

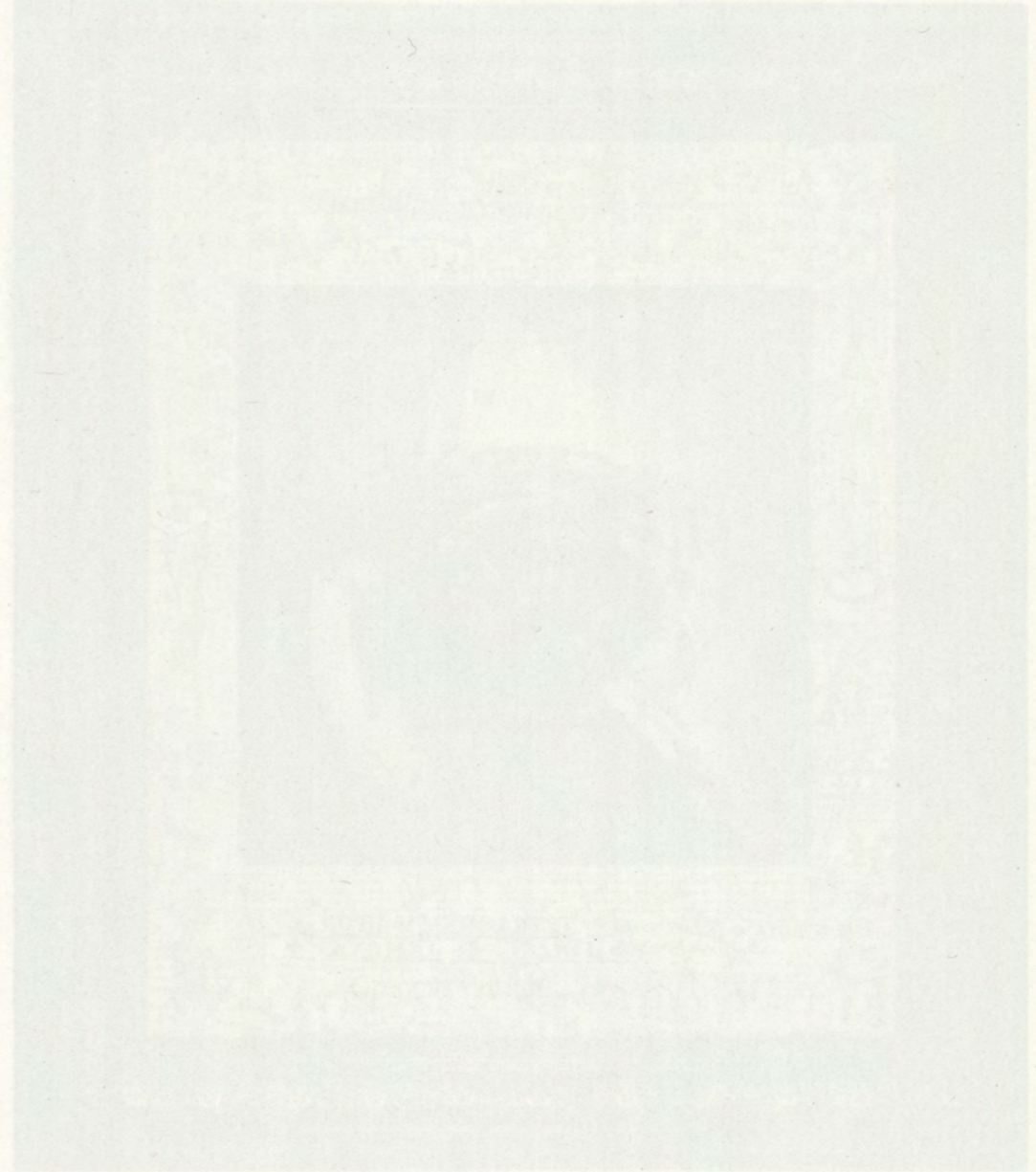
IMPOSING *Narratives*

Beyond the Documentary in Recent New Zealand Photography



NINE NEW ZEALAND PHOTOGRAPHERS

IMPOSING *Narratives*
Beyond the Documentary in Recent New Zealand Photography



Gregory Burke, Curator

WELLINGTON CITY ART GALLERY

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Laurence Aberhart
Rhondda Bosworth
Margaret Dawson
Megan Jenkinson
Fiona Pardington
Peter Peryer
Patrick Reynolds
Marie Shannon
Christine Webster

With essays by

Jim and Mary Barr
Christina Barton
Miro Bilbrough
Gregory Burke
Lawrence McDonald
Priscilla Pitts
Shona Smith

Gregory Burke, Curator

WELLINGTON CITY ART GALLERY

COVER: Laurence Aberhart
Mater Dolorosa, 1989
FRONTISPIECE: Fiona Pardington
Left: St Helena Water, 1988

IMPOSING NARRATIVES

Beyond the Documentary in Recent New Zealand Photography

was published to accompany the exhibition organised by the Wellington City Art Gallery and toured nationally during 1990-91.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Imposing Narratives – Beyond the Documentary in Recent New Zealand Photography follows in the tradition of several exhibitions which have fostered greater public recognition of the work of New Zealand photographers.

The Active Eye, organised by PhotoForum and the Manawatu Art Gallery in 1975, and the National Art Gallery's *Views/Exposures* in 1982, helped stimulate public interest in photography as an art-form, and encouraged many galleries and private collectors to begin seriously adding photographic works to their collections. The current exhibition, however, is the first to thematically address and survey many of the issues surrounding photographic practice in New Zealand in the 1980s – a decade which has witnessed an unprecedented development and acceptance of photography as a collectible and valued art market commodity.

This exhibition and publication presents and documents more than 100 works by nine contemporary photographers who use new strategies and approaches to question the inherent assumptions of traditional image making. In addition, essays by seven writers and critics provide a variety of cues for a wider reading of the works and an opportunity for reflection and discussion of the issues that have been at the forefront of current photographic debate.

1989 – the sesquicentennial of photography – provides us with an appropriate context to contribute to the host of photographic exhibitions being presented nationally and internationally.

1990 – New Zealand's sesquicentennial – affords a further opportunity to celebrate the work of these photographers by bringing them to the attention of a wider audience. The national tour of *Imposing Narratives* is one of several 1990 projects initiated by the Gallery and the Wellington City Council.

Many individuals and organisations played a critical role in ensuring that the vision for this exhibition and publication was sustained. Principal acknowledgement is due to curator Gregory Burke, whose sensitive and thorough approach in the selection and negotiation of works brought the exhibition concept to realisation, and to each member of the City Gallery staff for their individual and combined expertise. Additional thanks goes to Wellington City Council photographer Neil Price who provided invaluable assistance in reproducing many of the images for the catalogue.

Special thanks and appreciation are owed to colleagues Cheryll Sotheran, John McCormack and Bill Milbank for their enthusiastic support and encouragement during the evolution of this project.

We gratefully acknowledge all of the artists, collectors and institutions who have willingly agreed to lend works to the exhibition for the length of its two-year national tour.

The exhibition and publication would not have been possible without the support of the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council. We are also grateful to Peter Biggs and Catherine Douglas of Ogilvy & Mather.

Above all, we are indebted to the photographers in the exhibition for sharing their vision with us and for their significant contributions to the visual arts of this country.

**John Leuthart, Director
Wellington City Art Gallery**

An Indeterminate Surface

Gregory Burke

The last decade has been a dynamic period for New Zealand photography and its relationship to other visual arts. There has been a proliferation of styles and a polarising of attitudes to the making of photographs. Images have grown larger; they have been collaged and montaged together; they have been grouped as one image; they have incorporated existing photographs; they have been diversely and, at times, incongruously framed. Images have been stage-directed and objects have been made to be photographed. In effect, the relationship to reality of much recent photography appears ambiguous.

Many contemporary photographers analyse and question the rules and inherent assumptions of traditional image making, and provoke a reassessment of the photograph as a true and objective record of reality and experience. By making obvious the fabrication of their images, they suggest that photographs not only reflect, but also play a part in confirming and determining social and cultural values.

Imposing Narratives presents nine photographers whose work underscores a reevaluation of the prevailing documentary tradition in New Zealand photography. Most have been trained in this tradition and all are aware of its conventional power. However, in a variety of ways, they seek to expose and challenge its limitations. They recognise photographs as pictures which are mediated by the ways society uses them. Rather than reinforce a belief in the internal veracity of the photograph, they point to the 'ways of seeing' the viewer brings to any image.

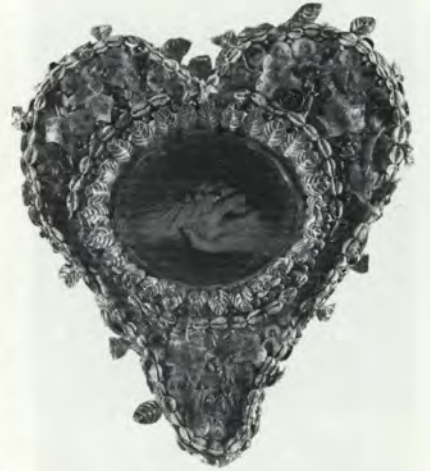
By presenting a range of works produced in recent years, the exhibition focuses on issues that motivate these photographers to explore alternative methods of photographic representation. If this exhibition defines a group it is a disparate one. The photographers vary in the distance they move away from the documentary tradition. Some use inventive and fictional devices, or incorporate the look of the documentary into their images to suggest a layering of narrative. Others deliberately fragment their images, making it difficult to locate a single viewpoint or reality. They all, however, recognise that a "photograph always manifests a double identity; a picture – a representation and a trace."¹

In addition, six short essays by writers and critics illuminate several themes that appear central to much of the work: the representation of self, the configuration of nature, the interplay between history and memory. These essays are presented as parallel texts, offering points of entry for the reader and viewer to explore common ground between photographers and their works, and to register how these themes and issues have been approached and treated differently.

In the 1980s, the use of the camera has become the preferred medium of expression for many women artists. Much of the discourse surrounding the politics of representation has been led by women, and this is reflected in the greater number of women photographers included in this exhibition. It is precisely the ways in which women are positioned and created through the media, particularly fashion and advertising, that have motivated many women photographers to initiate reevaluations of photographic practice. What is clear, is that it is women who are most suspicious of the neutrality of the photograph. They move most actively to reject notions of realism and make more obvious the manipulation in their work. Priscilla Pitts covers these issues in depth in her essay.

Many contemporary artists today are concerned with the cultural context for representation in our media(ted) era of consumerism. Their first reference is to existing images and systems of communication – cinema, television, video, magazines, posters. Within this climate, media boundaries are blurred. Artists shift between media. Painters work from photographs or appropriate photographic images directly from the mass-media environment. Sculptors cement images onto the surface of their works, denying them their physicality. Photographers, too, are incorporating materials and processes associated with painting and sculpture.

For example, Megan Jenkinson uses the technique of collage to *build* her images, and Fiona Pardington often combines images with a wide range of materials to shape them into three-dimensional objects. The value of their art is determined not so much by authenticity of the image declared through the purity of the medium, but by the way they



combine images to reveal how meaning is produced and to suggest new or hidden meanings.

Although, traditionally, photography may have been considered an art-form in its own right, it has been separated from other visual arts fundamentally because of its transcriptive properties and its reproducibility. In discussing film and photography, Walter Benjamin said:

*Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman.
The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web.²*

Photography's illusion of realism, its believe-ability, its inescapable quality of record, its lack of distance and involvement in the real, and its utter affiliation with one moment, were all thought to deprive it of the grandeur and mystique of painting. Painting's status and authenticity gave it an oracular force that photography was thought to lack. But there are implications hidden in Benjamin's statement that complicate this particular view of photography. It was written in 1936 when photography was being used extensively for propaganda purposes by the Nazi regime. Photography, then, can capitulate to and conspire with the real. There is also a commonality to photographs that separates them from painting and sculpture. These images get around. The very fecundity of photographic images removes them from the domain of tradition and separates them from the value systems associated with art.

The response of many art photographers in the 20th century was to idealise the documentary capacity of photography. They avoided ornamentation in their photographs, but sought to enrich them by emphasising factors such as print quality and image resolution. In effect, they attempted to establish a tradition and history for photography based on unmanipulated black and white prints. Their images declared a purity of the uncontaminated moment. What distinguished these photographers and determined their individual style was their ability to see the extraordinary in the ordinary, to provide new ways of seeing the world. Their images, of course, were structured and even manipulated through factors such as points of view, editing processes and adjustments of tone and contrast which were achieved through development of the film and printing of the image. However, these factors did not reduce their belief in the ability of the camera to accurately transcribe the world.

It is within this tradition that, up until the 1980s, most photographers in New Zealand have worked. The 1970s saw an upsurge of interest in photography as an artistic medium. The major art schools established photographic departments alongside the traditional disciplines of painting and sculpture. By and large, the discussion and practice of photography by those committed to the medium centred on the documentary tradition of image making. Amidst the wider history of images, photographers and teachers of photography drew upon photography's own history as their major point of reference.

The emergence of photographers trained in University art schools was particularly significant. Although the different media departments had their exclusivities, photography was further drawn into the wider context of art. With such close proximity between media, cross-fertilisation was bound to occur.

Following American artists like Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg, art students began experimenting with combining photography, painting, sculpture and printmaking. Working with their own photographs and often with images borrowed from the media, photography was incorporated into their work as signs of popular culture. Photography became a surface to work with and over. However, it was within the discipline of sculpture that the mixing of media was most potent. For it was in sculpture departments that the movements of conceptual and performance art took hold. These movements were a response to the increasing commodity status of art. They were conceived as a reaction against the autonomy of the object, a key tenet of modernism. They sought to draw attention away from the object to its physical, institutional and ideological contexts. Conceptual art attempted to define a new space for the art object, one that exposed the institutions within which art was framed, and one that located the object's function within a specific situation.

In this climate, artists moved out of the galleries and began working directly within environmental and social situations. Sculptors like Boyd Webb and Christine Hellyar³ placed objects in the natural environment to make an intrinsic connection to the locale. The



focus of their work was not so much on the object itself, but the connection it made to its situation. Performance artists considered the body as both subject and object, and sought to articulate the location of the body within cultural systems including language and ritual.

Photography was a primary means of communicating this new approach to making art. In fact, some performances, such as Andrew Drummond's *Filter Action* 1980, were done exclusively for the camera. Photographic documentation of performances and sculptural interventions within the environment were exhibited and sold as evidence within art's institutional contexts; the documentation became the art. The paradox of conceptual art re-entering art's institutions as photographic object was one factor that led to a reconsideration of its strategies.



Boyd Webb, *Blessing* 1985, colour print, Cibachrome, 1525 x 1220 mm. Courtesy Auckland City Art Gallery.



For some artists, the photograph as document of an event staged for the camera became a line of enquiry. A highly influential artist in this regard was Boyd Webb. He recognised that even the documentary photograph suggests narratives separate from the event itself. Since the 1970s, he has produced photographs as highly-wrought ironic tableaux. While he may build sculptures or suggest performance, the structure of his situations is only realised in the photograph. It is the camera that activates the fiction.

Through its eye the arrangement of materials becomes a world unto itself. Of importance is not the event, but the ways in which the viewer creates narrative possibilities for its interpretation.

During the 1980s, in the age of the revitalisation of the marketplace, multi-nationalism, information processing, digital imaging, global television and sky networks, artists have shifted attention from the object to representation itself. "For in our age the mass media saturates all experience. We live in and through this network of signs. Information swirls around us in a vast process of exchange, no longer coming to rest on an object."⁴

Much recent art is not so much concerned with the object and its institutional framing, but with the ideological space of representation and its constitution of subjectivity. Artists adopt the interventionist strategies of conceptual and performance art to question the nature of contemporary representation in an attempt to decipher and reposition its inscription of social relations. Photographers today are also aware of this direction, and are critically placed within the discourse surrounding the politics of representation.

The photographers in this exhibition draw not only on the history of photography but also on a much wider history of representation. Fashion, advertising, film, television, theatre, contemporary and historical art, popularist imagery, scientific photography, all come within their frame of reference. Seen collectively, their images float between objective reference and surface; reality is rendered fugitive.

By cutting and collaging, Megan Jenkinson literally pastes her images together constructing them within the frame. The viewer is shifted between the photographic reference within each shape, the reference of the shape itself, and the picture plane. The picture forms from a world of fragments irrupting into one another (P48-51). In some images, Fiona Pardington and Marie Shannon construct artificial situations and arrange elements that only achieve a semblance of unity when photographed.



Marie Shannon, *Untitled (American Gothic)* 1989, gelatin silver print, selenium toned, 378 x 482 mm. Courtesy the artist.

Shannon's recent works depict scenes of 'domestic bliss' that are totally fabricated. In *Untitled (American Gothic)* 1989, two figures recline before an indoor fire. Made out of pipe cleaners, their form is suggested just enough for us to get the picture. Within this

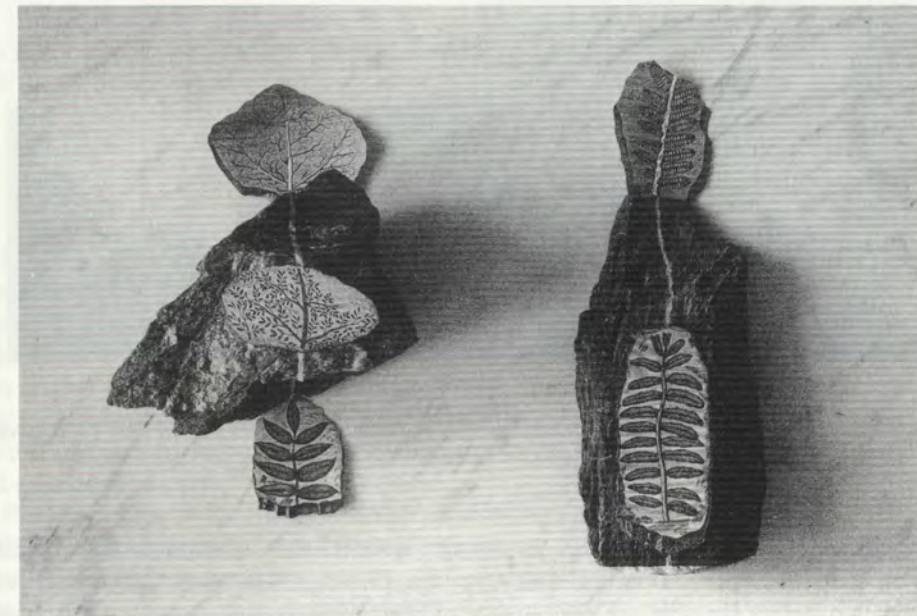
minimal tableau, the few clues provided are sufficient to assign character to the figures and to start building narrative possibilities. Besides the matchstick fire, the most *real* element in the picture is the small reproduction of the painting *American Gothic*, itself a fiction. A pastoral symbol of American spirit and togetherness, the reproduction is incorporated into the picture as a bizarre sign of identity. This doubling of signs provides much of the photograph's ironic tension. This, then, is a picture reduced to its bare essentials. Its world only exists for the photograph, makes no reference outside the frame, and has no before and after.

