

9, a Chizic
1925



A LIFE OF BLANK
works by Imants Tillers



A Life of Blank VI 1984
charcoal on 6 10 x 15" canvas boards
76.2 x 76.2 cm
Private collection
Photo: Fenn Hinchcliffe

A LIFE OF BLANK
works by Imants Tillers

To Arakawa
whose indirect tactics
and alarming prescience
were crucial in the forming
of a *Life of Blank*

Imants Tillers

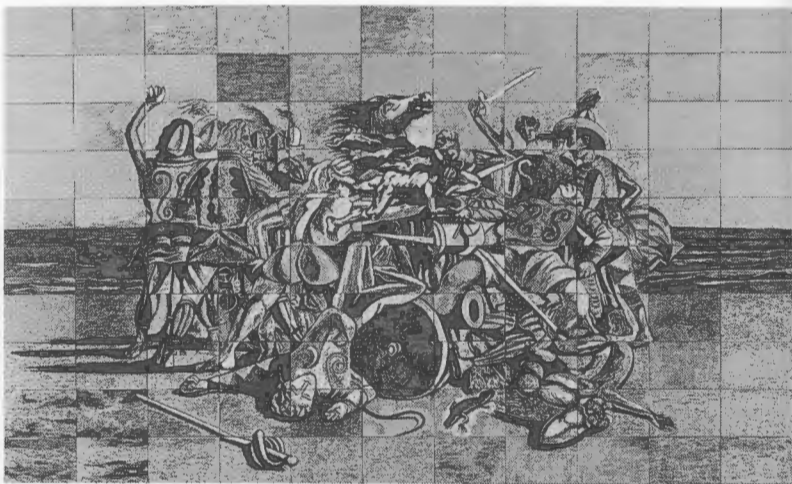
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When False is True 1985

oilstick, synthetic polymer paint on 110 10 x 15" canvas boards
254 x 419.1 cm

Collection of the artist

Photo: James D. Dee

The Enigma of Imitation: The Metaphysical Paintings of Imants Tillers

So we come to the metaphysical aspect of things. By deduction one can conclude that everything has two aspects: the current one which we almost always see and which is seen by people in general and the other one, that is to say the spectral or metaphysical aspect which can be seen only by rare individuals in moments of clairvoyance and metaphysical abstraction....

Giorgio de Chirico, Rome, 1919.

Imants Tillers is well-known for his large scale interpretations of pre-existing images borrowed from a diverse range of sources which can easily be dismissed as mere appropriations, or worse still, blatant plagiarism. What is significant, though, in defence of his approach is the process of selection of these images, for it bears an uncanny resemblance to what de Chirico refers to as the "second aspect of things."¹

Tillers has said elsewhere that while there is a hierarchy of choice of artists whose work is chosen for inclusion in his repertoire, he doesn't seek out specific references, but regards the process as a kind of "rendezvous", whereby certain images present themselves at a certain critical moment.²

It was in 1979 that his friend, the novelist Murray Bail, alerted Tillers to de Chirico, the enigma, when he presented him with a note written by the Japanese - American artist, Arakawa, who with Madeline Gins had met the ageing and much maligned painter in New York seven years earlier. In it Arakawa alludes to the secret process by which de Chirico undertook to elaborate on his metaphysical discoveries by embarking on a rigorous epistemological study. Although this process was undertaken completely "hidden from view", Arakawa believes that

it can now be recognised and in "the near future we will call it an effort toward the construction of a model of being, mind".³

At the same time, Bail also lent Tillers a copy of the only novel ever written by de Chirico, his surreal *Hebdomeros*, published in Paris in 1929, pointing out the momentous fact that Melbourne, Australia, is invoked in the second sentence! This demanded further investigation.

Tillers, like most people, was until then familiar with de Chirico's great Metaphysical paintings, a mere 120 paintings produced over a nine year period from 1910 to 1919, yet quite unaware of the strange and incongruous, but massive output of the remaining sixty years of his life. In 1920, following a revelation in front of a Titian, de Chirico had repudiated his early, most famous paintings, proclaiming "pictor classicus sum". After this portentous proclamation, he confounded and alienated his hitherto enthusiastic audience with a range of contradictory styles of painting (working in neo-Classical, neo-Baroque and neo-metaphysical modes) all of which co-existed simultaneously in time and defied any sequential logic. Moreover, de Chirico's own emphasis, not on these stylistic non-sequitors but rather on matters of purity of technique and quality of materials, merely contributed to the strong negative feelings he had thus provoked.

These sentiments are succinctly summarised by de Chirico's poem of 1945, "The Morning Prayer of the True Painter", in which he asks God's help in solving "...the problems of the materials....For the metaphysical and spiritual problems, they are now solved by the critics and the intellectuals."⁴

His curiosity thus aroused, Tillers became interested in de Chirico's unwieldy oeuvre to the point of obsession, initiating his own systematic investigation into the entire output. He developed a particular fascination for the archaeologists and gladiators, the Thessalian beaches and horses,

the mysterious baths, the suns and temples in a room. In his forthcoming interview with Evelyn Juers he says of de Chirico's late works:

For me this immense and largely unknown output forming an expansive "field of images" remarkably homogeneous over time, radically atemporal in its complex pictorial and thematic interrelationships is far more sustaining conceptually than the work of say, Marcel Duchamp, an artist I have also admired.⁵

A vast library of pictorial references was gradually acquired - a virtual storehouse of images - from which in late 1981 he finally began to borrow, albeit in a stuttering fashion, producing nearly 60 works over the next ten years, citing de Chirico in varying degrees of directness.

Suppressed Imagery, 1981, the first of the monumental canvasboard works by which Tillers is now best known, contains the initial evidence of the rendezvous with de Chirico, setting a tiny, tentative pencil sketch of a de Chirico temple in a room amidst a chequerboard of images mainly borrowed from Tillers's own prior work, *Visible Suspension*, 1980-81. Its sequel *Suppressed Imagery 2* and the later *Invisible Helpers* followed the same model but were both destined to end up as the underlayers of *Rapture* and *Pataphysical Man* respectively.

A further two years elapsed before the first quoted de Chirico to be exhibited as a work in its own right, *Corroboree*, 1982, was included in *Masterpieces* at Monash University Gallery, Melbourne, in 1983, although this too was painted over by a subsequent *Corroboree* which was also later dispersed. De Chirico's gladiators from the group in the room in *Invisible Helpers* make a second appearance in two works of the same title from 1983 *Untitled (Structure for a specific site)*, the specific site being the narrow stretch of wall between pairs of windows at Yuill/Crowley Gallery, Pyrmont, Sydney. Yet these full-scale charcoal drawings met the same fate as their de Chiricoesque predecessors and now lurk as

"ghosts" ⁶ in the underlayer of *Twilight of the Idols* from later the same year, melded with an early Pollock self portrait. Meanwhile, Tillers's immense antipodean landscape, *The Great Metaphysical Interior* of January 1983 introduced painting on canvasboard, acknowledging de Chirico's impact in its title. By May, 1983 Tillers had resolved the problem of how to utilise the de Chirico originals and *Das Napoleonspiel* is the earliest of these borrowings that still survives intact. In it, he makes visible the invisible in de Chirico: the magnetism between a pair of horses on a beach, mirrored by a pair of columns in the foreground, set within a dense force field borrowed from Arakawa.

