

Fiona Gunn

Kevin Henderson

Peter Hill

Donna Marcus

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Artists and curators regularly install exhibitions in galleries, but when an artist employs installation as a strategy it is about the articulation and deployment of an entire given space and the engagement of the viewer in that orchestration. Additionally, in this exhibition there is the interaction between installations. The dynamics of this totality cannot be captured in a catalogue (especially when the catalogue goes to print before the works have been installed and the curator's overall concept is based upon the participating artists' previous work and exhibition proposal abstracts). The written and visual material enclosed here provides a background to what will be/is/has been installed *in* the Plimsoll Gallery, and hopefully will enhance debate and discussion about installation strategies.

When Kevin Henderson was selected as the first Scottish Arts Council funded resident in Australia (hosted jointly by the Tasmanian School of Art at Hobart and the Canberra School of Art), I decided to evolve an exhibition of installation works to coincide with his presence and provide a focus for his residency. It has provided an ideal opportunity to view the work of another Scot, Peter Hill, whose work on the *Museum of Contemporary Ideas* has not been seen in Hobart although he has lived here for two and a half years. Their work is complemented by that of Fiona Gunn and Donna Marcus who will both come to Hobart to install their own work. Four very different attitudes to the notion of installation.

Paul Zika

April 1993



Membrane, 1992

Steel and latex rubber

1.7m x 2m x 1.2m

Jam Factory, Adelaide

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Thirty years ago it could outrage or amuse a general public to step into a gallery room and find only a row of house bricks across the polished floor, neatly cleaving the floor space into visible and banal proportions. In the 1990s it is hardly surprising to be informed that a row of broken windows in a derelict warehouse is not the debris from casual vandalism, but is an exhibited work of art (although, of course, there would be no reason why it couldn't be both). Whether subtle or brash, it does seem a simple thing, almost too easy, to be an installation artist. Take something, anything: no matter how big or small, with or without regard to its value, its origin, materiality, or use. Place it somewhere, anywhere: in a gallery or store, in a street or on a mountain top, on your body or in your pocket. Strictly speaking, in the barest practical terms, you have performed or constructed an 'installation'. If this is art—at least in its minimal, threshold condition—then, to repeat a contemporary slogan, art is easy.

But 'installation art' in fact defies easy definition, just as it denies facile execution. Installation is a hybrid art, perhaps even a pseudo-art: a complex of sculpture, painting, graphics, theatre, architecture, interior design, photography; and yet, it doesn't try to combine these integrally and functionally into a total work of art (like a Baroque spectacle or Bauhaus ballet). It requires many of these skills, and yet it also applies none of them. Its art is the manner of installing them, of putting them in place. If it refers to these artistic disciplines it is by means of excess or negation: they are not at the service of an installation; an installation draws upon them either too much or too little to be of use. Can an installation be interpreted as a work of sculpture? Yes, of course, provided one thinks of sculpture as something that can be environmental or ambient rather than discrete; that can be an arrangement rather than a fabrication. Can an installation be interpreted as a photographic piece? Yes, but again, only if one remembers that the art lies not in the photograph but in the placement of things for the photograph, a mode of placement which is not quite sculptural. In other words, installation diverts us from the essential conditions of any of the arts it employs.

Styletically, installation seems to be a postmodern phenomenon. It appears as a means of working with art which emerges as a possibility through the decline and transvaluation of late modernist aesthetics in the 1960s. The Pop environments of Claes Oldenburg or George Segal, the funk tableaux of Ed Kienholz, the sets of Allan Kaprow's 'happenings', or Christo's wrapping up of topographical or urban features: these were inspired as an exaggeration or burlesque of formalist etiquette. The work of Joseph Beuys and Yves Klein manifested a transformation of modernist principles of abstraction and the utilisation of materials and processes beyond or beneath the formal conventions of art. Minimalist sculptors and painters installed their work with a theatrical flair in order to oppose the illusionism of pictorial art with a literalism of a radically objective art. Of course, the installations of the 1960s were not without precedent; they renewed perverse aspirations within modernism to extend the borders of art and transgress the propriety of formalism. Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* and Marcel Duchamp's American work (including his decor for the Surrealist exhibitions in 1938 and 1942) would have to feature prominently in any genealogy of installation. But so too would El Lissitzky's trade fair designs from the late 1920s and '30s, Josef Svoboda's theatrical scenography, and the sparse geometric hanging of Frank Stella's and Kenneth Noland's exhibitions in the '60s. There is perhaps more modernism in installation art than might at first seem apparent.