Shannon's photographs are a continuation of her playful explorations of the representation of self, both personal and general. In earlier photographs, the fact that she was a woman photographing herself, placed her in an immediate context. Questioning and repositioning the representation of self has been an imperative for woman artists. By alluding to and intervening within representational standards of the feminine, many women photographers relocate and redefine the sense of the female self.

Rhonda Bosworth reconstructs her personal history by rephotographing as still lifes images of herself and her family mixed with articles from the home environment. In effect, by reordering, editing and reframing the photographs, Bosworth removes herself from the frame and puts herself in control of the body, the self (P34-37).

Margaret Dawson borrows the aesthetic of the snapshot. She reveals its fictions and, by inference, the fictions of self by enlarging the image way beyond domestic scale and casting herself (selves) in multiple roles. Photography's claim to realism is cast adrift. In attempting to locate the identity of the woman, we instead confront a masquerade, a surface of signs indicating a mutable self (P41-45).

The artist placing herself within the picture, where the body is treated as both subject and object, recalls strategies of performance art, and this is true also for Christine Webster, who performs for many of her pictures. Webster works through and out of patriarchal representations of women. Her large, glossy Cibachrome prints appropriate the realer-than-real surface of advertising and fashion. In making it her own, she actively and ritualistically resists and reverses orthodox views of women and men (P85-89). For these photographers, objective reference is illusive, on the move in the process of transforming. The image is no longer a record of reality; it is treated as a lexicon of signs, reflecting back on the viewer.



Megan Jenkinson, *Natural Logic – the Vertical Principal I* 1985, colour print, Cibachrome, 202 x 306 mm. Courtesy the artist.

Nature itself is recognised within the ideological space of representation as a sign of the feminine, as in many of Margaret Dawson's pictures where flowers and gardens are inseparable from the self she presents. By reworking scientific, historical and mythological configurations of nature, Megan Jenkinson explores the inter-textuality of nature and culture. Nature is presented as an elusive sign woven into life's persuasive narratives. Its reference shifts between being a sign of nature and a sign of culture. In *Natural Logic – the Vertical Principle I* 1985, a ceramic fragment, its surface illustrating a tree, is grafted onto a rock. This ironic disjunction between matter and illustration becomes a sign of the fictions of logic, and grafting, of course, is literally a cultural construction of nature. To underscore this point, Jenkinson has used the metaphor of pruning and grafting to describe the process of making her images.⁵

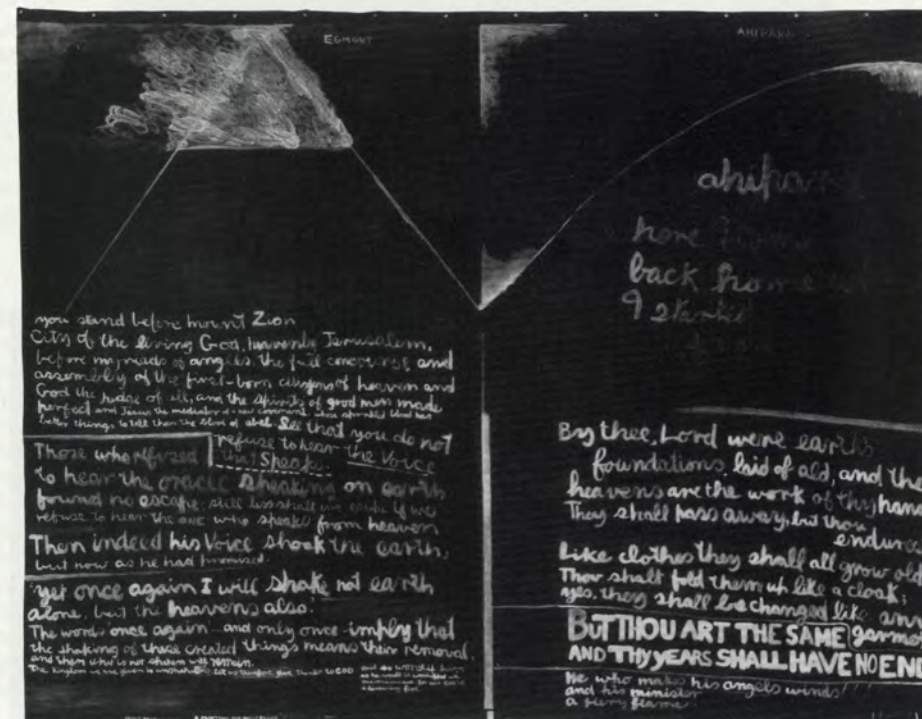
For Patrick Reynolds the imaging of nature is reconsidered as "the first object of photography."⁶ He presents images that are at first sight reassuring for their objective reference. But these images are capricious and unstable. Many are produced through a form of double exposure using the mutating light of dusk with the shutter open – a time exposure, combined with the instant and arresting light of the flash gun (P71-72). There is a fusion of two pictures into one, the darker background is flattened against the illuminated foreground. In many of his pictures, a single form is isolated before a pictorial landscape. The effect is reminiscent of 19th century portrait photography where the subject is located in front of a painted background. The shimmering tree, branch or frond becomes a standard bearer of cultural identity. Reynolds anthropomorphises nature, casting his players in theatrical narratives. For Reynolds, 'nature is a language', one he seeks to decipher.



Laurence Aberhart, *Taranaki (The Heavens Declare the Glory of God) New Plymouth, 14 May 1986*, silver contact print, gold and selenium toned, 195 x 245 mm. Courtesy the artist.

Laurence Aberhart appears to work within the documentary tradition of photography. Certainly there is no denying his photographs their potential value as documents. His pictures though are very aware of their historicising power, of photography's métier in picturing the world. For Aberhart the world is already pictured, already framed, already spoken. He works within histories already inscribed into the world's surfaces – indigenous, colonising, family, regional, nationalist, rural, urban, art, folk.

His photographs often expose the intersection of two or more pictures, as in *Taranaki (The Heavens Declare the Glory of God)*, *New Plymouth, 14 May 1986*. The two elements in this photograph suggest a complex layering and conjunction of narrative. Taranaki itself is the subject of numerous written and oral histories involving both indigenous and colonising peoples, and it has been numerous times pictured through painter Christopher Perkins, through postcards, through Colin McCahon. Here it shares an uneasy frame of reference with the observatory, which itself declares a universal picture. This, then, is a photograph about a clash of world views, about mutant signs, about picturing.



Colin McCahon, *A Painting for Uncle Frank* 1980, acrylic on canvas, 2330 x 3000 mm. Courtesy Private Collection; photo: Neil Pardington.

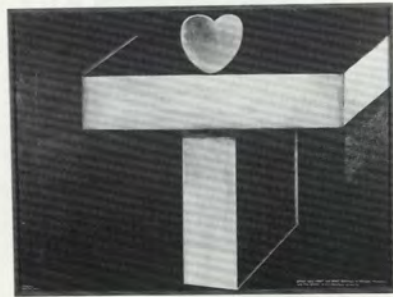
Peter Peryer's recent photographs look familiar. He, too, references a variety of photographic conventions. He reviews the world and reconsiders the aims of art photography by appropriating the styles of photographers not traditionally included within the realm of art. In *Mountain Scene* 1988 (P66), for example, the very title suggests the tradition of the picturesque. It is reminiscent of the type of picture which might be found hanging in a suburban living room. But it has other familiarities. Its muted grey tones and delineation of contour suggest descriptive landscape photographs found in books on New Zealand geomorphology.

Peryer seems to locate meaning in a shifting space between the objective reference of what is conventionally considered mundane and its means of signification. The photograph's surface is doubled. He explores the aesthetic styles and subject matter of the postcard, family snapshot, natural science or topographical photograph. This is not the 'decisive moment' of the modernist photograph. Rather, his images are signs removed from their time and place. By hauling them into the purview of art, he draws attention to their context and condition as images that define who we are.





Postcard, Courtesy Fotocentre Ltd., Oamaru.



Peter Peryer, *Alexandra Clock* 1988, gelatin silver print, 275 x 414 mm. Courtesy Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui.

Many photographers incorporate text into their work, visibly suggesting that language mediates the ways we experience and picture the world. Fiona Pardington literally frames her recent images with text, reinforcing their construction through and operation within language. She suggests that our interaction with the world and in particular the conditions of our sexuality are framed by language. This can be seen in the pair of images *Sex of Metals* 1989 (P58-59). Not only does she frame (shield) her images with language, but the use of the opposing signs of the weather vane within the images illustrates our assignation of words to pictures – male, boy, cock, etc. The allusion to the sexing of metals further suggests the arbitrary construction of sexuality within language, within culture. In this work Pardington both recognises and denies language its power.

In a variety of ways, the photographers in this exhibition identify the operations of representation within culture. They both highlight and parody the systems by which the subject is positioned and the self identified through photographic images. Their works may often seem very different in style. Implicit in much of the work, however, is an assertion that the spectator is a multiple subscriber to images and their implied narratives. In our multi-national, mass-media, market-driven society, difference is absorbed, repackaged and offered back to the consumer as commodity.

By bringing us back to the surface, these images seek to speak of and through the play of difference.

NOTES

1. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Beyond the Simulation Principle", in *Utopia Post Utopia: Configurations of Nature and Culture in Recent Sculpture and Photography* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1988), p. 83.
2. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in *Video Culture, A Critical Investigation*, John G. Handardt, ed. (New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1988), p. 40.
3. For further information on this work see, Christina Barton and Priscilla Pitts, "Unearthing Nature", *Antic 5* (1989), pp. 75-96.
4. Steve Edwards, "The Snapshooters of History: Passages on the Post Modern Argument", *Ten.8*, no. 32 (1989), p. 2.
5. Megan Jenkinson, "Virtus Moralis", *Creative Camera*, no. 10 (1988), pp. 19-20.
6. Unpublished Artist's Statement, 1988.

HEARTS

- P 7 Fiona Pardington, *Meltdown* 1988, colour negative print and mixed media, 323 x 300 mm. Courtesy the artist and Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington.
- P 8 *Postcard*, c. 1910, Rotary Photo, London, E.C.
- P 9 Laurence Aberhart, *Headboard # 1, Pawarenga, Whangapai Harbour, Northland, 10 May 1982*, gelatin silver print. Courtesy the artist.
- P 10 *Pincushion*, Hornman Museum/Michael Holford. Courtesy BPC Publishing Ltd., London.
- P 11 Rhondda Bosworth, *Absence of Z (2)* 1985, gelatin silver print, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist.
- P 12 Jean Lambert, *Printer's Mark*, 1943.
- P 13 Marie Shannon, *You Still Set my Heart on Fire* 1988, gelatin silver prints, selenium toned, 224 x 510 mm. Courtesy the artist.
- P 14 Colin McCahon, *Visible Mysteries No. 1* 1968, oil on board, 908 x 1213 mm. Courtesy Auckland City Art Gallery. Presented by the artist.
- P 15 Patrick Reynolds, *Heart of Leaves* 1987, gelatin silver print, selenium toned, 478 x 478 mm. Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland.



Exchanging Looks

Aspects of gender and representation in contemporary New Zealand photography

Every photographic image is a sign, above all, of someone's investment in the sending of a message.¹



Get the message?

The signals put out by this photograph² are crude but clear: Man is doer; Woman is done-to.

The angle of the man's arm into the photographic space effectively conflates the role of the maker of the image with that of the viewer, and locates both explicitly as masculine. Woman, on the other hand, is transfixed by this penetrating stare, 'this gaze gone hard'.³

The assumptions that underpin the construction of this image have been a primary focus for contemporary discussions on photography. The politics of the body and of representation continue to be critical issues of postmodernism and feminism. Of the 'fine arts', photography, with its links to documentary reportage, personal record, fashion imagery, advertising and pornography, has proved a particularly rich field for debate, deconstruction, resistance and renewal.

The notion that 'the gaze' is not neutral but is constructed as masculine was persuasively theorised in the 1970s by writers like John Berger,⁴ Linda Nochlin⁵ and Laura Mulvey.⁶ In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.⁷

Woman, then, stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.⁸ This theory has had a profound effect on women's art making and its ramifications have been various.

An early belief in the efficacy of 'redressing the balance' by producing images of 'strong' women in non-stereotypical roles,⁹ gave way to a realisation that the re-presenting of women in resistance to the (male) gaze could not be so easily achieved. For some women artists, one response to this realisation was to avoid directly depicting the female form and to explore alternative means of representing women's experience.

Photographer Rhondda Bosworth, for instance, (P34-37) has moved away from the familiar genres of (female) portraiture and the (female) nude. In recent works, she juxtaposes and layers objects to invent a kind of shorthand (legible primarily to women) in an intimate inscription of personal experience. Those images of women that remain in her work are mediated – rephotographed in order to distance them from the viewer and locate them outside the dominant mode of illusionistic, apparently unmediated photography.

Merylyn Tweedie has more emphatically elided even partial and resistant representations of the female body. On some collage works from which she tore the last vestiges of images of her own body, only yellowing patches of glue remain, faint signs of woman 'absenting herself' from the role of 'being looked at'. Today Tweedie makes mixed media, resin-glazed works which layer domestic materials and imagery, snippets of household advice, filmscript directions, and shreds of feminist/semiotic/psychoanalytic texts in a complex writing of the female subject into and as language.

As logical and effective on its own terms as this tactic may be, avoiding the depiction of the female form has (potentially) the significant disadvantage of abandoning the female body, yet again, to being positioned solely at man's pleasure. How, then, to make images of women that confound the male gaze and acknowledge woman as active subject and maker of meaning rather than as passive object?

For several women photographers the answer to this conundrum has lain in the self-image. The woman who photographs herself is able to take control of the way she presents herself to the viewer. Through this self-representation, she (like every woman self-portraitist) disrupts those codes which have established that 'woman' and 'artist' bear almost antithetical meanings in art. Her 'look' is not simply her passively objectified appearance, but the active reproduction and interpretation of that appearance. She constitutes herself as both subject and object of her actions,¹⁰ appropriating all the enabling transactions of transformation to her own ends.

A woman's self portrait is a whole made by language. . . A woman re-writing the script hollywood/narrative/film/theory, writes herself/her desire.¹¹

Thus, Megan Jenkinson's *Flora* 1984 (P47) rewrites the ancient story in which Zephyr pursued the reluctant Chloris; when he at length embraced her, flowers spilled from her lips and she was transformed into Flora.¹² Here it is the woman who is actor/artist. She gazes directly at the camera, returning the viewer's stare. With a salute-like gesture she holds a crown of hydrangea blossoms upon her head, in mimicry of the tiny garlanded china head on the mantelpiece behind her. In an instant of self-transformation, she steals meaning, creates it anew and names it as her own without benefit of the male embrace.

Jenkinson is just one of a number of contemporary New Zealand women photographers for whom the self-image has been a particular focus – amongst them, Marie Shannon, Margaret Dawson, Jane Zusters, Janet Bayly, Christine Webster and Gillian Chaplin.¹³ Others have constructed just one or two germinal images of themselves: Di Ffrench's *The Useful Idiot and Arnolfini's Hat* 1984; Dawne Pearce's corseted arms and legs in *Corset Book* 1984; Jenny Dolezel's student photographs of her face masked with fantasy make-up; Anne Noble's blurred image looking down towards her naked lower torso, *Untitled* 1982.

Images made by these women, with very few exceptions, exhibit some degree of deflection or repositioning of the gaze. It is rare to find a photograph that so conspicuously displays the artist's body as an object as does Gillian Chaplin's *Self-Portrait* 1977, in which, in full frontal pose, she lifts her dress over her head to reveal her naked form beneath.

Instead, we discover a number of avoidance strategies: the use of masquerade and disguise; a focus on certain parts of the body (in particular, the hands); cropping to pointedly exclude parts of the body (notably the head and face); blurring and obscuring the figure and/or face in various ways; further mediating the body's 'presence' by photographing its shadow, its reflection, its image. The notion of the decisive moment (so often assumed to be 'captured' by the photograph) may be resisted by the use of elements of narrative or sequential structures – but narrative which is fractured, interrupted, refused.¹⁴

Janet Bayly's grouped self-images seem, at first sight, to form a sequence. Her clothes and background are the same in each photograph, and the blur of the figure in

movement implies a continuum in time and space. Yet there is no beginning and no end to these 'narratives', nor can we discern any apparent logic in the relationship between one frame and another. It is impossible to pin down this woman, even more so to pin her up.

Merylyn Tweedie's books and her text and image works, with their diagrams for book layouts, imply even more strongly a progression from 'start' to 'finish'. Linear reading is, however, continually subverted by the repetition of words and images, the irruptions of one text into another, the visual and associative dislocations between text and image.

The manipulation of spatial relations within the image may also serve to disrupt its easy consumption. In relation to film, Laura Mulvey has written of the way in which the man commands an illusionistic, rational, three-dimensional space, while the woman functions as icon and spectacle at the surface of the image.¹⁵ Both Megan Jenkinson and Marie Shannon exploit this situation. In their rejection of a coherent space, they challenge the assumption of a single viewpoint and subtly elude the fixed stare, 'this gaze gone hard'.

*Shannon deliberately structures her images for a 'roving eye': "I think of these photographs as narrative pictures. . . I would like them to be 'read' – backwards and forwards, up and down, with the same sort of buildup of detail you get when you are reading a text."*¹⁶

Her three-part images (P77-78) imitate the format of the familiar landscape panorama, which traditionally attempts a broad and apparently seamless depiction of space. Shannon's, however, is a domestic landscape, compressed with all the seams showing. The visual disjunctions between the abutted sections seriously fissure the pictured space and render as shaky and insecure the environment which we expect to be most stable.

Shannon places herself at the compositional centre of her domestic images. Despite this, the concept of the centred self is challenged in a multiplicity of ways: the cropping of the head; the occasional use of disguise (*The Rat in the Lounge* 1985, P 77); distortion of the body (*Baby Clothes* 1986); the restrained violence implied by the objects that surround or are held by the figure – a Swiss army knife bristling with gadgets, secateurs, the fireworks in the living room. Whether threatening or under threat, this 'self' is placed at risk.

Megan Jenkinson's use of collage (P48-51) enables her also to construct space as illogical and flattened. Subtle dissonances of scale, perspective, colour and lighting call into question assumptions of photographic illusion. The backgrounds to her shallow stages are often faked – photographic 'backdrops' of the Pyramids or Auckland's skyline; wooden surfaces painted to look like marble. Objects float or penetrate other objects in ways that defy laws of gravity and the solidity of matter.