It was not until a year later at the beginning of 1984, however, that the prodigious *Pataphysical Man* ⁷ was born. New York viewers were the first to see it displayed in *An Australian Accent* at PS1 alongside *Das Napoleonspiel*, *Twilight of the Idols* and the de Chirico-inspired Cucci columns quoted in *Zeitgeist Painting*. The response was overwhelming. Tillers was hereby established as an "appropriationist" partly due to the impact of his own writings ⁸ and was warmly received. By some weird twist of fate *An Australian Accent* happened to coincide with an exhibition of de Chirico's late paintings at the Robert Miller Gallery - a result of the renewed interest in his work generated by his influence on the young Italian trans-avantgarde artists. Critic John Russell of the New York Times responded thus:

Such was the disrepute in which de Chirico stood in old age when he came to New York in 1972, he was virtually ostracized. But there was a portent of things to come in the reaction of the young Japanese-American painter Arakawa. After an hour with de Chirico, he said: "Quadruple irony! I never heard anything like it. Quadruple irony! And it was in fact, as a many layered and many levelled ironist, rather than as a moral leper, that de Chirico came to be regarded among young painters the world over.

We have only to look at Pataphysical Man, the huge painting by Imants Tillers that stands out in the Australian Accent show at PS1 in Long Island City, Queens, to see that de Chirico is as big in the Antipodes as he is in our own hemisphere¹⁰

In Tillers's work there is in fact a complex interaction (or "system") operating on three levels - the relationship between Tillers's paintings and their sources; between the new paintings and the old within the whole set of his works (his *Book of Power*); and the synchronicities between particular images, particular viewers and the artist. What is crucial is the timing of these unexpected collisions of objects, destinies and events. This third level of interaction is elusive, even to the artist, taking place only when pursued with indifference, with the painting assuming a lifepath of its own. (Like the magic balloon in Albert Lamorisse's classic film *The Red Balloon*, which despite being commanded by its young master to wait for him, deliberately disobeys). These three levels are a direct outcome of Tillers's modus operandi of observing, referring to, choosing to imitate images which are already in circulation. These interactions would not be possible without this methodology of imitation.

Within the pantheon of artists appropriated by Tillers (totalling around 200 on 33,794 canvasboard panels at the last count) are sources as diverse and obscure, as merely fashionable or as truly great as Jackson Pollock, Colin McCahon, Wilhelm Busch, Johnny Warrangula Tjupurrula, Voldemars Matvejs, Anselm Kiefer, Marcel Duchamp and Barbara Kruger. These sources co-exist as simultaneous yet divergent streams within the image field that is Tillers's *Book of Power*.

The borrowings from these sources vary in their purity from verbatim quotations of entire originals, to hybrids, which present an intersection of various streams - sometimes by utilising complete motifs, at other times simply a title or some minor fragment from another

stream. The streams can be classified according to two broad categories:

1. Those used momentarily either because of their art world topicality, for example, Ross Bleckner, Sherrie Levine, Philip Taaffe, Eric Bulatov, or because of some chance connection, coincidence or accident such as with Joseph Sima, Holman Hunt, Isobel Tweddle, or purely because of their visual attraction or impact, as is the case with Clifford Possum, Eugène von Guerard, George Stubbs, Maria Olsen or Margaret Preston.

2. The major sources whose recurring or persistent usage is a means of empowering the artist by exploring different artistic identities: namely those of Giorgio de Chirico (with 60 assorted borrowings to date); Colin McCahon (used 33 times with both partial and complete quotes); Arakawa (from whom Tillers has borrowed 25 times, but almost always the same motif, the ubiquitous "beacon"); Jackson Pollock (quoted wholesale in the 17 black and white action paintings of 1990-91 and with borrowed elements in a further 7 paintings); Georg Baselitz (with 23 Tillers's reinterpretations, the majority of which are from his Hero painting series from the 60's exemplifying the New Type of Man); and that of Sigmar Polke (higher beings have commanded his inclusion 17 times so far).

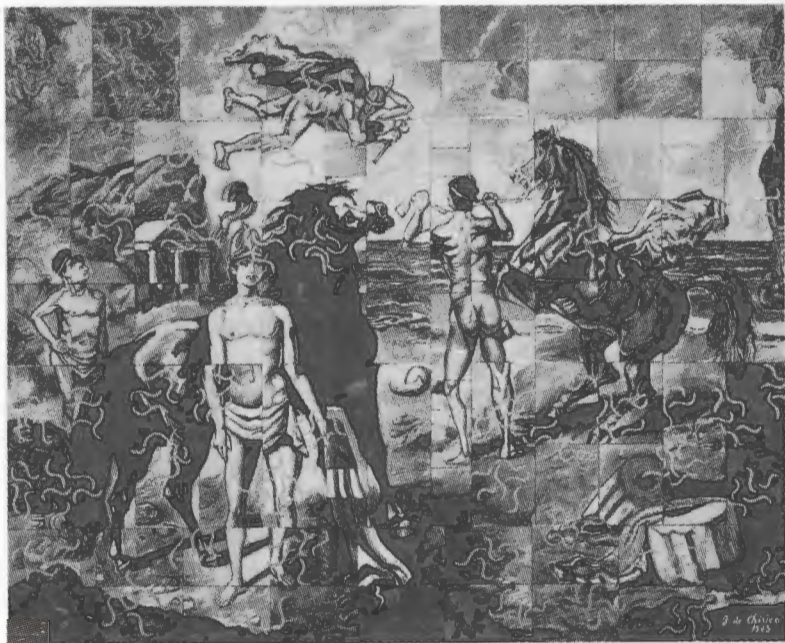
In drawing together a sub-set of Tillers's de Chirico-inspired works, this exhibition's significance lies largely in its presentation for the first time of one of these co-existent streams.¹⁰ This represents quite a change of direction from the curatorial tendency (echoing the artist's own efforts) to sample the diverse range of his sources. While it is by no means an exhaustive survey, it is a representative sampling of the way in which Tillers has worked and re-worked de Chirico's images at different scales and in different versions and vividly illustrates some of the interrelationships within individual paintings, as well as the connections between them.¹¹

It has been said that it is only possible to understand the enigmas

contained within particular paintings by de Chirico by studying precisely every piece of his work.¹² Thus a particular picture of say 1912 would require a knowledge of "another of 1930, a letter dated 1914, a page of a novel written in 1929, a sketch for a stage design, a neo-Metaphysical painting etc." And so too is the significance of Tillers's work only fully comprehensible by piecing together the connections and interrelationships between events and images which usually lie outside and far beyond the painting under consideration.

Tillers has recently been drawn to Bice Curiger's term "picture molecules"¹³ to help describe a crucial part of his process. Curiger defines a "picture molecule" as the movement in time and space of a motif or image unit. In her example, an image of a silverware box with crossed spoons, possibly originating as an illustration in a C19th sales catalogue finds its way into a Max Ernst collage and from there into a Sigmar Polke painting of 1981 and then into a limited edition print executed for Parkett by Polke in late 1991.¹⁴ In Tillers's paintings (because they are usually composites of canvasboard units) such picture molecules can literally move about within his œuvre, as they frequently do, creating the possibility of not only new paintings but continually fluid relationships within the total set of his images. Thus Tillers cites the example of *When False is True*, 1985 which contains two such picture molecules - the escaping lizard from Arakawa and the flying figure of Mercury from de Chirico. It also includes a couple of migratory fragments - some decorative crosses from a long-abandoned Klimt work and several "targets" from Michael Nelson Tjakamarra, shed from Tillers's influential painting the *Nine Shots*, 1985.

In de Chirico's œuvre, one can observe a similar migration of motifs from one image to another. Thus the flying figure of Mercury (which appears in *When False is True*) originates in de Chirico's *Ippolito*



La Città di Riga 1988

acrylic, gouache, oilstick on 36 10 x 15", 55 11 x 14" and 28 5 x 7"
canvas boards 279.4 x 342.9 cm

Private collection

Photo: Fenn Hinchcliffe

e i suoi compagni, 1963 (quoted verbatim by Tillers in *La Città de Riga*, 1988) and reappears six years later in an identical form in *Cavalli con aigrettes e dio Mercurio*, 1969. This migration of motifs or picture molecules is indeed analogous to de Chirico's beloved idea of metempsychosis - the supposed transmigration of the soul of human beings or animals at death into a new body of the same or different species.

