + The New Technoculture' for *Art and Feminism* refers to Freud and his last bid in 1933 to 'solve the riddle of femininity' which led him to comment 'that women have made few contributions to the inventions and discoveries of the history of civilization.'⁴¹⁹ However the authors of *Art and Feminism*, Helena Reckitt and Peggy Phelan note that 'Freud notoriously allowed as women's original contribution to Western civilization' the "female" skills of sewing, knitting and weaving.⁴²⁰ Freud saw women as passive, unable to concentrate, unable to reach intellectual heights and as the senior scholar at the Institute for Women and Gender at Stanford University, Marilyn Yalom, says in her book, *A History of the Wife*, he set the tone for the psychologists and psychiatrists of the 50s who 'believed women should be able to find fulfilment in their roles as wives and mothers, without the extra burdens of paid employment.'⁴²¹ Yalom cites the work of the 1950s British analyst, John Bowlby who she says 'followed Freud's line of thinking in developing his influential attachment theory. Bowlby argued that the mothers of small children should devote themselves exclusively to nurturing their offspring and that employment at this time of life was inadvisable.'⁴²²

Within the hothouse atmosphere of the post-war house the woman, cast by Freud and others as the designated nurturer, was located at the hearth, available for all members of the family but particularly for her children; the at-home equivalent of the Virgin Mary, Florence Nightingale and Mary Poppins. Why was the woman placed in this role? Was there any escape from the body of thought that would bind her to the hearth? There is a certain inescapable logic to her casting given that women give birth to children and it might naturally be assumed that they will nurture those children and become good mothers. Or is this a flawed assumption? Simone de Beauvoir certainly believed the assumption to be flawed. In *The Second Sex* she says 'there is no such thing as an "unnatural mother", to be sure, since there is nothing "natural" about maternal love; but, precisely for that reason, there are bad mothers.'⁴²³

In the earlier chapter *Behaviour and Beliefs in the New Landscape* factors impacting on women in the post-war period were discussed and foremost among them, since the passing of the [Australian] Maternity Allowance Bill in 1912, was the belief that it was women's civic duty to produce healthy children which were seen as, 'an asset of the State'.⁴²⁴ Further the writer Adrian Forty in his book, *Objects of Desire*, expressed the opinion that 'the most important change within the last century in the ideas constituting the home has been the shift from its role as a source of moral welfare to one

⁴¹⁷Masson, J. M. Letter to the Editors. New York Review of Books, 16 August, 1984, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/5761> (29 September, 2002, 1.45pm)

⁴¹⁸Danielle Ramsey, 'Feminism and Psychoanalysis', Gamble, S. Editor, 2000. *The Routledge Critical Dictionary of Feminism and Postfeminism*. Routledge, New York, p. 168

⁴¹⁹Sadie Plant, 'Zeros + Ones: Digital Women + The New Technoculture', Reckitt, H. and Phelan, P. 2001. *Art and Feminism*. Phaidon Press, London, p. 285

⁴²⁰Reckitt, H. and Phelan, P. 2001. *Art and Feminism*. Phaidon Press, London, p. 176

⁴²¹Yalom, M. 2001. *A History of the Wife*. Pandora Press, London, p. 361

⁴²²loc. cit.

⁴²³de Beauvoir, S. 1997. Translated and Edited by HM Parshley. *The Second Sex*. Random House, London, p. 538

⁴²⁴Maternity Allowance Bill 25 September, 1912. Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (1912, p.3438). Reiger, K. M. 1935. *The Disenchantment of the Home - Modernizing the Australian Family 1880 - 1940*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 110

of physical welfare, represented in visible terms by its turning from a place of beauty into one of efficiency.⁴²⁵ The lustful public pursuit of Modernism and new technology promoted by everyone including politicians and magazines was also important in linking the post-war woman to the hearth as the nurturer since the kitchen would display most of the new technology and the very suburban house in which the family sequestered would be a pale reflection of Modernism and ideals developed at the Bauhaus. As the American/Australian art critic and author Robert Hughes wrote in his essay on Julian Schnabel "Modernism" was telescoped into "newness," and newness was promoted as a value in itself.⁴²⁶ Hughes may have been talking about the art market but his statement holds true for post-war Australian attitudes. 'New' took precedence over everything and the basis for this was economic. If all that was new manifested as desirable an impetus would develop that could only be satiated by purchase. In other words a consuming class would emerge with their gaze firmly on the prize and the prize would be 'new' — new ideas, new products, new attitudes.

So the woman is cast in the role of nurturer but being cast in a role is far from succeeding in the role and there were women who were quietly fearful of their ability to be good mothers. Louise Bourgeois in discussion with the French curator and author Marie-Laure Bernadac spoke of the meanings inherent in works shown in New York in 1949 including a work titled *Woman Carrying Packages*. 'A woman who carries packages is responsible for what she carries and they are very fragile. Yes, it is the fear of not being a good mother' said Bourgeois of the work.⁴²⁷ This natural fear of failure is compounded by other feelings related to self worth and sexual identity. Simone de Beauvoir wrote that 'women's magazines are full of advice to the housekeeper on the art of preserving her sexual attractiveness while washing dishes...[and] reconciling coquetry, maternity, and economy'. But attaining the desirable balance in reality proved difficult and this, said de Beauvoir, 'is why the amorous type of woman feels resentment towards her children who ruin her seductiveness and deprive her of her husband's attentions.'⁴²⁸ Gay Bilson recounted a story from her adolescence that links with de Beauvoir's comment. 'I remember sleeping in the sleep-out. It had a door to the back verandah. Mother came to the door. It was obvious that I had been sleeping with nothing on. I was screamed at and made to feel small...It was as if my mother felt I had a man in my room or I was masturbating. There always seemed to be some sexual jealousy on my mother's part during my adolescence.'⁴²⁹

With just a little scratching at the surface we find that the nurturing role, mother love and good mothering are constituent parts of a very complex relationship which society is prone to label with the all encompassing, yet inadequate, term 'love'. The role of woman as nurturer does not exclude the love of a father for his children or the contribution he might make to nurture his children. Glenn Murcutt's father for example was particularly interested in nurturing his children but his method was perhaps extreme.

After my father's return from the war, the daily regime for us included swimming...and music...A normal day would see us swim a mile — half in the morning and half in the afternoon. Before school we would walk 1.5 kilometres to the beach to swim the half-mile, then 1.5 kilometres home to music practice, shower and dress. Then my job was to clean the bathroom. In the afternoon my father picked us up and took us to the swimming baths or to the beach for the

⁴²⁵Forty, A. 1987. *Objects of Desire — Design and Society 1750-1980*, Thames and Hudson, London, p. 108

⁴²⁶Hughes, R. 1992. *Nothing If Not Critical: Selected essays on Art and Artists*, Penguin, New York, p. 302

⁴²⁷Bernadac, M. 1996. *Louise Bourgeois*, Flammarion, New York, p. 54

⁴²⁸de Beauvoir, S. 1997. Translated and Edited by HM Parshley, *The Second Sex*, Random House, London, p. 541

⁴²⁹Bilson, G. (1998) Interview, 30 October

half-mile swim followed by a 100-metre sprint. If we were not fast enough then we had to do it again... In my school holiday's I worked in his joinery factory from 7am - 4pm like an employee... I did this from the age of twelve (I think) to sixteen.⁴³⁰

It is clear that Murcutt's father put a great deal of effort into his style of nurture and while Murcutt says he felt a great love for his father he also felt 'overly managed.' Glenn Murcutt's siblings including his sister are sharply divided on the long-term effect of such a managed childhood.

The American artist and feminist, Miriam Shapiro who with Judy Chicago developed *Womanhouse* in 1972 as part of the Feminist Art Program at Cal. Arts wrote in reference to the project that

Out of our consciousness-raising techniques came the motif of the kitchen. As we expressed our real underlying feelings about the room, it became obvious that the kitchen was a battleground where women fought with their mothers for their appropriate state of comfort and love, it was an arena where ostensibly the horn of plenty overflowed, but where in actuality the mother was acting out her bitterness over being imprisoned in a situation from which she could not bring herself to escape and from which society would not encourage such an escape.⁴³¹

This is a very telling comment and it serves my position, which is that mothers and daughters frequently maintain a very prickly relationship. As I researched the subject and talked to other women there was immediate understanding and response to this position. The difficulty inherent in the relationship between mothers and daughters does not preclude love but the relationship is frequently characterised by periods of great difficulty. The equally worthy subject of the relationship between mothers and sons I leave for investigation at another time. My focus in this documentation, and in this chapter in particular, is women.

Gay Bilson says that as a child and as an adolescent she found herself 'always at loggerheads with my mother... She didn't know how to love' Bilson says of her mother. 'She had no sense of nurturing anything. She was lost to thwarted ambition for more romantic ideas.'⁴³² The sentiments expressed by Bilson echo de Beauvoir who notes in the chapter on 'The Mother' in *The Second Sex* that 'conflicts arise when the girl grows older... she wishes to establish her own independence from her mother. This seems to the mother a mark of hateful ingratitude...'⁴³³ The mother exacts her revenge by constricting the girl's freedom, loading her with tasks or constantly punishing her for trivial reasons; in essence trying to rob her of her emerging womanhood by returning her to the non-competitive state of girlhood. These notions are as dark as the psychodrama in a Fred Cress painting and cast the home as a dangerous place for a girl child. De Beauvoir asserts that 'one of the major truths proclaimed by psychoanalysis is the danger to the child that may lie in parents who are themselves "normal"'. She continues by saying that the 'complexes, obsessions, and neuroses of adults have their roots in the early family life of those adults; parents who are themselves in conflict, with their quarrels and their tragic scenes, are bad company for the child.'⁴³⁴

The current worrying increase in our community of child abuse, including incest, and more recently reports of parents murdering their children to punish a partner must be noted. The murder of a child by a parent is the ultimate denial of the nurturing role. Associate professor Chris Goddard,

⁴³⁰ Murcutt, G. (1998) Interview. 28 October

⁴³¹ Miriam Shapiro, 'The Education of Women as Artists: Project Womanhouse' (1973). Reckitt, H. and Phelan, P. 2001. *Art and Feminism*. Phaidon Press, London, p. 208

⁴³² Bilson, G. (1998) Interview. 30 October

⁴³³ de Beauvoir, S. 1997. Translated and Edited by H.M. Parshley, *The Second Sex*. Random House, London, p. 534

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 538

director of the Child Abuse and Family Violence Research Unit at Monash University, Melbourne, points to a reluctance on the part of politicians to really come to terms with child abuse. In a story by the journalist Seamus Bradley, published in *The Age*, in October 2002, Goddard is quoted as saying 'research shows that many people simply do not see child abuse as a problem. This is despite the fact that from 1991 to 2000, 291 Australian children were killed in assaults.'⁴³⁵ With all the improvements to our lifestyle in societal, technological and economic terms since the post-war period the hearth in the suburbs has become an even more dangerous place for children. Goddard believes Governments of all persuasions are reluctant to interfere in families 'the left because they believe mandatory reporting victimises the poor and the right because they don't want to interfere with family as the building block of society.'⁴³⁶

Louise Bourgeois as an artist, woman, wife, and mother has explored some of the darker issues related to filial relationships in her angst-filled works. The artist is constantly driven by the strength of the emotional turmoil she felt in her family circumstances as a child, her later alienation from her beloved France, and paradoxically, separation from her father, the perpetrator of so much of her grief. As a child Bourgeois recalls her father taking a mistress, Sadie, and integrating her into the household alongside his wife under the full gaze of the family. 'This unhealthy atmosphere of deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy and double betrayal (since Louise felt betrayed not only by her father but also by Sadie), generated a profound psychic disturbance within the artist.'⁴³⁷ In December 1985 *Artforum* published a piece called *A Project by Louise Bourgeois: Child Abuse* from which Marie-Laure Bernadac quotes the artist as saying 'as a child, she felt manipulated, so as an adult she wanted to manipulate. Sculpture was her weapon of revenge.'⁴³⁸ The fears that Simone de Beauvoir expresses for mother and daughter at the hearth become self-perpetuating, generational, and are borne out by Bourgeois seeking, in adult life, to exert the power she was forced to succumb to in her childhood. The accumulations of raw emotion experienced by Bourgeois as a child have proved strong enough to fuel her practice for a lifetime. Bourgeois sees the home, the site of family, largely as the domain of shattered innocence and the family members largely the perpetrators of all unhappiness. While the artist found in her estimation her parents to be the architects of sadness she also came to feel intense guilt about her own skills as a mother. Conflicting emotions and her intense need to connect in human terms and yet her inability to make any connection are factors that characterise her work. Lawrence Rinder writes that there is 'no reassuring progression in her work, only...[a] powerful, recurring dichotomy.'⁴³⁹ Robert Hughes says that in order to make her work Bourgeois would 'rummage painfully between the layers of her own psyche.'⁴⁴⁰ And in her expressions of interiority she differed markedly from the formal male approach to sculpture. 'What Bourgeois sets up is a totemic, surrealistic imagery of weak threats, defences, lairs, wombs, almost inchoate groupings of form. Her work is by turns aggressive and pathetic, sexually charged and physically awkward, tense and shapeless. It employs an imagery of encounter to render concrete an almost inescapable sense of solitude.'⁴⁴¹ In this manner of working where the artist's sense of difference is so clearly displayed Bourgeois draws constantly on her storehouse of experience, fleshed out in every possible nuance of tragic detail and yet she reveals her pain in covert symbols that may not always be clear to the viewer. The artist draws deeply on her experience; she offers a glimpse of her soul and then withholds vital pieces of information. These exclusions enable her to re-explain her position constantly in her work. In developing this ability to delve so deeply into her psyche Hughes believes 'she thereby brilliantly

⁴³⁵Bradley, S. 2002. 'The Young and the Innocent', *The Age*, (*Saturday Insight*), 5 October, p. 3

⁴³⁶loc.

⁴³⁷Bernadac, M. 1996. *Louise Bourgeois*. Flammarion, New York, pp. 8, 9

⁴³⁸ibid. p.8

⁴³⁹Bourgeois, L. and Rinder, L. 1999. *Louise Bourgeois Drawings and Observations*. University Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. University of California, Berkeley, and Bullfinch Press, Berkeley, p. 14

⁴⁴⁰Hughes, R. 1992. *Nothing If Not Critical: Selected essays on Art and Artists*. Penguin, New York, p. 287

⁴⁴¹ibid. p. 285

revives the concept of art as autobiography, previously advocated by Picasso...⁴⁴²

Hughes maintains that the 'field to which Bourgeois's work constantly returns is female experience, located in the body, sensed from within. "I try", she told an interviewer with regard to one work, "to give a representation of a woman who is pregnant. She tries to be frightening but she is frightened. She's afraid someone is going to invade her privacy and that she won't be able to defend what she is responsible for."⁴⁴³ The fear of failure as a woman, as a mother and as a nurturer is never far from expression. But it is the *Femmes-maisons* that Bernadac feels are 'emblematic of Louise Bourgeois's entire oeuvre. The combination of geometric and organic forms, of rigidity and malleability, of architecture and viscera, serves as a metaphor for her own psychic makeup.'⁴⁴⁴ Bernadac relates the verticality of these works to Bachelard's theory of the verticality of the house and the separation of cellar and attic.

The American artist Eva Hesse also explored interiority as a means of forming abstract expression. As an artist she maintained her life and her art were bound together inextricably 'it's a total image that has to do with me and life' she said.⁴⁴⁵ Her exploration of formal issues in art, her reflection on the incidents of her childhood, the acceptance and positioning of women artists in a male dominated art world, her health and the 'being' of a woman consumed her. Lucy Lippard quotes Hesse from a diary entry in 1963 where the artist said 'I guess I am doing well but I am not happy in how I feel... There is a tenseness and anxiousness that never leave me... I am constantly dissatisfied with myself and testing myself. I have so much anger and resentment within me... It is as difficult as it is said to be an artist's wife and an artist also.'⁴⁴⁶ Hesse hungered to be a child, to rewrite her history in order to gain attention and love but when she sheltered in this domain she became angry that she was not regarded as an adult.⁴⁴⁷

In 1960 Hesse began a self portrait in which she depicted herself as having a 'schizophrenic syndrome'. 'If my whole security is based on myself...' she wrote 'then I have to be perfect. Therefore I can't be dependent on another person's opinion.'⁴⁴⁸ Lippard contended further that Hesse 'had a constant need to analyse any involvement with the emotional, comparing it, often unfavourably, with the "intellectual" side which she felt she lacked.'⁴⁴⁹ Unlike Bourgeois, Hesse worked to keep the emotional context from her work although she still felt passionately that her life and art were one. 'She wrote of looking forward to having children, but then, "I sympathise with women who are weary of their mates, bored by their relationship and are yet bound by it."⁴⁵⁰ She could see herself as the



Plate no. 65 Eva Hesse,
Self Portrait, 1960-1961

⁴⁴²Bernadac, M. 1996. *Louise Bourgeois*. Flammarion, New York, p. 9

⁴⁴³Hughes, R. 1992. *Nothing If Not Critical: Selected essays on Art and Artists*. Penguin, New York, p. 285

⁴⁴⁴Bernadac, M. 1996. *Louise Bourgeois*. Flammarion, New York, p. 23

⁴⁴⁵Lippard, L. 1992. *Eva Hesse*. Da Capo Press, U.S.A, p. 5

⁴⁴⁶*Ibid.* pp. 21, 22

⁴⁴⁷*Ibid.* p. 15

⁴⁴⁸*Ibid.* p. 12

⁴⁴⁹*loc. cit.*

⁴⁵⁰Lippard, L. 1992. *Eva Hesse*. Da Capo Press, U.S.A, p. 13

woman object Simone de Beauvoir described in *The Second Sex* but in a different context that of a girl cast as insecure woman because of the 'broken, sick, unsupportive home' from which she came.⁴⁵¹ Hesse was constantly in emotional turmoil and we have a privileged insight into her private world because her 'near-obsession with autobiography' caused her to fill diaries, notes and letters with her pain and these remain to tell the story.⁴⁵²

While Hesse was not tested as a mother, Bourgeois was and she tried to balance her desire to manipulate, as she herself had been manipulated, with her real desire to be responsible for her children, protector and nurturer and at the same time deal with her fear of inadequacy as a mother. Bourgeois had three sons, the first an orphaned French boy that she and her husband adopted in 1938. Through this child she wanted to keep alive her connection to France, her mother country, and she also wanted to affect in a positive manner the life of a child deprived of parents.⁴⁵³ Bernadac writes of the recurring 'theme of maternity, pregnancy and childbirth, which are in fact threads linking all of her work. Maternity is intended here in the broadest sense of a nurturing matrix — the capacity to give birth, germinate, reproduce, fulfilling the function of refuge, home and erotic "receptacle" since, for Bourgeois, even pregnancy, the result of sexual encounter, is erotic.'⁴⁵⁴ Was Bourgeois a successful nurturer? Little is written of her 'boys' amid the millions of words written by the artist and others about her relationship with her mother, her father and Sadie (the mistress of her father). I find it curious that the spider in her work is so often characterised by curators and writers as friendly and reassuring like the Daddy Long Legs Spider in the corner of a room. In so doing they miss the fact that the female spider eats her young. Does Bourgeois choose to obliterate her failure as a mother by eating that which she has failed? Is she perhaps expressing her own personal supremacy and longevity in the form of a spider? Bourgeois' constant exploration of the present through the envelope of past pain in an effort to reconcile her relationships continues today with the same drive and power that she demonstrated as a young artist.

Nurture and the role of the mother I have always associated with saints and martyrs — that strange overlay of post-war religiosity working its way into the foreground again. Saints I see as individuals who perform selfless tasks for others and require no recognition or payback. Saints, I believe, are very rare. Martyrs on the other hand perform the tasks but expect payment in return often unbeknown to the recipient upon whose head is building a huge emotional debt that cannot be repaid.⁴⁵⁵ It seems that in the post-war suburbs the women at the hearth were computing the debt. Without knowing it the tiny baby was accumulating an emotional debt that at some time would be called in for repayment. This resentfulness, or bitterness as Miriam Shapiro put it, tainted the relationship of many mothers and daughters. The work of the housewife and mother was thankless. The work was done because there was no alternative but always there was a desire for repayment or recognition, some basic attention. And in such a state of mind there is the ever-present potential for the mother to inflict harm on the child



Plate no. 66 Louise Bourgeois, *Spider*, 1994

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 26

⁴⁵² 'Lya Hesse: A Retrospective', Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, 1992, p. 17

⁴⁵³ Bernadac, M. 1996, *Louise Bourgeois*, Flammarion, New York, p. 170

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 149

⁴⁵⁵ (I am defining these terms as they are popularly accepted rather than in a religious sense)

as a form of repayment. Not necessarily physical harm — that would be noticed — but psychological harm or perhaps the withholding of love; actions that cannot be seen but which have a lifelong effect on the child.

When I met Antonia Bruzzaniti at her Woodend hydroponic tomato farm I coined the phrase *Tomato Madonna* in reference to the way in which she chose to live her life. The relationship between this divorced woman and her tomatoes was that of a mother and child.

The tomatoes in my greenhouse totally depend on me like children. The computer controls the heating and the balance of humidity and the fabric keeps out the wind and rain but I have to manage the feeding for the different growth stages. I don't leave them, I'm afraid to leave them I'm obsessed by them.⁴⁵⁶

For Bruzzaniti tomatoes replaced loss in her life; they became her surrogate children — hundreds of kilos of them all plump and shining in their perfection. They replaced the sadness of her marriage and subsequent divorce. In the needs of her tomatoes she discovered that she could be entirely lost. Mothering can take many forms and at the hearth of her tomato palace Bruzzaniti does not withhold 'love'.

My mother was a martyr but we know she had reason. In Australia in the 40s and 50s great shame was cast on those who gave birth to imperfect children. These sad creatures were kept silently at home, like my aunt, or sent away to allow the family the belief that their flawed progeny did not exist. They were swept under the metaphorical mat but remained an uncomfortable bump. My parent's second born was an intellectually handicapped child and my mother gave her life for this child while my father painted in his shed and played the piano, while I played alone because 'normal' did not require attention or love. It is clear that I am interested in matters of mother daughter relationships because the hearth for me was not filled with maternal love. Instead a mounting emotional debt, that I could never repay, ticked away like compound interest. As I grew older I came to terms with the cause but the gulf between my mother and myself only widened. And in a strange paradox, after a lifetime of martyrdom to the cause my sister rejected my mother in a most explosive and painful manner occasioning the need for police intervention on several occasions. She simply left the house, her prison and her jailer at a time when my mother was aged, crippled with arthritis, vulnerable and unable to cope with the embarrassment of a headstrong child, now in her forties, running away and refusing to return. A child who paraded the streets bedecked in multiple stands of gaudy bracelets, carrying four or five baskets or bags, curiously attired and demanding to eat lunch daily at *The Grand Hotel* on the Esplanade at Glenelg not far from Adelaide. She was like a walking billboard attracting the opportunist and there were certainly those who took advantage of her as she wistfully stockpiled picnic baskets, plastic cups and plates and sewing baskets that would never see a picnic table or a sewing machine. In a lifetime my parents had made no plans for this child. Now my father was dead and my mother was trying to cope alone. Paradoxically my sister met an intellectually handicapped man who, in his innocence, showed the way that my parents could not find in forty years. Between the frustrated police and this man a future was secured, a place in a suitable home, and a resolution and reconciliation between my mother and my sister before my mother died.

With my sister safely cared for, her days of wandering the streets and eating at *The Grand Hotel* completely forgotten, Yosl Bergner's graters returned to my consciousness as I contemplated

⁴⁵⁶Bruzzaniti, A. (1999) Interview, 7 March

other dangers of the hearth. As the discursive underlying the documentation clarified into the key themes of theatre, ritual, nurture and sustenance the graters moved into the theme of nurture. I began to look at multiples of the Australian designed 'Willow' cylindrical graters and what these machine made objects, unchanged in design for over one hundred years, might collectively imply. The idea of using the grater began with Margaret Olley and her comment on aesthetics, mutated to the theatre of Jewish narrative and Christian iconography and finally delivered me back to the doorstep of the suburban housewife ministering to injured children in her kitchen. Marshalling thoughts in the corporeal realm a relationship was constructed between the bodily healing of the nurturing mother and the healing miracles of Christ. The serrated surface of the grater implying the physical cuts and grazes mothers so frequently tend with *Band-Aids*, cotton wool and *Dettol*. But graters harbour a potential for danger. They are designed to shred. Cartoonist, Mary Leunig, in her book of drawings called, *There's no place like home*, examines the potential for self-inflicted damage in a bleak watercolour that places one of her dissolute housewives at the kitchen bench preparing a meal (see overleaf). The woman is worn and tired. Her mind is disengaged from reality. Her thoughts transport her to a world of softness where she is carried high on the back of a white bird into a responsibility-free sky. She is a child again. But all is not well, even in her imagination. A large fluffy grater is grinding the cloud of her sublime imagination into her bowl, tying her back to the reality she hopes to escape. There are no children evident in this kitchen. Perhaps they are sleeping. This could be the woman's only moment of peace for the day. And then we notice that below the bone-weary face the housewife has shredded her hand up to the wrist into the real grater and a large pool of blood is developing on the bench top.⁴⁵⁷ Leunig's black humour drew me back from the consideration of the healing nurturer to the thorny relationship between mothers and daughters. When this relationship breaks down the potential exists for the mother to maim the child emotionally, leaving scars as raw as any flesh wound. The grater became a metaphor for the maimed, like Bergner's Christ grater.

The Spanish born artist Eulàlia Valldosera brings together a number of concerns that appear in this documentation. Valldosera is concerned with the domestic, the home, rituals, the body, cleanliness and the interactions of the home including the fracturing of relationships in particular the ambivalence she felt for her father and the relationship of the artist to her mother. Valldosera is drawn to the theatrical, to the narrative. 'It is on the dramatic terrain that Valldosera takes her distance from the sculptural tradition of recent decades: beyond the experience of space and the materials that fill it, her work moves towards an art of elliptic story-telling, which becomes permanently cyclical in its endless narration.'⁴⁵⁸ This is the way in which the Director of the Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam, Bartomeu Marí, and chief curator of Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona, Nuria Enguita Mayo, present the work of Valldosera in an exhibition, *Eulàlia Valldosera Works 1990-2000*. Valldosera's works are based on performance, which may be static, and light as means of illumination and a means of perception. In these works she uses everyday objects of no value and imbued with little originality. These are objects that are the traces of our existence, our discards, like the emptied bottles of household cleaners that the artist collects from around the world.

In the consideration of cleanliness and godliness Valldosera moves to the material that must be removed, dust, ash, crumbs, scurf, hair, the signifiers of our life. Instead of obliterating these 'germ laden materials in the manner of the martyred housewife she seeks them out as viable materials for her works such as *Sweeping (The World's Navel: #1 The Earth's Belly)* 1991, a performance work

⁴⁵⁷Leunig, M. 1983. *There's No Place Like Home*. Penguin Books, Melbourne, p. -

⁴⁵⁸Eulàlia Valldosera Works 1990-2000. Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, 2000, p. 16



Plate no. 67 Mary Leunig, *Untitled*, 1982

where the artist ritualistically sweeps thousands of cigarette butts into various forms exorcising her guilt as a smoker or *Table* (*The World's Navel: Documents*, photographic series #3) 1990-1993 in which crumbs on a table reveal the matriarch of the hearth (see overleaf).

In the installation works that encompass shadow play and an object landscape, *The Dining Room: Fear of the Mother* 1996 and *The Dining Room: The Figure of the Mother* 1994-1995 display the circular concerns of this documentation, (see overleaf). On a hospital style curtain the viewer can see the shadows cast by the object landscape. This is a theatrical device that heightens the narrative in the work. Chairs, a table and the huge figure of a mother cast by one of the artist's plastic domestic cleaner bottles. The viewer explores the significance of the shadow play, explores the landscape and the play of light reflected by pieces of glass. Valldosera says of this body of work,

How could I rid myself of the heavy shield I had raised against a mother apparently dominated by her husband? Only by growing closer and humbly rediscovering the woman who I still did not yet truly love. And as soon as I began the long-feared struggle, my masochistic armor began to disfigure me. I could only conquer that weakness — which came from an unquestioned maternal inheritance — by treating it with kindness. Behind the desperate shadow — in which cowardice and servility covered up the subtle revenge of a woman jealous of her children for having conquered her own territory — there appeared a woman of indomitable strength.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁹ Eulàlia Valldosera *Works 1990-2000*, Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, 2000, notes attached to p. 76

In *Vessels: The Cult of the Mother*, 1996, Valldosera uses the simple but ingenious

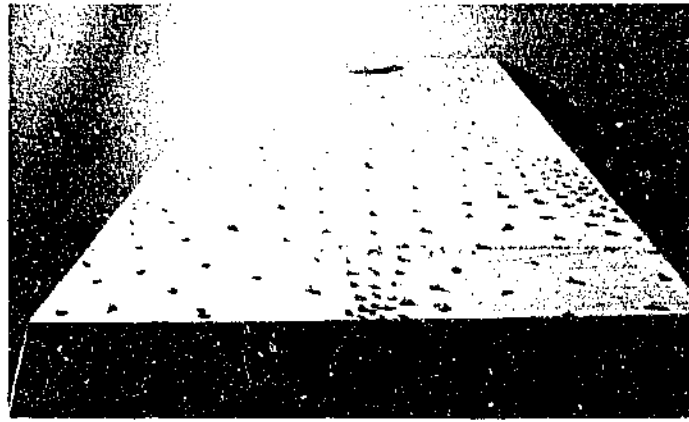


Plate no. 68 Eulàlia Valldosera, *Table (The World's Navel: Documents, photographic series #3)*, 1990-1993



Plate no. 69 Eulàlia Valldosera, *The Dining Room: The Figure of the Mother*, 1994-1995

method of light projection against her empty cleaner bottles and a mask to fit the architecture of the venue, to create a huge spectre of matriarchs of different scale. In the catalogue essay by Nuria Enguita Mayo these discarded plastic bottles, she says,

become a conscious way of deciphering the figure of the mother through two different approaches: that of analytical thought...and that of Jungian archetypal thought in the latter, which refers to the Great Mother, identified with the world as the container, the giver of life and food, but also the possible torturer, like Medea in Greek mythology — a menacing figure who holds the right of death over those whom she has given life.⁴⁶⁰ (also see overleaf)

At the suburban hearth we have a jealous and vengeful mother feeding her family but exacting a repayment from her children, the form or sum of which is unclear. A woman cooking to control or

⁴⁶⁰ Eulàlia Valldosera Works 1990-2000, Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, 2000, notes attached to p.89



Plate no. 70 Eulàlia Valldosera, *Vessels: The Cult of the Mother*, 1996, #1 *Woman Seed*

seduce, cleaning to find redemption, flaunting her power over her children in the only act of power she had open to her. Since psychoanalysis was invented by Freud this has been the subject of discussion. But nothing is all black or all white. The sun did shine, there was reason for optimism, mothers did cook favourite foods for the pleasure and generosity of doing so and love did flow from mothers to children. There was no opportunity of escape, no honourable discharge from motherly service in the post-war era, so recognition and honour are due to these women for just getting through albeit with their frailties displayed. Women now have choices but similar problems still exist. Gay Bilson, for instance, representative of the next generation, acknowledges the fact that with all her experience she 'was a hopeless feeder of her two children and yet [she] was obsessively cooking for adults.'⁶¹

The spectre of the vengeful woman at the hearth is not universal. But the vengeful mother does exist and the complex relationship between mothers and daughters continues. We can only hope that the damage to the girl child can be minimised.

⁶¹ Bilson, G. (1998) Interview. 30 October

SECTION 5

THE HEART(H) AS A CRADLE OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUES

5.3 SUSTENANCE AND AMBIGUITY IN SUBURBIA

Literature abounds with gastronomic acts of seduction, celebration, daily survival, treachery, and death marked by the sharing of food. The cook in these narratives is often characterised as alchemist turned writer artfully engaging with human appetites and senses and then chronicling, like a scientist, the elements that will achieve the sublime in order to relive the moment. In this chapter, the last of the thematic explorations arising from the domestic hearth, the focus moves from behaviour and beliefs that result in a multiplicity of rituals and the complex relationships of the hearth to the consideration of the table and the sustaining of the family. And even as I attempt a single-minded focus on the theme of sustenance the companion themes of nurture and ritual are constantly in play as much today as they were in post-war Australia; circulating, involving, tangling, separating, overlapping. These are inescapable themes arising not only from the hearth but also the intricate relationships of the family cast adrift on the isolated stage that is home, without a script to guide the way. The family left to negotiate critical aspects of their life while others watch in the same way an audience watches actors on a stage; in the same way an audience is hungry for the action (or inaction) of so-called 'reality television' such as *Big Brother*. Home is a bell jar existence, an emotional pressure cooker and therefore it is not surprising that there is failure. Failure becomes evident in poor relationships and in the withholding of the necessary rituals, nurture and sustenance required for the family to succeed and grow together. Success in matters of the hearth barely rates a mention but failure is certainly noted.

The exploration of this theme begins with the acknowledgment of the many cycles of sustenance starting with the slaughter and harvesting of meats and fish followed by the gathering of ingredients, the preparation of the meal, the sharing of the meal, which might also be considered the destruction of the meal, the contemplation of the remains, and finally, the decay. The cycle of sustenance is a subject that the Romanian born artist and Fluxus member, Daniel Spoerri, has made into a life's work. Spoerri's aesthetic sensibility is shaped by his particular interest and experience in various facets of the theatre. Best known for his table pieces Spoerri creates a meal and at some point interrupts the cycle of consumption. At that point he fixes all of the dishes and debris to the table surface and then exhibits the baroque remains as a conventional rectangle in a gallery. Sheldon Williams in his catalogue biography for Spoerri writes about the 'terrible paradox — immediately frozen into permanence. Litter and corruption were suddenly given art status.'⁴⁶² In 1979 Spoerri was invited to take part in the *Biennale of Sydney, 'European Dialogue'*. A dinner was held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales adjacent to a long gallery wall. At the conclusion of the dinner all items remaining on the table were fixed to the surface of the table and the table top was fixed vertically to the gallery wall. Below the installation a long metal tray at the base of the wall caught any debris that was not held fast or was in a position to move to another place.⁴⁶³ I know the work well because Nick Waterlow, Director of the 1979 *Biennale of Sydney*, invited me in my professional capacity of the time, to direct a photographic shoot of the

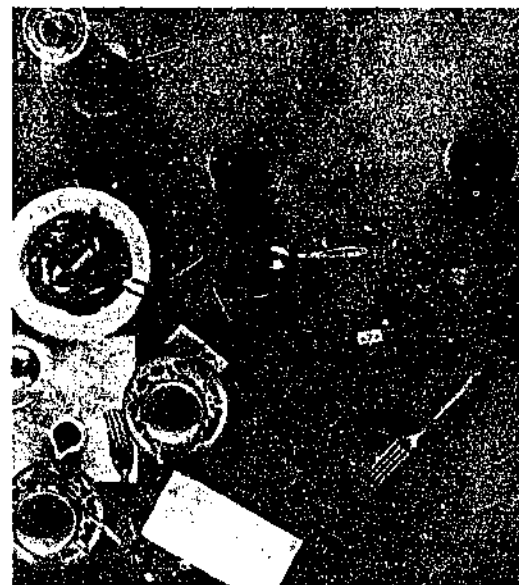


Plate no. 71 Daniel Spoerri,
detail of table piece, date unknown

⁴⁶²Sheldon Williams, *Biennale of Sydney (3rd), 'European Dialogue'*, compiled by Nick Waterlow, Art Gallery of New South Wales, The Australian Centre for Photography and other venues, Playbill, Sydney, 1979, p.-

⁴⁶³*Biennale of Sydney (3rd), 'European Dialogue'*, compiled by Nick Waterlow, Art Gallery of New South Wales, The Australian Centre for Photography and other venues, Playbill, Sydney, 1979, p.-

artworks included in the exhibition for later publication. Spoerri began making these tableaux in the 60s and, according to an article in the 2002, April-May edition, of the international German magazine, *Kunstforum*, was still making them in the 90s. In one sense it is worrying when an artist does little more than repeat that which was initially successful but in the context of theatre and ritual Spoerri's work might be considered limitless in that the purpose of the ritual is repetition and participation and like a Greek tragedy or the story of Christ performed in recent decades as entertainment the ritual retelling over generations finds new audiences. Spoerri embraces elements of theatre and ritual in works that record time, space, place and relationships. And he poses more aggressive questions of waste, excess, destruction and decay in the twentieth-century. He touches on aspects of the political, sure in the knowledge that food has always been a highly politicised commodity.

Spoerri's intensely physical approach to the ritual of the table is contrasted by the sensitive and elegant response of the Dutch jeweller, Manon van Kouswijk, whose recent work, *Wash (and then stay for a while...)*, shown at Gallery Funaki, Melbourne, in 1999, explores the materialisation of presence and the idea of witness to presence.

One evening I invited some friends for dinner at my house. I served soup and rice with chicken. We sat at the kitchen table all night drinking red wine and telling each other stories. When I woke up the next morning I could still hear their voices...I decided I wanted to have a witness to their presence which would enable me to keep their traces as memory.⁶⁴

The artist then set about embroidering the red wine stains left on the white damask cloth the poignant result revealing the human need for connection with others.

Manon van Kouswijk's selection of materials and method evokes Eva Hesse's use of materials associated with the domestic environment. The American academic, Anna C. Chave, in her essay 'Eva Hesse: A "Girl Being a Sculpture"' written for the 1992 Hesse retrospective at Yale touches on Hesse's use of the womanly crafts. 'Spinning and weaving, sewing and knitting, wrapping and bandaging: working with fiber is conventionally woman's work...Historically, needlework has signalled woman's confinement in the household and the limitation of their accepted creative outlets to activities that are, in the first instance, domestic chores.'⁶⁵ While Hesse immersed herself in fibre van Kouswijk links for a moment with Hesse and then moves on to other materials more associated with jewellery.



Plate no. 72 Manon van Kouswijk, *Wash (and then stay for a while...)* detail, 1999

Before we reach the point of placing our bounty on Spoerri's tables or reach for embroidery thread, to record the moment issues of life and death must be encountered. Marcel Proust in *Swann's Way* talks about of tragedies that underlie the making of delicious food. Contrasting the anticipation of a roast chicken 'the aroma of...which she [the cook] knew how to make so unctuous and so tender' with the violent attempts of the same saintly, knife wielding, servant in killing the bird while emitting 'shrill cries of "Filthy creature! Filthy creature!"' And later when the bird appeared at the table 'in a skin

⁶⁴Manon van Kouswijk, *Wash (and then stay for a while...)*, Gallery Funaki, Melbourne, 1999

⁶⁵Anna C. Chave, 'Eva Hesse: A "Girl being a Sculpture"', *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, 1992, p.108

gold-embroidered like a chasuble...⁴⁶⁶ The narrator contemplates the instant dismissal of the servant for the horror and cruelty he has witnessed in her clumsy slaughtering of the bird but then relents when he considers the extent of the deprivation he would suffer without her delicious food. And it is this age-old equation that allows the balance to fall in favour of the delicious cooked food that keeps so many of us at the table without a thought for the abattoirs and the violent loss of life.

What we eat and drink has long fascinated artists. 'The relationship between food and performance is not a recent development' writes the American art historian and curator, Karen Moss, 'the form has precedents dating back as far as Dionysian rituals, medieval pageantry and ritualised nineteenth-century banquets... Contemporary artists now actively "perform" with food, often using it to merge the practice of art with the experience of everyday life.'⁴⁶⁷ The Nabis, symbolists, the Futurists, the Surrealists and Fluxus all explored aspects of food in art and performance, sometimes creating cook books and opening restaurants to reinforce their theories. Moss says that it was not until after 'the post-war economic boom, [that] artists began to explore the idea of food as both a sign of commodity and in relation to our own corporeality.'⁴⁶⁸ In the creation of *Womanhouse* in 1972 led by Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro, food was important to the totality of the work for its ability 'to underscore its relationship to the body, sexuality, and gender-related activities.'⁴⁶⁹ Commenting on *Womanhouse*, Moss says 'this biting feminist critique of domesticity and housework included a dining table filled with platters of food and a sensuous pink "nurturant kitchen," that featured floor-to-ceiling fried-egg "breasts" reiterating the role of female as both provider and object of consumption.'⁴⁷⁰

In the same year as the staging of *Womanhouse* Judy Chicago exhibited her seminal work *The Dinner Party* (see overleaf), a work that had taken six years and hundreds of assistants to make. Essentially the work defies patriarchy to rewrite history by including great women and resets the table of the last supper for thirty-nine women on a table that forms a huge equilateral triangle. In each place the woman 'is represented on a hand-painted plate by an abstract form based on "central core" vulvic imagery; an embroidery and a chalice. On the base tiles are inscribed with a further 999 names.'⁴⁷¹ Chicago says embroidery was chosen as an important mode of construction within the work for its immediate representation of, 'a traditional female act, requiring both generosity and personal sacrifice.'⁴⁷² The work toured internationally attracting huge audiences and much was written about the piece and the ideas it provoked. Was it art, many wanted to know? In 1979 the American art historian and critic, Diana Ketchum, wrote a critique for the *Village Voice*, 11 June, in response to the phenomenon of *The Dinner Party* saying that the work was hard to place in mainstream art between 1960 and 1979. Ketchum chronicled many of the questions asked about the work. Some saw the work as 'an attack on Minimalism, since it has concept, or that it is an example of the new eclecticism, since it uses traditional crafts. Others say it falls in the tradition of nineteenth-century public art...' ⁴⁷³ and the questions follow 'is it art? Is it politics? Is it fine art or crafts? Is it the work of a single artist or collective, accumulative work like the medieval cathedrals? Is it erotic? Is it pornographic? Does it celebrate women? Does it denigrate women?' ⁴⁷⁴ In the end Ketchum comes down on the side of public art saying the lesson inherent in the work is no more than 'the basic feminist lesson that the first step

⁴⁶⁶Proust, M. 1992. Translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. Revised by D.J. Enright. *In Search of Lost Time*. Volume 1 *Swann's Way*. The Modern Library, New York, pp. 169-171

⁴⁶⁷Karen Moss. 'Palliative Pleasures: The interaction of food and performance art'. *Setting the American Table: Essays for the New Culture of Food and Wine*. 2001. Copia - The American Center for Wine, Food & The Arts, Napa, California, p. 57

⁴⁶⁸*ibid.* pp. 58-60

⁴⁶⁹*ibid.* p. 62

⁴⁷⁰*loc. cit.*

⁴⁷¹Reckitt, H. and Phelan, P. 2001. *Art and Feminism*. Phaidon Press, London, p. 111

⁴⁷²Chicago, J. and Hill, S. 1980. *Embroidering Our Heritage: The Dinner Party Needlework*. Anchor Books, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York pp. 20, 21

⁴⁷³Diana Ketchum. 'On the Table: Joyous Celebration' (1979). Reckitt, H. and Phelan, P. 2001. *Art and Feminism*. Phaidon Press, London, p. 227

⁴⁷⁴*loc. cit.*

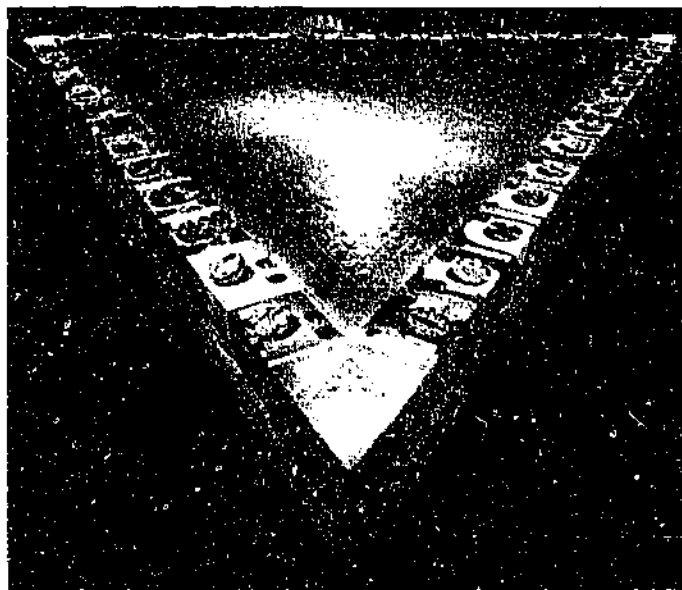


Plate no. 73 Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, 1974-1979

in coming to consciousness is for women to know what other women have done.⁴⁵ *The Dinner Party* is a monumental exploration of gender, cultural identity, representation and politics and it is a superb showcase of the womanly crafts. Perhaps the work in totality is weighted too heavily towards the representation of the crafts than art. From its first showing the explicit imagery on the plates that represented the chosen women was found to be shocking and there were calls for the exhibition to be closed down because it was pornographic. We know well this kind of controversy only increases audience numbers. Today *The Dinner Party* wouldn't cause a ripple of dissent. Ketchum, from her position in the late 70s, maintained the work was a backward glance for the women's movement despite the obvious originality and perhaps that is the problem with the work; it appears didactic because it relies too much on the issues of feminism to fuel the communication with the audience. When we look at the work of Eva Hesse who borrowed from the womanly crafts we see an artist driving those materials to new conclusions free from the limitation of illuminating issues and yet her work explored gender, representation and politics. Chave says Hesse's 'rope pieces are not like dainty, controlled displays of needlecraft, but like needlework gone berserk...'⁴⁶ Chave points out that on the one hand with the emblematic use of fibre Hesse is playing the role of dutiful daughter and wife while at the same time bursting from the traditional constraints by using fibre in the subversive role of sculptor. Turning the emblems of women's work into a vocabulary of self-empowerment.⁴⁷ Both women were searching for the same end but Hesse, it seems, was more interested in making art while Chicago was more interested in constructing a monument to the achievement of women that, in the end, was more educational than expressive.

Within the theatre of the domestic kitchen, the 'dining table has always been a symbol of emotional stasis' the place where we share food. 'The dining table is always where the people in weddings are alloyed to each other, where people often propose marriage, where adolescents rage at the incomprehensibly terrible taste of their parents, where the inevitable food is arrayed during a wake.'⁴⁸ The table is a symbol of survival. To maintain and continue there must be food on the table, nourishment provided, or we die. Nourishment may be at the level of subsistence or the excess of a Dionysian ritual where feasting, sex and pleasuring the gods was mandatory.

The preparation of food, the getting of the food onto the table, can also become a form

⁴⁵ Diana Ketchum, *On the Table: Joyous Celebration* (1979), Reckitt, H. and Phelan, P., 2001, *Art and Feminism*, Phaidon Press, London, p. 228.

⁴⁶ Anna C. Chave, *Eva Hesse: A "Girl being a Sculpture"*, *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, 1992, p. 108.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, cit.

⁴⁸ Lionel Tiger, 'Your Table is Waiting', *Setting The American Table: Essays for the New Culture of Food and Wine*, 2001, Copia: The American Center for Wine Food and the Arts, Napa, California, p. 69.

of entrapment. As Simone de Beauvoir said the 'magic of the oven can hardly appeal to Mexican Indian women who spend half their lives preparing tortillas, identical from day to day, from century to century.'⁴⁷⁹ In sharp contrast Australian women experimented with the extreme requirements of the 70s dinner party syndrome which was more akin to the Dionysian feast where the cook, usually the woman, worked for days to prepare a meal that was demolished in a very short period of time. And unlike their Mexican Indian counterparts by the mid 80s Australian women had exercised their right of choice and determined that this was a practice that separated them from their guests and required altogether too much effort and generosity. The answer for the future would lie in simpler approaches.

In 1993 Gay Bilson was invited to prepare the banquet for the close of the Seventh Symposium of Australian Gastronomy to be held at the National Gallery, Canberra. Feasting has become a passion for Bilson whose inclusive performative works spring from arts references, not simply her professional involvement with food. Since the 90s Bilson has been increasingly interested in performative works using food as a medium, drawing on her immense knowledge of ingredients, preparation, making and serving of food. The dinner for eighty was to carry on the tradition of banquets in a grand theatrical manner based not only on spectacle but also on the intellectualising of food. Bilson chose the body as the theme for the dinner and in the process developed an idea for one of the courses that would prove shocking.

