

THE FABRIC ART COMPANY STUFFED STUFF SHOW



ORGANISED BY
WELLINGTON CITY ART GALLERY
1984



INTRODUCTION

In November 1983 the Fabric Art Company will hold an exhibition of its work at the Wellington City Art Gallery. This will be a special, perhaps unique, event. Although it is not uncommon for artists to exhibit their work together, it is rare for artists to work as a group on a joint statement. This has occurred in the past particularly in mural work. However the work for this exhibition has been carried out by a group of women who wish to establish a new approach to their media while making a strong statement regarding their social concerns.

Women working in groups with fabric have many historical precedents — the Bayeux Tapestry being one of the more famous. Other instances occur such as those of Elizabethan times when numbers of women worked jointly on such things as table cloths and bed hangings. The Fabric Art Company however has introduced a third dimension into the work which means the Company now works with objects as well as hangings. The groups and tableaux in this exhibition are the result of long arduous planning. It required much more thought than the simple hangings that the Fabric Art Company first made.

There are seven women involved in the group and six of them will exhibit in this show. The group has been in existence for less than two years. It grew from a fabric art class given by Joan Beattie at the Workers Education Association in Wellington. At that time the W.E.A. wished to stimulate creative work in new areas of the visual arts — fabric art was one of these. Joan Beattie decided to intensify the learning situation by setting the class group projects. Forming the group was a result of this and similar mural projects. Included in Joan Beattie's class were Anne Allen, Noeline Black, Pru Durrant, Tineke Fijn, Val Griffith-Jones, Jill Gunn and Rosemary Nausbaum who make up the Fabric Art Company today.

The first public success came to the class in mid 1982 when two hangings were shown at the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts Fabric and Fibre Exhibition. This show required the creation of the name Fabric Art Company to encompass the whole group. Later, the group was asked to exhibit at the Academy's Lombard Exhibition as invited guests.

The Fabric Art Company is obviously aware of work done in the area of fabric art. However, their use of this medium clearly conveys the concerns and happenings of their own daily lives. The artists' reactions to the domestic scene — babies, nappies, toys, husbands 'have you ironed my shirt dear?' all are expressed through their fabric art.

Images of women knitting themselves, unravelling themselves then knitting themselves together again make for strong comment and one which many women will easily identify with.

Although the group has chosen ordinary materials to reflect the humour, ironies and agonies of ordinary life, the work is neither crude or clumsy. Complex forms will at times astonish the viewer. The artists have as a group contributed many skills and experiences, but credit must go to Joan Beattie for the high quality and craftsmanship the group has achieved.

