



# MARIA KOZIC

"THE



INSTALLATION"

SEPTEMBER  
5-19

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Tasmanian School  
of Art GALLERY



MT NELSON CAMPUS UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA



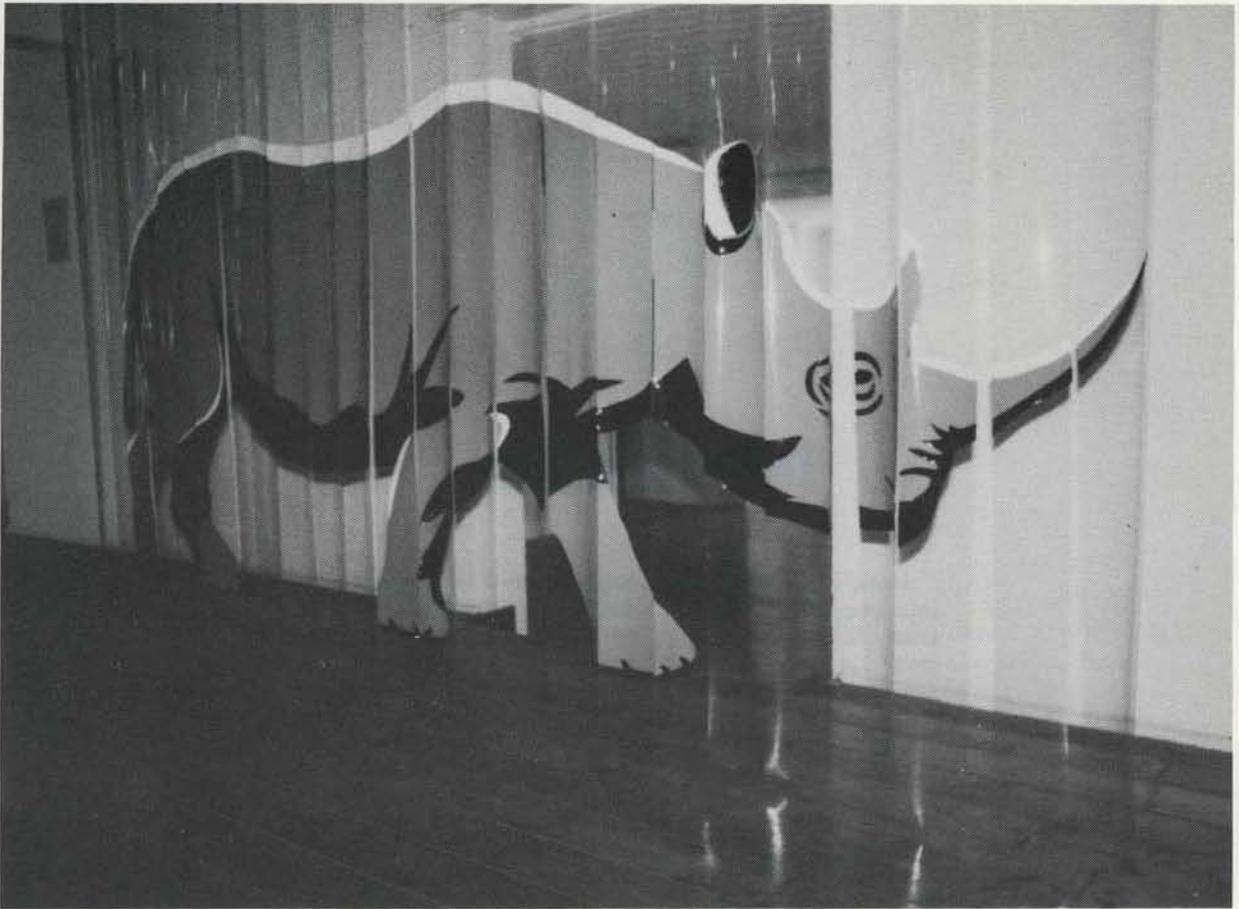
## Introduction

Maria Kozic and Philip Brophy are two quite remarkable people. Kozic is a sculptor, printmaker, video artist, film-maker, and a member of the 'new music' group →↑→ . Brophy is a writer, speaker, teacher, also a member of →↑→ and co-ordinator of the group's many and varied activities. They compile 'Stuff', a monthly magazine, and have just completed a book on the history of the group. In the past two years they have been represented in most of the major survey shows held in this country, as well as contributing to many smaller group and individual exhibitions. Maria Kozic has a work in *Australian Art of the Last Ten Years*, one of the opening exhibitions at the Australian National Gallery, and both are shortly to go to Paris to participate in *From Another Continent: Australia the Dream and the Real at the Musee d'Art Moderne*.

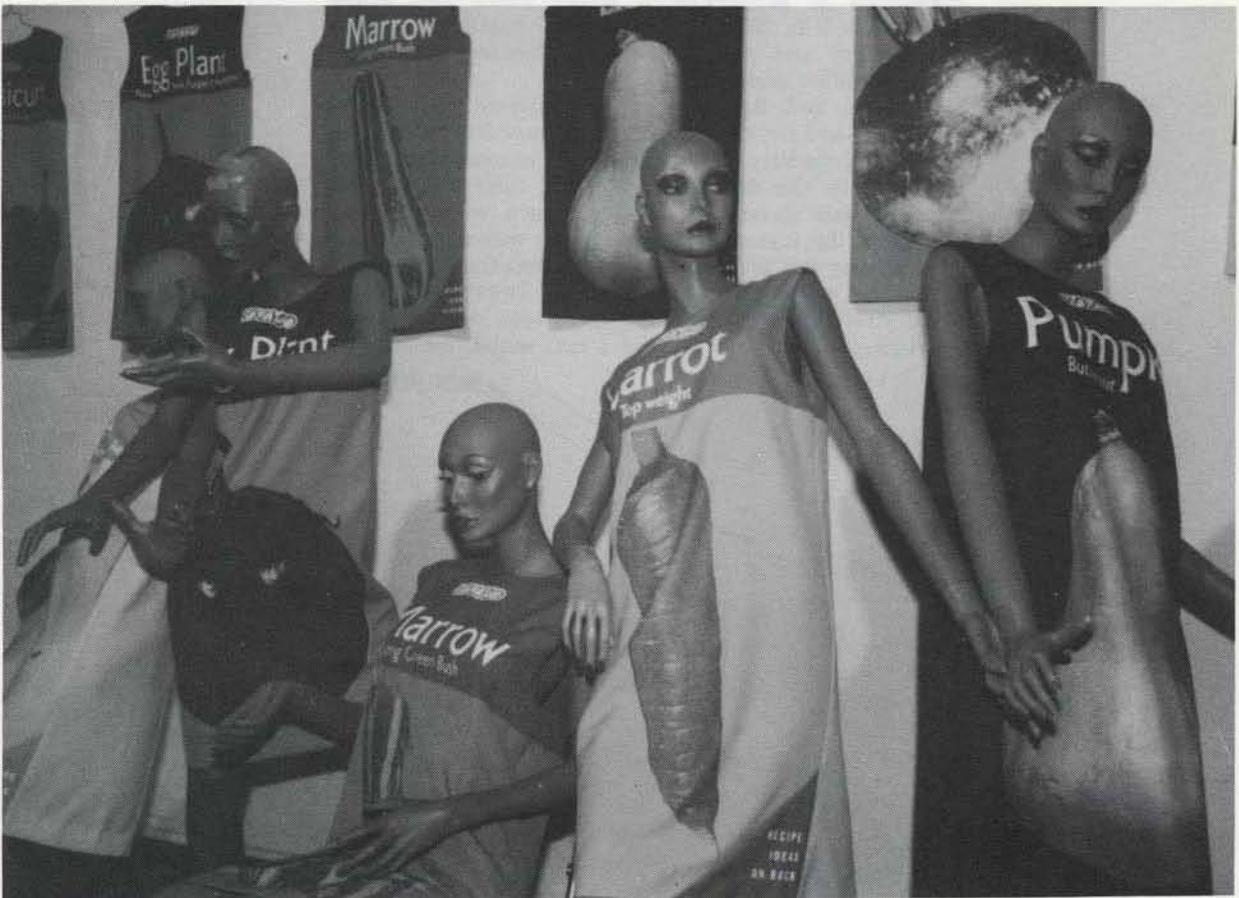
They have, in short, achieved considerable success and are in the forefront of an avante garde which has emerged in Melbourne in recent years, and whose approach is in direct and often bitter conflict in matters of theory and practice with the Sydney-based 'neo-expressionist' push.

Kozic and Brophy are both diverse and prolific workers and for this reason I have included in the catalogue, a number of articles, from various sources, referring to the different aspects of their work. This rather vast amount of reading (which will eventually include the transcripts of the forum speeches) is aimed at placing this art within its theoretical frame, the ideology of which may not be widely known in Hobart. To view this work without knowledge of the theory which informs it, is to read a text without a context.

LORIS BUTTON



'Rhinceros' 1982  
 Coloured and clear plastic strips  
 305cm x 370cm



'Seed packet dresses' 1982  
 Screen printed on fabric  
 7 dresses each size 14

# The Desire of Maria Kozic

Adrian Martin

This article was originally published in *Art & Text* Winter 1981 page no.18.

## Forgetting

In what Gilles Deleuze calls our "Culture of memory", there is always an appropriate critical discourse at hand, an accepted framework within which to speak. Particular art objects and practices seem 'naturally' to call forth a corresponding commentary – and to speak outside the terms of this exchange is to immediately risk accusations of 'missing the point', writing out of turn and out of place.