The movement or circulation of picture molecules in conjunction with a certain clairvoyance on the part of the artist sometimes produces remarkable consequences. Speaking about *When False is True*, Tillers describes how he inserted a detail from Arakawa and Madeline Gins' book *The Mechanism of Meaning* ¹⁵ into de Chirico's gladiatorial beach scene. This small detail, entitled *Escape*, depicts a lizard escaping by shedding its tail, the squirming tail held firmly by a cat's paw. In Tillers's version the lizard runs free of the wild *melée* on the beach, its tail trapped by the limp arm of a fallen gladiator. As Tillers relates, "when Arakawa and Madeline Gins saw my painting they were very impressed by this juxtaposition of motifs. They then told me that when they'd met de Chirico in New York in 1972 and had shown him *The Mechanism of Meaning*, De Chirico had been totally disinterested until he, too, came across this escaping lizard. This page struck a chord with him and triggered off an enthusiasm for the rest of this volume. After this incident, I realised that at the core of my work lies intuition and resonance."¹⁶ One could add that Tillers, like de Chirico after 1919, is metaphysical not so much in his choice of subjects but in his attitude.

Such a metaphysical attitude can also be found in Arakawa and Madeline Gins' recent book *Pour ne pas mourir/To not to die* ¹⁷ which is a dissertation on and compendium of various notions of "blank" - "forming blank", "the atmosphere of blank", "the morality and economy of blank", "the perceiving of oneself as blank" and so on. It is from this

nexus of ideas that Tillers had earlier invented *A Life of Blank* as a title for a series of 6-panel canvasboard works in 1984 - two of which featured de Chirico quotes, one of which hangs in the current exhibition.¹⁸ It served again as the title to a second series of small 6-panel drawings based on de Chirico's lithographs illustrating a book of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* of 1930 and also as the title for this exhibition.

The *Untitled* series of small works on 5" x 7" panels in gouache on acrylic was executed for Tillers's solo show in Zurich in 1987 and seen for the first time in Australia in this exhibition. It contains several works of significance as small versions or reworkings of Tillers's themes. *Ordine e disordine* forms a part of this series, re-presenting at a larger scale the gladiators in a room which can be found within *Pataphysical Man*. The massing and disintegration of the crowded scene serves as a metaphor for the two states of the *Book of Power* - the ordering of canvasboard panels into distinct images and their deconstruction or dispersion into the amorphous mass of stacks. Likewise, *Maker of a New Destiny*, 1992 is a new, smaller presentation of an existing work and a recently completed addition to the *Untitled* series. The revelation of a divergent (colour) reproduction of the gladiatorial beach scene already borrowed for the monochrome *When False is True* seven years earlier, provided the inspiration for this second version of the de Chirico source.

Tillers's idea of works of art "not as originals but as isomorphic shadows mapped into the domain of reproduction"¹⁹ finds a visual model in *Untitled (The Remorse of Orestes)* 1987. The relationship of things to their shadows is likewise a recurring central theme for de Chirico as exemplified in his original of the same title, in which Orestes - depicted as a mannequin is accompanied by a mysterious serrated shadow in an atmosphere of disquietude.²⁰ The calligrammes also include many examples of shadows - particularly the sun, or moon, attached by an

umbilical cord to its own shadow (as seen in Tillers's *A Life of Blank* #2, #5, #12 and #13) with the cord reduced sometimes to a schematic volute (*A Life of Blank* #1 and #14).

Tillers's prophetic painting *La Città di Riga* is also based on two divergent reproductions of the same de Chirico source, one in colour, the other black and white. By randomly mixing panels painted from one version with those painted from the other, Tillers inadvertently created the red, white and red flag of his native Latvia (banned under Communist rule) from the plain red garment in the original. While this fortuitous outcome was completely unpremeditated (and the liberation of Latvia three years later totally unforeseen!), in some instances Tillers does deliberately juxtapose significant elements. Thus, *The Return of Ulysses* 1991 becomes a kind of homage to Murray Bail through the inclusion of his silvery face, hovering God-like over the poignant scene depicted by de Chirico heeding Nietzsche's command to the artist "to go back over everything that had already been done (the constant revisitation, the vicious circle, the serpent of time that bites its own tail in the cycle of eternity)." ²¹

In June 1989, while Tillers was dining with Arakawa and Madeline Gins at Rocco's, a once fashionable restaurant on Thomson Street in New York's Soho, the conversation inevitably turned to de Chirico and their meeting with him in New York, seventeen years earlier. As Arakawa's memory slowly returned he recalled that they had also taken de Chirico to Rocco's. In fact they had sat at the same table that they were sitting at now and after a thoughtful pause and smile he added - yes, indeed Giorgio de Chirico had once occupied that same chair in which Tillers now found himself seated.

"Indirect tactics, efficiently applied, are inexhaustible as Heaven and Earth, unending as the flow of rivers and streams, like the sun

and moon, they end but to begin anew; like the four seasons, they pass away but to return once more." ²²

Sun Tzu, China, 490 BC.

Jennifer Slatyer
January 1991

- 1 Giorgio de Chirico, 'Sull 'Arte Metafisica' in *Valori Plastici*, Rome, 1918/19; 4-5
- 2 Jennifer Slatyer, 'An Interview with Imants Tillers', *The Australian Bicentennial Perspecta*, Sydney, 1987; 111-115
- 3 See 'Towards Francis Picabia' published in *Imants Tillers: Venice Biennale*, Sydney, 1986
- 4 For his part, Tillers later circulated a copy of this poem in New York in 1987 as an accompaniment to the invitation for his exhibition at the Bess Cutler Gallery.
- 5 Evelyn Juers, 'Imants Tillers: The Phenomenon', *Artscribe*, London (for publication in 1992)
- 6 Thanks to Evelyn Juers for this idea, expressed in 'Action Paintings - an exhibition of recent work by Imants Tillers', *The London Review*, London, 1992
- 7 Well-known to Sydney viewers since its installation in the new wing at the Art Gallery of New South Wales
- 8 Imants Tillers, 'Locality Fails', *Art & Text*, Melbourne, No. 6, June 1982; 'Fear of Texture', *Art & Text*, Melbourne, No. 10, June 1983, and 'In Perpetual Mourning', *ZG/Art & Text*, New York, July 1984
- 9 John Russell, 'Art: The Irony of Chirico', *The New York Times*, 27 April, 1984, New York
- 10 Tillers's recent solo exhibitions at Yuill/Crowley in Sydney and Deutscher Brunswick Street in Melbourne during 1991 which focussed on Jackson Pollock differ from this approach in that they were painted by the artist as a preconceived set.

