

show and two at Gomboc Gallery. His work is typified by macabre assemblages which position the human figure, or part of it, within a situation of pain or imprisonment. His work is always exquisitely crafted; the anatomical correctness of the works accentuates their sinister qualities.

Arkeveld's influence over a section of the sculpture community cannot be overlooked. Artists such as Theo Koning, Stuart Elliott, Peter Dailey and Claire Bailey all make work which addresses important social issues through making insightful and often witty caricatures of the human condition. The Art Gallery of Western Australia has in its collection a particularly good example of Stuart Elliott's work. It is an installation of a complete town of dark, ruinous buildings, which on closer inspection do not quite function. The buildings are made from ceramic and are fired black as though they have been through some terrible destruction. On the streets of this town, rows of trucks with front axles like horns march relentlessly forward in ways that always block each other's path. Elliott is preoccupied with the complete futility of the relentless pursuit of tasks and ideals with which mankind concerns itself.

David Jones is a sculptor with an international reputation. *Mahogany Spiral* made from 144 charred wood blocks describes the formal use of natural materials which characterises his classic and highly refined work.

Carmela Corvaia's work *Untitled Seed* is well-proportioned and harmonious. Using sticks, thread, clay, leaves and paper she has patiently constructed an intricate, woven, structure of two semi-spherical seed shapes while the base of the piece is made from a careful layering of amber-coloured leaves. The work is somewhat evocative of British sculptor Andy Goldsworthy who makes ephemeral work from reconstructing all kinds of natural elements within the environment. □

References to catalogues:

Sculpture Survey 1995 Gomboc Gallery Middle, Swan.

One Hundred Years of Sculpture 1895 - 1995, AGWA, 1995.

IMAGE-SCAVENGING

Dangerous Liaisons
Plimsoll Gallery, Centre for the Arts,
Hobart
7 - 30 April 1995

Reviewed by
Jennifer Spinks

Dangerous Liaisons is both a more unruly and less interesting exhibition than the title - with its seductive, sophisticated overtones - would appear to promise. It is, in fact, a rather motley, indifferently-hung collection of works by contemporary Australian artists who have been more or less inspired by periods and features of Western art as diverse as the Renaissance, seventeenth century Dutch genre painting, Maltese and South American Catholic imagery, the Baroque, Rococo, Classicism and Neo-Classicism. It includes the artists Maree Azzopardi, Rose Farrell & George Parkin, Brad Levido, Anna Platten, Siobhan Ryan, Timothy Schultz and Lisa Tomasetti. Curator Diana Klaosen invokes Postmodern image-scavenging as the unifying stylistic element of the exhibition, while the thematics are broadened to include "private or shared agendas — significant social, cultural, sexual and moral issues — (addressed) in highly individual, contemporary and contrasting ways, with humour and irony tempering serious intent."

One aspect remains constant throughout this grab-bag of an exhibition: it is clear that none of the artists can hope to duplicate the technical mastery and illusionary power of their sources, and indeed, seem uninterested in doing so. We must assume that they have other concerns, ranging from the referential to the subversive. It is, then, unfortunate that the curator appears to have a greater interest in simply demonstrating that these artists have historical antecedents than in probing how such complex relations have developed within their work. A more selective curatorial approach allied with a more considered, intimate hang may have allowed the intriguing individual qualities of the works to

emerge, rather than swamping them in a chaotic whole.

Those artists in *Dangerous Liaisons* who pursue a quietly thoughtful vision fare badly from an uncomfortable proximity with exuberant, dramatic artists like Schultz and Ryan. Two Polaroid photographs from Rose Farrell & George Parkin's 1989 series *Miserable Pleasures and Glorious Mysteries* are almost lost in the melée. Their Madonna's poignant, melancholy gesture and the rich yet subdued background details of these tableaux fail to command sufficient attention in such gaudy surroundings. In any case, this specifically South American religious imagery seems inappropriate in an exhibition which proposes to concentrate on European masterworks.