My idea was to use my own blood to make sausages ('boudin noir'). The whole meal centred around the body. The food offerings read as a list of words: 'stomach, egg, flesh, bone, skin, blood, heart, milk, fruit, virgin's breasts, dead men's bones'. There is such a resistance to blood, especially our blood. I discussed the whole idea with Janni Kyritsis, my chef at Berowra Waters Inn, and he was not enthusiastic to say the least. We were at the time making a fine blood sausage using properly prepared pig's blood; that is blood not allowed to curdle when it is retained in the slaughter, and as human blood has similar properties to pig's blood I knew it would work as an ingredient. It seemed to me to be the greatest generosity I could show to use my own blood. I talked to a doctor, a pathologist and even a lawyer. I knew that I must be checked out for Aids, Hepatitis and so on. Even then the cooking process would kill any baddies. Still the resistance was enormous. So it became a rumour rather than fact. I wrote a piece for the *Sydney Morning Herald* ('Good Weekend') about blood with the recipe for 'boudin noir' included and letters poured in. An interesting period and how cowardly I was. Artists have used blood recently and seem to have the social sanction my idea did not. Blood has a bad name these days...⁴⁸⁰

The Australian novelist and critic, Marion Halligan, attended the banquet and wrote a critique of the *Body Dinner* for *Island Magazine*. 'A blood sausage follows, with apples and calvados. A rumour circulates, that it is Gay's blood, carefully collected over the past year, strictly tested of course, and made into the best black pudding I've ever tasted. Nobody believes the rumour, at least they don't think they do: what's interesting is that it even exists.'⁴⁸¹ If Judy Chicago's 'butterfly vaginas'⁴⁸² shocked in 1972 then it was Bilson's turn in 1993. Home cooks across the nation took a sharp intake of breath as

⁴⁷⁹ de Beauvoir, S. 1997. Translated and Edited by HM Parshley. *The Second Sex*. Random House, London, p. 472

⁴⁸⁰ Bilson, G. (1998) Interview, 30 October

⁴⁸¹ Halligan, M. 1994. 'Too Solid Flesh'. *Island*, Issue number 58, Sydney, pp. 3 - 6

⁴⁸² Lucy Lippard. *The Pains and Pleasure of Rebirth: Women's Body Art* (1976). Reckitt, H. and Phelan, P. 2001. *Art and Feminism*. Phaidon Press, London, p. 216

they read the 'Good Weekend' and contemplated generosity in a new form; their own blood offered to their families as sustenance. It sounded pagan, uncomfortable and threatening. Metaphorically women were already offering their blood but Bilson's head-on approach had all the effect of a high speed car crash. And yet artists who perform publicly with buckets of blood and the bloody entrails of animals fail to draw such criticism. Bilson's sin was that she had intruded into the comfort zone of middle class home and hearth.

Bilson's claim that the use of her blood in food might represent the ultimate generosity and sacrifice is a sentiment echoed by Judy Chicago. But Chicago is not talking about blood she is talking about embroidery 'as a traditional female act, requiring both generosity and personal sacrifice.'⁴⁸³ The ideas are not mutually exclusive since the womanly crafts are based on great effort, sacrifice, and repetition; all the better to keep the housewife busy at home in a patriarchal society. Both women invite their respective audiences, generations apart, to journey to the extremes of the womanly crafts in order to see and possibly seek liberation.

Halligan summed up her experience of the *Body Dinner* by saying that the 'banquet was as much a criticism of culture as it was an affirmation. It subverted as much as it celebrated...it seems to me that eating is probably the most ambiguous act of our lives.'⁴⁸⁴ The calculated excess of the banquet would seem light years away from post-war Australia where the focus was on making ends meet.

The post-war housewife became skilled at making left overs into something else because waste was not only frowned upon it could simply not be afforded. The household menu was often constructed around the principle of specific meals for specific days. In the 50s the each day of the week could often be identified by the dish that was served. And in the consideration of the dishes the housewife looked at the possibility of leftovers and thought about what they might become as part or the sum of another meal all with an eye to saving money. The big family meal of the week was Sunday lunch, which was inevitably a roast of some kind accompanied by roast potatoes and two or three types of vegetables. Friday evening was often fish and chips from the 'corner' shop wrapped in newspaper. The short trip to the fish and chip shop represented a brief, and inexpensive, outing for the family and a night off for the housewife. The prevalent style of cooking was English but there was, if one looked more closely, a degree of diversity in the range of foods cooked to sustain the family at a time we often characterise as having absolute sameness. Of course the quality of the cooking, the individual flair and capability of the woman would set some food apart as particularly good.

Alan Saunders says that he 'always assumed mothers were thought of as good cooks...'⁴⁸⁵ and yet many women struggled with the task. It was however, definitely not done to say that one's mother was a bad cook. Judged purely on numbers how would it be possible for all women to be good cooks? Could every woman like the task equally? Clearly the answer is no. Isolated as they were in their individual fenced realms women helped each other by participating in an arcane ritual that was tinged with the post Depression homily 'waste not, want not'. Favourite recipes, successful recipes, economical recipes were written on the back of an envelope or a scrap of paper and passed on from woman to woman. The envelope was always a used envelope that had been set aside for reuse as a shopping list or for recording recipes. Using anything but scrap paper or reused paper was unheard of. These little pieces of paper shaped our palates. In post-war Australia there were no brilliantly illustrated cookbooks and no gastro-porn suggesting home cooks could achieve restaurant

⁴⁸³Chicago, J and Hill, S. 1980. *Embroidering Our Heritage: The Dinner Party Needlework*. Anchor Books, Anchor press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York pp. 20, 21

⁴⁸⁴Halligan, M. 1994. 'Too Solid Flesh'. *Island*, Issue number 58, Sydney, p. 6

⁴⁸⁵Saunders, A. (1999) interview. 15 April

quality food without any experience. Women had to wait for Margaret Fulton in the mid 1960s before full colour recipe books started to become popular. Women's magazines were helpful regularly publishing recipes and Fulton herself began writing for *Woman's Day* in 1960. Organizations such as the Country Women's Association and gas and electricity utilities published collections of recipes, usually text only booklets, lacking illustrations or photographs. There was however something personal about exchanging recipes that inspired women to save these reused paper envelopes with the telling handwriting. The artefacts were organised into books or were simply tucked into a drawer. Rosa Matto's mother wrote down recipes on separate pieces of paper that she filed in a box. Matto noted that her mother could 'find a recipe in this box very quickly by just the shape and colour of the paper.'⁴⁸⁶ There was a value placed on the envelope recipe that transcended the fiscal. Decades later these recipes serve as time capsules, a record of ingredients, flavours, and approaches, a social history inscribed by hand and even the style of handwriting tells us something of another time.

Recipes were passed from mother to daughter introducing a generational dimension to the ritual. And that's how *Heavenly Tart* came to me. The relationship of taste to memory, as Proust pointed out with the 'petites madeleines' dipped in tea, is primal in its tug and if I have a 'petites madeleines'⁴⁸⁷ it is *Heavenly Tart* a recipe that was only cooked for special picnic occasions when I was a child (see overleaf). At a time when my mother was sorting through her possessions she offered me her recipes and I accepted the one that meant a great deal to me in unlocking the door to the innocence of childhood. She also gave me the two recipe books that had influenced her style of cooking (see overleaf). Both were published by the Country Women's Association and both hung from a hook on the inside of the back door which meant that as the door opened, as it did a hundred times in a day, the books would sway and swish and make a noise that became a particular signifier of place. Although I choose not to cook the relationship between the sense of taste and the unlocking of memory and the relationship of artefact to childhood is reconstructed not as food on the table but in the form of an artwork called *Heavenly Tart*. Curiously it was not until I began working with the recipe that I discovered that it was incomplete. Was it always incomplete? Was there another part that I had misplaced? Did my mother always complete the recipe in her own way exerting her own individuality as a woman? This is a question that I must address to the universe since it cannot be answered in person.

In the words of the British composer, lyricist and playwright, Lionel Bart, *Food Glorious Food*, and the urgency and constancy of keeping food on the table holds the cook at the hearth hostage to the preparation of one thousand and ninety five meals a year for life. But the cook as alchemist is alive and well and as artfully engaged with human appetites and senses as ever. Now the chronicles of the alchemist take the form of dazzling cookbooks, seductive life-style layouts in glossy magazines and television entertainment. Today the new cook is a celebrity leading home/hearth cooks on inspirational voyages of discovery to lighten the repetitive load of sustaining the family. Like scientists the celebrity cooks and the home cooks remain as eager to find the elements, the pathway to the sublime, because the result has the power to provide Proustian memories of the hearth for generations to come.

⁴⁸⁶Matto, R. (1999) interview. 10 January

⁴⁸⁷Proust, M. 1992. Translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin. Revised by D.J. Enright. *In Search of Lost Time*. Volume I. *Swann's Way*. The Modern Library, New York, pp. 58-64

SECTION 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 THE VALUE OF MEMORY

This documentation has been presented in the form of a discussion in parallel with the visual works and the soundworks and supports artistic research in which memory is as much a fabric as any physical manifestation of wood or steel or paper. *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet* uses as a methodology the collection of materials and in particular various kinds of memory or remembering: autobiography, individual memory, collective memory, recorded memory, re-experienced memory, episodic memory and quite possibly memory that moves into fantasy. This documentation provides evidence of the various kinds of collected memory that have become ingredients in the gestation and constant mutation that contributes to the making art. The collected memories have been subjected to change inasmuch as they have been processed, reinterpreted, reconstructed and reconceptualized, sometimes influencing the making of artworks and at other times forming a rich background chorus of ideas and atmospheres.

The constant companion of remembering is forgetting and in his book *Lost Time* the American academic and author, David Gross says that the 'disruption and discontinuity that modernity brought in its wake undermined the premise that remembering the past was the right thing to do'⁴⁸⁸ Gross also examines the argument for not exploring episodic memory and memory drawn from the personal past which he says is often 'more filled with anxiety and suffering than we are usually willing to acknowledge'⁴⁸⁹ Any examination of the past has the potential to set free repressed ideas, feelings or circumstances that may not be welcome but on the other hand Proust has illuminated the joy of memory. Gross discusses at length Proust's attitude to remembering and the obligation Proust felt that this placed upon the 'artistic personality.' According to Gross, Proust contended that 'the "artistic personality" had an obligation...to turn the raw material [of memory]...into its "spiritual equivalent," which is to say, into a work of art.'⁴⁹⁰ Gross maintains that this is the core of Proust's book, *In Search of Time Lost*. When the narrator decides to convert memory into a novel the 'implication is that every individual has the responsibility...to seize upon his or her profoundest memories and transform them into aesthetic objects...that could then take up separate existence outside and beyond the self.'⁴⁹¹ In volume IV, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, Proust expresses his view on art and life. This view, the American critic Roger Shattuck, author of *Proust's Way: A Field Guide to In Search of Lost Time*, says 'sounds like a manifesto.'⁴⁹² Shattuck has abbreviated Proust's words and I use Shattuck's version. 'The greatness of true art...was to find, grasp, and bring out that reality which we live at a great distance from...that reality which we run the risk of dying without having known, and which is quite simply our own life.'⁴⁹³ The author Alexander Nehamas in his book *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* continues in this vein quoting Proust's narrator from *In Search of Lost Time*. The narrator states 'that in fashioning a work of art we are by no means free, that we do not choose how we shall make it but that it pre-exists and therefore we are obliged, since it is both necessary and hidden, to do what we should have to do if it were a law of nature, that is to say to discover it.'⁴⁹⁴ This discovery Nehamas says 'can be made only in the very process of creating the work of art...[in] the ambiguous relation between discovery and creation...'⁴⁹⁵

David Gross believes that 'all significant creation is, in some manner or other, re-creation.'⁴⁹⁶ The 'new' he says

mainly comes into being through a completion of what has been left incomplete, or by bringing into awareness implications hinted at but never quite grasped or

⁴⁸⁸Gross, D. 2000, *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture*, University of Massachusetts Press, USA, p. 52

⁴⁸⁹*ibid.*, p. 53

⁴⁹⁰*ibid.*, p. 50

⁴⁹¹Gross, D. 2000, *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture*, University of Massachusetts Press, USA, p. 50

⁴⁹²Shattuck, R. 2000, *Proust's Way: A Field Guide to In Search of Lost Time*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, p. 151

⁴⁹³*loc. cit.*

⁴⁹⁴Nehamas, A. 1999, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, p. 188

⁴⁹⁵*loc. cit.*

⁴⁹⁶Gross, D. 2000, *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture*, University of Massachusetts Press, USA, pp. 70, 71

expressed before. Hence creation as recreation means not merely repeating what is, but inventively reinterpreting, and reconceptualizing that which has been received from the past.⁴⁹⁷

This is I believe the pathway to the poetic dimension.

In agreeing with Gross on the importance of remembering and the pathway to the poetic I set myself against the modernist ideology of forgetting. Decades ago art movements including the Futurists, the dadaists and the Russian Constructivists and individual artists such as Mondrian wanted to leave the past behind.⁴⁹⁸ It was their belief that to remember another time was not relevant to the time in which they lived. Some would even have supported the destruction of libraries and museums as incongruous relics of another time. Remembering, in all its frail inconsistency, I believe is critical and remembering as part of a process leads me to the creation or recreation of artworks, writings, text, language, linguistic communication, and performance. On occasion, following my intuition and my particular pathway, I find myself in much the same place that other artists have been at different times before me – sometimes decades before and sometimes contemporaneously. While the pathways are different and the outcomes no more than parallel this is indicative of the influence of collective memory at a conscious and unconscious level. It is the collective consciousness that often causes ideas to converge despite the diversity of pathways used to arrive at a singular point. In the context of discussing the collapsed nature of Rachel Whiteread's floor pieces Briony Fer says the 'floorpieces not only involve a reiteration of the actual floor of the gallery, but also invoke a collective memory of recent sculpture...'⁴⁹⁹

As much as we may at times converge in our thinking as artists, art also delivers breadth and pluralism and, according to Proust, art expands horizons: 'instead of seeing only one world, we see it multiplied, and we have as many different worlds at our disposition as there are original artists.'⁵⁰⁰ In this documentation I have quoted examples of artists who have used or now use memory to fuel their practice but Louise Bourgeois would be the greatest exemplar of a practice in which memory is a consuming and powerful force that has sustained her investigation for more than fifty years. Bourgeois has cleverly protected her practice over the years by supplying oblique answers to questions about her work. The interviewer gathers answers to questions but finds they are at times meaningless. Like 'The Emperor's new clothes', answers do not always exist even when they have been given. Bourgeois throws the writer, curator or viewer back on their own resources to find meaning and over the years the meanings of Bourgeois' works have shifted or been revised. Perhaps Bourgeois is actively rewriting her history to protect her works from meanings that are too literal. More likely she is acutely aware that she must retain fragments of the real meaning in order to continue rehearsing the narrative as she continues to do in her practice.

Collective and episodic memory plays an important role in the contemporary practices of Doris Salcedo, Eulàlia Valldosera, Ann Hamilton, and Mona Hartoum. Doris Salcedo's concerns arise from collective memory essentially about social issues such as the brutalisation of the Colombian people, the plight of the disappeared and the people who remain to whom the merest shred of memory or artefact becomes critically important. Salcedo consistently and almost neurotically rejoins broken furniture, as if trying to remake broken bodies, filling the interiors, the cavities, with concrete to make them permanent, a bulwark against obliteration. Against forgetting, Eulàlia Valldosera uses episodic

⁴⁹⁷Gross, D. 2000, *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture*, University of Massachusetts Press, USA, pp. 70, 71

⁴⁹⁸*Ibid.* p. 104

⁴⁹⁹Fer, B. 1997, *On Abstract Art*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p. 164

⁵⁰⁰Proust, M. 1992, translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, Revised by D.J. Enright, *In Search of Lost Time*, Volume IV, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, The Modern Library, New York, p. 299

memory to document the domestic domain and the body, exploring ideas of cleanliness and dross and the familial relationships of the hearth in highly theatrical performative works involving shadow play. She often calls upon the audience to act as witness to the scene she has painstakingly constructed from collections of realia, mirrors and beams of light. Ann Hamilton constructs monumental installations that are 'imbued with the social and historical conditions of its siting as well as the particulars of its making and architectural housing.'⁵⁰¹ Hamilton's works require the assistance of hundreds of workers and exist only for the site and for a particular time beyond which they themselves must be committed to memory. The British author Jeanette Winterson wrote in *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (1996) that the

true artist is connected. The true artist studies the past not as a copyist nor as a pasticheur will study the past, those people are interested only in the final product, the art object, signed sealed and delivered to a public drugged on reproduction. The true artist is interested in the art object as an art process, the thing in being, the being of the thing, the struggle, the excitement, the energy, that have found expression in a particular way. The true artist is after the problem. The false artist wants it solved...⁵⁰²

The American curator and exhibition director, Sarah J. Rogers, used this passage to begin her essay on the Ann Hamilton exhibition, *The Body and the Object: Ann Hamilton 1984-1996*, held in 1996 at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University. Rogers' essay, republished in *Art and Feminism*, draws attention to the current shift from the intellect to the body evidenced in Hamilton's work.

Mona Hartoun, as the child of a Palestinian family, draws on collective memory to make artworks that attempt to imbue the space she is using with the sense of 'home' wherever she may be as a means of overcoming her feelings of isolation and dislocation from her country. Each of these artists chooses to express memories and ideas in works and materials that have a theatrical or performative dimension. As artists they define or redefine space and place; they consider domestic issues and issues of the self, the body and the personal. The works are sculptural but differ from their traditional counterpart in that the works are drawn from within the female psyche rather than from a more external, more masculine, view of sculpture. But in remembering, as part of their practice, these artists do not invite nostalgia.

At the best of times memory is fickle. It is hard to distinguish between truth, fiction and desire. In recalling and telling my stories I strain to remember fragments that in some cases no longer exist because time has eroded the archive and I work to fill in the space with what I believe is the truth. A process that begs the question — in the telling and retelling of memories or personal narratives do we eventually erase and replace the truth as fragments fall away, with a completely new truth, replica or simulation? Is it possible that in the expression of the recollection or memory one begins to forget? This is the domain that Louise Bourgeois so shrewdly protects with her shifts in meaning. She retains and revises, the memory, the truth and the power.

During this study I have voyaged through harbours on the sea of ideas and fantasy, collecting memories, facts, realities and truths and in doing this I have delved into my own psyche. Memory cannot be divorced from concepts of time and space. Time as a poetic force and memory

⁵⁰¹Simon, J. 2002, *Ann Hamilton*, Harry N Abrams, New York, p. 11

⁵⁰²Reckitt, H. and Phelan, P. 2001, *Art and Feminism*, Phaidon press, London, pp. 276, 277

are implicated in an investigation of both place and space. The place in this study is the metaphorical and literal hearth and any investigation of hearth leads to a study of woman and the heart of woman. From the hearth I journey through thematic landscapes investigating concepts of theatrical space and performance, ritual, sustenance and nurture; a conflation of ideas with which to frame new memories, materials, experiences and imaginings. The ideas that grew in the mind of a child, the uncomfortable atmospheres, barely understood that could never be discussed, the desire to escape, were truths built firstly on intuition. Now these truths re-emerge from a complex remix of intuition, various forms of research and collections of objects and materials. The product of this remixing and reinterpretation is a series of visual works supported by two soundworks that have no fixed meaning but rather pose questions for the audience. Works take the form of sculptural objects or small installations, responses to the breadth of conceptual and material possibilities of the method. In the making of the artworks and soundworks I have collaborated with a diverse group of practitioners. I have explored mechanical and industrial processes such as surgical instrument making, metal plating, envelope making, industrial sewing in the form of 'protective blankets' used as a base for embroidery, and the disappearing skills required to construct the timber frame for a house. All of the processes gathered into the making of my artworks are representative of set systems, codes from a modernist society, constructed to enable manufacturers to reproduce editions of hundreds or hundreds of thousands of objects all exactly alike. Having extracted a product from a set system I set about deconstructing or reconstructing new systems, rewriting upon the existing system, erasing the original meaning and replacing it with a new meaning, system or code. For instance the Pianola roll is rather like a secret code unless the machine, the Pianola, is available to liberate the music from the perforated but mute paper. In *Bread of Heaven* (pages 23 and 24, Vol. II) the Pianola roll is subjected to a new system that mutates and reorganises the single strip of perforated paper into many separate sections that are reformed into a series of single coded messages or envelopes that form a landscape of secrets. Now it is the potential of the envelope both as a poetic form and as a carrier of the message that must be decoded; the space between the object and its possible meanings is now the subject. As Madan Sarup would say the work is a 'deliberate exploration of what lies between, rather than within, art forms.'⁵⁰³ And to this we can call on the American philosopher and academic Richard Rorty who urges a focus on the belief that no examination of metaphor should rest at merely 'the distinction between literal and metaphorical...but as a distinction between familiar and unfamiliar uses of noise and marks.'⁵⁰⁴ Metaphor read as unfamiliar noise and marks links the concept of object, the possibility of a trace or mark and the potential of sonic value, with the pressings of memory: episodic, collective, new or old. The artist is the constructor of poetic codes to be remembered or forgotten, soundings of the mind, body and spirit.

This work represents a synthesis of ideas and manifestations of memory. Ideas not necessarily new but the subject of discovery in research for this documentation and in my studio where these ideas have gained a further original expression in the visual works, at least insofar as they have been distilled in the context my experience. I hope that the research is fruitfully shared for the conduct of it has been a most rewarding process.

⁵⁰³Sarup, M. 1993, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism* (Second Edition), The University of Georgia Press, Athens, p.173

⁵⁰⁴Rorty, R. 1989, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Cambridge University Press, New York, p. 17

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Dale Chihuly, *Masterworks in Glass*. Frank Stella, *The Fountain*. David Hockney, *A Bigger Grand Canyon*. Fiona Hall, *Sculpture Garden*. National Gallery, Canberra, 27 November, 2000

Proust Recaptured. Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, New York, 25 October, 2000

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Damian Hirst: Theories, Models, Methods, Approaches, Assumptions, Results and Findings. Gagosian Gallery, New York, (24th St W), 24 October, 2000

Peter Hujar Photographs. Matthew Marks Gallery, New York, (24th St W), 24 October, 2000

Sharon Lockhart Photography. Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York, (24th St W), 24 October, 2000

Martin Kippenberger (represented in *Biennale of Sydney 2000*). Metro Pictures, New York, (24th St W), 24 October, 2000

Donald Judd. Luhring Augustine, New York, (24th St W), 24 October, 2000

Matthew Ritchie. Andrea Richie Gallery, New York, (also included in the SFO MOMA show 'The Anderson Collection'), 24 October, 2000

Delia Brown Paintings. D'Amelio Terras, New York, (303 W 22nd St), 24 October, 2000

Michael Kvium: Paintings and installations. DCA, New York, (525 W 22nd St), 24 October, 2000

Allan McCollum (large-scale installation exploring facets of lightening). Freidrich Petzel, New York, (535 W 22nd St), 24 October, 2000

Bridget Riley (paintings). *Dan Graham* (roof installation). *Joseph Beuys* (street installation). *Rodney Graham and Bruce Nauman* (series of installations on the theme of near and far). Also the design work of *Jorge Pardo* which has transformed the ground floor of the DIA Center for the Arts, Chelsea, New York, (W 22nd St), 25 October, 2000

Damian Hirst: Theories, Models, Methods, Approaches, Assumptions, Results and Findings. Gagosian Gallery, New York, (24th St W), 25 October, 2000 (second viewing)

SELECTED VISUAL AND THEATRICAL REFERENCE CONTINUED

Andy Goldsworthy. Wall. Storm King Arts Center, Upstate New York. Also works by Richard Serra, Alexander Calder, David Buren, Mark Di Suvero and Magdalena Abakanowicz, (seventy-one artists are represented within this vast sculpture park), 21 October, 2000

Andy Goldsworthy. Haines Gallery, 49 Geary Street, San Francisco, 17 October, 2000

Various young conceptual artists, Don Soker Gallery, 49 Geary Street, San Francisco, 17 October, 2000

Various local emerging artists, Jennjoy Gallery, 49 Geary Street, San Francisco, 17 October, 2000

Various commercial galleries representing Bay artists, including Tersera Gallery, Hang, Caldwell Snyder, Sutter Street, San Francisco, 17 October, 2000

Kiki Smith. Ellsworth Kelly. John Berggruen, Grant Avenue, San Francisco, 17 October, 2000

SFO Museum of Modern Art. Viewing of collections and temporary exhibitions and exploration of the architecture of the new Mario Botta designed building, San Francisco, 16 October, 2000

Biennale of Sydney 2000. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Museum of Contemporary Art and Customs House, Sydney, 6 July, 2000 (I found the small line engraving by Louise Bourgeois, *He disappeared into complete silence*, 1947, absolutely captivating and this diminutive piece has become a particular influence in my studio practice)

Lynne Plummer. *Cantata: A Play of the Trace*. Gallery 101, Melbourne, 30 June, 2000 (NZ artist using original music as an integral part of the exhibition)

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Eating. Zhang Peili. Video installation, MoMA, New York, 24 January, 1999

SELECTED VISUAL AND THEATRICAL REFERENCE CONTINUED

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Annina Noisi, Chelsea, New York. Review of work held in stock by Jenny Watson, 21 January, 1999

Eraser and These Restless Years. Doug Aitken video installations, 303 Gallery, New York, 21 January, 1999

Anselm Kiefer. *Works on Paper 1969-1993* (temporary exhibition), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 20 January, 1999

Jenny Watson. Anna Schwarz Gallery, Melbourne, 29 September, 1998

Rosslyn Piggott — *Suspended Breath.* National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 7 August, 1998

Alexander Calder 1898-1976 and Mark Rothko. National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 19 May, 1998

American Museum for the Moving Image, Queens, New York, 17 May 1998

Georgia O'Keeffe, Edward Hopper and Alexander Calder. Three new exhibits, Whitney Museum, New York, 13 May, 1998

Errata

p 49 line 36: "coconut" for "cocoanut"

p 49 line 36: "galangal" for "galanga"

p 78 line 5: "Olley's" for "Ollly's"

p 83 line 37: "Whiteley's" for "Whitely's"

p 114 line 7: "Baghdad" for "Bagdad"

COLOURS OF THE KITCHEN CABINET

A studio exploration of memory, place, and
ritual arising from the domestic kitchen

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VOLUME II
COLOURS OF THE KITCHEN CABINET

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SECTION 1

THE THESIS

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO COLOURS OF THE KITCHEN CABINET VOLUME II

(reprinted from Volume I)

Please note: this is an edited version of the introduction to Volume II the original version can be found in Volume I. The introduction is reprinted in this volume as a reprise, should it be required, to assist the reader.

Volume II *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet* contains the visual works and accompanying soundworks that form the thesis of this project. The visual works consist of a series of sculptural objects that seek to embody some of the circumstances but especially the paradoxes of domestic experience. These experiences are sometimes mine, sometimes those of my parents, other artists, and other women. The experiences are synthesized, perhaps in ways that remain inscrutable to me as an artist, in the hope of achieving a resonance, an agreement of images, materials and space that speak on a level more general than that of the sources. In the synthesis the act of remembering and the erosion and suppression of memory play an important role in the conceptualizing of the visual works and soundworks.

David Gross, in reflecting on Marcel Proust's attitude to the importance of remembering asserts that it was Proust's position that memory and remembering were of great significance and as a consequence placed a particular responsibility on the 'artistic personality.' According to Gross, Proust contended that 'the "artistic personality" had an obligation...to turn the raw material...into its "spiritual equivalent," which is to say, into a work of art.'¹ Gross believes this premise sits at the core of Proust's work, *In Search of Time Lost*. When the narrator decides to convert memory into a novel the 'implication is that every individual has the responsibility...to seize upon his or her profoundest memories and transform them into aesthetic objects...that could then take up separate existence outside and beyond the self.'² As Gross contends, to

a considerable extent, what an individual is or becomes is directly shaped... by one's own autobiographical events and the manner in which 'they are interpreted and made use of in later life. We are the things that happen to us, or rather what we make out of them. Of course, once events occur, they vanish into the past and are gone forever...' But we are a unique species possessing, as no other does, 'recollective abilities', and because of these abilities 'happenings from our past can be made present again...'³

The visual works bring into focus aspects of memory and time and issues of gender, space, identity, ritual, and place. Like the once loved, free standing kitchen cabinet, the hoarder of consumables, I hoard the narratives of my life as fragments of memory that are slowly slipping away. In the attempt to write these memories into permanence I hover between things forgotten and things remembered and in the process truth becomes indeterminate. The visual works do not seek to illustrate any given narrative but rather to express ideas visually. The works arise from my search for the essence, feelings, sentiments, experiences, the sense of *the other* that exists in the nexus between the unspoken and the unwritten, the familiar and the unfamiliar. The works occupy a space free of turbulence like single disconnected frames of a film.

¹Gross, D. 2000. *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture*. University of Massachusetts Press, USA, p. 50

² *ibid.* p. 50

³ *ibid.* p. 12

They are contemplative; they do not advance but rather they are imbued with a stillness allied to that of an actor on the stage caught between words and actions within the frame of the proscenium arch: meaning and truth hanging captive within the space between.

In scale the works maintain a relationship to the body of both the maker and the viewer. In their stillness the wooden works for example present as sentinels or beacons, containers for forgotten rituals or fragments of memory; enigmatic vessels resonating with experience and yet transparent. Despite their apparent rigidity in form and structure the wooden works are full of contradictions. They are fragile, they have an uncertain hold on the earth and they are in the process of change, their unsealed surfaces transmogrifying in the atmosphere at the whim of the air breathed by the viewer and the air expelled by the viewer.

In creating a bodily relationship the forms became tall and narrow. This form parallels ideas expressed by Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* in which he talks about the verticality of the house and the separation of the attic from the cellar, which I choose to view, through the wooden works, as the separation of the intellect and the body.⁴ This is also a form used by Louise Bourgeois in her drawings, *Femmes-maisons*, in the late 1940s. These drawings reinforce the relationship of the woman to house and hearth and examine the objectification and eroticism of the victim. The tower-like forms of the *Femmes-maisons* exhibit the apparent contradiction of both rigid and organic qualities.⁵ In the 1960s the American artist Eva Hesse also used the tall narrow form, often neurotically bandaged, to create grid-like structures that were at once constructed and deconstructed, erased and reformed as she searched for the essence of her materials and the relationship between the multiple forms she produced. Lucy Lippard quotes Hesse as saying 'repetition feels obsessive'. Lippard says the 'wrapping and binding and layering process...makes the viewer relive the intensity of the making in a manner far from the abstract or didactic way in which process is used by men'.⁶ Hesse's bandaged forms, such as, *Laocoon* 1966, also exhibit both rigid and organic qualities. Coincidentally, both Bourgeois and Hesse refer to the tower-like forms in their work as personages, a term that links the inanimate to the animate. I choose to appropriate the term in relation to the elevated wooden works that form part of the body of visual work for *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet*.

Textile works such as *Heavenly Tart* and *Consumer Music* reference the position of the womanly crafts in current art discourse. The Melbourne art historian Simon Gregg wrote in his essay accompanying *Stitching: An Artisan Approach*, an exhibition staged at RMIT as part of the cultural component of the Melbourne Fashion Festival, 2002.

The handcrafts of the home pierced the sphere of high arts patriarchy some time ago: Dada, Surrealism and Russian Constructivism all introduced women's domestic arts into the gallery to rupture historical distinctions between art and craft...The tradition of domestic arts in this context has since been enriched by the 60s counter-culture (stitching as an alternative art form) and 70s feminism (stitching as an oppositional art form).⁷

⁴Bachelard, G. 1994. *The Poetics of Space*. Translation, Jolas, M. Foreword, John R. Stilgoe, Beacon Press, Boston

⁵Bernadac, M. 1996. *Louise Bourgeois*. Flammarion, New York, pp. 23, 24

⁶Lippard, L. 1992. *Eva Hesse*. Da Capo Press, USA, p. 209

⁷Simon Gregg. 'Stitching: An Artisan Approach'. *Stitching: An Artisan Approach*. RMIT, exhibition part of the cultural component of the Melbourne Fashion Festival, 12 March-28 March, 2002

The use of fabric and aspects of stitching and binding in Eva Hesse's work, evidence of the womanly crafts, can be also found in the work of a diverse range of artists. For instance Doris Salcedo who often 'freezes' fragments of cloth in concrete as a poignant reminder of the 'disappeared' of Colombia, Eulàlia Valldosera who uses cloth reminiscent of domestic sheets or hospital curtains as a screen upon which to create shadow play and Liza Lou who creates environments such as *Kitchen* that are painstakingly beaded using hundreds of workers and millions of beads. In her contemplative work, *Recollection* (1995), Mona Hartoum uses human hair because hair is 'a symbol of remembrance...'⁸ On a small loom set on a table Hartoum effectively 'rewrites' her recollections into a new fabric. Hartoum's piece is diminutive in comparison to the monumental pieces of Ann Hamilton in which hundreds, even thousands of shirts, metres of hand inscribed fabric or evidence of cooking can be found. And closer to home in the work of Rosslynd Piggott there are traces of traditional embroidery and sewing. The works of these women also evoke the endlessness of domestic ritual and the consumerist role for which women were groomed not only in post-war Australia but also in all western countries.

In the paper work *Bread of Heaven*, the found paper is lost to the search and recovery of the memory that holds the key to what once was. Despite their transmogrification the deconstructed and re-systematised Pianola rolls form a temporal landscape of eternal longing for the past while the restless movement of a domestic doyley in *Statement of the Possible* anxiously formulates a code to signify future potential.

There is a beauty, an embedded poetry in the ordinary, the everyday and the repetitive nature of daily life that does not occupy an heroic stage but rather a stage of diminishing returns where the comfort derived from small-scale domestic rituals somehow overcomes the otherwise abject possibilities of the domestic domain. And like the womanly crafts the poetic dimension found in the ordinary is not limited to my state or my country. It is a condition in common, the story of everywoman in western society. In considering the ordinary as a quality in her work the Australian artist Tracy Moffatt spoke in a radio interview with the ABC Radio National art critic Bruce James. The conversation centred on a body of work called *Scarred for Life* shown at the Biennale of Sydney 2000. *Scarred for Life* (1994) and *Scarred for Life II* (1999) comprise a series of photographs and text each graphically depicting the recollection of an event so powerful that it is remembered for life. The photograph is viewed as if a film still; each image tells a story in a highly theatrical manner with Moffatt's camera acting as the proscenium arch. For example *Scarred for Life II, Suicide Threat*, 1982, depicts a heavily pregnant woman in the living room of a middle class home. The woman holds a packet of matches in one hand and a lit cigarette between her fingers. She faces the camera as though she is about to leave the room walking away from an older, conservatively dressed, woman in the background. The text reads, 'She was forty-five, single and pregnant for the first time. When her mother found out, she said "If I wasn't a Catholic I'd commit suicide"''.⁹ With the potency of advertising the image carries all the signifiers required by the viewer to make a connection; to experience the schism between the women. In the work Moffatt sets up the spectre of conflict and rivalry between women and especially conflict and rivalry between mothers and daughters. Miriam Shapiro wrote in an essay entitled *The Education of Women as Artists: Project Womanhouse 1973*, about the generational rivalry between mothers and daughters that can be found at the source of supposed nurture, the hearth:

⁸ Archer, M Brett, G. and de Zegher, C. 2001. *Mona Hartoum*. Phaidon, New York, pp. 97-99

⁹ *Biennale of Sydney 2000*, Art Gallery of NSW (and other venues), Biennale of Sydney Ltd, 2000. pp. 84, 85

it became obvious that the kitchen was a battleground where women fought with their mothers for their appropriate state of comfort and love, it was an arena where ostensibly the horn of plenty overflowed, but where in actuality the mother was acting out her bitterness over being imprisoned in a situation from which she could not bring herself to escape and from which society would not encourage such an escape.¹⁰

Moffatt told Bruce James that 'it took a lot of guts to make art that looks ordinary. Art made from things that look ordinary, made of ordinary things, ordinary moments.'¹¹

The materials used in the making of the visual works for this study are in the main ordinary, common. The rugged twine from a mop, coarse parcel string, old enamel bowls, scrap timber, old kitchen graters are examples of materials selected for feel, surface, shine or implication of threat. The materials are often chosen before I understand how they will be used and later the materials are subdued to the politics of making art.

The discovery of an old doyley in the belongings of a recently deceased Aunt, the last of my maternal relatives, and its presence within a work confirms the desire to hold fast her memory and yet the work is not about her but rather the potential that exists in each child. For hundreds of years people have pressed living flowers between the pages of books in a secretive and covert manner to stave off death and loss. But the very act inevitably results in death as the moisture and colour drain from the flower until all that remains is a fragile, colourless, memory of the reality. What remains is not truth but when the flower is viewed, the memory of the flower as it was in life re-establishes in the mind of the perpetrator. Pressing the flower is an act of entrapment of a beautiful thing that assures its death in order to keep alive the memory. This action parallels the paradox of the hearth.

Sound or sonic value is as important to my idea of art making as sound is to film. Sound animates space, creates atmosphere, and intensifies emotion. The soundworks for this project contained on the two CDs are simply constructed from the material of memory. CD I *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet* is a soundwork created from three stands of recorded narrative. Strand one consists of sound fragments from twelve autobiographical recollections read by Geraldine Cook, Head of Voice, Victorian College of the Arts. Strand two consists of sound fragments from the list books referred to in Volume I, section 5, 5.1 *Ritual (and Purification) in the Suburban Kitchen*, read by the author and strand three consists of excerpts from the Country Women's Association publication, *The Housewives' Calendar of Puddings: A Pudding a Day for the Whole Year*, circa 1950s, read by Diana Marsland, cooking school director, Woodend, Victoria. Diana reads the method and ingredients of recipes selected at random from the book. In post production the three separate strands have been mixed or deconstructed to form a single strand, sonic landscape that emerges from the bowels of the cabinet when triggered by the viewer. The kitchen cabinet as the witness to the secrets of the hearth is no longer silent witness but the memory of past free-standing glory is rapidly failing, disintegrating into tiny fragments that animate the cabinet only briefly.

On CD II a selection of twelve prose poems or recollections titled, *A Recollection a Month for the Whole Year*, are performed by Geraldine Cook, Head of Voice, Victorian College of the Arts. These random recollections from a life have been preserved within a new system, liberated from the human

¹⁰Miriam Schapiro, *The Education of Women as Artists: Project Womanhouse (1973)*, Reckitt, H. and Phelan, P. 2001. *Art and Feminism*, Phaidon Press, London, pp. 208, 209

¹¹James, Bruce, Interview with Tracy Moffatt, 'Arts Today', ABC Radio National, 31 July, 2000

archive, in an attempt to save them from the inevitability of forgetting. The past is made present, automated for eternity.

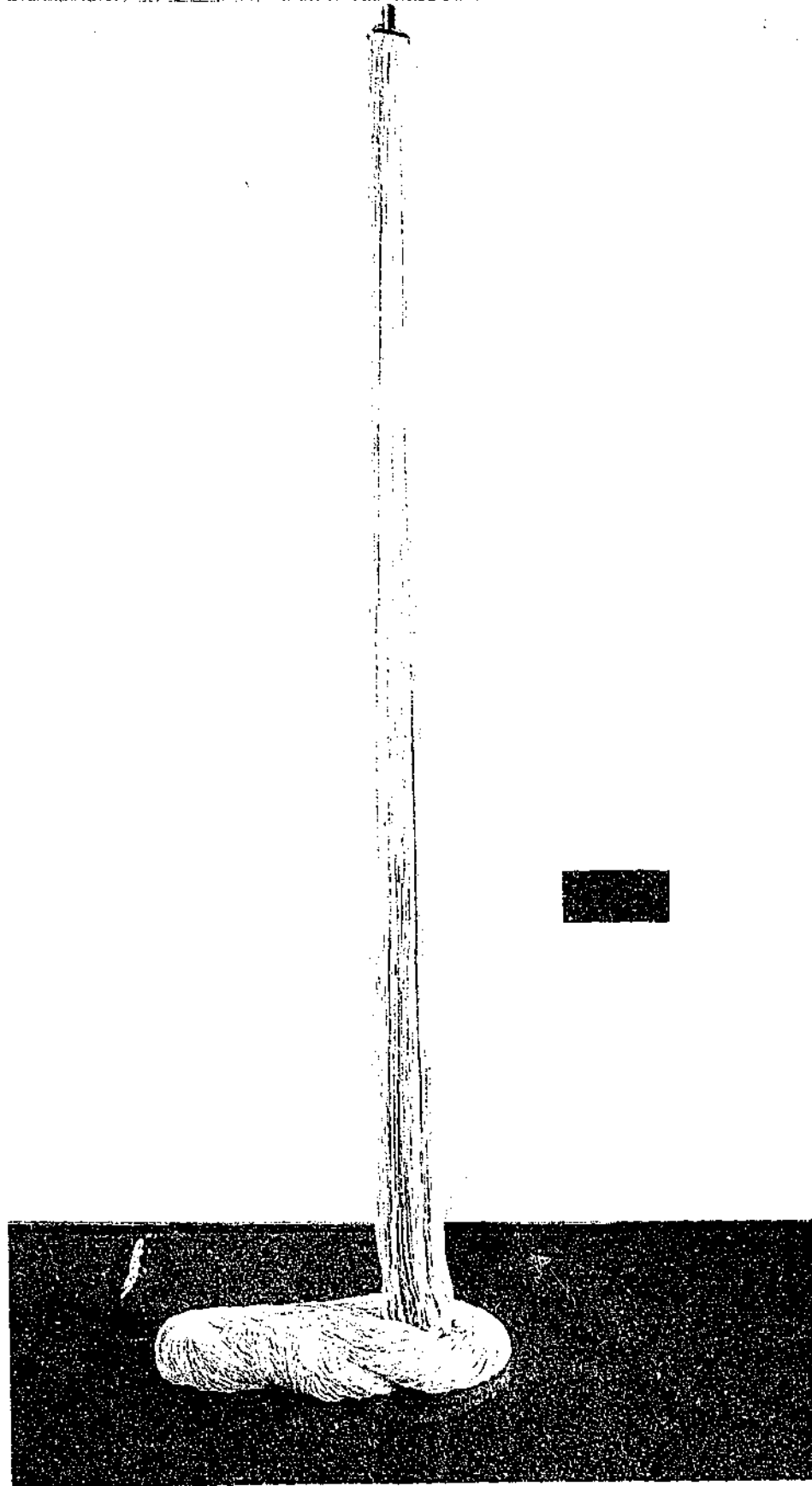
The CDs can be found in the pockets attached to the inside back cover of this volume and full text of both soundworks are included in Section 1, 1.3 *The Soundworks*. In a strange case of symmetry and unfortunate timing caused by the upheaval of major renovations long overdue for completion the recordings were made, not in the studio (which was a demolition site) as planned, but in the new kitchen of the historic two-story Victorian shop, home to Kinesound and living quarters for the owner and his family. From the kitchen microphone each of the voices, Geraldine Cook, Diana Marsland and myself were linked to a temporary studio set up adjacent to the kitchen in what will become a dining room.

The appendix includes reference in Section 2, 2.1, to collections of artifacts gathered in the course of this study and used to support research, documentation and the making of visual works and soundworks. In Section 2, 2.2 the full transcripts of the twelve interviews undertaken at the beginning of the project can be found, each in its way preserving memory that may become more significant tomorrow than it is today.