I am looking at the works of Maria Kozic. Quick, think something, recognize something, 'place' the artist's style . . . of course, it's Pop Art, the history of Pop Art ("Two Pages from Warhol's Book"), and the history of its theory and criticism which comes at once to rescue me: 'trashy' media images (the Queen, Clint Eastwood, David Bowie) in a high-cultural setting of an art gallery; the draining and subversion of their original cultural meanings through repetition and transformation; the self-reflexive humour of returning to Pop Art and reworking it today; 'new wave' and the 'second degree'.<sup>1</sup>

"It is necessary to speak in the name of a positive force of forgetting . . . which is one with experimentation."<sup>2</sup> Such an experiment is attempted here: the *bricoleur's* association of an artistic practice with a theory, a philosophy, that (for us in Australia at least) has an unauthorised place in the social contract of art criticism.

I don't wish to find in Maria Kozic's work the properly 'historical' concerns and strategies of Pop Art as I have abbreviated them above; I am not in search of either its cerebral or its kitsch elements. Rather, I am interested in the notion of *desire*, the figuration and circulation of desire in an art work, and the implications of recognizing it in a style where it has hitherto been unrecognized (repressed?). Desire as it has been theorised by writers such as Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Jean-Francois Lyotard and Helene Cixous – not just sexual desire, but the desire of energy, play, invention, production.

## Multiplying

" . . . a love that rejoices in the exchange that multiplies" (Cixous)<sup>3</sup>

In the discourse upon (and within) Pop Art, the strategy of repetition is almost always linked to a problematic of meaning, of signification: the original meaning of a 'found' image thus alienated, or rewritten, or repositioned. But to read the desire in Kozic's work is to recast repetition in another way: desire as multiplication, flow, intensity . . .

There is no *one* in Kozic's art, no category of the singular, the unique, the theological, such as dominates traditional Western art and thought. Desire is non-specific and unlimited, it embraces "Nine Carnivorous Cats", "A Dozen Chooks", five hundred birds, three Clint Eastwoods. No distinction between 'animal' and 'human' as the privileged object around which to organize and distribute one's energies.

Even a nomination like 'cats' splits in two and multiplies: from one side a pack of tigers, from the other, leopards. Nine or eighteen? And neither is there a single view, a privileged perspective from which to look at the subject of a work – the category of 'subject' is itself questioned. In "Queens", a very conventional front-on photographic portrait of the Queen's head, placed in the centre, is flanked by nine different 'angles' on the image, as if seen from the sides, the top and the bottom. Rather than possessing 'a' meaning, the work is situated on the level of a desiring process which is mimicked and figured: shifting, turning, playing with a representational image which then loses its singularity and is dispersed into the realm of difference.

"No movement, arising from any field, is given to the eye-ear of the spectator for what it is: a simple *sterile difference* in an audio-visual field" (Lyotard).<sup>4</sup> Kozic's multiplication-games are 'sterile' precisely in the sense that they cannot be justified or quantified in terms of a signification which would contain their movement of desire: five hundred of these, nine of those, the specific repetition doesn't make a difference, it makes differences, the arbitrary is celebrated.

## Representing

"The unconscious is all positivity, it is a logic of flows and intensities which are not determined or controlled by representation" (Guattari)<sup>5</sup>

"A simulacrum . . . should not be conceived primarily as belonging to the category of representation . . . rather, it is to be conceived as a kinetic problematic, as the paradoxical product of the disorder of the drives, as a composite of decompositions" (Lyotard)<sup>6</sup>

Kozic's version of Pop Art holds a particularly fascinating relation to the act of representation. Her work is not abstract, and neither is it entirely 'second degree'. "A Dozen Chooks" is, to some extent, meant to be just that; a dozen chooks. But desire resides not in the named and completed representation, but in the play of representing itself. Heterogeneous elements are thrown together precisely to be perceived as an *assemblage*, not as a coherent, seamless synthesis: a tape-loop of recorded chooks plus blobs of brown paint on newspaper plus a dozen sculptured chooks perched above the paper . . . a scene staged to be recognized as referring to something 'real', yet not real', a child's game that delights in the spinning of its fiction.

"Dulux Color Chart" is a deadly joke upon traditional notions of representation as mimesis. There are forty black-and-white prints of a color chart – each one possessing a single 'real' color sample from the original that has been added to it. All forty prints taken together do indeed constitute the actual color chart. But that is the joke: to force the prints together into a single mimetic object is to ignore the distribution of the original, its multiplication and transformation, and the abundance of 'sterile differences' the work contains.

Representing is a process and a game which extends into the exhibition and experience of the works. If there are birds on show hanging by string from the ceiling, it is so they can be physically disturbed and 'set in flight'; if there are crocodiles on the floor, it is so they can be trodden upon and made to emit a sound resembling 'ouch' (the nature of the sound being itself a joke upon mimetic representation). What matters is not so much the *identity* of the objects semi-represented (birds and crocodiles) but the fact that they partake in this game of effects and affects . . .

"A horse is defined by a register of affects as a function of the assemblage of which it is a part, affects which represent nothing other than themselves: being blinded, having a harness or bit, being proud, having a big widdler, having a fat rump to make droppings, biting, pulling overburdened loads, being whipped, falling, making a row with its legs . . . The true problem, through which a horse is 'affective' and not representative, is: how do the affects circulate within the horse, how do they pass, transform themselves into one another?" (Deleuze and Guattari) <sup>7</sup>

### Exchanging

Everywhere, at every level, art is governed by the rules of exchange, the law of the contract. This much of this in return for this much of that: no situation is more alien to the production of desire. The discourse of art criticism, certainly, is implicated in the terms of such a repressive exchange when it acts under the sign of *interpretation*, inside the culture of the signified. What does the following review have to do with Maria Kozic?:

" . . . the constructions of Maria Kozic strike a blow for zoology and the preservation of the world's wildlife . . . The whole exhibit evokes the words of R.L. Stevenson, that we can't move a stone or a log of wood or even step on the grass without disturbing the ecological order of some other living creature. *What M. Kozic is gently saying* is that it behoves late 20th century man to step a little more lightly." (italics mine) <sup>8</sup>

The explosions of desire in art such as Kozic's precisely cannot find an *equivalency* of critical discourse, they cannot be translated into or balanced by an act of writing which names and closes them. Deleuze and Guattari's characterisation of the practicing psychoanalyst has pertinence here:

"Inside the external contract between psychoanalyst and patient, there secretly unfolds, in an even greater silence, a contract of another nature: the one which is going to *exchange* the patient's flow of libido, to coin it in dreams, fantasms, words, etc. It is at the intersection of a libidinal flow, non-decomposable and changing, and of a flow capable of being segmented which is exchanged in its place, that the power of the psychoanalyst will install itself; and like all power, it has the object of rendering powerless the production of desire and the formation of utterances, in brief, of neutralising the libido." <sup>9</sup>

Kozic's art is important as regards the ideology of exchange because it gets inside and subverts it. The works are indeed literally 'gifts' in some instances ("Philip's Birthday Present", "Three Clints for Peter"), but all could be called such, for as figurations of desire they are not self-sufficient or self-enclosed, they are *for* another, for many others, they are designed to include others.

A series of paintings bears the title of the familial demand which prompted them: "Maria, Why Don't You Paint Me Nice Landscape?" But this conventional demand — this demand for convention — is answered by an overrunning of the economy which governs both representational art and the socially sanctioned gift. They are three fairly plain, traditional landscape paintings — not quite similar enough to be considered the one painting times three; not quite different enough to be considered three separate, discrete art objects. Exchange is thrown into crisis because the gift received is polymorphous and perverse; it is too much and yet not enough.

Kozic's art wages war also against the related notion of formal economy in art, the 'appropriate' distribution of colour and line. "All so-called good form," writes Lyotard, "implies the return of sameness, the folding back of diversity upon an identical unity. In painting this may be a plastic rhyme or an equilibrium of colours; in music, the resolution of dissonance by the dominant chord; in architecture, a proportion." <sup>10</sup> When Kozic multiplies her portraits of Clint Eastwood and David Bowie, changing the particularly loud and unrealistic combination of colors from one frame to the next, there is no overall 'plan' to the differential play, no rhyme: and hence not even conceptually or structurally a single, homogenous object to name and consume. The works are both infinitely extendable and infinitely contractable; there is always more to explore, there is always somewhere to stop, as one desires . . .

"She doesn't 'know' what she's giving, she doesn't measure it; she gives, though, neither a counterfeit impression nor something she hasn't got. She gives more, with no assurance that she'll get back even some unexpected profit from what she puts out. She gives that there may be life, thought, transformation. This is an 'economy' that can no longer be put in economic terms. Wherever she loves all the old concepts of management are left behind. At the end of a more or less conscious computation, she finds not her sum but her differences" (Cixous) <sup>11</sup>.

### Footnotes

1. cf Paul Taylor, "Australian 'New Wave' and the 'Second Degree'", *Art & Text* 1, pps 23–32.
2. Gilles Deleuze, "Four Propositions on Psychoanalysis", in *Language, Sexuality and Subversion*, eds. Paul Foss and Meaghan Morris, Feral Press 1978, p.139.
3. "The Laugh of the Medusa", *Signs* Summer 1976, Vol.1 No 4, p.893.
4. "Acinema", *Wide Angle* Vol.2 No 3 1978, p.53.
5. "Psychoanalysis and Politics", in *Language, Sexuality and Subversion* op.cit., p.131.
6. "Acinema", art.cit., p.54.
7. "The Interpretation of Utterances" (with C. Parnet and A. Scala), *Language, Sexuality and Subversion* op.cit. The authors are here referring to the fantasies of 'Little Hans' in Freud's famous case study.
8. Alan McCulloch, *The Herald* (Melbourne), 26/3/81.
9. "Four Propositions on Psychoanalysis", art.cit., p.139.
10. "Acinema", art.cit., p.55.
11. "The Laugh of the Medusa", art.cit., p.893.