Within these fictional domains, Jenkinson figures herself forth as different virtues or intellectual attributes: Temperance, Fortitude, Concord, Philosophy, Logic. Here the female body does not stand for these attributes (as it does in the traditional personifications she references and re-figures). Rather, it is represented as the active agent of intellectual and moral forces. Woman, in these images, is constructed not only as Philosophia, but also as philosopher; not only as Logica or Concordia, but also as logician and peacemaker. Meaning is not inscribed on her blank, acquiescent body but is re-written through her active, conscious re-definition of the self.

Unlike Margaret Dawson or American photographer Cindy Sherman, Jenkinson does not deliberately alter her appearance with make-up, wigs, costume, etc. Nonetheless, as the accompanying titles make clear, these are not self-portraits but masquerades, reconstructions of that 'self' in another guise. Mary Ann Doane suggests that:

*By destabilising the image, the masquerade confounds th[e] masculine structure of the look. It effects a defamiliarisation of female iconography.*¹⁷

Masquerade is a double exposure, one which confuses the viewer as to what's really on offer. Its duplicity effects a calculated distance between viewer and image – a distance which the female spectator normally finds difficult to achieve since 'she is the image.'¹⁸ Here, however, in that 'space' manufactured by the masquerade, a space which problematises established relations between viewer and viewed, woman can position herself to both produce and actively read the image.

Margaret Dawson conspicuously exploits the possibilities of the masquerade. In her

large colour photographs, she re-makes her appearance in a variety of recognisable roles: marching girl, frumpy housewife, Maori maiden, punk chick, smiling *Woman's Weekly* blossom queen. Like photographers Cindy Sherman and Judy Dater, Dawson reproduces in these works the look of certain female stereotypes (P41-42). Yet none of these representations entirely convinces. The costume doesn't fit properly; the smile is forced; the hairstyle too obviously a wig; the outfit not quite right. A comment from Sherman comes to mind:

*I was more interested in the types of characters that fail.*¹⁹

All Dawson's characters fail. They participate in the fate of every woman – always to be not quite the perfect match for the stereotype. Dawson makes explicit *within* her images the slippage between 'the image' and reality.

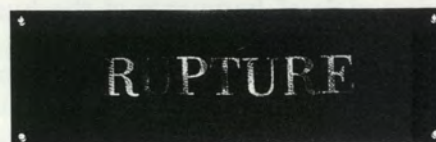
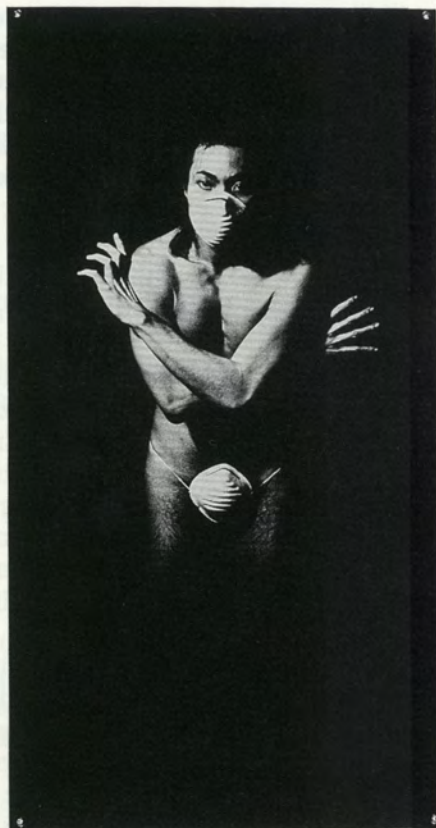
Dawson's later photographs operate somewhat differently. Rather than reproducing stereotypical representations of women, they appear to seize moments in some bizarre enactment. Stumbling about on a hillside in outsize high-heeled shoes and oversized dress, or sword-swallowing in a 'circus tent' slung from a rotary clothesline (P44), her costume ornamented with foil milk bottle tops, Dawson the woman poses as the child acting out fantasies of adulthood and power. Her clumsy rehearsals of these roles question the notion of the authentic self. They expose as a fiction the child's momentous 'discovery' of him/herself as a coherent and independent identity²⁰ – an exposure towards which the very multiplicity of Dawson's representations of 'self' has continually operated.

Jane Zusters' campaign of resistance to the gaze does not lie specifically in disguise. Her continuing refusal to present a clearly positioned and defined image of herself does, however, ally her work with the strategies of masquerade. Furthermore, she frequently structures her representations around that 'distance' between woman and image that Doane suggests is so difficult for women to establish. She often pictures herself at one remove: in a mirror, the image of her naked body interrupted by other reflections, shadows, objects; in a shop window, her reflection obscured by signs and models of fragments of the human anatomy; as a shadow cast upon a wall that seems to be at once outside and inside. In *Self Portrait* 1981, she holds up in front of her an outsize painted cut-out of a dress with tabs on it, such as you'd attach to a paper doll. Above the dress her head is blurred by movement. Woman, Zusters implies, is expected to 'dress' and 'pose' for the camera. At the same time, however, her assumption and discarding of identities, using the various accoutrements of femininity, may act as a mask, a shield, a mode of self-defence, denying the viewer's search for the 'real' woman.

Christine Webster's recent works, on the other hand, appear to expose woman yet again. Her large glossy photographs, which mimic the look of fashion photography or high-class porn, are knowingly seductive (P86-87). Many are images of the artist's naked body and, as such, are balanced precariously on the edges of the deep cracks that divide pornography from the erotic, deconstruction from salacious delectation.

Webster does employ various devices in order to confound the (male) gaze – elements of masquerade, blurring of the figure, and a partial concealment of the body which is less a strategy of avoidance than one of re-inscription. Many of the figures hold something in front of the pubic area – a black feather fan, a bunch of keys, a triangular cake blazing with candles, a black tin baby's bath, a dildo. These suggestive objects both attract attention to and mask the genitalia, in a variation of the masquerade which enables Webster to reinvent their meaning in women's terms – as active, potent agent, or a site in which to locate the mutability of female desire and response.

This formulating of an active feminine body is not, primarily, aimed at the male viewer. Webster seems to be consciously engaged in constructing and speaking to a female spectator – or more accurately, as her use of text panels beneath the images invites, a (female) reader. Her images of men are similarly directed to the woman viewer. *Moon Envy* 1987, an inspired parody of Freud's famous tenet about penis envy,²¹ is a joke told specifically for women's amusement. In *Rupture* 1989 identical industrial face masks cover both the man's mouth and his sex organs, explicitly making the link between the symbolic possession of the phallus and access to language. The truss-like appearance of the lower mask hints at disabling physical rupture and a consequent disruption of male potency. Webster again masks in order to reinvent – in this case, translating male sexual dominance into silence.



Christine Webster, *Rupture* 1989,
gelatin silver print, 1825 x 795 mm.
Courtesy the artist.

Fiona Pardington is also engaged in making images of men specifically for women.

*What male nudes are available to us in a historical sense are never prepared for the private, erotic gaze of the female consumer, but rather are grandly striding embodiments of civic pride in public squares. Women should now reconstruct their experiences of the male body.*²²

This project involves more than a simple reversal of position. It is probable (and probably desirable) that women do not view men in the same way men view women. Mary Ann Doane asks:

*After all, even if it is admitted that the woman is frequently the object of the voyeuristic or fetishistic gaze . . . what is there to prevent her from reversing the relation and appropriating the gaze for her own pleasure?*²³

The answer, she postulates, is that voyeurism demands a certain distance from its object, a distance which is not commensurable with woman's 'over-identification' with the image. And she goes on to suggest (implicating Luce Irigaray as she does so²⁴) that woman is more comfortable with the sense of touch than with that of seeing.

Such a claim, however, would confine woman yet again within the body and exclude her from the active out-reach with which the look is invested. Further, it effects a certain closure with respect to the structure of the look – positing it as a one-directional stare which 'would not permit the other thus transfixed to leave the battlefield or the pleasure-bed, or the canvas.'²⁵ Rather, it may be that woman is able to construct and practise a different kind of look.

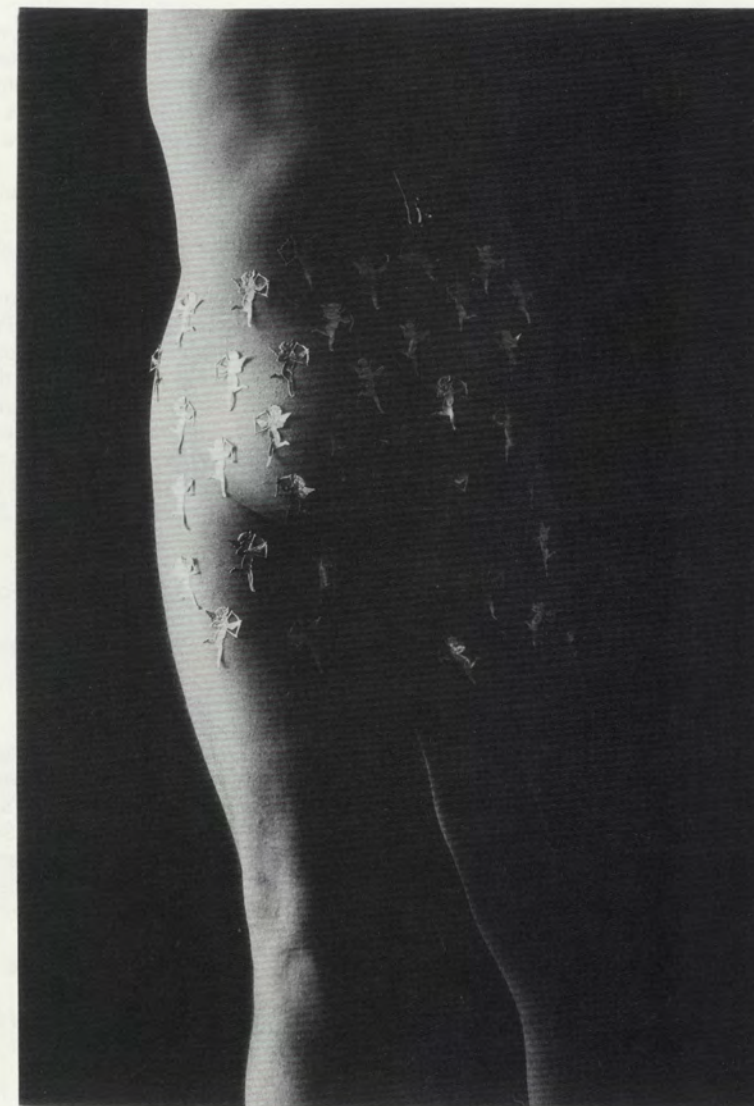
Mary Ann Caws answers her own question,

*Is there some way of looking that is not the look of an intruder, some interpretation from which we could exempt ourselves as consumers?*²⁶

by positing as an alternative the glance, which "inflicts its momentary violence, and sometimes on the slant . . . leaving to the other a certain freedom."²⁷

Fiona Pardington's *Sebastian* 1987 references familiar western iconographies, including that of Saint Sebastian, the Christian martyr who, though shot through with arrows, rose Christ-like again. Pardington's image divests the male body of the heroic significance with which the saint is traditionally invested. In languid pose, back-on to the viewer, this body is presented as vulnerable, inactive, soft. Although exposed, this Sebastian is not transfixed by the arrows which mythologically sealed his fate as martyr-hero. Here, each is (only on the point of being fired by an insouciant cupid) laid lightly upon his skin, like a kiss or a caress.

Pardington acknowledges the desire embedded in the look – it is overtly inscribed upon the body in the form of its reiterated visible symbol. At the same time, these scattered shiny cupids diffuse the gaze, permitting it only an intermittent touch-down upon the desired object and reflecting the look back on itself.



Fiona Pardington, *Sebastian* 1987, gelatin silver print, selenium toned, 508 x 407 mm. Courtesy the artist.

As in Jenkinson's, Dawson's and Webster's use of the masquerade, Bosworth's rephotographing of images, or Shannon's disruptions of coherent spatial description, Pardington here renders problematic and unstable the space(s) between viewer and image. She invents a glance which oscillates between voyeurism and intimacy, distance and proximity, sight and touch; a look that is constructed in and through female spectatorship, but one which opens up possibilities for a profound re-negotiation of relations in the exchange of looks within and across genders.

NOTES

1. Allan Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning", in *Thinking Photography*, Victor Burgin, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 87.
2. Parbhu Makan (untitled). Introductory image to "Elam Portfolio", *PhotoForum*, no. 24 (February/March 1975), p. 3.
3. Mary Ann Caws, "Ladies Shot and Painted: Female Embodiment in Surrealist Art", in *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*, Susan Rubin Suleiman, ed. (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 270.
4. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1975).
5. Linda Nochlin, "Eroticism and Female Imagery in Nineteenth Century Art", in *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art 1730-1970*, Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin, eds. (New York: Newsweek, 1973).
6. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", *Screen*, vol. 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975), pp. 6-18.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
9. This is a continuing strategy for some women and, in the hands of photographers Gil Hanly and Fiona Clark, can be an effective one.
10. By adopting this dual role, the photographer avoids participating in the unequal power relations which some writers have argued are embedded in the very act of 'taking' a photograph of another. See, Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York and Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977); Allan Sekula, "Traffic In Photography", in *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973-1983* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Press, 1984), pp. 77-101; Melissa Banta and Curtis M. Hinsley, *From Site to Sight: Anthropology, Photography and the Power of Imagery* (Cambridge, Mass.: Peacock Museum Press, 1986).
11. Annette Van Den Bosch, "Desire/Language/Struggle", *Art and Text*, no. 12/13, (Summer 1983/Autumn 1984), p. 100.
12. James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (London: John Murray, 1979), p. 125.
13. The self-image has also been a focus for overseas artists such as Cindy Sherman, Jo Spence, Judy Dater, Holly King and expatriate New Zealander Alexis Hunter.
14. Many of the strategies described here are, of course, used elsewhere than in images of the female self. It is worth noting at this point the very different tactics that the male maker of the self-image can adopt. In Peter Peryer's *Torso* 1980, the artist's naked body is frontally presented to the camera, with the penis confidently positioned at the very centre of the image. The cropping of the upper torso and the apparent truncation of the legs at the knees reference familiar remnants of classical statuary and locate the image in an instantly recognisable heroic tradition. Yet, were the object of such a photograph a woman, we would read her pose as a display – of something for the taking. She would be nude, whereas he is naked. *Torso* consists of the same photograph repeated five times. Yet this repetition does not, as we might expect, empty the image of meaning. Instead, it posits the artist as a focused and unchanging self – a fixed body which is the very opposite of the mutable, multiple selves depicted by Jenkinson, Zusters, Dawson or Webster. Even naked, man is dressed in authority.
15. Laura Mulvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-15.
16. Marie Shannon in Rhondda Bosworth, "Domestic Scenery", *Six Women Photographers*, *PhotoForum*, no. 56 (1987), p. 49.
17. Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator", *Screen*, vol. 123, no. 3-4 (September-October 1982), p. 82.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
19. Cindy Sherman in Els Barent, *Cindy Sherman* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1982), p. 8.
20. Of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, according to which 'the privileged moment in the process of self-consciousness is the mirror phase . . . when the infant child perceives its reflection as an independent and cohesive identity . . . Lacan, however, stresses that the apparent unity is a multiple fiction . . . it covers or masks the infant's fragmentation and lack of coordination . . . in the wholeness of an image. . . .' Kate Linker, "Representation and Sexuality", *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, Brian Wallis, ed. (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), p. 398.
21. Elizabeth Eastmond, *Gender Confusion and General Insubordination – some themes in recent work by Christine Webster* (Dunedin: Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1989).
22. Fiona Pardington in *Montana Lindauer: The Art Award 1989* (Auckland: Auckland Society of Arts, 1989), p. 24.
23. Mary Ann Doane, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
24. For a re-reading of Irigaray's position in respect of the female body, see Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989).
25. Mary Ann Caws, *op. cit.*, p. 270.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 270. See also Berkeley Kaite, "The Pornographic Body Double: Transgression in the Law", in *Body Invaders: sexuality and the postmodern condition*, Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, eds. (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 150-168, for discussions of a 'passive', 'emasculated' look, and of the return of the gaze.

- P 25 Nature Morte (Silence), Wanganui, 10 February 1986
- P 26 Taranaki (The Heavens Declare the Glory of God), New Plymouth, 14 May 1986
- P 27 Kevin Wasley's Elvis Presley Memorial Record Room, 14 May 1986
- P 28 Selma, Alabama, 15 September 1988
- P 29 Landscape near Mohaka, 5 June 1989





- F-6 Nelson Morte (Illness), Winnipeg, 20 February 1966
- F-26 Toronto (The Heavens Declare the Glory of God), New Plymouth, 14 May 1966
- F-17 North Weyburn's Dale Priddy Memorial Board Room, 14 May 1966
- F-28 Wain, Alberta, 15 September 1966
- F-29 Landscape near Melville, 9 June 1966



Terra Informis/Known Ground

Christina Barton

"The photograph possesses an evidential force . . . its testimony bears not on the object but on time."

Roland Barthes, 1981

I have a memory. It is a photograph.

It shows the corner of a house at night in winter.

It must be night because light shines from a window and is reflected by the snow banked up against the house. This literally is a frozen moment, for the photograph captures a spray of falling snow and a trail of indistinct footprints. It is as though the camera has caught the uncanny effect of a strange disturbance. The evidence is there in the falling snow, the trampled ground.

This is the corner of my childhood home. My father took the picture, shaking the tree to get the falling snow effect. It conjures for me memories, triggering a certain kinaesthetic recall: the feel of snow underfoot, the burn of cold air on my face, of being there in that place. Yet its very intractability is measure of a loss: of a time and place that is no more, can never be, and perhaps never was.

That a photograph can convey so much is testament to its power. For not only does it exist as a record of historical fact, but also it functions as a vehicle for memory, as a generator of fictions. It is in fact the tension between the real and the contrived, between the known and the fabricated, that gives photography its peculiar affectedness. We can create as well as capture our photographic moments.