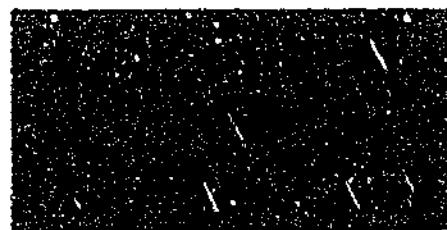
SECTION 1

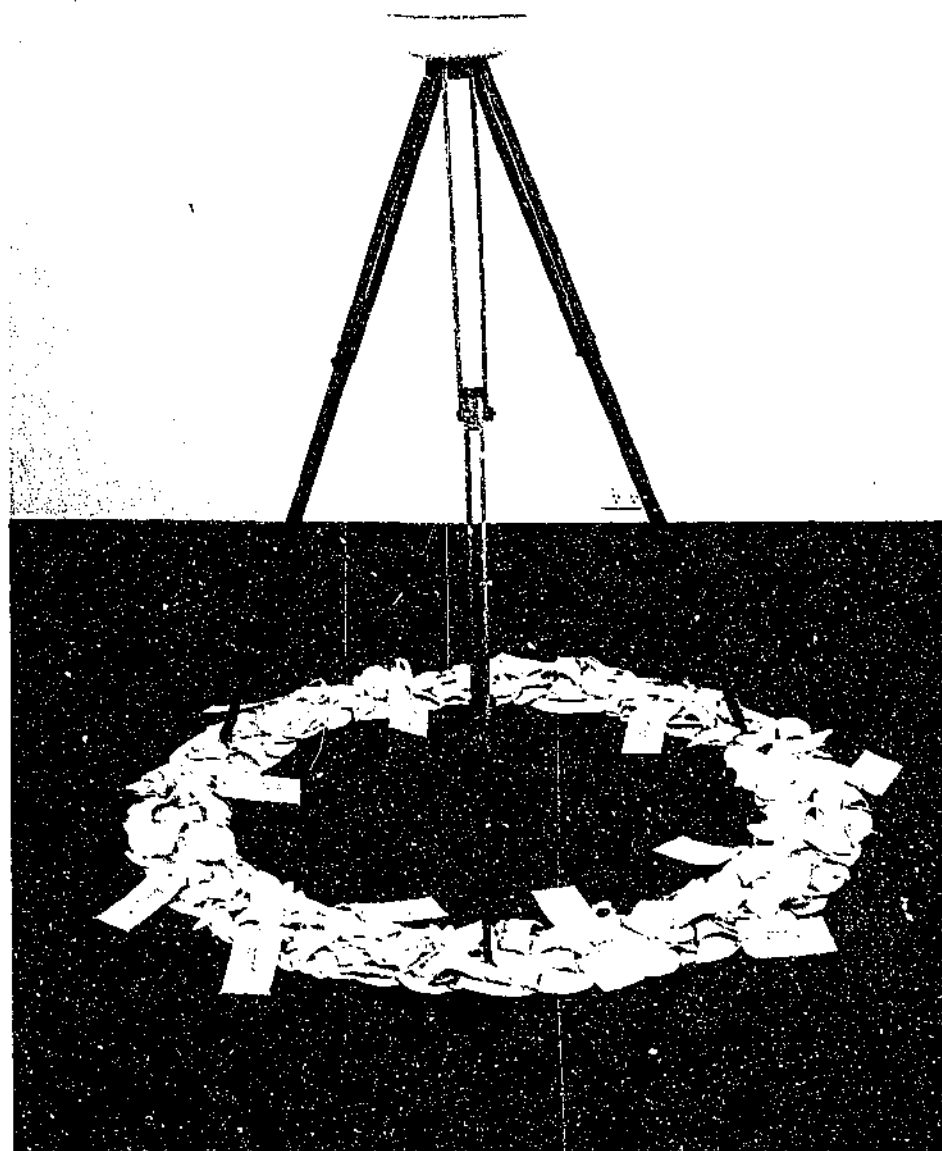
THE THESIS

1.2 THE VISUAL WORKS



Endless (damp dusting), 1999
Made object, found object
Dimensions variable



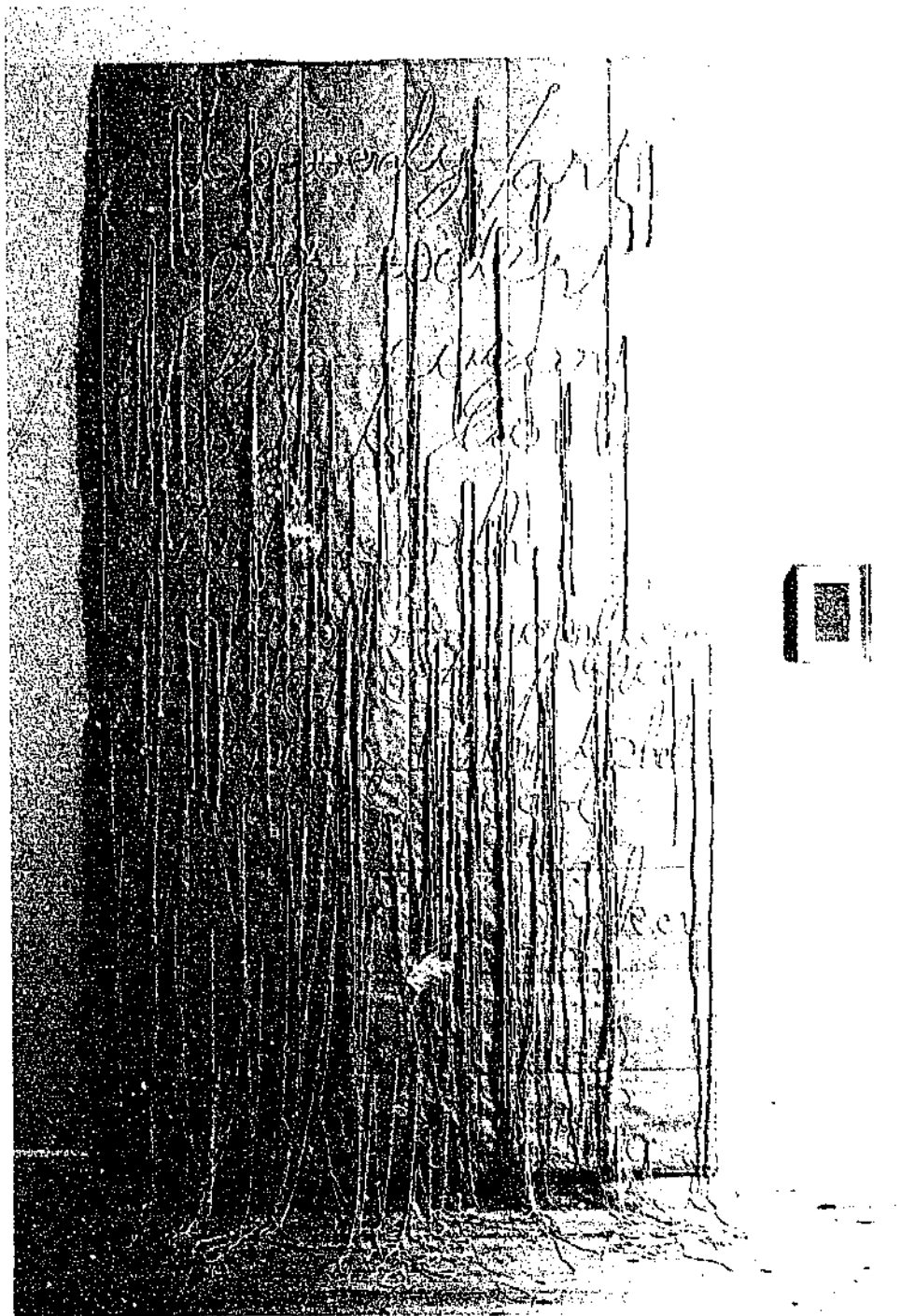


Memento Mori, 1999

Found tripod, circa 1930, found re-enamelled bowl, collection
of broken china, tags, ink, parcel string, metal screw
136cm x 135 diameter

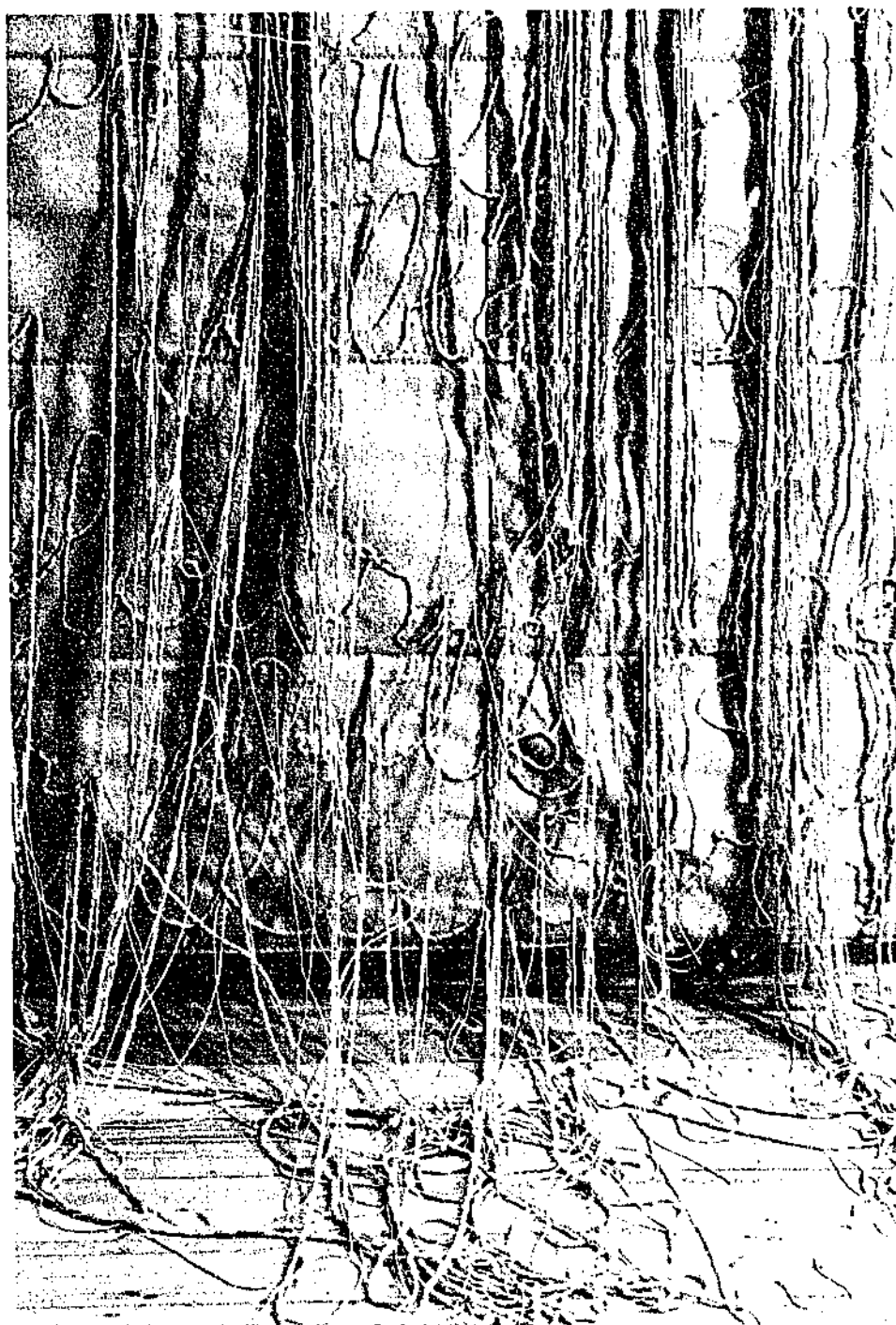


Memento Mori, detail

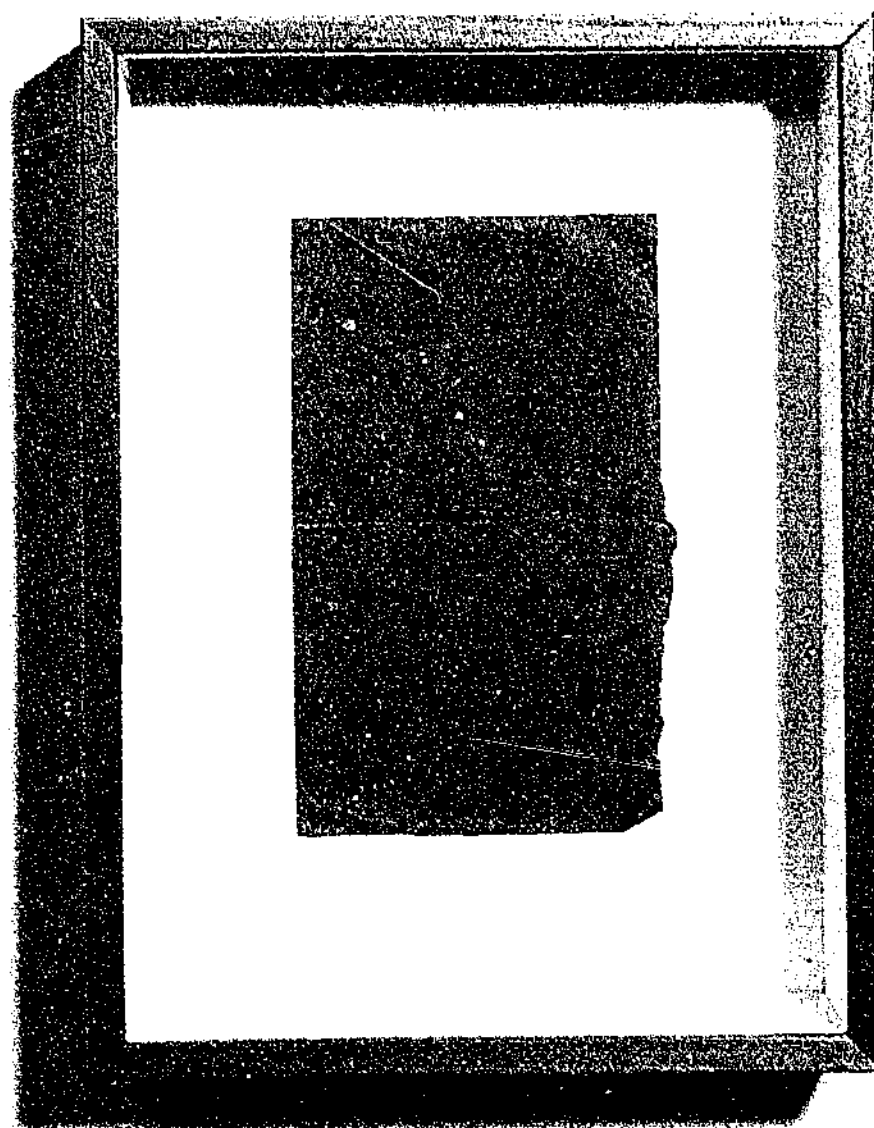


Heavenly Tart, 2000

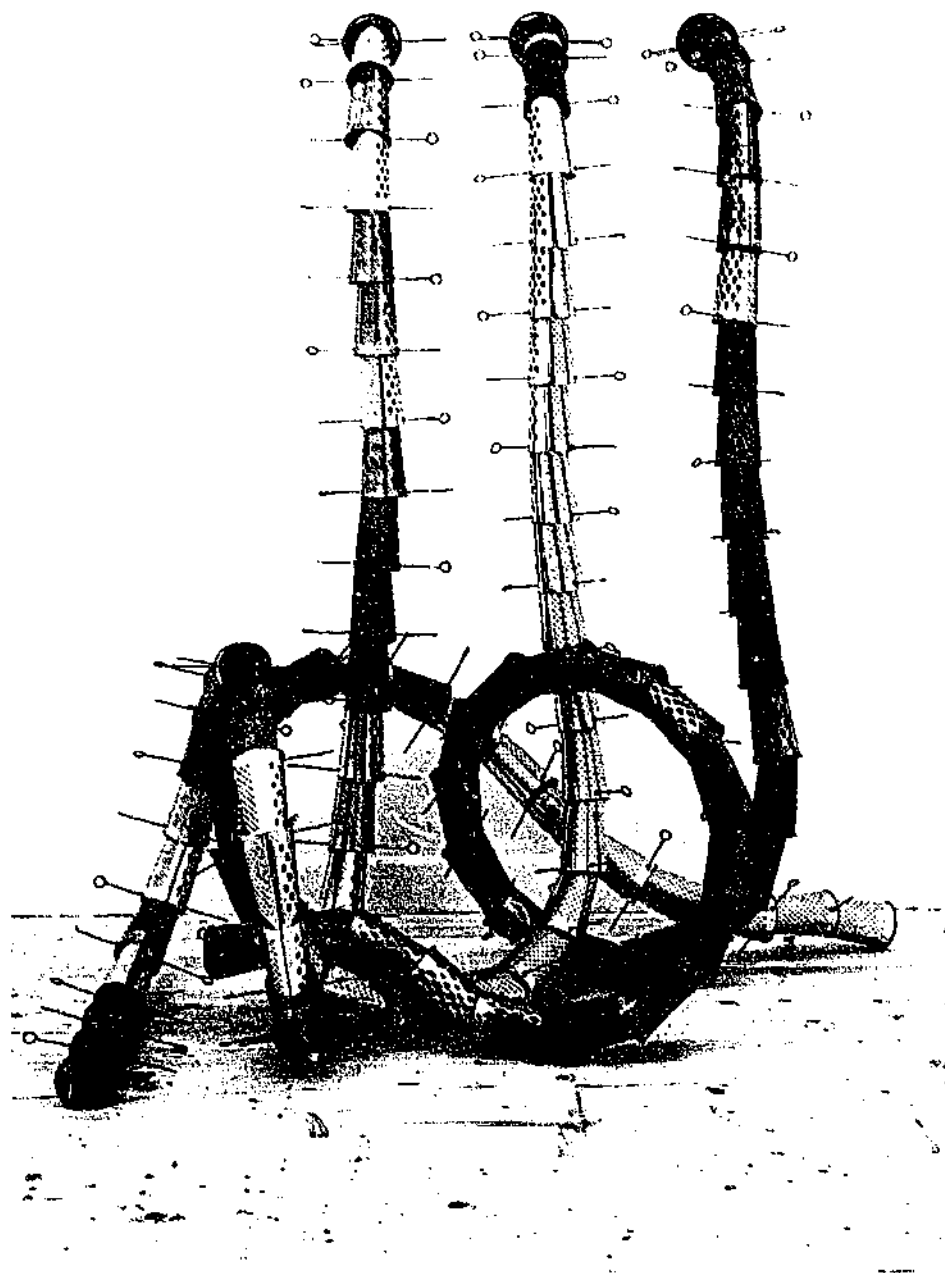
Canvas, mop twine, parcel string, recycled cotton wadding,
wood, glass, paper, graphite
256 (variable) x 187cm



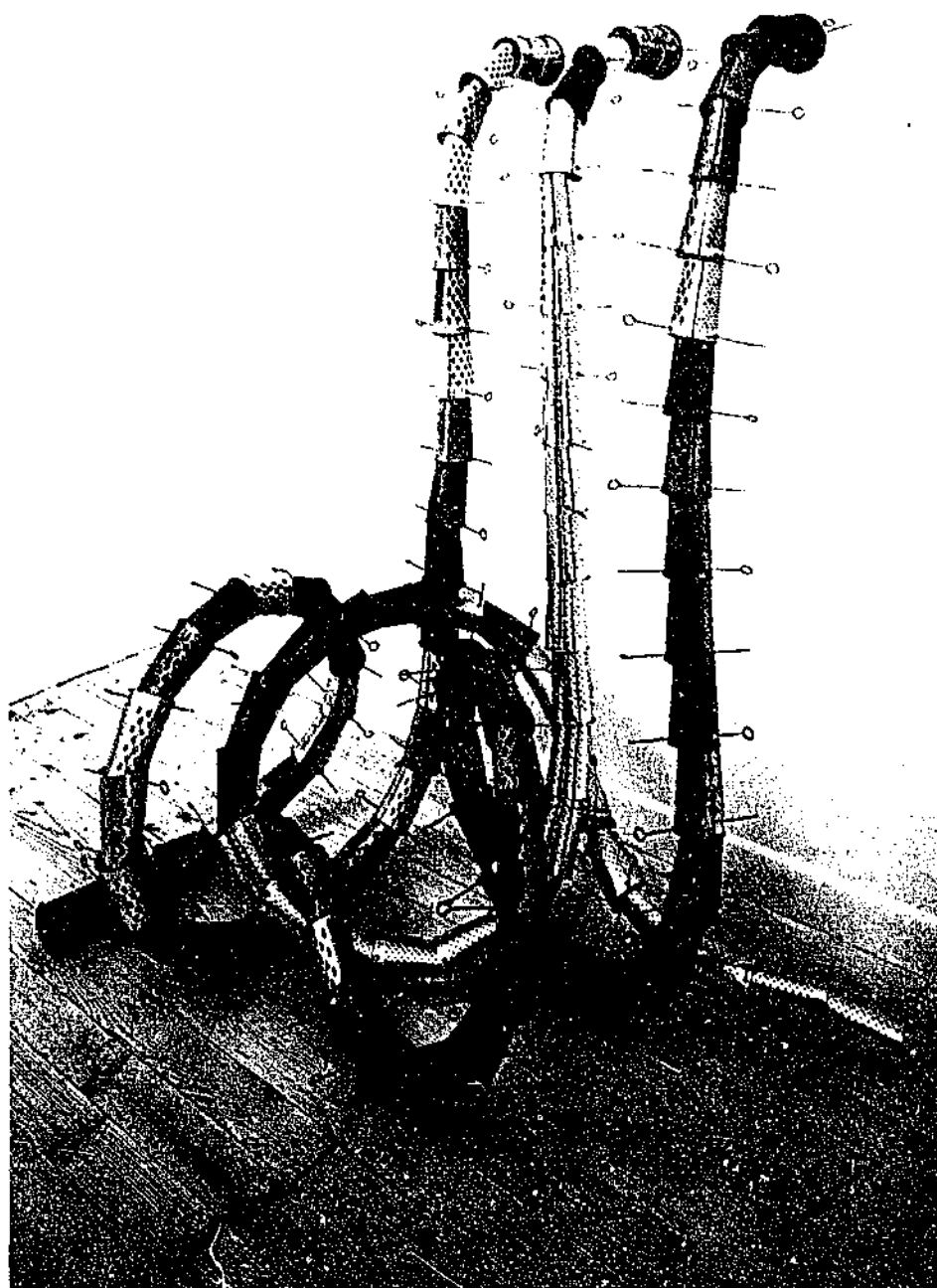
Heavenly Tart, detail

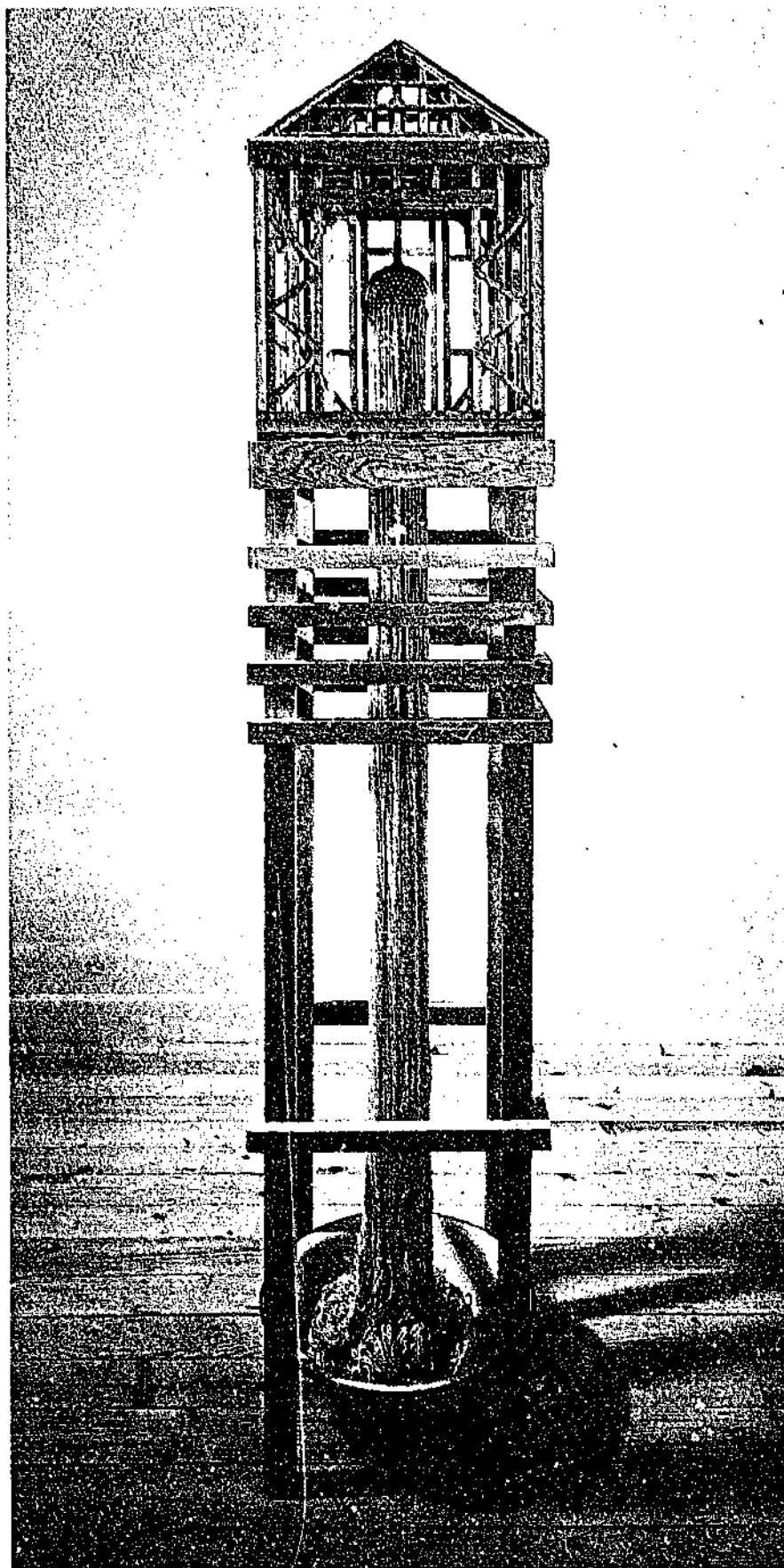


Heavenly Tart, detail showing glass-fronted box containing original artefact in the form of a back-of-envelope recipe, author unknown, circa 1952

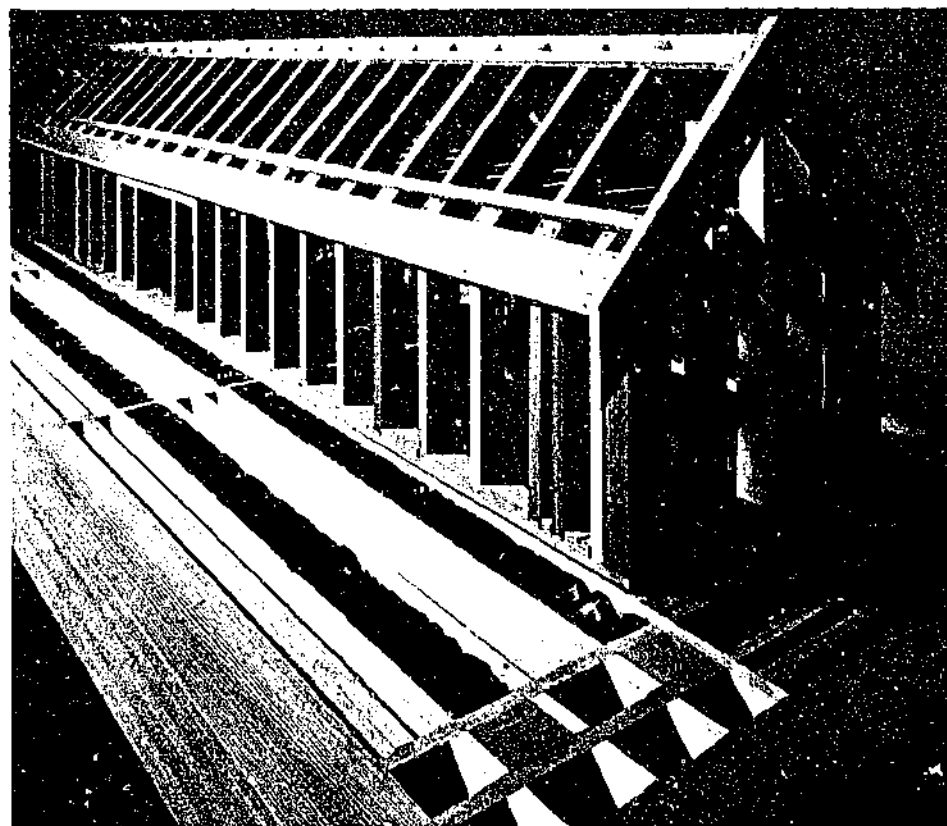
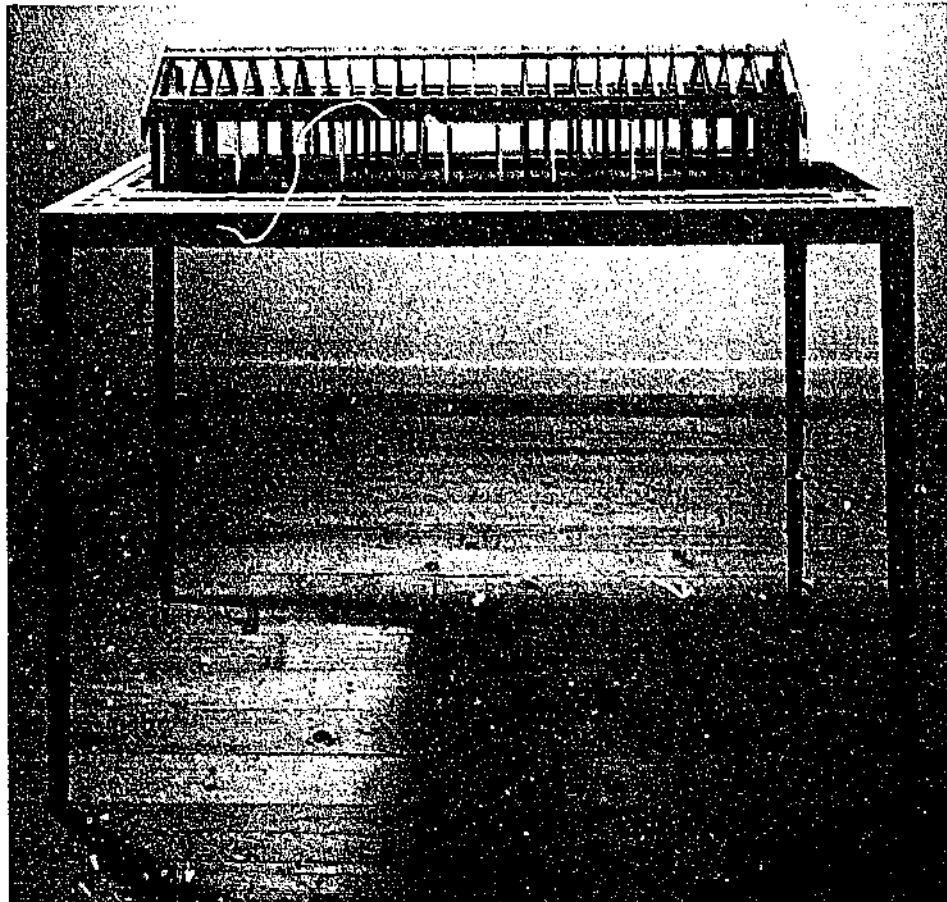


Embrace, 2000
Kitchen graters, skewers, rubber rings
Dimensions variable



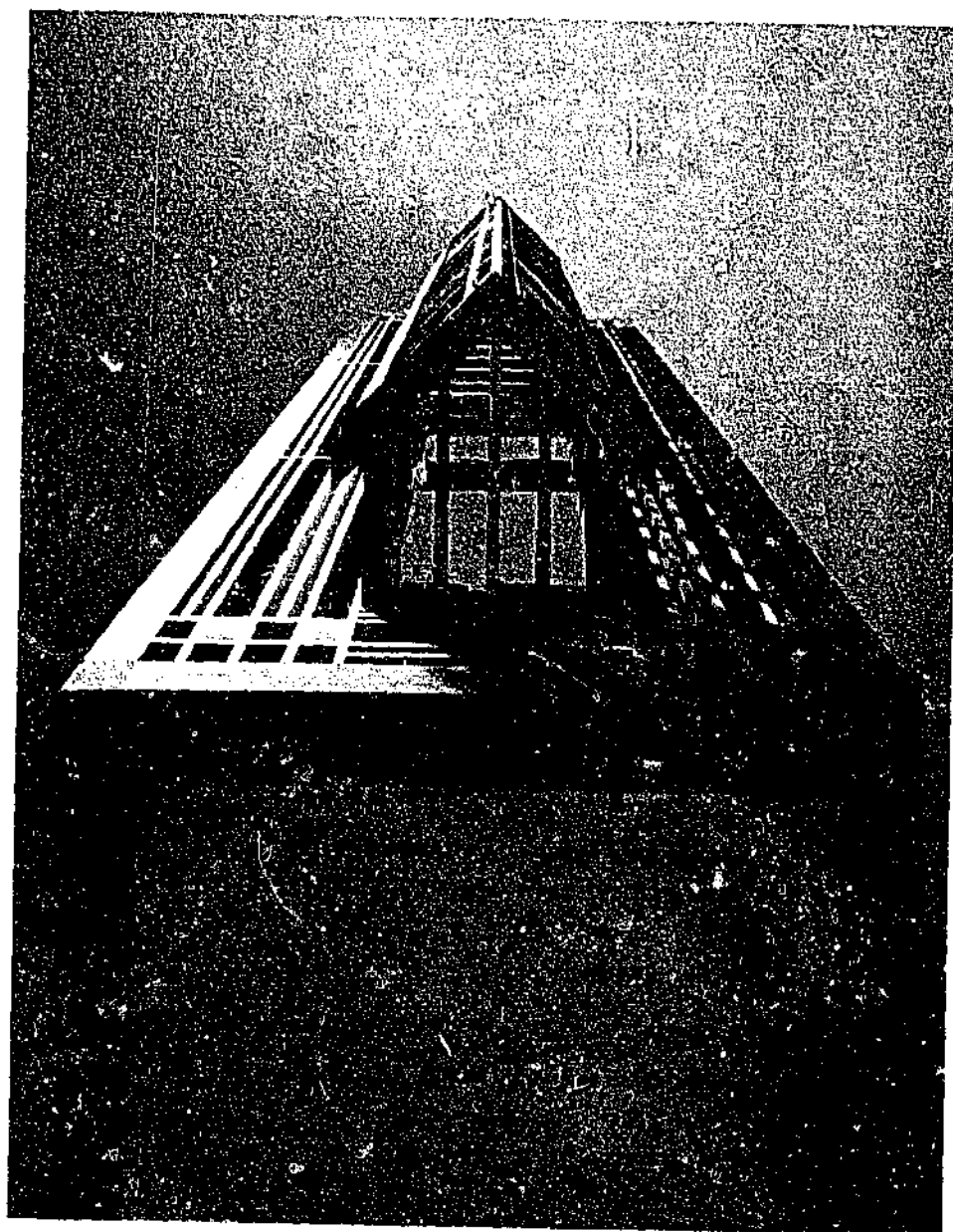


Cleansing and Atonement, 2001
Wood, mop twine, enamel bowl, slotted spoon
197 x 41 x 41cm

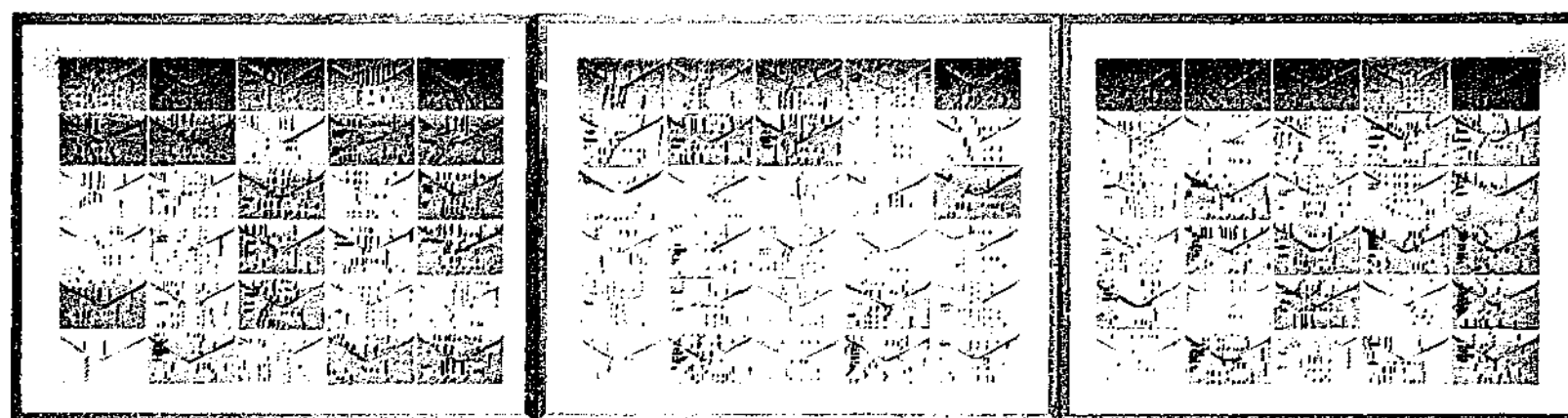


Lately My Diet Has Become A Trifle Monotonous, 2001
 Three timbers, tin alphabet cookie cutters
 127 x 148 x 56cm

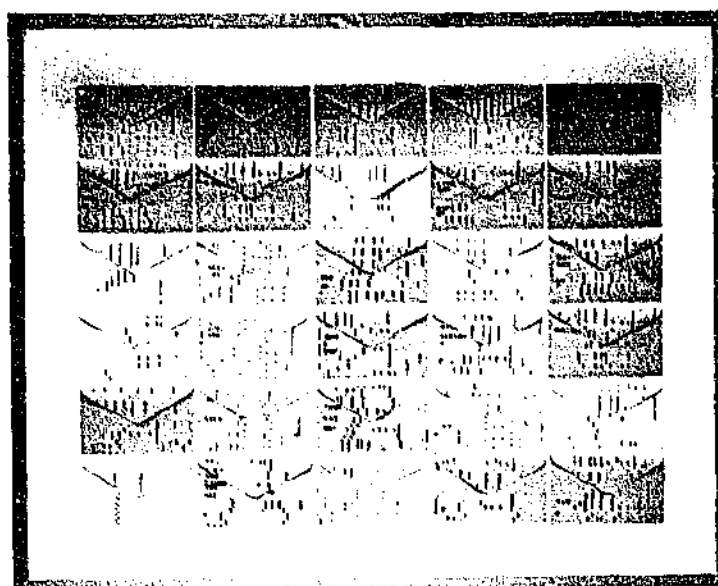
Lately My Diet Has Become A Trifle Monotonous, detail



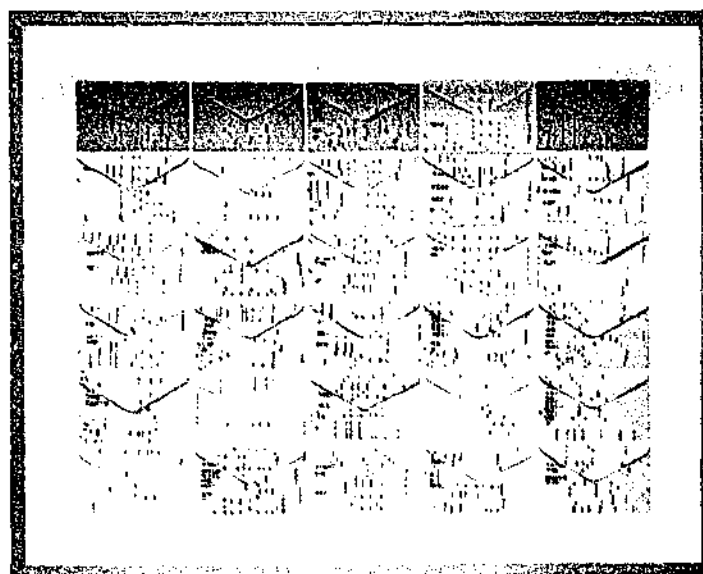
Lately My Diet Has Become A Trifle Monotonous, detail



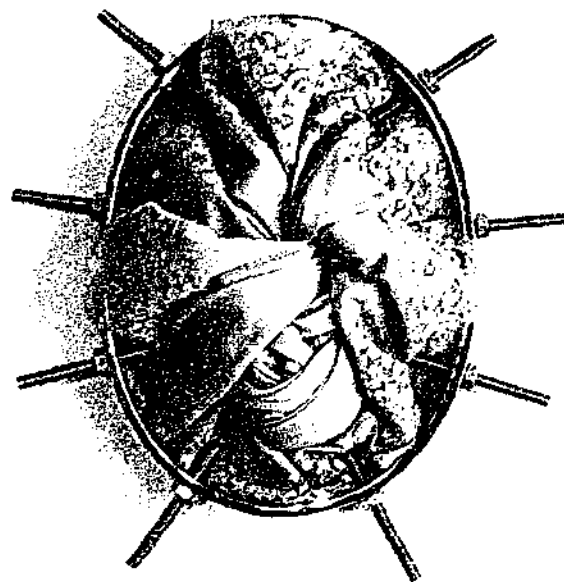
Bread of Heaven, 2002
Found paper, wood, glass
70 x 264 x 7cm

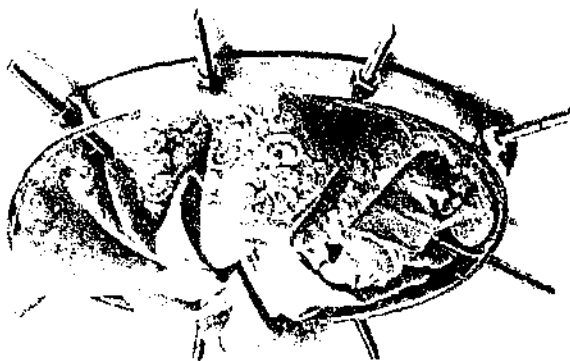


Bread of Heaven, detail, single element

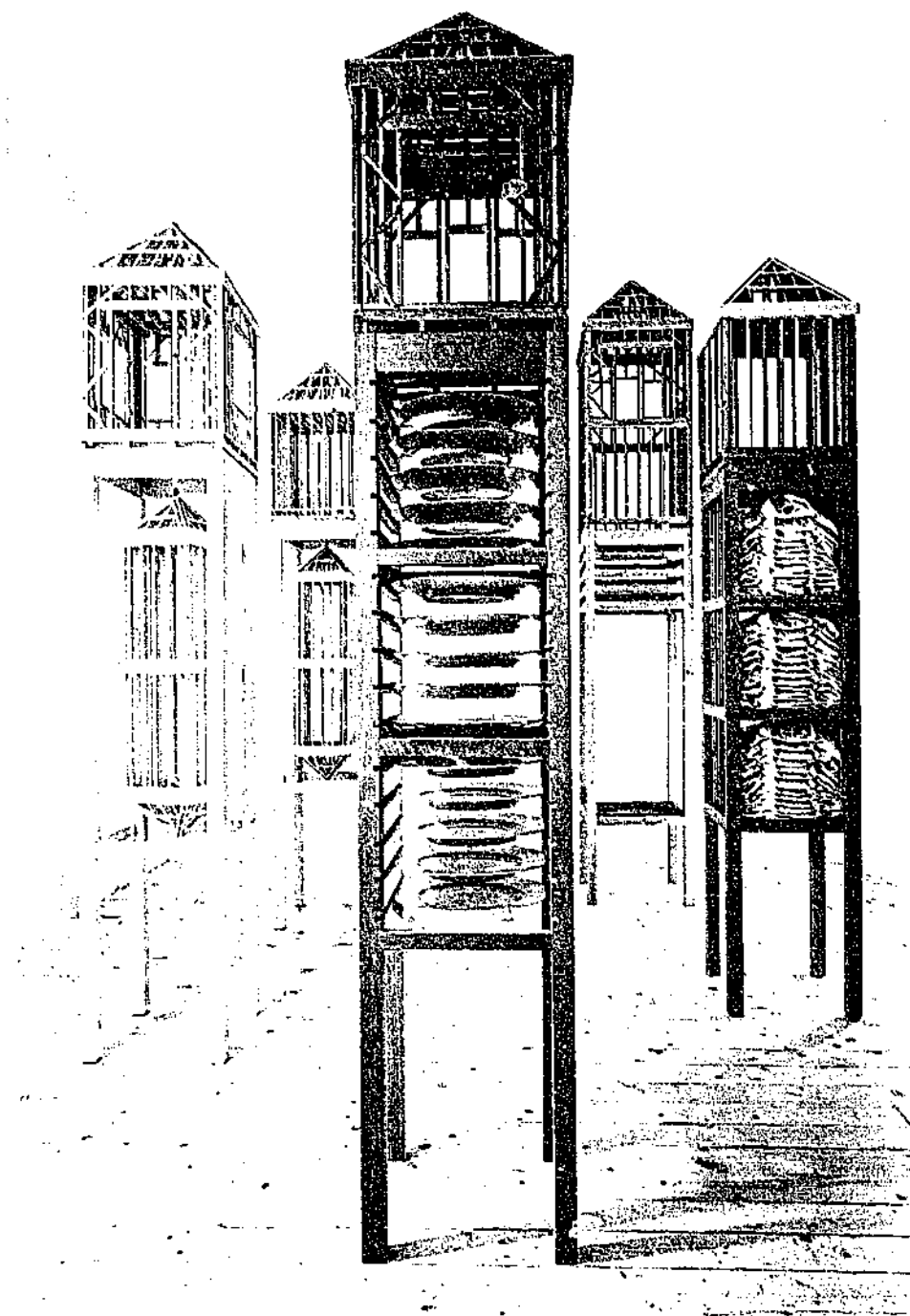


Bread of Heaven, detail, single element

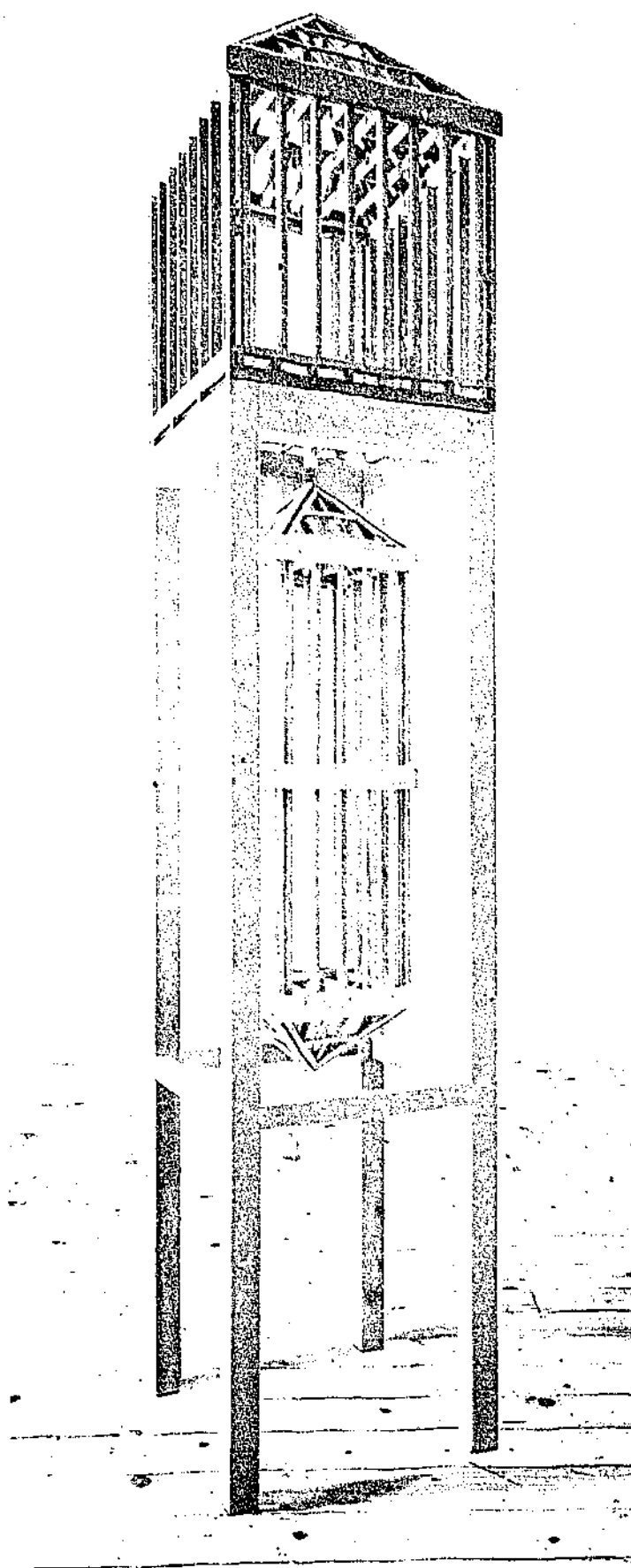




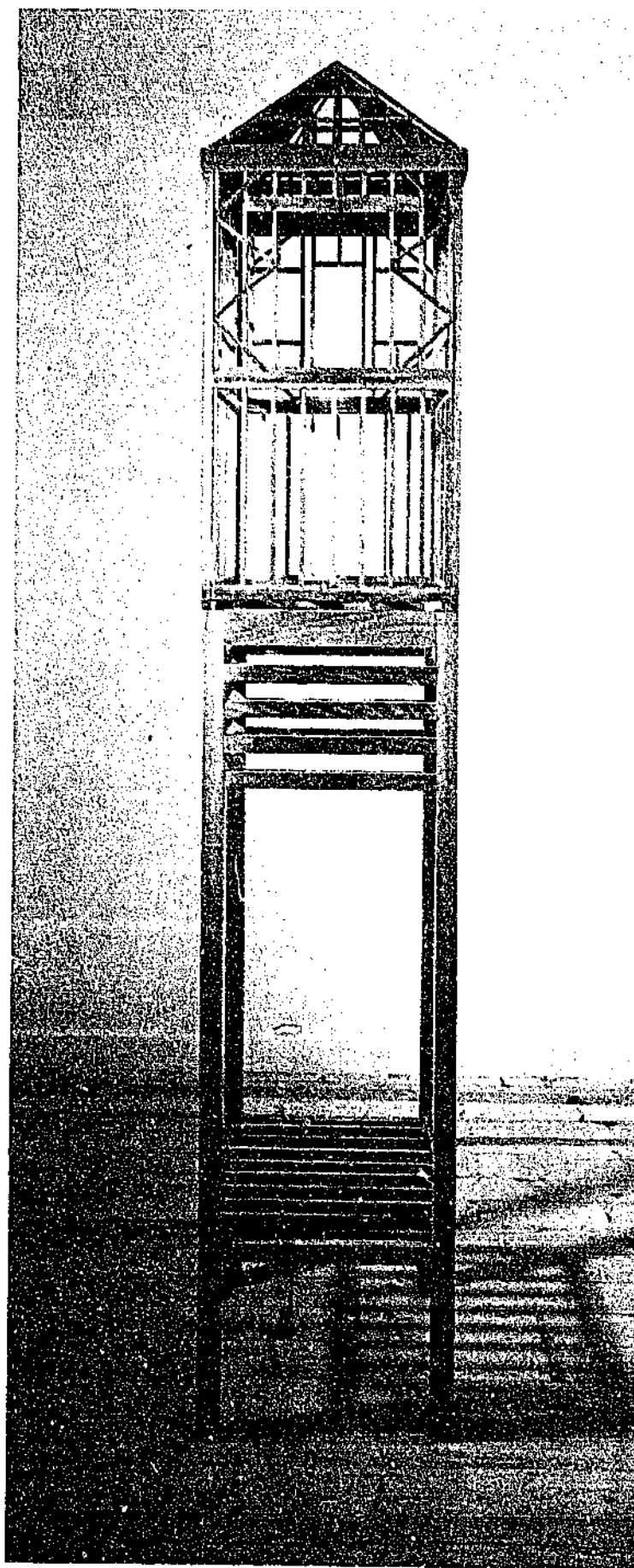
Untitled, 2002



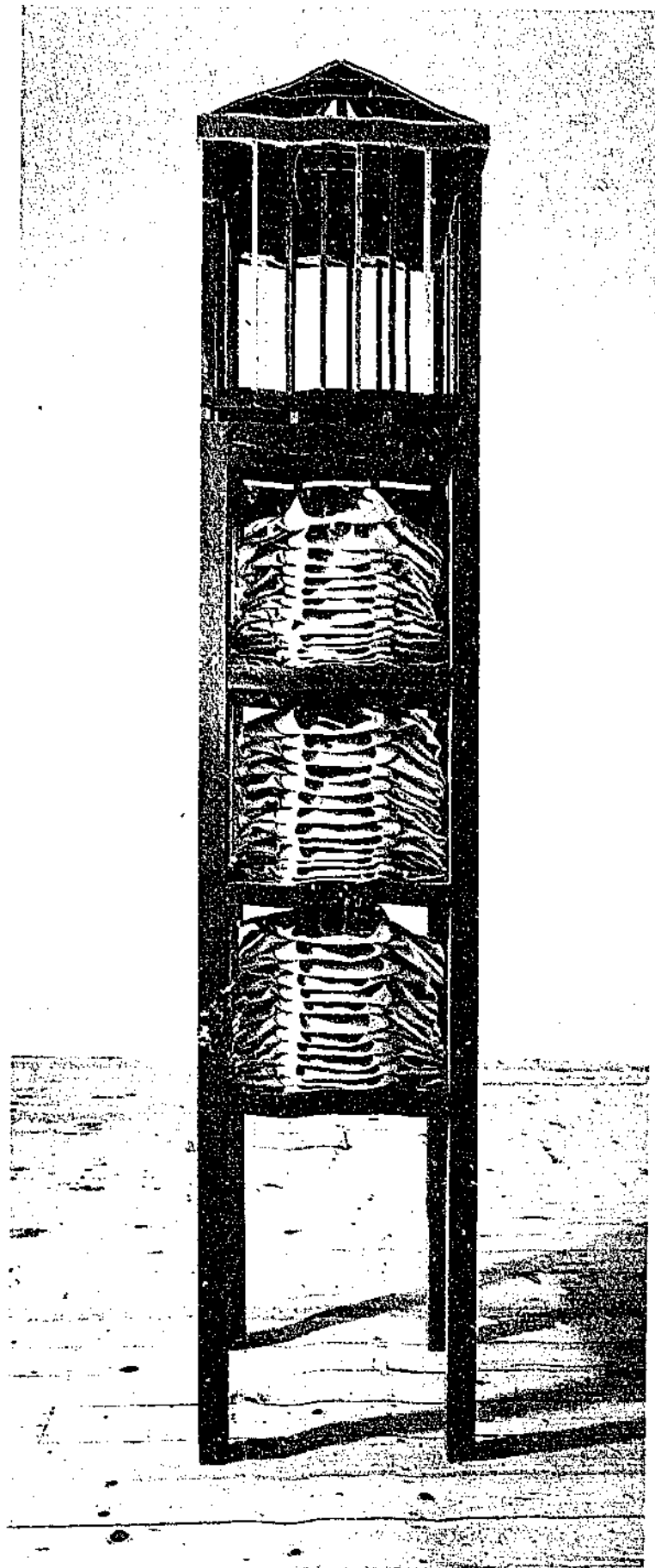
Anthology of Sadness, 2002
Huon Pine, American Cherry Wood, plates, shirts, metal hooks
240 x 300 x 350cm