Installation art poses critical problems and conundrums which are not that far removed from the dynamic self-scrutiny and aesthetic uncertainty of modernism: questions about what is art and what is not. But it asks them in a manner that it is sceptical of modernist protocols. Thus it does not enquire into the conditions of taste (which, according to the doctrine of formalism, allows judgements to be made on the essential qualities of an art), but rather investigates the institutional contexts of art (the structures of production and reception which designate something as art). In this way installation art defines itself as an expanded conception of art, without recourse to the properties of specific arts. Consider this: if the procedures of installation are those of placement and arrangement then what makes it

an art, something beyond a mere routine or technique utilised by storemen and packers, or an art distinct from that of devices employed for advertising display, interior decoration or department store window dressing? It may seem a preposterous question because installation art evidently requires the pragmatic ability to identify artistic problems concerning expression or style or symbolic significance, and will demand the discovery of appropriate solutions. However, at a practical level this has nothing to do with an installation artist's materials or methods, since there is nothing essentially different about them (and advertising display surely has likewise its own criteria for assessing solutions to problems about expression, style or symbolism).

And, there is an even harder question: what distinguishes installation art from the activity of a museum curator or exhibition designer? The curator and designer, after all, have the museum collection at their disposal as readymade artistic material, and the museum walls, floors, lights and so on as physical 'supports'. Like the installation artist, they are responsible to the imperative to utilise those facilities as aesthetic devices. To respond that an installation artist may incorporate their own work in their installation, where a curator does not, is not an adequate answer: it only tells us that some installation artists may happen to be painters or sculptors or photographers, as well as being 'installers'. The artistic work we, as an audience, are expected to critically attend to is the 'installation', not only its discrete components but the significant ensemble. But is this not the same expectation we bring to any formally curated or edited exhibition? If so, then perhaps one can never actually curate an exhibition of installation art, only commission it.

Perhaps installation art is then a kind of institutional ruse, a seduction of the work of art by the institutional practices and discourses of art, a simulation of the institutional power of curators. Certainly, the past thirty years has been an era of unprecedented curatorial enterprise with blockbuster exhibitions and international contemporary art events defining curators more as stylists and entrepreneurs than as scholars. One must recall that

'installation' not only refers to curatorial practice (its discursive as well as aesthetic decisions) but also to a museological and publicity routine of photographically representing works of art in their contexts of display (the 'installation view'). These two notions — one investigating form and presentation, the other accounting for contextualisation and significance — converge to make 'installation art' an acutely paradoxical activity. If the former provides the artist, like the curator, with a repertoire of techniques derived from collage, montage, assemblage (utilising the wall and floor, for instance, as pictorial or sculptural elements), then the latter synthesises that range of interventions as an institutionalised form of vision. What one looks at in a curator's installation of art in a museum is a particular way of looking at that art (it determines, more or less, how one interprets that art: the installation is a way of seeing the art). What one looks at in a work of installation art is the context in which looking can, more or less, occur: the installation is the art itself, it does not determine anything other than the place it occurs in as the site for looking at art.

It may come down to this: the art in installation art is the ability to mime a curatorial decision, to double the institutional context for art. Even in its modest manifestations, it mimes the command of its setting; precisely because it is the art of 'setting'. Yet the horizon of this ambition is the vanishing point of its grandeur: at the limit of its achievement installation art effectively disappears because it becomes the very medium of an environment (much as water disappears for a fish immersed in the ocean). The difficult task of 'installation art' is to always exceed the terms of its discrete sculptural or pictorial components (of selection, fabrication, placement and so on) and yet to also always fall short of the totality it invokes. In a curious way, 'installation' is visible and critically accountable as an art form only so far as it fails to fulfil its destiny.

Edward Colless

1993

Born Canberra, 1962

Studies

- 1981-84 Sydney College of the Arts
1987 Middlesex Polytechnic, London
1991-92 College of Fine Art, University of N.S.W.