- 11 See the author's Appendix to this volume for a complete list of Tillers' de Chirico quotations.
- 12 Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, 'Eight Selected Paintings' in *Late de Chirico: 1940-76*, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, 1985
- 13 Bice Curiger, 'A major Sigmar Polke Retrospective traveled through the United States this year', *Parkett* No. 30, 1991; 31
- 14 Ironically Tillers had himself spent from May 1991 (oblivious to Polke's and Curiger's thoughts) painting precisely the same picture molecule of the silverware box and the crossed spoons as the central motif for a large commission for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney. His painting was unveiled in November, 1991 at virtually the same moment as the publication of the Polke issue of *Parkett*, No. 30 which focuses on this image too. In entitling his work *Pure Beauty* perhaps Tillers was unconsciously alluding to the beauty of coincidence - one of the major themes of his work.
- 15 Arakawa and Madeline H. Gins, *The Mechanism of Meaning: Work in progress [1963-1971, 1978]*, Abrams, New York, 1979; 87
- 16 Jennifer Slatyer, op.cit.
- 17 Arakawa/Madeline Gins, *Pour ne pas mourir / To not to die*, Litterature Éditions de la Différence, Paris, 1987
- 18 The other de Chirico, a horse's head, now destroyed, was one of the eight paintings (all from a Life of Blank) torn from the walls of Yuill/Crowley during a break-in to Tillers' 1984 exhibition, titled *Pandemonium*.
- 19 Jennifer Slatyer, op.cit.
- 20 He once wrote: 'There is nothing more mysterious in all the centuries of history than the shadow of a walking man.' From Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, op. cit.; 49-59
- 21 *ibid.*
- 22 Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ed. James Clavell, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1981



The Return of Ulysses 1991

oilstick, gouache, synthetic polymer paint on 80 10 x 15" canvas boards
254 x 304.8 cm

Collection of the artist

Photo: Paul Green

A Life of Blank: Imants Tillers

Several years ago the Commune di Venezia mounted an exhibition of the paintings of Giorgio de Chirico in the handsome gallery, the Museo Correr, on the Piazza di San Marco.¹ The exhibition, *De Chirico nel centenario della nascita*, as its title suggests, was a centennial celebration of the artist's birth and the ninety-five works in the show spanned his career. There were many splendid early examples of de Chirico's œuvre, paintings like *L'Enigma dell'arrivo* of 1912 in which the viewer glimpses the full-blown sail of a brigantine hidden behind a high wall, a picture in which the vast stillness of the foreground and its wraithlike figures is hauntingly counterpoised by the implied activity out of view. And the exhibition included the 1913 painting *La Torre rossa* in which the blast of light and heat in the middle ground of the painting is interrupted by the cast shadow of a towering equestrian statue, where the shadow might be a source of coolness and rest, here it is all unremitting menace.

These early paintings are a searing reminder of de Chirico's formidable intellectual and painterly inventiveness. A work like *Ritratto premonitore di Apollinaire* (1915), for instance, has been shown by Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco to typify and to encapsulate the hothouse world of art and letters in Paris in the period just before World War I.² The painting contains a portrait in the manner of a grecian bust, the eyes of which have been covered by fathomless dark glasses, a symbol of the seer; a light band of material to the right of the bust carries two highly stylised objects (possibly modelled from chef's moulds) representing a fish and a conch, symbols of Orpheus; and hovering as a silhouette in a sea-green plane of colour is a profile of de Chirico's friend, the poet Apollinaire. Despite the seeming simplicity of the elements of the painting, dell'Arco demonstrates just how complex the iconography really was, identifying

the references to Orpheus and the multi-layered meanings implied by the subject for the intellectual circle of which de Chirico and his brother were a part. Clearly, *Ritratto premonitore di Apollinaire* and several others in a similar vein mark an eloquent tribute to the originality and the stature of Apollinaire but dell'Arco also points out that there is a strong element of automythography being developed in these works:

As has been said [he writes], Orpheus more than once saved the Argonauts during the voyage in search of the Golden Fleece. This was one of the favorite myths of de Chirico and Savinio [his brother], who had come from the Thessalian shores from which the mythical heroes (painted repeatedly by de Chirico) had sailed.³

Although in later years de Chirico settled in Rome with his second wife Isabella Far., the first fifty years were marked by almost ceaseless travel - born in Athens of Italian parents, from early adolescence onwards, de Chirico, his mother and his brother, moved from Athens, first to Venice, Milan and Florence, and followed this by a stay in Munich. Moves to Italy (Milan), then to France (Paris) continued the odyssey and, indeed, from 1910 onwards de Chirico seemed rarely to be in the same city for more than a couple of years before moving on. The identification with the homeric epic, therefore, can be seen to have been a literal as well as a figurative one and it adds a particularly piquant layer of meaning to many of the great metaphysical paintings of the war years and their aftermath.

Lionised in avant-garde circles immediately before World War I and during the early 1920s, when his work was considered by the Surrealists to be exemplary, de Chirico and his work fell from favour soon afterwards and, if we are to believe his deliciously vituperative autobiography, *The Memoirs of Giorgio de Chirico*, for well over a generation his current work was to be misunderstood and maligned by a band of 'castrated, illiterate men, real bootblacks, real arse-lickers of

everything foreign and who, in a cowardly and criminal manner have reduced all forms of art and thought to an obscene aping of the most decadent, empty and frivolous things that are done outside Italy and especially in Paris.'⁴

With a considerable degree of justification, de Chirico complained that as he became increasingly interested in studying the techniques of the old masters and as he became much more painterly, critics and collectors lost sight of the fact that he continued to produce works of real intellectual astringency, now combined, however, with this much more focussed concern on the rich tradition of painting and its sometimes arcane techniques.⁵

It wasn't only the Italian critics (Venturi and Longhi in particular) who would attempt to enforce this point of view; indeed it remains a problem which continued into the 1980s. The Museum of Modern Art in New York under Soby and Barr was indifferent to the later work of de Chirico and William Rubin has maintained a similar position arguing that if 'the later Munch is saddening, the later de Chirico is a tragedy that turned into farce.'⁶ Rubin is extremely critical of de Chirico's eclecticism, deriding the styles he utilised - his 'Neo-Classicism, art school academicism, Neo-Romanticism, Neo-Baroque and a kind of awkward style approaching Neo-Primitivism.' For Rubin much of the later work was corrupt and he supports his case with the following observation:

This last aspect can only be appreciated if we add to the catalogue of the previous paragraph yet another category, Neo de Chirico: the variants and facsimiles tantamount to forgeries of Paris and Ferrara pictures that the maestro ground out in increasing numbers and with increasing cynicism during his later years. These begin with certain "re-creations" of the early twenties, through the making of which the Surrealists rather naively hoped de Chirico would rediscover his muse. Paul Eluard, for example,

commissioned a second version of *The Disquieting Muses*, which de Chirico assured him would be an "exact replica" that would "have no other fault than...being executed in a more beautiful medium and with a more knowledgeable technique."⁷

And yet, despite the scepticism and downright hostility of critics like Rubin, the Venice exhibition was to show that the early metaphysical works, many of which were outstanding examples seemed almost to be eclipsed by the later paintings. Why was this the case?

The Museum of Modern Art's over-arching presentation of modernism has delivered a very particular and linear view of the history of modern art and in this de Chirico's seeming eclecticism from the mid-1920s onwards amounts (to MOMA) to nothing short of a failure of nerve. And yet this is not the way it seems when considered within the context of his life's work and, indeed, his 'apostasy' (if we are to believe the purists) allowed him to explore a number of avenues of investigation which were full of promise and which produced some terrific pictures. Three avenues have particular resonance in the context of this exhibition, *A Life of Blank*. The first is his obsessive concern with self-portraiture; the second is his copies after masterworks; and then there is his insistent archæology which saw Giorgio de Chirico reconstructing his own past as an agglomeration of fragments, a continuation, one might argue, of the automythography that had characterised many of the great metaphysical paintings of the second decade.

The early self-portraits from, say, the mid-1920s seem dominated by the portrait bust, much in the manner of the high renaissance painters like Raphael, Bronzino, Parmigianino and Titian and in almost all of them, despite the generally lugubrious demeanour of the artist, a strongly theatrical element exists. This is particularly so of the 1922-23 self-portrait in which a bust of the dramatist Euripides, sightless in this case

like a seer, hovers behind the young artist who carries a plaque with the words 'Nulla sine tragœdia gloria'. Despite the striking realism of the painting, it is essentially a literary conceit for here de Chirico implies that if the dramatisation of the human tragedy can be said to have been born with Euripides, it follows that art was born then too, for the urge to paint is the urge to represent that tragedy.