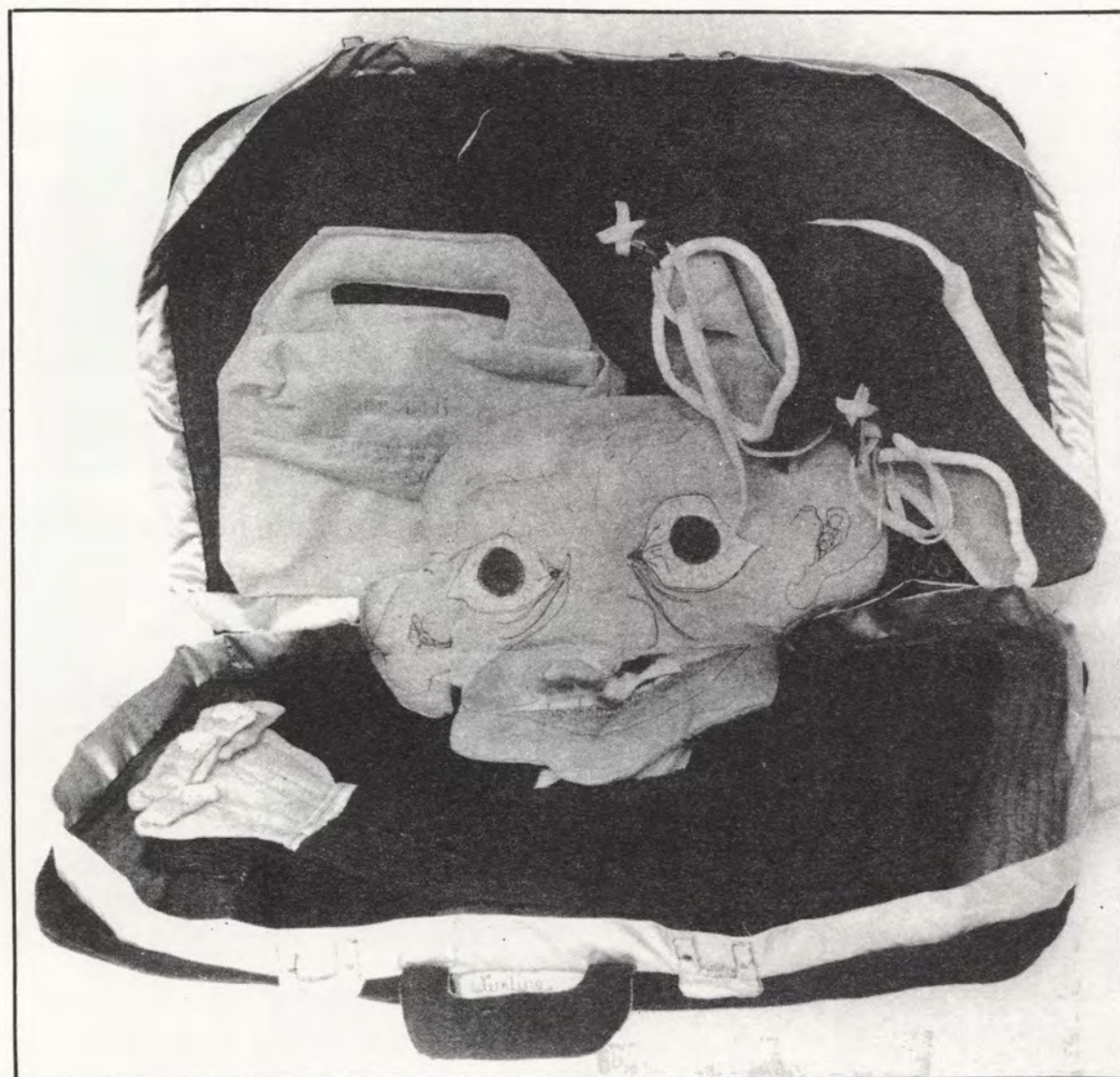
The joy, imagination and humour that is expressed in this work is something that everyone can relate to. The novelty of the work and skills of the different artists make this an interesting and thought provoking exhibition.

The City Art Gallery Director, Anne Philbin, is to be congratulated for introducing to a wider public a different aspect of the exciting art scene in Wellington.

Jeanne Macaskill
(Paris, October 1983)

FABRIC ART COMPANY — EXHIBITION RECORD

- 1982 JUNE Fabric and Fibre Exhibition — Academy of Fine Arts.
 "Sewing the Old Soft Shoe"
 "With Tender Loving Care"
- NOV Lombard Art Award for Crafts, Academy of Fine Arts.
 "Kitchen Environment"
- 1983 EASTER Kapiti Arts Festival, Southwards Car Museum.
 "Ladies a Plate"
- JUNE Fabric and Fibre Exhibition, Academy of Fine Arts.
 "Preconceptions"
- SEPT New Zealand Jazz Foundation 10 Dimensions Concert.
 "Wedding Breakfast" (visual for composition Wedding Eclairs).



BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

ANNE ALLEN — JOHNSONVILLE

- Born Anne Slinn 1950 Nelson.
 Educated Waimea College Nelson
- 1968-70 Christchurch Teachers College.
 Specialized in Art
 Taught in Nelson and Wellington for six years.
 Married with two sons aged three and five years.
 Attended various art and craft workshops.
- 1981 Became interested in Fabric Art
 Foundation member of the Fabric Art Company.