Solo Exhibitions

- 1986 *Blood is not thicker than water*, Avago, Sydney University
1987 *Language informed behaviour—definitions are indefinite*, QP2, Middlesex Polytechnic, London
1990 *In the Middle—between—the light*,
The Performance Space, Sydney
1993 *Warnings*, Rom Gallery, Sydney

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1982 Art Unit, Sydney
1984 *Given Spaces*, Artspace, Sydney
Sculpture at the Performance Space,
The Performance Space, Sydney
1985 *In almost every case*, The Performance Space, Sydney
Drawn in, 338 Pitt Street, Sydney
1988 *My arm covers the distance*, 338 Pitt Street, Sydney
1988-89 *Called by name of*, First Draft, Sydney,
Chameleon Gallery, Hobart
1989 *Fresh Art*, S.H.Ervin Gallery, Sydney
China Crisis, Shop 9, Pailou Plaza, China Town, Sydney
1990 *Metal as metaphor*, Bondi Pavilion, Sydney
Fill—between—and in the Middle, Tin Sheds, Sydney
1991 *Perspecta*, A.G.N.S.W., Sydney
Discrete Entity, Canberra Institute of the Arts
Gallery, Canberra
The Total Look—Locating Furniture, Plimsoll Gallery,
University of Tasmania, Hobart
1992 3D, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
Special Screening, The Jam Factory, Adelaide

She was thirsty for every breath that flowed from her lips. There seemed to be a relationship between what she felt within and the energy of that exchange. It was a familiar sensation—a flow—a blanket of cloud pressing on her. Spreading through her, as though there was no separation between her body and where she happened to be. A constantly exchanging membrane negotiating the jagged edges, the soft amorphous substances—mixing and serging, shifting and jolting.

The breaths would form and dissipate slowly, escaping her lips and leaving her with nothing over and over again.

She heard vibrations, the pitch of the sound, the tone of under water movements. The pressure of its presence pushing and displacing the atmosphere around her, blocking the light—suspending her.

Fiona Gunn

Title of work in exhibition

Gravity's orbit, 1993

Latex rubber

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Born Singapore, 1963

Studies

1981-86 Grays School of Art, Aberdeen

Solo Exhibition

1987 Eden Court Theatre, Inverness

Group Exhibitions

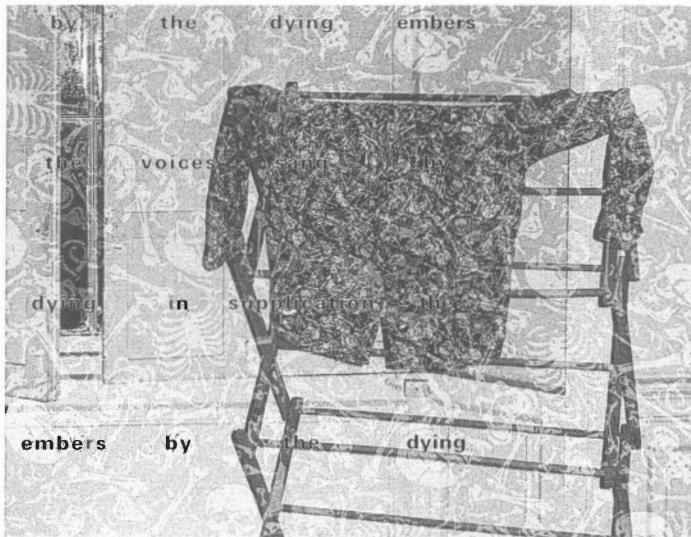
1989 *Scatter*, Third Eye Centre, Glasgow

1990 *The British Art Show*, Hayward Gallery, London,
Leeds City Art Gallery, McLellan Galleries, Glasgow
Self Conscious State, Third Eye Centre, Glasgow

1991 *Kunst Europa*, Kunstverein Kirchzarten, Germany
Walk On, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh,

Walk On, Jack Tilton Gallery, New York

1992 *Contact*, Transmission Gallery, Glasgow
Guilt by Association, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin



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the	know	whats	by
dying	in	fashion	the
embers	by	the	dying

together	without	distinction	gathered
without	Eurasia	Division	together
distinction	The	Cross	without
gathered	together	without	distinction

together	without	distinction	gathered
without	many	hearths	together
distinction	and	homes	without
gathered	together	without	distinction

together	without	distinction	gathered
without	woman	and	together
distinction	a	man	without
gathered	together	without	distinction

together **without** **distinction** **gathered**
without **microcosm** **macrocosm** **together**
distinction **and** **god** **without**
gathered **together** **without** **distinction**

on **feeling** **her** **pulse**
feeling **between** **nature** **on**
her **and** **culture** **feeling**
pulse **on** **feeling** **her**

on **feeling** **her** **pulse**
feeling **gather** **join** **on**
her **and** **reconstitute** **feeling**
pulse **on** **feeling** **her**

on **feeling** **her** **pulse**
feeling **one** **over** **on**
her **an** **another** **feeling**
pulse **on** **another** **her**

on feeling her pulse
feeling the most on
her blessed sacrament feeling
pulse on feeling her



loved by her eyes ***by sense the loved*** ***her of divine by*** ***eyes loved by her***

Kevin Henderson

Title of work in exhibition

Divine Economy(s). Division The Cross, 1993

Mixed media

Born Glasgow, Scotland, 1953

Studies

- 1971-73 Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee, Scotland
1974-77 West Surrey College of Art, Guildford, England
1978-81 West Surrey College of Art, Farnham, England

Solo Exhibitions

- 1984 Mario Flecha Gallery, London
1985 Corners Gallery, Glasgow
1987 WASPS Gallery, Edinburgh
1990 Judith Pugh Gallery, Melbourne
1992 Judith Pugh Gallery, Melbourne
1993 Post-West Gallery, Adelaide

Group Exhibitions

- 1981 Institute of Education, Bedford Square, London
Five Painters at the Maltings, Farnham, England
1982 Kiln Gallery, Farnham, England
1983 *Three Scottish Painters*, Mario Flecha Gallery, London
1984 *Five Painters at the Cite des Arts*, Paris
1986 Sue Rankin Gallery, London

Between 1981 and 1993 Peter Hill has written for *Artmonthly* (London), *Artscribe*, *Studio International*, *The Artists Newsletter*, *Design, Performance, New Dance, Art and Text*, *Artmonthly* (Australia), *Agenda, Interview, Galeries* (Paris), *Artlink*, *The Scotsman*, *The Glasgow Herald*, *The Aberdeen Press and Journal*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Sunday Age*. He has never written for *The Mercury*.

Between 1985-1990 he founded and edited *Alba Magazine* from Scotland. He has written numerous catalogue essays.

This whole installation should be seen within the larger context of the fictional *Museum of Contemporary Ideas*, a long-term project which holds a mirror up to the contemporary art world reflecting both its serious and absurd sides.

This fictional art fair is supposed to be happening in New York, a city which rightly claims it does not need one as it is an art fair all year round. The trustees of the museum disagree and they have given over several floors of their Park Avenue building (one of ten sites in New York City) for the *First New York Contemporary Art Fair*. One small section of this has been reconstructed for exhibition in the Plimsoll Gallery, Centre for the Arts, Hobart.

There is an art fair taking place somewhere in the world at least once a month. In May it is Chicago down at the old Navy Pier, in December Los Angeles, June Basel, and November Cologne. Collectively they have become a moveable feast with the same cast of characters criss-crossing the globe like art-world guests and waiters in the soft under-bellies of 747s.

 **WHEN NEXT IN NEW YORK**
 **WHY NOT MAKE A NOTE**
 **TO VISIT** 
 **THE NEW**  **BASEMENT** **PLATO'S CAVE**
 **BAR IN THE**
 **OF THE**
 **MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY IDEAS**
 **Linking Drinking with Thinking**


The art fairs themselves are not curated events like the Venice or Sydney biennales (although the big ones like Basel and Cologne have long waiting lists of galleries seeking entry). Space is sold, in the form of booths, to galleries as the same space will be sold the following week to car manufacturers, yacht chandlers or furniture designers as art fairs turn overnight into home shows and car shows.