Eight years later another portrait, this time modelled on the self-portrait by Nicholas Poussin in the Musée du Louvre, was produced and it's possible that the inspiration for this was derived not so much from the picture itself but its incorporation into the Ingres painting *The Apotheosis of Homer* of 1827 in which Poussin appears in a pantheon of cultural heroes, side by side with Shakespeare, Diderot and Molière, all several steps below Sophocles, Euripides, Plato and Aristotle.

In the Venice exhibition one couldn't help feeling that in all of the self-portraits the constant quotation of the work of earlier painters was, for de Chirico, an act of empowering, as if each time he drew in another element in the history of portraiture he might possess its magic and its strength.⁸ Like Rembrandt, de Chirico was to leave literally hundreds of self-portraits and like the earlier artist he would depict himself in an almost bewildering variety of roles. But what strikes one after seeing a number of these self-portraits is that the artist is depicting a kind of clothed husk, and is coolly assessing himself as the sum of his imagined personae. If the nagging feeling is there in the half-length self-portraits such as the one from which the Tillers painting *A Life of Blank* is drawn, then it is in the theatrical full length self-portraits such as *Self-Portrait in a Park* painted between 1946 and 1948, in which we see the artist complete with seventeenth century costume and ornamental sword and against a backdrop which contains one of his ubiquitous long-maned horses, that the attenuated nature of this elaborate personal construction

is at its most poignant.⁹ For these beautifully painted works which might so easily degenerate into indescribable silliness have a kind of heroic pathos which speak a great deal about the 'human tragedy'.

Modernism's optimism, particularly that characterised by the utopian enthusiasms of the futurists, the surrealists and the constructivists, was to be pricked by at least two great twentieth century artists, Marcel Duchamp and Giorgio de Chirico, and one great writer, Georges Bataille, although curiously the critique provided by Duchamp and a number of other Dada artists has been relatively easily circumscribed by the apologists of modernism. This circumscription has not so easily occurred in the case of Giorgio de Chirico who in many senses has remained 'beyond the pale' like Bataille. It seems clear that this is one of the reasons why de Chirico is such a central figure in Tillers's œuvre for here was an artist who, despite his undeniable stature, has been so marginalised by the modernist machine.

One can speculate that a key reason for this seems to lie in the fact that de Chirico had placed such great emphasis on the copy as an integral feature of his *modus operandi*. Rosalind Krauss has shown just how sacrosanct and central the issue of originality has been to the politics of modernism in her landmark essay 'The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Post-Modernist Repetition' in which she demonstrates the often extremely subtle ways in which artists like Rodin incorporated the copy into their œuvre while at the same time declaiming their inherent originality.¹⁰ Krauss was able to demonstrate, much to the irritation of art historians like Albert Elsen, that there was a flip side to the *tabula rasa* of modernism, a *tabula plena* which at its most complex embraced the whole history of ideas and at its most practical allowed the artist to repeat an idea either as an exact copy or as a subtle variation of an earlier work. This was to be de Chirico's strategy from the mid-1920s onwards and it

is quite obvious that for art historians like William Rubin this kind of art practice is fundamentally untenable. Not so for de Chirico who was to produce a number of great paintings which are, in effect, homages to the artists whose paintings he copied, or were copies and variations of earlier works of his own.

Two 'old master' paintings at least were like red rags to a bull: copies after Fragonard and Watteau. De Chirico painted *Fanciulla addormentata* (*Antiope da Watteau*) in 1947 and *Testa di vegliardo*, a copy after Fragonard as late as the 1970s, which are great examples of his 'apostasy', although they represent only a minute proportion of the works which saw de Chirico analysing and raiding paintings spanning the history of western art. Consider the rôle of Piero della Francesca in de Chirico's œuvre, for instance, whose influence is seen in the legion of paintings incorporating gladiators and other theatrical warrior-figures, and well represented in this exhibition. Similarly, de Chirico produced a number of paintings which are direct copies of works by Raphael, the most notable of which was the lovely *La Muta* of 1920 on which he signed his name as 'Rafael Giorgio de Chirico'. Works after artists like Lorenzo Lotto followed and, of course, during the 1920's he would produce a number of works after Gustave Courbet including the beautiful *Busto di donna in verde* of 1924-25, a copy of Courbet's *La fille endormie* which had been used as the illustration on the dust-jacket of de Chirico's book on Courbet published in 1924.¹¹

A basic reason for de Chirico's interest in these works lay in his increasing desire to understand the painting techniques of the old masters which he argued were rapidly being lost in the twentieth century (his memoirs are riddled with scathing criticisms of shoddy modernist painting) and not only did he experiment with a range of these techniques but he spent days in libraries like the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris

poring over rare and ancient texts on painting and paint technology, study which would be put to use in his own paintings with eclectic but never boring results.

At the same time, one cannot help feeling that his pantheon was being assembled as an alternative to the one which was increasingly being promoted as exemplary in the construction of modernism. Both Raphael and Courbet had, to a certain extent, fallen from favour early in the twentieth century and no one in their right mind would dare to promote Watteau and Fragonard as anything other than effete and rather foppish practitioners, to be overshadowed a short time later by the towering figures of David and Goya, and only marginally less silly than that 'pitiful moralist' Jean-Baptiste Greuze.

There are several levels on which this intensive study might be considered, therefore. On the one hand, de Chirico makes the insistent claim that painting is essentially a discipline which has a specific and identifiable history and that it is incumbent upon the contemporary practitioner to be familiar with its full range. So too, one must argue, does Imants Tillers. And while not being dismissive of the desire to draw and paint from nature (his superb still lifes would give the lie to that), it nevertheless remains true that de Chirico believed that the history of great painting was in many ways the painting of its history. He wrote in his *Memoirs* for instance:

It is normal and useful to work from reality and study nature, but this study should be accompanied by an even more constant and systematic study of the works of the great masters. Only after copying for tens and hundreds of times drawings and studies of trees by authentic masters such as Titian, Rembrandt, Poussin, Claude Lorrain, Fragonard, etc., can one afterwards copy a tree from life, and then you will be able to do it with mastery and confidence and not, as happens with many painters today when they paint

from life, thinking only of Cezanne or Van Gogh, after which they succeed only in creating remarkable horrors.¹²

On another level, de Chirico's œuvre represents the expression of an extraordinarily erudite artist, one who prided himself upon his intellectual acuity and one who used it in the medium of painting in a subtle but nevertheless literary fashion. Readers will not have missed the point that Tillers, for over two decades now, has maintained a similar commitment to painting as an intellectual discipline.

In this view, Giorgio de Chirico has some affinity with the Symbolist painters, anathema in formalist circles of the twenties and thirties, although there is a sense in which his attitude towards, say, classical mythology was much more robust and unequivocal. Whereas in the case of artists like Gustave Moreau and Odilon Redon, one is transported into a picture world where the boundaries between fantasy and reality have been so blurred that one can imagine the artist living that world, there is almost always an arbitrary element to de Chirico's picture making. He proclaims the aphorism "*Pictor classicus sum*" whereas Moreau might declaim the belief that "*Pictor est pictura*".