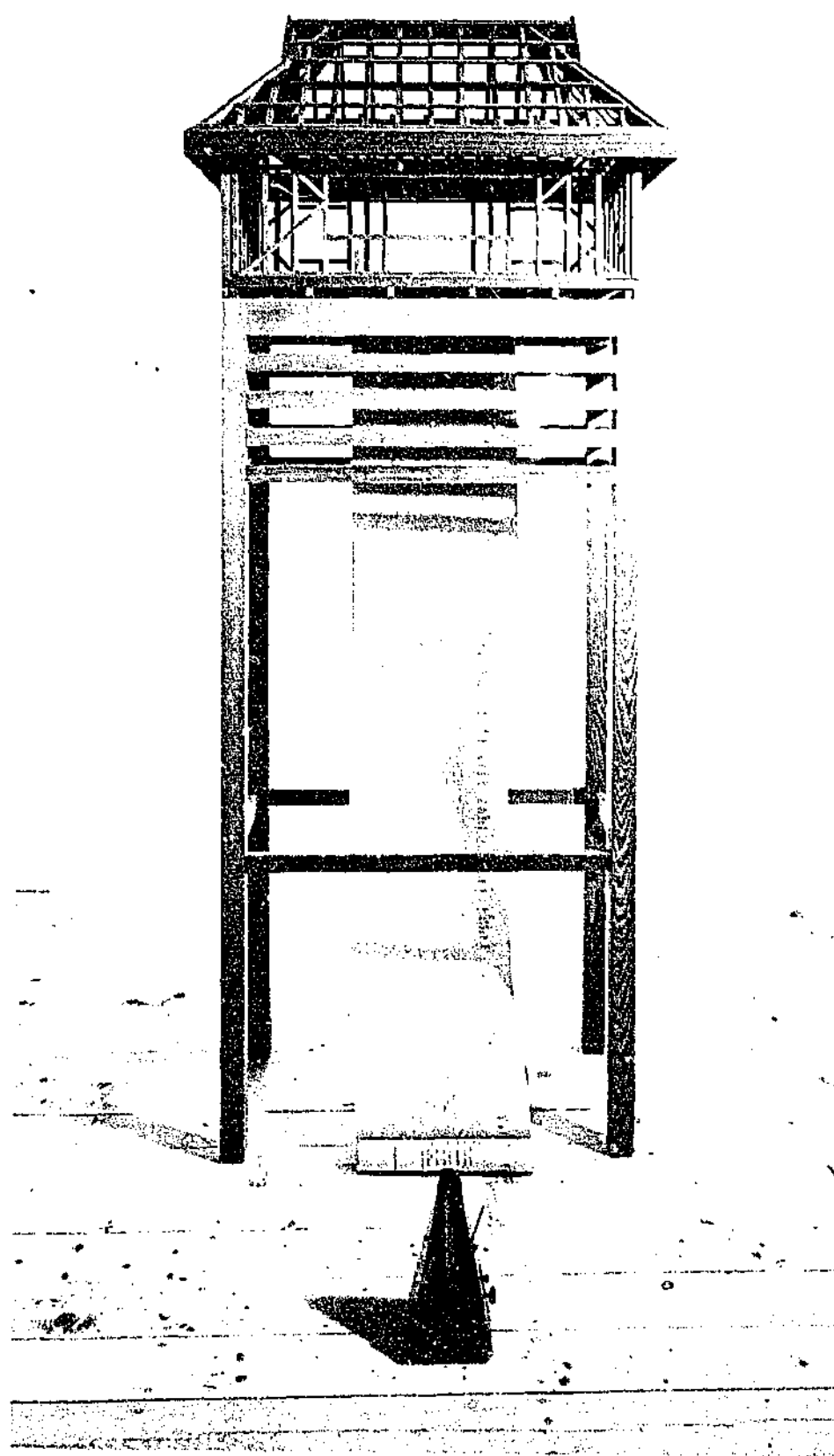
Anthology of Sadness, detail
Element I, Huon Pine, metal hooks
197 x 38 x 38cm



Anthology of Sadness, detail
Element III, American Cherry Wood
240 x 46 x 46cm



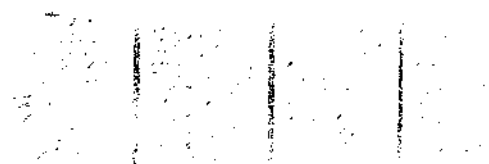
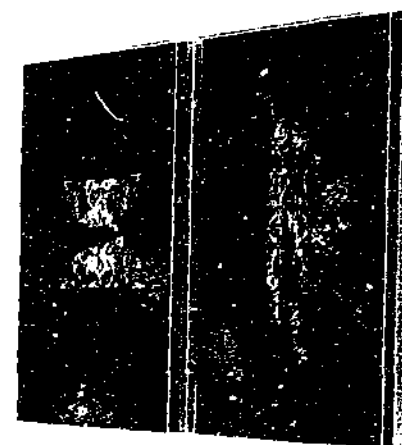
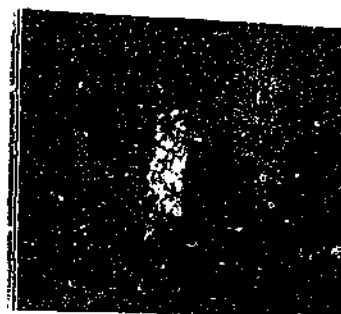
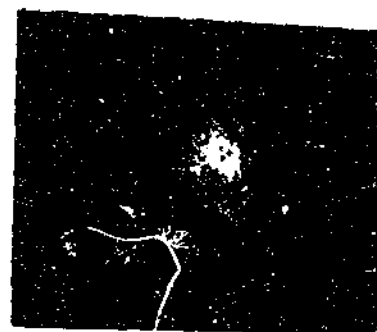
Anthology of Sadness, detail
Element V, American Cherry Wood, shirts
197 x 38 x 38cm



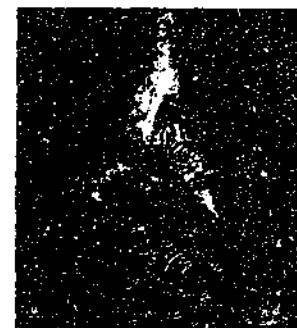
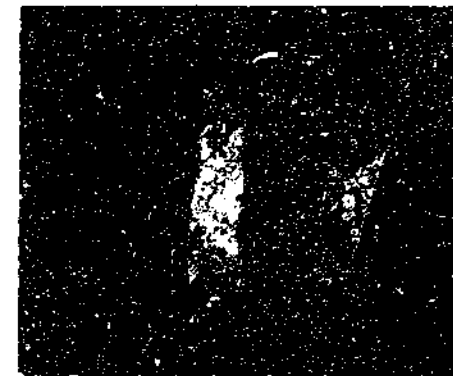
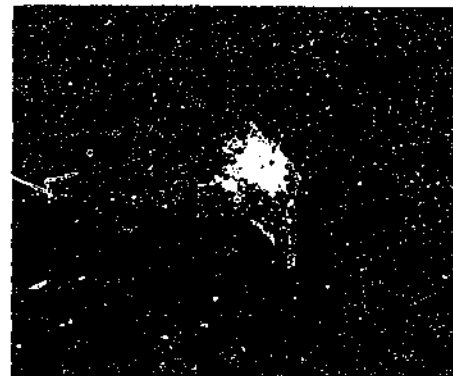
Words and Sweet Music, 2002
American Redwood, found paper, metronome
190 x 78 x 46cm



Words and Sweet Music, detail

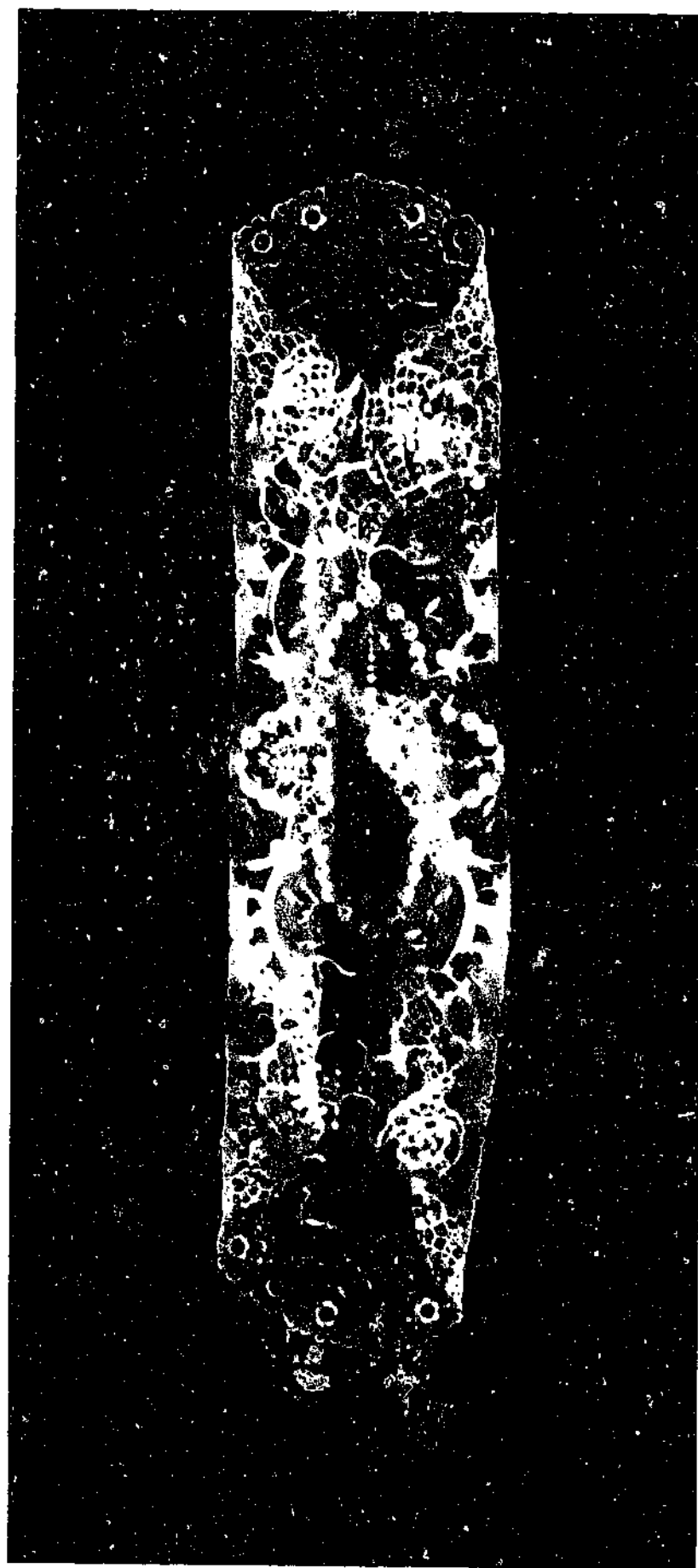


Statement of the Possible, 2002
Photograms, graphite, paper, perspex
Six elements, 112 x 332 x 7cm



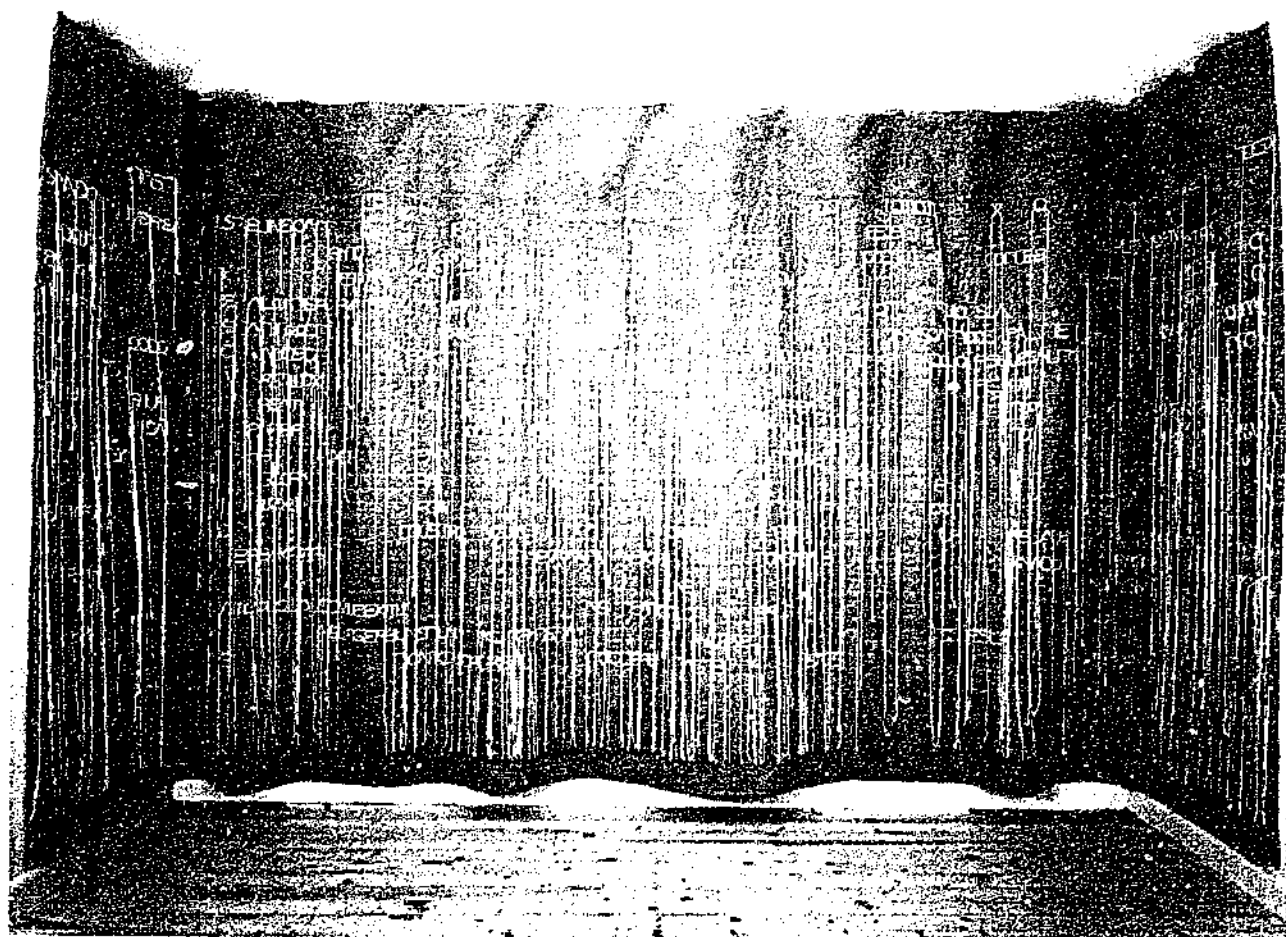






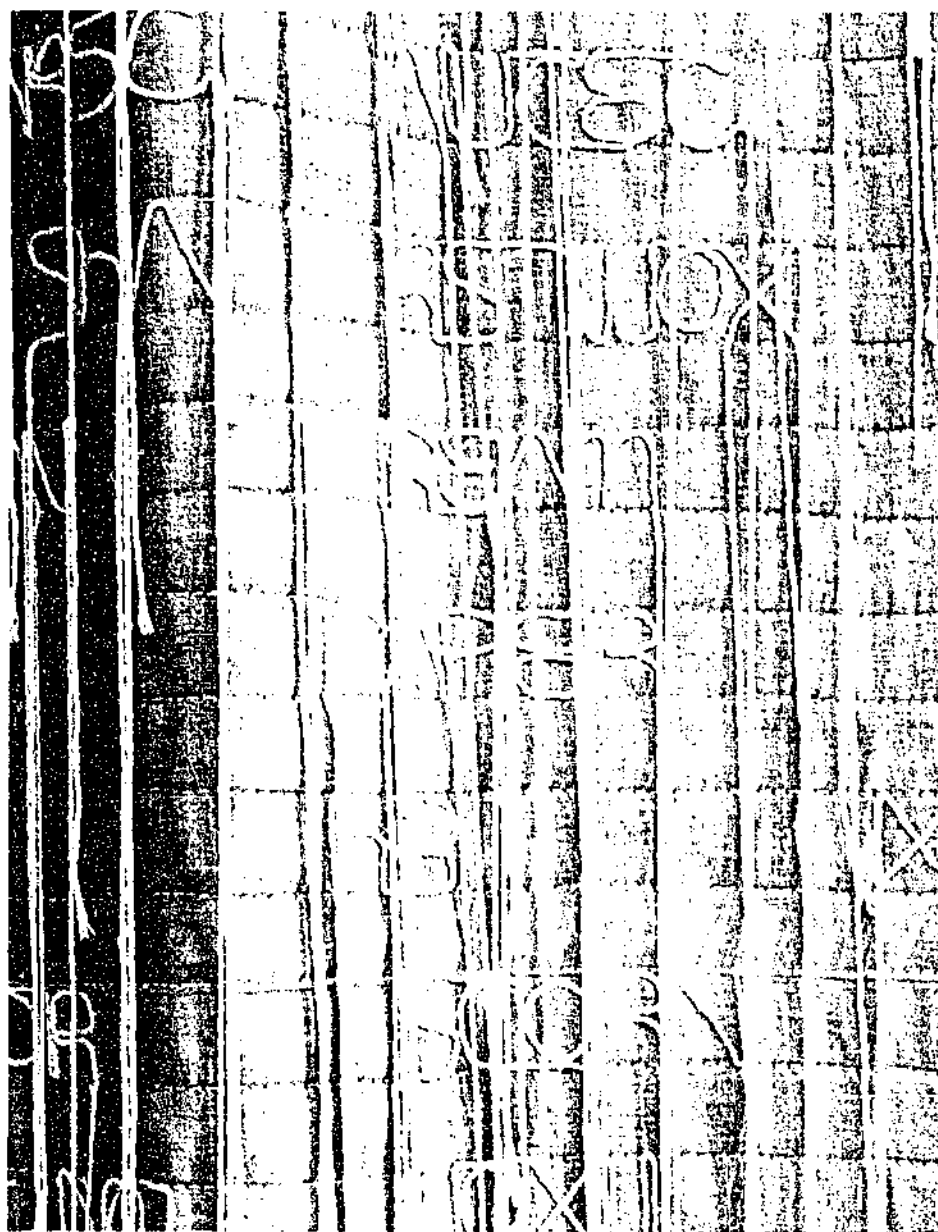
2
The repetition
of the same will
be not only the
temptation but
will cause the
concentration.

She will be very
poor and but a
woman! But she
is a great woman
than I am. The



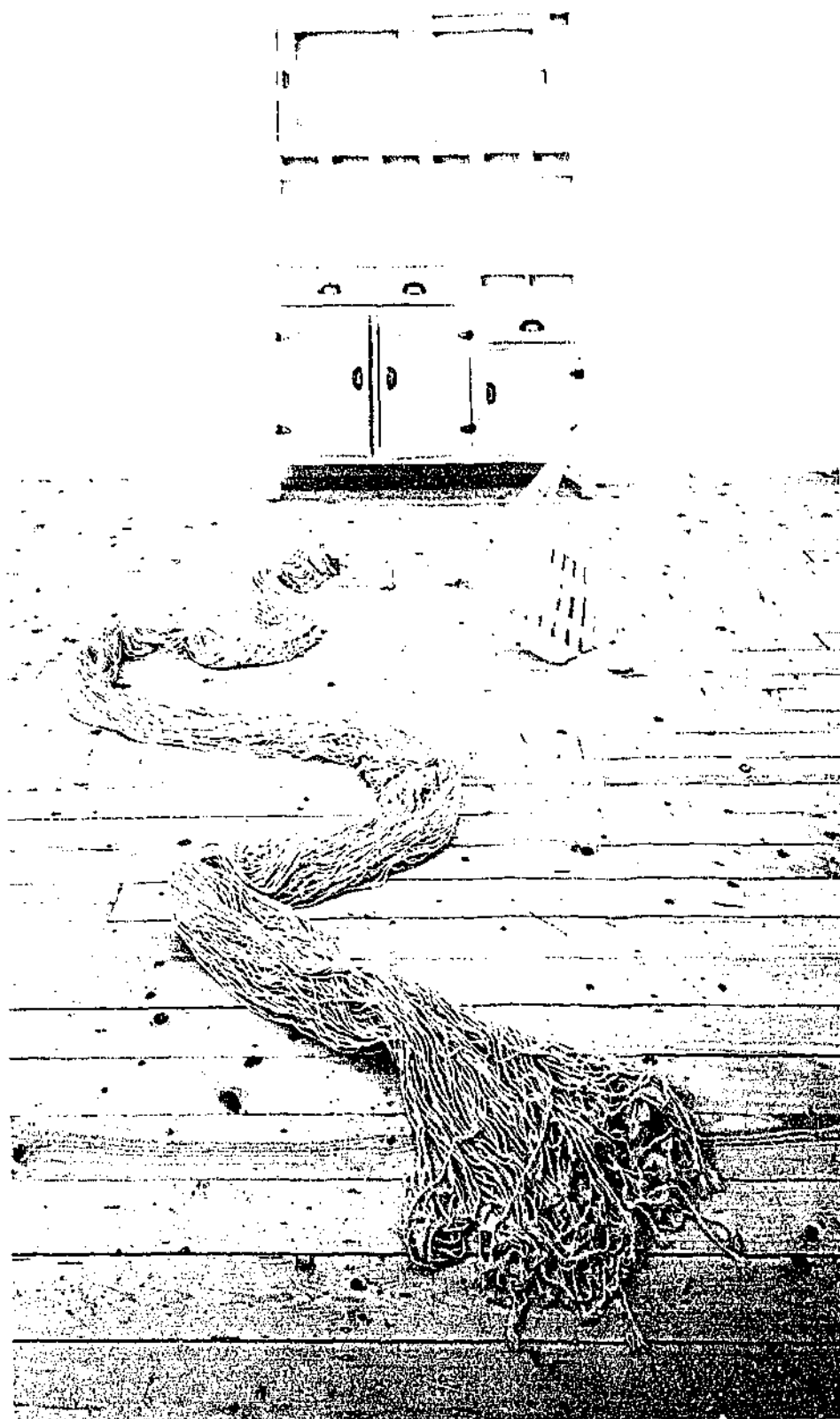
Consumer Music, 2002

Belgian linen, mop twine, cooking twine, metal eyelets, recycled cotton wadding, linen thread
300 x 600cm

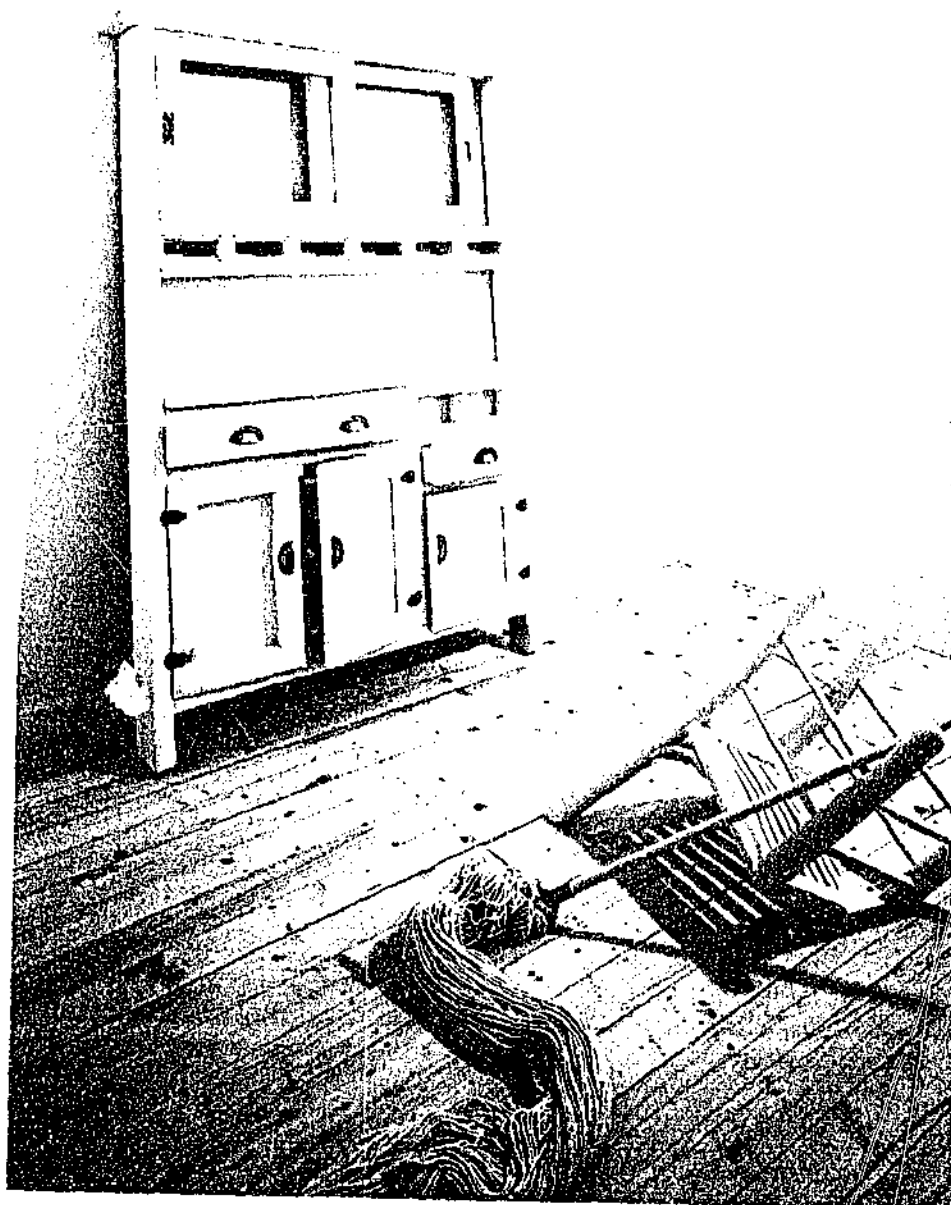


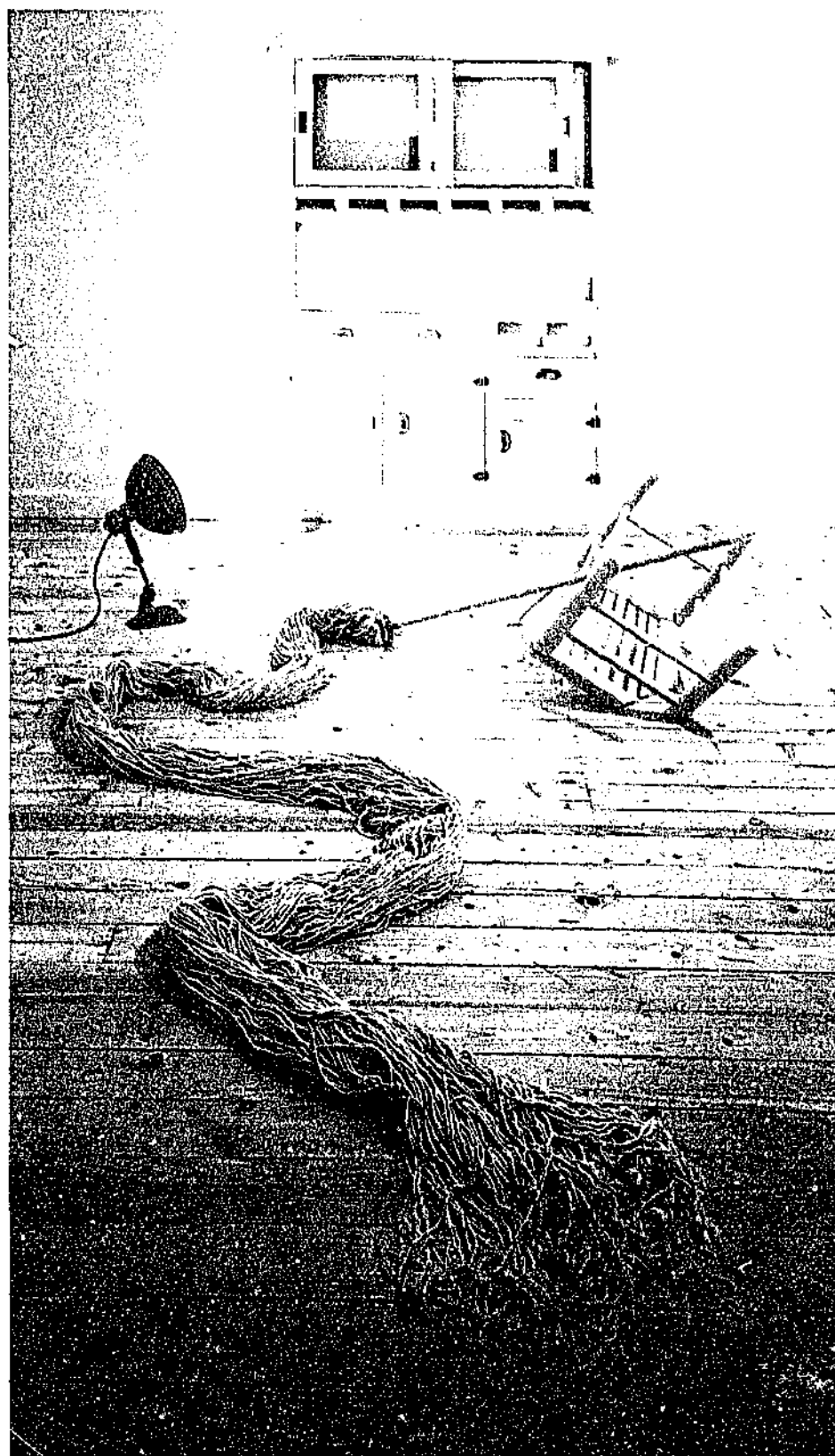
KTASTY EE PP MS
 SANDGALILIOS LIVERED RANTASB ISTEINECAT
 DOILLERAS PAXTR XSC ES AN ZE I TOILET RDRIG NG KSOJ LAMII
 EG ALEH TANTWON NE ALW TEK RY IN WA SHEDUP ENDEQ JA CECREMBREA
 JONMSTA YERS AT OODT TRO SIXXTO ETPAPER U F RXSOAPTODI PA TET THER
 OODOIL ARSC AUCEG TV BEKF XIRONIN I UTTELE JW KP DOLC PSULESALFOI
 FAST CK SHA RSTWOK AQUAMINL SHT U PL JU
 BUTTERMIL SHURTT AV REAM UR LETPA REAKFA TOUN FREAL TWO K
 OM TO P SANG PAPER ODDO SIN RE EDDO NTLI STEI TO PERS
 GREA MB HB XI PAP PPTRE
 BUTTERPCR SCORN RA O TISSUESL R RMU
 POWDERPL NOI WOK RTW AQUAM DOT
 FASTRO LOUSIRO NGWAT OXPRUR RYG GERT POLADE DUR ILETAPER J SCOFF
 BREAKFAS EVIANTV EXMILI IONSAPPLE UJ
 OODP:NE REAMOUSCOWSTWEEKMI LI NE BRUSI ANADO
 RPUZBAURYG! NS EAMLOFOU PASTEFISHST
 NBOURGERBUNSTON KLIGHTSTA HEESEC ISSUESLI TOOTHEN DEN
 EKIKO NGWAT BEE TONICTWOPURSAUEY FOODSKE PASTS K DASSI
 ESPINENUTSS OKTIONSTI

Consumer Music. 2002. sketch. graph paper. liquid paper, highlighter pen. graphite
 21 x 71.5cm



Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet, 2002
Transformed found wooden cabinet, canvas, metal fittings, mop
twine, marine ply, glue, foam padding, CD player, light
Dimensions variable





Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet, 2002

Transformed found wooden cabinet, canvas, metal fittings, mop
twine, marine ply, glue, foam padding, CD player, light
Dimensions variable

SECTION 1

THE THESIS

1.3 THE SOUNDWORKS

CD | *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet*

This soundwork for three voices is composed of three separate strands of spoken text each extracted from a different memory archive. The work is part of the title piece *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet* which is a floor and wall installation consisting of a deconstructed and upholstered cabinet, a deconstructed and upholstered chair, an oversize floor mop, a light and a CD player secreted within the remains of the cabinet. The light and the soundwork are activated as viewers trigger movement sensors placed within the gallery space. Within the theatre of the white box the artifacts allude to rituals lost, time past and obsolescence. Interrogated by the light the artifacts seem unable to sustain the role they once played within a familiar system. Obsolescence as a consequence of consumerism, transformation and erosion of memory are characteristics of change. But change has not succeeded in eroding the place of the family as the cornerstone of our society although the relationships between family members are much changed. Despite shifts in society and system breakdowns the family remains, for the moment, the dominant paradigm and the domestic hearth, the site of family, continues to reflect changes in both societal and familial patterns.

The work was performed by Geraldine Cook, Head of Voice, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, Diana Marsland, cooking school director, Woodend, Victoria and Greer Honeywill. In the Kinesound studio the strands of recorded sound have been allowed to erode, to fade as memory fades and what remains is mixed into one strand that recalls fragments of all three narratives. The text for each strand can be found on the following pages.

The work was directed by Greer Honeywill and recorded and engineered by Yuri Worontschak at Kinesound, Melbourne in November 2002.

(text for each of the three strands follows)

Strand I:

Excerpts from *A Recollection a Month for the Whole Year*

Voice: Geraldine Cook

In that time when peace replaced nightmares and sons were no longer bred to fight an unknown enemy, gentle dreams began to take hold in the hearts and minds of the Australian battlers. How did they start? Did they start from the dry seeds of need or the plump, incubated visions of politicians? Whatever the origin, the dreams grew, nurtured by a new optimism as perfect as any laboratory medium, until one outgrew its destiny. It grew to mythic dimensions. This dream spoke of a new life shared by many. A new romanticism, a belief that it was possible for every Australian family to turn honest toil into a home on a quarter acre block, surrounded by a stately fence.

Dreamers 1998-1999

In 1941 my parents married and settled in a tiny two-room suburban flat in Prospect, South Australia. In the evenings when my father played the piano my mother would push my blue stroller under the kitchen table to keep the glare of the light out of my eyes. People repeatedly told her that I would grow up to be neurotic. But I spent those early years under the table peacefully wrapped in a blanket of sound and the sounds seeped into my blood. When I was nearly three we left the little flat in Prospect for my parent's dream house.

Prospects 1998

My father made the furniture. He carved occasional tables and side tables and polished them. He bent tubular metal and turned wood to make light fittings. And he laid Lino on the surface of the kitchen table. A coat of white paint, the colour of making-do, disguised a legion of imperfections that could never be polished away.

Fifty-Two 2001

My mother filled the kitchen with the rich sweet aromas of baking. Rich fruity Jubilee Cake, warm from the tin, with tangy lemon icing and sprinkles of coconut. Desserts with evocative names like Heavenly Tart and biscuits with the now politically incorrect name of Chocolate Afghan. She had a collection of favourite recipes that she found in cookbooks and back-of-the-envelope recipes she gleaned from friends.

At Home 2000

At Shannon Avenue there was no after meal lingering at the lunch or dinner table. Instead dishes were swept briskly from the table and piled high next to the stainless steel sink. My mother always washed the dishes. My sister and I were not to be trusted. We were the wipers in this ritual: ever the handmaidens to the martyr. My father played the piano.

The Enamel Bowl 1999

My mother was a saint and a martyr. She hovered, like a nurse, between the saintliness of placing all others before her needs and the martyr's obsessiveness. The saint requires no repayment but the martyr craves recognition, even gratitude. Or worse, inflicts the embrace of obligation on the object of her gaze. Even in the most perfect of circumstances how strangely thorny is the relationship between mothers and daughters. Locked into a lifetime of wounded feelings they dance within the limits of the antiseptic gauze shroud, breathing on the barrier that maintains their futile embrace.

Embrace 2000

My mother was obsessive about the kitchen floor always washing it before she left the house. She would place the chairs on the kitchen table and wash the floor using a string mop and a bucket of hot water. She was afraid that if something happened to her while she was out strangers might come to the house and adjudicate her life's work as a housewife. For her the kitchen floor was the means by which such judgement could be made.

Obsession 1998

When I first married I didn't know what to buy at the supermarket without a list. I could not prepare the list without first deciding on the menu for the week. Each week the menu, the ingredients, household and personal needs were recorded in a spiral-bound notebook fitted into a leather cover. Once the list was complete I could shop. When the notebook was full it was taken out of the cover and put in a cupboard.

Kitchen Music 1998

Strand II:

Five weeks of household consumption from the supermarket, butcher and green grocer extracted from List Book I 1991, from the archive of remaining List Books dated 1991-2000

Voice: Greer Honeywill

TV week jarlsberg milk horseradish 2 cat food breakfast rolls chicken stock brown sugar apple juice mixers butter eggs cream black olives parmesan pine nuts orange bags mineral water listerine 2 tissues 3 cat litter 4 soap 4 toothbrushes tampax shavers dentotape spring water half a cabbage bunch of large carrots capsicum 4 onions celery spring onions beans mushrooms basil potatoes avocado mango leaves 2 tomatoes coriander 2 chicken breasts corned beef 500gms of mince cat meat caster sugar honey raw sugar cream butter unsalted butter milk worcestershire sauce cayenne pepper 3 cat food orange bags sunlight liquid finish powder mixers eggs coffee breakfast rolls sugar libra shavers TV week apple juice deodorant tissues 250gms borlotti beans 4 onions garlic sweet potato cucumber spring onions spuds coriander chillies 6 oranges 5 bananas 400gms mince 400gms chuck steak 500gms fillet steak 2 chicken breasts 6 bacon cat meat spaghetti 2 cans of tomatoes 4 cans of tomato paste 2 milk cream butter brown rice orange bags 3 cat food dry cat food mixers breakfast rolls shavers TV week apple juice black olives cooking oil bread alfoil spring water coffee pan forte special jam 'lite' cheese slices mineral water dishwashing powder cream cheese jarlsberg good oil smoked salmon celery capsicum half a cabbage carrots lots of leaves cos lettuce cherry tomatoes garlic 6 oranges 5 apples mushrooms walnuts cucumber avocado 4 bacon corned beef 500gms mince 2 chicken breasts cat food milk nuttalex orange bags apple juice 2 cat food dry ginger mineral water breakfast rolls TV week bread chicken stock beef stock rinse aid white handle tie bags fluffy methylated spirits preen 4 toilet rolls potatoes asparagus leaves lettuce cherry tomatoes onions avocado 6 oranges 5 apples 6 bacon 2 chicken breasts steak cat meat white bread bornhoffen cloves milk eggs black olives cranberry juice TV week mixers 4 cat food spaghetti icecream breakfast rolls butter unsalted butter apple juice special juice beef stock kitchen towel cream toothpaste toilet rolls Listerine onions cos leaves 300gms borlotti beans tomatoes 2 avocados 2 mangoes asparagus carrots spuds cantaloupe christmas fruit garlic ginger coriander basil spring onions oranges cucumber lime leaves lemon grass cocoanut milk galanga ham 400gms veal 400gms pork 200gms pork fat 10 bacon steak 500gms minced steak 500gms blade steak chicken pieces TV

Strand III:

Recipes selected at random from *The Housewives' Calendar of Puddings: A Pudding A Day For The Whole Year* published by the Country Woman's Association, circa 1950.

Voice: Diana Marsland

January 3 Apricot Eggs

4 small plain sponge cakes, stewed apricots, cream.

Split the sponge cakes in half as you would a scone. On each half pour enough apricot juice to moisten the cake without making it soggy. On this place a firm half apricot, round side up. Put whipped cream around this to represent a poached egg.

January 7 Creamy Lemon Pudding

8ozs Self Raising Flour, 4 ozs butter, 3ozs sugar, one egg, a pinch of salt.

Sift Flour and salt, add sugar, and rub in butter. Mix to a stiff dough with egg and a little milk. Roll out and line two 9 inch tins or deep tart plates. Bake in a moderate oven until cooked (about 25 minutes). When cold, mix the filling: 1 tin of condensed milk, 2 egg yolks, the rind of 1 and a half lemons, a quarter of a pint of lemon juice. Stir all together and pour on the cooked pastry cases. Beat the 2 egg whites stiffly, beat in 3 dessertspoons of sugar, and pile on lemon filling. Bake to a golden brown in a slow oven (about 20 minutes).

February 19 Floating Island

Whisk 4 egg whites until stiff, and then fold in 4 tablespoons of castor sugar. Flavour with a few drops of vanilla.

Make a caramel with the 3 heaped tablespoons of sugar by browning it slowly in a saucepan. Have ready a pudding basin greased with butter and pour in the caramel, and shake it well around. Then pour in the egg mixture and steam for half an hour over boiling water. The basin must not be too small. Then, using the saucepan in which the caramel was made, make a custard with the yolks of the 4 eggs and three quarters of a pint of milk and 1 tablespoon of sugar. Turn out the mould on to dish, surround with custard, chill, and serve with ice cream.

March 15 Fruit Flummery

1 cup of water, 1 cup of sugar, 1 large tablespoon of powdered gelatine, 1 tablespoon of plain flour, the juice of 2 large oranges and 1 lemon, the pulp of 6 passionfruit.

Mix the flour, gelatine, sugar, and water to a smooth paste (dissolving the gelatine), and then add the juice of the oranges and lemon. Heat slowly and stir while the mixture simmers for 3 to 4 minutes. Do not boil. Turn into a large basin to cool, and then beat thoroughly until very white and thick. Lastly, add the passionfruit pulp, beat again, and when thick pour into a glass dish. Chill and serve.

April 2 Washing Day Pancakes

2 ozs butter, 2 eggs, a pinch of salt, 2 ozs flour, 1 cup of milk.

Beat eggs well, add flour, melted butter, and milk, and beat all well together. Put into well-buttered plates and bake in a fairly hot oven. Serve with lemon and sugar or folded over with jam in between.

April 5 Honey Velvet

3 teaspoons of gelatine dissolved in a quarter of a cup of hot water, 1 junket tablet dissolved in a dessertspoon of cold water, 3 tablespoons of powdered milk, 2 tablespoons of sugar, 1 dessertspoon of honey, a few drops of vanilla, and one and a quarter cups of warm water. Beat powdered milk, sugar, and honey into the one and a quarter cups of warm water. Add the dissolved gelatine, and lastly the dissolved junket tablet and vanilla. Beat thoroughly with a rotary beater and pour into serving dish, and chill.

April 10 Heavenly Tart

Line a tart plate with good short pastry. Bake the shell in a moderate oven for 30 minutes. Allow to cool. Then fill:

First Filling: Put 1 cup of water into a saucepan with three quarters of a cup of sugar and the juice of 1 lemon and bring to the boil, then add 1 heaped tablespoon of cornflour or custard powder mixed with a little water. Simmer for two minutes, stirring well, then add a few drops of cochineal and spread on the pastry shell.

Second Filling: Bring 1 cup milk to the boil, then thicken with 1 heaped tablespoon of cornflour mixed with a little milk. Remove from fire and beat in 2 dessertspoons of butter, 3 dessertspoons of icing sugar, and a little vanilla essence. Spread on top of the first filling and sprinkle with cocoanut and chopped nuts. Serve cold.

April 25 Steamed Quince Pudding

Take 5 or 6 medium-sized quinces, peel, core and cut into quarters. Make syrup with 3 cups of water and 1 cup of sugar and stew quince gently until tender and pink. Make a suet crust by mixing three quarters of a cup of finely chopped suet with 2 cups of self raising flour and a pinch of salt and mix this to a soft dough with cold water. Roll out the size of the saucepan and place on top of the fruit, cutting a hole in the centre. Simmer for about three quarters of an hour, with lid on saucepan. Serve hot, with the crust cut into wedges.

CD II A *Recollection a Month for the Whole Year*
Voice: Geraldine Cook.

The twelve pieces included on this CD have been drawn from my personal archive of recalled memories and were written during the period 1998-2002. What follows are the texts for this work. Each piece is recorded as a separate track assembled to favour the chronology of the family rather than the chronology of writing.

Dreamers (1998-1999)

In that time when peace replaced nightmares and sons were no longer bred to fight an unknown enemy, gentle dreams began to take hold in the hearts and minds of the Australian battlers. How did they start? Did they start from the dry seeds of need or the plump, incubated visions of politicians? Whatever the origin, the dreams grew, nurtured by a new optimism as perfect as any laboratory medium, until one outgrew its destiny. It grew to mythic dimensions. This dream spoke of a new life shared by many. A new romanticism, a belief that it was possible for every Australian family to turn honest toil into a home on a quarter acre block, surrounded by a stately fence. That was how it was for my family. My mother and father stood together on the threshold of the great Australian dream carrying a child born in the year and month that the war ended and the flames of warfare gave way to rockets of celebration. This was the waiting room for a new time, a time of opportunity and wish-fulfilment, where dreams were large enough to blot out the memory of depression, war and personal loss. My father did not go to war instead he worked as a travelling salesman. He sold towels door to door while his brother flew secret missions in the dark in flimsy fighter planes never believing he would return. It was the drink that rendered my father a failure to the war effort but in this time of optimism there would be no hard feelings. The dream was big enough to share. Later, my mother would feel the burden of guilt because her husband failed to stand shoulder to shoulder with his mates. In the 40s and 50s difference was abhorred in a community focused on conformity, sameness, and repetition as a means of control. A time when the *Australian Home Journal* banner headlines exhorted, 'Home Grown Population is Best' (June 2nd 1947), 'Lets All Work Together for Good' (May 1st 1948) and 'Life is What You Make it' (September 1st 1947) as part of their home baked propaganda.

Prospects (1998)

In 1941 my parents married and settled in a tiny two-room suburban flat in Prospect, South Australia. Within the limited boundaries of the kitchen stood my paternal grandmother's piano complete with timber inlay and brass candelabra. It was into this already over utilized space that I was born. It must have been a tight fit, the baby, the piano, my parents, and the bottled genie. In the evenings when my father played the piano my mother would push my blue stroller under the kitchen table to keep the glare of the light out of my eyes. People repeatedly told her that I would grow up to be neurotic. But I spent those early years under the table peacefully wrapped

in a blanket of sound and the sounds seeped into my blood. When I was nearly three we left the little flat in Prospect for my parent's dream house. Their own home on a quarter acre block; a red brick, South Australian Housing Trust dream just like all of the others in the new post-war seaside suburb of Glenelg. It was 1948 and the Great Australian Dream was off and running.

Fifty-two (2001)

The mean-spirited red brick house on Shannon Avenue occupied the regulation post-war footprint. It was brand new and 'modern' but it was an ocean away from Frank Lloyd Wright or true modernism. Practicality in all things and the belief that one must never overcapitalise was the guiding principal of the householders on Shannon Avenue.

My father made the furniture. He carved occasional tables and side tables and polished them. He bent tubular metal and turned wood to make light fittings. And he laid Lino on the surface of the kitchen table. A coat of white paint, the colour of making-do, disguised a legion of imperfections that could never be polished away. And in this endeavour there was no hint of the Australian echo of the Arts and Crafts movement.

There was never a thought given to the relationship of the house to the land that decision had been made by the bureaucrats of the South Australian Housing Trust. The house faced the street and a creek that was prone to flooding. The murky waters of the creek claimed the lives of several children before it was transformed into an open concrete drain.

At Home (2000)

The kitchen at Shannon Avenue was a narrow rectangle with the cooking at one end and a dining space filled with a freestanding kitchen table at the other. The kitchen table was the hub of the house.

With the back door placed in the centre of one of the long walls the daily movement of the family artificially separated the functions of the kitchen from dining activity. My mother mourned the lack of a truly separate dining room for forty-five years until she moved into a home where she would never again have to think about cooking or separate dining rooms.

At Shannon Avenue the piano held court in a room of its own, the living room. The living room was out of bounds except for special occasions or recitals by my father. Later, when we got a television set it was placed next to the piano.

My mother filled the kitchen with the rich sweet aromas of baking. I remember rich fruity *Jubilee Cake*, warm from the tin, with tangy lemon icing and sprinkles of coconut. Desserts with evocative names like *Heavenly Tart* and biscuits with the now politically incorrect name of *Chocolate Afghan*. She had a collection of favourite recipes that she found in cookbooks

printed by the Electricity Trust of South Australia or the Country Women's Association and back-of-the-envelope recipes she gleaned from friends.

The Enamel Bowl (1999)

At Shannon Avenue there was no after meal lingering at the lunch or dinner table. Instead dishes were swept briskly from the table and piled high next to the stainless steel sink. My mother always washed the dishes. My sister and I were not to be trusted. We were the wipers in this ritual; ever the handmaidens to the martyr. My father played the piano.

If I peel back the layers of memory to a place some forty years ago I can see another kitchen and the male version of Bertram Mackennal's, *Circe*. In the house of my uncle, my father's oldest brother, there was no hot or cold running water in the big old kitchen. Every family visit that included a meal always ended with the same ritualistic drawing of hot water from the nearby laundry. The water was collected in a cream enamel bowl with a thin green rim. In his triumphal march back to the kitchen, my Uncle would hold the bowl carefully before him like *Circe* with her poison. The steam rising from the water softly wafting over his shoulder, trying to remember its way back to the laundry.

Once the bowl of water was placed on the kitchen table the ritual began with my uncle in the lead. Pontius Pilate-like he washed away the remains of the meal and his responsibility to the family was complete. The blood relatives armed with crisp white tea towels striped in red clustered about him vying to dry dishes laced with foam. There was talking and laughing and the sharing of often-repeated stories. It was a ceremony re-experienced over and over again in the same way every time we ate with him.

Astoria (2001)

My grandparent's house was built of many things, red bricks, pebble, roughcast cement, timber and iron. *Astoria* they called it, in all its heavy pillared, multi-gabled glory. Far from American shores *Astoria* was a house of shadows its small-paned windows and stained glass never quite able to feed the light-starved interiors. Over the years the light simply faded away, like my Grandmother, as the Cyprus hedge at the front and the big almond trees at the back grew too large for a quarter acre block. Dark-stained timber interiors hung with big brown landscapes populated by horses, dogs and pink-jacketed riders mopped up what light there was so that on the brightest day the lights had to be switched on.

Beyond the kitchen was the back verandah the darkest of all domains. Here hissing cats and witches on brooms sticks, guardians of the toilet, swooped and threatened. These were not visions but cut metal, black-painted, suburban versions of the scarecrow, designed to hang from eucalypt trees to frighten the birds. They also frightened a small child as they swayed drunkenly from the verandah's beams, casting animated shadows in the early evening. And then there was the very strange smell that came from

the stacks of trays about which I was forbidden to speak. They were drying racks for rose petals and other leafy materials my Grandfather would blend into his illicit pipe tobacco.