By presenting an art fair as an installation within a conventional gallery space I am trying to alter our normal reading of artworks and of how one artwork relates to its neighbour, given that art fairs are marked by random selection and the whim of each gallery director without consultation with the neighbouring galleries. Thus, one stall might be exhibiting eskimo art, the next large cibachrome photography, or a suite of Andy Warhol screenprints. The latest shocker from Jeff Koons may sit opposite an installation by the Gorilla Girls, or the work of a local landscape painter. At the smaller fairs where there is less of an international mix of blue chip galleries, provincial and national art can often dominate. This installation hopefully rides across the spectrum from the very safe to the very saleable and to the experimental.

It is also my intention to set up a fictional situation that has a narrative element built into it, a little like a film set waiting for a story to be acted out around it. In this case the spectator gets a preview of an art fair two hours before the official opening. This would normally be during the later stages of the press viewing of the fair. Some galleries would already have finished and be cracking open the Moet and Chandon, while others, with airport delays may not have arrived at all, or may be in the latter stages of hanging the works. We find crates still waiting to be put into storage, some works leaning against the walls of booths, ladders and tool-boxes sitting in the middle of the floor and a strong whiff of perfume and panic in the atmosphere as the doors are about to be opened.

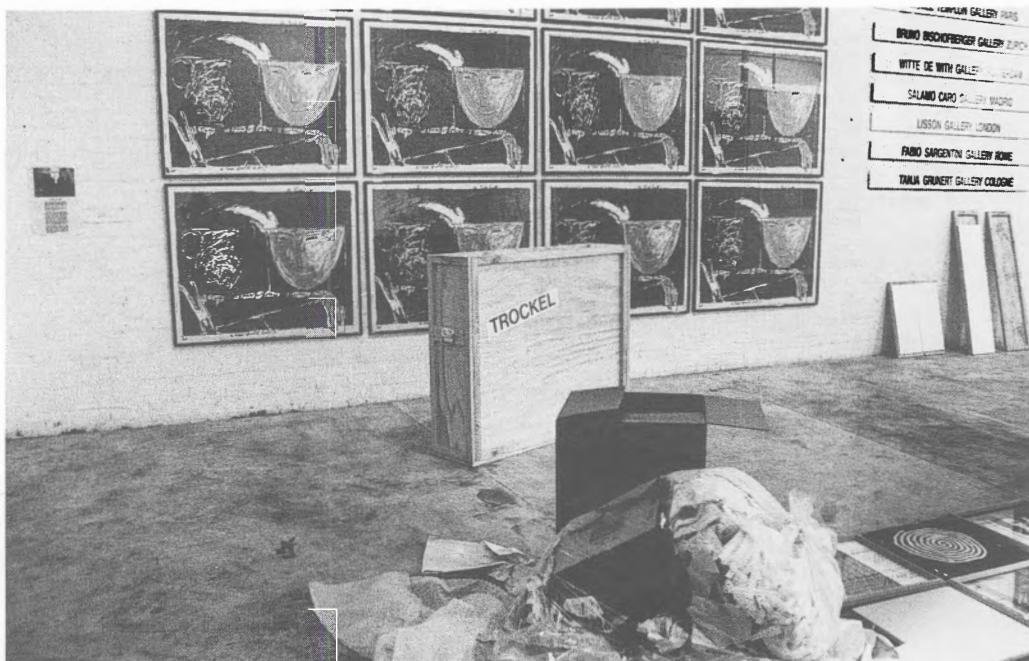
While some parts of the installation are like props for a film set and their only value may be to act as such for photographs which I will take during the run of the exhibition, other elements of the installation 'deconstruct' the idea of the art fair rather than mirror that idea in an illusionistic way. An example of this would be the signage relating to very real international galleries hung one above the other. They would never be exhibited like this at an art fair. Rather, they are in themselves an artwork that brings together different aspects of the art fair as 'event'.