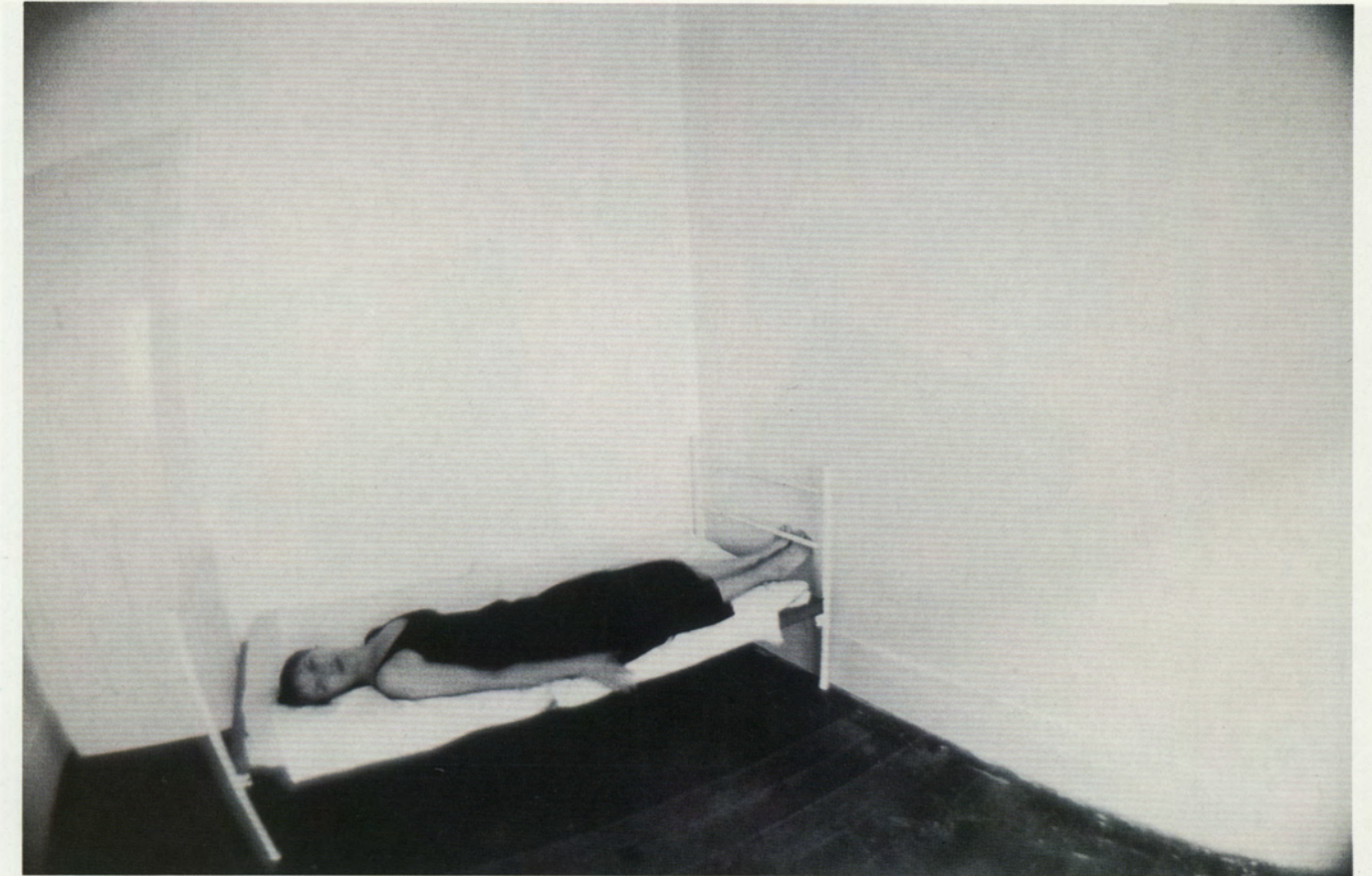
Most photographers operate somewhere between the capture and the creation of images. Their motives may vary from a desire to take control of and participate in the construction of their own personal histories, to a wider impulse to chronicle and address a collective history.

Today there is an added imperative to acknowledge and analyse the ways in which we are constructed by the images we make. For not only do I remember what I think I see in that familiar photograph, but also strangely and inexorably, it remembers and therefore creates 'me'.

There is a certain pathos in the photographer's desire to call a momentary halt to the flight of time. There is a particular melancholy in the realisation of the partiality of our photographic memories, a mournfulness in the loss of that which is evident in the image. Nevertheless, the photograph remains a potent reminder of a presence in absence, a recognition of the mutable in the immutable, of memory and its loss, of history and its making.

"The photograph is a certain but fugitive testimony . . ."

Roland Barthes

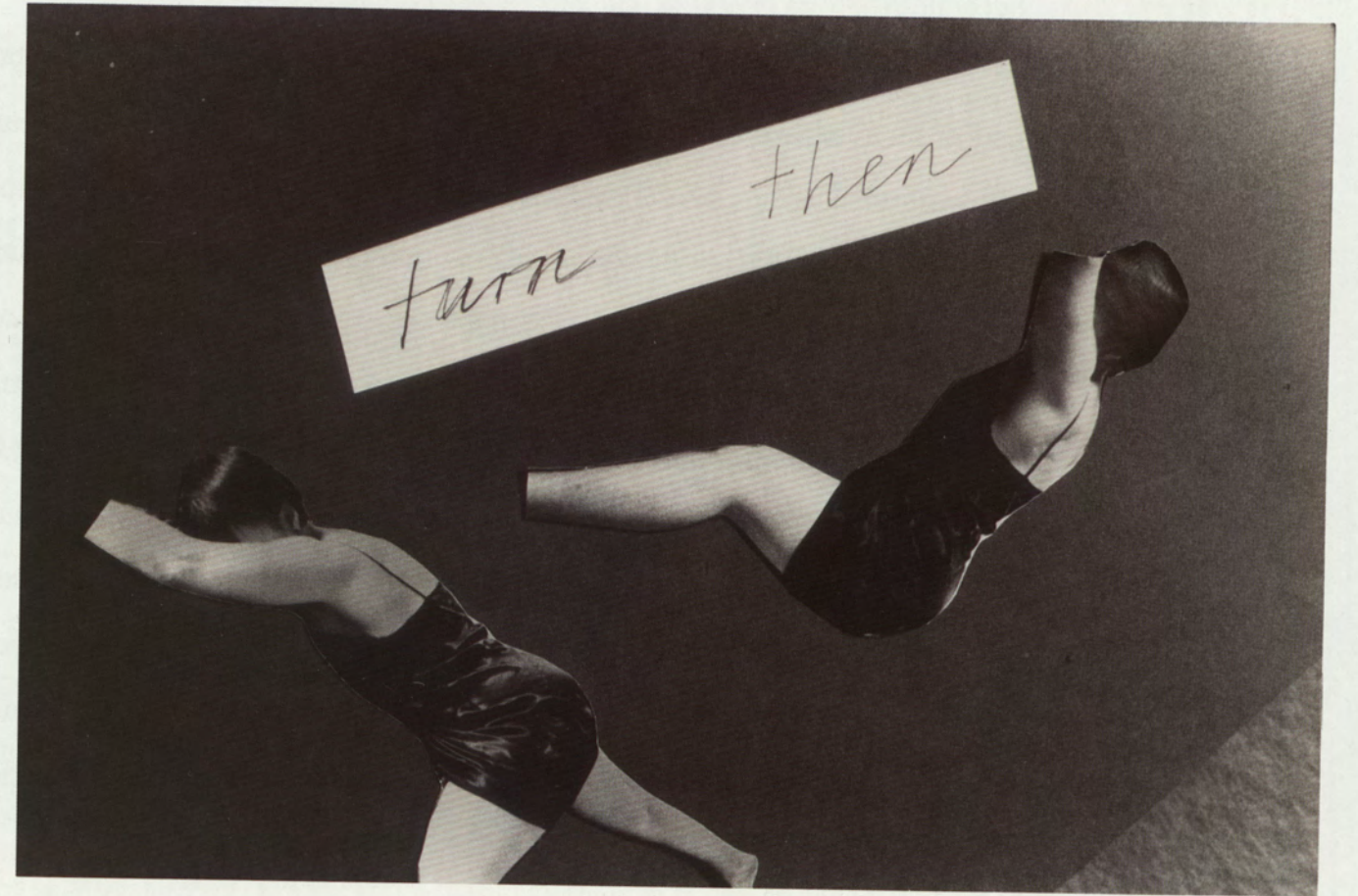


- P 33 **Self portrait/April 1985**
- P 34 **Mother goes upside down 1985**
- P 35 **Insignia 1987**
- P 36 **My selves 1987**
- P 37 **turn then 1989**



- # 11 Self portrait April 1968
- # 14 Mother goes upside down 1965
- # 25 Insights 1987
- # 26 My selves 1987
- # 27 Birth Day 1989





The Open Eye/I

Shona Smith

We live as human subjects by taking on a history. In New Zealand it is mainly the history of being men or women under capitalism. In deconstructing that history, we can only construct other histories. What are we in the process of becoming?

The conscious mind is only part of the human subject. Conscious thought is one of many structures that produce the unstable thing we call self. Fears and phobias, unconscious sexual desires, social and political factors also produce the complex subject. Except by study of these multiple determinants, an individual's experience cannot be understood. That we cannot know the unconscious, renders the search for a unified individual self, or gender identity, drastically reductive.

This is complicated by the body which forms the material basis for the constitution of the subject. Our bodies are unified and discrete, and usually complete with gender identity by the time we are conscious of self. No re/invention is possible without the presence in the inventing subject of a plenitude of others. Deconstructing the opposition between masculinity and femininity challenges the notion of identity. We end up with an unbounded and therefore undefinable self.

Exciting, and yet

*Since I was more than a child
trying on a thousand faces
I have wanted one thing: to know
simply as I know my name
at any given moment, where I stand.*

Simplicity eludes us. Postmodernism stands on its head the premise "know yourself and you know the world". Try to understand this world and you become part of an image that is distorted and dispersed in mirror glass surfaces.

Photography is an essential part of the high-tech media machinery used to ensure the continued dominance of materialism. Photographic images that demand conformity to type are seen as oppressive by those who are usually (at least initially) both politicised and relatively powerless. Women, used to being/seeing themselves as photographed objects, turn to the other end of the camera to make glossy images they strip to reveal the negatives.

Although there are fewer women wanting to make a career of pain, some remain concerned with issues of equality. Others celebrate female difference. Our most radical photographers are making images that reject dichotomies, that challenge the way the written word divides experience into arbitrary categories like subject/object, masculine/feminine. They work comparatively illusionless, miming illusions in a society where it is a *crime/only to cast too bold a shadow/or smash the mould straight off.*

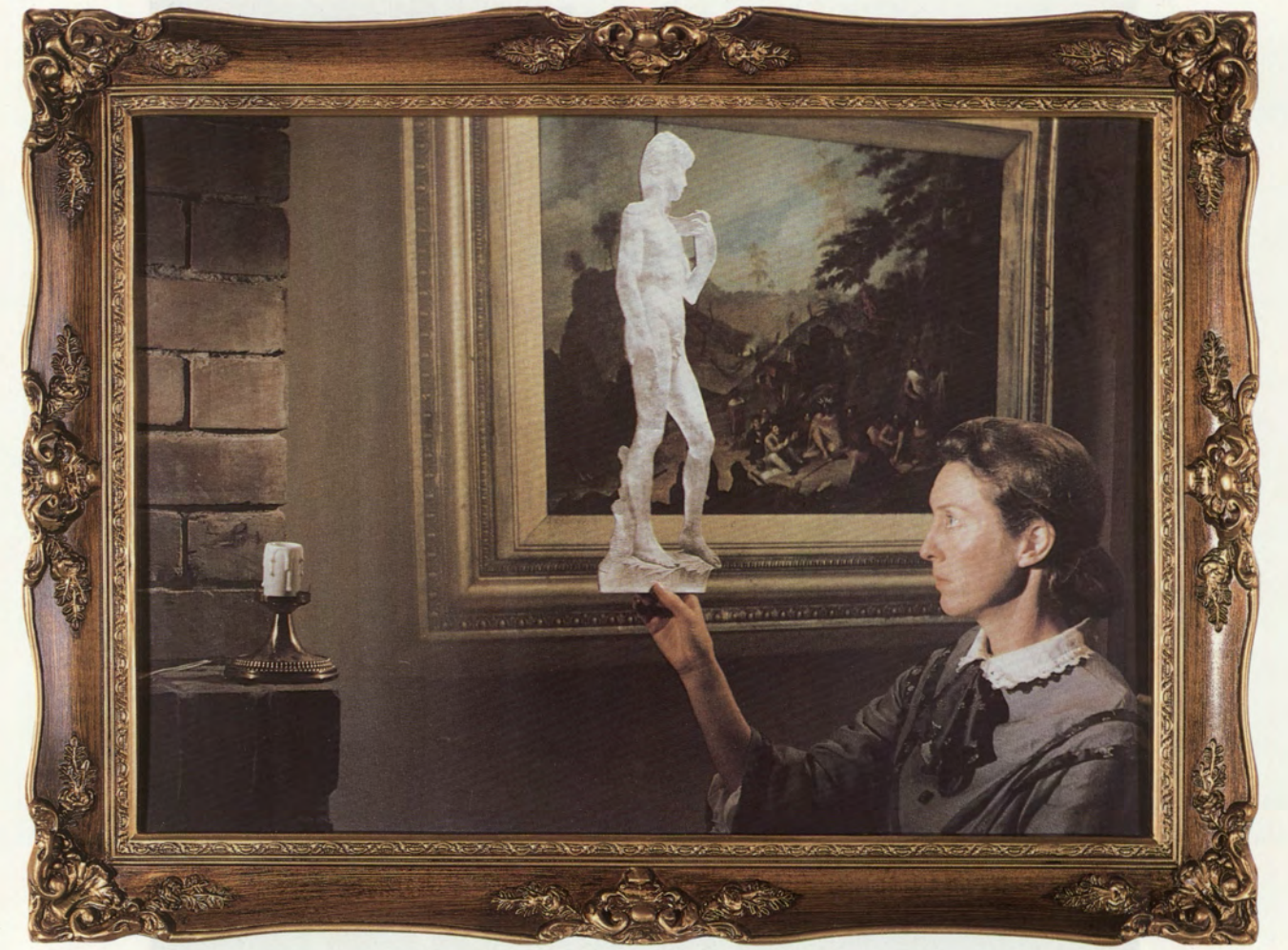
The self is the place not only of structure but also of loss. At every moment we stand simultaneously on a site of cohesion and dispersion.

- P 41 **Woman at the Catholic Cathedral, Christchurch** 1985
- P 42 **Woman Outside the House with Flowers** 1987
- P 43 **Colonial Vision** 1987
- P 44 **Sword Lily (Gladiolus)** 1989
- P 45 **HOUSE SPARROW (passer domesticus)** 1989





- 741 Woman at the Colosseum (California, 1982)
- 742 Woman in a Hat (San Diego, 1982)
- 743 Colosseum (1982)
- 744 Sword Lily (California, 1982)
- 745 HOUSE WINDOW (pussy willow, 1982)



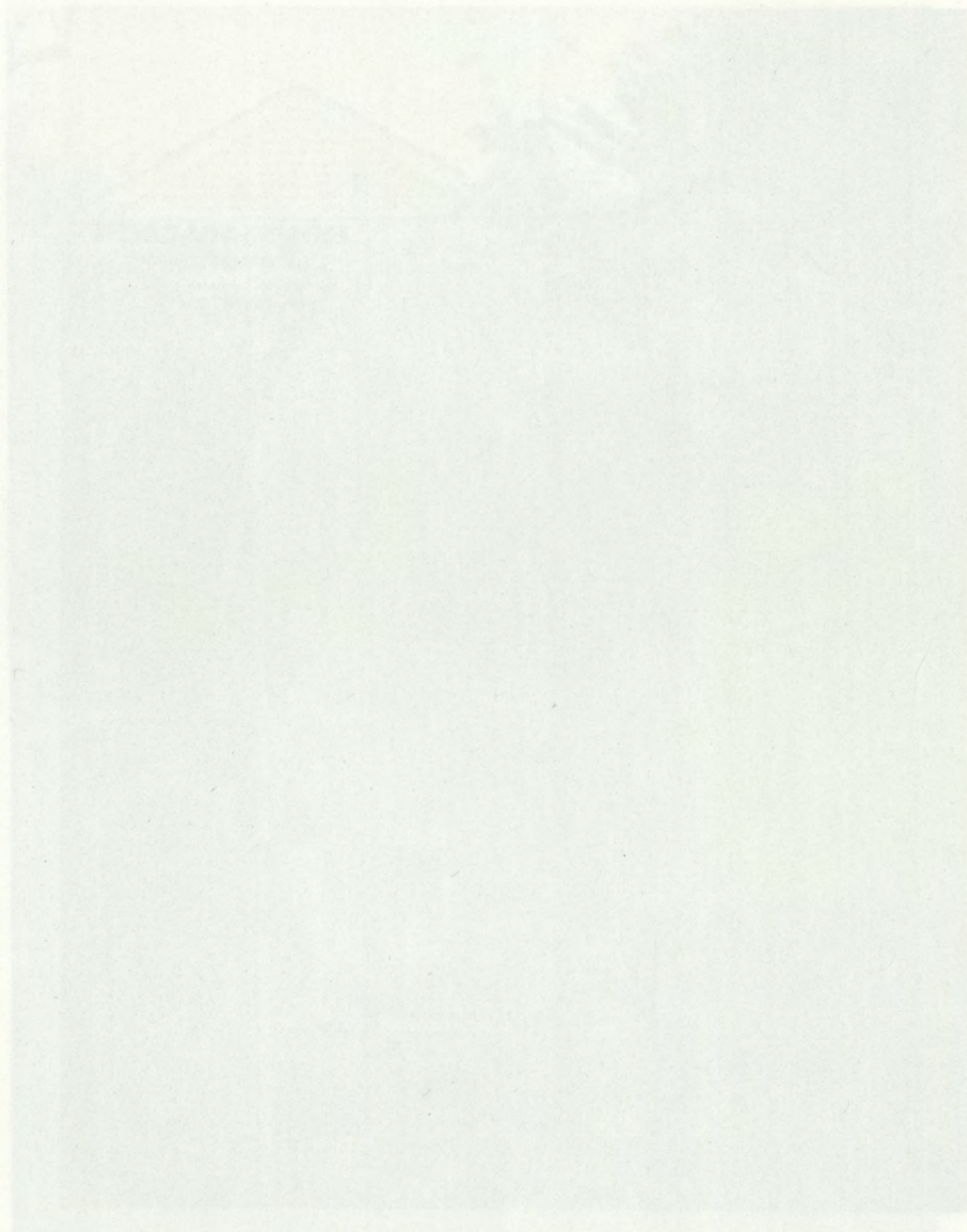


Sword Lily (gladiolus)