Anna Platten's realist painting *Self-Portrait in Studio* (1992) draws on the traditions of seventeenth century Northern European painting. She imparts an eerie presence to the mostly inanimate subject matter of this work and the accompanying drawing *Study for Puppets* (1994). The potential of these images to unsettle the viewer could have been developed to a fascinating degree in a more intimate setting.

Both Platten and Farrell & Parker have produced works with quietly complex relations of imagery and technique to their sources. It is a shame that various other works in *Dangerous Liaisons* meet the curatorial criteria of art historical elements and implicit or explicit sexual content in a much less interesting fashion. Brad Levido's monochrome paintings combine beautiful young men with fragments from classical antiquity. They are intelligent and sympathetic homoerotic images, but technically and stylistically tame.

In a similar vein, Lisa Tomasetti draws on Renaissance traditions when posing her black and white photographic nudes. She employs well-worn clichés of the genre (including deeply-shadowed studio lighting, exaggerated grain, and languidly narcissistic figures) which undercut any subversive intent she attempts to bring to her work.

Maree Azzopardi's reworkings of religious imagery combine basic

elements of *découpage*, splashes of gold paint, and rather heavy-handed applications of shellac. Her theme of specifically female religious ecstasy is potentially intriguing, but its impact is lessened by a thoroughly mediocre presentation.

Siobhan Ryan's sculptural work is quite different: her almost excessive attention to the materiality of these Rococo-inspired extravaganzas has fascinating results. Metal, velvet, and "dripping" resin, among other components, twist through the pieces *Boudoir*, *Landscape* and *Plode* (all 1994). Their elaborate, convoluted forms are reminiscent of hearts, maps, female genitalia, and human cells, and refer insistently to female experience.

Similarly, Tim Schultz's paintings *Goria* (1994), *Marquise* (1993), *Psyche* (1993), and *Severed Head* (1994), exaggerate, and render demonic, features of Rococo art. They are peopled by monstrous, predatory women, who are decorated with pearls and lurk in decadent interiors. These funny yet macabre paintings have a sophisticated relation to the Rococo; they exploit its inherent sensuality, while challenging its rigid categorisations of humour and tragedy. Schultz clearly revels in both the pleasures of the artificial image, and the murky, sinister undercurrents of human sexuality.

Large-scale, gaudy and dramatic, these paintings dominate *Dangerous Liaisons*. Despite their intrinsic interest, it is a shame that the cool, subtle works of Farrell & Parker and Anna Platten were not also permitted to achieve their full impact. Had they done so, the exhibition might have offered some intriguing insights into contemporary art and the persistent lure of European culture. □



Tim Schultz, *Psyche*, 1993, oil on canvas, 135 x 115cms.

BUILDING WITH BITS

The Futures Technology Centre
Elizabeth College, cnr of Warwick
& Murray Streets, Hobart
Design team: Paul Ian (architect),
Ian Friend (artist), Sarah Lindsay
(artist), Kevin Todd (artist)

Reviewed by
Ian McLean

Tasmania's State government has an art-for-buildings scheme: budgets for buildings constructed from the public purse are obliged to commit an amount towards the purchase of art works. This usually results in the commissioning of a sculpture, or the purchase of other art works to adorn the building. In these projects the relationship between the architect(s) and artist(s) have not always been easy or necessary. However, for the recently completed Futures Technology Centre, a state government project and part of a

secondary college in Hobart, artists and architect formed a collaborative team; a new order of design was conceived in which artist and architect were not competing for the same territory.

The Futures Technology Centre has received more bad press in its short life than any other building in Tasmania. I have found it difficult to find any person, any architect or artist who is not shocked by the building's inelegance. This is clearly a building with 'meaning'.

The design team agreed that they should interpret the pedagogical function of the building in architectural terms, deciding that the necessary construction elements of the building would be its embellishment and form. If this sounds like form would follow function, in fact function followed frame. The aesthetic strategy was to re-engage the design precedents set by early modernism within a postmodern frame. While the Centre would be a zoo of formalist quotations, these quotations would