Furthermore, while there may be autobiographical elements in many of de Chirico's works (although the distinction between autobiography and automythography is almost impossible to detect most of the time), it's fair to say that going in search of the artist in de Chirico's œuvre is doomed to frustration and fundamentally misses the point of his achievement, an observation which is equally true of Imants Tillers. His robustness has much to do with his sense of theatre and, one might argue, that powerful feel for dramatic illusion which is derived from good acting. And de Chirico is equally insistent that what you are looking at are picture constructions: their artifice is always something which is of paramount concern, and at times is promulgated with admirable



Untitled (Geheiminsvolle Bäder am Nachmittag) 1987
gouache, synthetic polymer paint on 36 5 x 7" canvas boards
76.2 x 106.7 cm
Collection of the artist
Photo: Paul Green

eccentricity. The same can be said, of course, of Imants Tillers whose œuvre has involved in the past decade an elaborate process of 'building' pictures from stacks of panels, each numbered and registered sequentially - in their 'resting' state, the works lie anonymously and blankly against the wall; in their active state they are built or rebuilt in a predetermined order for display.¹³

Imants Tillers's predilection for the work of Giorgio de Chirico, therefore, which has seen him produce close to sixty paintings incorporating compositions by the artist is, in a real sense, an acknowledgement of de Chirico's significance in the field of modern painting, and it is perhaps especially noteworthy that he has tended to favour the later work which many critics have dismissed as inconsequential. Two particular types of painting seem to have attracted him. On the one hand there are the paintings which, regardless of actual size, have the feel of monumental tableaux - works like *Combattimento di gladiatori nella stanza* (*Le combat*) of 1928-1929 which found its way into Tillers's *Ordine E Disordine* (*Gladiators in a Room*) 1987 along with *La Vittoria* (*Le Triomphe*) of the same year. And, fittingly, there is the stage design commissioned for *I Puritani* in 1934, a black and white illustration of which is the dominant image of *When False is True* of 1985.

While tending to eschew the portraiture and the still lifes, the other significant body of works which Tillers has used are the paintings in which the mannequin-figure is more or less made up of archæological fragments, and reconstructed, so to speak, as a kind of 'history of civilisation'. Perhaps the most well-known of these is Tillers's use of the 1927 painting *L'Archeologo* in *Pataphysical Man*, the monumental painting now in the collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. De Chirico's recumbent figure has a torso which is made up of a collection of architectural fragments - broken columns, corinthian and

doric capitals, arches and domes. The figure seems to have its source in the statue represented on a number of occasions in the piazzas of the earlier metaphysical paintings, but whereas in these the statue is part of a scene which represents the past-in-the-present, now the figure has itself come to represent this, albeit in a fragmentary manner. *The Voice*, which incorporates de Chirico's *L'Architetto* of 1927 in a beautifully conceived conjunction with a golden Arakawa column and radiating force field, is another terrific example of this figure. Here the Arakawa energises the de Chirico itself and its subject - De Chirico is like a radiant beacon in Tillers's own odyssey.¹⁴

The *Remorse of Orestes*, which incorporates an elaborate overlay of a Papunya painting, is another work which involves the piecing together of the figure from a range of fragmentary elements and in this case the mannequin is enervated by an extraordinary serrated shadow which, if anything, is more physically imposing than the figure it mirrors.

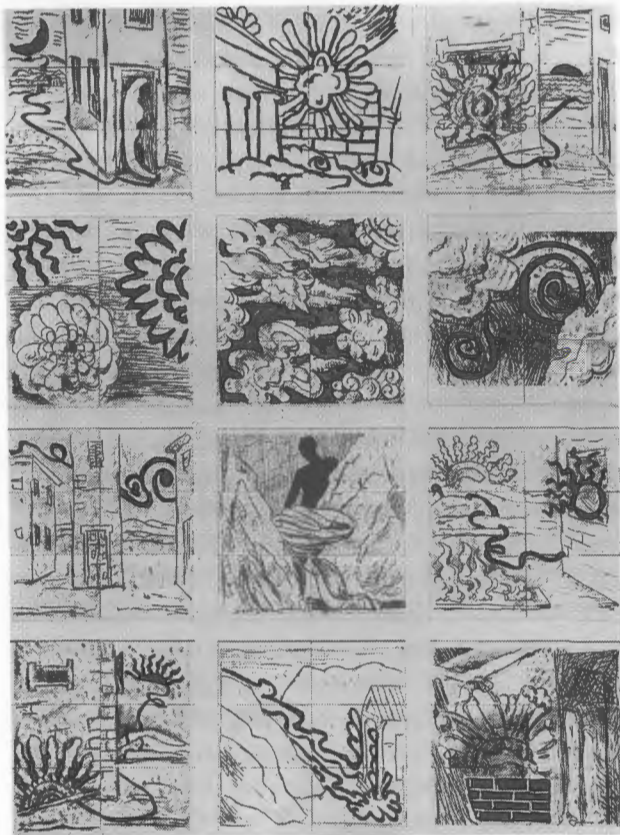
The insistent use of aboriginal motifs and references to paintings by aboriginal artists, is something which recurs in many of the de Chirico works. Mary Eagle in her informative essay on Tillers for the Deutscher exhibition in 1990 has drawn attention to Tillers's abiding concern with the way in which Australian culture has for two hundred years been informed by a dominant world culture 'against which it struggles to find its own identity' and it seems reasonable to assume that the de Chirico mannequin figure with its 'civilised and civilising' baggage can be read as a particularly effective metaphor for the expression of that concern.¹⁵ In the case of the Orestes image it may be the classical figure can be read as an elaborate metaphor for the colonisation of Australia, in which case the Papunya overlay becomes a tentative gesture of affirmation.¹⁶

The de Chirico connection with Australia does not stop there, incidentally, for in a preparatory drawing for *Untitled (the Mysterious*

Animal) of 1987 Tillers observes that the original painting has an uncanny resemblance to a map of Australia and points out that the eye is almost dead centre of the map (Alice Springs). It can hardly be coincidence, furthermore, that in *Untitled (Mystery of a Hotel Room in Venice)* of the same year a schematic map of Australia seems to occur in the decorative patterning of the block standing in front of the figure.

Jennifer Slatyer in her essay 'The Enigma of Imitation: the Metaphysical Paintings of Imants Tillers' which accompanies this piece of writing has discussed at some length the way in which the unexpected conjunctions occur in Tillers's œuvre and the 'co-incidences' referred to above are excellent examples of the way in which Tillers empowers the works of other artists with new meaning. Scale and colour are two other important selections which the artist makes and which have highly significant semantic implications for the reading of the paintings. Although it is perhaps at its most arresting in works like *When False is True* or *The Return of Ulysses* we do well to remember that the series of calligrammes titled *A Life of Blank* were taken from illustrations of small drawings which were in fact themselves illustrations for a book of poems by Apollinaire. These fascinating drawings with their weird umbilical cords, which attach dark to light, sun to sun, in a preternatural but curiously logical series of images, seem more ominous and shot through with foreboding in their new life. Jennifer Slatyer has pointed out the fortuitous colour application in *La Città di Riga* which cast up the Latvian flag in the most unusual of circumstances.

However, while it would be possible to continue to elaborate a complex web of associations when analysing the paintings in *A Life of Blank*, it has not been the intention in this essay to go over much of the ground already covered by Jennifer Slatyer. Rather, in speaking about the work of de Chirico, I have tried to suggest a number of affinities which can



A Life of Blank *1 *2 *4 *5 *6 *7 *8 *9 *12 *13 *14 *15 1990
 charcoal, gouache, gesso, synthetic polymer paint each on 6 10 x 5"
 canvas boards. Each 76.2 x 76.2 cm. Collection of the artist.
 Photo: Paul Green

be drawn between the working practices and ideas of the earlier artist and those of Tillers himself, affinities which I feel make this particular aspect of Imants Tillers's œuvre so extremely rich and satisfying.

And what of 'the life of blank', that curious title which pervades this exhibition? Well, there is a haunting conclusion to chapter 5 of part 4 of Milan Kundera's great aphoristic novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* which might give some idea of why Tillers has chosen to work in the way he does and why the paintings seem to be so evocative themselves. For the best part of the book, Tamina tries to find a way to retrieve a package of her notebooks and letters left in a distant town with her mother. About half way through the book Kundera speaks about why it seems so essential for her to regain those fragments of her past:

She is aware, of course, that there are many unpleasant things in the notebooks - days of dissatisfaction, quarrels, even boredom. But that is not what counts. She has no desire to turn the past into poetry, she wants to give the past back its lost body. She is not compelled by a desire for beauty, she is compelled by a desire for life.