Beyond the threatening verandah was the back garden and whatever light there was seemed enough for the beaming faces of the giant sunflowers bred to make seed for the family Galah.

Embrace (2000)

My mother was a saint and a martyr. She hovered, like a nurse, between the saintliness of placing all others before her needs and the martyr's obsessiveness. The saint requires no repayment but the martyr craves recognition, even gratitude. Or worse, inflicts the embrace of obligation on the object of her gaze.

The saintly nurse soothed the tearful child, wielded clouds of cotton wool and disinfectant and kissed things better with a plastic strip punctuated with air holes. She was an expert at running repairs in her kitchen surgery. But there are some wounds that cannot be kissed better.

My mother was a saint bowed down by the vast weight of an abusive, alcoholic, husband, the responsibility of home and family, and the shame of giving birth to an imperfect child. A child without all of her circuits joined, hardwiring unfinished, never to be completed. In this environment normal would be sacrificed in an attempt to manage the rest. Can a mother's love ever be given in equal proportions?

Even in the most perfect of circumstances how strangely thorny is the relationship between mothers and daughters. Locked into a lifetime of wounded feelings they dance within the limits of the antiseptic gauze shroud, breathing on the barrier that maintains their futile embrace.

Obsession (1998)

My mother was obsessive about the kitchen floor always washing it before she left the house. She would place the chairs on the kitchen table and wash the floor using a string mop and a bucket of hot water. As a consequence she was always late. While she was a clean woman, my mother was more concerned with judgement. She was afraid that if something happened to her while she was out strangers might come to the house and adjudicate her life's work as a housewife. For her the kitchen floor was the means by which such judgement could be made.

When her Father died she washed the floor before the funeral.

Kitchen Music (1998)

When I first married I didn't know what to buy at the supermarket without a list. I could not prepare the list without first deciding on the menu for the week. Each week the menu, the ingredients, household and personal needs were recorded in a spiral-bound notebook fitted into a leather cover. Once the list was complete I could shop. When the notebook was full it was taken out of the cover and put in a cupboard.

Blue Boy (1999)

Where are you my Gainsborough Boy
clad about in your suit of moon-soft blue
polished perfect like your first sonata

Where are you my Gainsborough Boy
late of Morgan Street West Hindmarsh
where the stench of the tannery mingles
with the smoke from the brick stacks
and the factory effluent runs in torrents into the river
where the little duck swims.

Where are you my Gainsborough Boy
product of sweet dreams rising from sorrowful pavements,
light of your mother's life.

Is that you?

Is that you centre stage in the lace collar beneath the great organ,
your small hands stretched taught across piano keys,
fleshy young cheeks aflame?

Is that you I see or a soft blue haze that tricks the eye?

Oh where are you my Gainsborough Boy.

Gone, gone, all gone.
Unfulfilled promises signpost the path

Gone, gone, after a lifetime of torment,
to a place where you cannot be compressed
into a metronome case of measured behaviour.

Taken fright.

Gone from the glare of the spotlights,
the baton of the conductor no longer providing life's cues.

Mother's boy.

Your sense of loss translated into a lifetime
of practised penance on her piano.

Beloved piano.

Where are you my Gainsborough Boy
are you sojourning with celestial musicians in a golden band?
Play on there is no work here to be done,
no mothers, siblings or wives left to mourn.

Done, done all done.
Let the frightful Francis Bacon images in your head give way
to the Horace Trennery hut with the lighted candle at the window
filled with the soft caress of the Berceuse.

Searching For The Pale Blue Writing Case (2002)

When I surveyed the remains of a life the careful organization was all but
obliterated by folded pieces of paper, neat coils of string and tins of rubber
bands. Even in the new millennium, in good hands, wanting for nothing the
dreadful effects of deprivation during the Depression could not be escaped.
Everything must have another use.

The Kewpie (2002)

It was there in the shadows at the back of the cupboard as it
had been for fifty or more years. It survived the pogrom wrought
on a household no longer needed and of all the possibilities it was
favoured to journey to the new territory where life would be lived
in one small room.

It was still in the cellophane wrapping looking out making no
judgement. In all its fragility only a small chip in the icing patty
on which it stood marred the perfection. It had never graced a
cake there was no occasion good enough and then suddenly we
were too old for Kewpie cake decorations.

What made her value this obscure object more than her children?
At the Royal Adelaide Show my desire was always thwarted for a
Kewpie-on-a-stick. Only common girls had them I was told. I still
don't know what that means. Did the Kewpie define my mother?
And if it was such a loved object why was it left to live such a shadowy
existence? A dusty secret to be discovered on a day when there would be
no more secrets.

SECTION 1

THE THESIS

1.4 LIST OF WORKS

Please note: visual works are recorded in centimetres, height before width followed by depth.

- ▣ *Endless (damp dusting)*
1999
Made object (metal, wood, mop twine), found plastic hospital sign
Dimensions variable
- ▣ *Endless (damp dusting), detail*
- ▣ *Memento Mori*
1999
Found tripod, circa 1930, found and re-enamelled bowl, collection of broken china, tags, ink, parcel string, metal screw
136cm x 135 diameter
- ▣ *Memento Mori, detail*
- ▣ *Heavenly Tart*
2000
Canvas, mop twine, parcel string, recycled cotton wadding, wood, glass, paper, graphite
256 (variable) x 187cm
- ▣ *Heavenly Tart, detail*
- ▣ *Heavenly Tart, detail*
Glass fronted box containing original artefact in the form of a back-of-envelope recipe, author unknown, circa 1952
- ▣ *Embrace*
2000
Kitchen graters, skewers, rubber rings
Dimensions variable
- ▣ *Embrace*
2000
- ▣ *Cleansing and Atonement*
2001
Wood, mop twine, enamel bowl, slotted spoon
197 x 41 x 41cm
- ▣ *Lately My Diet Has Become A Trifle Monotonous*
2001
Three timbers (American Cherry Wood, American Redwood, Huon Pine),
tin alphabet cookie cutters
127 x 148 x 56cm

- ▣ *Lately My Diet Has Become A Trifle Monotonous*, detail
- ▣ *Lately My Diet Has Become A Trifle Monotonous*, detail
- ▣ *Bread of Heaven*
2002
Found paper, wood, glue, glass
70 x 264 x 7cm
- ▣ *Bread of Heaven*, detail
Single element 70 x 87 x 7cm
- ▣ *Bread of Heaven*, detail
Single element 70 x 87 x 7cm
- ▣ *Untitled*
2002
Chrome plated mild steel, zinc plated tin, nylon
114 x 82cm
- ▣ *Untitled*
2002
- ▣ *Anthology of Sadness*
2002
Huon Pine, American Cherry Wood, plates, shirts, metal hooks
Five elements, 240 x 300 x 350cm
- ▣ *Anthology of Sadness*, detail
Element I wood (Huon Pine), metal hooks
197 x 38 x 38cm
- ▣ *Anthology of Sadness*, detail
Element III wood (American Cherry Wood)
240 x 46 x 46cm
- ▣ *Anthology of Sadness*, detail
Element V wood (American Cherry Wood), shirts
197 x 38 x 38cm
- ▣ *Words and Sweet Music*
2002
American Redwood, found paper, metronome
190 x 78 x 46cm
- ▣ *Words and Sweet Music*, detail

- *Statement of the Possible*
 2002
 Photograms, graphite, paper, Perspex
 Six elements, 112 x 332 x 7cm
- *Statement of the Possible, detail*
- *Statement of the Possible, detail*
- *Statement of the Possible, detail*
 Single element, 62.5 x 52 x 7cm
- *Statement of the Possible, detail*
 Single element, 62.5 x 52 x 7cm
- *Statement of the Possible, detail*
 (Author unknown, circa 1924)
 Single element, 28 x 86 x 7cm
- *Consumer Music*
 2002
 Belgian linen, mop twine, cooking twine, metal eyelets, recycled cotton wadding, linen thread
 300 x 600cm
- *Consumer Music, detail*
- *Consumer Music, sketch*
 2002
 Graph paper, liquid paper, highlighter pen, graphite
 21 x 71.5 cm
- *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet*
 2002
 Transformed found wooden cabinet, canvas, metal fittings, mop twine, marine ply, glue, foam padding, CD player, light
 Dimensions variable
- *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet, detail*
- *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet*
 2002
 Transformed found wooden cabinet, canvas, metal fittings, mop twine, marine ply, glue, foam padding, CD player, light
 Dimensions variable

- ▣ *Colours of the Kitchen Cabinet*
 2002
 Playing time/ 3 minutes
 Soundwork for three voices: Geraldine Cook, Diana Marsland, Greer Honeywill
 Directed by Greer Honeywill
 Recorded by Yuri Worontschak, Kinesound
 Postproduction Yuri Worontschak and Greer Honeywill

- ▣ *A Recollection: A Month For The Whole Year*
 2002
 Playing time/16.44 minutes
 Performed by Geraldine Cook
 Directed by Greer Honeywill
 Recorded by Yuri Worontschak, Kinesound
 Tracks: *Dreamers* (1998-1999)
 Prospects (1998)
 Fifty-Two (2001)
 At Home (2000)
 The Enamel Bowl (1999)
 Astoria (2001)
 Embrace (2000)
 Obsession (1998)
 Kitchen Music (1998)
 Blue Boy (1999)
 Searching For The Pale Blue Writing Case (2002)
 The Kewpie (2002)

SECTION 2

APPENDIX

21 ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

During the conduct of this study and the making of the visual works and soundworks I collected or was given archival artefacts that assisted me with both the research for the documentation and my studio deliberations. A collection of models for timber frame houses, popular magazines from the post-war period, cookery books from the period and my own collection of remaining List Books have all yielded ideas that have been drawn into the synthesis of ideas for the making of works.

List Books

A selection of list books from the remaining archive of List Books dated 1991-2000.

The list book came into being in 1969 as an aid to shopping and a system for reducing involvement in the tasks of shopping and menu preparation. The ritual of the list book evolved and continued until 1999. In the following year the ritual was gradually deconstructed until it no longer existed. Since we had come to live close to the heart of the Woodend village the gathering of comestibles was no longer an expedition to distant shops, a trek requiring organization, instead it became a five-minute predatory strike. Or perhaps we simply changed over time.

Archive of Cookery Books

In the image, left to right:

Author unknown, circa 1930. *The Victoria League Cookery Book*

Author unknown, circa 1949. *Green and Gold Cookery Book*. Twenty-second Edition, R.M. Osborne, Adelaide, for King's College

Andrews, E.J. Convener, circa 1955. *Calendar of Meat and Fish Recipes: One for Every Day in the Year*. The South Australian Country Women's Association (Inc)

Watkie, A. H. Editor, circa 1950. *The Housewives' Calendar of Puddings: A Pudding a Day for the Whole Year*. The South Australian Country Women's Association (Inc), Third Edition

Author unknown. *Australian Everyday Cookery: Revised by a Professional Cook*, circa 1950. Tenth Edition

Whitcombe and Tombs, Melbourne, (various contributors), circa 1969. *A Collection of Favourite Recipes*. Vol. 2, Ladies Auxiliary of St John's Village, Wangaratta

Magazines

A selection of archival magazines from the post-war era

Left to right:

The Australian Women's Mirror, Sydney, 1954, Wednesday, Vol. 30, No. 10, 27 January,

Australian Home Journal, Published by James Russell, Sydney, 1947, 1 June,

The Australian Women's Mirror, Sydney, 1954, Wednesday, Vol. 30, No. 13, 17 February

Models

These simple constructions are technical school models made as classroom exercises, a way of learning the skills required for the construction of a timber frame for a domestic house.

In the image, back row left to right:

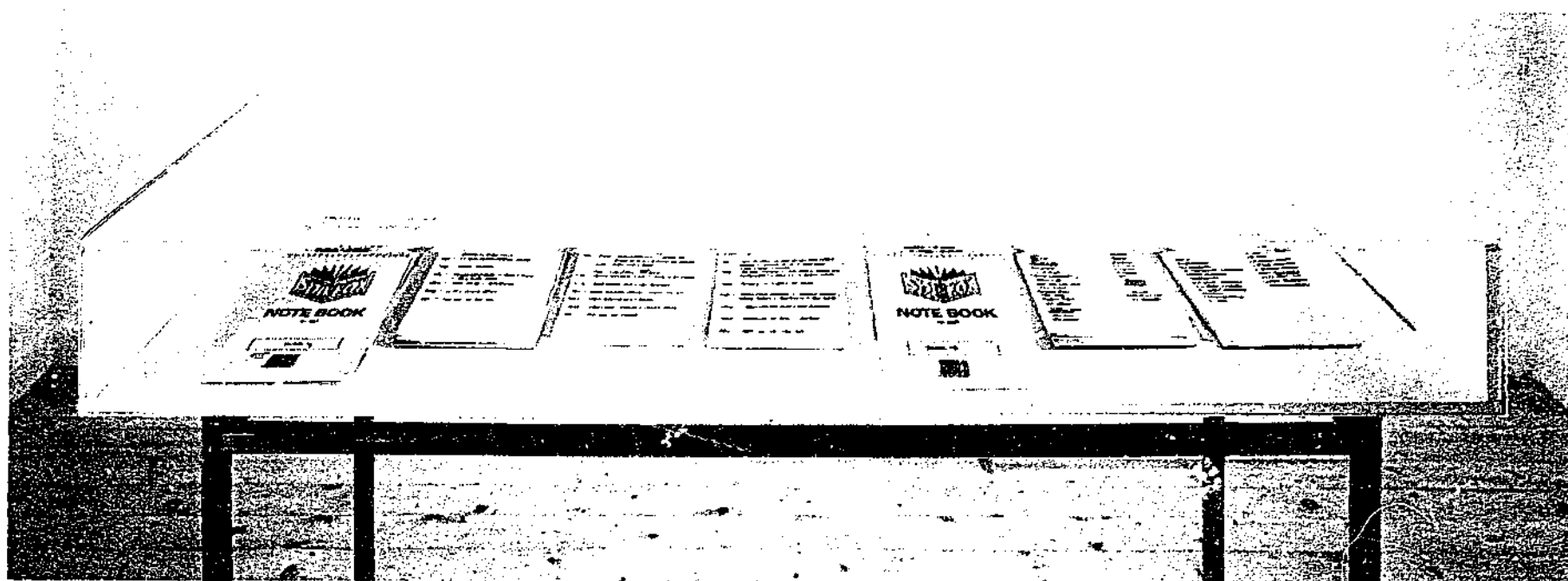
Model for a domestic dwelling, circa 1960, model for a domestic garage, circa 1960

Middle row left to right:

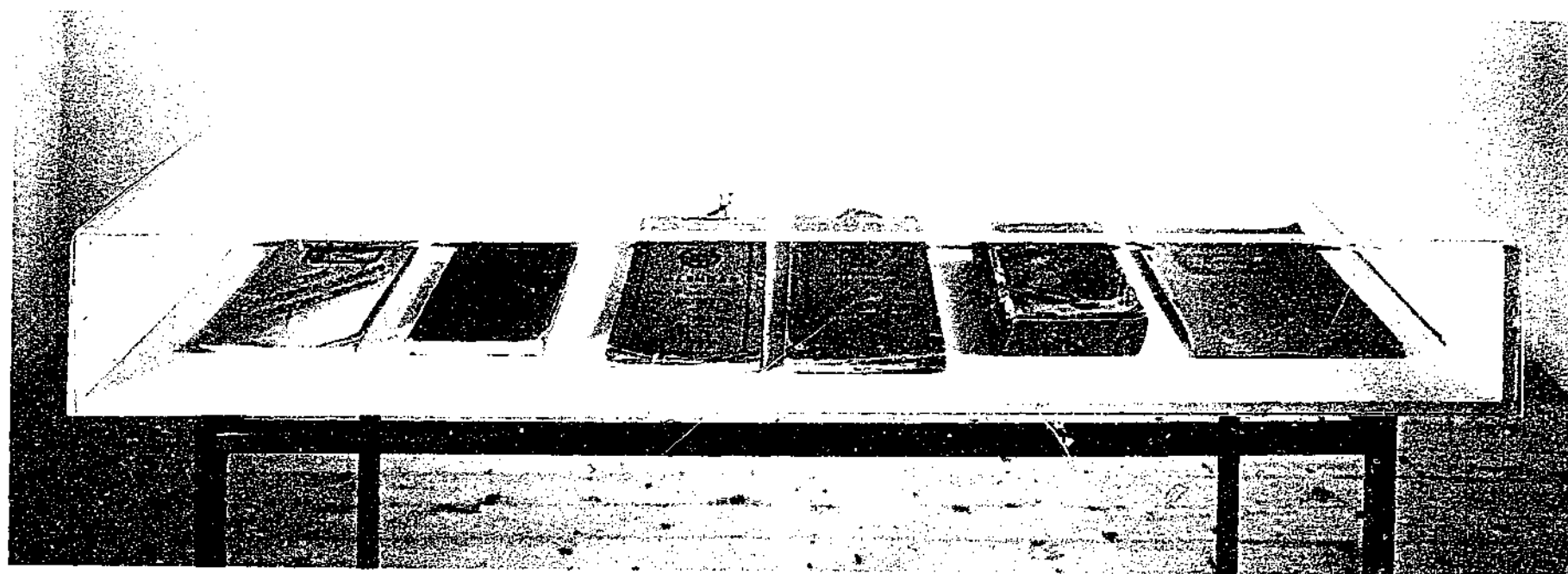
Model for a domestic dwelling, 2001, section of model for a domestic dwelling, circa 1970, model for a domestic dwelling with verandah, 2000

Front row left to right:

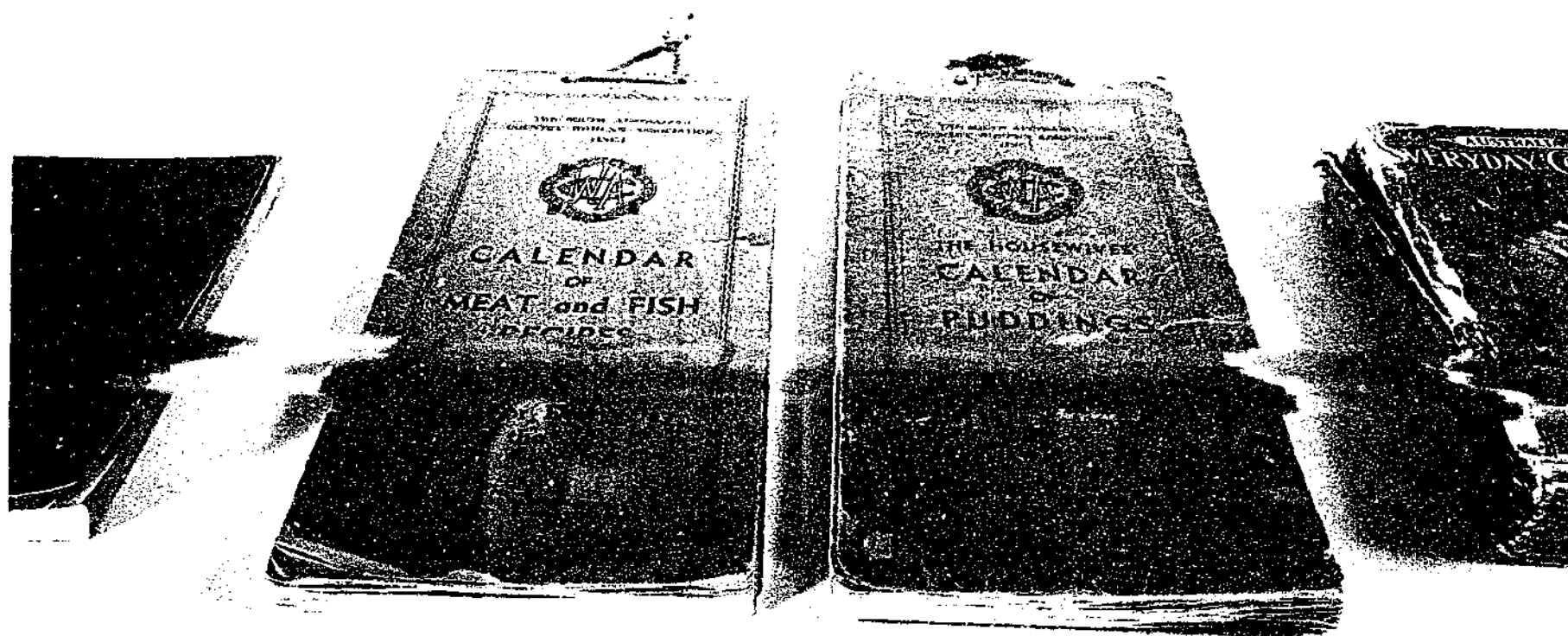
Model for a domestic dwelling, circa 1960, dolls house built in the style of a post-war house, circa 1950



Selected list books. 1991-2000

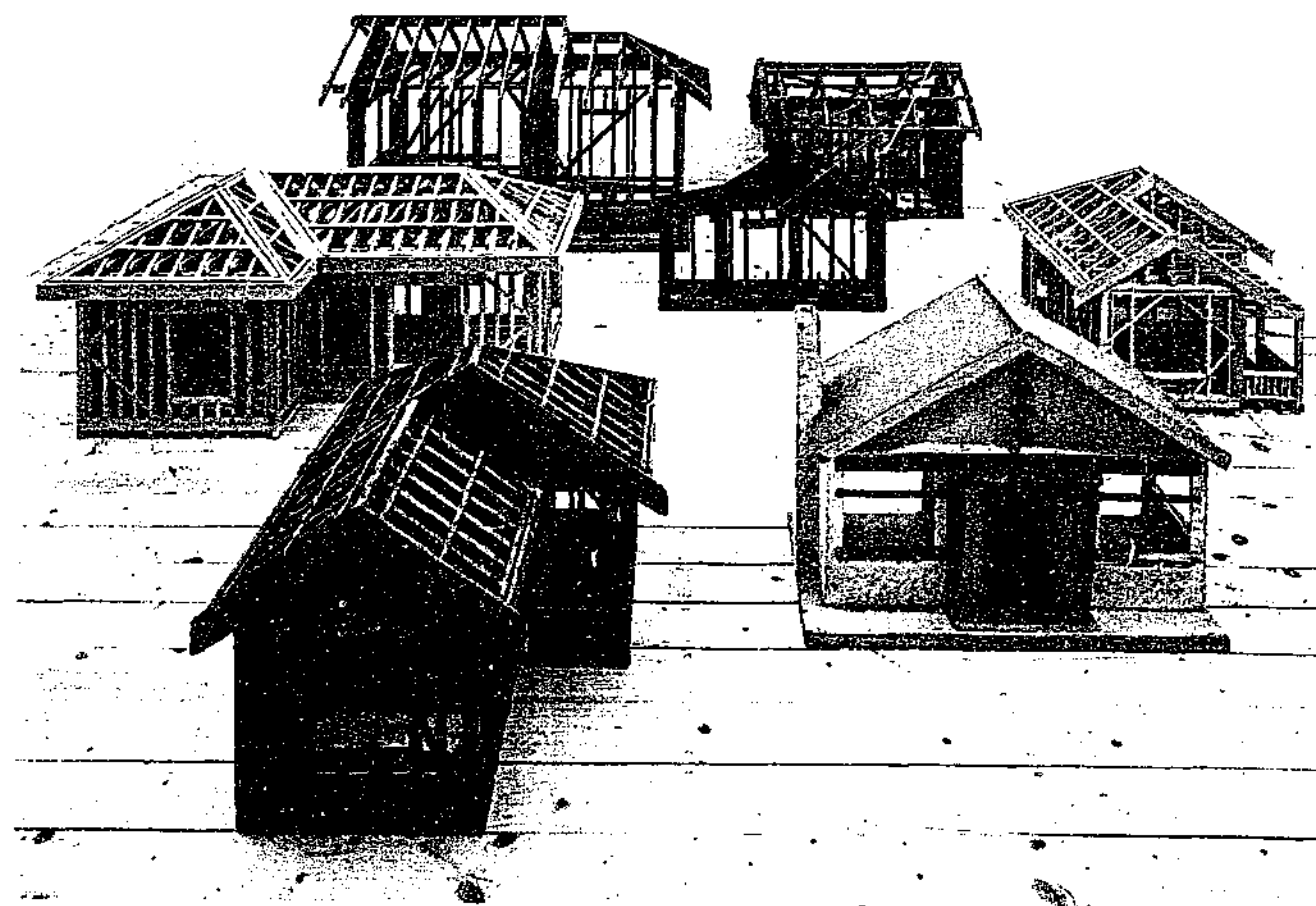


Archive of Cookery Books





A selection of archival magazines from the post-war era left to right: *The Australian Women's Mirror*,
Australian Home Journal, *The Australian Women's Mirror*



Collection of building models (1960-2001) and doll's house (circa 1950)

SECTION 2

APPENDIX

22 TWELVE INTERVIEWS

Transcripts in full of twelve interviews conducted during 1998 and 1999 as part of the research for this project. The interviews are presented in the chronology in which I discovered the material.

Elizabeth Chong

Cooking School Director, national television presenter and author. Elizabeth Chong has written six cookbooks and in 1994 was awarded the prestigious *La Mazille* award for one of her books.

Date: 5 June 1998, 2.00pm - 3.30pm
Place: Hawthorn, Melbourne, Victoria

We left China in 1934, when I was three.

I remember my Grandmother's kitchen most strongly. In that kitchen nearby to the Queen Victoria Market, West Melbourne, I ate dishes that I have remembered all of my life. And I have passed those dishes on to my children who still cook them today if they can't think of anything else to cook. Many dishes have passed from my Grandmother to me, and then on to my children in such a seamless way. Perfect, intact, like sealed time capsules when in reality the dishes may not even exist in that form in rural China today. Rural China is so welcoming of city culture that the cuisine has changed.

The dishes of my childhood were simple, with earthy flavours and the dried ingredients of rural China: dried tiger lilies, dried turnip shreds, dried shrimps, ingredients I still use today and which are still available. Yet the knowledge of these dried miracles is being lost. Young Chinese in Australia often have no knowledge of these ingredients.

Beef and Tomato and *Steamed Egg Custard* are the two dishes that I remember most. It was curious that the dish of *Beef and Tomato* was traditionally made from strips of beef but my Grandmother made it with minced beef. It may have been because my grandmother had difficulty chewing. Today I only like the dish made the way my grandmother made it with minced beef. Sadly I think that a lot of dishes regarded as 'normal' or 'natural' will be lost eventually.

My mother was Chinese born and my Father Australian born. He lived in Wahgunyah, Victoria, as a small boy. When my father brought my mother to Australia she was classified as an alien and had a very short visa that they had to fight to renew every 12 months. Sometimes it was necessary to return to China and it was on one of these trips that I was born. It took three years for the authorities to allow them to return to Australia. My mother loved Victoria and was often quite parochial about Victoria being the best place to live.

My paternal Grandfather, after nearly 50 years in Australia, returned to China late in his life with his young wife in order that he could die in his own country. My father was five when his father returned to China.

My Grandmother was a farmer's daughter. The family worked the land in the traditional manner. They ran chickens and used bullocks to work the fields, growing vegetables and rice to sustain them. Any excess food they would sell.

Because she had four sons my grandmother was not required to do physical things. She was a very tiny woman and as the family became more prosperous she was provided with many comforts. These comforts included a maid or Amah who helped her to cook. In contrast my mother was a woman of great physical and emotional strength. It was both a physical and moral strength. She had the strength

to achieve anything.

I grew up in a house with three generations of my family and the cook.
I can still remember the fish cakes made by this cook.

We lived over the family dim sim and Chicken Roll business in West Melbourne. I can still remember the cosiness of the kitchen. My grandmother cooked assisted by the Amah and my mother looked after the six children and worked in the factory.

It was my Grandmother who taught me to knit in this cosy kitchen.

While my mother did not have time to cook she was, however, a natural born cook. It was her attention to detail that marked her as a consummate cook. She would know what to use and what not to use, she had great instinct. My mother was analytical and possibly critical about cooking and food and I learned to assess what I was eating at an early age. My father was a very imaginative cook and my mother was always critical of the results. 'This would be better with...' she would say. Our family talked about food all the time. Not as a snobbish thing, not an academic discussion, but a natural enquiry about dishes, nothing pretentious. Just living.

During World War II my father bought a poultry farm in East Ringwood, Victoria.

At the time East Ringwood was very rural. My father bought the farm because he believed a rumour of the time that all Chinese children should be interred to protect them from those who might think that they were Japanese. This didn't come about, and perhaps it was never true, but it was enough to prompt my father to buy the farm to ensure his family stayed together. Father learned the poultry business quickly. He also grew vegetables made salted ducks, and salted preserved eggs which he supplied China Town. My mother was always working, collecting eggs and washing eggs to help the war effort or to supply China Town. At the poultry farm we had a great kitchen with a wood fired stove. There is something about a wood stove that compels one to keep cooking. Soups on the stove were a welcoming presence...great when we came home from school. We had pets — dogs, cats and a cockatoo that spoke Chinese. Chinese was the language of the house.

Father was always involved in new ventures; pressed salt ducks, salted eggs, chives, melons, almond biscuits. He was always cooking.

The evening meal was a celebration really everyone ate around the table. And we were grateful because we had lovely food. I remember the chopper, always the chopper. It minces and chops. It requires patience and rhythm. The sound of the chopper is like the rhythm of drums.

I remember the sizzle of the wok, loud voices, excited, throwing things about, shouting above the roar of the wok. It was never a quiet kitchen.

The farmhouse was wonderful, with big Australian verandahs all round with mesh. I walked four miles to school each day and didn't think anything of it.

When I was fourteen or fifteen I first experienced food outside my culture. I was staying with an Australian friend and I remember we had rabbit stew. I have liked it ever since. I was amazed at the home and the table setting; it was so fancy. Lots of cutlery and crockery with flowers, it was not our way. There were home made scones and jam and cream in crystal dishes. Because in our culture we

have a little of everything I mixed jam and cream with the rabbit stew.

When I was a teenager we moved into the great Australian Dream. Our dream, complete with tennis court was in East Kew. I learned tennis. The tennis court seemed to attract boys. Sometimes on the weekends my mother cooked for twenty five to thirty five people. I didn't cook but was interested. Food was an abiding passion in the home. Grandmother and her Amah were still with us. Mum had two Amah's.

Father had a series of businesses including the dim sim and chicken roll factory, frozen foods for the trade, and a large wholesale fruit business at the Queen Victoria Wholesale Market.

I daydreamed about being a concert pianist and then later thought about being a journalist. About this time our music teacher would take us to *Russell Collins Restaurant* at lunchtime on Saturdays to show us how things were done in the English manner. There were three of us learning the piano at the time. Father was very grateful that we were learning about English culture. We had two worlds in which we lived. At the *Russell Collins* we had crumpets and honey. Things with cream, cakes, things we would not have at home. I remember the crockery and things like that. Our teacher fostered an appreciation of beauty and music. She took us to the opera.

At seventeen I met my husband to be. He was one of the tennis-playing boys. It didn't seem sensible to go to university so I began training as a teacher. I didn't finish because in second year students had to do rural experience and my father didn't think that this was appropriate for me. I married at nineteen. The marriage lasted twenty-two years and I had four children.

Along the way I was asked by the school Clubs to demonstrate cooking and before I knew it I was on the lecture circuit and then a writer, which I didn't intend, but you have to write around recipes to find the history.

In the early days I was not an experienced cook. I remember my first dinner party; I forgot things. I became gradually confident with cooking in a range of ways. Neighbours would ask how to cook rice or how to do various things.

In the 50s Australians started to become interested in Chinese cooking although more from curiosity and with a slightly averted eye. There was always a gap between what they wanted to know and what we wanted to tell.

In 1961 my father opened the *Golden Phoenix*, the first licensed Chinese restaurant with beautiful furnishings and professional chefs. The *Golden Phoenix* was on Exhibition Street opposite the Southern Cross. My older sister, my two brothers and my father owned the restaurant. I was not involved, as I had young children at the time. Chefs from the restaurant were always at home where there was non-stop discussion about the merits and demerits of food. By then I was teaching cooking and I took an academic interest in asking questions.

Food gradually took over my life after I made it my career. When I started cooking classes people wanted to come.

Television is a bit deceptive. Sometimes I have to work the night before to make the dish happen within the segment. You have to be able to do lots of things at the same time. Chop, cut, stir and still talk to

Bert (Bert Newton). I have confidence that everything will turn out right.

I think a sink close to the stove makes an easy working kitchen. To cross the length of a room is not good. An arc is better, to turn and be there. The fridge shouldn't be too far away. Good lighting. I don't like the country kitchen style with dark beams and shadows in the corners and I don't like cluttered benches. A good exhaust is important. A light and bright look -- to look out of windows while you work is a spiritual thing.

I like the open space approach rather than a separate kitchen. I don't mind a homely, cosy ambience a pristine environment is not welcoming. I always clean benches of objects but food clutter I don't mind. I like visitors in close proximity when I'm working in the kitchen. Friendship is important.

I like turquoise, greens and white at the moment in the kitchen.

If I built a kitchen from scratch I don't know what I would do. I love white and I love colour...colour would win.

Margaret Olley

Australian artist and philanthropist

Date: 22 October 1998, 1.00pm - 3.00pm

Place: Paddington, Sydney, New South Wales

I remember a long time ago moving further down the road to a three story Victorian house that was to be my perfect house. You know, painting on the top floor, living below. But it didn't work out. The house sort of controlled you. I couldn't wait to move back into my shed. [Olley's house is actually in the grounds of a Victorian, two-story house in Paddington. At the far end of the garden, there is a shed made of tin and louvers]. It's like *the house that Jack built*. When looking for a house I saw the 'shed' over the fence and fell in love with it. When the property became available I tenanted the main house and created a home out of the 'shed'. I moved this and that [gesturing to walls], all quite illegal.

I have a very particular approach to eating, especially when I'm working. In the morning I like slices of apple and at lunch a mug of diet soup. My favourite is *Beef, Vegetable, and Croutons*. I don't know how they manage to maintain the crispness of the croutons. I like to eat at night. I'm addicted to Schweppes soda and these flat fruit biscuits.

I haven't had a dishwasher for seventeen years. I had them take it out after my friend died. I never used it. I use this small table and this is all I have to prepare a dinner for ten. You get into a system: a plate here and here.

I like to take two of everything [photographs and catalogues] so I can give them away, but I forget to give them away. Look at the house in this photograph. It's a beautiful house, very large. It has a huge kitchen and yet they brought in an outside caterer. They don't even use it.

Look at this she's [Clarissa Dickson Wright one of the *Two Fat Ladies*] a recovering alcoholic you know. Hasn't had a drink for years. I am too. I cook with it [alcohol] and serve it and people hardly notice that I don't drink. I don't put alcohol in pudding. I still find the Alcoholics Anonymous approach to life very useful.

I was born in Lismore, New South Wales, in 1923, but registered in nearby Kyogle.

I was brought up in the country. My mother's father had the newspaper at Ballina, New South Wales, when it was a big port. My father picked up a parcel of land in Queensland at Lower Tully in Northern Queensland far away from civilization. Later he bought another piece of land closer to Tully. My brother and sister were born in Tully. It was a wet place.

I rode a pony to school.

At six I was sent to St. Anne's boarding school in Townsville. Now that cut the cord. There were huge wild mango trees surrounding the school. The fruit tasted of turpentine. A St Anne's favourite was to boil and slice this stringy fruit and serve it as pudding. It was revolting. I wouldn't eat a mango for years.

The family moved to the Tweed River, New South Wales, leaving a relative to run the Tully property.

I remember the kitchen being at the centre of the house and my mother was a fabulous cook. This was the time of the depression and yet we had plenty to eat. We had chickens and ducks, so there were

plenty of eggs and then there were house cows. We churned our own butter. There seemed to be cooking always going on. My father was a wonderful vegetable grower and what we didn't need he gave away to needy families. We had mushrooms galore. In the kitchen there was a fuel stove but my mother, despite the depression, insisted on one of the very first *Primus* gas stoves.

I remember flashes of childhood. Camping on holidays for six weeks at a time to a remote beach where cousins would join us from Sydney. In those days there was no corner store and all provisions had to be made in advance. Cooking went on for weeks in preparation. Nothing was ever thrown away. We used tins like *Arnott's* biscuit tins with lids to carry food, with butter to keep it fresh.

I remember my mother making *Gold and Silver Cakes*. Twelve eggs and a pound of butter went into these cakes that were always square for better packing. Yolks went into the *Gold Cake* and the whites went into the *Silver Cake* along with arrowroot and a pound of butter. We loved stirring with the smell of cooking it was very exciting. And I remember marble cake.

We moved to Brisbane. We moved around a lot.

My father went to war and when he returned he became a beekeeper. He raised queens and sent them through the post. That wouldn't get past *Australia Post* today. There were special little boxes made for the transport of queens. Inside the box were two circles with a small corridor between the circles for the workers to feed the queen. The queen went into one circular compartment and the workers in the other, along with some food for the journey. A gauze covering went over the top and then the package was tied with wire and a big addresses label was attached.

My father always said it was dreadful to divide up properties for soldier settlements after the war. He always believed that you had to have enough land to allow fallow paddocks. Like painting, I have to lie fallow for a while but there's always something going on.

Ginger Cake my mother made couldn't lie fallow. It had tart lemon icing. It had to be eaten on the first day or it slowly began to ferment. By the fourth day it grew whiskers. And I loved root ginger beer. The 'mother' or female plant was passed around in an almost covert manner. It was a sweet, refreshing drink, the best. I tasted it again in Sri Lanka eighteen years ago.

Where I was brought up there was no corner shop, you had to make things. At Tully we made an orange drink with oranges, lemons, and a packet of *Epsom Salts*, very good for the blood. I also liked a special lime cordial made from West Indian limes. It was created for Diabetics so it was without sugar. It was really thirst quenching.

I don't understand all of that suburban mentality, the *great Australian dream*. I was brought up in the country.

[Olley is smoking] I still have a good palate. Smoking has heightened my sense of taste. The only thing I don't like cooking with is coriander. I hate it with a passion it's the only thing I can't bear. I feel very connected to the fruits of the earth.

I had an old Aunt, one of the first physios in Brisbane. She used to say 'I only like salt and pepper on my food'. She made wonderful *Batter Pudding* it was about her only claim to fame. She was actually a role model for me. She was single; did anything she wanted.

People in the city seem cagey about recipes. I make a wonderful *Rose Madder Beetroot Soup*. I called it my *Rose Madder Soup* because of the colour. I use a bunch of parsley, blend it finely, add two cans of beetroot, sliced beetroot, beef stock, thickened cream, nutmeg, pepper and salt. It's a lovely soup for summer sprinkled with chives. I'm mad about beetroot even tinned beetroot.

My mother cooked a *Shoulder of Lamb* with garlic and a bay leaf inserted into the flesh and a skewer used to close the pocket. She cooked it quickly in a hot oven, then put foil over and cooked it slowly for several hours. Not like French or English lamb that is underdone. I still use my mother's recipe.

I love mashed potatoes. You get the best results if you get the cheapest, oldest potatoes and I always add cream.

My mother made a terrific *Dandy Pudding*. I wish I'd asked her more, I don't know how to do it. I guess the recipe went when the house burnt down. The house in Brisbane was a wooden house on stilts and it burnt to the ground with all of the mementos and possessions of the family.

I love watching people of experience cooking, its like watching a conductor.

My mother cooked a wonderful *Plum Pudding*. She cooked it in a copper hanging from a copper stick. I was fascinated by the way the pudding was wrapped in calico, the pleating around the edge, and the skill and confidence of my mother to successfully wrap it in this way. I loved my mother's *Plum Pudding* but not her Christmas cake; it was dry.

Italian food; I prefer French. I prefer Chinese food. And I love Japanese Tempura.

Sam [Olley's late partner] loved very spicy food and we used to have ding-dongs about this.

I divide everyone into dirt movers or step overs. I call the dust, patina. If someone is coming I put some fresh green leaves about and leave it at that. I thought I'd have someone in once a week or once a fortnight to clean. They're all called Maria. She wanted loads of cleaning things that I had never heard of; maybe she sold them on. I had oven cleaners, pure caustic soda. I don't like cleaners, just hot water.

I was brought up with no electricity and no refrigerator. *Coolgardie* safes hung in the breezeways and we had water bags. Even the people in the Antarctic are looking to hook up to electricity to keep things cold.

I can make a whole meal out of leftovers. I hate waste, it's criminal, I hate waste of any kind. But I can't make soufflés.

I don't associate with Mixmaster's and their constant beating, I loved butter churning or hand beating butter and sugar.

I love familiar things I'm always looking for something...wonderful shapes. People give me things. If I don't relate to them I recycle them. Everything goes together here. Look it's beautiful in shape, almost like a gourd, curvaceous. [Olley] holds a pewter coffee pot with a domed lid finished with a very fine finial, slim legs that curve to form little feet and a turned wooden handle. The body of the piece is shaped like a soft sensual spiral and the spout is very fine with expressive lips set at right angles to the

pot]. I love collecting. I find things in very out-of-the-way places. Gnash's familiar, for example. The happy looking and very large rodent, normally found at the foot of Gnash, came originally from Joan Bowers. The piece made a circuitous route, through other hands, and eventually found me. I presented it to my house as a gift.

[Olly's centrally placed dining table where the interview took place is awash with sunlight, papers, books, invitations, vases of flowers and many of the objects on the table and in the living space have been included as subject matter in her paintings]. It doesn't matter what you paint, it's how you paint it. [Olley points to a striped blue and white jug with a metal handle on the kitchen bench] See and there it is [Olley has opened a catalogue and is pointing to a painting in which the jug is represented].

[On the *British Kitchen Sink School*] I don't look to the British. Life's too short to be depressed. You mean slice of life. Slice of life on the stage, that's David Williamson [the Australian playwright] that's not good theatre. It's bums on seats where everyone finds themselves. I like to be transported. I like to see something great.

Life is a great school; be quiet and watch, learn from the mistakes of others...and yourself.

Do you go to supermarkets? Why can't Australian's make cheap Indonesian biscuits? And all those shelf meals: who buys them?

Women have to be more like men. In my day women had one eye on the baby, one eye on the pot and one eye ahead. Women need to learn to be more like men with their tunnel vision and sharp focus. When I paint that's what I'm like. When I paint I love painting to music especially the radio, ABC Classic FM.

The first kitchen had a small window but I began to crave more light during winter. So I had the wall pushed out to create a new kitchen. I shift build, change, all the time. I compose all the time.

And then there is *still life pudding*. When the fruit in my arrangements gets a bit spotted I cook them up.

Barry Pearce

Head Curator, Australian Painting, Art Gallery of New South Wales and author of numerous catalogues and books.

Date: 23 October 1998, 10.00am – 11.45am

Place: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW

My father was killed in Germany in February 1945, less than a year before the end of the war was declared. He was a fighter pilot in the Australian Air Force on a mission to bomb a major munitions factory in Germany when he was killed. I was nine months old.

My mother was one of thirteen brothers and sisters. I have recollections of living in Lowe Street, in Adelaide, with Mum and one of Mum's sisters and her child. We all lived in the one room. Mum's family was an inner city family.

I have recollections of my Grandmother's house, using zinc bowls for washing and the dunny out the back.

Some time after the war ended my mother managed to get a Housing Trust house for rent at Woodville Gardens on the fringe of Adelaide in one of the new 'dream' suburbs. It was a red brick house with tiny rooms. All the houses were the same design. But it was your own space, a chance for some happiness. In the end it became a place to escape from.

First Avenue, Woodville Gardens, was a very long street with a single row of houses as far as one could see. Behind the houses there were empty paddocks that afforded views across to the Port River. You could see the funnels of ships like a mirage as they moved down the river. That was the magic of the place for me. The distance was so great that you could see people in the far distance like spots. Bit by bit each spot would grow bigger until one could discern a figure. And then even larger as the figure resolved into say a man on his way home from work. The paddocks gradually filled with houses and the kids from the houses went to the same school. Some kids came from better homes with Hoovers and 'fridges' and the American movie dream. We had an ice chest and the iceman came every day with a horse-drawn vehicle, like the milkman with his ladle and big milk container, filling the billy left on the front porch.

The house had a tiny kitchen with *Laminex*, or *Contact* with a *Laminex* pattern, on all surfaces. The stove was gas and set in a recess and the ice chest was in the corner. There was a small sink, which later had an instant hot water service above it. We had a chip heater in the bathroom. Life was conducted in three rooms. The kitchen was the place where all discussions occurred around the green *Laminex* table with the thin chrome legs. There was a tiny living room and a back verandah that was covered in, partly with fly wire and partly with tin.

I'd sit in the kitchen and listen to my mother doing the washing out in the verandah. I remember the effect of the *Reckitts Blue* in the water. When the whites were put through the wringer the blue water would stream off leaving the clothes glistening.

We had one of those seesaw clotheslines.

The kitchen was painted in glossy paint. The Housing Trust liked cream and green. My mother painted the cupboards herself, and then the table was green *Laminex*. Much later I got her to change the paintwork to one of the new pastel colours, like pale pink, but there was always the green *Laminex* table. The lino was off-white with spangles of silver and gold, and faint lines. There was even lino in the living room at first but later there was carpet.

It was a hard life for my mother trying to survive on a war widow's pension. When I was a young boy she didn't want to leave me to work but it was necessary. Money would run out and there would be no food. She placed a weekly order with the local grocer that could be covered by her pension. If we ran out of food she would send me to the grocer to ask for food from the next week's order. I can remember the men in the shop going behind a screen, whispering and sniggering that Mrs Pearce had to send her son to get food. There was incredible pain associated with asking the grocer. To this day I can't ask for favours.

In the last two years of Primary school my mother got a job through friends in the street. The job was some distance away and she had to catch two buses to get there and didn't get home until after seven at night. I was going to Challa Gardens Primary at the time and I would come home and have to wait in the empty house for my mother from 5.00pm until 7.00pm. The cupboards were often empty so I didn't even have comfort food. My mother hated this but had to face it. Later things improved. I remember no food in an empty house and outside becoming dark. I always hoped my mother would buy something special on the way home and some times she did.

Despite the solitary existence there was also a sense of freedom; no one to tell me what to do. Left to my own imagination I built a cubby in the peach tree in the backyard. I built secret underground spaces in which I could hide. And I grew strawberries over the secret spaces.

There were other children. I remember two, maybe even five, children from this time. They were of the same age and from the same school. We did play together but my overwhelming memory is of being alone when the other kids were called home.

The neighbours didn't know my mother very well, although a little later she got close to one family. There was another family of teachers who liked us a lot but they soon moved away. My mother was shy and withdrawn. I think she was ashamed of trying to run a family and household in this way. We were somehow different, my mother and I, at a time when everyone was the same. There was no father to complete the picture. Going back to the old neighbourhood years later the neighbours said they didn't know that I was alone and that my mother was trying so hard to survive.

My mother had a beautiful voice. I liked to read *Biggles* or *Black Beauty* sitting in the kitchen listening to mum sing while she did the washing in the laundry. She liked popular songs that would have been sung by the Andrews Sisters or Frank Sinatra. Later we had seventy-eight records.

My mother would encourage me to mimic Al Jolson as well as others. She loved, *I'll be With You in Apple Blossom Time*; it was my father's favourite. These were among the happiest moments for me. She picked up songs so quickly.

There were tea towels in the kitchen hanging on racks behind the kitchen door. The backdoor had a top section filled with a pane of frosted glass. When someone came to the back door it was very exciting because this soft dark shadow would appear in the glass. At the backdoor there was a wire door with

those springs that would grind as the door was opened and then when it closed it would shut with a loud thwack. I tried to stop that sound in various ways but never succeeded. For me the sounds of someone coming were an injection of excitement. Waiting for the black shape to appear at the door.

And then we got our first fridge! What a joy. We bought [Cottee's] *Kia Ora* cordial essence in raspberry and lime and mixed up big quantities with endless sugar. Whenever the fridge was opened the fridge light would illuminate the red and green fluid giving it a sort of glow. In the heat of summer it was wonderful to have iceblocks to make the cordial cold. It was a cordial weekend that first weekend, all red and green.

There were old peach and apricot trees in our yard and we would preserve the fruit. We would have jars and jars of apricots and nothing else in the kitchen cupboards. Eventually I killed the peach tree by building my cubby and disturbing the roots.

My mother copied down recipes into a book and she added cuttings. I still have the book and it conjures up memories of the things I loved and hated. *Lemon Meringue Pie* was a favourite, with condensed milk and coloured coconut. I adored it and we had it at least once a week. My mother made the best batter in the universe. She seemed to have some secret she didn't pass on to me. Three weeks before she died I went to visit her. The prime purpose was to get the secret but we got side tracked. The batter was light and airy and the fish floated in the centre, succulent and moist. She made big and fluffy scones and slabs of marble cake.

I hated vegetables that were yellow or orange; pumpkins or parsnips, and also Brussels sprouts, peas and beans. She could only get me to eat them raw.

