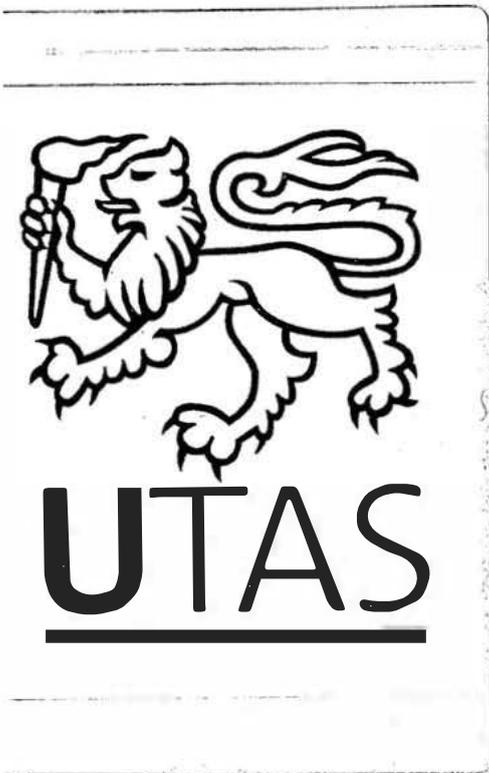


Props for Social Discourse

By

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BFA (Hons)



Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy (Fine Arts) University of
Tasmania (Feb. 2000)

To Helene

My lover and best friend for the support during the many
years of study in fulfilling my goal.

Declaration of Originality

This Thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the Exegesis and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgment is made in the text of the Exegesis.

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ABSTRACT

This research project investigates the role of seating in rural and urban public spaces. It incorporates references to both past and contemporary societies and has been developed as a series of *Props for Social Discourse*. The result has been the development of pieces of furniture that began with a narrative response to thinking about my life, growing up and living on the North West Coast of Tasmania. On one level, the resulting works tell a story about how country folk or city folk converse with one another in relatively relaxed social situations. The narrative depicts this Australian discourse both with humour and with a more serious cultural intention, one which is focussed upon how furniture might influence social intercourse.

Running parallel to this investigation, on a formal level, I have explored the integration of metals and leather. I have woven these two materials together to create a unity. The works challenge the traditional use of these materials, especially in the manner that they have been utilised jointly to date.

The starting point for these *Props for Social Discourse* was my observation of the manner in which rural people from my district placed their bodies in particular positions when participating in social discourse. This led me to develop the theme of the *Leaning Post* which, in its various manifestations, is intended to be introduced into public social spaces. These works are directed towards bars, cafes, clubs and meeting places. The public spaces are specific to people who rest and have social discourse whilst their body is in a vertical, semi-standing position.

Another body of work in these *Props for Social Discourse* is a range of seating which has been formulated through my investigations of the positions strangers place themselves in while sitting in public spaces. I have

developed seating where the sitting positions are separated in order to create a comfortable personal resting place. The seating also addresses the direction that people need to face whilst sitting. This directional position changes constantly as strangers rest together within public spaces.

It is my intention that these *Props for Social Discourse* have an immediate tactile response with the body. This feeling is visually enhanced where I have integrated metals and leather. I have paralleled these responses with the sexual ones we encounter when relating body skin with sheer fabric or with see-through metal fabric that is presently evident within contemporary body adornment. The outcome has been the melding of these responses within the *Props*. This development has allowed me to produce larger scale pieces for public spaces which give people the opportunity to respond to the tactility of the form, in both a sensual and sensory way. It is intended that their regional source is also emphasized.

By drawing upon my past regional imagery and transforming them into usable contemporary *Props*, this thesis addresses social interaction in public spaces.

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