# Popism – The Art of White Aborigines

Paul Taylor

This essay was commissioned by *Flash Art* (Milan) in 1982 and refers to the POPISM exhibition (National Gallery of Victoria, 16 June – 25 July, 1982). It has also appeared in *On The Beach* No.1 Autumn 1983.

*"Nowhere is everywhere, and first of all in the country where one happens to be."*

Alfred Jarry

Public attention in Australia was focussed on one photograph during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Melbourne. The photograph, published and discussed in newspapers throughout the country, depicted one of the surveillance cameras which has been situated around the city and which remained in their key locations after the Meeting. POPISM was conceived at that time as a celebration of surveillance as a public reality in Australia. Accordingly, POPISM spans the distance between that single photograph and global surveillance by meandering among the picturesque vistas of seeing and being seen, charting a theoretical course between the multi-national metaphor and the metonymy of the press photograph.

POPISM was chiefly an exhibition in the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne during 1982 of paintings, photographs, Super-8 films performances, relief and drawings by fourteen Australian artists. It represented our emergent arts since the mid-70s – narrative and figurative art, tableau in performance and film, the use of low and amateur technologies, a substitution of fashion for historical style and a piratical regard for stereotypes and archetypes of popular and mainstream culture. POPISM also operated as a cultural tactic, quickly sighting and antagonising its opponents in chosen informational roles in Australian art and who responded bitterly to the exhibition's depreciation of personal biography, originality and immediate social purpose.

When in Australia last year, Achille Bonito Oliva suggested that our TransAvantGarde art might resemble a pop art because popular culture and imagery have constituted our major visual tradition. POPISM, however, focussed itself upon the rhetoric of photography, rather than of painting, as the bearer of a specifically Australian utterance. Our art and criticism have recently sought to reverse the shame of earlier generations concerning cultural alienation and instead exploit that alienation as part of a multi-national strategy. A search for a regional Australian culture, ultimately a worthless pastime, reveals a centrifugal impulse wherein our art, like the mythopoetic Dreamtime of the aborigines, is the flak of an explosion not of our detonation. This art, born in mediation, has gestated within the camera where things are naturally upside-down and is expressed in a carnivalesque array of copies, inversions and negatives. It is an ab-original soulless, antipodal reflection and a name is written on every stone. Hence it was crucial that the POPISM exhibition take place within the museum, the site of a modernist exclusion and suppression and whose sustaining fiction of history is terrorised by POPISM's artistic hall of mirrors and its candlelit cave, full of quotations, copies, shadows and fragment.

The art and films of Howard Arkley, David Chesworth, Ian Cox, Juan Davila, Richard Dunn, Paul Fletcher, Maria Kozic, Robert Rooney. The Society For Other Photography, Jane Stevenson, Imants Tillers, Peter Tyndall, Jenny Watson and → ↑ ↗, and others not in that exhibition, date from the years which witnessed the wearing-down of all dominating art practices and

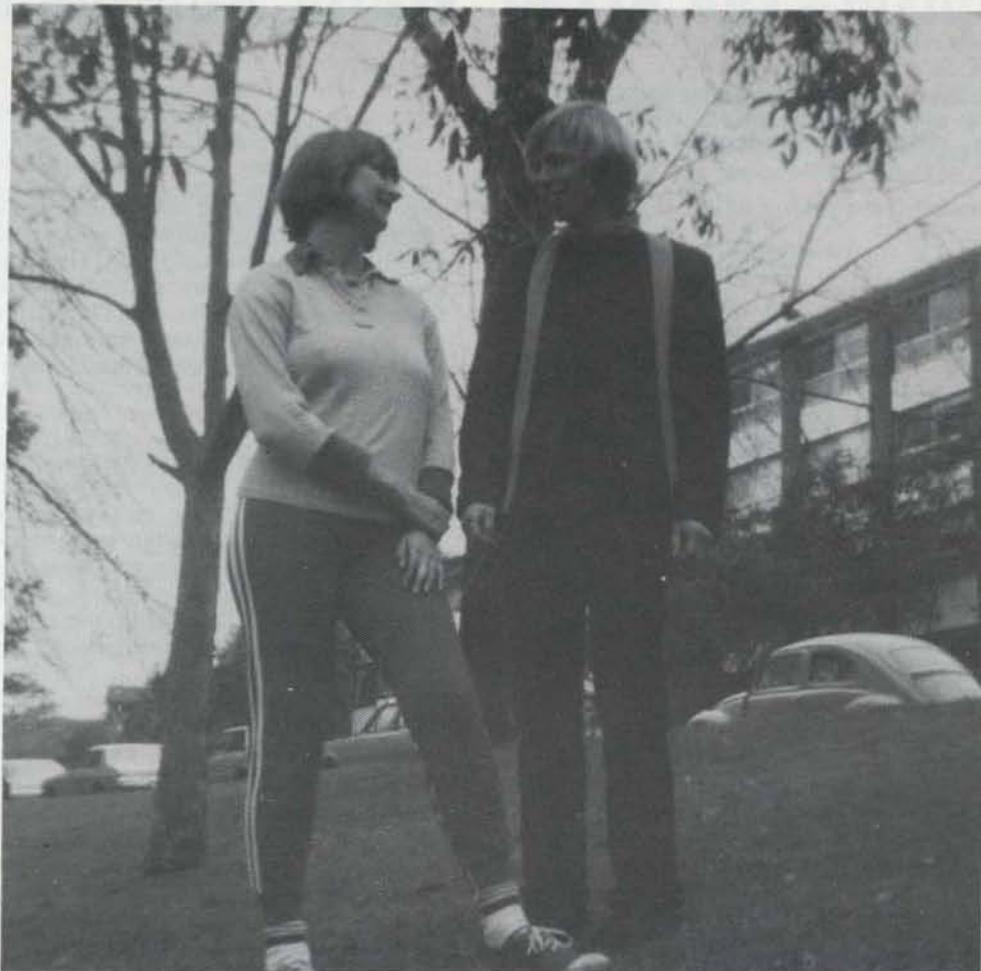
their substitution with an absolute relativity of means. Minimalism, abstract painting and mixed-media became exhausted in the market-place. The women's art movements failed to inspire younger artists – only their fence-sitting custodians – and art schools, journalism and survey exhibitions were morbidly slow to recognise the uniformity that artists and critics found it convenient to project.

This uniformity is the litter of Australia's privileged position within recent multi-nationalism, and nowhere better than in the artificial and redundant language of disco music has this uniformity been recognisable. Disco's modus-operandi is repetitious within the fertile space of the cover-version, the re-staging of an original in terms of a specific use-value (dance). Conversely, this uniformity can be used to shroud a newly expressionistic speaking, a bluntly lyrical artisanship which narrates not an inner voice but the shattered debris of a self in exile, expressed only in the nailed-down utterances of cliché, mass media and art-history. These mentalities in POPISM have stimulated a moratorium on social purpose and a suspension of any obvious motivation.

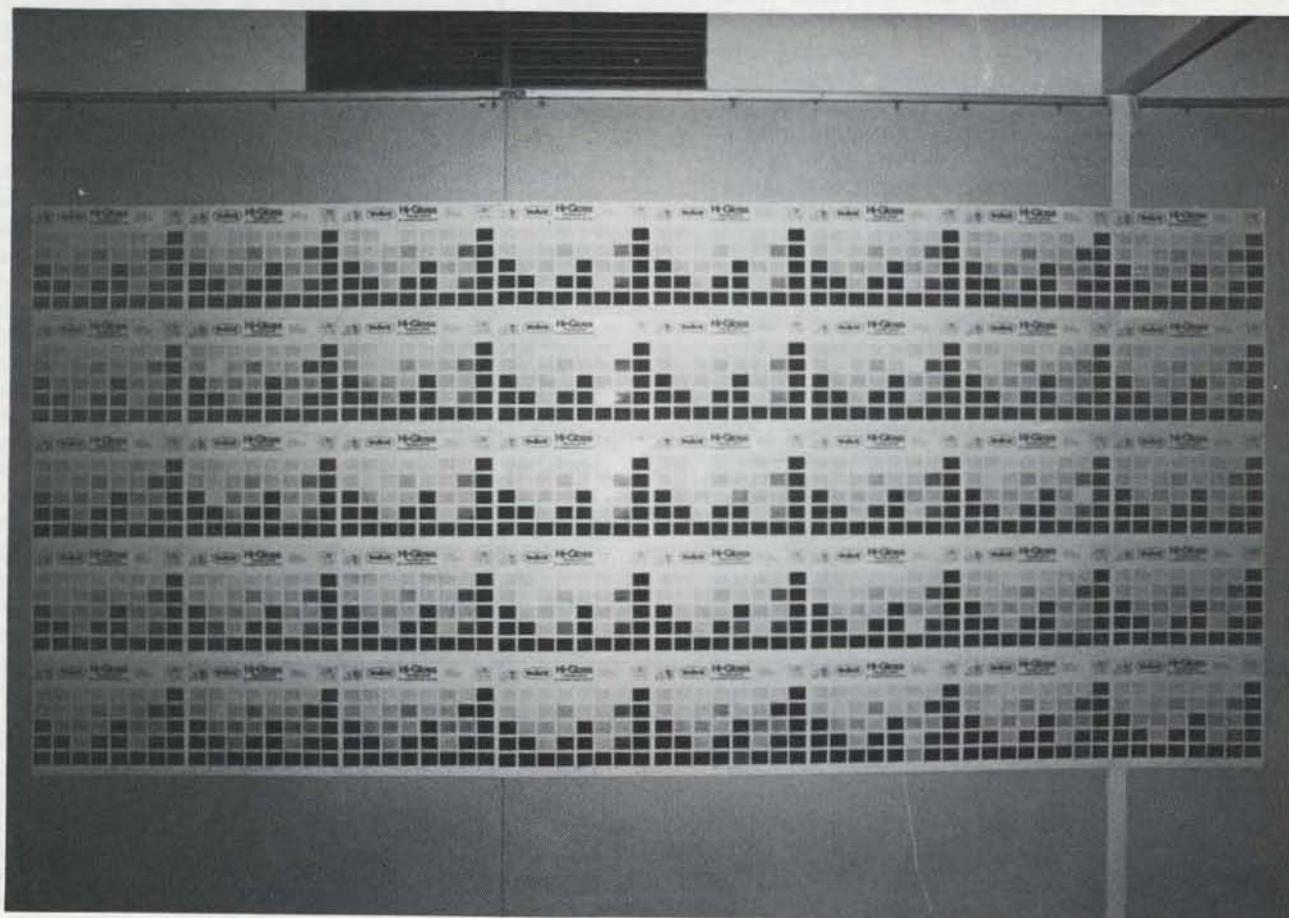
POPISM equates realism with abstraction as similarly permeated by representation rather than as terms in an historical or artistic opposition. The art sometimes echoes the structures of represented information and representational authority. It transforms banality, violence and crime into celebrity and spans the modest to the epic. Images refer to and reflect only other images and are free from any compulsion to represent reality. Each addresses itself, its other and the viewer like the most sophisticated of news programmes. It refers to life as menus refer to cuisine. It is utterly reified and offers itself to be ordered and consumed as an item on the menu.

