Collaborative

Tony Coleing

Prints

24th July to 15th August 1993
Plimsoll Gallery, Centre for the Arts, Hunter Street, Hobart
Gallery Hours: 12 noon to 5 pm daily

The University of Tasmania at Hobart acknowledges generous assistance towards its annual exhibitions programme from the Minister for Education and the Arts through Arts Tasmania
Tony Coleing’s work as a painter, sculptor or printmaker cannot be easily categorised or stereotyped; it has an honesty that disregards all conventions. Since the late 1960s Coleing has produced over 200 prints utilising techniques both conventional and unconventional. About a quarter of the prints he has produced have been in collaboration with like-minded artists. The prints that result from these collaborations are often bizarre and almost always irreverent. They are works that are uncompromising, pitting themselves against the brutal and alienating world in which we find ourselves.

Roger Butler, National Gallery of Australia

In 1992 Roger Butler, Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Australian National Gallery assembled an exhibition titled Tony Coleing and Friends. The exhibition focused upon prints produced by Coleing in collaboration with other artists. Through the initiative of Bob Jenyns, Senior Lecturer in Sculpture, Coleing was at that time undertaking his second residency at the Tasmanian School of Art.

Historically the activity of collaboration within printmaking usually refers to the relationship between an artist and a printer and the roles are clearly defined - the artist is the inventor and the printer the technician. A less common occurrence is the collaboration between more than one artist and a printer in the production of the print. The majority of works in this exhibition are an amalgamation of the former process.

In some cases the print has evolved from an amalgamation of perceptions originating from the aesthetics of quite distinct disciplines, as in Coleing’s collaboration with Leigh Hobbs, an artist working within temporal media.

In the light of activities generated by Coleing during his residency it became apparent that a logistical outcome would be to assemble a small survey exhibition of Coleing’s printing activities over the last 20 years up to and including some of the collaborative projects undertaken at the Tasmanian School of Art.

Due to its hybrid nature, Roger Butler refers to the difficulties in categorising Coleing’s work but, within its diversity, collaboration has always played an important role. To enter into collaboration requires an open and generous ‘art-spirit’ if a successful interaction, exchange of ideas and mutual expression is to occur. Coleing is a master in the collaborative process and his role can be likened to that of an Agent Provocateur. He goads, provokes, and scratches in an effort to extract repressed thoughts, fantasies and individual home truths - he gets to the ‘heart of the matter’, to precipitate a ‘stream of consciousness’.

In the grand tradition of social commentary, content for Coleing can be either anecdotal or drawn astutely from specific contemporary socio-political issues. Personal histories, and even folklore and mythology, edge their way onto the stage as well.

It is not uncommon for the viewer to be confronted, too, with scatological subject matter. Dirty jokes, sexual allusions and other subversive and transgressive means are called upon to challenge contemporary social mores and to confront masculinity. Coleing doesn’t just get under the clothes, he gets under the skin!

He has said of these works that there is ‘a lot going on for anyone who wants to bother to look’. In the print studio his activities are unpredictable and images materialise on whatever Coleing can lay his hands. And just as he searches for uncompromising subject matter, so he constantly explores technical alternatives for their expressive potential. His unconventional methods and lack of preciousness offer a liberating approach to printmaking.

The experience when collaborating with Tony is analogous to a dance in which one person leads, another responds, the response may alter the lead, stimulating changes in the choreography. The collaborative process becomes the art form itself.

Milan Milojevic, July, 1993

Whatever the image, the collaborative print has a reading that extends far beyond the edition. The print has been many things for me in my collaboration with Tony over the last decade or so. First it was as an audiovisual designer for a Pasta installation that he and Margaret Dodd were doing at an Adelaide Festival. Then it was as a curator facilitating a performance event that he and Adrian Hall spread to include the Salamanca Ballroom dancers. Since then it has been several prints and three video/sound works.

Some people, when confronted with a video camera, spend the first week studying a manual and wondering what they will do with it. Tony climbs inside it, pushes the record button and starts making Art. If you happen to be standing nearby - that’s it - you are a collaborator. He is happiest when ‘doing a bit’ and believes that’s what everyone else should be doing also.