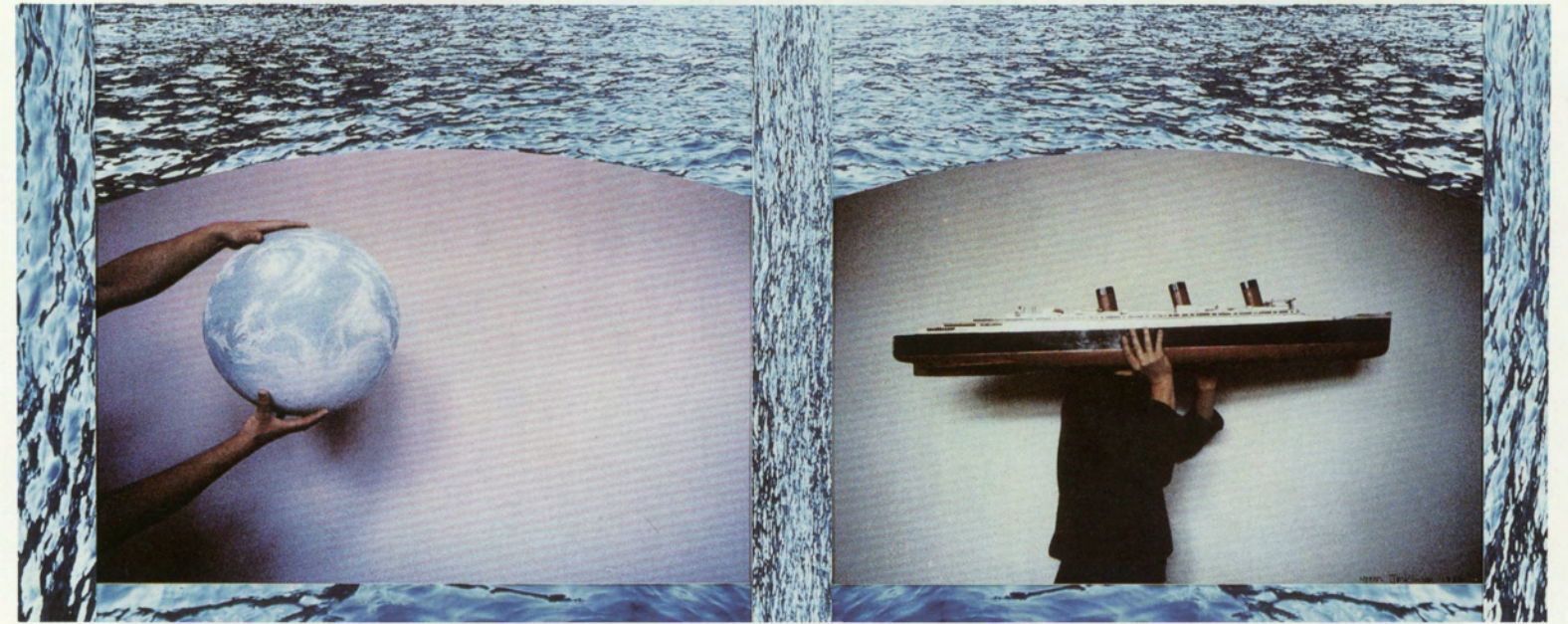
HOUSE SPARROW
passer domesticus

- 141 How 1984
- 142 Las Talloniz - the Law of Retaliation 1980
- 143 Voyage of Liberty Ship 1980
- 144 Philosopher Trying to find the Reason in the Codes Nature II 1980
- 145 Athen Weighed Down by the Cumulative Effect of his History 1987



- P 47 **Flora** 1984
- P 48 **Lex Talionis – the Law of Retaliation** 1986
- P 49 **Voyage of Liberty Ship** 1986
- P 50 **Philosophica Trying to find the Reason in the Codex Naturae II** 1986
- P 51 **Artem Weighed Down by the Cumulative Effect of his History** 1987







The Frame

To inspect the frame we must move from the centre, first crossing the photograph's grained landscape to the image edge where exclusions are advertised and inclusions confirmed. It is at this point we can safely say everything is either in or out of the picture.

Some photographers have insisted on the integrity of the physical edge of the film's frame, giving it a priority that seems to deny its own dependence on chance. Yet most 'icons' are isolated from a number of similar images selected from the proof-sheet, confirming the power of the photographer over the density of experience.

All photographers have this power. Consider the casual injury of the snap shot. Arms, heads, Mums and Dads innocently severed by technical inexperience. Here the framing edge might as well trigger memories from outside the frame as the scene captured by it: "See the arm of the chair? Your Aunt Margaret was sitting in it, but I missed her. I think it must be this new camera."

Were this a book or magazine, our next frame would be the page's edge rich with implications for the positioning of images. But for this particular journey we will skate across the matt finally stopping at the thin black line or, more grandly, the gold-leaf confection at the matt's edge.

This framing clearly marks photographs out as portable, saleable objects and it can set out a style or fashion. It seems odd though that so many photographs have been corralled by a narrow black rim – a tight-lined nod to neutrality. Some of the photographs in this exhibition have taken up the argument of position and style posed by the frame, and have claimed this edge for themselves by drawing on history and even irony in how they surround their images.

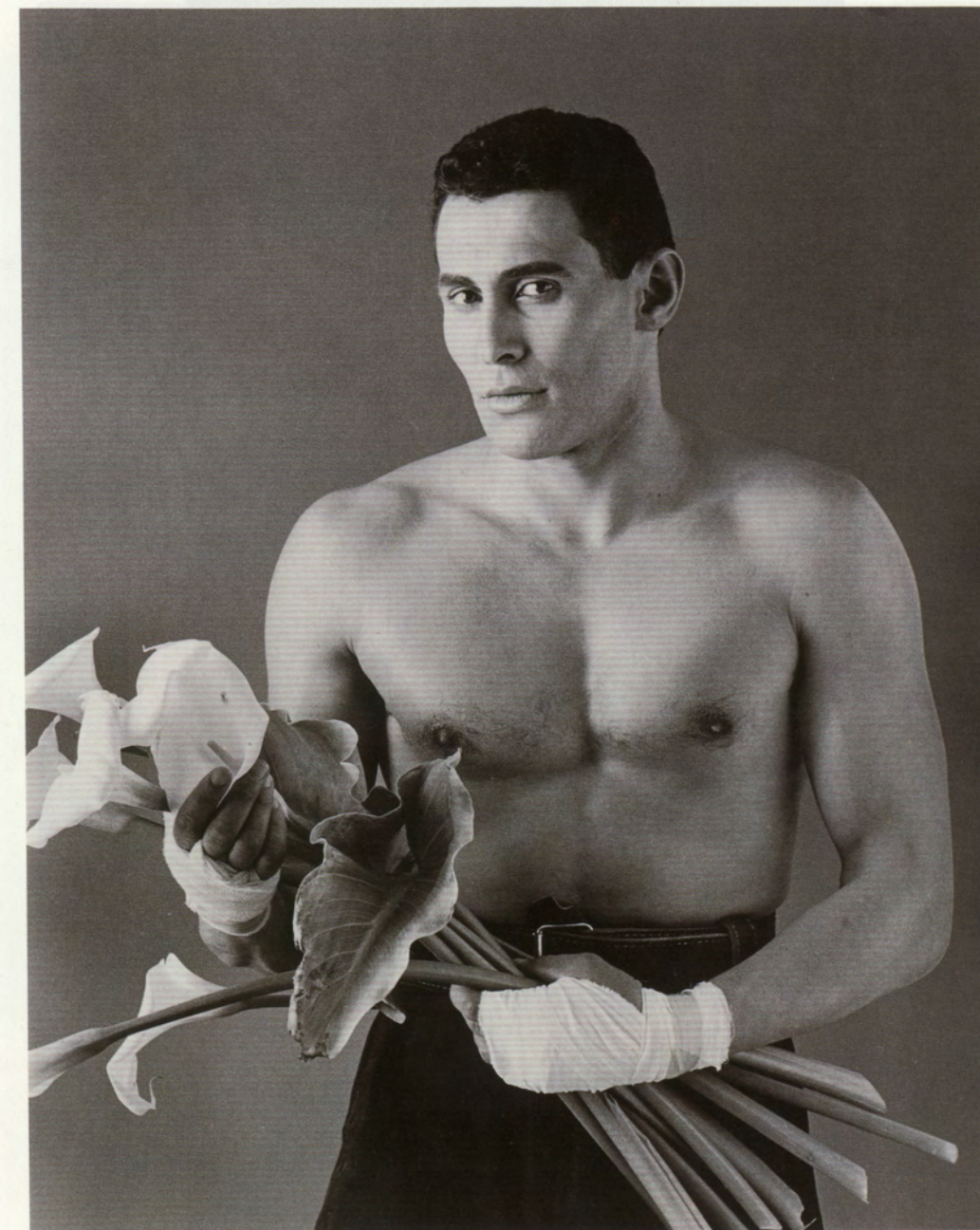
Once we end this journey, we tumble into the most powerful of all frames – the gallery's own context. Presented as art, what photographic information can withstand leeching by the twin institutional forces of aesthetics and commodification? Still, unlike most other art objects, photographs have the good fortune to use a process firmly embedded in the real world which is constantly being reassembled by technology.

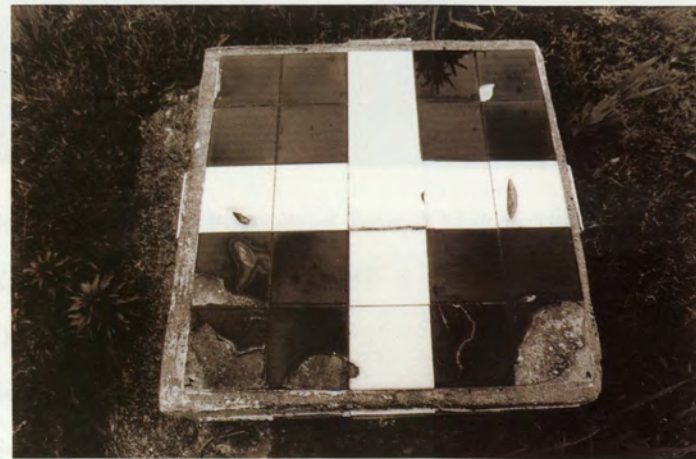
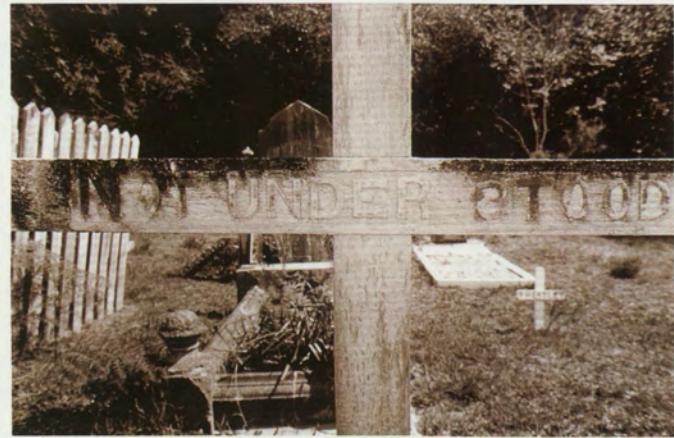
Around seven years ago *National Geographic* featured the Egyptian pyramids on its cover. To better fit the golden border the magazine always uses as its own frame of its view of Our World, the Giza pyramids were digitally nudged closer together.

Digital technology is not new – it's how *Time* can publish the same news photographs in New Zealand and New York by satellite transmission. But there are further possibilities. It is already all but impossible to detect the reshaping of a photograph, as pixels (smaller than the grain of the film) are shunted around to create new versions of what was once touted as photographic truth.

When *National Geographic* feels free to play with the pyramids, you can be sure something's afoot. For if no image is safe from manipulation, its history and its source take on new significance. The myth of photographic truthfulness may now finally be laid to rest. But for the meanings invested by context, by framing, it is clearly a time to move out from the edges and back to the centre.

- P 55 **Prize of Lilies: A Portrait of Joseph Makea** 1985
- P 56 **Kawhia, Red Hill, Kai Iwi** 1987
- P 57 **Oracle** 1987
- P 58 **Sex of Metals I** 1989
- P 59 **Sex of Metals II** 1989







Floating Narrative

Miro Bilbrough

Narrative turns a knowing eye on the fragile boundary between fact and fiction. And recognises this division as one of its own: an artifice. Narrative invents the real world over and over.

We like to think of narrative as the space of the story-teller or artist: it is also the space of political and social manipulation. We like to imagine that we tell narratives. More often they tell us (who we are).

How can narrative, traditionally a linear movement in time, be contained within a still (photograph)?

By freezing the narrative, withholding before/after, the photograph summons each viewer to (re)invent it. And so the narrative multiplies – takes other lives, and others' lives. Although the photograph may construct us, we in turn may construct it.

The anchor of a single photograph's narrative, however deeply it may descend into our unconscious, is never secure. A counter, critical narrative – introduced from within or without the photograph – may weigh, surface and float the original anchor.

The intention and desire of one narrative may be disrupted, not simply reflected, by its relation to another. Then the photograph will be opened instead of closed. It can now resist (re)solution.

The viewer is offered parallel consciousness of the fictions that (re)solve who s/he is, and is now freer to choose their own. The artifice of the photograph is no greater than that of the self. In both cases another may always be taken or made.

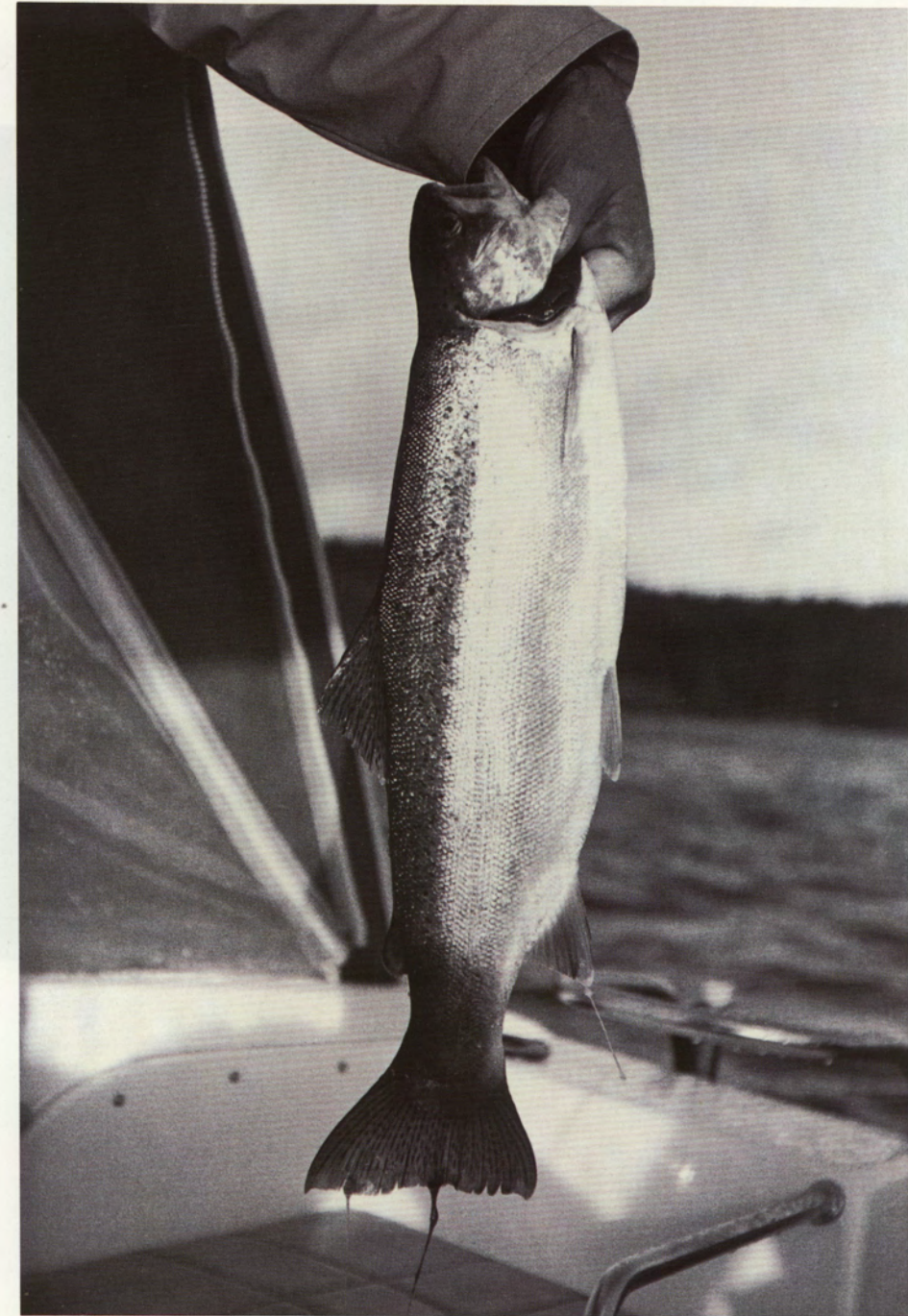
Expose the riddle of who constructs the narrative of a single photograph: the photographer, the society from which they come, the walls on which the photograph hangs, the people that come to see it. Are they in unison or discord?