Peter Hill

Title of work in exhibition

New York Contemporary Art Fair, 1992

Mixed media



Details from *New York Contemporary Art Fair, 1992*

Judith Pugh Gallery, Melbourne, 1992

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Born Sydney, 1960

Studies

- 1977-80 Tasmanian School of Art, Hobart
1985-87 City Art Institute, Sydney
1988-89 Hochschule der Kunste Berlin, West Berlin

Solo Exhibitions

- 1985 *Simone is a Girl Like You*, The Painters Gallery, Sydney
1987 *Lurks 'n Capers—Representation as Myth*,
Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney
1988 *Donna Marcus*, DC-Art, Sydney
1990 *Works From Berlin*, DC-Art, Sydney
Donna Marcus, Judith Pugh Gallery, Melbourne

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1980 *Waists of Time*, Crafts Council Gallery, Hobart
1982 *Detour by Tender Aliens*, Community and Arts Centre, Hobart
1983 *Studio Access Project*, Artspace, Sydney
1984 *Bras Icons Rooms*, Artspace, Sydney
Streetspace, Mark Foy's Plaza, Sydney (curated by Artspace
as an umbrella event of the Sydney Biennale)
1985 *Return to Sender*, Tasmanian School of Art Gallery, Hobart
1986 *Forbidden Fruit*, First Draft, Sydney
1988 *Untitled*, The Performance Space, Sydney
Frolic, Bondi Pavilion Gallery, Sydney
The Art Collector's Starters Kit, DC-Art, Sydney
1990-91 *A Material World—Fibre, Colour, Pattern*,
Powerhouse Museum, Sydney
The National Fibre Exhibition, Tamworth City Art Gallery and
regional galleries tour
1992 *Some Rooms*, Judith Pugh Gallery, Melbourne
Dame Edna regrets she is unable to attend, Heide Park
and Art Gallery, Melbourne
Rapunzel, Gallerie IX, Berlin
1993 *Drawing on the Walls*, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Qld.

STORMY LAWNS (Concrete Dreams)

Some time ago I became fascinated with ferrocement boats whose monolithic forms seem to be more firmly moored to the patio or garage than they are ever likely to be to a jetty. These 'concrete dreams' anchor their owners to epic weekends of *leisuretime* to craft which might one day float far from their suburban settings. In the meantime they remain visibly becalmed on the front lawn in a state of monumental stagnation.

I am interested in exploring notions of biography and autobiography and the framing of 'ourselves' in both a personal and 'National' context, with particular reference to the Gold Coast where I currently work. Using personal histories which appropriate all sorts of national myths, I began to think about how easy it is to be anchored to family myths, legends and dreams and how comfortably secure but also cumbersome these can be.

As a child, my mother lived on large boats which her father eventually salvaged, sinking whatever could not be re-used. Later as an adult, my mother would say she wanted to call her home 'Anchorage' whilst simultaneously browsing for the next real estate bargain at the 'next port of call'. My childhood was spent 'in-transit'. My mother planted fruit trees during the many shifts we made; these were sorts of moorings, I suppose.

The Gold Coast is a city well moored down by its Dreams and Paradises, a place where boats anchor at the doors of Dreamhome situated on canals where sharks now lurk. One is aware of transitoriness in this part of the world where the Real Estate lift-out of the local paper on a Saturday is as thick as two copies of *The Mercury*. The culture of canal estates is a site of more than a few 'concrete dreams' far more fleeting than many a ferrocement boat sitting firmly on stormy lawns.

When a few months ago I was invited to participate in this exhibition, I thought of sending a series of works which would neatly fit into postal boxes. I did consider that trying to construct an almost life size simulated concrete (papier mache) boat in two weeks might be idiotic but still I played with the idea of constructing *Stormy Lawns* particularly when I read:

'....in making your selection study carefully the economics and logistics of each site being considered. Determine what facilities you will need and what are available. An ideal site would be on or alongside water...'

Cairncross, C. *Ferrocement Yacht Construction*, 1972, p.78.

Reading this at my home at the top of Mount Tamborine in the Gold Coast Hinterland and being asked to participate in an exhibition at the Plimsoll Gallery on the Docks in Hobart just *had* to be a sign. The offer of access to the workshops and technical assistance further cemented this notion and I am extremely grateful to Phillip Blacklow without whose valuable assistance this project could not have been realised. Soon after, I happened across a copy of *Thirty-five Modern Motor Boats* in my own spare room, a book complete with *actual* blueprints. I browsed at 'Happy', 'Rocket', 'Rampant' and 'Ripalong' and although 'Eric Jr' and 'Broadbill' were particularly fetching, it was 'Benbow' which soared from the page as the *ideal* concrete Dreamboat. I then went on to mulching the Real Estate section of the paper and old telephone directories to prefabricate the body of the boat on my back lawn. It's a good thing that Queensland has a climate sympathetic to this type of boatbuilding.