I can't get over the smallness of the space that was the kitchen and yet there were visitors. Conversations always took place in the kitchen. Sometimes there were six or seven people in the kitchen at the one time. Often playing cards. My mother was a smoker. I remember her sitting at the table with a cigarette in her mouth and the smoke drifting up through her glasses. I liked watching her at these times she seemed larger than life. Like a film star from the films we would see regularly at the Kilkenny Odeon. In that little kitchen we would have gambling nights. The visitors would sit around the table betting, thinking, and smoking. And the room would fill with smoke; like something out of Dostoevsky's *The Gambler*. And my mother would be there smoking. I still love being with smokers because it reminds me of her. Sometimes she would be sitting at the green *Laminex* table and smoking. She would ask me something, then pause, followed by a suck on her cigarette. The slow and deliberate sequence made her look like Einstein. I feel sad at the passing of the cigarette.

I thought of mother as shy and later I became ashamed of her and didn't want to be seen with her. I felt ashamed to take people home.

She grieved all her life for my father but I did not realise this until after she died. She had a recurring nightmare that my father, who was initially reported missing during the war, came home many years later. She imagined there would be a knock on the door and it would be my father (Allan). She would be amazed that he had survived and then she would be shocked because in her dream he was still twenty-one and she had aged. I didn't get much out of her about my father. When I got married to Antoinette it was she who would tell me so much about my mother's life. As though my mother was a different person. The kitchen was my mother's confessional to Antoinette but not for me. There were stories from the kitchen that I did not experience. To me my father was a sepia photograph. I realise

now in retrospect that I was angry with my father for not coming back and with my mother for not giving him form. She didn't talk about what she had lost.

When I was preparing the Arthur Boyd retrospective I found myself at Boyd's house. I tripped over a little statue of his father dressed in uniform. We talked about fathers and I realised how important Boyd's father was to him. I told him about my lack of a father. Later I recounted this to a journalist, who then wrote an article for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. I was deeply embarrassed and couldn't read the article. Later I received a letter addressed to me at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The letter was from a Melbourne woman that I did not know who had read the article and remembered attending the wedding of my mother and father. In detail the woman described what they wore, how they looked, how they were together. She said that my mother had sung my father's favourite song *I'll be with you in Apple Blossom Time*, to him as part of the ceremony. It was both heart breaking and wonderful.

Later I went on an odyssey to find my father's grave in Germany. Through the authorities I found out where the bodies of the men killed in the bombing mission were buried and I eventually found the cemetery. On the way to the cemetery I saw, out of the corner of my eye, a red fox as it darted away. After a search I found the gravestone, which read, 'Allan Harry Pearce, aged twenty-two'. I fell on the grave sobbing, overcome. In this state I saw a black dog, wearing a studded collar. The dog looked fierce, as though it might attack. I don't know why, but I reached out to the dog and it came over and licked my hand. It then moved in close to my body and settled against the warmth. The dog became a conduit. I talked to the dog about my father and mother for about half-an-hour. My father was shot down while on a mission to bomb a major munitions factory in Germany. The mission failed and the war ended six months later. The journey to find my father made me think about all of the early years. The living room, the house and the laundry suddenly seemed all very Proustian. The moment also contained this emotional crisis for me, the identification of my mother's grief. The way we lived was to protect her and give me the best she could.

I remember meeting English migrants from the migrant hostel. They lived in *Nissan* huts like a prison camp. The conditions seemed appalling even to me in a Housing Trust area. There seemed to me to be a strong prejudice against 'wogs' (or was it 'dagoes' then) taking jobs and dominating our society. There were jokes made about them. I remember meeting some Italian migrants at school, but there was only one Chinese student.

When I was about fifteen or sixteen and attending Art School and University the *Thai Hoong Restaurant* was very important. It was opposite the *Marina Bar*, where we bought the very first pizzas in our lives; spongy but exotic. The *Thai Hoong* was the quintessential Chinese establishment. It had sweet and sour fish, garlic prawns, and mixed fried rice. The *Marina Bar* was into non-Anglo Saxon food. I told my mother that at the *Thai Hoong* they put bamboo shoots in the food. She was perturbed, but her sister was absolutely appalled at the thought when we told her.

My paternal grandmother, who I called Nan, lived in a tiny terrace house in Magill. The kitchen was in a renovated out-house. You crossed a strip of red cement to access the kitchen, which was a very tiny, elongated room. The smell of freshly painted cement and the smell of polish on the lino floor I can still remember. Nan made poached eggs on toast and topped them with freshly cracked black pepper. The smell of the cracked pepper on poached eggs to this day takes me back. The smell of food takes me back...and the taste. I can still taste the lime and raspberry cordial.

I remember sleeping on the front lawn on hot summer nights. Everyone did, the street was like a dormitory. This changed overnight when someone was murdered while sleeping on the front lawn of their home. People started locking doors.

My mother worked in a railway laundry and became friends with an Aboriginal woman called Alice. Alice was very dark in colour, almost blue black. When she came to our back door she seemed to make the dark shape in the frosted glass in the door especially dark. I remember when I was nine or ten going to the football with Mum and Alice and noticing that an Aboriginal played for the West Adelaide Football team. I can remember people standing behind me saying things like, 'nigger'. Alice cried. We were all outsiders. Different. Alice was lonely, melancholy, a bit like Mum. In our kitchen Alice wasn't different. She was a loving friend. Mum had a wonderful sense of humour. She could make the walls shake with her humour. Alice had the same sense of humour, it was anarchy when they laughed, and nothing mattered. My mum passed her sense of humour on to me. I can laugh at things. I remember her laughing and smoking. That was heaven.

I didn't love my mother when I was an adolescent, I was even ashamed of her. I love her more now than ever but it's all too late. The last images of her, in those three weeks, were in that kitchen, at the Laminex table, which by then had a wood grain Contact plastic over it. She lived in that house until the time that she died.

My mother was tidy but not obsessed. She was a woman who worked and sometimes the house was untidy but she always cleaned the surfaces before visitors came. But she was not driven. It seemed to me that other women in the street were much more obsessive about cleaning.

When TV came I can remember an old neighbour who had moved out of the area, Alma Golding, bringing her little TV over on Friday. We would sit on the steps outside on hot Friday nights. The TV would be inside with the screen door propped open. We would drink our raspberry and lime cordial as we watched. I eventually pressured Mum to buy a TV and we went into hock to get it. I think I was in Primary school. I loved to watch *The Cisco Kid*.

I have only a vague recollection of the rehearsals for *Look Back in Anger*. Your parents were there? I think I can just remember. I remember thinking that you had really nice teeth. I remember your smile and your certainty when we were not sure. In the face of such certainty I have to gulp. I can recall rehearsing a scene with Barbara West in the kitchen of the house I shared with two friends in Norwood. I can remember kissing Barbara in the kitchen and throwing cups...all part of the script.

There have been a lot of Australian painters who have used the kitchen as subject matter. Edwin Tanner used kitchen implements in his pictures. John Brack has painted every room including the kitchen, Brian Dunlop and Margaret Olley. I remember Margaret Olley's house in both human and gastronomic terms. She paints in the kitchen. A meal at Margaret Olley's is one of the great occasions in one's life. Dale Hickey and his coffee cups, Grace Cossington Smith, Margaret Preston, especially the painting with the blue scales based on a Leger work. David Strachan probably included the kitchen as part of rest of house, and John Olsen did paintings of paella, and perhaps in Brett Whitely's work there may have been a glimpse of the kitchen, although I'm not sure. I recall Donald Friend painted *Tiled Stove at Hill End*.

You should read Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. There are many volumes to the set. I recently began reading them and the detailed descriptions will remind you of the area you are exploring. And Russian plays. They're all about the kitchen.

There was no Australian equivalent to the *Kitchen Sink School* of British art or theatre. There are good painters of interiors but generally our culture is more oriented to gaze out of doors. The impulse is for external not internal.

On those occasions I think about my mother and the green *Laminex* kitchen table. I imagine I am explaining everything to her.

My wife was curious about what we might talk about. For her the kitchen was a theatre of stress. Her father was a sort of schizophrenic. Well, perhaps not strictly schizophrenic; I mean gentle as a lamb when sober, but threatening when drunk, a serious alcoholic. But that's another story.

Glenn Murcutt

Australian Architect. In 2002 Glenn Murcutt was awarded the prestigious Pritzker Prize the greatest international accolade that can be made in the field of architecture

Date: 28 October 1998, 1.00pm – 3.00pm
Place: Mosman, Sydney, New South Wales

I was born in London in 1936.

Because of the 'scorched earth' policy in New Guinea, where we lived, our family was forced to leave before the Japanese came. My mother returned with us to Sydney in July 1941 on one of the last trips for civilians leaving a war zone.

When the war ended in 1945 I was 9 years old. I remember watching the removal of the concrete triangular prisms placed on the beaches in Sydney, which were to slow the Japanese invasion. It was a time that signalled the return of my father from Thursday Island; a homecoming and a picking up of life again with both a mother and a father.

My father was not always the most jovial of men. He was a tough father, but my mother was gentle. I was the eldest of three children. We had to perform differently when Dad came home from the war. I was part of the pre-war family and after the interruption of war there was another family.

My father was driven, busy. He was involved in boat building, shoe making, he bought land and prospected for gold, he was involved in the timber industry, and yacht building. He built a yacht in which he sailed off with Errol Flynn [Australian-born actor in Hollywood films]. After they departed they had mast problems and came back to Port Moresby Harbour for repairs. While there the boat sank.

My father spent 1919-1941 in New Guinea in what was the new frontier. My father was good at boxing, played the saxophone, designed houses and furniture, and knew about modern architecture. He had the diaries of Thoreau and had a first volume of Freud; all in New Guinea. He was a man who only needed five hours of sleep a night.

After my father's return from the war, the daily regime for us included swimming, we all learnt to swim under three, and music. We swam competitively. In fact my brother was a National Champion selected for the training squad for the Olympic Games Water Polo team. A normal day would see us swim a mile; half a mile in the morning and half a mile in the afternoon. Before school we would walk 1.5 kilometres to the beach to swim the half-mile, then 1.5 kilometres home to music practice, shower and dress. Then my job was to clean the bathroom. In the afternoon my father picked us up and took us to the swimming baths or to the beach for the half-mile swim followed by a 100 metre sprint to break the minute. If we were not fast enough then we had to do it again.

My father's philosophy was that in life we were going to be under pressure. Most will give up but the ability to hang on provides success. In my school holiday's I worked in his joinery factory from 7.00am - 4.00pm like an employee, and during this time I was trained. I did this from the age of twelve, I think, to sixteen. Although I felt a great love for him I did feel overly managed. My sister and one brother feel extraordinarily resentful even today. Others feel like me.

During his early adulthood my father had nothing. He was a self made man, not arrogant but confident. He did extraordinary things in his life that few in the country could have achieved. In the house we had seven pianos. He remade a grand piano. From 1946-1947 he built a twenty-metre swimming pool and allowed exhibition swimming and filming underwater.

As a child I received no pocket money only earned money. The earned sum for certain tasks was ten shillings. It was also a prize for asking a good question or learning something without being asked. It was essentially a prize for initiative, a reward for initiative. We never knew when it would happen. There would be a fine of three pence if lights were left on. I grew up aware of the consequences of my actions. My brother on the other hand was non-consequential. He often got belted for doing silly things that he later acknowledged as silly and yet he feels today no resentment.

Money was always there for concerts sometimes I would attend concerts with my music teacher. Saturday morning was for gardening. Saturday, in the afternoon, we did swimming racing. Sunday morning was for swimming racing and Sunday afternoon we had free. Homework had to be fitted in after dinner and before bed at 9.30-10.00pm. We were up again at 5.00am. My father thought swimming and music were very important, a way of using the brain and the body. My mother gave us protection for our private time and time together.

I was deeply interested in boats and aircraft and I built model boats and aircraft. I was very interested in the principles of flight and these principles are with me today.

We were different in many ways from the tight economic norms of the time including being almost vegetarian. In New Guinea we couldn't buy fresh meat we had no refrigeration. We ate plenty of grains and my father brought goats to New Guinea, not for eating but for milk. My mother made goat milk cheese. We grew our own nuts, Paw Paw and tropical fruits. When we came to Australia we continued to use nuts, beans, lentils, and soya beans in cooking. It was a very labour intensive style of cooking for my mother. We were not allowed to eat sweets. When I later discovered sweets I ate them like they wouldn't be around again. I started eating meat at eighteen.

We always ate fish, all sorts of vegetables, many of which we grew. We crushed wheat to make porridge and ran chickens for eggs.

We always lived in spacious homes that were always unfinished. All the essentials were there but bits were finished well and bits were unfinished. The houses were always finished for sale.

1945 signalled the end of the war and there were fireworks in Sydney. I can remember being on the deck of a boat in the harbour. It was cool. These were the first big celebrations of our society I can remember. The fireworks were for Victory and they were beautiful.

In the latter stages of the war a Japanese submarine came into Sydney Harbour. It accidentally blew up a ferry instead of warships. Another submarine came into the harbour and ran aground. The crew blew themselves up. A day or two later I went down to the boat and found a little grey hat most probably from the crew of the Japanese submarine. One night around that time, my mother heard voices. She had a protective ritual of placing mattresses over us and I can still remember being under the mattress against the wall. On this occasion we were all terrified and my mother was convinced that it was the Japanese coming for us. It turned out to be a neighbour. A man in his late 50s, a warden, checking very loudly if everything was alright.

In 1946 I can remember that we celebrated Empire Day by making big bonfires. After his gold mining days, and after coming to Australia, my father became a conservationist. He hated cutting down good trees for bonfires. We were mortified by the way he expressed his anger towards our friends who cut down trees.

My father had the first back-to-front *Studebaker* designed by Raymond Loewy. We felt a bit self-conscious because the car was different from the conservative cars of the time. We didn't throw things, like rubbish, out of the windows. If my father encountered anyone throwing things from the windows of a car he would stop and pick it up and then give chase. We were very embarrassed on these occasions.

My father always dressed like a pauper. He had holes in his shoes, dreadful shorts and an old blue Singlet. It was very embarrassing. When I was thirteen I asked him why he dressed like that and he said 'son, I can afford to dress this way'. He never let his wealth show. He was raised on the notion of doing the ordinary things extraordinarily well and to enjoy a high level of privacy. Privacy is very important to me.

In 1949 I had to repeat the last year of primary school before going to secondary school. This was a disaster for me because I lost my peer group. My mother was very determined that we would do well at school and worked hard with us until the subjects got beyond her. She wanted to be certain her kids had a future that would lead somewhere. It was my father and mother who insisted I matriculate. I was in the lowest stream at high school. I hated a lot of schoolwork, found it very boring and utterly without excitement. I learnt the art of survival by day dreaming and coping with boredom. I was always bored so kept dreaming.

There were some good teachers that I recall in maths, art and nature studies and I did well in those subjects, well enough to be promoted to the 'A' stream. An exam in history, for example, was a date pudding. All they wanted was a string of dates.

I never lived in real suburbia. I had nothing to do with the *great Australian dream*. My family realised the dream without suburbia. The family bought great pieces of land; we had no neighbours for half to three-quarters of a mile. These were bush settings, isolated, facing a national waterfront reserve with banksias, casuarinas, and pittosporums. Plants became great symbols for me. Back in 1943, on our walks we had plants that we cared for, to make sure that no one damaged them.

In 1949 my father began propagating native plants. He would study the seeds, plants, and nutrient levels. In learning about trees he could point to the differences in trees growing on the same side of a hill. These were important things for me. They taught me about place and how to read the land. We can't separate the plant, bird, insect, and animal life because they are all related.

The post-war housing that was prevalent was very tacky, Housing Commission. Very boxy. My father would go to great lengths to explain why they were inappropriate.

Subdivision plans were all deadly. Planners got to learn about the dream as a consequence of the back-to-back houses of England. In Australia they continued this style of building in what became 'the slums of Australia'. Places around Surrey Hills where my father came from. In Australia the war was the impetus but what happened was inappropriate.

My father introduced me to the work of architects like Sid Ancher, Harry Seidler and Bill Lucas in the latter years of my high schooling. They remain amongst the most influential influences in my career.

My father chose to live in a very free manner. In New Guinea he chose to live ten kilometres from his nearest neighbour in an area where cannibal tribes lived in the surrounding mountains. My mother was nineteen when she went to New Guinea with my father. She had me at twenty-two while they were passing through London on the way to the Olympic Games.

While my father was not interested in the *great Australian dream* he did believe in the equation ownership = freedom.

When I was nine my uncle was a flying instructor in the war. He was good at art and drawing. He made a model aircraft with a wing span of say 400mm. It was immaculate, like the most professional construction, very beautiful. He inspired me. My uncle gave me a book on the principles of flight by Camm. It gave the mathematics of lift, the change of positive pressure to negative pressure. I started to design aircraft with wingspans of say 1m-1.5m and they all flew. If one broke I would rush back and repair it or make another. My mother called me a little beaver. I flew them, pushed them hard in the air, broke some, and came back to remake them. My father tried to discourage my intense interest in model aircraft and boats. When I was twelve he told me that I would be an architect. I was required to read architectural journals and ask questions. To learn the principles behind the ideas was very important. As the eldest perhaps it was more intense for me.

In 1948 I made city buildings and houses from off cuts and put battery operated globes inside the structures by linking the positive and negative with copper. I charged my family one penny to see the city at night. I got ten shillings for that because I had demonstrated initiative. See people often ask what I did to get ten shillings and I can't often remember but that has just come to me. And I do remember learning a piece by Debussy, *Clair De Lune*. My father liked Debussy and Satie and I learned the piece without being asked so I got ten shillings.

I really believe that if we pit discovery versus creativity, that creativity is elitist. Discovery is the most important. Creative drive is important too but the real issue is discovery.

Nervousness is always an important ingredient to success – the fear of failure.

I learned in 1973 from a great Spanish architect that with every new project he was very nervous. The path of discovery provides every human with possibilities.

The education system determines for us a convergent-based paradigm giving answers to given questions because they are the easiest to assess. Divergence poses a problem for assessment. Questioning and discovery are integral to identifying relationships. If discovery is applied as a term to science why not then to art?

Understanding materials and understanding what materials can do is very important.

Historically servants prepared food in the kitchen. The genteel did not go into that realm. The kitchen was removed from 'real living'. Real living by real people at that time depended on servants doing the preparation. People from so-called privileged backgrounds don't know the joy of relationships and activity that a kitchen can provide.

A good building needs a good architect. Mies van der Rohe said that 'with every good building there was a very good client'

If we are prepared to respond to the requirements described by the client then the client directs and influences the spaces. If a client has no interest in the preparation of food, for example, then the kitchen space won't be more than functional or operational. We take our instruction and also, at times, inspiration from the client.

I see the kitchen/living space as a communication space. In every house I think of some space, sufficiently dimensioned, where a child can run at full speed and have enough space to stop before killing itself.

Serenity is important; dimension, relationship of elements, space, nature and light contribute to serenity. Light has a liveliness about it. This is important to the design of the space.

Architecture is like an onion it is many layered. There are two horizontal sections and a vertical section. You don't know about organic structure until you know about the sections of fruit. Section gives understanding, form, structure, photosynthesis, reproduction, colour, texture and perfume.

In 1974 I designed a kitchen that I can't better [The Marie I. Short house, Crescent Head, NSW, purchased by Murcutt in 1980]. It has a bench like a table. It is a communicative place. One must smell the cooking. People often ask about the mess — it's not mess but things out of place for the moment. Lights focus on kitchen activity and then when we move to the dining table the lights are off in the kitchen and on over the dining table. Involvement is important. The ideal is an environment where everyone pitches in without formality. Great events and great celebrations of life happen in this space.

I look at repetition as renewal. No two meals from the same kitchen are the same. Nothing is the same. Rice today might be boiled but tomorrow it might be cooked by the absorption method. Rice today but then, cous cous tomorrow or *Risotto with Mushrooms*. *Seafood Pasta*, seafood with garlic, coriander, oil, and onion: all smelling good. There is always the option to extract if cooking smells are not acceptable.

Placed in a field, the tablecloth defines place. In an open field with a basket of food, where do I go to make a place? A tree, maybe, or a clearing.

In the kitchen chairs in a group are place. In a field we look for trees, a rock, or a clearing. Each time we put down a cloth it separates the edible from the inedible; establishes place. Shadow can define place. Shadow from an umbrella or a tree. Shadow in sunlight equals place. A tree equals place, a secure place. Pattern equals security. Prospect and refuge are necessary components of place.

As a child I saw Greeks on the beach at Middle Harbour often looking for mussels, oysters, octopus, sea urchins or squid. We discard these gifts of the sea regarding these foods as next to offal. I used to catch octopus for the Greeks and they would give me five shillings or two shillings from time to time. They were the hunters of the sea. They could also have contributed to the destruction of our ecology.

In my early days I was limited by my family's vegetarian ways. I didn't eat out until 1957. I was twenty-one. I was at University. We all went out to dinner to a Swiss Inn. Swiss and German restaurants were prominent in the 1950s

Chinese was the earliest of the Asian influences. Later Italians. My preference is for Latin and Asian foods. French is my least favourite. Asian food is light, healthy, fragrant, undercooked, with the goodness still in the food as well as the flavour.

Lebanese was very powerful in 60s Sydney. Lebanese even predates Chinese. The Lebanese used cracked wheat, tabouleh and parsleys: lots of flavours like homus, eggplant, sesame seeds and lemon. These were all new ingredients in the 60s to Anglo Saxons. Their breads were very thin. Falafel, spread with sesame seeds, chickpeas, sesame seed oil, lemon, and garlic, all rolled in tabouleh. I often had this as a takeaway. It was so full of flavour.

The kitchen became available to everyone. In the 60s it was about going out. In the 70s it was showing off with eight to ten people to dinner every Saturday.

The invention of machinery released time for everyone. I remember my mother in New Guinea washing by hand, using a scrubbing board and a 'copper' under which she would light a fire. She boiled everything. In the 40s we had a chip heater. There was lots of time devoted to heating water, washing and ironing. 'Cleanliness is godliness'. Whiteness is clean, so advertising tells us. Therefore white is clean and accordingly it must be next to 'Godliness'. Perhaps the whiteness and the godliness in that expression are a reflection of colour prejudice. Machinery changed, fabrics changed. This gave more time, spare time. Often this was our time, time to play tennis, meet people or go on picnics. Gradually there was more money available and a release from the very tight regime. We had house assistance in the 40s. Many families did. We had a domestic assistant for five years. Of course in New Guinea my mother had lots of house help. There were four helpers just to look after the children.

The kitchen is alive with sound. Steam from a cappuccino machine, water boiling, the crackling of food frying in woks, the sound of wood on timber, beating, pounding, and cutting. The click clack of pots, the sounds of rapid movement. Turning and lifting of food, sliding pots on the cook top, doors opening, cutlery drawers, metal implements on timber, glasses, the corking of bottles, the glugging sound as you pour wine. The sound of metal touching glass as it does when I spoon out chilli paste. The 'splop' from bottles, the sound of cans being opened, metal on metal, the pop of the beer as you lift the cap. You hear people cursing sometimes. You hear people tasting, sniffing, smelling food. Footsteps, talking, doors opening, fridge opening. Sounds of the floor. Sounds of garbage lids, plastic or tin lids, water taps turning, topping up, beating, rolling, patting things down. Natural sounds like wind. The sounds of sun expanding metal. Trees touching windows. The sound of an extraction fan. The 'song' of slicing.

Food colour must be legible against the background colours in a kitchen. A dark kitchen is bad for food. There must be good natural light. The colour of light, be it yellow, white or blue, exerts different effects. Blue light can intensify red. Colour often comes from materials.

Cutting on stainless steel is not comfortable. Cutting on timber is good but the timber must be engrain so it closes on itself. Heals. Colour and texture are related. Timber when constantly washed either darkens or bleaches.

A kitchen is like a stage set it is not complete without people. When it is empty it lies in waiting.

Ordinary has a place. Ordinary as extraordinary is of interest. From ordinary we measure. There's a place for ordinary. Surrey Hills and Paddington were ordinary suburbia; less than ordinary. Surrey Hills was the place my father saw as the end of the world. But the ordinary changes; ordinary is now

better. Paddington is now sought after. Ordinary, of itself, is not bad, it's a relationship past or future, but it's shifting all the time. The trick is to understand when the ordinary reaches the extraordinary. We lift the bar. But the bar can go down. The ordinary shifts. The extraordinary lies within the ordinary. Ordinary is the act of preparation of food but many do not do this well. My mother cooked extraordinary meals for her day but they would no longer stand the test. Now we want shorter preparation time, enhanced flavours, fast satisfaction.

You know the term food preparation as applied to the kitchen is only a convenient title. It doesn't cover what happens in the space.

Our perception and judgement assist our enjoyment of food. Smell can't be divorced from taste and taste in various parts of the mouth. There is a sense of the known with the unknown. Smells are a vital part of appreciating food. Smell can tell you what level of cooking you are at. Our sense of smell can tell us if the food in the oven is ready. The tasting and smelling of food or say the smelling of a cork are all part of the preparation. When we cut food, fresh fish, meat, we smell the freshness. Our sense of smell tells us what will be cooked and what won't be eaten. I love the smell of dough and baking food.

The kitchen was separated from the house for a long time because it often burnt down. It was very hot. There was a desire to save the rest of the house by sacrificing the kitchen.

The kitchen is about nurture, the relationships of people, things shared in a communal way. It's a marvellous space.

Gay Bilson

Food performance artist and restaurateur (formerly of *Berowra Waters Inn* near Sydney, designed by Glenn Murcutt, and *The Bennelong Restaurant* at the Sydney Opera House).

Date: 30 October 1998, 9.30am - 11.30am

Place: Elizabeth Bay, Sydney, New South Wales

I was born in 1944.

I grew up in Hawthorn in one side of my grandmother's house. We were working class, no car, no phone, and no owned home. My father was a silent and loving man. My mother did all the talking.

My father didn't go to war because he was the foreman in a factory. He had that one job all his life, never missed a day except for a bad accident.

I adored my father he was succour, he loved us, my brother and me. My brother was born seven years after me and wasn't meant to be — he was an accident. I was always at loggerheads with my mother. She didn't know how to love. I hated her for a long time. My mother didn't work. She had nothing to fill her time. Did nothing. Didn't even nurture. She had no sense of nurturing anything. She was lost to thwarted ambition for more romantic ideas.

My mother was a hopeless manager of the household money and food was often short. When we had tomatoes we were only able to have two slices rather than a whole tomato. She cooked the same food over and over. I didn't think about food until I was at university. The meal my mother most often cooked was grilled mid-loin lamb chops with peas, mashed potato, and a mash of carrot and parsnip, typical of its time and class.

I used to play games with my food. Games were transporting and diverting. I wanted the table to be a more social place than it was.

The table was in the kitchen. It was a time when rubbish was wrapped in newspaper and put in the bin. Before cling wrap and foil.

The *Proccero* loaf was re-baked on Sunday because bakers in Australia didn't work on Sundays at the time. The crust always went black and was cut off perhaps that was my mother's ineptitude. On Sunday we would have sliced re-baked bread with jam and sugar, and the top of the milk, never cream. It was a sort of poor person's dessert. It was sweet and comforting.

We had hardly any visitors. My father's football friends Ted and Nancy Spinks were among the only visitors; a sense of hospitality was missing. We had a Christmas party once a year to which we invited relatives and a few friends.

My father was one of thirteen and my mother was one of six.

My father had a younger brother, Harry Cheesman. He was different, exotic, fascinating. Harry played musical instruments, had rooms full of books and wove things on huge looms. He was gay although this was never spoken of and he was an alcoholic. He lived with his friend, a doctor of pathology who

taught at Melbourne University, for all the time I knew him. He listened to serious classical music, no one else did. He was good to me, but also a bit frightening. He shaped my dream. I always knew I would go to university, always had a head for books. I would read with a torch in bed every night. To me he represented creativity and imagination. He was literally the only one in our family who was a reader.

I remember sleeping in the sleep-out. It had a door to the back verandah. Mother came to the door. It was obvious that I had been sleeping with nothing on. I was screamed at and made to feel small. I connect this with cleanliness. Sexual perhaps. It was as if my mother felt I had a man in my room or I was masturbating. There always seemed to be some sexual jealousy on my mother's part during my adolescence. But I wasn't wild.

I used to find other families that I could attach myself to. I attached myself to the family of a Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Hawthorn. I used the church as a basis for social life. We went to single sex schools so church offered an opportunity to meet the opposite sex.

I was good at school until I found boys. I repeated my matriculation year to get into the Melbourne School of Medicine and then changed to arts and took a scholarship. I hung around but didn't finish the degree. I didn't finish because I was so enamoured of the freedom outside the half-a-house we lived in. I wanted to run away.

I thought until well into my teens that marriage was an incredibly perfect coupling. That people were happy until death.

To me kitchen equals the hearth.

I remember the icebox. And sitting around the radio listening to Jack Davey and singers like Gladys Moncrieff and Peter Dawson. I could never talk to my mother but she liked to listen to light classics. I had no interest in the Beatles or pop. One evening I burst into tears drying dishes with my mother when Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* was playing on the radio: I was transported by the beauty. I told my mother I must be alone just to listen to the singers. To this day I don't have a dishwasher.

My parents liked the Sunday newspapers, *Craven A* and *Turf*. They were Labor voters all their lives but there was no conversation or exploration of public issues of the state of the world.

Outside the house there seemed to me at the time a division in the community between Protestant and Catholic. This, I found later, was true.

At state school in the 5th and 6th grade I remember a girl called Sigrid Asche. She was German. She had a brother who wore 'lederhosen' to school and was laughed at. She was ostracized and laughed at. One day I asked her to play ball with me because I felt sorry for her. We became close. Years later she contacted me or I saw her and she said she had never forgotten that incident. And there was Ingrid from a Jewish family who owned the corner store. Ingrid also spoke German. I was close to her too. My friendship and involvement with these two girls was very important and says something very important about my attitudes as a child. I was attracted to those who were different, those who were marginalized by the rest of the class.

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taught at Melbourne University, for all the time I knew him. He listened to serious classical music, no one else did. He was good to me, but also a bit frightening. He shaped my dream. I always knew I would go to university, always had a head for books. I would read with a torch in bed every night. To me he represented creativity and imagination. He was literally the only one in our family who was a reader.

I remember sleeping in the sleep-out. It had a door to the back verandah. Mother came to the door. It was obvious that I had been sleeping with nothing on. I was screamed at and made to feel small. I connect this with cleanliness. Sexual perhaps. It was as if my mother felt I had a man in my room or I was masturbating. There always seemed to be some sexual jealousy on my mother's part during my adolescence. But I wasn't wild.

I used to find other families that I could attach myself to. I attached myself to the family of a Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Hawthorn. I used the church as a basis for social life. We went to single sex schools so church offered an opportunity to meet the opposite sex.

I was good at school until I found boys. I repeated my matriculation year to get into the Melbourne School of Medicine and then changed to arts and took a scholarship. I hung around but didn't finish the degree. I didn't finish because I was so enamoured of the freedom outside the half-a-house we lived in. I wanted to run away.

I thought until well into my teens that marriage was an incredibly perfect coupling. That people were happy until death.

To me kitchen equals the hearth.

I remember the icebox. And sitting around the radio listening to Jack Davey and singers like Gladys Moncrieff and Peter Dawson. I could never talk to my mother but she liked to listen to light classics. I had no interest in the Beatles or pop. One evening I burst into tears drying dishes with my mother when Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* was playing on the radio: I was transported by the beauty. I told my mother I must be alone just to listen to the singers. To this day I don't have a dishwasher.

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my mother sold him the piano Uncle Harry had found for me. I resented that. Jimmy asked my mother if he might marry me so that he could stay in Australia. I wasn't consulted of course. And wouldn't have become party to this.

I'd one day like to go back to learn more piano theory.

I knitted obsessively when I was an adolescent. I made things to earn a little money. Taught myself to sew and make dresses. One night I got yelled at because I woke my Mother ripping material I was about to sew. She chased me around the house to hit me.

I remember Chinese restaurants in Melbourne. I believe Chinese cuisine to be the greatest extant cuisine. But that is not what is served here.

Chinese and Italians made very little impression on the working class, white, enclave where I lived.

When I was nineteen or twenty I became interested in food. Not so much for the food itself but for the liberation from the grilled lamb chops. My interest represented an escape from the confines of where I grew up and the sheer dullness. Food represented social things. I invited people to eat and I enjoyed cooking. It was 1965 and I was working in the cataloguing department of the Bailleau Library.

About this time I met my husband, Kevin Morris, and soon after went to America with our two very young boys. I had been cooking for lots of friends making ridiculously labour-intensive things like little pastries and fritters and so on. This was all about social liberation as much as it was about food. I also loved the thanks one received when cooking for people. There's a generosity in the labour and offering which goes beyond food itself. In New York State, in a small parochial town I cooked on and on, although I didn't know much about real skills and craft. With any craft repetition brings about revelation of what it is all about so that imagination can sour. I was too naïve, consumed mostly with using up energy, to really get anywhere, but it was a good time, a fascinating new society and lots to chew on. Food for me then was identity, physical exertion and mental energy.

At *Berowra Waters Inn* all the cooking was initially done without many machines. Pastry, pasta, and so on, were all done by hand and elbow grease. It was naïve, but instructive, and the result I think of not having done a formal apprenticeship.

For twelve years I suffered from the pain caused by pinched nerves, a condition called Carpal Tunnel. I couldn't sleep through the night but continued to work on in that stoic women's way. I finally had a simple operation, which released the nerves, and it changed my life. At last I could sleep through the night. I felt a fool for not doing something years earlier.

Later I became interested in performance work. I recently did an event, *Loaves & Fishes* for two thousand people as part of the 1998 Adelaide Festival. It was about feeding a community. It was a theatrical performance that lived outside the proscenium arch and fitted within Robyn Archer's theme for the festival, *The Sacred and Profane*. All labour was donated. It was great to work for the Festival and Adelaide is the only city I'd do it in. The food was given to the audience, it was important that it be free. John Bennett from the old Magill Pottery made fifteen hundred bowls marked with a graphic from an ancient bowl I saw at the Art Gallery of South Australia. The bowl, which was central to this event, sold for four dollars. People bought the bowls (if they wished). There was a sense of communion. The event was staged on the last night of the Festival. Those who did not have a bowl used the flat

Lebanese bread.

I hired Rosa Matto's kitchen for the food preparation. I wanted fish that looked like a fish with a head, frame and tail. Later I worried about the heads and in the end they went. We used 4,000 Western Australian sardines.

Within a ceremony using the river, barges, and the Adelaide Chamber Singers we began serving at 9.00pm. First we placed the bread on the bowl and then we added the salad made from rocket and mizuna leaves and chickpeas cooked with turmeric and cayenne, with a dressing of olive oil and chermoula, a Middle Eastern marinade and finally, the harissa, which is a paste of dried chilies, garlic, coriander and caraway seeds. There was no alcohol, instead mint tea, served hot and sweet with sugar. I love to give food away. Sharing the moral of the loaves and fishes. When it was over there was the packing up. I was very flat after.

In another performance based on feeding I wrapped spicy food in lotus leaves and then clay. We then baked the parcels in wonderful large fires in the park opposite The Performance Space at the Adelaide Festival Centre. The audience, the diners, accepted their parcel in a piece of calico, which then acted as a napkin. The clay was cracked open and the lotus leaf acted as a plate. This event was for about five hundred people.

I'm interested in the arts not just food. I use food because I know about it and it has to be shared not wasted.

Food Magazines are bullshit. They're about fashion, money and status. They pretend they are about living, about food to cook at home. *Divine* (a food and wine magazine published by Andrew Wood in Melbourne, Victoria. Gay Bilson is a contributor to *Divine*) is an antidote with more serious writing. Food magazines are about marketing.

Restaurants are analogous to theatre. The wall between the kitchen and dining room relates to the proscenium arch. Dining is interactive theatre. I loathe open kitchens in restaurants. Cooks become show-offs.

The nature of the kitchen is changing of course. The kitchen as hearth (the focus, literally) will never be the same again. All things change. Cries for a return to the warm kitchen and domestic meals with the stove the provider of warmth, ignore change. Writers in magazines I deplore take up this cry.

The smoke detectors in my apartment building are so sensitive I can't grill or roast safely without setting them off. They're restrictive. This kind of living forces changes to the way we cook things.

For a *Gastronomy Symposium* in 1988 we turned the tables on what is seen and made the stage the kitchen for once. Banquets can be theatre. My idea was to use my own blood to make sausages (*boudin noir*) as part of a menu for a banquet to close the *Seventh Symposium of Australian Gastronomy* in Canberra in 1993. The whole meal centred around the body. The food offerings read as a list of words: stomach, egg, flesh, bone, skin, blood, heart, milk, fruit, virgin's breasts, dead men's bones. it was called *The Body Dinner*. There is such a resistance to blood, especially our blood. I discussed the whole idea with Janni Kyritsis, my chef at *Berowra Waters Inn*, and he was not enthusiastic to say the least. We were at the time making a fine blood sausage using properly prepared pig's blood — that is blood not allowed to curdle when it is retained in the slaughter, and as human blood has similar properties to

pig's blood I knew it would work as an ingredient. It seemed to me to be the greatest generosity I could show to use my own blood. I talked to a doctor, a pathologist and even a lawyer. I knew that I must be checked out for Aids, Hepatitis and so on. Even then the cooking process would kill any baddies. Still the resistance was enormous. So it became a rumour rather than fact. I wrote a piece for the *Sydney Morning Herald* ('Good Weekend') about blood with the recipe for *boudin noir* included and letters poured in. An interesting period and how cowardly I was. Artists have used blood recently and seem to have the social sanction my idea did not. Blood has a bad name these days, yet it's not blood itself that is the baddy, it is what invades it.

For *The Body Dinner* we served a dish of pigeon breast and duck hearts as the main course. This dish included red cabbage, because of its colour and because of the phrase lovers use, 'mon petit choux'. The pigeon sauce was coloured red with beetroot. All these ideas needed, as they always did, were Janni's skills to bring them into being. Fish was there as 'skin' but otherwise the meal was almost completely meat as is our body. Only when milk and fruit appeared did the meat finish. 'Bone' was bowls of cleaned marrowbones with gold leaf on some of the bones. It was a reference to John Donne's poem, *The Relic*. The biscuits with the marvelous name summed it all up I suppose. They're real Southern Italian biscuits which we had great fun making. *Rose Petal Jam* on the nipples of the virgin's breasts. Marion Halligan, the novelist and critic, who was at the symposium, wrote a piece for *Island* magazine. She was slightly critical about some of the ideas and the presence of so much meat but I liked her piece and it's meaty criticisms.

Menus were produced only at the end. We had a forty metre long table, one metre wide that sat eighty to ninety people. At one point I blindfolded guests while we brought in a table set up. My daughter was bandaged, but mostly naked, and she lay on the table covered with purple figs, grapes, breads, and *Damson Plum Jelly*. All that could be seen was the table loaded with a Dionysian feast. When the audience returned to the table my daughter arose from the fruit. Then she gave out the menu. It was all symbols and metaphor about regeneration and renewal.

I think Phillip Searle (the Australian restaurateur and gastronome) is better at performance, more theatrical but less intellectual.

To me the sound of the kitchen of my childhood was the radio and the sounds of the back door and wire door shutting. Later it was the exhaust in a commercial kitchen and that moment at the end of service when the fan was turned off and it slowed down to silence.

I don't think of myself as an artist. Of all the sciences and arts it is the visual arts I am least moved by or notice. Well I notice less. I have a passion for music and reading and I love ceramics.

In food I love pale dirty whites not grilled capsicum and olives.

Food for me has moved a long way from my mother's grilled chops and mash on a plate, to *Berowra Waters* and high 'nouvelle cuisine', to the current approach of putting food in the middle of the table.

I love big, central plates of food, the sense of plenty, and the interaction of the diners when they serve themselves. I've been bowled over by Margaret Olley's domestic space and sense of table.

A restaurant that would be fun would be a no choice, no criticism, place — I wouldn't take notice of food critics. Just feeding everyone with what I'm cooking that day. I used to think it proper to have a

la carte.

There is too much sense of ego within the greed of our capitalist society. Ego equals energy and energy is derived from a belief in oneself but we haven't come to terms with being and nothingness. As I grow older I want to be calm and more peaceful about being nobody.

I think the attention given to restaurants and young cooks is a farce. It does great damage to people who have simply learned a craft or earn a living. Tim Pak Poy at *Claudes* (the Sydney restaurant) is the most seriously wonderful cook in Australia. I'm not a serious cook. Don't know that I'm a particularly good cook. I have a good eye and I love the adrenalin of service. I'm a critic and passionate about the arts and the wider audience.

The attention to food and the attitude towards it in the socially exclusive pages of glossy magazines and newspapers ignores food as the right of all, the 'justice of the table' that Neruda (the Chilean poet and diplomat) wrote about in his poem.

I was a hopeless feeder of my two children and yet I was obsessively cooking for adults. My children have seriously limited palates except for one of my daughters who is now twenty-five. She has a good palate and is good at the stove.

I've watched natural cooks. I am not a natural cook. I have influenced younger people but I had to work hard at it. Maybe I don't really want to do it.

I sold *Berowra Waters Inn* in December 1997. I had closed it in March 1995. It was a hard life on the river with two kids. Fogs, boats breaking down, hard. Degreasing the grease trap every month. There were real ecology issues building over water. I wanted to hang on to *Berowra Waters Inn* to live in it one day, but could not keep both the apartment in Sydney and *Berowra*. The dining room at *Berowra* would have been a wonderful studio. I suffer a great sense of guilt because I didn't finish the building properly. It was built in three stages because I kept running out of money. The problems caused by waste, both septic and kitchen, became the bane of my life. The bottom line for me was the change made to the building by Glenn Murcutt. I have always been very interested in architecture. To become a patron of Glenn's was a great privilege. He turned a rotten old house on a river into a verandah to a view. I believed that if people drove for one hour from Sydney to get to *Berowra Waters Inn* that there was an equal sense of gratitude needed. Theirs for what we provided in the form of the food, service, and the view. And mine in thanking them for coming so far.

'No dusting!' Margaret Olley once ordered a cleaning woman. I loved that, what it said about Margaret. She once said to me that instead of cleaning you should just put another vase of flowers on a table, sideboard or whatever. I loved that too. This doesn't mean that I agree with her, but it makes lovely sense in her domestic space. Her admission that she likes doing the dishes is something I can relate to. I love doing the dishes, have never owned, domestically, a dishwashing machine. I especially love doing them after people who have been in the house for dinner have left. Getting my privacy back into order again.

Robert Rooney

Australian artist, writer and former art critic

Date: 6 November 1998, 10.00am – 12.00pm
Place: East Hawthorn, Melbourne, Victoria

I was born in 1937 and in 1939 I moved with my parents to Broomfield Road, Hawthorn. Initially we lived at number nine and then in 1943 we moved across the road to number twenty where I have lived for the last fifty-five years with my parents. I haven't travelled – I don't feel it necessary. Paul Taylor (Melbourne curator and writer) came up with the myth that I haven't done anything and I must have led a dull life. Of course I don't agree.

I noticed no particular difference when my father was away at war. I just accepted such things. My father was in the Air Force maintenance division. He occasionally had weekend leave. I was, however, aware of the celebrations at the end of the war. Local houses were decorated with streamers to welcome back the troops. Two of my Uncles were prisoners of the Japanese at Ambon. I was aware that the Second World War dominated life until 1945 but I was more focused on particular aspects of the war. For instance Australian animals in comic strips depicted as fighting the foe and *Bluey and Curly*, a newspaper comic strip about Australian soldiers. I remember an animated cartoon, *When Tulips Bloom Again*, about Holland during the war and both *Donald Duck* and *Bugs Bunny* sending up Hitler. There were humorous associations with the war; things like radio programs and getting pie plates for a certain number of food coupons. From memory, the exchange of coupons for kitchen goods such as pie plates had something to do with the Housewives' Association, which had a radio program.

20 Broomfield Road is a double-fronted Victorian house, set back from the road, which my father took 20 years or so to alter and build. The current dining room was originally my bedroom. The first renovations for the house were the kitchen and my room. Before the renovations the kitchen was primitive – a combination of laundry and kitchen with coppers and troughs. There was a wooden top that made a bench when placed over the troughs. The kitchen had an early Kooka stove with a Kookaburra emblem.

We still maintain the family tradition of three meals a day including roasts on Sunday. I dislike looking back with today's perspective to find fault with the past as though what we ate was somehow sub-standard or what was there before was bland and uninteresting, it wasn't.

I remember roasts and chicken, chicken at Christmas. Having chicken at Christmas wasn't really a novelty because at the time, and into the 1950s, we kept chooks. I associated more with 50s and 60s television – situation comedies, where the mother was always cooking pot roasts, and episodes of *Perry Mason* that ended with Perry Mason treating Della Street to a big, thick steak, as if it was something special.

In the 50s we had a new kitchen built, an original kitchen of the period. Yellow *Laminex* with flecks of what looked like frosting on aluminium, and aluminium edging. The floor was covered with lino tiles in a ribbon design. It included square and triangular pieces of yellow alternating with blue, which was laid in such a way as to create the illusion of a ribbon being bent around in a spiral. The design was surrounded by grey. My mother had seen the design in a *Home Beautiful* magazine. Ceramic tiles for the kitchen were a grey, yellow and blue combination.

In July 1960, there was a competition run by Myer's. You didn't call it Myer in those days, which coincided with the visit of Vo Bacon, an American equivalent of Margaret Fulton (Australian cooking expert, teacher and author). The prize was a new model gas stove and £200 of kitchen equipment. My mother won it. The stove had the latest rotisserie in addition to the oven. After being presented with the prize there was, what Myer's called, a 'mix-up' and my mother was shown a smaller model stove. She contacted the public relations people because a larger stove was illustrated in the advertisement for the competition, and they saw to it that everything was fixed up. In her new kitchen my mother was very happy. Things didn't necessarily change. She continued to cook the usual things although she did join the Gadget of the Month Club and accumulated a lot of useless things.

My father would work on the renovations to the house on weekends. He worked for the Board of Works, at the Hawthorn Depot. Later he went to work in the office of the Depot, but in the early days he worked outdoors, digging up the roads and that sort of thing as well as doing office duties. My father went to Swinburne Technical School when he was in his teens.

When I was young I took the kitchen for granted although I would help with the washing up. Before the present living/dining room was finished, the old dining room was the centre of things because that was where the fire and the radio were. Radio played a big part in suburban life back then.

My family bought our present home through the War Service Loan Scheme. We rented at first but when it was to be sold my parents decided to buy it.

At the end of the war and into the late 1940s there were vacant blocks in the streets near Auburn South State School (where Robert went to school), and at one time a big rubbish tip extended from Auburn Road to Glenferrie Road near the Kooyong Tennis Centre. From around 1949 onwards, streets began to be filled up with houses and the tip turned into the parks and sports ovals one sees today.

I created my own world. I read and made things using my Meccano set. I also had a set of blocks that came in various sizes and had arches and pillars. Some pieces were patterned like bricks. A lot of houses being built today look as though they were designed using those blocks; badly proportioned revivalist buildings. I hate the proliferation of Neo-Georgian houses.

When I was fifteen or sixteen and all through art school my favourite house was the one Harry Seidler built for Rose Seidler that I saw in *Home Beautiful*. I was mad about modern architecture of that sort.

I started art school full-time in 1954, when I was sixteen and began exhibiting with the Contemporary Art Society almost immediately, which didn't please most of my teachers. They didn't like me being influenced by Charles Blackman (Australian artist) either. I was told he couldn't draw. It was Blackman who introduced me to the notion that the artist should draw from everyday life. I was a modernist from the beginning.

Before I was old enough, I was at Swinburne Junior Technical School, I was allowed to borrow art books from the adult section of the Hawthorn Municipal Library. In the 1950s I discovered Skira art books, particularly Maurice Raynal's, *From Baudelaire to Bonnard*, *Munch*, *Matisse*, *Rouault* and *From Picasso to Surrealism*. The library had a marvellous art section a whole room to itself in the 1950s and the head librarian took a special interest in building up the art section. But the place was like a slum by the 1980s. When I went back to look again at books I remembered, I found they had been thrown out.

I was aware of migrants at school. I just accepted the fact that they were there. Italians and Greeks had shops, Greengrocers or Fruiterers, during the war and after. There was a German boy in my class at Swinburne (c 1950 - 52) and I recall Chinese and even a Japanese boy. We used to have Chinese food sometimes, dim sims and the usual stuff. I didn't think of it as exotic.

I started learning the piano late, at thirteen. I had always been mad about music from as early as I can remember. When I was about eight or eleven I used to fill manuscript books with pretend music or play on my Tonette (a plastic ocarina-like instrument) or a set of blocks with tuned bells inside which shook. When I was twelve on a holiday in Gippsland I used to pretend I was playing the piano in the communal games room of a holiday place with cottages and I think an early caravan park. Somebody there heard me and suggested that I should learn the piano.

I was given a piano for Christmas in 1949, and studied classical piano for four years before turning to jazz. I listened to all sorts of music but had a strong interest in modern music, Stravinsky and others.

I listened to the ABC and the commercial stations as a child. There were people who only listened to one or the other. Although I listened to *The Argonauts Club* on the ABC, it was through readings on 3DB children's session that I discovered E. Nesbit's *The Treasure Seekers*, and P.L. Travers', *Mary Poppins*.

I noticed that when television came the attitudes were the same. The people next door only watched Channel 7. We got TV in 1958. I watched everything. Later I would tape my favourite programs from the 1950s such as *Leave it to Beaver*. When the series was repeated in the mid 80s some young artist friends regarded Wally and the Beaver as rebels. There is a tendency to view the past from the present position. Present attitudes are assumed to be correct and those of the past wrong. Now certain aspects of the 80s are being seen in a negative light that wasn't there at the time.