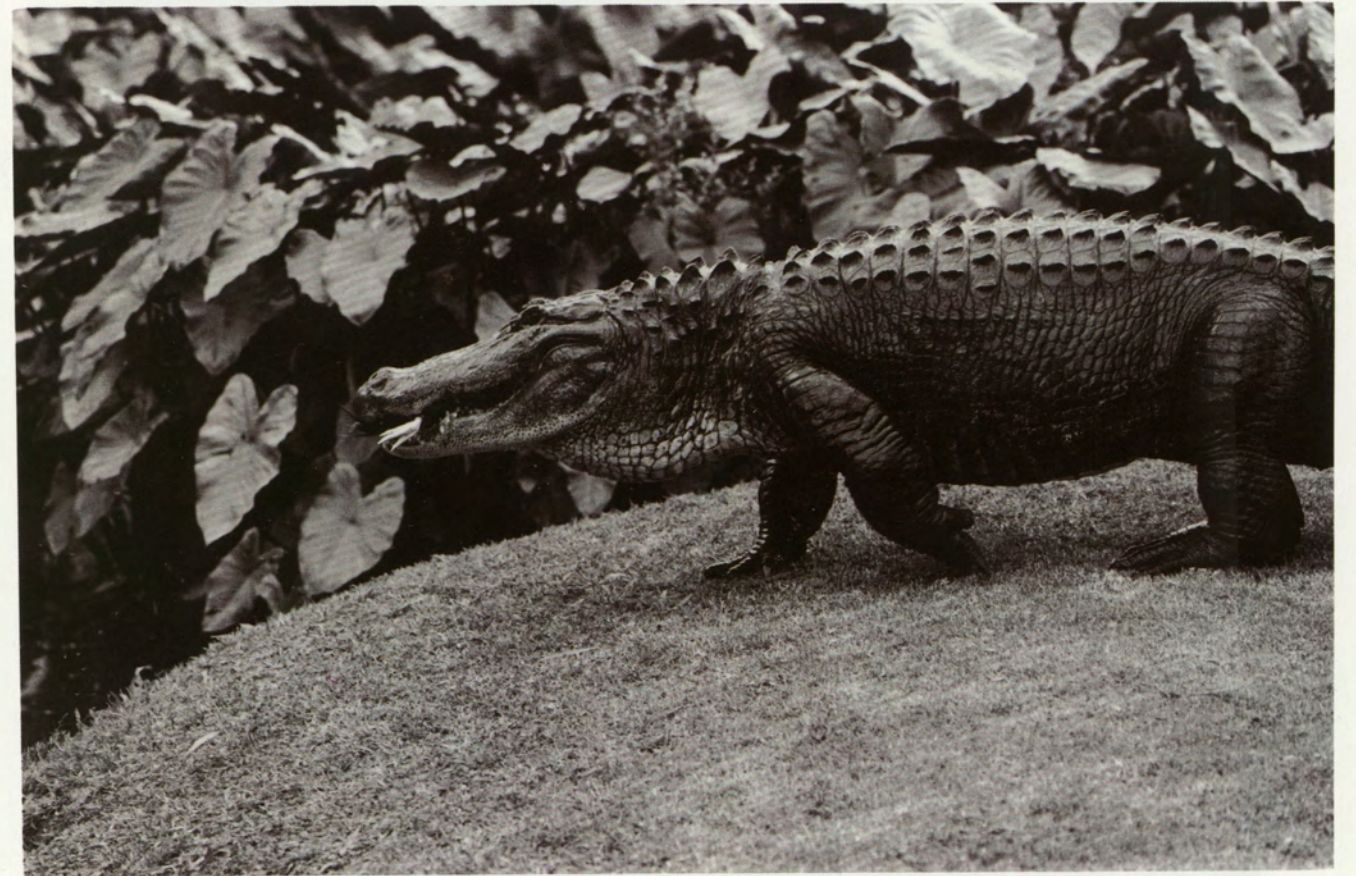
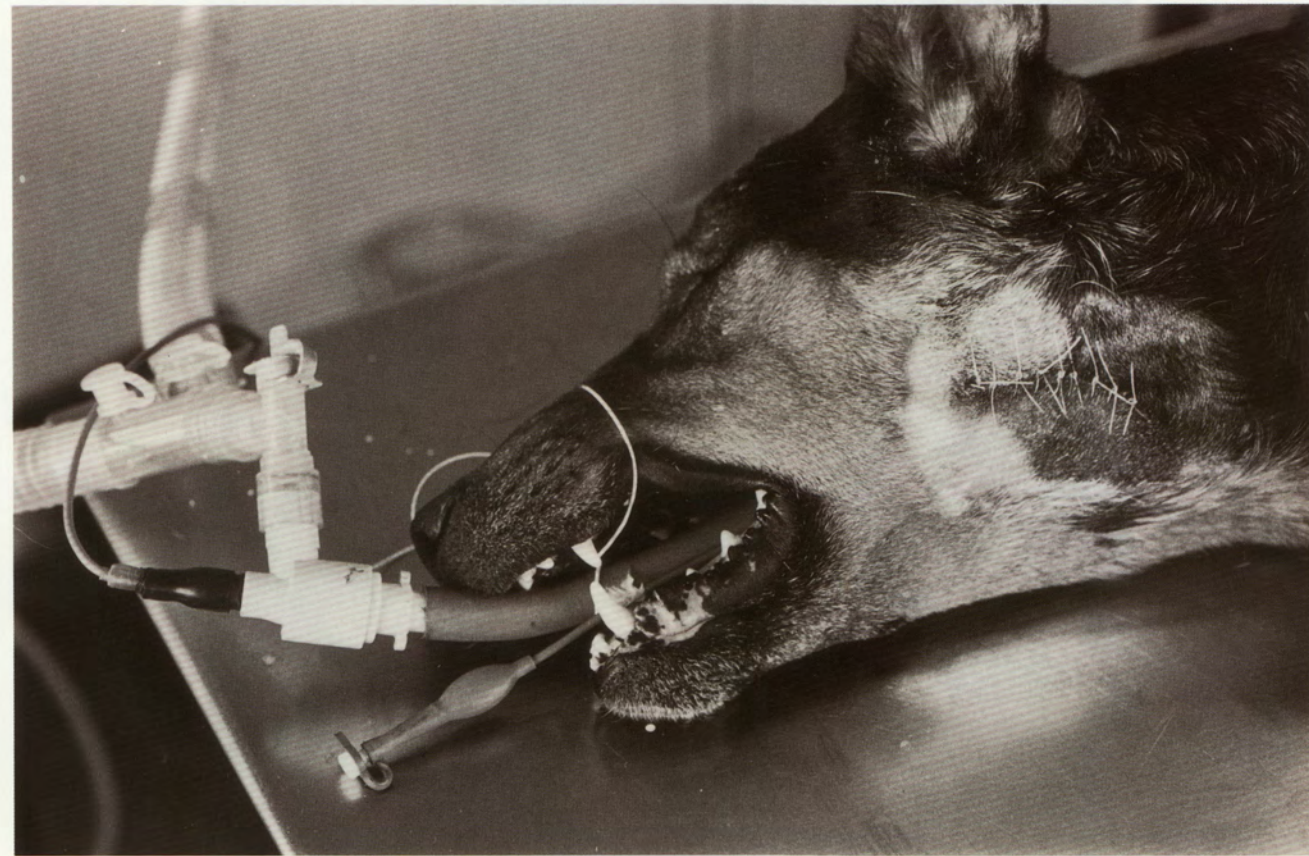
Expose the layered fiction, and still the will to truth will be strong. In this mood, we wonder, is there a displaced landscape of the real *beneath* the skins of representation, the accumulation of narrative. Supposing there were, how would we get there?

The photograph beckons towards this lost landscape, but can only signal its loss. Any language – visual or verbal – is in itself a narrative of separation. Thus in representing the 'real', language can only deny it.

Seeking the landscape of the real, we are inclined to mistake that which is more desirable for that which is more authentic.

- P 63 **Trout, Lake Taupo 1987**
- P 64 **Dog's Head 1988**
- P 65 **Alligator 1988**
- P 66 **Mountain Scene 1988**
- P 67 **Westhaven, Auckland 1989**





- 748 Trout Lake, Oregon 1987
- 749 Deer Head 1988
- 750 Alligator 1988
- 751 Mountain Sheep 1988
- 752 Woodpecker, Kentucky 1988



How Green was My Narrative

"... artifice was considered by Des Esseintes to be the distinctive mark of human genius.

Nature, he used to say, has had her day; she has finally and utterly exhausted the patience of sensitive observers by the revolting uniformity of her landscapes and skylines. After all, what platitudinous limitations she imposes, like a tradesman specialising in a single line of business; what petty-minded restrictions, like a shopkeeper stocking one article to the exclusion of all others; what a monotonous store of meadows and trees, what a commonplace display of mountains and seas!

In fact, there is not a single one of her inventions, deemed so subtle and sublime, that human ingenuity cannot manufacture; no moonlit forest of Fontainebleau that cannot be reproduced by stage scenery under floodlighting; no cascade that cannot be imitated to perfection by hydraulic engineering; no rock that papier-mâché cannot counterfeit; no flower that carefully chosen taffeta and delicately coloured paper cannot match!

There can be no shadow of doubt that with her never-ending platitudes the old crone has by now exhausted the good-humoured admiration of all true artists, and the time has surely come for artifice to take her place whenever possible."

J. K. Huysmans, *Against Nature* (A Rebours) 1884

"It is... in a kind of simalcrum of a 'nature' that the modern sign discovers its value. The problematic of the 'natural', the metaphysics of appearance and reality, become the characteristic themes of the bourgeoisie since the Renaissance... the mirror of the classical sign. Even today, nostalgia for natural reference survives, in spite of numerous revolutions aimed at smashing this configuration, such as the revolution of production, in which signs ceased to refer to nature, but only to the law of exchange, under the commodity law of value."

Jean Baudrillard, 1976

Nature was the late Raymond Williams' choice as perhaps the most complex word in the language. Narrative, while it doesn't have quite the same breadth and depth of reference, shares something of this complexity. But the act of joining them together not only compounds the complexity, it also produces something akin to an oxymoron. As supreme examples of cultural construction and social symbolising, all narratives could be said to be inherently *unnatural*. Strictly speaking, we can only have natural narratives if the concept of the *natural* is seen as a particular representation of *nature* subject to cultural and historical determination. Such a vast conceptual domain as nature is always selectively and differentially conceived in terms of changing cultural configurations. What are Virgil's *Georgics* (B.C. 37-30), Darwin's *On the Origin of species* (1859) and, more recently, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) if not epochal stories that render intelligible the subterranean movements of parts of nature.

When we turn specifically to photography, it is clear that a relationship to nature has been central to the medium since its inception 150 years ago. To cite just one early example, on January 31, 1839, William Henry Fox Talbot read a paper before the Royal Society titled, "Some account of the art of photogenic drawing, or the process by which natural objects may be made to delineate themselves without the aid of the artist's pencil". Talbot anthropomorphised nature by endowing it with the agency to use a pencil. All that was required of culture was to find a means of fixing these 'natural images'. But actually what Fox Talbot was doing here was naturalising a thoroughly technological process just as, conversely, natural forces would later be culturalised in the form of social utilities such as electricity, energy, horse and manpower.

Susan Sontag's strong rebuke to photography is that it lacks the power to narrate and therefore cannot help us understand a world it can merely show. The still image, it is suggested, is but a static, frozen moment cut from the flow of time. But even leaving aside the obvious narrative affinities of the photo-sequence or series, let alone the contribution of caption or text, most photographs *imply* simple narrative by wedging into a before and after situation. They give off a range of connotations before contextual factors finally push them toward a preferred denotation. This certainly holds true for photographers working within a 'straight' documentary style. The effect multiplies when we turn to those working within 'the directorial mode', such as the majority of the photographers included in this exhibition.

Because it is not an object to be simply represented but the name of the very support which sustains and is continually transformed by culture, nature will always be subject to reinvention as the *natural* in human languages. And perhaps we can predict that as expansionist narratives of industrial growth continue to rust relentlessly, they will increasingly become covered over by unmanageable outgrowths of green. The *nature* of (post) modernity may be thoroughly caught within the game of simulation, but nostalgia for the lost referent may yet be overcome by a return of the repressed.

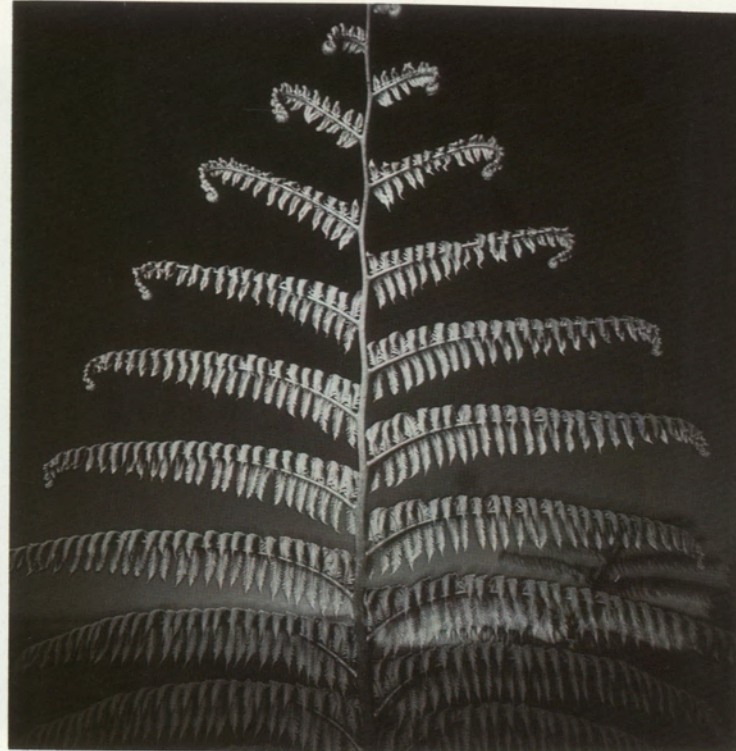
- P 71 **Heart of Leaves** 1987
- P 72 **Botany for Beginners III** 1988
- P 73 **The Structure of the Universe II** 1988
- P 74 **Night is my Fire VIII – Venus: Sweet Bitter** 1989
- P 75 **Nature is a Language** 1989