The reason he can pull it off, and what I think this exhibition essentially celebrates, is that he has a generous art spirit that will allow flexible interactions, without preciousness. He genuinely enjoys the way this extends his own world view. He respects your mark as his own and assumes the same of you.

The work is then carried by his absolute professionalism through all technical and aesthetic decisions to the signed and numbered edition. It’s not an act that many people in the art world can pull off and as this selection of prints testifies, and it’s a small selection of the total at that, a lot of us really enjoy the chance to scratch away at a plate whenever Tony comes to town.

Leigh Hobbs, Hobart, July, 1993

G.D. Clarke, Hobart, July, 1993

Collaborative prints with Mr. Coleing

“Ya wanna do a print with me?”

“Yes”, I say. “When?”

“Now”, he says.

“How do you want to do it - do you want to do half and me the other”.

“Nup”, he says. “You just start and I’ll get it from you later”.

“What about subject matter. Do you want to discuss it?” I venture.

“Nup - just do it and I’ll pick it up”.

Several days later and much hassling from Mr. Coleing: “Ya finished it yet?”

No reply.

“Give me a look”, he says. “That’s alright. I’ll take it now”,

Next day:

“When are we going to print it?” he asks.

“When I have some spare time”, I reply.

“What about tonight?” he asks.

“Alright. That sounds as good a time as any”.

We spend six hours printing in the studio from 8 o’clock that night with much discussion about how solid the ink should be. I insist, being a student of the heavy-handed Kenneth Jack that the ink must be solid; Coleing on the other hand likes a thinner less solid image.

We compromise and settle for half-way. It’s 2 am and all that’s left to do is to sign each edition of 30 prints.

I have known Tony for the past 20 years but had not previously had the chance to work with him although I was very much aware of the energy that he put into his work. My experience was repeated with many other artists during his short stay, the result being a folio of 20 or so prints.

Bob Jenyns, Hobart, July, 1993
The Ian Potter Foundation Sculpture Commission Exhibition, National Gallery of Victoria
Lisbon International Exhibition of Drawings, Lisbon, Portugal
Landcape into Art, Australian National Gallery, Canberra
Morceau d'echanges, (collaborative with Murr Grounds), Ray Hughes Gallery, Brisbane
Artists for Aboriginal Land Rights, Paddington Hall, Sydney
The College Show, (touring) Regional Development Programme No. 10, V.A.B. of Australia Council
Australian Art of the Lost Ten Years, Melvils Hall, Australian National University, Canberra
Henry Warriland Memorial Print Award Exhibition, Warrnambool Art Gallery
Perspect '83, Art Gallery of NSW (touring)
Inaugural Exhibition Hugh Williamson Prize, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery
The Field Now, Heide Park & Art Gallery, Melbourne
Austausch/Exchange, Iran Dougherty Gallery, Sydney
Recent Acquisitions of Australian Prints, Australian National Gallery, Canberra
Artworker Union Fundraising Show, Artspace, Sydney
International Biennale of Graphic Art, Ljubljana, Yugoslavia
The First Exhibition, Ray Hughes Gallery, Sydney
The Politics of Picturing, Tasmanian School of Art Gallery, University of Tasmania; Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane
Artists for Peace Exhibition, Mori Gallery, Sydney
The Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of NSW
The Biennale Des Fins des, Hamburg, Germany
Shocking Diversity, Prior Council of Australia Touring Exhibition, M.O.C.A., Brisbane
Here and There, Monash University, Melbourne
Towers of Torture Exhibition, Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney
Drawing Australia - Drawings 1770's to the 1980's, Australian National Gallery, Canberra
Irony, Humour and Dissent - Recent Australian Drawings, Manly Art Gallery, Sydney, Monash University, Melbourne
Moral Censorship and the Visual Arts in Australia, A.C.C.A, Melbourne
International Master Print Fair, Hotel Intercontinental, Sydney
Works on Paper Fair, New York
Off the Wall in the Air, A Seventies Selection, Monash University Gallery & A.C.C.A., Melbourne
Modern Australian Paintings, Charles Nodrum Gallery, Melbourne
Her Story: Images of Domestic Labour in Australian Art, S H Ervin Museum & Art Gallery, Sydney