My mother and father encouraged me. I was always read to and supported at school. They might have thought that I would be an engineer but when I wanted to be an artist they encouraged me.

From around 1958-59, while I was working at Hall's Book Store in Prahran, I started collecting images that looked like abstraction but weren't. I was interested in modernism's influence on commercial (even cheap) design; Mondrian in lino patterns, for example. I was also interested in artist's commercial work. Philip Guston did wartime illustrations for *Fortune* magazine and De Kooning did an advertisement for the Container Corporation. When I met Sol Lewitt in the 1970s, I told him that I had found some early illustrations of his in an old *Art Director's Club Annual*.

I wrote a piece for *Cinema Papers* in July 1987 where I discuss the use of art images and references in American sitcoms. In an episode of *Leave it to Beaver*, Beaver's mother June comments on Ward Cleaver's artistic ability, 'he did all those cute cartoons for the school yearbook. He could have been a commercial artist. He was actually very good'. Among other things I go on to talk about the kind of images found on the walls of the Cleaver's Mayfield house that included prints of Constable and Monet. While Samantha and Darren Stevens of *Bewitched* and Maxwell Smart and 99 of *Get Smart* favoured early Picasso and Klee prints.

Most of my photographic works are to do with my own environment and friends. Places I have documented in photographs have been because friends lived there. If they moved the place ceased to exist for me. Where they lived was the intent.

The title *Kind-hearted Kitchen-garden* existed before the painting. *The New Penguin Dictionary* came out. I looked at entries, the first and last on a page, and created random hyphenations. When I composed the work I used a stencil made from the top of a German Christmas cake box. The cake was packed in a box with a scalloped edge with cellophane over the top. The shape was a scalloped rectangle but I decided to engineer the shape to make a square. I reduced it ever further for *Canine Capers*. The format of the *Kind-hearted Kitchen-garden* painting is derived from my interest in carpet designs and the work of Frank Stella. Rugs, carpet, lino, knitting, are all grist for the mill. *Kind-hearted Kitchen-garden* is the most reproduced of all my works. It's been reproduced upside down, sideways but it seems to be properly labelled these days.

The baluster-like shapes at the centre of the *Kind-hearted Kitchen-garden* paintings are the inside of a clothes peg. For the borders I sometimes used two reds or two browns so the colour is not the same all the way round but suggestive of colours in an abstract way. McEwan's had paint displays behind which were brightly coloured painted exteriors with lots of green. This influenced me.

It was not until 1978 that I saw my first kitchen garden. Sunday Reed took me on a tour of the kitchen garden at Heide. It turns out that kitchen gardens are laid out formally with everything in its place just like my painting only with plants. I thought the house at Heide was terrific. It was funny that the paintings were the exact opposite of the house.

For *Slippery Seal* I used the title of the cut out looking for an absurd element; the serious and the non-serious. This is a constant in my work the serious and the non-serious. Late in the 70s and early 80s people forgot that and thought I was sending up everything. I was associated with Barry Humphries. I didn't abuse suburbia I accepted it. It's up to people how they take my work.

NEWS stands for north, east, west, south and was a photographic work where I placed the camera in the middle of a room for a rats eye view of the world. I wasn't looking through the lens but placing the camera in the four different directions to collect information. I set up a system and photographed friends places and here. Kitchens feature as part of this work but only as another room.

I have a collection of thirty or more cut outs and I have exhibited them. In 1988 when I started using cut out animals I was re-examining my past. I could see all this terrific stuff that I could use. *Cereal Beaks* was built on a repetition of a beak shape cut from a cereal box. In the 60s repetition was important, part of the mass culture, commercialism, consumerism. Repetition was not boring. Andy Warhol had the same breakfast for years.

Between 1959 and 1963 I wrote letters every week and in these letters I documented things so it is easy to place events and activity in the appropriate date. When digging up material for the retrospective exhibition at Monash University I found all these things that I could use. I have always collected and stored things. In fact there is now no room in my studio. I paint in the living/dining room. My canvases are often up to eight feet in length and there is little room. I started watching TV and then there was the fire. Now I like to listen to the radio.

Most of my work is done in winter. I take ages to plan an exhibition and then I exhibit everything I've done. I stack my canvases and work in progress neatly in the central hallway. I don't make my stretchers any more.

I stopped painting for a while. In 1975 I decided to return to painting but it was not until 1982 that I did.

My collection of things and my exploration of childhood provide recurring themes.

I have never made the distinction between abstraction and figuration.

I became interested in the work of the so-called *Kitchen Sink* painters after seeing their work reproduced in *Studio* magazine in the 1950s. The National Gallery of Victoria had acquired paintings and drawings by John Bratby, Jack Smith and Edward Middleditch in the late 50s. But in the 1980s when I started writing art reviews for the *Age* newspaper in Melbourne they like a lot of modern British art, including Michael Andrews' *All Night Long*, weren't on display. I wrote several pieces in which I suggested that, as there was considerable interest in realism and expressionism, they should be brought out of storage. When I spoke about this to the curator responsible for European art, she replied that overseas visitors would think the Gallery backward if they were put on display. I knew that Canberra and other State Galleries, and some private collectors had works by these and other artists so I began to research an exhibition of *Kitchen Sink* works and some related European works by Bernard Buffet and others). As the only *Kitchen Sink* artist missing from local collections was Derrick Greaves, I wrote to Graves Gallery in Sheffield, which had one of his paintings that I thought would look good in the show. They wrote back to say that by coincidence they were preparing a *Kitchen Sink* show and asked me to supply a list of works in Australian collections. They also wanted to know if there were any Australian artists that had been influenced by them. I sent lists and reproductions from my files. After much opposition from Jack Smith, who didn't want to be connected with the group anymore, the show *The Kitchen Sink Painters* was held at the Mayor Gallery, London in 1991. No paintings or drawings from Australia were included, nor was my minor contribution acknowledged.

I remember reading *Look Back in Anger*, and of course, the anthology *The Beat Generation* and *The Angry Young Men*. However, I was more interested in the Beats, especially Jack Kerouac and I did enjoy Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim*.

The ideal modernist kitchen would be small because my ideal modernist house would be constructed on a small block in Broomfield Road where I live now. I buy Tattsлото tickets each week. If I won I'd create a modernist house.

In the 40s and 50s we would have known everyone in the street but in more recent times I haven't got around to it.

I really haven't thought about sound in the kitchen but the radio and the sounds of serials and comedy programs like, *Mrs. Obbs*, *Dad and Dave* and *Martin's Corner* remind me of the kitchen. On Sunday afternoons in the early 1940s, the 'ice cream man' used to come around ringing his bell. Often, I would eat my ice cream while listening to *The Phantom Drummer*, which was very scary. I was really interested in the *The Argonauts Club*. Jeffrey Smart (the Australian painter) was the art presenter.

I remember that Wendy Lockey of Berwick used to be always writing letters to 3DB's children's session. She would write in every week. I was fascinated I didn't know where Berwick was; every week there would be something from Wendy Lockey. I wonder where she is?

I made biscuits called *Superman* biscuits. The recipe was in a book on the television series, *Superman*. I used to make Anzacs as well, which were the basis for a photographic work.

I began a series documenting the body but gave it away because weight training took so much time. I

was amused by how far you could go on an exercise bike without leaving the studio. The artist Robert Hunter rode the bike in the photographic work.

In *Coats* I modelled the work on a sample I saw at *Art Stretchers*. One coat, two coats and so on referring to coats of primer.

My next show at Pinacotheca in April 1999 is about the early childhood of modernism. I have an image of the *Mona Lisa* in one picture, *A Paris Pair: At the Louvre*, and *A Paris Pair in the Luxembourg Gardens* in another, in a homage to the Nabis. The paintings in the show go from Education Department Gauguin to 'Kinder Cubism'. There's a homage to Maurice Dennis, *A Paris Pair: At Prayer*. (Pinacotheca closed during the period of this study after decades of service to artists and Robert Rooney is now represented by Tolarno Gallery, Melbourne)

William Yang

Playwright, performer, author and photographer. William Yang's innovative theatre piece, *Sadness*, was made into a film which was awarded the Film Victoria Erwin Rado Award for best Australian Short Film at the *Melbourne International Film Festival* in 1999. He has also written and performed *Bloodlines* and *Friends of Dorothy*.

Date: 24 November 1998, 1.00pm — 3.00pm
Place: North Bondi, Sydney, New South Wales

I was born in 1943 a third generation Australian Chinese. I was born in Dimbulah, North Queensland.

When I was growing up I had no real sense of social history. 'Before the war' was a phrase my parents used. 'We were able to get such and such before the war'. The war was an event that marked a change. It referred to a time past that would never return.

I remember a cousin had postcards from the UK because he was there in the war.

At first we lived in a house in the town of Dimbulah. Then we had a tobacco farm. There was a small cottage on the farm, where we first lived, then my father built a skillion to the larger house and we lived there. The kitchen was separate. It had a large farm table because in the busy season my mother would have to feed the men who worked for us as well. There was a large wood stove, we didn't have electricity.

In the 50s my father built his dream home. It was constructed of concrete brick and covered with white stucco. Italians built it and I have joked that it looked more Italian than Chinese or Australian. The walls were pastel coloured plaster, not painted. In the kitchen we had *Masonite* cupboards that were curved on the corners, they soaked the *Masonite* to curve it. The bench top was green *Laminex*. There was linoleum on the floor, a wood stove, and a kerosene refrigerator. There was a sense of modernity.

It was my job to fill the up the fridge and my mother would scold me if I overfilled it saying that the fridge could explode. There were stories of kerosene fridges that caught fire. They weren't very efficient and in the summer when it was hot and the fridge was full of food it took a long time for the fridge to get cold. Because I was always looking in the fridge and staring at the contents, my mother banned me from opening the fridge.

Although it looked very solid and monumental it wasn't a very practical house.

There was no sun control, no planted trees and no shade on the building. It got the full western sun and the thick concrete walls would retain the heat. The bedrooms were hot until late at night. Later I studied architecture and became scornful of the house and my mother's claim that it was 'the pride of Dimbulah'. I told my father it was a lousy design and I can remember how wounded my parents were by that remark.

In the busy season when we harvested the tobacco my mother was always feeding the men. In the busy time tensions would run high.

In Dimbulah we had Italian share farmers who made their own pasta. The wife would break a dozen eggs into a bed of flour and then mix and knead the dough. Their food was everyday food not high

class. The cooked pasta was served with chicken, which they reared on the farm and tomatoes that they grew.

At home we had a mixture of Australian and Chinese food. I went through a stage of not eating rice. My father liked Chinese food and he could cook. In the kitchen my parents were equal. When they were together my parents probably ate Chinese food but for the men my mother would cook meat and potato and stews. My mother was a good cook. My favourite was roast chicken. We had Sunday roasts with potato and pumpkin. We grew our own vegetables, usually cooked in the Chinese style, not steamed but cut and cooked more like stir-fry.

My mother taught me to cook in the kitchen on the wood stove. She would even make sponge cakes in the wood stove. I haven't made a cake in my life.

My father had this special thing. Outside of Dimbulah there were termite mounds formed into conical shapes. Inside there was a gummy substance that was quite combustible. People would get it out. It looked like a brain. It looked like a sort of coral formation. It would break up easily into this combustible organic matter. It was often burnt on the tobacco seedbeds to sterilize the soil and stop weed growth. Once the organic matter had been burnt out of these hollow conical termite nests my father would saw off the top and it made a natural earth oven in which to roast pigs. He would build a fire in the 'oven', scrape out the coals and put the pig in, cover the hole on top and there the pig would roast in the heat retained by the thick earth walls of the 'oven'. He had his own recipe using oil, spices and aniseed. Years later when I was researching the Chinese in Australia in the Northern Territory I saw some original Chinese stone ovens at Pine Creek. They were of similar shape to the anthills but hand made from stone and cement. I realised an oven like this was a traditional way of roasting suckling pig which was cooked as an offering for New Year and other celebrations. It was very enterprising of my father to convert the anthill into an oven. Maybe someone before him had thought up the idea, I don't know, but roasting the pig was always an exciting event of my childhood.

During the war my parents met Steve Summers an American serviceman stationed in Dimbulah and they became friends. After the war Steve went back to America but every Christmas he and his wife Helen would send us a Christmas card. We got cards for thirty years. They were so elaborate. Some would have embossed satin others were stuffed so the words Merry Christmas stood out like a pillow. In some the glitter was so thick it was like a *Lamington*. Another had a frozen lake of green sequins. They were far more glamorous than anything we could buy although we always bought the best Christmas card in the shop for Steve and Helen but our efforts were terribly tame. These cards were my first impression of the USA even before I saw Hollywood movies.

I had a cousin Phyliss who married someone in Hong Kong where they lived. They would send us photos of their family and postcards from Hong Kong. In her drawer my mother kept several long rolled up photographic scrolls of scenes from Hong Kong Harbour with hundreds of sampans sailing on the muddy water.

I was well behaved as a child but had a rebellious streak that came out when I was about sixteen. When I rejected my parent's view for a bourgeois Australian life a little rift developed.

The kitchen was always the centre of our house. We always ate together. At sixteen I was testing myself and I was difficult and by the time I was twenty I was quite rebellious. I was critical of my parents and found fault.

The biggest disappointment my parents had of me concerned music. My sister and brother and I learned to play the piano. The piano featured in our social life. We would visit friends and part of the social entertainment revolved around playing music, mostly the piano. People would perform, some reluctantly, and there was a social pressure and competition. I reached a higher level than either my sister or brother and my parents had a dream that I would become a concert pianist but I gave it up. It shattered them. They couldn't understand why I wouldn't continue playing the piano since I'd come so far. They didn't have the same expectation of my sister and brother. Once I asked a friend over to dinner and my father started to reminisce about the time I started learning and that my hands were too small to reach an octave. They got so sentimental. It was just so embarrassing, like bringing out the baby photos.

My parents would give badly designed dinner parties. They liked to cook. The guests would arrive and then my parents would completely ignore them for an hour or so while they worked in the kitchen preparing the meal. So it was often left up to me to entertain the guests and I resented that since it was in my difficult period and they weren't my guests they were my parent's friends. My parents didn't have a sense of making guests feel comfortable. It probably never occurred to them that someone could feel uncomfortable in their house. In my opinion they put too much emphasis on the food. In Chinese culture issues are largely unspoken. Differences are never openly discussed. I have the strong impression that Chinese families eat and gloss over problems.

I'd just graduated in architecture at Queensland University. My parents sold the farm and came to live in Brisbane because my brother and I were there. My father wanted my brother and I to move back home with them. My brother did but I was on my way to Sydney. My sister had left years ago and was making a life for herself in America. This period represented the height of my rejection of my parent's values.

My parents moved from Dimbulah to Graceville, a suburb of Brisbane. It was the Australian dream on a suburban block on stilts, quite ordinary. There was a very big kitchen and a big deck outside that was quite attractive. The kitchen had a table and was quite comfortable.

After my mother died my world changed. I realised that all my relationships with my relations were through her. After she died I had to invent relationships. I suppose I hadn't really been interested in making them. All information about my relatives came from my mother she had the family story. When she died I lost the connection.

All the family information seemed to come from women not from men. Men tell me nothing. Nothing I want to know. I don't follow football. I intimidate them because I have been on TV. It takes me time to get on with them but I get on with the wives.

In traditional Chinese society, not that I've lived by these rules because we were assimilated, modes of behaviour are important. Certain subjects such as sex are never discussed, certainly not in public. Things are brought up obliquely, not directly. You are supposed to know how you are supposed to behave. It's a very set form, and if you transgress you are usually not told just frozen out, never mentioned again.

There was little Chinese migration at all in the 50s or for most of this century, because of the White Australia Policy. In Dimbulah Italians, Yugoslavs, Poles and other Europeans made up half the town. Dimbulah was a tobacco town, a multi racial town. They were the New Australians. We regarded

ourselves as the established Australians.

In the 1960s many students came to Australia to study under the Colombo Plan. Many people when they met an Asian assumed they were students. The idea of an Australian born Chinese was not widely appreciated. At the time I felt uncomfortable about my Chinese identity and when people assumed I was a student I'd say I was.

I got an architectural degree and practiced for a while in the late 60s. Then I dropped it. I tried to make theatre a career but it wasn't successful. I became a freelance photographer first taking pictures of actors and that's how it started. It seemed easier than being a playwright. I don't think I was ever very interested in architecture. Not passionate. My friends were passionate about doorjambes or fascinated by a lintel. I wasn't involved in that way. I don't think I was meant to be an architect. Architects are interested in buildings not so much people. They're interested in construction. Maybe this is getting back to a male/female thing. Men are interested in construction and women have a sense of family. Anyway theatre was more seductive than architecture. I can feel the link from Shakespeare to the present.

When I was six someone said to me, '*ching chong Chinaman, born in a jar, christened in a teapot, ha ha ha*'. I was perplexed. I asked my mother why he would say this to me. I said I'm not Chinese am I? She said I was. I was devastated. To that point I had no idea I was Chinese or different in any way. Years later I met a Taoist teacher who taught me Taoism and then I went in search of my Chinese spirituality. In a cultural sense not a religious sense; in a directional and philosophical sense not a religious sense.

I quite like Chinese culture with its inbuilt spirituality. Heaven to the mind of a Chinese is as earth is to us, as real a concept as the physical world. This is not the way it is in the western world.

I cook here, mainly vegetables, seldom meat. I buy the meat cooked such as ham or a chicken from Chinatown. Often I cook in the wok or make a stew. If I'm writing I like making a stew. It's a slow process. I take time from writing to peel a few onions, then I go back to writing, then I come back and add some white radish. The things I eat are rather limited I get into a habit, same old things. I like it when someone stays with me and changes my diet. I had a person here from China and he was amazed that offal here is very cheap no one here wants to eat it when in China it's among the more expensive cuts. So we were eating kidneys and heart, which at first I wasn't that keen about, but then I got to like it. I get crushes on things. I ate Chinese cabbage as the main green vegetable for a year. This year it's English spinach.

When I eat out I like Chinese. I eat out medium often. Or I eat Jewish. I like the local Jewish version of a grill with a salad and vegetable bar Savion, just down the road. I like to eat at Bondi or Chinatown.

The sound of the kitchen to me is the sound of chopping. But I remember my parents arguing in the kitchen quite a lot. I thought their marriage was not a good match. But my mother was distraught when my father died. She loved him.

When my mother was teaching me to cook she said carrots were for colour only. There was an awareness of the colour of food as well as the taste. My mother had a yellow plate she would often serve things on. I inherited it. It is one of the few physical links to the family.

There were no cleaning rituals in our house, nothing like that. I'm not good with floors but I'm good at washing up. When my life is in order the dishes are always washed. A friend said that it was always

easier to clear up a mess when it was warm rather than when it was cold. She meant soon after you've made it. I guess I agree with that.

I don't like cooks who use all the saucepans.

Eating is functional and practical but it becomes a social statement when it is a celebration. I often celebrate birthdays with a dinner. It marks a change. And it's a way of enjoying life. There was a time when I had low self-esteem. I was uncertain about where I belonged. Then I hated birthdays. I felt unworthy of the whole ritual. I hated being the centre of attention. When I lived in shared households I would sometimes have dinners and there'd often be a point when I felt that the other people weren't helping enough and I'd feel pissed off and I'd think, this is the last time I'm asking anyone over for dinner. But now I don't feel that way. I often have dinner parties and I always enjoy them, except if the guests fight. Now I use the dinner as an excuse to tidy up the house, to clean the bathroom, and it seems that the energy from the dinner flows into other domestic areas. So they are never a problem now. I always have birthday parties, not every year, but often. Let's enjoy life while we are alive, while we can. At the beginning I went through an austere stage, I'd say, 'no presents'. Now I think, if someone wants to give me something why deny them the pleasure. Now I accept it, I say thank you. It has been a difficult journey to arrive at a position when I felt I could receive graciously.

This house has been checked for feng shui. I sleep with the bed facing a certain way to align myself with the direction of the energy flow. I rent this place. At one time I tried to buy it but financially I look so bad on paper it was too hard to get a loan. When I thought about it owning it wasn't really important to me I haven't got any dependents to leave it to. In the end I bought a new set of computerised projectors. I don't feel my life is unfulfilled because I don't own a house.

My mother was not happy with me because I did not fulfil any of her dreams. There was nothing I could do that would make my mother think highly of me. But she loved me anyway and I just gave up trying. You seek parental approval and it was liberating for me not to seek it.

I think we are defined by the generation we grow up in.

Filial piety, I don't go with that.

Rosa Matto

Chef, Cooking School Director and Olive Oil expert,

Date: Sunday 10 January 1999, 2.30pm – 4.30pm
Place: Goodwood, Adelaide, South Australia

My parents arrived in Australia in 1953 chasing the great *Australian dream*. I was born in 1954.

Our first house was a bluestone cottage in suburban Adelaide. When we made good, my father rendered it to make it look more Italian. He made it pale terracotta all over when it wasn't fashionable. My brother and I were appalled. My mother and father were very proud.

The house was in Prospect, which was quite a cultural mix with plenty of 'New Australians'. I loved that term even though it was often used in a derogatory manner but it was accurate. I was still called a 'New Australian' when I was twelve. My brother wondered when we would be 'Old Australians'. We felt that we had moved on and we wondered when Australians would notice that we had. Assimilation has been the government policy but people still ask where I come from. I'm now a professional Italian so I play on that, it's how I make my living.

My parents came from a little village in the hills behind Naples where there was mainly subsistence farming. My father's father was a very fair man and instead of giving all his land to the oldest son he divided the land into equal parcels to give to his children, even the girls. Unfortunately this meant that no one could make a good living because each parcel was too small. So the boys gave the land to their sisters and moved on to greener pastures.

My father's older brother was the first to come to Australia and he stayed with various families. The Italians established unofficial boarding houses and sponsored new people into South Australia. By the time my father and his brother came out a little house had been set up. My family was always sponsoring other people. My father was well respected within the Italian community and responsible for many families from his village coming here.

In the little house there was never just my family. There were always people, in the beds and bathtubs, wherever they would fit. My brother and I resented this. We ended up with lots of 'Aunties' and 'Uncles' related only because they stayed in our house. When my father died eleven years ago the importance of this work was made clear to me at his funeral.

The people would stay in our house anything between three weeks and one and a half years. It is beyond me where we shoved all the bodies; it was only a little house.

It was good for my mother because there was always another woman to talk to and cook and shop with. But the day to day logistics of who slept in what bed! None of this seemed very difficult at the time. The sponsoring at our house went on for nine years until I was eight. Then it all stopped abruptly. I don't know why it stopped. We were a bit like a rubber band that had been stretched and after it stopped we sort of sprung back. We became very private and very jealous of our time together.

In one of the bedrooms there was a panel down the middle that divided it in two. My brother had one half of the room and I had the other. This was my first room. I was ten.

The kitchen was a big room with the sink at the window. There was a small workbench and a big kitchen cabinet with lead light doors. The first cabinet was very attractive but the updated version in chrome and white painted timber was very modern.

My father had very contemporary taste. He got rid of anything that reminded him of home. He liked space saving furniture. Everything had an extra purpose. Everything had a place. He was quite regimented. There was a big table in the middle of the kitchen. It was chrome with red sparkly *Laminex*. Later it was changed to green *Laminex* and then *Laminex* that was silvery white with flecks of gold. But the chairs were always the same red vinyl with black piping. The kitchen was in that format for a long time until we knocked down the wall between the kitchen and the dining room and then another wall to make a verandah. My father called it a little piazza. He was a man of style. He was a factory worker and my mother cleaned part time. There was not a lot of money but we did well enough. We were always well dressed. My father was a very natty dresser.

Later the kitchen changed to an island across a third of the space that separated the cooking and eating areas. We had an ice chest that was enameled in green and white. A man called Bob would bring the ice. He was a 'Rabbit' and 'Bottle-o' as well. Later we got a *Kelvinator* fridge in cream, all rounded and curvaceous with the word *Kelvinator* in chrome across the front. I always loved the chrome lettering. We were the first of the families in our street to have a fridge. The neighbours would ask if they could put their ice cream in our freezer. Mum wrapped each brick of ice cream in newspaper and wrote the house number on the parcel because all ice cream looked the same then. The families would come and get their ice cream and then bring it back for storing until it was all gone.

We had tin ice cream trays with a lever action. I kept them. We used to make lemon gelato and coffee ice with sticky left over coffee. We put it in the ice cream trays and used it to make *Granitas*.

The stove was a *Chef*. It had four gas hot plates, a griller section and oven. That's the first stove that I remember. Then my mother wanted electricity because it was cleaner and she regretted it from the moment it was put in. She now has three gas hot plates and an electric hot plate.

In those early days the families living in the house ate together.

When we had lots of people we had two *Laminex* tables pushed together with some wooden chairs along with our red vinyl chairs. It always felt temporary. There were never more than three families including us. But it was a crowd. The house had only two bedrooms a dining room a formal living room a central passage and bathroom with a *Paterson's* heater. Before the heater my mother boiled all the water in the copper. Saturday night was bath night. Even kids in the street would come. I can remember my brother and I being smacked with a wooden spoon on our bare wet skin for having soap-fights with neighbourhood children.

Everyone in the street was in the same circumstances. There were Greeks, Italians, Polish and Australians. Next to us was an Australian couple, Auntie Bubs and Uncle Tom. They were quite old. Auntie Bubs became the defacto carer of the children when mothers and fathers were at work. After school, she'd do a head count, give us a bush biscuit and send us to play on the road.

There was a very disreputable woman in our street. She was a barmaid, in the days when barmaid was a bad word. She was a 'good sort' even though she worked in a pub and wore very bright lipstick and came home very late at night and fell over the milk bottles. She had painted on eyebrows. If she came

out of her house to tell us off for making too much noise on Sunday morning she would come out without any eyebrows and we would all laugh and point.

Aunty Bubs and Uncle Tom had a TV and they would put it in the hall so people could congregate on the lawn to watch it. The children would go to sleep and the adults would watch until it finished for the night. Each group brought food. This is the first time I remember eating Greek food like *Taramasalata*.

We grew our own vegetables such as zucchini, broccoli and eggplant because you couldn't buy them. My mother gave them to Aunty Bubs and a widow called Mrs Wade until she realised that they didn't know what to do with them. Later she gave them cooked dishes. Food shared was often a repayment for help.

Italians love lamb but it has to be very young. Anything that smelled like mutton was not on. Aunty Bubs boiled potatoes scoring the flesh with a fork and roasted them with the mutton every Sunday. She used to give roast potatoes to my mother who didn't know how to cook them in just this way. We couldn't eat the potatoes in the house because they had been cooked with the mutton and father hated the smell. He kept the windows firmly shut on Sunday to keep out the smell.

We often had parties and Aunty Bubs and Uncle Tom would always come but not the other people in the street. Parents never intervened in children's disputes when they arose. Sometimes in the summer there would be a gathering of kids and parents on the front lawn. The parents would drink beer. My father had a good voice and my parents always sang. It was excruciating for my brother and I. Often there would be a wedding on a Saturday night and the extended family would all come. It was the equivalent of the whole village coming. We have lots of pictures. Always they were drinking beer. They really took to beer here. We used the bottles for sauce. I still can't get enough beer bottles for bottling tomato sauce. Bottles need to be dark and able to accept a crown seal so beer bottles work well. There was wine but it was homemade and usually foul. Wine was always a highlight to make because we literally stomped on the grapes with our feet until such time as we got a winepress. Lots of people came to make wine. The press was in Uncle Frank's shed. People would 'book' in to press their grapes and then the juice was stored in demi-johns.

It was necessary for our family to make sauce in order to eat the way we did. We would buy tomatoes from the growers at Virginia and Two Wells, in South Australia. We could make up to four hundred bottles with two families working. Tomato sauce is the hallmark of Southern Italian cooking.

There was always associated food that was made at the same time as the sauce. Pizza with squashed tomato on top, corn wrapped and put in the coals and figs for dessert. Later when gas burners were more common we lost the associated food.

We grew our own basil and this was a sacrosanct patch.

We were busy and happy in the fifties and early sixties although there were demons.

My mother had several nervous breakdowns and my father had his demons too. My father who was formal, regimented, found himself living in an informal society.

He tried hard to fit in. Everyone called him Albert instead of his real name, which was Alberico. Even Aunty Bubs and Uncle Tom after twenty years couldn't actually pronounce his name. He had worked

very hard to fit in and towards the end he became bitter about not being accepted and having to make compromises in his new country.

My father was a shop steward but didn't go to meetings because his accent was too hard for the bosses to understand. But the men on the shop floor could understand him. My father insisted we learn English well and he encouraged English at home. Later they went back to speaking Italian at home and then it became a mixed routine of English and Italian. He was proud of me when later I taught English. He had a liberal attitude. I actually had to go back to University to learn Italian because it was very much my second language. My Italian is good now but it's been a conscious effort to learn. On the other hand cousins spoke English as a second language. In their homes there was dialogue in English but Italian was the first language.

My mother was not physically strong. She got worn out. It seemed to affect her emotions that she had no life of her own. Before I was born she was washing, cooking and cleaning for a lot of men and because many were shift workers she would have to do double time in the kitchen. Then the families began staying. It wasn't easy. It created tensions. My mother was a private person with no space to herself. And we were demanding children. We never did any housework because we had homework. We didn't do chores because she didn't expect that. She was a bit of a martyr. It was a grueling time for her. She felt isolated. My father had personal resources but she didn't read magazines or books. Father was gregarious and she was shy.

She cried and was depressed and couldn't do anything. It was possibly hormonal. She had a hysterectomy at thirty-eight. She was never really treated for her depression. Drugs made her seem more dopey. There were no Italian doctors or psychiatrists as there are now. She had no family here only my father's family. My father's family dominated our lives. They took over and mostly she didn't mind. Perhaps she was taken for granted. She was warm and giving but had no success in her own right. Although she was a very good cleaner — it was her life's work, and she was proud of the respect she earned at work. She had electric shock treatment that took years to get over. Sometimes we would visit or take her out in the *Hillman*. She was in and out of hospital for nearly two years. We picnicked outside the hospital while Dad visited Mum. I remember these picnics. I had my first Gorgonzola cheese at one of these picnics.

This all happened when I was about ten and eleven. My mother was sadder when she came home. I remember she came home for my twelfth birthday but we couldn't have a party because she was not well enough. I remember being hurt.

She is sixty-nine now and lives by herself. We talk every day and see each other frequently. It is a very natural relationship. She now has a life of her own. Widow friends drive her about and they go out quite a lot.

At Prospect, across the road from our house there was the perfect *great American dream house*. It was a triple fronted brick veneer with an open plan interior. There were steps down into the living room and lots of space efficient furniture. Betty, who was an only child, lived there and Betty's mother was a harridan. We loved their house. My mother now has a house just like it. So much light and space with big windows and a compact front garden with neat cement paving, all very practical and easy to keep tidy. There were flower-beds surrounded with concrete circles and a small backyard with a lawn and a clothes hoist. We had a clothes hoist but we swung on ours.

We were updating our house too. Our place didn't change more than we could afford. Father paid cash for everything or we didn't get it.

We ate differently from families of other nationalities. Italian houses all smelt the same sauce cooking, garlic and onions frying. Australian houses smelt differently from ours.

My mother-in-law is a 5th generation Australian and her house always smells different. No lingering cooking smells. We try to recognise the smells, try to guess as part of a sensory game. I play this with a friend from Bagdad. I have always been curious about smells, drawn to smells. I like to look in pots on the stove.

The Chinese influence came quite late. We didn't eat out in restaurants as kids. The first Chinese meal we ate was at Christmas time on a trip to Melbourne. Christmas Eve dinner was always a special Italian thing but on this occasion the only place open was Chinese. There were no Italian restaurants open they would all have been home cooking eel and other Christmas foods. We had fried rice, sweet and sour pork with pineapple in it and a red sauce. It was so bizarre but it was good. My mother wouldn't eat it because Italians are not supposed to eat meat on Christmas Eve. I thought I was going to die and go to hell. I was about twelve and my mother was back with us.

I'm not a practicing Catholic but it was a lovely part of my childhood. I feel I should go back to Church for the children. Church was a fulfilling social event where one wore one's best dress, took communion, heard mass, and later shared coffee at home with friends. The ideal of shared common values is very attractive to me these days.

My children are baptized and go to Catholic schools. It's a New Year's resolution to go back to Sunday mass but it depends on the priest, his intelligence and his approach. We have met some intelligent and urbane priests and it could be good for the children.

There was a Greek family next door and sharing was very tied up with being Greek. They played Greek music and even the children would dance and know the steps. There were smells over the back fence. Smells, rich and intrusive in a way, but delicious, different from ours. They cooked lamb on the spit. We could just call in and they would feed us. My parents would ask what they were eating and it was always meat and lots of salads.

There was a regional influence too in our cooking from the people who stayed at our house. Like a potato dish from Padua and a pasta sauce from Calabria. Subtle influences.

My mother was still learning to cook when she started to cater for large numbers in Australia. She was not really skilled at it in the early days but she was an open book, ready to learn, not like my Aunts. She was not set in her ways. Poverty made an impact because we ran out of money at the end of each week and the meals would get plainer and plainer.

I remember a red lentil soup with a boiled potato in the middle and olive oil drizzled over. I refused to eat it at the time. My father hit me and made me eat it. It may have been all that there was. Today I think it would be delicious. I asked my mother to cook it one day and she got very angry and said we didn't have to eat that way any more.

We always had good bread, some cheese and oil. A great Italian snack is good bread, olive oil and

sugar, a bit like hundreds and thousands. A real treat for Australian children was bread with hundreds and thousands. I had a friend who really wanted her mother to make this for her with real hundreds and thousands but she wouldn't. One day as a surprise she did, but forgot to butter the bread and the hundreds and thousands fell off. My friend never told her mother.

My son had never had baked beans from a can because we always make our own.

I bought a can recently and they were really awful, sweet, not like ours at all. As a child I longed for baked beans and spaghetti in tins, mashed banana sandwiches and camp pie. So far away from the Italian dishes my family cooked. I went to an Australian friend's house one day and for some reason looked under a bed and it was stacked with thousands of cans of tinned peaches. I didn't say anything. Maybe they were on special at the Supermarket.

My mother shopped nearly every day on the way home from work. And she went to the market twice a week for things that we didn't grow. This was all very different from the Anglo Celtic/Irish homes.

We moved, but still in Prospect, to the cream brick house which my father did not dream of rendering. There were never vegetables in the front garden. There were flowers in the front and vegetables in the back garden. In the back yard there was also a lawn and flowerbeds and a metal frame over which grapes grew. There were always grapes.

In the cream brick house the kitchen was much the same. Benches all round the walls with drawers at the top and cupboards beneath. There was a big window and a sink, all very open. Then we divided it after two years with a low bench to separate cooking from eating. My mother still lives there. If my mother moves it will be for a bigger kitchen table so that we can all sit around it.

My mother has written down recipes, not in a book but she has a box full of recipes. She can find a recipe in this box very quickly by just the shape and colour of the paper. There are some Greek recipes but mostly they are Italian. She doesn't usually work to a recipe but she now wants to do more elaborate things so she and I write recipes together.

Antonia Bruzzaniti

Primary producer based at Woodend, Central Victoria.

Hydroponically grown tomatoes have been the primary crop until 2002 when tomatoes gave way to the less demanding but high yielding cucumber.

Date: 7 March 1999, 7.00pm - 9.00pm

Place: Woodend, Central Victoria

My parents came from Calabria. In Calabria my parents worked the land. Not their land but land owned by growers who were better off. They were paid not in money but in the vegetables they grew. Money was scarce and they really worked for food to survive.

My parents lived in a house with no defined kitchen just an open fire in the corner with a tripod. Everything was cooked on the fire or in the oven my father built. We were lucky to have the oven and those who didn't have one shared ours. Few people knew how to build the oven but my father had the skill. It was a skill passed from his father to him. He knew the secrets. To make sure the ashes were clean before setting the bricks to ensure it heated. My mother also worked on the land.

My mother would cook mainly vegetables and pasta there wasn't much meat but by adding different things to the vegetables and pasta she could make lots of different dishes. She added dry beans, dried fruits, tomatoes and they even dried prickly pears. They dried lots of things as they came into season.

Everyone had a pig but you needed permission to kill the pig. We made salami, which was a good response to having no refrigeration. And the salami could be made different by adding fennel or oregano, made hotter with chilli, or it could be made sweet. The big ones were put under oil. There were lots of different flavours. My parents picked olives in the summer.

On the land everything was done with a horse and plough. You made your own flour. You took your grain to be milled. You couldn't buy anything you had to make your own. There was only access to a small grocery shop where you could buy pasta, if you didn't make your own, and salt and coffee.

My earliest memories of the kitchen are from 1957 when I was about five. Even earlier I can remember my mother holding and carrying me because there was no stroller. My father was in Australia and my mother was left in Italy with two children to take care of. I can remember my mother carrying me to the house of her Mother-in-law hoping she would offer dinner, but she never did.

There was just us in the kitchen, I don't remember guests. Mother did all of the cooking. My father didn't do any — he was brought up that women were in the kitchen.

There was no TV so there were mainly games with other children. School finished at 12.00pm and then we would play in the streets. I was supposed to come home at a certain time but my mother would have to come in the evening to find me. I was a tomboy. My parents were quite patient. I don't remember either of them smacking me.

When I was a child I got on well with my sister but when she got married and left home there was some distance. I was sorry she got married because I was on my own and I was only thirteen. She was six years older than I was.

By 1966 we had come to Australia to live in Moonee Ponds. My father had the house rented and we moved in. We didn't ever go far from Moonee Ponds. My parents wouldn't go to Queensland they liked to feel safe to know where they were. They wouldn't even go to Kew. They only went to Footscray or Moonee Ponds, never further than five kilometres, which was OK but further than that and they were out of their comfort zone. That's why they need me. I take them where they want to go.

In Moonee Ponds the kitchen was tiny with bright colours. There was a green cast iron gas stove with the oven underneath. Brightly coloured cabinets in blues and whites. It was a rented house in bad condition. There was a *Laminex* table in the centre of the kitchen and benches built in on one side. The kitchen chairs were chrome with padding and we had a coffee table to match in a bright red design with glass on top. It wobbled a lot — we still have it.

My father had prepared this house for us. He came to Australia in 1962 and we came in 1966. Those four years alone in Italy were very hard for my mother. At first my father couldn't send any money so she had to leave us to work for food. That was really the only problem. There were no electricity bills to pay because there were only oil lamps, no land rates. No costs other than food.

When my father went away I didn't really miss him. It didn't bother me. I suppose I still had my mother and I was with the other kids. I was aware it was hard for my mother. No I didn't miss him isn't that strange?

When we arrived in Australia I went straight to school, I must have been eight because they put me straight into grade four. But I didn't have any language. I didn't fit in well. I was just warming the seat. We didn't have teachers who could help with the language. I was there for one year only. Just warming the seat. It was a terrible year.

Then my parents moved me to St. Monica's in Moonee Ponds and I repeated the year because I had failed. We had a different teacher who came in to help with reading and writing. I picked up reading first. At first I couldn't sound the alphabet or spell. I did it on my own. My parents couldn't help with the language. They managed to keep jobs without English. My mother always found it easy to get a job.

In Australia there was more meat, more food than I could imagine. There was food in the cupboards because my mother shopped every week and my father went to the market. He brought home boxes of fruit. We had everything. Chocolate. I made chocolate sandwiches with a block of chocolate between two slices of bread. We had everything we didn't have in Italy but too much. It was heaven. Every Sunday there was a big family lunch. This was when everyone was younger and all the children were at home. We had lasagne, pasta, roast chicken, a lot of food including fruit in season and a lot of it. My father would always buy a whole watermelon never a quarter. Cherries. He'd buy a box. He would bring boxes of things. Things out of season any time of the year and bananas all of the time. I didn't know what a banana was in Italy.

I remember my first meat pie. I didn't like the smell at first. I watched girls eat them with a spoon to stop them dripping on their uniform. All that black stuff. At first my mother made my lunch and gradually I came to buy it from the tuck shop. At first a sausage roll and then later, pies. I like pies now. My mother went to work for *Four and Twenty* and she would bring home plenty of pies and give them away.

The kitchen was a family place. We stayed in the kitchen until late because there was better light in that room after dark. There was no TV when I came out so I went to a neighbour's house to watch. I liked

puppets and Disney and I remember *The Monkeys*. On weekends there would be cowboy movies like *Rin Tin Tin*, *The Rifle Man* and *Gun Smoke*.

I never got invited to the homes of Australian girls. I got along better with other 'New Australians' because we shared something. I couldn't join in the new language very well; it didn't make me happy. I went to the homes of other 'New Australians' but just to visit rather than eating. I kept in contact with these friends for a while.

I did a hairdressing course, got a diploma and worked in Footscray for a Greek girl. I liked hairdressing because I had to. It was my mum's choice. I did the training, I passed and I worked. My mother was proud but it wasn't me. I couldn't see myself doing it for the rest of my life.

I got married in 1977. We moved into my parents first owned house. They renovated the kitchen for us and it looked like Moonee Ponds. They renovated the kitchen and bathroom.

There was orange *Laminex* on the benches and a stove with a fan above it in the ceiling. They put in two big windows to let in more light. The back was nearly all kitchen. The floor was tiled. The tiles looked Greek to me, ugly. They looked like outside tiles. It was all orange and brown. It was modern for 1977 with a double sink. It was clean and new and my parents felt that it had to be new for the newly married couple. They were trying to help us get a start.

I liked cooking but my husband was hardly ever home. I cooked, I waited, I threw it out. He went to his mother's. He was my first cousin. It was not a totally arranged marriage. I was willing to marry him from a child. My father's brother got involved in matchmaking. My family thought it seemed a good idea.

The marriage lasted six months. My husband used to say that if we didn't get along that's what divorce was for. I wasn't sure what he meant. His parents wouldn't come to our house. I would go with him to their house but they would never come to our house. I later found out that when I went to work they would come to see if I was keeping the house clean enough.

My husband was an abusive man who would call my parents in the middle of the night. When he left me it took twelve months for the divorce. I didn't want a divorce. It took ten years to adjust to the fact that he was not coming back. In Italy you don't divorce. Those that do often marry older men and I didn't want another arrangement.

My parents had worked hard. They had two homes here and land in Italy. My husband's family came to Australia with nothing and he goes straight into a home without having to rent.

I went into a Pizza shop business with my sister and her husband. We ate lots of Pizza late at night when it was quiet. I did a lot of the cooking. My sister and I would cook, serve and take orders. My favourite Pizza had tomato, lots of cheese, lots of hot salami, olives and a tiny bit of anchovies. I'd splash some tomato over the top. The pastry was very thin. We had the Pizza shop for three years and I experienced working for myself. Learned about responsibility and the fact that you had to be there all the time. When we had the shop we would often go into the city after work looking for the perfect Chinese restaurant. It was very late at night in the city. We'd buy the food and take it away. If we didn't like it we'd throw it away. We found our favourite Chinese restaurant opposite the Victoria Market. Their fried rice was special. Frank, my sister's husband, liked it spicy so the chef would add

chilies. Sometimes we would take our Chinese food to the beach in the summer when no one was there it was so late. When we sold the shop we stopped going out at that time of night.

When my sister and I were both at home we would take turns to wash the dishes. My sister and I always cleared the table. I cooked sometimes when my mum was doing overtime. I'd leave her dinner on the stove and go and watch TV. It would burn and I'd get into trouble. TV was more important than the kitchen.

After we sold the shop I rested for three years. By then my father had the farm at Woodend and I'd help out.

My sister, her husband and I had another Pizza shop in Footscray for two years, mainly takeaway. After that I worked for a while sewing bed linen for *Drynen Imports*. I did this at home. I was my own boss again. I didn't like it much and the pay wasn't good. Then I started growing strawberries at the Woodend farm.

On the farm my father had a bit of this and a bit of that. I thought the strawberries tasted good and they did well at Woodend. I enlarged the planting to thirteen hundred which was really too much. I picked them and sold them to the local supermarket and to fruit shops in the city. And to conference centres like *Cammerary Waters* and *The Bentinck Country Hotel* at Woodend. They were easy to sell. A quick sell because they were fruit. With children you can buy two punnets and do a lot with them, ice cream, cakes.

I felt growing or making food if it tastes good you can't fail, it's part of life and there's never enough good quality. Whatever I grow will sell as long as it looks good and tastes good.

Everything you put into the ground can succeed. I get angry if I fail. With the tomatoes if something genetic happens to a plant and it changes I cry over it. With the strawberries I didn't live at Woodend permanently. I had more time. The work is in the season, there's nothing to do in winter, and you just wait for re-growth. The strawberry season was short. We picked in December, January, February, and March and the rest of the year there was no income. You need more. I couldn't cope on my own. It's backbreaking. I decided on a greenhouse.

Hydroponically grown foods have been around since the Egyptian times. I didn't know about hydroponics. I saw these lovely tomatoes and I read up on them. I found out that they were easy to grow and you didn't have to worry about the weather conditions. I didn't worry about the cost of the greenhouse construction and tanks because planning was there. I was the labour to grow and look after the tomatoes but I didn't expect all this work. I'm still learning. There are some fungal diseases brought on by the humidity in the greenhouse that can wipe out the crop but I haven't come across this.

The tomatoes in my greenhouse totally depend on me, like children. The computer controls the heating and the balance of humidity and the fabric keeps out the wind and rain but I have to manage the feeding for the different growth stages. They need a boost to harden them when they are juvenile and then I ease it down so they concentrate on growing fruit.

Tomatoes are my life. I live in this greenhouse. I'm fussy. I get up at 6.00am - 6.30am each morning and I'm in the greenhouse by 7.00am and finish about thirteen hours later in summer and by 5.00pm in winter.

when it's dark. You do better in summer than winter. Plants like the natural light. I don't leave them, I'm afraid to leave them: I'm obsessed by them.

I have a horticultural adviser. I told him that I didn't wait for the flowers to fall off once the fruit had set. I take them off. I don't allow them to fall into the pot to cause disease. He said I was obsessed.

I have 3,484 plants and they are all dependent on me. When they're healthy they're beautiful. I like to see colour in the plant it means a lot in a plant. You can see if it's missing out if it doesn't take up water — it will wilt. You read the plant. I am learning now.

Every two weeks the Doctor, my horticultural adviser, comes to visit. He gives me advice, reassurance and support because I am on my own.

My brother-in-law helps three times a week and he sleeps over. He's very good. He makes the time to help. He doesn't feel responsible but wants to help because my father and I can't do it by ourselves. Actually I set the greenhouse up because his two sons were unemployed. They were happy to come into the business for free. They came once and then left.

The tomato is a most important food. I taste to see if other tomatoes are as good as mine. We use tomatoes in everything. We bottle them. Tomatoes, oil and bread, these three things you must have. If you have them you won't starve.

Of my mother's cooking my favourite is *Spaghetti and Mince Meat*. I always eat the spaghetti and leave the mince until later. Don't ask me why. I love her eggplant made in the oven.

We talk about recipes. My sister has the new recipes. She has lots of Italian friends and they share and we taste. We taste new food at her house. She blazes the trail because she is more interested in cooking and she is a very good cook. She learnt not from my mother but by meeting new families when she got married. We try it and then add to the existing recipe. She likes rich things.

Colour in the kitchen? I think of the night and warmth, warm colour and sitting at the table together. Nothing has happened during the day to split us up. We are always together. It is important. When we eat together we know we are alive.

The noise of the fan is the sound of the kitchen. We cook with a lot of steam. If the fan is on someone's cooking. The smell — you can smell it outside. I know what my mother is making because the smells are in the brain.

Growing tomatoes makes me feel like I am doing something in a different situation. If I was married or had children I wouldn't be able to do this. It's challenging. For me to know I have succeeded I have to see red fruit on the plant. Sometimes I've grown Christmas trees, tomato plants that do not bear. I learn to control the plant, the light, food, and temperature.

The plants have three stages, the juvenile stage, the flowering, when the fruit is formed, and the stage when I cut the top off. Once you have learned what to do it becomes easier.

Ambition. Once I have mastered tomatoes I want to grow something different, perhaps flowers. But I need my Ps' in tomato growing before I attempt to change.

I don't want to depend on a book I want to be independent, to know.

I go to a course at the North Melbourne Institute on hydroponics and plant growth but I'm really ahead of them. I really needed that course before I started.

Somehow growing fruit seemed to be a breeze, more exciting. And I want to be better and better at growing tomatoes. If I can get forty kilo from one plant then I want to try to get forty-five kilo.

Change can improve people; it can alter their lives.

I get lonely sometimes because I have no social life. I think sometimes about old age. I think I want to die first, before my parents, so I won't be alone. I don't want to be by myself.

Fred Cress

Australian figurative painter. Cress spends half the year in Sydney, Australia and the other half in France. In March 1999 I attended a Master Class conducted by Cress at the Central School of Art, Adelaide, South Australia

Date: 24 March 1999, 5.30pm - 7.30pm

Place: Central School of Art, Adelaide, South Australia

I was born in Poona, India in 1938. There were three brothers who died at birth.

My mother never cooked while she lived in India it was all done by the servants. We led a reasonably ordinary existence at the lower end of everyone's expectations. My father was in the army and servants were simply a part of that life. We had five servants including a shared laundry person and gardener. My mother practised nursing at the local hospital.

I have no early recollections of kitchens or food. I was a very sickly child until the age of three and during this time I nearly died three times. There was a high infant mortality in India. I had some sort of paralysis, Scarlet Fever, and some other illness, and spent lots of time in bed. On one occasion when I was very sick I asked to eat curry Dahl. Since it looked like I might die my mother thought what harm could it do. I seemed to get better. On another occasion a faith healer who attended me said I would become a painter and would become world famous. This seemed very strange in Poona. There were no artists in the family to relate to. I was actually sickly until the age of sixteen.