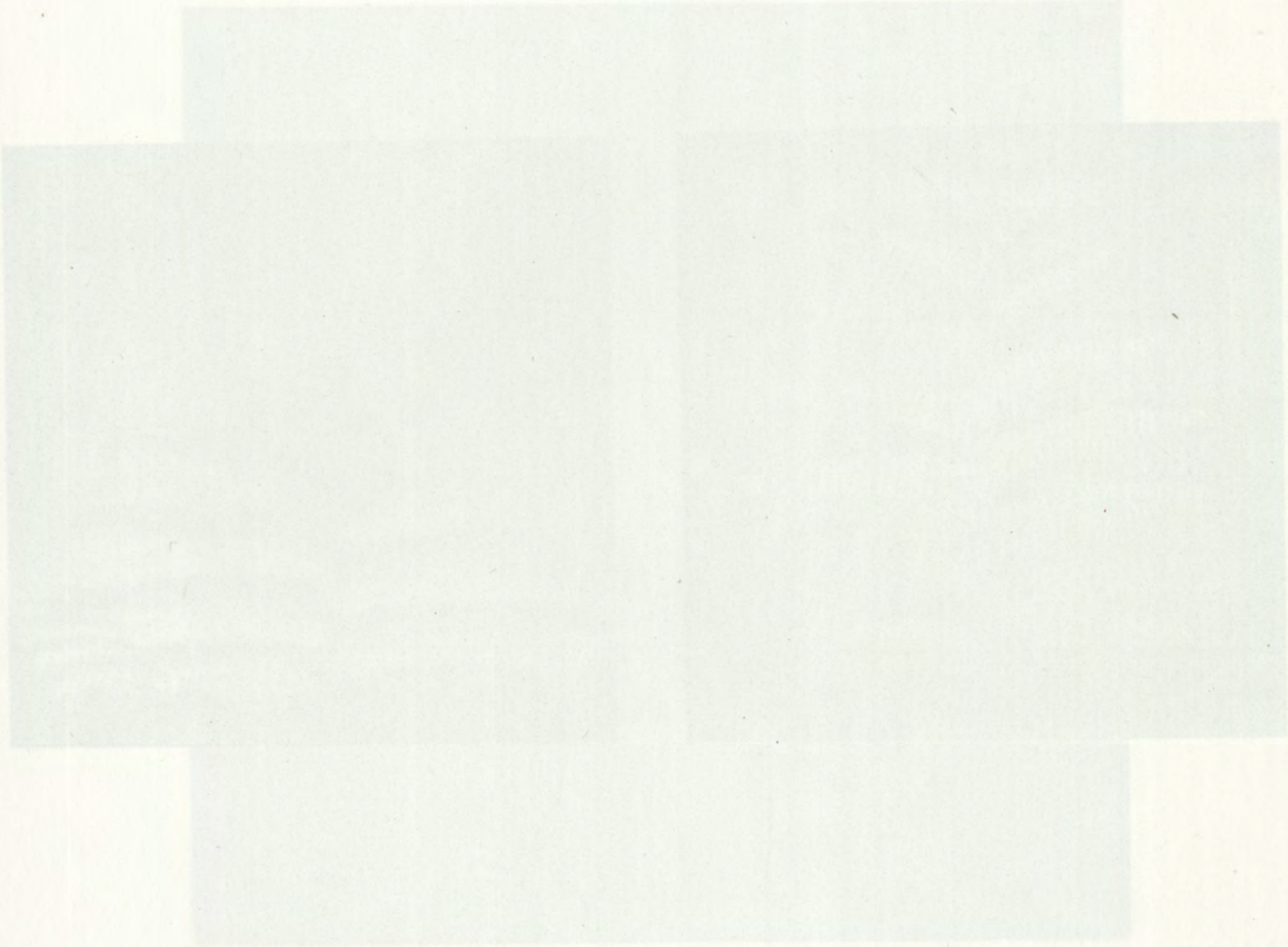


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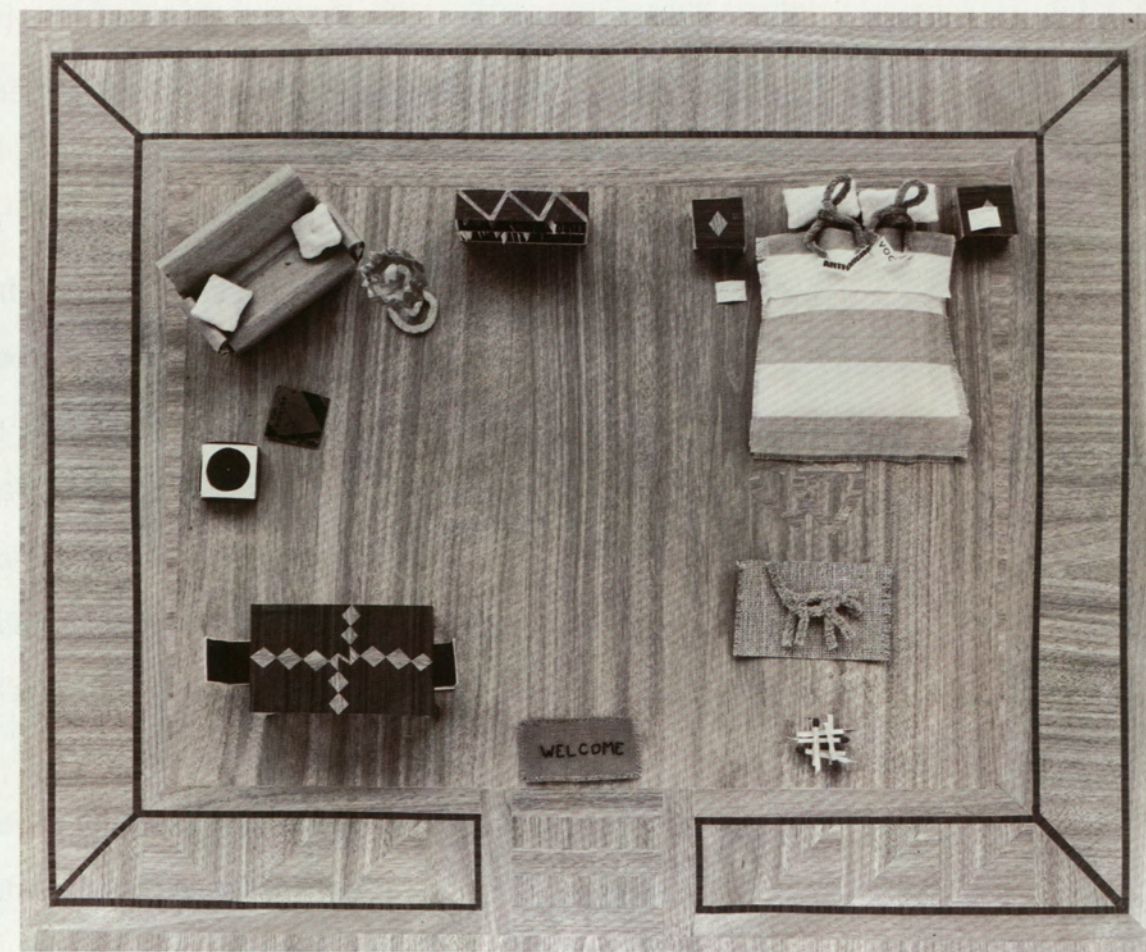
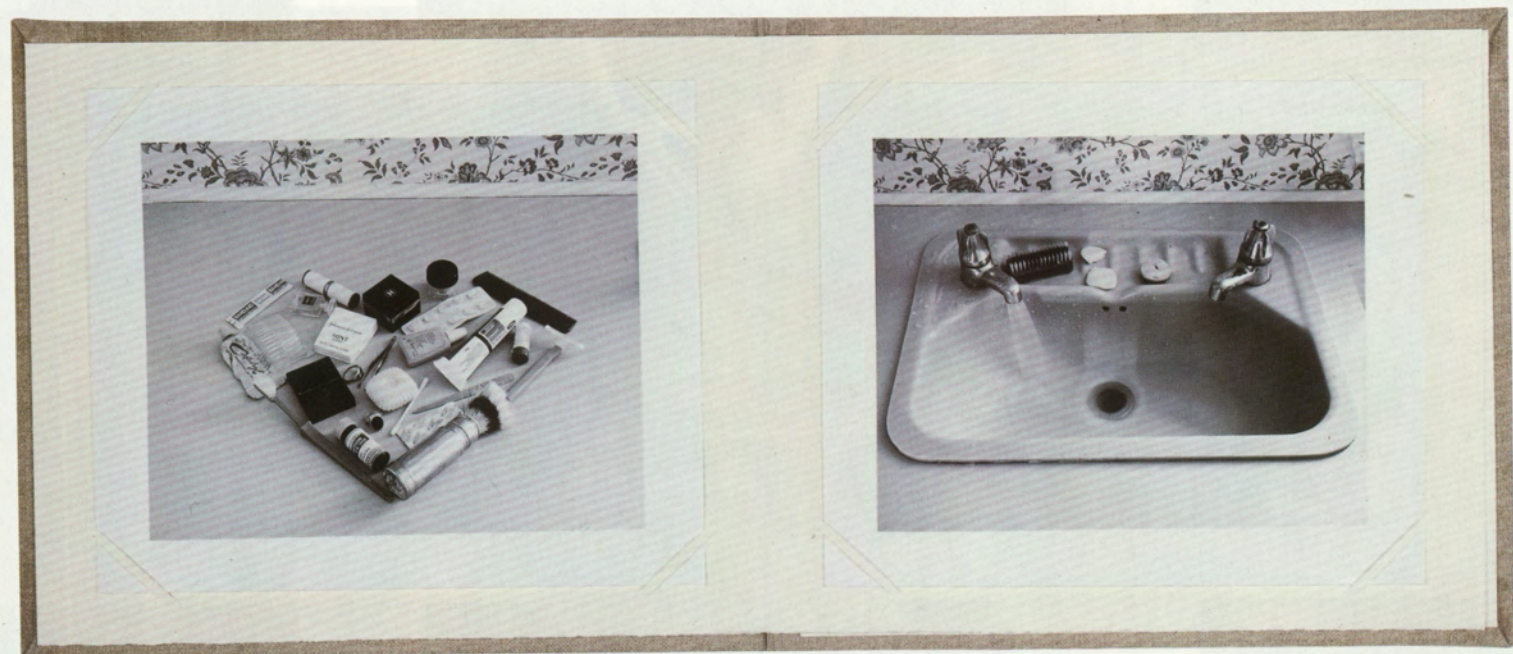


- 73 The Rat in the Lounge 1983
- 74 Saint Patrick's Day Mairies: the Wearing of the Green 1988
- 75 The call of the Wild 1988; The Safety of Home 1988
- 76 Domestic Bliss 1988
- 77 The Dream Home 1989



- P 77 **The Rat in the Lounge** 1985
- P 78 **Saint Patrick's Day Manicure; the Wearing of the Green** 1986
- P 79 **The call of the Wild** 1988; **The Safety of Home** 1988
- P 80 **Domestic Bliss** 1988
- P 81 **The Dream Home** 1989





Living with a Bigger Picture

Reduction-Exposure-Development-Enlargement. This is the *process* of photography.

We size up the scene. Moving, we position our subject. Through our choice of lens and proximity to our subject, we decide the relative size and importance of the elements of our picture. We make our choice. The image is then reduced and transcribed onto the film's surface. From this diminutive frame, we make our enlargement.

This continuum of reduction and enlargement has always been central to the process of photography. That very transaction between the compression and expansion of the static moment is integral to the power of the photograph to represent, reposition, and reinvent our world. Through our choice and magnitude of enlargement we order and classify, we confirm our beliefs and confirm others' beliefs. The magnitude of enlargement becomes a negotiating factor in determining the authority of the fictions that attach themselves to the picture through the forces of cultural and political circumstance.

But size itself can be a fiction emersed in the circumstantial evidence of the picture. This is most obvious in the inflationary world of the mediascape where daily we sift through a hierarchy of photographic representations. Here images compete in scale for our attention, seeking to ensnare and implicate us in their particular world view. The bigger picture indicates its market position by dominating our vision. Its size enhances its aura by increasing its claim on both the real and the imaginary. It aims to steal your eye by giving you the eye. You are made the object of its (your) desire.

These dramatised fictions attain a predatory power by entering our imagination. For it is in the realm of the imagination that we locate our sense of self. The monumental picture seeks to position us by scaling down our sense of self. We are challenged to measure up to its values; to, in effect, fit the bill.

For most of us, our own photographs are more modest. Filed away to be brought out during intimate moments, these images are tightly woven into our sense of identity. They are called on to reconstruct who we are. They are scaled for handling, and this potential for a chain of human touch intensifies their significance as traces of personal history.

Not for handling are those photographs framed up as art. The size of these images has tended to be moderate. Yet in recent years many photographers working within the gallery context have felt the need for more room. Many factors have led to this expansion into literal space, such as a greater valuation of the photograph as commodity. The effect, however, has been to question and reposition the viewer's dominant relation to the image, to throw into relief the power photography has as a mechanism of social control, to draw attention to the photograph as object and, finally, to make obvious the partiality of enlargement.

- P 85 **Hysteria** 1987
- P 86 **Water into Wine** 1987
- P 87 **Stainless** 1988
- P 88 **Surrender** 1988
- P 89 **Bite Out** 1989





WATER INTO WINE

- P 56
- P 56 W
- P 57 Stainless 1988
- P 58 Surrender 1988
- P 59 Blue Out 1989



STAINLESS



SURRENDER

Works in the Exhibition

Documentation

Further Reading



BITE OUT

Works in the Exhibition

Height precedes width. Unless otherwise indicated, all works are courtesy the artist.

Laurence Aberhart

'Infant of Prague', Hato Hohera Catholic Mission, Waitarake, near Kaeo, 20 May 1982

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
195 x 245 mm

A Distant View of Taranaki from the Mouth of the Wanganui River, at Dusk, 3 February 1986

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
195 x 245 mm
Courtesy the artist and Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington

Nature Morte (Silence), Wanganui, 10 February 1986

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
245 x 195 mm
Courtesy the artist and Aberhart North Gallery, Auckland

Nature Morte (Fish), Wanganui Museum, 11 February 1986

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
195 x 245 mm
Courtesy the artist and Aberhart North Gallery, Auckland

Interior 1 and 2, Kawerau, Waitotara, 10 March 1986

(Diptych)
Silver contact prints, gold and selenium toned
195 x 545 mm
McNamara Collection, Wanganui.

Taranaki (Grey), 19 April 1986

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
195 x 245 mm
McNamara Collection, Wanganui

Kevin Wasley's Elvis Presley Memorial Record Room, 14 May 1986

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
195 x 245mm
Courtesy the artist and Aberhart North Gallery, Auckland

Taranaki (The Heavens Declare the Glory of God), New Plymouth, 14 May 1986

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
195 x 245 mm

Midway Beach, Gisborne, 13 June 1986

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
195 x 245 mm

Kai Iwi, 25 September 1986

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
245 x 195 mm
Courtesy the artist and Aberhart North Gallery, Auckland

Mater Dolarossa, 1986

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
245 x 195 mm

Taranaki, 1986

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
195 x 245 mm

Fort Macon at Atlantic Beach, North Carolina, 5 September 1988

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
195 x 245 mm

Selma, Alabama, 15 September 1988

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
195 x 245 mm

(William G.), Shaw, Mississippi, 17 September 1988

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
195 x 245 mm

Landscape near Mohaka, 5 June 1989

Silver contact print, gold and selenium toned
195 x 245 mm

Rhondda Bosworth

Figure study/Drowning 1984

Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
253 x 168 mm

Family Memorabilia I 1985

Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
168 x 253 mm

Mother goes upside down 1985

Gelatin silver print, selenium toned and hand-coloured
153 x 230 mm

Self portrait/April 1985

Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
168 x 253 mm

Figure study/Grass skirt 1986

Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
196 x 185 mm

Insignia 1987

Colour print, Cibachrome
162 x 241 mm

My selves 1987

Colour print, Cibachrome
192 x 192 mm

Personal effects 1987

Colour print, Cibachrome
159 x 234 mm

h/with 1989

Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
168 x 253 mm

Memory vista I 1989

Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
198 x 186 mm

Memory vista II 1989

Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
198 x 186 mm

over/out 1989

Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
168 x 253 mm

turn then 1989

Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
168 x 253 mm

Margaret Dawson

Woman at the Catholic Cathedral, Christchurch 1985

Colour negative print
1000 x 760 mm

A September Blossom Queen 1986

Colour negative print
1000 x 750 mm

Colonial Vision 1987

Colour negative print, gold frame
627 x 830 mm
Julia Morison and John Hurrell, Christchurch

The Personal Price is too Great 1987

Colour negative print
1000 x 750 mm

Victor's Delusion 1987

Colour negative print, gold frame
1040 x 735 mm

Woman Outside the House with Flowers 1987

Colour negative print
1300 x 1000 mm
BNZ Art Collection.

HOUSE SPARROW (passer domesticus) 1989

Colour negative print
1350 x 1016 mm

Sword Lily (Gladiolus) 1989

Colour negative print
1350 x 1016 mm

Megan Jenkinson

Evolution of the Species 1983

Cibachrome collage
130 x 430 mm
Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui

Flora 1984

Colour print, Cibachrome
199 x 300 mm

Natural Logic – the Vertical Principle I 1985

Colour print, Cibachrome
202 x 306 mm

Fortitudo Battles with the Winds of the Furies 1986

Cibachrome collage
185 x 275 mm
Barbara Jenkinson, Auckland

Lex Talionis – the Law of Retaliation 1986

Cibachrome collage
202 x 590 mm
National Library of New Zealand/Te Puna Mātauranga O Aotearoa

Logica Struggling with the Science of Decipherment or Justitia of Liberty 1986

Cibachrome collage
185 x 275 mm

Philosophica Trying to find the Reason in the Codex Naturae II 1986

Cibachrome collage
200 x 300 mm

Voyage of Liberty Ship 1986

Cibachrome collage
156 x 394 mm

Artem Weighed Down by the Cumulative Effect of his History 1987

Cibachrome collage
200 x 300 mm
BNZ Art Collection

Ratio Fails to Understand How an Unstable Chain Reaction Corresponds with Determinism 1987

Cibachrome collage
200 x 300 mm
BNZ Art Collection

Conservation Strives to Preserve a Genus Loci Amidst the Destruction 1988

Cibachrome collage
202 x 300 mm
Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland

Codex Naturae (Book of Nature) 1989

Cibachrome and paper collage
book closed: 384 x 255 mm
book opened: 384 x 510 mm

Fiona Pardington

Prize of Lilies: A Portrait of Joseph Makea 1985

Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
476 x 377 mm
Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui

Kawhia, Red Hill, Kai Iwi 1987 (Triptych)

Gelatin silver prints, sulphite toned
258 x 383 mm; 238 x 370 mm, 252 x 383 mm
Patrick Reynolds, Auckland

Oracle 1987

Gelatin silver print, sulphite toned and mixed media
785 x 660 mm

Saul 1987

Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
472 x 310 mm
Paris Family Collection, Wellington

Shield of Delusion 1987

Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
333 x 260 mm
Courtesy the artist and Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington

Measuring Love by Suffering 1988

Gelatin silver print, gold toned and mixed media
605 x 500 mm
Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui

Meltdown 1988

Colour negative print and mixed media
323 x 300 mm
Courtesy the artist and Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington

Adolescent Fantasies 1989
Gelatin silver print, sulphite toned and mixed media
590 x 464 mm

Herb of Beaten Wives 1989
Gelatin silver print, sulphite toned and mixed media
590 x 511 mm
Courtesy the artist and Sue Crockford Gallery,
Auckland

Sex of Metals I 1989
Gelatin silver print, gold toned and mixed media
354 x 456 mm
Haru Sameshima, Auckland

Sex of Metals II 1989
Gelatin silver print, gold toned and mixed media
363 x 466 mm
Haru Sameshima, Auckland

Peter Peryer

Slaughter, North Otago 1985
Gelatin silver print
365 x 365 mm

Dead Steer, Waikato 1987
Gelatin silver print
175 x 175 mm

Kangaroos, Pennant Hills, Sydney 1987
Gelatin silver print
373 x 373 mm
Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui

Trout, Lake Taupo 1987
Gelatin silver print
450 x 300 mm

Alexandra Clock 1988
Gelatin silver print
275 x 414 mm
Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui

Alligator 1988
Gelatin silver print
295 x 450 mm
Jim and Mary Barr, Wellington

Dog's Head 1988
Gelatin silver print
310 x 465 mm

Jervois Road, Auckland 1988
Gelatin silver print
175 x 175 mm

Mountain Scene 1988
Gelatin silver print
275 x 414 mm
Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui

Owairaka, Auckland 1989
Gelatin silver print
175 x 175 mm

Rockhopper Penguin, Campbell Island 1989
Gelatin silver print
275 x 414 mm
Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui

Wandering Albatross, Auckland Island 1989
Gelatin silver print
275 x 414 mm
Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui

Westhaven, Auckland 1989
Gelatin silver print
480 x 480 mm
Jim and Mary Barr, Wellington

Yellow Eyed Penguin, Enderby Island 1989
Gelatin silver print
275 x 414 mm
Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui

Patrick Reynolds

Heart of Leaves 1987
Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
478 x 478 mm
Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery,
Auckland

Ancient Music 1988 (Dptych)
Gelatin silver prints, selenium toned
each 115 x 115 mm
Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery,
Auckland

Botany for Beginners I 1988
Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
478 x 478 mm
Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery,
Auckland

Botany for Beginners III 1988
Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
478 x 478 mm
Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery,
Auckland

The Structure of the Universe II 1988
Gelatin silver print
478 x 478 mm
BNZ Art Collection

The Structure of the Universe III 1988
Gelatin silver print
478 x 478 mm
BNZ Art Collection

Ancient Geometry I – Music of the Spheres 1989
Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
355 x 355 mm
Courtesy the artist and Gow Langsford Gallery,
Auckland

**Ancient Geometry V – The Greater Part of the Soul
(Jews Ladder)** 1989
Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
355 x 355 mm
Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery,
Auckland

Ancient Geometry VI – The Pencil of Nature 1989
Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
355 x 355 mm
Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery,
Auckland

Nature is a Language 1989 (Dptych)
Gelatin silver prints, selenium toned
each 114 x 114 mm
Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery,
Auckland

**Night is my Fire II – Subtle Body
(The Psychoanalysis of Fire)** 1989
Gelatin silver print, selenium split-toned
290 x 290 mm
Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery,
Auckland

**Night is my Fire III – I am the Sun and Air
(Man Ray's Sister)** 1989
Gelatin silver print, selenium split-toned
290 x 290 mm
Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery,
Auckland

Night is my Fire V – The Eye of the Heart 1989
Gelatin silver print, selenium split-toned
290 x 290 mm
Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery,
Auckland

Night is my Fire VIII – Venus: Sweet Bitter 1989
Gelatin silver print, selenium split-toned
294 x 294 mm
Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery,
Auckland

The Dream of Nature I – Spiritus Vegetativus 1989
Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
355 x 355 mm
Courtesy the artist and Real Pictures Gallery,
Auckland

Marie Shannon

The Rat in the Lounge 1985
Joined gelatin silver prints, selenium toned
280 x 668 mm
Paris Family Collection, Wellington

**Saint Patrick's Day Manicure; the Wearing of the
Green** 1986
Joined gelatin silver prints, selenium toned and
hand-coloured
274 x 654 mm
Jim and Mary Barr, Wellington

The Pursuit of Cosiness I 1986
Joined gelatin silver prints, selenium toned
274 x 754 mm
Jim and Mary Barr, Wellington

The Turtles 1986
Joined gelatin silver prints, selenium toned
274 x 660 mm

A Tiger in Bed 1987
Joined gelatin silver prints, selenium toned
268 x 665 mm
Courtesy the artist and Brooke/Gifford Gallery,
Christchurch

Born to be Tame I 1987
Joined gelatin silver prints, selenium toned
281 x 1120 mm
Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui

Domestic Bliss 1988
Gelatin silver prints
book closed: 223 x 260 mm
book opened: 223 x 522 mm

From the Animal Kingdom 1988
Gelatin silver prints
book closed: 185 x 221 mm
book opened: 185 x 1895 mm
Courtesy the artist and Southern Cross Gallery,
Wellington

The Call of the Wild 1988
Gelatin silver prints
155 x 992 mm

The Safety of Home 1988
Gelatin silver prints
155 x 992 mm

Untitled 1988
Gelatin silver prints
152 x 1223 mm
Fiona Pardington, Auckland

You Still Set My Heart on Fire 1988
Gelatin silver prints, selenium toned
224 x 510 mm

The Dream Home 1989
Gelatin silver prints, selenium toned
378 x 457 mm

Untitled (American Gothic) 1989
Gelatin silver print, selenium toned
378 x 482 mm

Christine Webster

Hysteria 1987
Colour print, Cibachrome
1700 x 765 mm

Water into Wine 1987
Colour print, Cibachrome
1740 x 915 mm

Stainless 1988
Colour print, Cibachrome
1890 x 580 mm

Surrender 1988
Colour print, Cibachrome
1770 x 2210 mm
Private Collection, Auckland

Bite Out 1989
Gelatin silver print
1870 x 795 mm

Rupture 1989
Gelatin silver print
1825 x 795 mm

Documentation

The biographical and bibliographic documentation that follows was researched and compiled by Miro Bilbrough. Further information on the artists may be found in many of these entries.