Selected Bibliography


Selected Group Exhibitions

1964 Young Commonwealth Artists, Whitshapel Gallery, London
1968 The Field, National Gallery of Victoria & Art Gallery of NSW.
1970 Alcorno-Seki's Travelling Scholarship for Sculpture, National Gallery of Victoria, Transfield Art Prize, Bonnyton Gallery, Sydney
1970 Fourth Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Mildura Arts Centre
1970 Transfield Art Prize, Bonyton Gallery, Sydney
1971 Comita Invitation Award for Sculpture, Adelaide, SA
1971 The Situation Now, Object or Past Object Art?, Central Street Gallery, Sydney
1972 Marland House Sculpture Competition, Age Gallery, Melbourne
1972 Australian Prints, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
1973 Harold Steenman in Australia, Bonyton Gallery, Sydney & National Gallery of Victoria
1973 Sculpturescape '73, Mildura Arts Centre
1974 Recent Australian Art, Art Gallery of NSW
1974 Object and Idea, Narional Gallery of Victoria
1974 Coffes Acquisitions Exhibition, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery
1974 Australian Graphics, 1974, Travelling Exhibition
1975 Survival Kits, Ewing and George Paton Gallery, Melbourne University
1976 Mildura Biennale, Mildura Arts Centre
1976 Australian Post-Object Art, Experimental Art Foundation, Jam Factory, Adelaide
1977 Recent International Forms in Art, Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of NSW
1978 Watters at Pinacotheca, Pinacotheca, Melbourne
1978 Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Mildura
1979 William Dobell Foundation Exhibition, Sculpture Centre, Sydney
1979 Recent and Experimental Australian Art, Canberra
1980 European Dialogue, 3rd Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of NSW
1980 Drawn and Quartered, Australian Contemporary Paperworks, Art Gallery of South Australia.

List of Works

1. Tony Coleing / Robin Wallace-Crabb
   You never need to sail alone with your surfact class, 1979
   Colour screenprint and stencil on paper. Image size: 49.5 x 70cm
2. Tony Coleing / Gary Shead
   Could I have your money now, as I may be busy later, 1976
   Colour screenprint on paper. Image size: 61.2 x 80.4cm
3. Tony Coleing / Robin Wallace-Crabb
   BEEP BEEP, 1979
   Colour linocut on paper. Image size: 38.9 x 30.2cm
4. Tony Coleing / Helen Eager
   I'm no fool, I put whitewash on my tool
   Yes, but what about the Queen?, 1979
   Colour lithograph on paper. Image size: 33 x 43.2cm
5. Tony Coleing / Bruce Latimer
   WHAT'S NEXT?, 1980/81
   Etching on paper. Image size: 15 x 22.5cm
6. Tony Coleing
   Something old, something new, 1983
   Etching, aquatint on paper. Image size: 36 x 39cm
7. Tony Coleing / Shayne Higon
   A COMMON PROBLEM, La dese, 1984
   Linocut on paper. Image size: 30 x 34cm
8. Tony Coleing
   Tahiti - Perle Du Pacifique, 1984
   Etching, aquatint on paper. Image size: 34 x 50.5cm
9. Tony Coleing / Kevin Sheehan
   The Passion of James, 1985
   Aquatint, etching on paper. Image size: 32.7 x 50.5cm

Collections

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Art Gallery of New South Wales; National Gallery of Victoria; Art Gallery of South Australia; Art Gallery of Western Australia; Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston, Tasmania; Mildura, Ballarat, Warrnambool, Muswellbrook and Wollongong Regional Galleries; Museum of Contemporary Art, Brisbane; National Art Gallery of New Zealand.
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T. Coleing and N. Nedelkopoulos. 'Welcome to the world, Cop This!' 1986-88 Etching, Aquatint. Platemark: 500 x 500mm