During my first ten years my father was away more or less all the time. At the age of five I was sent to boarding school. Everyone went to boarding school at that time. My school was three days travel from Poona to the foot of the Himalayas where I saw snow for the first time and where the mountains echoed to the cries of jackals. It was a military school and we were caned often. The cane meant that you learned to read and write quickly. We were taught in English. The only food I can remember from this time was a jar of lollies we were allowed to have.

When I was nine years and eight months we left India, it was 1948, and India had been granted independence. We travelled by boat to England. Along the way the boat was picking up troops. It stopped at Aden and picked up troops that slept on the deck. Our first port of call in England was Liverpool and it was a shock. Low sky, damp, close houses, grey.

We settled in Birmingham where my mother had relatives. My mother had five brothers and a sister. Her sister married a man from Birmingham and his mother took us in. We faced post-war rationing and it was all very different from India. Even the manners were different. We stayed with my Aunt's husband's mother whom we called, 'Mother', and during this time my own mother began to cook for the first time in her life. All she knew was Indian cooking but there were few Indians in Birmingham in 1948. 'Mother' asked us to leave. We went to stay with other people and they had the same experience, they couldn't stand the smell. They asked us to leave. My father looked for a house and found a small house on land twelve feet by sixty feet with a small front and back garden on the park at Queens Park, Harbourn in Birmingham. This was an original village precinct with immense charm and a good place to live. My father, whom I hardly knew, had to train himself to renovate houses. It was a two up and two down configuration with no bathroom and a toilet in the coal shed. My parents were the first to install a bathroom inside the house. The kitchen was small and there was no room for a communal

table. In the kitchen there was a fridge, a small sink under a window to no-where, and a small cooker. There was a small separate dining room and table. The house was cheap and my father patched the house until it looked good. One day a door slammed and the ceiling fell in. Apparently during the war anti-aircraft guns were based in parks and they shook the houses. That explained the price. We were the first to have central heating. I shared a bedroom with a very sick man, an uncle.

My mother cooked Indian food and anything with spice. She curried everything, curried egg, curried chicken. Food rationing went into the 50s and we were lucky to eat much at all. No one entertained because there was no food. Usually people met at the pub and had pork pies and chips, crisps that is. My parents both worked. My mother got a job as a nurse in outpatients at the *Birmingham Ear Nose and Throat Hospital* because she could speak Hindi. More and more Indians were coming to Birmingham because it was the centre for industry.

My mother ran the kitchen at home but my father learned to bake cakes. He went to night classes. He enjoyed it but he never cooked a whole meal. My mother had no interest in cooking.

I went to Grammar school where we were served school lunches. We all sat down every week to the same thing. We started off the week with 'some kind of meat' that nearly put me off meat for life. Usually a roast with mashed potato, peas and gravy. Next day it would be something hamburger-style and then on day three it would be Shepherd's Pie. We always had fish on Friday. I hated school food. Often I would try to sell or swap my meal ticket with someone so I could go and buy chips...dreadful for the teeth.

In the last year of school we sat for the 'O' level GCE. Father wanted me to go to Oxford but I needed seven 'O' levels including maths and German. I got ill, diagnosed with nerves, and missed the art exam. I passed all but maths and German. I had to redo maths and art.

It was during this time that I began to know the art teacher. At first the school had no professional art teacher nor dedicated art room so my first art teacher was the chemistry teacher. He taught us how to sharpen pencils. But I was lucky. I was the class artist. My art teacher suggested I go to art school so I sat the exam and got in. Life began to change, open up. My father was disappointed.

The first two years of study at the *Birmingham College of Art* were very general to open up the possibilities and in the third year we decided on a major. I was being preened for Industrial Design. My father and the college felt this was the best course because of job prospects but the best students always went into painting. I read a book on Renoir and was fascinated by the fact that he was still painting right to the end of his life even when the brushes had to be strapped to his wrists. I felt painting was something I could do for a long time. I took the painting course. I passed with first class honours and later received an ADT (Art Teachers Diploma). I only found out when my father died that I had passed through college on scholarships. He gave me sixpence a day but it was not enough to eat well.

At eighteen I became interested in music and joined a jazz group and tennis was also an interest. By now having moved away from home eggs, chips and peas had become the staple and a curried dish with sausages. Somewhere in the period 1959-1961 Chinese restaurants emerged in Birmingham with three course meals for two shillings and sixpence.

Young and keen to travel I left England for Australia because the ticket only cost ten pounds on the Migrant Scheme. There were no Indian restaurants in Australia in 1962. The first week I was here it was

one hundred and seven degrees. I walked down Collins Street dressed as an English art teacher with bow tie and calf-skin shoes. I was told that the *Ceylon Tea Centre* was the only place where I might find Indian food and I went looking for it. A man in the street introduced me to *Florentinos*. His name was Tom Lazar and at *Florentinos* I met Ian Syme among others who wondered why I had come to Australia when everyone in the sixties was leaving.

I had no prejudices about race or colour, I didn't even know a friend of mine was Jewish. It meant nothing to me. My parents brought me up to be like that I didn't know about class I went to a Grammar school based on merit. Eventually I met rich people who introduced me to the class structure but the 'English Club' system always remained a mystery to me.

I joined the *Musicians Club* in Melbourne and that's where I learned about eating oysters and lobsters. I really learned to cook as a bachelor when duties were a week about. On your week you would have to do all the shopping and cooking no matter what. We all put in a certain amount for the purchase of food. 'Thunge' was my specialty. The term came from *The Goon Show*, 'thunge a great big steaming mass of marrarable thunge'. 'Thunge' is anything you want to make it. Everyone seemed to enjoy it. It had nothing to do with a recipe. I quite enjoyed cooking despite the fact that I had to learn to cook lamb chops and the roast on Sunday.

These were the staples of Wangaratta where I found myself after I applied for a teaching post. It was here that I could also further my interest in tennis. But while I found I was very good stylistically it was in Wangaratta that I discovered the difference between style and substance. There the substance was to 'win' not just to look good.

After two years I took up a lectureship at *Caulfield Technical College*.

I rented a room from a man I knew from the *Musician's Club*. He had a big house. His wife had left him because he could never finish the house. He made fixing the house a life's work. I introduced him to a musician I knew from Birmingham and we decided to have a huge party. It started at seven and ended at dawn with five different jazz bands playing. In the morning we found the garden filled with tents and neighbours who had moved in to listen to the music. Once a month we cooked dinner and the three of us invited guests turn around. We often had sixteen to dinner with jazz in the evening. I met a woman at one of our parties. She often came but had zero interest in me. I made a point of inviting her on my turn. She became my first wife. I cooked and played guitar in a house filled with paintings. She was impressed but she was going away quite soon after. I insisted she go and we got engaged in London. Anne was in advertising at the time but is an artist in her own right now. She benefited from being able to meet really good painters and participate in well-informed discussion about painting.

We bought a weatherboard house in South Caulfield, Melbourne, at the end of 1966 and married in 1967. The first room we worked on was the kitchen. Anne's lover before me was an architect so she had some idea of what to do. I now do a lot of renovation but at the time I didn't know anything about renovation. Today I have a house in France that I renovate which I don't think I will ever finish. I like that, the fact that I've got things to do. When we bought the house I didn't even know how to mow the lawn I had to ask the neighbours how to do it. At the time my wife was the designer while I had no taste. She knew what she wanted, how things should look, I was the worker. We entertained in that house. We had a dining room next to the kitchen. My wife learned to cook. At the beginning I hardly noticed. We had lots of parties. We served fashionable things like *Fondues*, no Indian food. To look smart my wife did some Italian things with spaghetti. I was addicted to curry which I ate at lunch. I found a place

where I trained them to make what I wanted.

In 1969 my parents came out from England to live in Australia. My parents lived in the first house that my wife and I bought. My father didn't have enough money to buy it because he never saved. To me owning a house is important.

On the teaching front when I returned from England at the end of 1966 I brought with me new ideas about teaching. I was Acting Head of Painting at *Caulfield* at the time. I found that half of the staff didn't want anything to do with these new ideas while the younger staff and many of the students accepted the ideas. I set up and ran the new course but I didn't teach it. I really ended up with a double job trying to juggle the status quo and the new course. This would become a problem. In 1968 there was a conference for art teachers from Australian and New Zealand held in Melbourne and at the same time we were staging an exhibition at the *Argus Gallery*, called *Zetetic X*, which means to proceed by inquiry. This exhibition presented clearly our current thinking and although we had not been invited as delegates to the conference questions were asked considering the relevance of the student work shown. I suddenly found I was very busy. I was however being propelled as a teacher not a painter. My wife informed me she was pregnant with our first child on the night the show opened. It seemed painting was slipping away. Now I was a father, a handyman and gardener. I had no idea. I planted fruit trees.

When my parents arrived we moved to East Malvern to a house my wife hated. In the move I got a larger studio space. At Malvern there was a three-car garage that I claimed as a studio. It was here that I painted the crumpled pictures.

Eventually the new Dean saw the division at *Caulfield* as my problem and I was sacked. *Prahran* and *Swinburne* offered me jobs. I went to *Prahran* because it was close to my eating place, a Transylvanian restaurant. I used to drive from *Caulfield* to *Prahran* just to eat there. The whole incident brought me up short as a teacher. I began to think more about painting. There is no proof of good teaching and the best students have to kill the father, they can't admit what they got from you. To me the only concrete path was painting. I dedicated myself to painting it was 1968. *Prahran* took me in as a high-flying teacher. I was appointed to a board with Lenton Parr and Patrick McCaughey established to overview all V.I.C. (Victorian Institute of Colleges) courses. I still did teacher type things but now I was a painter at heart. At this point I was still miles ahead of my contemporaries in thinking about teaching.

We moved to Sandringham. It was more relaxed. We had a seaside manor. I bought a Bentley and my wife a sports car. I was successful as an artist. In 1974 I travelled to the United States. It was after that trip that I gave up teaching to concentrate on painting.

We moved to Sydney in 1976 because it was the only city in Australia and by then I wanted to be in a city. I was an abstract painter at the time and Sydney was the city of abstraction. We lived at *McMahons Point* then the arse end of the Harbour. We bought our house for \$45,000 and I encouraged *Alun Leach Jones* to buy a house there. Later I bought a warehouse in *Annandale* that I made into a studio.

In 1977 my wife bought me a book on Asian cooking by *Charmaine Solomon*. Just the pictures were enough. We renovated the kitchen and I started to cook Indian/Asian food. The first meal I cooked for guests was a *Biryani with Spicy Cabbage and Pilau Rice*. *Alun Leach Jones* came. I was now interested in cooking. We had dinner parties where I cooked. My wife was losing interest in cooking, food and me. At this point we started going in different directions. I arranged the dinners, invited the guests and

cooked. Eventually we separated and I moved into the studio at Annandale.

The studio at Annandale now includes living quarters. I put a kitchen in there. I met Victoria (my second wife) when she came to photograph me in the studio. She photographed artists working in situ. When she came to me I cooked for her. Victoria loved the idea of a man who could cook and pay the bills. We now spend six months at Annandale and six months in France. Victoria is now a very good cook. She does the bulk of the cooking. I just cook for occasions. In France the kitchen is at the centre of the house and the central table seats twelve. There is a fireplace you can stand inside. We have made the kitchen the heart of the house because we like it like that. It's warm, full of cooking aromas and a communal atmosphere. In the rest of the house we have two bars one by the kitchen and one by the salon. We have TV in the salon and we retire there after dinner.

I vacuum women can't do that. I keep the studio clean and I give the kitchen a clean when it needs a big clean, once monthly, practically with a toothbrush. I'm the one that empties the cutlery drawer and vacuums the crumbs out of it but I'm not obsessive about cleaning. In the studio sometimes I clean to start. I need to keep my studio spaces in order they are both large and I hate wasting time constantly looking for things.

In the kitchen I like light colours. Light = clean. The kitchen must be clean and ordered. When Victoria uses a sharp knife she just leaves it wherever she finishes with it. She would put them in the dishwasher if I didn't stop her. I run around and clean them before she can put them in the dishwasher. When I cook I tend to clean as I go. When the meal is finished and ready to serve there is very little clutter left.

Cooking is relaxing. I can remember at the McMahons Point kitchen when I was married with kids there was something sacrosanct about the space. I couldn't be disturbed I was behind a barrier. I could be seen but not interrupted.

In 1981-1982 the subject of secrecy emerged in my work. This precedes my eating pictures. I had been cooking for a while and had not put together food and secrecy. I was searching for shapes that represented a secret state. By 1986-1987 I was focused on the dining table. I could see what was happening the shapes of eyes, hands, the placement of knives. Everything was laid out and everything had such potential symbolic meaning. There were male and female symbols in simple cut fruit shapes. The table was laden with possibilities. Australians at the table have heaps of energy. Apples and pears can represent male genitalia; I like the colour of tomatoes. I like the idea of a juicy tomato and long things like zucchinis, cucumbers, and knives. The shapes are suggestive. I like aubergine; it's dark, menacing and sexy.

English painters I admired were Bratby, Middleditch and Jack Smith. Of the *British Kitchen Sink* painters John Bratby's style influenced me. In 1958 I painted *Woman at Sink*, in the style of Bratby. Sickert also influenced me and I adopted his style in my final year at college. These pictures were mostly to do with pubs, cafes and dancing halls. Sickert was very interested in dancing halls. His pictures were always about incidental scenes.

I didn't learn jazz it just happened organically. When I was young I was affected by a restless energy. I hardly had time to sleep. When I got to Wangaratta I was used to playing jazz seven nights a week plus the effort required for big concerts live TV and radio appearances and touring. I was an experienced musician. At Wangaratta I was asked to join in although I didn't really want to. With such a wide-open countryside there was so much to see and paint but my musical experience was in demand. I didn't buy

a guitar because I didn't want to be a full time musician. I was also interested in adult art education and began the Art Society. And there was tennis.

I wanted to be sharper, cleaner, and more definite in shape. Everything comes so easily to me that people are often suspicious. People don't like facility. The fact that I could flow easily from one thing to another made people suspicious. I know I am the best figurative draughtsman of my contemporaries. Clearly I wanted to be a painter and in 1965 I stopped playing the guitar but I still play tennis for relaxation.

By the time I was fifty I was a figurative painter. I knew the problems. I was at a crossroads but felt the figurative subject was so strong that I just had to do it. My hero is Goya. When I became a figurative painter I lost my buyers and audience overnight, it was a shock. To make matters worse I had decided to become a narrative figurative painter.

I like the look of food. I can tell just by looking that it's done. Like a painting or drawing you can tell when you have it and when you have lost it. I like spices for their complexity and taste and I have a passion for Indian/Asian cooking.

Jenny Watson

Australian artist represented in Australia and abroad

Date: 8 April 1999, 11.00am - 1.00pm
Place: North Fitzroy, Melbourne, Victoria

I was born in 1951. My early childhood was affected by the post-war situation although I didn't know about the war. There was a sort of economy at home. I was educated not to waste and not to replace unless needed. There was no sense at the time of the consumerist approach of the 80s and 90s. There was also a religious streak in my family. My parents often helped people less fortunate by sharing or providing hospitality. In later life my mother became something of a religious fundamentalist. She became quite eccentric at the end of her life. In the end she was like a deep southern Baptist. My father was a knockabout guy self educated, musical, and artistic. He'd done a lot of things. He was a good balancer.

It was not until the 60s really that I became aware of the effect of the post-war housing boom. When I was a child we lived in my mother's parent's home an old Edwardian house built in 1915 with stained glass windows. Later my parents got the bug to buy a new house. I remember this new phase. I became aware of the emphasis on new homes in the 60s when I was about nine. There was a real push to live in a new home. Old homes were somehow not good enough or second rate. I didn't realise at the time that the government was strongly supporting this attitude.

When the Edwardian house at Mont Albert was sold it went for the price of the land because the Church were to build units on it. My parents bought a house in the Dandenongs which was really too far away and led to a period of unhappiness. After the Dandenongs we moved to Box Hill and that's where I spent my teenage years.

The Edwardian house had a kitchen that was small but it had a big pantry with a little window with a fly-wire cover; primitive refrigeration in a way. There was a cellar with a trapdoor and deep dark shelves. It was fantastically designed. The size of the pantry had a lot to do with the woman not having to go to the shops too often, about being self-sufficient. In the kitchen there was a small sink and a stove. It was very functional. It had the feeling of a service area as though there were servants. But there weren't. It was all very friendly. Serving and eating food was done in the dining room next door to the kitchen.

I remember the Edwardian house being beautifully cool in summer. People knew how to build then with more land. The house was well sited. The lino and the dark shelves of the pantry seemed to reinforce a feeling of coolness.

The house in the Dandenongs was a newer house but not brand new. It was a 'fibro' cottage. It had a wood stove in the kitchen and we ate in the kitchen. It was much more 60s in appearance with a Laminex table and padded chairs. There was a built in bench seat with a glass panel above it so you could see into the lounge. I liked that. There were happy times in the 'fibro' house. That's where I got interested in horses. I remember Sunday night's dinner was nice. It was casual. Perhaps it might have been cold corned beef and salad, and Trifle. It followed the big lunch. We had a roast on Sunday at lunchtime for years after my mother had been to church.

The house in Box Hill was a standard weatherboard house built in the 50s. Not very nurturing. The kitchen had three doors off it. Now that I know a bit about architecture I know this would have been for economy but it was not at all cosy. My parents saw the three doors as a problem. That's when I started to feel that architecture was important. Although I have two views on this; I could live in Australia with no awareness of architecture in an old farmhouse like I do. Living in the shell created by someone else quite happily (at the time of the interview Jenny Watson was living at Lilydale outside of Melbourne). But on the other hand designing what you want is important. The kitchen with the three doors was the cooking and sitting hub of the Box Hill house. My parent's house and others like it were built for quickly housing people. It was an economical home. My parents ran out of money in the various moves and we settled into a fairly ordinary lifestyle. The kitchen was pale green with white doors. There was 60s lino on the floor with a pattern that looked like separate tiles but wasn't and green Laminex benches and table setting. It was OK, functional.

My mother was a good cook. I'm still using her recipes today. Recipes she passed on to me verbally. She cooked in a basic English style roasts, fish and chips, pudding, sponges, custard. Straight down the line English. There would not have been one exotic ingredient in the house. It's good food and some of it is trendy now, Trifles and Bread and Butter Pudding. Today when I present mum's standard food, such as Bread and Butter Pudding, at a dinner people are appreciative and curious.

One of the benefits of having galleries in the Northern Hemisphere is that the Directors, eager to impress, take you to the best restaurants in their city. Since I'm represented in London, New York, Italy, and Germany. I've had a really fantastic gourmet experience through my work as an artist and I know a bit about food. I don't try to cook lots of cuisines but I might at some point.

When we lived at Mont Albert it was a very Anglo area but at Box Hill I remember Germans and Italians at High School. There were no blacks or Asians at the time. The socio-economic group I was in was very closed. We didn't go to someone's house for dinner. I'm not sure if this was the unsophisticated mid 60s or the group. The 60s to me were not about food or socialising. It was all grey suburbia and TV. We developed the feeling that things were happening somewhere else, in London or America.

Food is fascinating on many levels. Food can fuel addiction for instance. Women's relationship with food can turn from sustenance to destruction. Bulimia and anorexia are the manifestations of the destructive power of food. This is problematic because it is possible to stop completely other areas of addiction but we have to eat.

Food is sensual. Like the brown flecks of cinnamon sprinkled on top of pale yellow custard for example sets up a dialogue affects the way I make a painting. I did realistic kitchen drawings in the 70s using Derwent coloured pencils. They were not really about food rather the atmosphere of the kitchen. The textures and awareness is all connected with paint. Colours, texture, pigment, are connected to the way I cook, as with painting.

At Sydney College of the Arts two years ago I had two Masters students who were working with food as their subject. One concentrated on what she called 'gastro porn' which has its roots in the absolutely fantastic photos of food in cookery books. The other created 'trompe-l'oeil' effects by painting food directly on to the plate.

I have one brother and five half sisters. I can remember at the Edwardian house my five half sisters as young working girls of seventeen - twenty-one. This was my father's first family. They would go into

town to do various jobs. At 7.30 in the morning they would be in the kitchen making their own lunches. Nice sandwiches or *Vita Wheat* biscuits. They would wrap them in greased lunch wrap and put them in a brown paper bag. This was a busy time of the morning. As a toddler I thought this was really nice. I liked being in the kitchen with them. They had a roster system for the dishes. My mother cooked for as many as nine every day but did not wash the dishes in the evening. There was a community feeling generated by the shared activity of washing and drying the dishes.

In Box Hill we had fish and chips on Friday night. Friday night was Youth Club and fish and chips. I'd come home late from Youth Club and find my father watching old movies. He was an amateur expert on silent films. His Aunt had taken him to many movies when he was very young and he knew a great deal about film the directors and actors. These were good times.

My father had no role in the kitchen. He would have had trouble making a cup of tea simply through not having had the opportunity to do so very often. Food in our house was always the responsibility of females.

I was sold on American TV. When I was seven, I fought with my mother because I said I wanted to go to America. I watched *Father Knows Best*, *The Donna Reed Show*, westerns like *Zorro* and *Jet Jackson* a sci-fi thing. America seemed very exciting through this range of images and I became a TV and film buff at age five. American families all seemed to have two story houses. There was the seductive notion of the perfect family. At the time in America there were a wide range of family models from rich to poor, black to white, but at that time there was only this narrow view of the family portrayed on TV.

My mother had worked in orphanages and trained as a nurse. Instead of going to Canada to continue a career in nursing she got married. I think the nursing training made her extremely efficient in terms of time management and seeing essential tasks as opposed to minor ones. I think she actually enjoyed the old-style physicality of housework where there was a schedule of windows being washed, curtains being cleaned and floors polished. The polish was an old fashioned one in a tin and I remember she had an arrangement with a cloth tied over a dry mop as a polisher. Maybe this was from the orphanages or the hospitals. With the combination of the girls doing the daily dishes the household was very efficient but not obsessive or fanatical.

I don't know if my mother saw some special talent in me but she didn't want me buried in suburban drudgery. I was not expected to be involved in any household chores. She didn't approve of my choice of career however. To be an artist to her was too hedonistic but to teach art was OK, a social responsibility. That's how I got to go to Art School. It was a lack of sophistication on her part. I was quite disapproved of in my rebellious youth.

For me there was a denial of the nurturing role. Cooking and cleaning were not my priorities although that culture in women was expected even then. No matter how sophisticated we get a woman is still expected to have food in the fridge. There is a moralistic judgement made on those who don't. Interestingly, the men I have been involved with have been good cooks.

I don't associate kitchens with theatre. I think of them as functional space.

In my teenage years the most important food was sweets. Jellies and Trifles. Certainly that is how my enthusiasm for food was expressed. No alcohol. There were cakes, even paintings of cakes.

As a small child I remember roasts with basic salads in summer.

In the 70s I used a vegetarian cookbook. My brother and I were vegetarians in the mid 70s. This was my way of showing off demonstrating how you could get away from meat. But it was also part of 70s social changes very much to do with inner city alternative culture.

My father with his restoration work developed a good colour sense, good feel.
There was a lot of artistic activity evident in our family. An Aunt was a book illustrator and author.

Food was not really a big thing in our family there was this control. You ate only what you needed. There was no opulence. From my first form cookery class I remember learning to cook crumbed cutlets. I've always liked the idea of that. Good lean healthy meat. I like food that is fairly spare.

There were back of the envelope recipes but they were never organised into a proper recipe book.

Sounds of the kitchen will always be the girls making lunches and washing up; the sounds of their voices as they swapped tales and their hysterical laughter. Happy times really.

I always associate blues and greens with the kitchen, restful colours; the colours of cake icing. In a basic 50s household the only flamboyance was cakes. I like the colour of green salads, pale green lettuce. The coolness. Today my kitchen is painted cream.

In America I have seen kitchens with a central wooden bench with two sinks backed by a fridge, stove, and cupboards. In front of the bench there is sitting space. This idea might be popular here too but I actually spend more sitting around time in the US.

I have met a number of male artists in America who say very quickly and quite surprisingly, 'I don't have a kitchen'. Perhaps it is them saying to women 'there's no way you can walk into my life'. Maybe...that's my view. There is a denial of domestic issues in their life. Cooking is not a priority.

To me the kitchen is a functional place although in my house I have a 19th century chaise in one corner and an old work-bench type table from a factory. This encourages sitting down and having a drink. It is suggestive of the room being open to more than the functionality of the kitchen.

Alan Saunders

Author and Radio National broadcaster, presenter of *The Comfort Zone*, a program that brings together threads of food, architecture, design and landscape.

Date: 15 April 1999, 4.30pm – 6.30pm
Place: ABC Studios, Ultimo, Sydney, New South Wales

I was born in London in 1954. Rationing in England ended that year. My mother still has my ration card. I have no memory of the time although I realise now my diet was more deprived then. I do remember there were ruined bomb sites. 'Ruined bomb sites' was a generic term for any derelict land. They were places to play if you were a child.

I lived with my parents in a council flat in North London. We lived on the third floor. The kitchen was a very small room. There was just room for a table a washbasin and next to the basin a wooden flap that concealed a spin drier underneath. I can't remember where the fridge went. There was a gas cooker and a flap to a large cupboard space, bench space and pantry. I don't associate this space with strong feelings.

As I got older our circumstances seemed cramped. It seemed more than the effect of me getting bigger as I grew up.

I always assumed mothers were thought of as good cooks. The history of my mother's cooking would mirror recent cooking in England. She cooks more variety now. I remember liking fatty roast lamb and baked potatoes and spaghetti, real spaghetti, not spaghetti out of a can. Not everyone had real spaghetti in working class English homes in the 50s and 60s. When I think of spaghetti I think of long, thin, strands wrapped in blue paper.

My father spent a year in Rome during the war. He was in the Royal Army Service Corps. This experience changed his approach to diet although he didn't cook he was a bad cook. He could fry things but nothing more than that.

I don't remember if my father did undemanding tasks like peeling potatoes but he did do the washing up and some cleaning. I dried the dishes at a later stage when I had developed a moral conscience.

Our kitchen table was not really in the centre of the room or the centre of activity. Like smaller kitchens of this century all of the furniture was against the walls. You couldn't easily get three at the table at once. I was an only child. We tended to have meals in the living room.

We had American television in England. *Sergeant Bilko* is still one of my favourites of all time. There were shows like the *I Love Lucy Show*, the one with Vivian Vance, *Mr Ed*, *My Favourite Martian*, *Perry Mason* and *The Defenders*. I liked Hanna-Barbera cartoons and *Top Cat* was a favourite. And there were Australian shows like *Magic Ten* where kids lived in a self-sufficient community without adults. It was a very appealing idea.

American television generally gave the impression of tidiness and a more modern country. American situation comedies were shot on film rather than video and this gave everything a brighter look.

I was twenty when I went away to university. I deliberately applied to a University away from home. This was usual at the time. At the University Hall of Residence I was catered for. There was a kitchen area but nothing beyond a toaster and a kettle to boil water. Meals at University were canteen style. You queued with trays and people slopped things on your plate. Then you sat at the table with your tray. During this time I encountered a specially designed tray with one edge bent down rather than up. This enabled you to slide the tray on the edge of the table. I have a marked aversion to eating from a tray. The ceremony of eating the meal seems disrupted by having things on a tray.

After school, I worked for a while as a Library Assistant. After twelve months I left for Leicester to study Law. I didn't go ahead with Law. I saw the film, *Paper Chase*. I remember hearing it discussed on the radio that being a lawyer was like being an athlete you had to do it to the exclusion of all else. I didn't want to do that. That notion of exclusive concentration frightened me. After a while I changed to Philosophy. While I was away my parents moved to a larger council flat. This was in my sabbatical year when I was President of the Student Union, a full-time post. Cooking was too much trouble then. I lived on instant meals. I never cooked as an instrument of seduction.

I lived with my parents in their new home when I went to the London School of Economics. My mother is still there. My father is dead.

The kitchen was much larger than the first flat with more bench space. There are two doors opening from the kitchen. One is a sliding door to the living room and the other a door to the hall. From the hall door to the left there is a water heater, an old fridge that serves as a cupboard, a freezer, very tall, taller than me, a window, a washing machine, and in the corner a gas cooker. Then bench space with cupboards under and over the bench and a sink. The sliding door almost fills one wall. And there is a table that sits three with a spice rack over it.

By the time I came to live in this flat there was a noticeable increase in carbohydrates in the cooking. Spaghetti and other pastas were prevalent. At one point the price of potatoes shot up so my mother used rice instead. She served rice with Asian dishes she cooked. These dishes had varying degrees of authenticity. But there was a wider range of flavours. There was Greek food, *Taramasalata* and vaguely Greek things like grilled sardines and lemon juice and Greek coffee for my father and me. My father had one of those long thin things to make coffee. I don't know how to use them. And salads, lettuce and beetroot that's what my mother thinks is a salad. There was some alcohol but feeling the pinch they moved to cider, a traditional table drink.

At the time I had a tendency to think of cooking as some sort of mystery that needed to be mastered or a chore to get over. I can remember on a camping trip sharing the cooking. At one point I was left to cook sausages. I didn't know what to do and I was too proud to ask for help. I had to think about it, work it through.

In the 80s in England owning your own home was more popular. More people wanted to. It was not a class thing because upper middle class people were happy to rent or lease the freehold for ninety-nine years.

I came to Australia when I was about twenty-six to study at the ANU. There was a communal kitchen there where I did cook but not daringly. After a year or two I went to a girlfriend's house and cooked quite ambitious meals; often disastrous meals for her and for friends. Then I started looking at cookbooks. This would be 1983 or 1984. *Turkish Delight* was a terrible mistake. The recipe said

to put in a kilo of sugar. Did they mean it I wondered and put it in anyway. It was a major ecological disaster. Then there was the terrible African thing with peanut sauce...disgusting. And then there was *Bouillabaisse* without fish only eggs. It was a fun time.

When I looked at the influences on Australian food for the foreword of *Australian Food* I found a lot of French influence still in evidence.

We have Chinese restaurants but we have no examples of famous Chinese chefs in Australia despite the long establishment of Chinese restaurants. We have no equivalent of say David Thompson (well known for his Thai cuisine) or Tetsuya Wakuda (the ultimate Japanese chef). Perhaps Cheong Liew (although he represents much more than Chinese cooking). Chinese restaurants flourished by providing a European style of Chinese cuisine. In essence they cleverly gave us what we wanted and they continue to do that. A Chinese restaurant in Roma, for instance, will have a different menu from restaurants around here. It is economically safer to develop a culinary presence where there is a population large enough to sustain what you are doing. In some smaller English towns, for instance Chinese restaurants did not appear until the 80s because the Chinese population was insufficient to sustain them. There were of course Chinese restaurants in the cities.

It is interesting that Vietnamese food is not often mentioned. I think it is important. In Sydney Vietnamese food has no powerful spokesperson and no personalities which seems to militate against its taking a higher profile. There is however a proliferation of Thai restaurants. Food commentator Cherry Ripe maintains that the number of Thai restaurants cannot be related to the size of the Thai population.

Italian is strong. I was interested to read in *Wog Food* by John Newton that kids are still laughed at in the schoolyard for having salami sandwiches. Italian and Mediterranean food is much more suited to this climate but it also has its bastardised versions. For example, the Pizza, which is interestingly out of control as an artefact and *Spaghetti Bolognaise*.

My mother was good at housework, tidy, clean, but not obsessive.

I was attracted to English film, drama and decorative arts from the period 1945-1956. Their work was a reaction against wartime austerity expressed in a baroque form. The lush films of Powell and Pressburger presented an intricate view of life. The films illustrated life in the style of Rex Whistler, very decorative in style. And plays by Terrance Rattigan and Christopher Fry. The *Kitchen Sink* stuff was a reaction against this and the restrictive literary culture run by second-generation Bloomsbury'ites. While John Osborne was saying, 'this is the reality'. His play, *Look Back In Anger* was astounding at the time, a call to arms. While today we might view it as appallingly sentimental at the time sides were being taken. When I think of the *Kitchen Sink School* I always think of something ugly like square sided sinks, stained with water dripping from the taps. Of course all this gave way to playwrights of my day like Tom Stoppard.

My interest in food crept up on me in the mid 80s. By this time my parents and I were eating out and talking about food. I was buying books.

Initially I worked with the ABC in Science. Eventually I was casting around for something we didn't have. I admired the BBC Radio Four food program and decided to move in that direction. In 1988 I founded *The Food Program* and I did this until 1997.

I found I knew much less than I thought. One of the ways of finding my way around the subject was to take a very broad perspective on food. The show I do now, *The Comfort Zone*, is not entirely of my own creation. The mix of food, architecture, design and gardens was an idea put forward by management. I don't actually connect with gardens in any way. I like to look but I don't do. The mix is an unstable compound at times. And we can't fit everything in. Food politics, genetic engineering, where do they fit? I worry sometimes that I might be losing definition because of the breadth of subject matter that I cover.

Thinking about architecture reminds me that when I was at school I wrote for the school magazine. In one article I wrote about John Nash the early nineteenth century architect who did some striking work in London. I struggled with the article. I thought to write on architecture that you had to have adjectives but what I found was that you needed nouns and verbs. Without nouns and verbs you couldn't say what things did. I couldn't ground my evaluation seriously without the nouns and verbs but I could do without the adjectives.

I don't cook as much as I should I'm out too much. In 1993 I moved into my present house but I'm not satisfied with the cooking and eating spaces. In an earlier place I had long lunches and it was bright. My current place is more of a dinner place.

In the 80s a lot of people thought you might as well be running a restaurant because at home people were trying to emulate restaurant food. Cookbooks in the 80s had elaborate pictures of restaurant food carefully plated. You'd need four frying pans going at a time to achieve the effect. It was unrealistic. I like dishes like *Jambalaya* just placed in the centre of the table with a green salad and bread. You just dig in. This is more what people do these days, very simple.

The best European and Anglo food is good, has good things in it. In the 1890s doctors were complaining that the Australian diet had too much meat and too much tea.

In the last twenty to thirty years living has changed especially in the west with increasing prosperity and disposable income people are able to think about things in a material sense. How they would like their physical life ordered. Television and advertising focus huge attention on this but there's so much more than, the '*Better Homes Than Yours*' syndrome. There is always talk about television having too many lifestyle programs. Well I don't know how food magazines can find circulation. There's yet another new magazine, *Elle Cuisine* about to enter the market. It's not an infinitely expanding market.

With the proliferation of food the nature and urgency of the talk changed. The irony is that it happened as more and more had less to eat.

Exhibitions

- 2002 *The 2002 Fundere Sculpture Prize*
Group Show
Yarra Sculpture Gallery
30 October - 17 November
- 2002 *Central Goldfields Sculpture Prize and Exhibition*
Group show
Selected by Director, Megan Campbell
Central Goldfields Art Gallery
17 March - 6 April
Awarded the Coates and Wood Foundry Prize
- 2002 *Heavenly Tart*
Small solo show
Curator Louiseann Zahra
Spare Room, RMIT
March 12 - 28
- 2002 *Undercurrent*
Group show
Curated by Asim memishi
idspace contemporary art gallery
2 March - 30
- 2001-2002 *Monash University Faculty of Art and Design*
Group show
Curated by Malcolm Bywaters
Arts Victoria
29 November - 12 April
- 2001 *Powder – the controlled space*
Group show
Curator Malcolm Bywaters
Faculty Gallery, Monash University
1 February – 24 February
- 2000 *Urban Songs*
Small solo show
The Lobby, Hotel Sofitel
28 August – 31 December
- 1998 *Australian in New York*
Group show
Curator Simonne Jameson (PhD)
Gelabert Studios, New York
29 May – 27 June

Exhibitions

- 1997 *Australian In Paris*
Group show
Curator Simonne Jameson (PhD)
Miromesnil Fine Art, Paris
10 November – 10 December
- 1995 *The Great Australian Dream*
Instigator/Artist
Collaborative exhibition bringing together the paintings of Greer
Honeywill, the photographs of Lynette Zeeng and the soundscape
of Rodney Lowe
Gallery 101, Collins Street, Melbourne, 18 July - 6 August
- 1991 Re-established studio practice after moving from South Australia
to Melbourne

Publications

Books

Honeywill, G. 2001 'Table Eight on the Floor – the work of Flossie Peitsch' in *Setting the American Table: Essays for the New Culture of Food and Wine*, Copia: American Center for Wine Food and the Arts, Napa Valley, pp.78-83

Sole author of text, plus images of the artist's work

Commissioned text essay submitted 28 February 2001

The essay is a critique of a fibre installation artwork by Australian artist Flossie Peitsch on the theme, the family at table, and the relevance of that model in current society

English language

Honeywill, G. 1995 'Dorrie's Dream' *The Australian Arts Diary* compiled by Maria Prendergast, Debden Associates Australia, Melbourne

1 page - sole author of painting reproduced in the August section of the book

Selection of artists, Maria Prendergast

English language

Honeywill, G. 1978, 'Come Out Pageant '77', *Communicating Arts*, Australian International Press and Publications, Melbourne, pp. 106 – 107

Sole author of published essay

2 pages, 2000 word essay published with photographic documentation of the event

Essay chronicles my experience creating and directing a major outdoor arts event, *Come Out Pageant 77*, for the Come Out Youth Festival, South Australia
Published in the first edition of a national arts and education book published yearly

Editorial Committee Margeurite Brand (Music), Peter Hamilton (Film/Video), Nola Hogg (Music), Bob Mathers (Art), Lynden Nichols (Dance), Neil Rasmussen (Drama)

Publication produced in co-operation with the following national arts bodies; Australian Association Dance Education, Australian Craft Teachers Association, Australian Society for Education Through the Arts, Australian Society Music Education, Association Teachers Film and Video, National Association for Drama in Education

English language

Publications

Books

Honeywill, G. 1975, Contributor, *Asia: a resource book for Australian schools*, Asian Studies Co-ordinating Committee, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra

2 page sole authorship of published research presenting the depth of study material held at The Educational Technology Centre, Education Department of South Australia, in this publication compiled by Mr. I.H. Welsh, National Executive Officer, Asian Studies Co-ordinating Committee, Canberra
English language

International magazines

Honeywill, G. 2001, 'Stories from the kitchen – Heavenly Tart', *Copia*, volume 04, issue 01, May, *Copia*: American Center for Wine Food and the Arts, Napa Valley, pp. 18 - 21

Sole author of text and images of my artwork *Heavenly Tart*
(new article written specifically for American publication)

Editor: Doreen Schmid

4 pages – 1,500 word essay and images of my artwork *Heavenly Tart*
The essay focuses on the trans-generational passing on of recipes and the social implications for women in the 1940s and 1950s.
English language

Honeywill, G. 2000, 'Table Eight On The Floor', *International Tapestry Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2 August, pp. 25, 26

Contributor to *The International Tapestry Journal*

Published by the Canberra School of Art, Canberra

Editor: Sally Brokensha

Editorial Panel: Ian Arcus, Valerie Kirk, Kay Lawrence, Diana Wood Conroy

Sole author of published essay on the fibre installation of Flossie Peitsch

2 pages – 1,000 word essay and supporting images

Essay reviews the artist's fibre installation

English language

Publications

Arts and cultural magazines - national

Honeywill, G. 2000, 'Table Eight On The Floor', Textile Fibre Forum, Volume Nineteen, Issue 4, No. 60 November, pp. 24, 25

Contributor to Textile Fibre Forum

Published quarterly by The Australian Forum for Textile Arts, Ltd, Queensland

Editor: Janet de Boer

Sole author of published essay on the fibre installation of Flossie Peitsch

2 pages - 1,000 word essay and supporting images

Essay reviews the artist's fibre installation

English language

Essay won the inaugural Allport writing award for tertiary students in Australia writing on fibre

Honeywill, G. 1997, 'Contempora5 – new prize, new art!' *The View Australia*, Issue 7, pp. 32-35

Contributor to *The View Australia*, arts, heritage and cultural magazine distributed nationally and international

Published by Mark Wang, Designs Australia, Riversdale Road, Camberwell, Victoria

Editor: Nick Walker

Sole authorship of published essay

4 pages – 1500 word essay supported by photographs on the artist finalists in the inaugural *Contempora5* competition staged at the National Gallery of Victoria. *Contempora5* was established by the Kennett Government to encourage Australian artists working in contemporary art forms.

English language

Honeywill, G. 1997, 'Combing the world', *The View Australia*, Issue 6, p.36

Contributor to *The View Australia*, arts, heritage and cultural magazine distributed nationally and international

Published by Mark Wang, Designs Australia, Riversdale Road, Camberwell, Victoria

Editor: Nick Walker

Sole authorship of published essay

4 pages – 1,500 word essay supported by photographs on the background of Polish born Graphic Designer and collector, Kajetan Fiedorowicz. and his collection of exotic combs amassed on travels to Africa, Asia, China, Europe, Spain and his native Poland. Resident in Australia since 1982, Fiedorowicz plans to make his collection of indigenous combs accessible to the public

English language

Publications

Arts and cultural magazines

Honeywill, G. 1995, 'The Great Australian Dream', *The View*, Issue 2, pp.18 – 21

Contributor to *The View Australia*, arts, heritage and cultural magazine distributed nationally and international

Published by Mark Wang, Designs Australia, Riversdale Road, Camberwell, Victoria

Editor: Nick Walker

Sole authorship of published essay

4 pages – short essay and reproductions of my paintings and the photographs of Lynette Zeeng. Article presented the thrust of the collaborative exhibition of which I was both the instigator and a participant. English language

Honeywill, G. 1995, 'Seasonal Changes - the work of Lynette Zeeng', *Professional Photography in Australia*, October, pp. 41, 42

Contributor to *Professional Photography in Australia* now called ProPhoto

Published by Horowitz Audio Visual Magazines Group, Sydney, 12 times per year

Edited by Paul Burrows

Sole author published essay

2 page, 1,000 word essay and images of the subjects work

English language

SAM Magazine published in South Australia 12 times per year. Editor and publisher, Jaye Wall
Regular freelance design writer - sole author of monthly, double page spread, words and image

Honeywill, G. 1986, 'All eyes on SA for equestrian event', May, pp. 54

Honeywill, G. 1986, 'A phoenix rises in the hills', April, pp.64, 65

Honeywill, G. 1986, 'Championship coup for SA', March, pp.20, 21

Honeywill, G. 1986, 'Ben's magical whimsy', February, pp. 56, 57

Honeywill, G. 1985, 'European touch for casino', December, pp. 82, 83

Honeywill, G. 1985, 'Dinner designed for you', December, p. 81

Honeywill, G. 1985, 'A grand plan unfolds – The Horwood House', November, pp. 82, 83

Honeywill, G. 1985, 'In a secret garden – The Ingham House', October, pp. 82, 83

Publications

Arts and cultural magazines

Honeywill, G. 1985, 'Home, happy home – The Scott House',
September, pp. 82, 83

Honeywill, G. 1985, 'Building a dream', August, pp. 82, 83

Honeywill, G. 1985, 'Gawler...and beyond', August, pp. 68, 69

Honeywill, G. 1985, 'Fine blend of style and heritage', July, pp. 82, 83

Honeywill, G. 1985, 'Canadian Indian Button Blankets', June, pp. 46, 47

Honeywill, G. 1985, 'The Prescott House', May, pp. 82, 83

Honeywill, G. 1985, 'From the furnace, cool design', April, pp. 82, 83

Honeywill, G. 1985, 'The blend is perfect', March pp. 82, 83

Honeywill, G. 1985, 'Earthy Retreat', January, pp. 66, 67

Honeywill, G. 1984, 'Designs on Christmas', December, pp. 58, 59

Honeywill, G. 1984, 'Theatre's Loss is Design's Gain', November, pp. 54, 55

Honeywill, G. 1984, 'The Best of East and West', Sam, October, pp. 56, 57

Publications

Catalogues

Honeywill, G. Zeeng, L. and Lowe, R. *The Great Australian Dream*, Gallery 101, 101 Collins Street, Melbourne, 1995

Catalogue produced to coincide with the collaborative exhibition, *The Great Australian Dream*, shown at Gallery 101, Melbourne 18 July – 5 August of which I was both the instigator and a participant.

Multi-authorship – body text, 4 pages, written solely by me, introduction by Gallery Director Dianna Gold (1 page) and short contextual essay *A Personal Perspective*, by Professor Dimity Reed, Head, Department of Design, Faculty of Art and Design, RMIT, in support of the exhibition (2 pages).
Catalogue includes images of twelve of my paintings (front cover and 5 internal pages) and reproductions of Lynette Zeeng's photographs (6 pages)
Creative Direction and concepts for the catalogue – sole author
English language

Newspapers

Honeywill, G. 1995, 'Clarrice Ruby's Backyard Dream', *The Age Entertainment Guide*, 21 July, p. 13

Sole author of the painting reproduced on page 13 of the guide, 21 July, 1995

Publications

Electronic media: television

Thompson, Jeremy. 1995, 'The Great Australian Dream', *Today Tonight*, HSV 7, Melbourne, 1 August, 6.54pm

Sole author of twelve paintings used as the basis for this program segment
Edited segment covering the genesis of the exhibition, exhibits, live coverage of the opening, and interviews with Greer Honeywill, Lynette Zeeng, Jennifer Coate and Eleanor Hart)
English language

Gillespie Productions. 1995 'The Great Australian Dream', *House Hunt*, HSV 7, Melbourne, 29 July, 12.00pm

Sole author of twelve paintings shown within this program segment
Interview with Greer Honeywill at Gallery 101
English language

Whaley, Jim. 1995, 'The Great Australian Dream', *Sunday*, GTV 9, Sydney, 30 July, 9.00am

Sole author of twelve paintings shown as the complete segment
Footage of paintings shot at Gallery 101
English language

Gregory, Anna. 1995, 'The Great Australian Dream', *Today*, GTV 9, Sydney, 18 July, 7.56am

Sole author of twelve paintings shown as part of this program segment
Interview with Greer Honeywill at Gallery 101
English language

1995, 'The Great Australian Dream', News segment, GTV9, Melbourne, 18 July, 6.00pm

Sole author of twelve paintings shown within this segment
English language

1995, 'The Great Australian Dream', News segment ABC TV, Melbourne, 18 July, 7.00pm

Sole author of twelve paintings shown within this segment
English language

Publications

Electronic media: television

TAC/Southgate, 1994, 'Winterfire Celebration', *CEO Impact*, Melbourne, 21 June

Multi-authorship

Interview with Artistic Director, Greer Honeywill and footage of preparations -
electronic media release, duration 13 minutes

English language

1981, 'The 1855 Event', *Open College of Further Education/S.A. Film Corporation*, Adelaide, May

Sole author of multi-arts performance event

Interview with Greer Honeywill regarding the inspiration and organisation of the
performance

English language

1979, 'Perambulation Games', *ABC*, Adelaide, 9 May

Sole author of multi-arts performance event

Coverage of the performance, duration 90mins.

English language

Moore, B. and Honeywill, G. 1977, 'Come Out '77 Pageant', *ABC*, Adelaide,
21 May

Sole author multi-arts event

Program coverage of the event with commentary by ABC commentator, Bob
Moore, and Greer Honeywill,
duration 1 hr

English language

Honeywill, Greer. 1972 -1974, *The Curiosity Show*, *NWS 9*, Adelaide, writer and
presenter

Sole author

Regular segments on the visual and performing arts for youth magazine
program

English language

Publications

Electronic media: radio

Roberts, Tonia. 1995, 'The Great Australian Dream', 3LO, Melbourne, 18 July, 11.30am

Instigator and participant
Interview with Greer Honeywill
English language

Mann, Colette. 1995, 'The Great Australian Dream', 3AW, Melbourne, 19 July, 12.30pm

Instigator and participant
Interview with Greer Honeywill and photographic subject, Tony Leonard
followed by live talkback
English language

Millicer, Helen. 1995, 'The Great Australian Dream', *Art and About*, 3PBS, Melbourne, 3 August, 7.30pm

Instigator and participant
Interview with Greer Honeywill and architect, Hugo Leschen
English language

Published articles

Armitage, H. 1974, "Eureka" one up for theatre arts on the Fringe', *The News*, March, p. - (theatre review *Eureka Stockade*)

Armitage, H. 1974, 'Rivals' fresh as a daisy', *The News*, July, p. - (theatre review *The Rivals*)

Barclay, A. 1995, 'Where the heart is', *Herald Sun*, 24 July, p. 53 (exhibition review *The Great Australian Dream*)

Covernton, H. 1976, 'A touch of black comedy' *The Advertiser*, March, p. - (theatre review *Jumpers*)

Dolan, D. 1979, 'Masterpiece for children', *The Advertiser*, 9 May, p. - (performative arts review *The Arts Circus and Soft Sculpture, Come Out Youth Festival*)

Healey, J. 1974, 'A Bonanza', *The Advertiser*, March, p.- (theatre review *Eureka Stockade*)

Harden, M. 1995, 'Dreams are just castles in the clouds', *The Melbourne Times*, 12 July, pp.1, 27 (exhibition review *The Great Australian Dream*)

O'Halloran, J. 1974, 'Guild', *Adelaide University Newspaper*, March, p.- (theatre review *Eureka Stockade*)

Steger, J. 1995, 'Putting the great Australian dream in the picture', *The Sunday Age (Agenda)* p.16 July, p.7 (exhibition review *The Great Australian Dream*)