Donna Marcus

Title of work in exhibition

STORMY LAWNS (Concrete Dreams), 1993

Mixed media



Details from *Untitled*

From *On the Wall - Artists Al Fresco*

3.5m x 2.9m x 0.6m

Gold Coast City Art Gallery, 1993

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The Curator would like to thank the participating artists for installing works and providing text and images for reproduction in this catalogue, Phillip Blacklow who assisted with the construction of *STORMY LAWNS (Concrete Dreams)* and Pat Brassington for her support.

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An exhibition organised by the Plimsoll Gallery Committee, University of Tasmania at Hobart.

Plimsoll Gallery, Centre for the Arts, Hunter Street Hobart
15 May - 6 June, 1993

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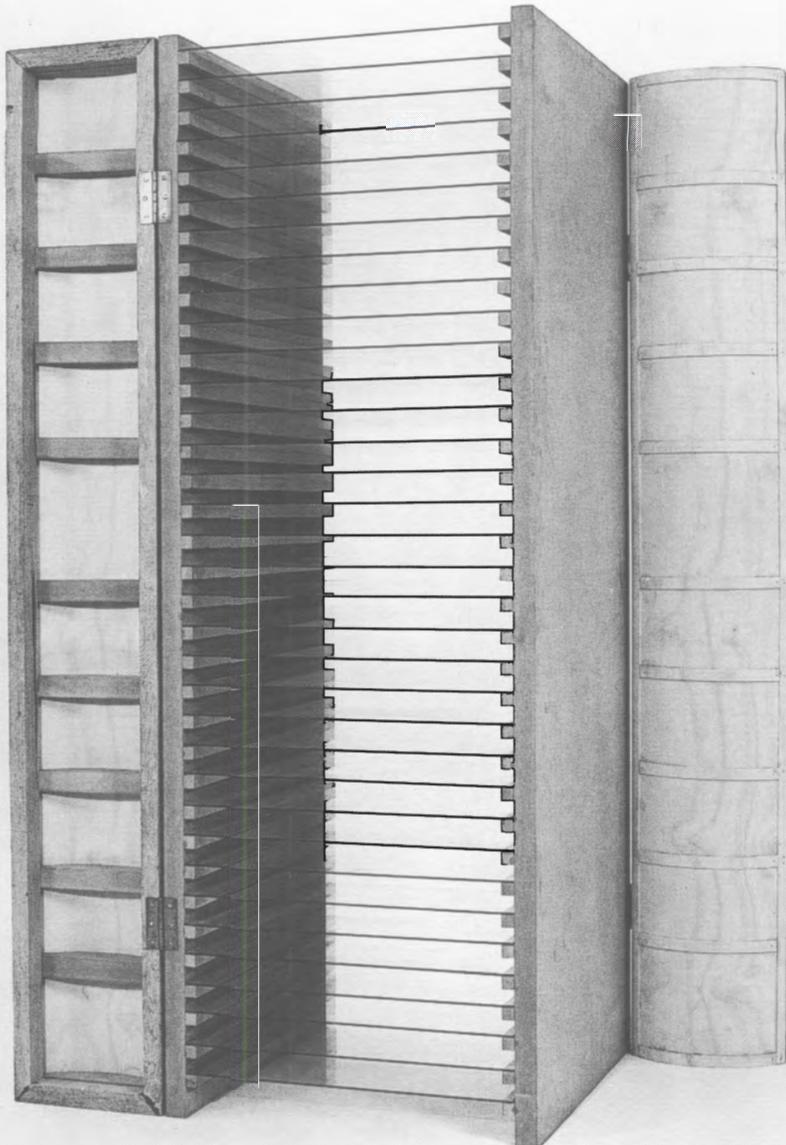
Curator: Paul Zika

Catalogue essay: Edward Colless

Plimsoll Gallery Co-ordinator: Pat Brassington

Catalogue Design: D'Art Room/Susan Andrews

Catalogue Printing: The Monotone Art Printers, Hobart



Fall, 1990

Glass, metal fittings, wood

1.6 x 0.6m