Reflecting and duplicating itself, the art in POPISM has no depth to be probed or, more accurately, to be evoked as the final term of an Inquisition. Instead Surveillance is the best term for this art. The camera, like its subject, has learned that it is seen by what it may in turn see. Comparisons between inside and outside are shunned and, as in *Alice Through The Looking Glass*, reflections are skimmed and slide Moebius-like around their own edges. POPISM, like the aboriginal nomads, can therefore find a metaphor for itself in its existence on the surface and edges of the existing landscape. It is not coincidental that POPISM, like the Australian population, has forsaken an interior and clung to the outside, emptying itself continuously of its valuable resources, its oil and uranium, and turning over its centre to American missile and surveillance bases. In this new scenario, Australian art can become the well-paid beneficiary of its timely, profound and radical superficiality. Our artists are researchers waiting for sponsors.

POPISM sought to suggest rather than define, yet its effects are already being applied as exemplary of Australian art, both locally and internationally. POPISM is more than this bleak tale of wasted oil which lies around, reflecting and making prisms. Insidious like crabgrass, it flourishes within the tautological and redundant scenario of surveillance, in our primitive Dreamtime and in the space of television where everyone is famous for fifteen minutes.



Still from the → ↑ → film "Romantic Story" (Oct. 1981)



'Dulux Colour Chart' 1980  
Black and white screen print with colour samples  
152cm x 380cm

# Texts & Gestures

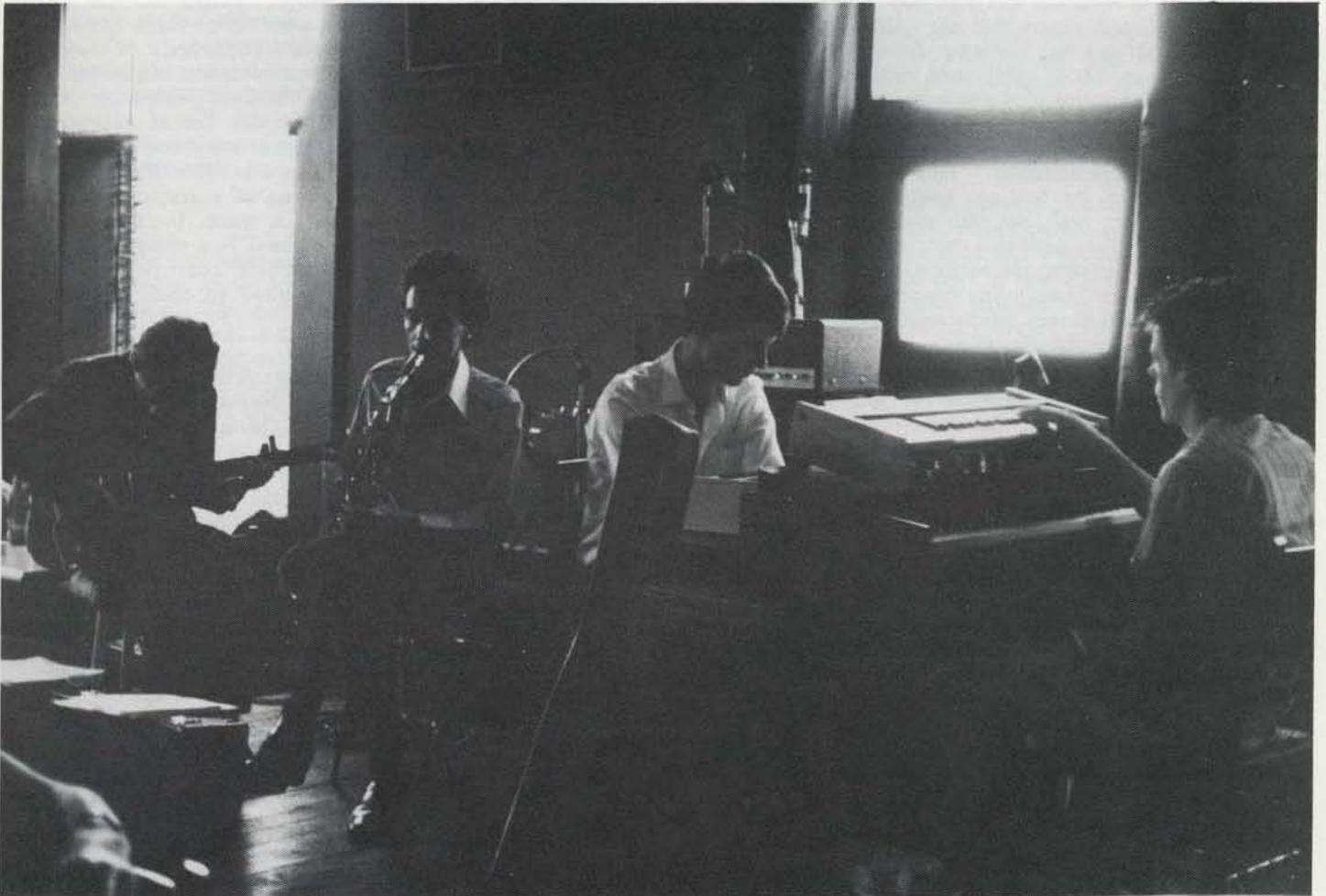
Adrian Martin & Philip Brophy

*This is the interview section of an article originally published in Art Network Winter 1982 page no. 28*

The second part of this article arose as the response to a series of written questions I posed to Philip from →↑→ – questions which in their form, their direction, their implications, are already playing with and constructing some notion of our music, ‘new’ music, ‘somewhere between art and pop’ music, as a concrete object, an ensemble of ‘textual strategies’ with strict intentions and predetermined effects. This is doubtless a project plagued by the worst ahistorical and anti-rhizomatic formalism; it was undertaken with irony and a conscious will - to self destruction (since, already, the rock press is formulating its own such frozen image of this music for its own ends<sup>7</sup>). But still a project worth the effort of discussion since it focuses all our problems of speech and utterance, the practice of our theorising which is not isomorphous with our musical practice, but not ‘other’ than it either: another space of connections and disconnections, another assemblage, and another point on which to experiment.

*I've been thinking about how to define and identify the 'kind' of music we produce in terms of certain textual elements like repetition, the degree of structure and systematisation, insistent use of quotation, and so forth. My questions are directed to each such aspect. First: what does this music exclude – what is it opposed to or offered as an alternative to?*

‘I don't know what I want – but I know what I don't want.’ Let's start with the basics: creativity is the practice of making decisions. Decisions that are not concerned with affirmation but with a sort of interrogation. A questioning of an existing situation characterised by its convention, its conservation, its stagnation. The urge to create is (should? must be? might be? probably is? . . .) prompted by a desire for *change*, whether it be (in historical, ideological *and* artistic terms) in a direction backwards, forwards or sideways. The specific direction is determined by the context, and is thus not of primary importance in itself (even though artistic criticism is most usually founded on a singular concept of direction, ie ‘radical art moves *forward*’).



From the →↑→ live music performance of “Minimalism” (First performed in July 1977; Photo taken at performance in April 1978)



Still from the → ↑ → video "A Non Space" (January 1981)

The decision — being the basis of creation/manufacture/production — is thus part act and part gesture. It is an act of *inclusion* and a gesture of *exclusion*. As a 'direction', this means that the path is not only towards some things but also away from others. Such is the intuitive genesis of what could tentatively be a more sophisticated practice of decision making, of creativity. And here too we have opposing notions of 'creation' — as that which remains intuitive, and that which nurtures (intellectual) sophistication. This notion of sophistication would be involved not solely with defining a particular chosen path, but with achieving a view of the map of which that path is a part; with acknowledging and critically accepting the network of paths with all its criss-crossing directions. The broader the view of the map, the more different this network looks, and the less 'important' its specific directions.

*How do you justify the use of repetition as a major element in your work? Do you in fact consider it a major element?*

No — I don't consider it a major element, because 'repetition' as a concept can be incorporated into a variety of uses. There can be a variety of types of repetition as well as a variety of ways of handling a particular type of repetition. Thus the concept of repetition becomes like a grammatical component within a musical language — too broad to be highlighted as a major area of focus.