NOELINE BLACK — PLIMMERTON

- Born Noeline Danrell in Hamilton 1948.
 Educated at Hamilton Technical College.
- 1970 Graduated with Diploma in Home Science from Otago University.
- 1972 Moved to Fiji with architect husband and two small children.
 Dressmaking professionally led to exploring other techniques with fabrics.
- 1975 Exhibited fabric hangings at Fiji Arts Society, Suva.
- 1976 Return to New Zealand with four children.
- 1980 A move to Wellington provided opportunities to develop interests in fabric further.
- 1981-82 Attended W.E.A. classes in Art with Fabrics (tutor Joan Beattie) and formed the Fabric Art Company.
 Exhibited individually at Fabric and Fibre Exhibitions, Lombard Art Award for crafts at Academy of Fine Arts, and at the Crafts Council.

PRU DURRANT — PLIMMERTON

- Born Pru Raphael 1935 Christchurch.
 Educated in Christchurch at Selwyn House P.N.E.U. School, and Rangi Ruru Girls College.
- 1953 Attended Canterbury College School of Fine Arts.
- 1955-57 Trained in Occupational Therapy.
- 1960-64 Worked in England. Visited Art Galleries in Europe.
- 1967 Attended W.E.A. Art Classes in drawing and painting.
- 1970-77 Attended evening classes on fabric printing techniques, and worked at a variety of crafts while at home with small children.
- 1981 Attended W.E.A. drawing classes.
- 1982-3 Attended W.E.A. Art Classes, and weekend workshops taken by Joan Beattie with the Fabric Art Company.

TINEKE FIJN — WILTON, WELLINGTON

- Born in Maastricht, Holland
- 1951 Arrived in New Zealand.
- 1970 Gained BA at Victoria University.
- 1971 Left for overseas after working in Public Service for a few years.

- Travelled overland through Africa.
- 1972-76 Lived in Zambia.
- 1976 Travelled overland through South America and from London to Sri Lanka.
- 1978 Returned to New Zealand.
- 1980 Bought and first used a sewing machine.
- 1981 Joined W.E.A. class run by Joan Beattie in March. Went to Brazil and Switzerland for six months.
- 1983 Daughter born in June.

VAL GRIFFITH-JONES — PLIMMERTON

- 1946 Born Val Gee, London.
- 1957-63 Truro High school, England.
- 1963-66 Harrow Technical College studying for a Diploma in Photography.
- 1971 Moved to New Zealand with husband and first child.
- 1971-82 Worked at home at various crafts, photography and toy making while enjoying four sons.
- 1982 Attended W.E.A. Fabric Art workshop and joined with the new Fabric Art Company.
Exhibited individually at Fabric and Fibre Exhibition.

Other interests include Playcentre work, sailing, tramping and gardening.

JILL GUNN — LOWER HUTT

Born Jill Doherty 1954 Winton, Southland.
Educated Dominican College Teschemakers Oamaru.

- 1971 Attended Dunedin Art School.
In the mid 1970's while raising three children worked in the craft area designing and making own creations.
Explored many crafts through workshops and courses during this time.
- 1982 After being introduced to fabric art through Joan Beattie I found a new challenge in turning "craft into art".
Joined the Fabric Art Company at the end of 1982 and have exhibited with them since.

ROSEMARY NAUSBAUM

Born Rosemary Devereux 28/10/43.
Educated in Hamilton

- 1961-63 Attended Auckland Post Primary Teachers College and received Home Science Teachers Certificate.
- 1963-82 Worked as an Air Hostess with Air New Zealand.
Married in 1966 and worked at a variety of jobs including managing a fashion boutique before having two children.
Became an avid participator in a wide variety of adult education courses including W.E.A. Fabric Art weekend workshops which led to becoming a member of the Fabric Art Company.



The Fabric Art Company with some of their creations. From left — Val, 'Mabel', Jill, 'Bruce', Pru, Anne, Tineke with real and fabric baby, Noeline and 'kids'.