There she sits on a raft, looking back, looking only back. The sum total of her being is no more than what she sees in the distance, behind her. And as her past begins to shrink, disappear, fall apart, Tamina begins shrinking and blurring.

She longs to see the notebooks so she can fill in the fragile framework of events in the new notebook, give it walls, make it a house she can live in. Because if the shaky structure of her memories collapses like a badly pitched tent, all Tamina will have left is the present, that invisible point, that nothing moving slowly toward death.¹⁷

Jonathan Holmes
January 1991

- 1 Venezia - Museo Correr, *De Chirico nel centenario della nascita, Venezia*, 1988-1989
- 2 see dell'Arco, Maurizio Fagiolo 'De Chirico in Paris, 1911-1915' in *De Chirico* (ed. William Rubin, Museum of Modern Art, New York), New York, 1982; 27-29
- 3 *ibid.*; 29
- 4 de Chirico, Giorgio *The Memoirs of Giorgio de Chirico* (translated and introduced by Margaret Crosland), London 1971; 154
- 5 see for instance de Chirico's observation towards the conclusion of Book 1 of his *Memoirs*:
Of all the Italian cities Rome is the one which includes the greatest number of intellectuals - that is, irritable and discontented people. These people have been and always will be my worst enemies, because in me they see what they would like to be, in my paintings they see what they would like to have: that is talent, power, knowledge. As a result they express their anger in the most underhanded and cowardly ways. The method they prefer, the one which they probably regard as the most efficacious, is to try by every means to distract the attention of the public and at the same time that of buyers from what I am doing today and direct it towards the painting I did earlier and which in fact I am still doing. This was the practice of the surrealists and also of the Milione Gallery in Milan. *ibid.*, 158
- 6 Rubin, William 'De Chirico and Modernism' in *De Chirico* (ed. William Rubin, Museum of Modern Art, New York), *op. cit.*; 73
- 7 *ibid.*
- 8 There is a section in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, 'The Soul as a Shadow and a Reflection', in which attention is drawn to the equivalence of the shadow to the life or soul. Like the shadow which features so prominently in de Chirico's work, the portrait might be said to be an index of an individual and carries some of the qualities that are imbued therein. Frazer speaks, for instance, of the modern Greek custom of killing a cock, a ram or a lamb and letting the blood flow on the foundation-stone of a new building in order to give it strength and stability. Sometimes the animal is buried under the foundation but on other occasions, instead of killing a beast, the builder 'entices a man to the foundation-stone, secretly measures his body, or part

of it, or his shadow, and buries the measure under the foundation-stone; or he lays the foundation-stone upon the man's shadow.'

Frazer, Sir James, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* 13 volumes, London, 1911 [reprint 1971]; part 2, 'Taboo and the Perils of the Soul'; 89

- 9 This is similar to the self-portrait which appears as a tiny figure in Imants Tillers's major de Chirico work *Pataphysical Man* 1984 in the collection of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.
- 10 Krauss, Rosalind 'The Originality of the Avant-Garde' in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* London 1987; 151-170. See also the introductory notes and the article 'Sincerely Yours' in *ibid.* (171-194) which is her reply to Albert Elsen.
- 11 de Chirico, Giorgio *Courbet (avec 33 reproductions en phototype)*, Rome, éditions 'Valori plastici', 1924
- 12 *op.cit. The Memoirs of Giorgio de Chirico* ; 179
- 13 This is not to suggest that a certain amount of randomness doesn't occur in the works. Take for example the portrait of Murray Bail, for instance, which forms part of *The Return of Ulysses* and which was painted as a separate work now incorporated into the new painting. There are numerous examples of this in Tillers's œuvre.
- 14 The significance of Imants Tillers's debt to Arakawa should not be underplayed since, as the dedication at the beginning of the catalogue suggests, Arakawa's influence on the development of this work has been substantial.
- 15 see Mary Eagle's catalogue essay for *Imants Tillers*, Melbourne, Deutscher Fine Art, 1990; 6.
- 16 Orestes committed matricide, killing his mother Clytemnestra and her lover, Aegisthus who in turn had slain Orestes's father, Agamemnon. The murder and its subsequent expiation ended a long and incredibly bloody passage in classical Greek mythology. Given the deliberate overlay of the Papunya painting, one might speculate that some kind of reconciliation is possible between the two cultures.
- 17 Kundera, Milan *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* [translated by Michael Heim], Harmondsworth, 1981; 86

Appendix

Works in the exhibition *A Life of Blank* appear in the Appendix as asterisked entries [•]

Suppressed Imagery 1981

pencil on 49 10 x 15" canvas boards

Nº 1- 49

177.8 x 266.7 cm (70 x 105")

Private collection

Suppressed Imagery 2 1982

pencil on 49 10 x 15" canvas boards

Nº 101- 146

177.8 x 266.7 cm (70 x 105")

Destroyed

Invisible Helpers 1982

pencil on 49 10 x 15" canvas boards

Nº 147- 195

177.8 x 266.7 cm (70 x 105")

Destroyed

The Corroboree 1982

charcoal on 24 10 x 15" canvas boards

Nº 520 - 543

152.4 x 152.4 cm (60 x 60")

Destroyed

Untitled (Structure for a specific site)

1983

charcoal on 10 10 x 15" canvas boards

Nº 1248 - 1257

254 x 38.1 cm (100 x 15")

Destroyed

Untitled (Structure for a specific site)

1983

charcoal on 20 10 x 15" canvas boards

Nº 1258 - 1277

254 x 76.2 cm (100 x 30")

Destroyed

Das Napoleonspiel 1983

synthetic polymer paint on

100 10 x 15" canvas boards

Nº 1455 - 1554

254 x 381 cm (100 x 150")

Private collection

Twilight of the Idols 1983

synthetic polymer paint, charcoal,

pencil on 88 10 x 15" canvas boards

Nº 2378 - 2465

279.4 x 304.8 cm (110 x 120")

Private collection

Pataphysical Man 1984

synthetic polymer paint, charcoal,

pencil on 168 10 x 15" canvas boards

Nº 2466 - 2633

304.8 x 530.9 cm (120 x 209")

Collection of Art Gallery of
New South Wales, Sydney

The Vortex 1984
synthetic polymer paint, watercolour,
charcoal, pencil on 144 10 x 15"
canvas boards
Nº 3590 - 3733
406.4 x 342.9 cm (160 x 135")
Two panels each by Zoran Tillers,
John Young
Collection of the artist

A Life of Blank III 1984
synthetic polymer paint on 6 10 x 15"
canvas boards
Nº 3926 - 3931
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Destroyed

- *A Life of Blank VI* 1984
charcoal on 6 10 x 15" canvas boards
Nº.4006 - 4011
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Private collection

The Dichotomy 1984
synthetic polymer paint on
16 10 x 15" canvas boards
Nº 4028- 4043
101.6 x 152.4 cm (40 x 60")
Collection of the artist

- *When False is True* 1985
oilstick, synthetic polymer paint on
110 10 x 15" canvas boards
Nº 7306 - 7415
254 x 419.1 cm (100 x 165")
Collection of the artist

Enigma and Anti-enigma 1986
oilstick, synthetic polymer paint on 168
5 x 7" canvas boards
Nº 8803 - 8970
152.4 x 248.9 cm (60 x 98")
The ICI Collection

The Hyperborean and the Speluncar
1986
oilstick, oil, synthetic polymer paint on
130 11 x 14" canvas boards
Nº 9389 - 9518
279.4 x 462.3 cm (110 x 182")
Private collection

Iris Field 1986
oilstick, synthetic polymer paint on 66
10 x 15" and 2 11 x 14" canvas boards
Nº 9543 - 9610
279.4 x 228.6 cm (110 x 90")
Private collection