Repetition can be used to generate pleasure — or rather, pleasures. The pleasure in "Nice Noise Theme" (on the NICE NOISE ep, 1979) is generated by the inevitability of a cyclic structure. The melody, when finished, has only one place to go — once more back to the start. Harmonically, the end qualifies the start qualifies the end etc etc. However, the pleasure in songs like "Only Quantity Counts" (live), "Three Note Song" or others in the minimalism set, is generated through hypnotic effect, of blurring the sense of exactly 'where' the listener is placed within the 'when' of the music. Time stands still — the memory is seductively fooled. 'Am I hearing this before?'

Repetition can be 'realist/ic', referring to a historically constructed image of musical composition and structurally recreating that image. This is the case in the 'Venitian Rendevous' set, where basic forms (ABA, AABBA, ABCABC etc) are used in the spirit of some sort of accurate or authentic representation of a muzak-type. Repetition can also be 'stylised', extending an analytical metaphor through artistic license, sharply accentuating the various functions of repetition within a certain context. This occurs in the "Nice Noise" set where it is not simply an 'over use' of repetition, but a streamlining of its role within rock music. For instance, if a 'solo' in rock could be defined as a noisy 'difference' bursting forth from a blandness, a sameness, these are the only two elements required to construct the song "Doing Very Little".

And of course, the list goes on. A list that, by virtue of its length and complexity, disqualifies the dumb comment 'It's too repetitious'. How would I justify a use of repetition (or rather, how would I qualify my disqualification of dumb comments like the above)? I would do so by referring to the *role* of repetition within the music and not by defending 'repetition' in a blanket, dogmatic fashion.

*What is the function of highly structured music? Would you give it an aesthetic defence or would you position its significance elsewhere?*

'Highly' structured? Obviously, the reference to structure here is in the sense of there being 'too much' or 'not enough' or 'abnormal' structure. Music history is basically an endless perpetuation of some sort of mythical 'object' defined by a harmonious (ie self-dissolving) balance between content, form, structure and texture. There always seems to be some sort of gravitational pull towards such a concept (or away from it, etc). It becomes the home base, the headquarters of all binary oppositions. I could call *any* music 'highly' structured if I deliberately and consciously focus on a

particular hierarchy of compositional processes and textual components. (Wasn't there some 'analyst' who reduced Wagner's "Ring Cycle" down to a minor third interval?) 'Structure' is not simply a noun – although the fact that it *is* a noun is very important (remember from primary school – “a noun is a *naming* work”). It is also a verb – a compositional tool and a critical perspective. One can replace the other – the critical perspective can foreground the compositional tool and vice versa. “One Note Song” is an ‘active construction’ of the conceptual structure known as the ‘one note’. But a conceptual structure of the same order can exist in something as sloppy as Van Morrison, as dramatic as Ravel, as exotic as Ravi Shankar, or as intense as the Sex Pistols.

Structure, however, *is* traditionally divorced from the more ‘productive’ (ie gratifying, seductive) modes of interpretation and reception. Structure is usually hidden, but it is often exposed also, and pleasure can be derived from this exposure. This is the very basis of dub music – hearing not only what is made present but also what is made absent. Rhythm itself is a temporal structure, defined by tempo, beat and syncopation. In this sense, recognisably rhythmic songs could also be called ‘highly structured’. But – getting back to the answer that your question desires – ‘highly structured’ music is essentially subtractive: it *removes* the compositional components that are designed for the more traditional modes of interpretation and reception. Thus, what is absent is the solo (technical expertise), the lyricism (social/humanist communication of [deep] meaning), textural complexity (compositional finesse), dynamic arrangement (performance energy), etc etc. The *attraction* of such music is that it is free (relatively) of these textual elements. The *purpose* of such music would be to question *why* such elements (at this point in music history) are involved in such an inclusion/exclusion dichotomy. Obviously, I’m not talking about aesthetics but of the ‘else-where’ – in fact, I’m probably talking about the politics of music composition at a historic juncture – that is, now.

*What is the role/intended effect of highly systematised differences and dynamics in your musical arrangements?*

Difference? The question is strangely worded. This ‘kind’ of music that is spoken of could be called music that is turned inside out so that the ‘differences’ appear to be more visible (heard) but only really because the structural elements have been organised in such a way as to clearly show their interrelationship. The more sharply defined the textual elements the more apparent their differences; and thus the more structured the music. On a formalist level, music not of this ‘kind’ tends to blur or obliterate its contained differences, harmoniously cancelling out each element with all the other elements (musical hegemony?) in pursuit of some sort of balanced, smoothed out object – otherwise called a ‘sealed text’. The role, then, of highlighting systematised differences would be to pen the musical text, to turn it inside out.

Aside from this, my approach to music arrangement (which is, incidentally, 50% of the compositional process) stems more from a practice of graphic design than from a knowledge of music theory. I have a ‘natural bent’ toward the design based upon bold lines, sharp edges, dynamic forms, as opposed to the messy, grey pencil sketch. Thus, I would call my music ‘graphic’ in every sense of that word. Its effect would be pleasurable (I hope) – but the sort of pleasure derived from

knowing, being exposed to, feeling the underneath of the music. The area of this ‘kind’ of music’s *effect* is still largely uncharted, but mainly because its political functions is *still* heavier or louder than the quality, effect and feel of the actual music. This means that words like ‘boring’ and ‘intellectual’ are prompted more by a reactionary stance than an evaluation of this kind of musical approach.

*Are you aware of having formulated what could be identified as a personal compositional ‘style’? What implications would it pose for you if it were so?*

Yes and no. I spent 1975 to 1979 fighting personal style until I realised it was pretty silly to attack it from the angle of denying its existence. Style is style – but things are more interesting *beyond* style. If my style is analytical, then the style is only superficial and dull compared to the actual analysis. *Personal* style (with that emphasis) smothers the open text with the well-worn blanket of artistic intention – that great historicist shadow of the Artist. What I am *still* attacking, though, is the way that personal style fits into critical evaluation. As part of any sort of art practice it is, to say the least, impotent. Replace the phrase in your question ‘your personal style’ with ‘a particular approach’ and I’d be more comfortable. In fact, the further away I am from art that is created by individual humans (as opposed to art that is culturally produced) the happier I am. To quote myself from three or so years ago: “Human being: being human – what a way to be.” Yes, I’m still ‘cynical’.

*In employing quotations as a musical strategy, what different kinds of quotation are operative for you? Do you work on distinctions between ‘straight’ quotation and reworked quotation? What is the intended effect of a quotation on someone who hears it? How would you define/explain the oft-mentioned quality of ‘corn’ in this music?*

Before we start particularising a notion of quotation into a series of approaches, we should go over the basic question – what *is* a quotation? Perhaps we should first try to discover what *isn’t* a quotation. We are thus landed with a conceptual paradox: on one side we can say that everything has a quotative basis in reference to (any) history; on the other hand we can say that this basis can be relatively ignored in reference to the uniqueness of each thing, the soleness of its utterance. Therefore, we should perhaps avoid using such broad distinctions for specific definitions.

The point is, what is it that a quote is highlighting, pointing to, declaring? The speakers? The source? The quote? I feel that a quote is most easily felt as something in one space pointing to another space – as well as giving the illusion that this other space is occupying the initial space. Let’s try a diagram. Taking A to represent the source of the quote and AI to represent the quote, we can depict the two possible views or perspectives of quoting as –

In a sense, there is a hazy distinction between the quote’s dislocation of its source and its embodiment of that source. However, what would have to be defined here is the role of the quoter, whose action and presence defines or instigates the action and presence of the quote. We’ll return to this. Anyway, I think that one could start to distinguish types of quotations in terms of dislocation and embodiment. The pleasure afforded the listener could also be approached in these terms.

The whole 'genre' of Mutant Disco generates a pleasure in dislocation — we like this disco music because it isn't disco music. It probably constitutes what could be called a 'negative genre' (perhaps I'm trying to rephrase the theoretically frustrating notions of the 'second degree'). As for the embodied quote, we could look at stylistic categorisation where the foundation of the quote is openly and historically accepted in the quotation, eg we like the blues because it is the blues.

The 'now' — the point of quotation — is important because in as much as quotation is like forming an individualised cats cradle with threads of history, it is the point of quotation which determines its historical plane. Possibly in a few years time, one will not be able to produce Mutant Disco as we know it (although it seems as though one will *always* be able to produce the blues).

Perhaps it is the presence or submergence of the speaker which qualifies the degree of quotation, ranging from a violent gesture to a muffled whimper. Examples would be Japan for the former (their violence is at times awkwardly beyond comprehension) and Abba for the latter (their only 'individuality' arises out of over-exposure to what is essentially a microscopic amount of 'newness' or 'specificity' in their quotation of bland European MOR pop music — their identity is now secure due to their intrinsic relation to a particular time — they are now history). Following on from this, Japan is consequently named *rip-off* in negative terms and *stylistic* in positive terms. Abba becomes, respectively, *crass* and *popular*.

So what of the 'intended effect'? Well, the role of the quotation is not merely to quote, but to *declare itself* a quote, generating a recognition of and identification with the source. It is in the actual declaration of the quote that the listener is most intrinsically and fundamentally engaged. I've already mentioned pleasure in relationship to quoted works, but there must also be, I think, some sort of cultural politic involved in the employment of quotation. This is where we could return to our initial broad historical distinction between kinds of quotation. Namely, in a process of writing (and publicly engaging in writing) history.