GROUP STATEMENT

We are all women with children and the home environment is one in which we spend a great deal of our time. It is within this area of familiarity that we have chosen to share with you some personalities, situations and thoughts that most of us have at some time encountered in our day to day lives.

Which family doesn't have a dear Granny whos' obsession is knitting, or a beer drinking cousin called Bruce or Trev? Children wouldn't be children if there wasn't a trail of debris left behind them. We do hope you enjoy viewing as much as we have enjoyed creating this exhibition. Welcome to the Fabric Art Company's Exhibition.

CATALOGUE

Fabric Artists do it with Machines. — Jill Gunn and Noeline Black

Self Images — Jill Gunn, Noeline Black
— Val Griffith-Jones, Pru Durrant
— Tineke Fijn, Anne Allen

Letter Boxes — Joan Beattie introduces the Fabric Art Company

1. The Joys of Babyhood — Jill Gunn

Nappies, nappies and more nappies, odd booties, all that cream and stuff for sore bottoms and special soaps and shampoos. Not to mention the safety pins, bottles, toys and clothes: it goes on and on. And in the middle of all this, baby, oblivious to the stuff.

Bruce and the Light of his Life (Nos 2-4)

2. Bruce — Jill Gunn and Noeline Black

3. Light of his Life — Jill Gunn

4. Mother-in-law's tongue — Tineke Fijn

Every respectable home has a standard lamp in the corner (doesn't it?) Turned wood, tall and elegant with a long fringed shade. I looked at these and it just seemed to be a body with a hat on top to light up our lives. "But who's life?" said Noeline. And so Bruce was born. He gracefully decorates the corner under his light, he's just a harmless Kiwi bloke, what more can we say?

5. Pye Eyed — Jill Gunn and Noeline Black

6. Plant 53 — Tineke Fijn

(Nos 5, 6)

Television takes over our lives so often, especially the kids. Sometimes its power is greater than we would like to believe.

Salvation Knitters (Nos 7-13)

7. Doris, Marjorie and Ethel — Noeline Black, Val Griffith-Jones

8. Soap — Val Griffith-Jones, Jill Gunn

9. Table with cabriole legs — Jill Gunn, Noeline Black

10. Time for a cuppa — Noeline Black

11. Marmalade — Pru Durrant

12. Pretty Polly — Anne Allen

13. ECHINOCACTUS grusonii — Tineke Fijn

In the works which Noeline and I have shared recently the theme of friendship and togetherness occurs often. Certainly the knitted ladies share a lot besides a passion for knitting.

Our excitement was infectious and everyone else in the group added pieces to the scene. I find the cable stitch nose and tail on Pru's marmalade cat amazing. We did love deciding on the items each lady was knitting — All Bran for Doris who has sat still too long, new boobs for Marjory who fancied something a little different and more decorative than her old ones. And Ethel sacrificing her leg to the baby she always wanted.

14. "Who's jumping?" — Jill Gunn

"Who's jumping on that bed? you'll wreck the springs." I get mad at my two daughters but I remember the fun of doing it myself as a child. This fun together with the fantasy of the toys jumping as well made this a joyful piece of work for me to do. I really enjoy making people especially their faces and making children is even more of a challenge.

Car (Nos 15, 16)

15. "Did you cancel the paper dear?" — Noeline Black, Jill Gunn, Val Griffith-Jones

16. "Who's feeding the cat?" — Noeline Black, Jill Gunn, Val Griffith-Jones

We get pretty tensed up about going away, why is it always a rush even after days of planning? By the time we leave, tempers are often rather strained and it's not until we get to Levin (when it's too late to turn back to collect forgotten items) that we start to relax. Once we did return home after a few miles to collect forgotten snorkels, and found we had locked a stray cat inside — we were to be away for three weeks!

Mum here hasn't relaxed yet and is still checking everything out. They couldn't have left much behind could they?