Antipodean Manifesto 1986
oilstick, oil, synthetic polymer paint on
50 10 x 15" and 6 5 x 7 "
canvas boards
Nº 9611 - 9726
254 x 190.5 cm (100 x 75")
Private collection

After Civilisation (for Geoff Bardon)
1986
oilstick, oil synthetic polymer paint on
60 15 x 10" and 28 5 x 7" canvas boards
Nº 10225 - 10312
254 x 254 cm (100 x 100")
Collection of the artist

Monument 1987

oilstick, oil, synthetic polymer paint on
10 11 x 14" canvas boards
N° 9727 - 9736
139.7 x 71.1 cm (55 x 28")
Collection of the artist

- *Ordine e Disordine (Gladiators in a Room)* 1987
gouache, synthetic polymer paint on
78 5 x 7" canvas boards
N° 11337 - 11414
76.2 x 231.1 cm (30 x 91")
Collection of the artist

The Very Truth 1987

oilstick, synthetic polymer paint on
88 5 x 7" canvas boards
N° 11685 - 11772
114.3 x 152.4 cm (45 x 60")
Private collection

Untitled (Gold Knots) 1987

gouache, synthetic polymer paint on
5 x 7" canvas boards
N° 14476 - 14502
76.2 x 106.7 cm (30 x 40")
Private collection

- *Untitled (The Remorse of Orestes)*
1987
gouache, synthetic polymer paint on
18 5 x 7" canvas boards
N° 14794 - 14811
76.2 x 53.3 cm (30 x 21")
Collection of the artist

- *Untitled (The Mysterious Animal)* 1987
gouache, synthetic polymer paint on
36 5 x 7" canvas boards
N° 14830 - 14865
76.2 x 106.7 cm (30 x 42")
Collection of the artist

- *Untitled (Geheimnisvolle Bäder am Nachmittag)* 1987
gouache, synthetic polymer paint on 36
5 x 7" canvas boards
N° 14865 - 14900
76.2 x 106.7 cm (30 x 42")
Collection of the artist

- *Untitled (Mystery of a Hotel Room in Venice)* 1987
gouache, synthetic polymer paint on
24 5 x 7" canvas boards
N° 15705 - 15728
76.2 x 71.1 cm (30 x 28")
Collection of the artist

- *La Città di Riga* 1988
oilstick, gouache, synthetic polymer
paint on 36 10 x 15", 55 11 x 14" and
28 5 x 7" canvas boards
N° 16593 - 16711
279.4 x 342.9 cm (110 x 135")
Private collection

Eclipse 1988

oilstick, gouache, synthetic polymer
paint on 45 10 x 15" and 15 7 x 5"
canvas boards
N° 16960 - 17019 246.4 x 190.5 cm
(97 x 75") Collection of the artist

- *Voice* 1988
gouache, synthetic polymer paint
on 90 7 x 5" canvas boards
Nº 18470 - 18559
160 x 127 cm (63 x 50")
Private collection

The Man who flew into his own Picture 1989

oilstick, gouache, synthetic polymer
paint on 48 5 x 7" canvas boards
Nº 20671 - 20718
76.2 x 142.2 cm (30 x 56")
Collection of the artist

Force of Destiny 1989

Diptych in oilstick, gouache, synthetic
polymer paint, each panel consisting of
20 15 x 10" canvas boards
Nº 20631 - 20670
152.4 x 127 cm each
Collection of the artist

The Voice of Architecture 1989

gouache, synthetic polymer paint on
90 7 x 5" canvas boards
Nº 20761 - 20850
160 x 127 cm (63 x 50")
Private collection

The Bark Tree 1989

oilstick, gouache, synthetic polymer
paint on plywood
Nº 32767
76.2 x 69.9cm (36 x 27.5")
Collection of the artist

- *Life of Blank #1* 1990
charcoal, gouache, gesso, synthetic
polymer paint on 6 10 x 15"
canvas boards
Nº 29373 - 29378
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist

- *Life of Blank #2* 1990
charcoal, gesso, synthetic polymer
paint on 6 10 x 15" canvas boards
Nº 29739 - 29384
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist

Life of Blank #3 1990

charcoal, gouache, gesso, synthetic
polymer paint on 6 10 x 15"
canvas boards
Nº 29457 - 29462
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist

- *Life of Blank #4* 1990
charcoal, gouache, gesso, synthetic
polymer paint on 6 10 x 15"
canvas boards
Nº 29463 - 29468
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist

- *Life of Blank #5* 1990
charcoal, gouache, gesso, synthetic
polymer paint on 6 10 x 15"
canvas boards Nº 29973 - 29978
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist

- *Life of Blank #6* 1990
charcoal, gouache, gesso, synthetic
polymer paint on 6 10 x 15"
canvas boards
Nº 29475 - 29480
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist

- *Life of Blank #7* 1990
charcoal, gesso, synthetic
polymer paint on 6 10 x 15"
canvas boards
Nº 29469 - 29474
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist

- *Life of Blank #8* 1990
charcoal, gouache, gesso, synthetic
polymer paint on 6 10 x 15"
canvas boards
Nº 30248 - 30253
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist

Accretions of Habit 1990
oilstick, gouache, synthetic polymer
paint on 42 15 x 10" canvas boards
Nº 30206 - 30247
228.6 x 177.8 cm (90 x 70")
Collection of the La Trobe Valley
Regional Gallery, Victoria

- *Life of Blank #9* 1990
gouache, gesso, synthetic polymer paint
on 6 10 x 15" canvas boards
Nº 30254 - 30259 76.2 x 76.2 cm
(30 x 30") Collection of the artist

Life of Blank #10 1990
charcoal, gouache, gesso, synthetic
polymer paint on 6 10 x 15"
canvas boards
Nº 30260 - 30265
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist

Life of Blank #11 1990
gouache, gesso, synthetic polymer paint
on 6 10 x 15" canvas boards
Nº 30266 - 30271
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist

Monument (1/15) 1990
gouache, synthetic polymer paint on
arches paper
Nº 30658 19.4 x 25.4 cm
Collection of the artist

- *Life of Blank #12* 1990
charcoal, gouache, gesso, synthetic
polymer paint on 6 10 x 15"
canvas boards
Nº 31069 - 31074
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist

- *Life of Blank #13* 1990
charcoal, gouache, gesso, synthetic
polymer paint on 6 10 x 15"
canvas boards
Nº 31075 - 31080
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist

- *Life of Blank #14* 1990
charcoal, gouache, gesso, synthetic
polymer paint on 6 10 x 15"
canvas boards
Nº 31081 - 31086
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist
- *Life of Blank #15* 1990
charcoal, gouache, gesso, synthetic
polymer paint on 6 10 x 15"
canvas boards
Nº 31087 - 31092
76.2 x 76.2 cm (30 x 30")
Collection of the artist
- *The Return of Ulysses* 1991
oilstick, gouache, synthetic polymer
paint on 80 10 x 15" canvas boards
Nº 33487 - 33566
254 x 304.8 cm (100 x 120")
Collection of the artist
- *Maker of a New Destiny* 1992
gouache, synthetic polymer paint on
36 5 x 7" canvas boards
Nº 33567 - 33602
76.2 x 106.7 cm (30 x 42")
Collection of the artist

Caricature of de Chirico I 1990
gouache, synthetic polymer paint on
arches paper
Nº 31208
55.9 x 76.2 cm (22 x 30")
Collection of the artist

Untitled (Implied Objects) 1991
oilstick, gouache, synthetic polymer
paint on 54 10 x 15" canvas boards
Nº 31299 - 31352
228.6 x 228.6 cm (90 x 90")
Collection of Qantas Australia

Study for a Life of Blank 1991
gouache, synthetic polymer paint on
arches paper
Nº 32718
76.2 x 55.9 cm (30 x 22")
Collection of the artist

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