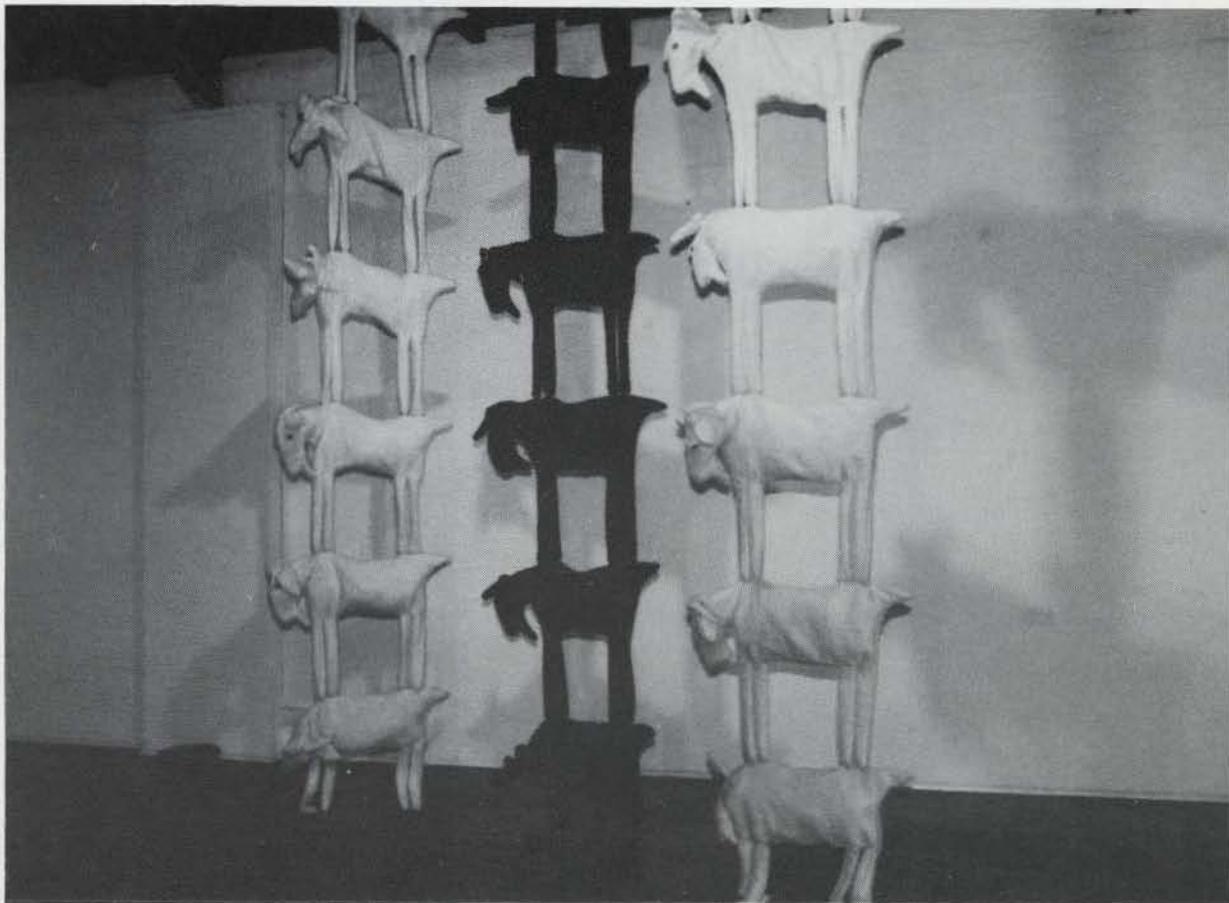
In this light, the difference between quotation and non-quotation would be the difference between writing (rewriting) history for oneself and having history written for oneself. The former involves a chronological dislodging of a part of history from that history's writing, whilst the latter involves a respect for the 'natural' (self-determined, unquestionable) flow of that history's writing. So now we can confuse the issue even more with related phenomena like 'revival', 'nostalgia', 'camp', 'satire', 'parody' etc. However, by juxtaposing the notion of quotation against these terms we might be getting somewhere, because these less controversial terms aren't as problematic. Their context of quotation is more clearly defined, more concretely stated. The quotes here have a communicative purpose, function and effect. In other words, their particular chronological re-ordering is accepted. The other, more difficult kinds of quotation we are trying to define, get situated as precisely 'other', devoid of reason, thus criticised on the grounds of 'aimlessness'.

The more conventional modes of quotation are hemmed in by barriers, constraints — cultural, political, mythical etc — and this 'other' quotation crosses such barriers respectively: whites playing black music; the avant garde forging backwards; structuralist/humorous jibes at expression and creativity etc. It is these barriers which define the context for the quotation in nostalgia, camp, satire and the rest. And it is these barriers that are also perhaps responsible for the often-mentioned quality of corniness/cheesiness/dagginess/etc associated (through misinterpretation?) with New Music — it's as if the crossing of the barrier is misrecognised, because there is no new context for the quotation, no new purpose, role and effect in the concrete senses associated with the other sorts of quotation. Thus, "Television Works" gets seen as parody or satire because the context of quotation is more problematic (and therefore harder to clearly locate and express). Once again, the Xerox syndrome<sup>8</sup> appears — "you've shown me nothing I couldn't already have seen myself on television".

The nearest thing I could associate the quotation in New Music with would be Pop Art. Both modes of quotation deal with actions and gestures related to art practice, although Pop Art was more in the domain of culture (high versus low) whereas this type of New Music is more in the domain of history (old/then versus new/now). Pop Art, too, encountered the Xerox syndrome, mainly because the artists had formally, not conceptually suppressed their originality — Warhol and Lichtenstein did not 'interpret' their subject matter, they 'handled' it, set it in motion in a new context. The notion of Xerox connotes an absence of the human, the artist, the creative decision, the mechanics of idea and craft, the message, etc. Pop artists historically abused their artistic license — as are the 'pop artists' of now.

In ending, I refer to my article on disco (the title of which abounds in quotation marks) "*What Is This Thing Called 'Disco'*"<sup>9</sup>. The title was very important in indicating the direction of its theory, the direction it utilised — one of deliberately and explicitly quoting, drawing as much attention to the *act* of quoting as to what was being quoted. As if in answer to this article, another appeared in *The Face* titled "*What Is Funk*". And it is important to notice the *absence* of quotation marks in this case, as the article was concerned with the existence of a fully-fledged, unchangeable, 'first degree' object: funk. The article is very critical of the fake funk that currently has Britain by its fashionable throat. In other words, the article had not recognised the quotation marks of the Brit-Funk movement (New York group the Lounge Lizards were perhaps the most vocal on this score, openly calling their brand of jazz 'fake jazz').

The trick, then, is to construct a 'cats cradle' based upon a difficult balance between the *quote* and its *source*, where each mirrors (xeroxs?) the other, declaring each other's sameness and difference. Can anyone lend me a hand . . . ?



'Goatem poles' 1982  
Acrylic fur with paper stuffing  
Overall size 305cm x 152cm

## Maria Kozic

b. Melbourne 1957

- 1977-8 Diploma of Art, Preston Institute of Technology (now Phillip)
- 1980 Post-Graduate Diploma, Phillip Institute of Technology

### Solo Exhibitions:

- 1978 Clifton Hill Music Centre, Melbourne
- 1979 Oz Print Gallery, Melbourne
- 1981 George Paton Gallery, Melbourne
- 1982 Reconnaissance Gallery, Melbourne

### Group Exhibitions:

- 1978 "La Trobe University Union Arts Festival", LaTrobe University, Melbourne
- 1979 "Australian Student Printmakers", Travelling Exhibition
- 1980 "Post-Graduate Show", PITspace, Phillip Institute of Technology, Melbourne
- 1982 "Three Aspects of Installation", Contemporary Art Society, Adelaide Festival
- "Line and Feline", National Gallery of Victoria
- "Vision in Disbelief", 4th Biennale of Sydney
- "New Painting", Roslyn Oxley Gallery 9, Sydney
- "From Preston to Phillip", a ten-year survey show Reconnaissance Gallery, Melbourne
- "Popism", National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

- "New Directions", Geelong Art Gallery, Geelong
- "Art In The Age Of Mechanical Reproduction", George Paton Gallery, Melbourne University
- "Australian Art: The Last 10 Years", Australian National Gallery at Melville Hall, Canberra
- "The Super 8 Phenomona", Australian Film Institute of
- "The Super 8 Phenomona" Australian Film Institute National Screenings
- "Melbourne Film Festival" Melbourne
- "3rd Super 8 Film Festival" Sydney
- "Fashion", Seaview Ballroom
- 1983 "Against The Wall", Melbourne University Gallery, Melbourne
- "Perspecta 83", Art Gallery of N.S.W., Sydney
- "Pirates & Mutineers", Roslyn Oxley Gallery 9, Sydney
- "A Melbourne Mood - Cool Contemporary Art", Australian National Gallery at Melville Hall, Canberra
- "Recent Films by Australian Artists", Australian National Gallery, Canberra
- "Anzart", Hobart
- "Super 8/Video Overload", Glass House Cinema, Melbourne
- "Continuum 83", Tokyo
- "Filmmakers' Visions", Auckland and Wellington Art Gallery

## LIST OF WORKS

### MARIA KOZIC

- Zebras** (1982) acrylic paint on cut-out plywood  
overall size 152cm x 152cm x 114cm deep
- Goatem Poles** (1982) acrylic fur with paper stuffing  
overall size 305cm x 152cm
- Pillow Talk** (1982) screen printed on fabric  
10 pillows each 35cm x 35cm
- Rhinoceros** (1982) coloured and clear sewn plastic strips  
305cm x 370cm (approx.)
- Seed Packet Dresses** (1982) screen printed on fabric  
7 dresses each size 14
- Godzillas** (1983) acrylic on cotton duck  
3 paintings each 152cm x 152cm
- 8 Oscars** (1983) acrylic on cotton duck  
8 paintings each 45cm x 23cm
- Dulux Colour Chart** (1980) screen printed with colour  
samples  
152cm x 380cm
- Two pages from Warhol's book** (1980) screen print  
overall size 206cm x 228cm

### FILMS

- A Trailer for 'One Tail for Two Dogs'** (1981)  
Super 8 transfer to ¾" video (3 mins)
- Manless** (1981)  
Super 8 transfer to ¾" video (10 mins)
- Installation film – Animal, Vegetable, Mineral** (1982)  
Super 8 transfer to ¾" video (12 mins)
- Seed Packet Dresses at Fashion 1982 parade** (1982)  
Super 8 transfer to ¾" video (6 mins)

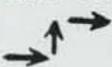


From the  $\rightarrow\uparrow\rightarrow$  performance "Asphixiation: What is this thing called 'Disco'?" (First performed July 1980; Photo taken at performance in December 1982).