Home Territory (Nos 17-20)

17. Riding High — Pru Durrant

18. Living space — Pru Durrant

19. Possessions — Pru Durrant

20. Common ground — Pru Durrant

My work is a statement about my environment. It is particularly about the activities at home, how they happen, and how people come to terms with them. The activities began through involvement in the doing and sharing in the midst of chaos: and from that comes the joy and satisfaction of a happy atmosphere. I am concerned with the realities reflected by the family needs, with the way things really are: not with the unrealistic and often sterile images in glossy advertisements for home interiors. I am celebrating my experience of involvement in home life, and I have used the brightness of colour to reflect that happy feeling.

Hard Pressed (Nos 21-26)

21. Slimline executive — Val Griffith-Jones

22. Blooming bike — Val Griffith-Jones

23. Mum — Val Griffith-Jones

24. Electrolux — Val Griffith-Jones

25. Iron — Val Griffith-Jones

26. Week in, week out — Val Griffith-Jones

One morning Frank said it again "Where's my clean shirt" and wham, mum had had enough. She ironed him, boots and all into his natty little brief case. Over the twenty five years of marriage she'd ironed about nine thousand six hundred and thirty four shirts. In her frenzy she attacked the vacuum cleaner, the hose of which she had been tripping over for years and the bike whose pedals caught her shins every time she went through the laundry. I can create because I am working in fabrics, squashed objects and paper thin people. In this scene the iron is all powerful. Don't let it happen to you!

Personal Stuff (Nos 27-31)

27. Bathmates — Noeline Black and Val Griffith-Jones

Our houses are always alive with people. It's lovely but sometimes hard to find time together with our husbands. We recognise the need to do so and any plots for time are well received. Fred and Mabel found the only peaceful place was in the bath but we are not sure if on this occasion they have the same things in mind.

28. "Who's the fairest of them all?" — Val Griffith-Jones

In the morning at our house each person is much involved with their own problems — where's my breakfast — lunch box — keys — bike pump and so on. This portrait of the family shows each member and their concern about the face they will show to the world this day.

29. Me and rubber duckie — Jill Gunn

I really wanted to make fabric taps. The shape of them fascinated me and the challenge of making them in fabric was fun too. I really love to work in this three dimensional way. I suspected that like me, lots of mothers bathed their babies in the basin every now and then. Rubber duckie was always squashed in somewhere and inevitably baby would pull the plug out and chew it.

30. Busy Lizzie — Tineke Fijn

31. Fight decay — Anne Allen

32. Percy — Tineke Fijn

Over the Fence (Nos 33, 34)

33. Tracey's wash — Val Griffith-Jones, Noeline Black

34. Raewyn's wash — Val Griffith-Jones, Noeline Black

Washing lines are very personal and if we are bold enough to peep, they tell us a lot about what goes on behind the net curtains. Tracey is newly wed and running both home and husband with great care. I identify with Raewyn who is always in a hurry, never enough pegs, the baby cries or it rains. She works at speed to gain a few moments each day to do her own thing.

35. Good for nothing — Noeline Black

"I'm home mum" and so another pair of jeans arrives in the wash with holes in the knees and seat. Patches, then patches over the patches, more jeans in the mending basket than in his drawers. Raising a son after three girls is a real test to ones ingenuity — how to get the knees under the sewing machine for a start!