Laurence Aberhart

Born 1949 in Nelson
1981, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988 Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Grants
1986 Artist in Residence, Tylee Cottage, Wanganui Fulbright Cultural Grant. Travels to the United States
Lives in Russell

Solo Exhibitions

- 1978 *Nineteen photographs*, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
1980 Lyttelton Coffee House
1981 *Twenty-three photographs*, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
View (an album), National Art Gallery, Wellington
1983 Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin
1985 Aberhart North Gallery, Auckland
1986 Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin
1987 Aberhart North Gallery, Auckland
1989 Aberhart North Gallery, Auckland

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1975 *The active eye*, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North (touring)
Auckland Building Centre
1976 CSA Gallery, Christchurch
1977 *The New Zealand landscape*, Snaps Gallery, Auckland
Twenty New Zealand photographers, Auckland War Memorial Museum
1978 *5/6 Christchurch photographers*, CSA Gallery, Christchurch
Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin
1979 University Students' Arts Festival, Christchurch
Three New Zealand photographers, Auckland City Art Gallery (touring)
Recent acquisitions: works on paper, Auckland City Art Gallery
The new image, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Arteries, Christchurch
Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
1980 *The street show*, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
Illusions, fantasies and lies; Street photos, PhotoForum Gallery, Wellington
Family photos, Snaps Gallery, Auckland
The galerie paper show, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
1981 *Stock show*, PhotoForum Gallery, Wellington
Ilam School of Fine Arts Gallery, Christchurch
Recent acquisitions 1980-81, National Art Gallery, Wellington
Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Come elephant riding, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1982 *Selected works*, PhotoForum Gallery, Wellington

Views/exposures: ten contemporary New Zealand photographers, National Art Gallery, Wellington

- 1984 *Pairs*, National Art Gallery, Wellington
1987 *The trained eye*, National Art Gallery, Wellington
A portrait of law, Wellington City Art Gallery
1988 *Exhibits*, Artspace, Auckland
Aberhart North Gallery, Auckland
Mezzanine Gallery, New Zealand High Commission, London
Rear vision, Wellington City Art Gallery
Seven photographers update, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui
1989 Aberhart North Gallery, Auckland
The photography show, Fisher Gallery, Pakuranga
Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland
From today painting is dead, Shed 11, National Art Gallery, Wellington
Montana Lindauer: the art award 1989, Auckland Society of Arts
Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington

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Sheriden, Keith. Review. *Art New Zealand*, no. 34 (Autumn 1985): 18-21.
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Barrie, Lita. "Laurence Aberhart: signs of mortality". *Art New Zealand*, no. 50 (Autumn 1989): 82-85.
Whibley, Margaret. "Laurence Aberhart". *Montana Lindauer: the art award 1989*, Auckland Society of Arts (exhibition catalogue): 8-9.

Rhonda Bosworth

Born 1944 in Takapuna
1973 Diploma of Fine Arts (Painting), Ilam School of Fine Arts, Christchurch
1980 Diploma of Fine Arts Honours (Photography), Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland
1985, 1987 Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Grants
Lives in Auckland

Solo Exhibitions

- 1979 Snaps Gallery, Auckland
1985 *Body image/still life*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1987 *Image instruments*, Aberhart North Gallery, Auckland

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1975 *The nude exposed*, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
The active eye, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North (touring)
1976 *PhotoForum '76*, Auckland War Memorial Museum
1977 *New work*, Snaps Gallery, Auckland
1978 *Seven women photographers*, University of Auckland
1979 *The new image*, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
1980 PhotoForum Gallery, Wellington
Seasons greetings, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1983 *Images of women*, Women's Gallery, Wellington
1985 *The body in question*, National Art Gallery, Wellington
1987 Aberhart North Gallery, Auckland
Politics and photographs, National Art Gallery, Wellington
The trained eye, National Art Gallery, Wellington
1988 *Group two*, 33 1/3 Gallery, Wellington
1989 *From today painting is dead*, Shed 11, National Art Gallery, Wellington
Community of women, National Art Gallery, Wellington

Selected Bibliography

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Tweedie, Merylyn. "From the archives of the self. . ." *Six Women Photographers*, *PhotoForum*, no. 56 (1987): 24-33.
Tweedie, Merylyn. "Past present". *Creative Camera*, no. 6 (June 1988): 28-32.

Margaret Dawson

Born 1950 in Blenheim
1978 Diploma in Fine Arts, Ilam School of Fine Arts, Christchurch
1979, 1986 Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Grants
1986 Travels to 6th Biennale of Sydney, Australia
Lives in Christchurch

Solo Exhibitions

- 1978 On a Christchurch Transport Board bus (touring Christchurch)
The red connection, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1983 *About women*, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1986 *Dreams and illusions*, James Paul Gallery, Christchurch
1987 *Marg. N. L. Persona*, Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt (touring)
1988 Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
George Fraser Gallery, Auckland

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1979 *The street*, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
1986 *The self*, Bishop Suter Art Gallery, Nelson (touring)

Visual Diaries Gallery, Wellington
Content/context: a survey of recent New Zealand art, Shed 11, National Art Gallery, Wellington

- 1989 Marshall Seifert Gallery, Dunedin
Canterbury belles, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch

Selected Bibliography

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Smith, Shona. *Canterbury belles*, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, 1989 (exhibition catalogue).

Megan Jenkinson

Born 1958 in Hamilton
1980 Bachelor of Fine Arts (Photography), Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland
1984 Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Travel Grant to the United States, Europe and Japan
1988 Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Grant to the United States
1989 Montana Lindauer Art Award
Lives in Auckland

Solo Exhibitions

- 1979 Elam School of Fine Arts Library, Auckland
1982 *Rediscovering Galapagos*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1983 Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
1984 Photokina, Cologne, West Germany
1985 The Photographers' Gallery, London
1986 *Disarray in Aequilibria*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1987 *Atticamorphous*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1989 Photo Triennial, Esslingen, West Germany

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1978 *Campus Arts North Photographic Exhibition*, Maidment Little Theatre, Auckland
After dark, Snaps Gallery, Auckland
About 16 photographers, Auckland Society of Arts
PhotoForum '78, Auckland War Memorial Museum
1979 *PhotoForum '79*, PhotoForum Gallery, Wellington
The new image, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
The child in the world, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
1980 *Koloplatten - an exhibition of colour xerography; Seasons greetings*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1981 *Furniture*, 100m², Federal Street, Auckland
Come elephant riding, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland

- 1982 *House show; Landscape; The pohutakawa show*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
Time release, Auckland War Memorial Museum
The nude exposed, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
- 1983 *Elam in focus*, University of Auckland
House show, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
Elam 1950-1983, Auckland City Art Gallery
Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Members' exhibition, Friends of Photography, California
- 1984 *House show*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
- 1985 Elam Library, University of Auckland
Red Metro Gallery, Auckland
- 1986 *Selection three*, Photokina, Cologne, West Germany
Someone's scheming, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
Visual diaries (A Flying Kiwi Arts '86 Exhibition), Wellington
The self, Bishop Suter Gallery, Nelson (touring)
- 1988 *Hearts and minds*, National Library Gallery, Wellington
Stock show, Real Pictures Gallery, Wellington
NZXI, Auckland City Art Gallery (touring)
Seven photographers' update, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui
Exhibits, Artspace, Auckland
- 1989 *Photography now*, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Art too, National Library Gallery, Wellington
From today painting is dead, Shed 11, National Art Gallery, Wellington
Montana Lindauer: the art award 1989, Auckland Society of Arts

Selected Bibliography

- Hewson, Paul. "The 'coloured' photographs of Megan Jenkinson". *Art New Zealand*, no. 13 (1979): 17.
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- Pitts, Priscilla. "The art of self defence". *Six Women Photographers, PhotoForum*, no. 56 (1987): 32-40.
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- Pitts, Priscilla. "Megan Jenkinson". *Exhibits*, Artspace, Auckland 1988 (exhibition catalogue): 16-18.
- Ensing, Riemke. Review. "Hearts and minds". *Art New Zealand*, no. 49 (Summer 1988/89): 38-41.
- Stacey, Gwen. "Megan Jenkinson and the waters of optimism". *Art New Zealand*, no. 49 (Summer 1988/89): 66-69.
- Whibley, Margaret. "Megan Jenkinson". *Montana Lindauer: the art award 1989*, Auckland Society of Arts (exhibition catalogue): 18-19.

Fiona Pardington

Born 1961 in Takapuna
1984 Bachelor of Fine Arts (Photography), Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland
Lives in Auckland

Solo Exhibitions

- 1987 *Speech of the heart*, Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington
George Fraser Gallery, Auckland
Plaster saints, Artspace, Auckland
Stout Research Centre, Victoria University, Wellington

- 1989 Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland
Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1983 *Early works*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
- 1984 *From sloth to chaos*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
- 1985 Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
PhotoForum Show, Auckland Institute and Museum
- 1986 *Auckland artists; Grand Xmas show*, Star Art, Auckland
Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington
- 1987 Room Eleven, Auckland
Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington
- 1988 Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton
Monsters from the id, City Limits Cafe, Wellington
Stock show, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
Demolition exhibition, Artspace, Auckland
Festival show, Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington
Four new artists, Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland
- 1989 Auckland Society of Arts
Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington
Montana Lindauer: the art award 1989, Auckland Society of Arts
Community of women, National Art Gallery, Wellington
Constructed intimacies, Moët & Chandon New Zealand Art Foundation (touring)

Selected Bibliography

- Pitts, Priscilla. Review. *Art New Zealand*, no. 43 (Winter 1987): 80-81.
- Kirker, Ann. "Flipping the coin: Fiona Pardington's photo-constructions". *Art New Zealand*, no. 48 (Spring 1988): 47-49.
- Whibley, Margaret. "Fiona Pardington". *Montana Lindauer: the art award 1989*. Auckland Society of Arts (exhibition catalogue): 24-25.

Peter Peryer

Born 1941 in Auckland
1972 Master of Arts (Education), University of Auckland
1977, 1978, 1980 Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Grants
1978 Travels to Europe and the United States
1983 Artist in Residence, Rangitoto College
1985 Fulbright Cultural Grant to the United States
Lives in Auckland

Solo Exhibitions

- 1976 *For your pleasure*, Snaps Gallery, Auckland
Peter Webb Galleries, Auckland
- 1977 *Peter Peryer: an introduction*, Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt
- 1982 Space, Auckland
- 1984 *Peter Peryer/recent photographs*, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
- 1985 Centre for Contemporary Art, Hamilton
Peter Peryer/photographs, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui (touring)
- 1987 George Fraser Gallery, Auckland

- 1988 Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1989 Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1975 *The active eye*, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North (touring)
- 1976 *PhotoForum '76*, Auckland War Memorial Museum
- 1977 *Best of snaps; Recent work; New work*, Snaps Gallery, Auckland
Ex camera, New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts Gallery, Wellington
Twenty New Zealand photographers, Auckland War Memorial Museum
- 1978 *Family and friends part 1; Noble/Peryer*, Snaps Gallery, Auckland
Seven photographers, Maidment Little Theatre, Auckland
Antipodean images, New Zealand House, London
Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
- 1979 *The new image*, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington
Bosshard Galleries, Dunedin
Three New Zealand photographers, Auckland City Art Gallery (touring)
- 1980 PhotoForum Gallery, Wellington
Recent work, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
- 1981 *The Auckland flower show*, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
Come elephant riding, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
- 1982 *Me by myself: the self-portrait*, National Art Gallery, Wellington
Summer '82, RKS Art, Auckland
Recent acquisitions 1981-82; Views/exposures: ten contemporary New Zealand photographers (touring), National Art Gallery, Wellington
Vision in disbelief: The 4th Biennale of Sydney, Australia
Time release, Auckland War Memorial Museum
Birds, bees and things, Denis Cohn Gallery, Auckland
The nude exposed, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Dunedin
- 1983 *International photography 1980-82*, National Gallery, Canberra, Australia (touring)
- 1984 *Anxious images: aspects of recent New Zealand art* (touring); *The chelsea project*, Auckland City Art Gallery
The body in question, National Art Gallery, Wellington
- 1985 *Better than collecting dust*, Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North
Posing a threat, National Art Gallery, Wellington
The word, Bishop Suter Art Gallery, Nelson
- 1986 *Content/context: a survey of recent New Zealand art*, Shed 11, National Art Gallery, Wellington
- 1987 *The trained eye*, National Art Gallery, Wellington
- 1988 Mezzanine Gallery, New Zealand High Commission, London
Seven photographers' update, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui
The painted zoo, Shed 11, National Art Gallery, Wellington
- 1989 *From today painting is dead*, Shed 11, National Art Gallery, Wellington

Selected Bibliography

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Interview. *Art New Zealand*, no. 8 (November/December/January 1977-78): 25,66-67.

Barr, Jim. Interview. *PhotoForum Supplement*, no. 1 (Summer 1977-78): 9-16.

Bosworth, Rhondda. Interview. "Peter Peryer: in a constant state of change". *Snaps News*, no. 3 (1978): 2.

Bosworth, Rhondda. "Peter Peryer". *Zoom* (December/January 1978): 60-61.

Bogle, Andrew. *Three New Zealand photographers*. Auckland City Art Gallery, 1979 (exhibition catalogue).

Bogle, Andrew. "Three New Zealand photographers". *PhotoForum Supplement*, no. 3 (Spring 1979): 14.

Hutchins, Tom. Review. "Three New Zealand photographers". *Art New Zealand*, no. 14 (1979): 17-19.

Sheriden, Keith. "A desire to understand". *Listener* (7 February 1981): 36-37.

Sheriden, Keith. "Frontierland: the photographs of Peter Peryer". *London Magazine*, vol. 21, no. 4 (July 1981): 42-49.

Johnston, Alexa. "Peter Peryer". *Anxious images: aspects of recent New Zealand art*, Auckland City Art Gallery, 1984 (exhibition catalogue): 53-58.

Ireland, Peter. "Peter Peryer: the significance of repetition". *Art New Zealand*, no. 31 (Winter 1984): 34-35.

Barr, Jim and Mary. "Peter Peryer/photographs", Sarjeant Gallery, 1985 (exhibition catalogue): 25-31.

Elias, Ann. "Wide-ranging images". *Listener* (8 March 1986): 34-35.

Tweedie, Merylyn. "Feminist issues in New Zealand art". *AGMANZ Journal*, vol. 17, no. 1 (Autumn 1986): 11-12.

Patrick Reynolds

Born 1962 in Auckland
1983 Certificate of Proficiency in Photography, Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland
1984 Bachelor of Arts, University of Auckland
1985-87 Travels to Britain, Italy and the United States
1989 Travels to Britain, France and the United States
Lives in Auckland

Solo Exhibitions

- 1987 *Candela*, Room 11, Auckland
1988 *Landscape*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1989 *Nature is a language*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1982 *Pop shots*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1983 *Early works*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1987 *Black eye white lies*, Potter Blair Associates Gallery, Auckland
1988 *From pillar to post*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1989 Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington

Marie Shannon

Born 1960 in Nelson
1983 Bachelor of Fine Arts (Photography), Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland
Lives in Auckland

Solo Exhibitions

- 1983 Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1985 Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1986 New Vision Gallery, Auckland
Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
1987 *Animal Pictures*, Room 11, Auckland
1988 *Romance and animals*, Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington
1989 *Indoor fireworks*, Artspace, Auckland

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1979 *Works 1979*, Auckland Society of Arts
1980 *Art from the art school*, University of Auckland
BYO show, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
Little works, Outreach Gallery, Auckland
1982 *New Zealand landscape show; Pohutakawa show*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
1983 *House show*, Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland
Centenary show, Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland
1984 Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch
Exposures Gallery, Wellington
1986 New Vision Gallery, Auckland
The self, Bishop Suter Art Gallery, Nelson (touring)
Content/context: a survey of recent New Zealand art, Shed 11, National Art Gallery, Wellington.
Artis Gallery, Auckland
1987 Room 11, Auckland
1988 *Group two*, 33½ Gallery, Wellington
Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington
Two photographers, Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton.
Hearts and minds, National Library Gallery, Wellington
Mezzanine Gallery, New Zealand High Commission, London
Seven photographers, update, Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui
The painted zoo, Shed 11, National Art Gallery, Wellington
1989 *Art too*, National Library Gallery, Wellington
Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui
Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington
Indoor fireworks, Artspace, Auckland
Constructed intimacies, Mōet & Chandon New Zealand Art Foundation (touring)

Selected Bibliography

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Shannon, Marie. Artist's statement and photograph. *PhotoForum ReView*, no. 33 (1987): 16-17.

Christine Webster

Born 1958 in Pukekohe
1976-79 Studies at Massey and Victoria Universities and Wellington Polytechnic
1982, 1984, 1986, 1989 Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council Grants
Currently lives in Paris

Solo Exhibitions

- 1979 *Photo art '79*, PhotoForum Gallery, Wellington

- 1981 *When you're strange*, Elva Bett Gallery, Wellington
1982 *An exhibition of large coloured photographs*, Wellington City Art Gallery (touring)
1984 RKS Art, Auckland
New photographs, Bowen Galleries, Wellington
Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch
Red Metro, Dunedin
1985 Roslyn Oxley 9, Sydney (touring)
Red Metro, Auckland.
1986 Red Metro, Auckland
1987 Artis Gallery, Auckland
Hewlett-Packard Foyer, Wellington
1988 Southern Cross Gallery, Wellington
Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland (touring)
Museum Ludwig, Cologne
Studio 66, Paris
1989 Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1979 Student Arts Council (touring)
1980 *Collection '80* (touring); *15 Wellington photographers; Illusions, fantasies and lies*, PhotoForum Gallery, Wellington
1981 *Collection '81*, PhotoForum Gallery, Wellington
1984 *New women artists*, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth (touring)
1985 *Hammond/Webster*, Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton
Red Metro, Auckland
Fresh art, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch (touring)
1986 *Five photographers*, Artis Gallery, Auckland
1987 *Chaos*, Roslyn Oxley 9, Sydney
Content/context: a survey of recent New Zealand art, Shed 11, National Art Gallery, Wellington
Sex and sign, Artspace, Auckland (touring)
1988 *On the border: an exhibition of manipulated photographs*, The Special Photographers' Company, London
Cologne Art Fair, West Germany
Rear vision: a history of PhotoForum/Wellington to 1988, Wellington City Art Gallery
1989 *A presentation of contemporary photography*, Fisher Gallery, Auckland
From today painting is dead, Shed 11, National Art Gallery, Wellington

Selected Bibliography

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Pitts, Priscilla. "New women artists at the Govett-Brewster". *Art New Zealand*, no. 32 (Spring 1984): 28-31.
Fischer, Catherine. "Leading the choir". *Follow Me* (June 1985).
Pitts, Priscilla. Review. *Art New Zealand*, no. 45 (Summer 1988): 38-39.
Eastmond, Elizabeth. "Gender confusion and general insubordination – some themes in recent work by Christine Webster". *Christine Webster*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1989 (exhibition catalogue).

Further Reading

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