- |      |  |      |  |
|------|--|------|--|
| 1977 | "Minimalism" (live music performance)<br>"a" (theatre performance)   | 1981 | "L'Acrostique D'Amour/The Crush", "Spaces", "What Is This Thing Called 'Disco'?" (recorded music)<br>"Television Works" (theatre performance)<br>"Hello, Australia!" (video)<br>"Romantic Story", "Suspense/Play" (films)<br>"Noises Vs. Musaks (and vice-versa)", "The Celluloid Self" (film performances)  |
| 1978 | "Female Feminism", "Nice Noise", "Venetian Rendezvous" (live music performances)<br>"Kaboom" (theatre performance)<br>"Contracted Cinema" (film)   | 1982 | "The Celluloid Self", "No Dance", "Documentation of the 'Asphixiation' performance" (films)<br>"Aural/Oral Risk", "ADS" (videos)<br>"Rhizome Is A Big Word" (recorded music)<br>"Formula Disco" (video performance)  |
| 1979 | "Self-Distortion/Self-Destruction", "More Tedious Structuralism", "Even More Tedious Structuralism", "Copyright of Spring" (live music performances)<br>"Venetian Rendezvous", "Nice Noise", "Pop Art" (recorded music)<br>"Texts" (theatre performance)<br>"Familiar Females Return", "By The Light (Of The Silvery Moon)", "Suddenly - I Moved" (video performances)   | 1983 | "I You We", "Caprice", "Muzak, Rock & Minimalism" (videos)<br>"Romantic Story", "The 1980 Moscow Olympics As Televised By HSV 7",<br>"The Celluloid Self" (films - remade)<br>"Made By $\rightarrow\uparrow\rightarrow$ " (book with flexidisc)<br>"STUFF" (monthly magazine)<br>"Caprice", "Muzak, Rock & Minimalism",<br>"Formula Disco" (recorded music)<br>"Still Rock 'N' Roll To Me" (radio play)<br>"Performance 2: MAGAZINE" (commissioned soundtrack to Sydney Theatre Company Production)<br>"Comics Or Cartoons" (installation) |
| 1980 | "Formula Disco", "Narrative Music", "Wartime Art" (live music performances)<br>" $\rightarrow\uparrow\rightarrow$ ", "Caprice" (recorded music)<br>"Asphixiation: What Is This Thing Called 'Disco'?" (theatre performance);<br>"A Non-Space" (video)<br>"Asphixiation: What Is This Thing Called 'Disco'?" (installation)<br>"Documentation of the 'Asphixiation' Installation",<br>"The 1980 Moscow Olympics As Televised By HSV 7",<br>"The Phantom No.692", "Some Lost Advertisements" (films) |      |  |

## LIST OF WORKS



### FILM

**Some Lost Advertisements** (October 1980)  
16mm B & W sound and additional cassette sound-track  
Dual projection - 20 mins

**The Opening Ceremony of the 1980 Moscow Olympics as Televised by HSV Channel 7**  
(Super 8 version - September 1980; 16mm version - August 1983)  
Colour sound - 10 mins

**Romantic Story**  
(Super 8 version - October 1981; 16mm version - August 1983)  
Colour sound - 25 mins

**The Celluloid Self**  
(Super 8 version - March 1982; 16mm version - August 1983)  
Colour sound - 15 mins

### VIDEO

**A Non Space** (January 1981)  
½" B & W sound. 4 monitor installation. 20 mins

**Asphixiation: 'Aural/Oral Risk'** (April 1982)  
1" colour sound - 4 mins

**Ads** (September 1982)  
¾" colour sound - 17 mins

**I You We** (May 1983)  
¾" colour sound - 7 mins

**Caprice** (June 1983)  
Super 8 transferred to 1" Video.  
Colour sound - 4 mins

**Muzak, Rock & Minimalism** (July 1983)  
¾" colour sound - 15 mins

### RECORDS

**Venitian Rendezvous**  
(7" 33½ EP) Edition: 300. Released 12.4.79

**Venitian Rendezvous (2nd pressing)**  
(7" 33 1/3 EP) Edition: 500. Released 31.5.79

**Nice Noise**  
(7" 33 1/3 EP) Edition: 300. Released 21.9.79

**Nice Noise (2nd pressing)**  
(7" 33 1/3 EP) Edition: 500. Released 21.11.79

**Pop Art**  
(7" 45 single - one side) Edition: 800. Released 15.12.79

→ ↑ →  
(7" 33 1/3 EP) Edition: 300. Released 3.3.80

**Caprice**  
(7" 33 1/3 EP) Edition: 500. Released 1.12.80

**L'Acrostique D'Amour/The Crush**  
(12" 45 single) Edition: 300. Released 2.2.81

**Spaces**  
(12" 33 1/3 ALP) Edition: 500. Released 11.10.81

**New Music 78/79 & New Music 1980**  
(12" 33 1/3 LPs - 1 track on each) Edition: 500.  
Released 5.11.81

**Asphixiation: "What is this thing they called 'Disco'?"**  
(12" 33 1/3 LP + 12" 45 single) Edition: 500.  
Released 18.12.81

**Rhizome is a big word**  
(7" 33 1/3 EP Flexi Disc - 1 track) Edition: unknown.  
Released 10.6.82

**Muzak, Rock & Minimalism**  
(12" 33 1/3 LP) Edition: 500. Released August 1983

**Caprice (2nd pressing)**  
(7" 33 1/3 EP) Edition: 500. Released August 1983

### MAGAZINE

**Stuff**  
(Issues 1, 2, 4/5 & 6/7)

### BOOK

**Made by** → ↑ →  
(Released: August 1983 Edition: 1,000 - includes Flexi-Disc)

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### "ART & POLITICS: YEAH, YEAH, YEAH!"

There are many things I take for granted – not out of apathy or routine, but because my experiences of procedure and conceptualisation have left me in a position that ladens me with a certain orientation of place, of perspective. For example, I don't think that you ever get to where you are going, in that the goal of your pursuit, the end of your "struggle", is endless. I am here not referring to grandiose philosophical ideals of reason and belief, but to the more mundane area of trying to understand things, know them, theorize and articulate them, explain and describe them. Such is the preface and the premise for my discussion of Art and Politics; of the artistic and the political. I will "talk about" Art and Politics – and I won't get anywhere. But more importantly, you won't get anywhere, as the lack of resolution would be more problematic and more frustrating for you than it is to me. "We" (a specious category in itself) won't arrive anywhere – and why we won't is what I shall discuss.

Firstly, the juncture between Art and Politics is not a point. Nor is it an intersection. Nor is it a collision. It is, in short, a non-event. An overlapping of one dimension upon itself – inseparable in terms of areas: indivisible in terms of layers. Historically, to speak about Art in terms of Politics has warranted a strategy – strategy being the keystone in the myth of political effectivity. But the concept of strategy here is no more than a procedure of separation, of rationally sub-dividing Art and Politics in order to construct a juncture that can only exist under the conditions of such a separation. To date, it is this effect of separation that has constituted itself as the point of centrality around which the political discussion of Art rotates and gravitates. Art is thus often measured either primarily or solely in terms of its distance from Politics, i.e. political content, political implication, political commentary and political effectivity. The "struggle" is to bridge that gap (which in itself is already a deconstruction) and join Art and Politics and live happily ever after – which all sounds like an episode from "Love American Style" (a reference for those who watched television in the early seventies).

In our feverish pursuit of the Truth, the centre, of achieving our goal and "getting there" we all too easily see things in terms of what they are intended to represent (i.e. their "truths") rather than acknowledging them as representations (i.e. their only "truthful" status). Art practices resultant from such a perspective function in a similar way. But, as we live fairly comfortably within a proliferation of Political Art, let us not disregard the **Image** of Art; the **Image** of Politics; and the **Image** of their juncture – because the only substantiality and the only effectiveness of working and theorizing in this domain is in the congealed image (the stylistic concretization) that these topics and tactics carry. I digress and describe to you here and now a different sort of image: a long, sleek, slender female leg, naked, clothed only by a shiny patent leather stiletto shoe. As I utter it, as I describe it, and as you formulate it by reconstituting it as an Image for yourself, **we are become** entwined in a series of codings that in this field of debate are painfully slanted. We are bogged by our context, rutted by our position; in other words – trapped by Image. You see, an image is not an object – it is a process. It cannot be described because an Image **happens**. And, images are forever "happening" one another. Political art, social commentary art, etc., has an Image that has very little to do with its imagery and content. Its (their) Image is defined more by its intention and, once again, its separation **from** "apolitical" art – art that either (apparently) condemns, rejects, disbelieves in, is silent upon or is simply unaware of its relation to Politics.

Political Art (so-called) is essentially art that believes in its intention and process. It is an art that loses sleep over achieving its goal and defining its truth. It is in this sense that Political Art (remembering that political art is a category that **names** itself, as evidenced by the plethora of "artists' statements") suffers certain delusions; namely, that it presumes it has the **power** to either implicitly or directly name other art as being "apolitical". Having suffered this accusation as a writer and speaker myself, I would be extremely offended if I didn't first realise how dumb and naive a declamation it is; for there is no way in the world – and I intend the tone of finality that this carries – that anyone can show me how or why art **A** is more or less politically minded or effective than art **B**. And if you attempt to do so, your only recourse would be to a self-perpetuating substantiality generated from the centrality of how one is meant to connect and disengage Art from and with Politics.