36. Gone for lunch, back in 5 minutes — Anne Allen

37. "And the little one said "Roll over" — Val Griffith-Jones

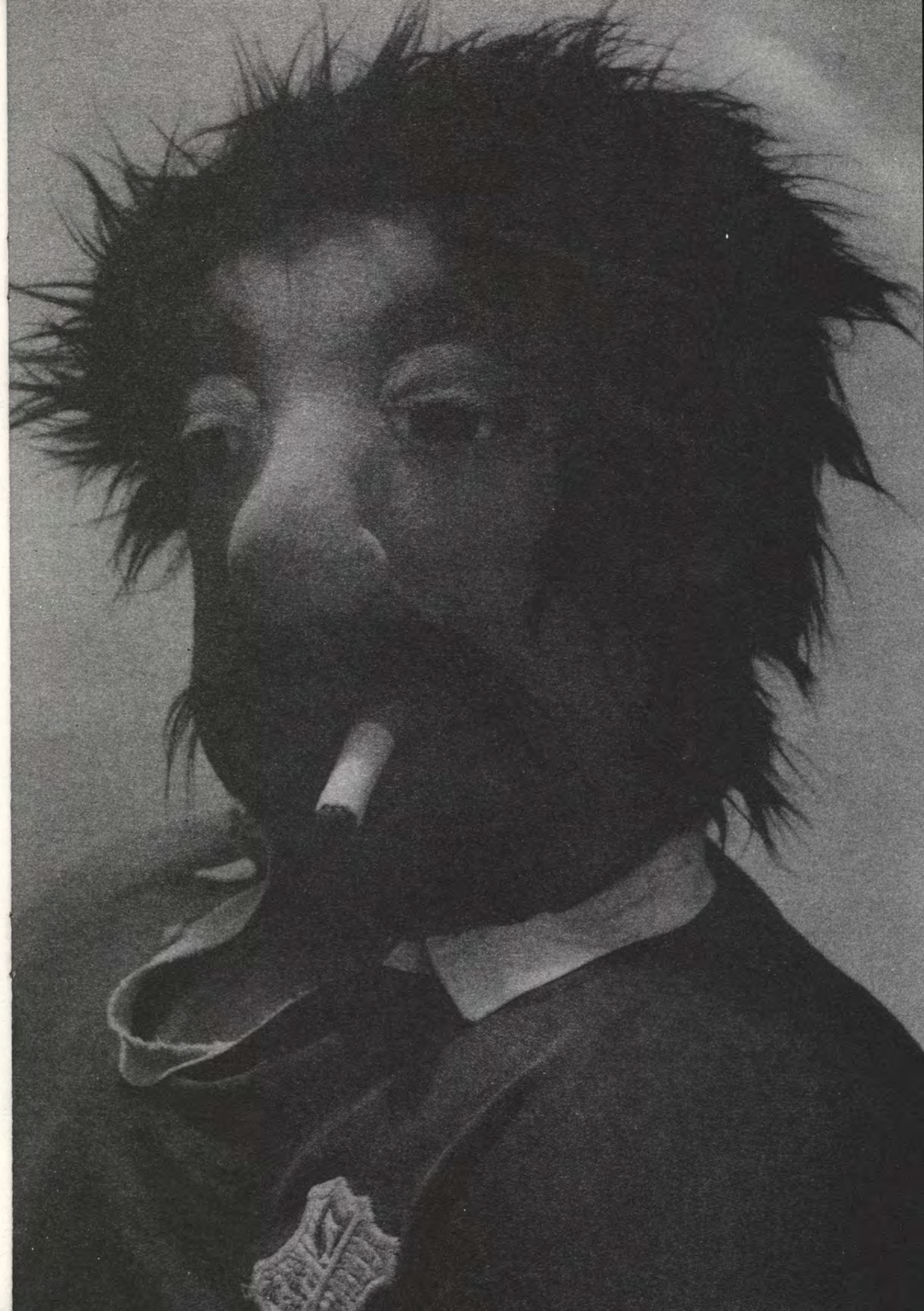
We often try to sleep '5 in a bed'. Bodies arrive silently and slip between the sheets. We pass the night watching the clock and trying to get comfy while the children claim more and more of the bed space. I like the way the bodies jig-saw together, the relaxed attitudes of the children and the sleepiness of the clothes.

38. Send me an angel — Jill Gunn

39. Sweet dreams are made of this — Noeline Black

40. The tooth fairy — Noeline Black

"The tooth fairy forgot to come" is a common cry in our house some mornings, and we realise we have boobed again. Children often ask 'who is she and what does she look like?' I suspect they are beginning to realise she isn't all she is cracked up to be!



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Photographs by Kevin O'Brien