There is a view of the Artist that I have vaguely entertained for some time now, and it tends to become more concrete as time goes by. It is of the artist as someone who theatrically controls meaning; not "meaning" as in the social codings of iconographical markings, but "meaning" as in a stream of communication directed primarily **from** the Artist. It is a status that is historically bound by intentionality, which in turn perpetuates and guarantees the status of the artist over and above the work, honouring the meaning and intention of the markings over the much more problematic and intangible concept of deciphering the "markings **themselves**". It is a state of affairs that filters through the histories of Romanticism, Expressionism, Surrealism and Conceptual Art, to name a few. It almost appears as no surprise that it exists also in Political Art, in that once again, the Artist theatrically controls meaning, in the sense that he or she implies that they have some sort of monopoly on "addressing society", on commenting on the world around them in order to make those of us who aren't aware, aware. The theatricality resides in the process of surfacing their conscience and consciousness for "us" to see. To put it bluntly, Political Art (as opposed to art that is political) merely states that it is aware, coding its message more or most in its statement rather than its awareness. The specificity of its awareness is inconsequential because its effectiveness is unable to be gauged. All one is left with is a personal statement couched in intention and carried by metaphor – such is the Image of Political Art. Art can be and is **made** political – but not by the artists or the art itself, but by institutions, systems and apparatuses into which the art is inserted and from which the art is appropriated. Such is the case from Picasso's "La Guernica" to Peter Kennedy's "November 11th" banners.

There is nothing to being political. Everyone is political, whether they know it or not – **and** whether **we** know or not whether they know or not. To politicize oneself is to declare oneself, to state oneself as a peculiar entity. The political statement is unfortunately inextricably mixed up with personalism, the only twist being that one ought to feel responsible for certain things. The current climate of Political Art and of the juncture between Art and Politics I find to be so pathetically moralistic that I can find calm and serenity in my wavering between nihilism and solipsism. Politics "in" Art thrives in an age of banners, T-Shirts, slogans and buttons – them all being more linguistic commodities than commercial products. The statement and the message is hurled back and forth across society like a fiery ball that encapsulates the problem and the problematic, infusing statement, intention, metaphor, strategy and result in one glorious swipe. As we look up into the skies, our faces aglow, dialectic interaction fundamentally degenerates into one word – the word is "yeah!" It is a word that has become an icon of rhetoric, usable in any artistic/political situation. Some murmur it solitarily; others call out in a chorus. But others, like myself, say "bullshit!" Political awareness would have to be the most oppressive force that grew out of the Counter Culture Revolution of the seventies. We are moralistically told things in terms of conditionality; that Art **should** this; that Society **should** that; that we **should** this; and that the Government **should** that. Such people have got all the right questions and answers except being able to explain (short of "Fascism") **why** I should engage myself in a certain way with certain things.

But let us step sideways for a while before we start repeating stale debates and mouldy arguments. First off, underneath the contrived controversy of what I am saying is two fundamental criticisms – (i) that politically concerned Art denies that its personal statement of self is a departure for catharsis; and (ii) that the effect of its effectivity is generated, maintained and located by metaphor. Together this means that such art (or such artistic theory and practice) attempts to speak in a chorus, working as a magnetic metaphor for like minds bound by democratic communalism. The voice of the artist (archaeologically flattened to merely represent depth and multiplicity in its chorus effect) is supposedly replaced by the repressed voice of a culture and society that cannot find a voice for itself, a voice that artist offers itself for as a medium for its message, which consequently orientates the art as a means to an end where the repressed voice is finally heard and its message acted upon. Such is the painterly picture of political struggle in the Arts; a canvas of gaudy brush-strokes pleading honesty, realism and the truth. However, it is this very notion of struggle, of its conceptualization as a romantic ideal, that generates the cathartic energy which propels the Art, giving it the impression of movement as opposed to stasis. It is, in the truest sense, “poetry in motion” in that the belief in politically concerned art causing social change in some way or another is a belief based upon the **metaphor** – not the **result** – of the political statement. And most unfortunately, yet most pragmatically, negative criticism of politically concerned art is levelled at and resultant from its concrete ineffectiveness (caused by its own unawareness of its self-status as Image) and not its aspirations and intentions. Thus, another category of “apolitical art” has to be noted – that which rejects the myth of effectivity that enshrouds so-called politically concerned art.

One is reminded of the notion of “the social role of Art” and I question: who is the performer? What is the performance? Who plays what role and what for? Obviously intended as a call for realism, the social role of Art is an ironically theatrical concept, centering on a moralistic designation for Art in an essentialist view, i.e. that Art **should** pay its debt to Society and the Artist **should** be a responsible being. But I feel that this view of responsibility is pushed here more to be in keeping with the notion of the Artist controlling the meaning(s) in his or her work, in the sense that if one publicly claims to be “responsible”, one implies that one has control over and of meaning. A further fallacy is also produced, which is the idea that the Artist actually **understands** society in the first place, misrepresenting the subjective (i.e. fragmented and often misinformed) as the objective through the presentation of the art object as a political object.

Art and Society are ultimately worlds apart, mainly because change in Art is measured by articulation and movement – change in Society is measured in its silence and stasis. The power of Society is precisely in its dumb silence, watching the Artist pitifully distance him or herself from Society by the very presence of his or her voice. I deny Art as having “social value” because to do so is to be absurdly moralistic in ones art practice; and irony of all ironies, when liberal-minded moralism of this sort eventually confronts Society on its terrain (on the battle-ground of Naturalism) it gets converted into self-centred fascism. Try your sociological preaching of politically concerned art concepts in your local supermarket and see what happens. To fully be an Artist is to gain a voice at the loss of speech – once you have that voice you’re at odds to communicate through silence. OK – so you do street theatre in the city mall; you perform your play at lunchtime in factories; you work on a mural project with unemployed kids; or you commune with aborigines in Central Australia. It is not my role to condone or condemn such activities. It is my option to voice a question that we should all ask each other continually – only in order to **keep up** with the silent stasis of Society – “what now?” Politically concerned art generally holds fast to its originally articulated strategy for social change, stopping short after its artistic gesturing, expecting Society to pay heed, pick up cue and do all the actual changing. Society owes Artists nothing, and for Artists to believe so is a gross misunderstanding of the relation between the two.

It is a real cop-out to call "pass" for the "what now?" question by claiming that you've "done your bit" or that "Rome wasn't built in a day". Such answers have consistently formulated the intangibility of the political effectivity of Art by expanding and extrapolating the relativity of Art and Society into the most nebulous of areas.

But perhaps what is the more major concern with this dichotomy of political and a-political art is not so much the art itself (most of which I find boring and uninteresting) as it is the theory and criticism that purports to locate it in a certain way, fixing an historical direction for its thrusting power. It joins most criticisms in a methodology of inclusion and exclusion, bolstering the parameters of its ideologically sound art, nurtured by the critics' parental concern for such art being made more and more public. But what such a critical voice too often forgets is that its power lies only in its Otherness, and that once such ideologies hegemonically gain power (as in certain contexts they have) their power has to be re-defined, re-orientated and re-directed. Or, to be crass about it, once to do once there's nothing left to whinge about? The critical arena of socially and politically concerned art moans within a context it shouldn't even be in. What has social change through Art got to do with the subculture of art theory and criticism in Australia? Or is that subculture needed to give critical consensus of an articulated nature that Society itself - in its dumb silence - is unable to deliver? It appears that certain desires are in conflict with certain objectives. Such critics confuse Art and Reality too often, confusing the "unreal" nature of Art with an investment with Art as a mode of Realism having an effect upon Reality. Art is seen to either have or lack "real" substance; to have power in its communicative force or to sit impotent. Implied in such divisions is that the critic is able to gauge the effectivity and measure the relevance of certain art practices - a godly feat if ever there was one. Still, we must neither neglect that sociologically orientated art criticism afforded, for a while, a comparatively more substantial practical form of articulation of Art than the flowery ideals hung over from the Romantic tradition of the tortured artist severed from Society, struggling for new heights of creative communication. But such comparativity is historically lost, and the then-welcomed "realism" in the language of art criticism and theorization has outgrown its welcome, giving rise to questioning how operative and functional the art - minus its annexed articulation - is today in its current state as impotent linguistic commodities.

Perhaps the articulation has to be changed or re-stated to accept the art for the theatrical state it is now in rather than the realist domain it originally was situated in. Perhaps the Art itself has to change. Or perhaps a different sort of contextual mechanics has to be sought out and experimented with. Perhaps certain desires have to be re-aligned with certain objectives. Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps. Such concerns don't take up too much of my time, although, perhaps they should. But they don't. And perhaps they shouldn't. You might talk about Art and Politics. All I can hear is impotency and moralism. The former I live with and refuse to deny. The latter I detest and refuse to acknowledge.

PHILIP BROPHY

Forum Paper - Tasmanian School of Art,  
September 1983.

(For further reading see *Wartime Art in Made by* → ↑ → by the author).

*Philip Brophy is co-ordinator of the group* → ↑ →, *lectures in sound at P.I.T. in Melbourne, he is a writer contributing to a wide variety of journals and a speaker of some note.*

## FALLING OFF MY BICYCLE AND OTHER STRANGE MYSTERIES

When I was starting on the preparation of this paper I began by using the initial responses, the likes or dislikes that I had of Maria Kozic's work. I was going to use these responses as the basis for developing an argument. Whichever one out-balanced the other would form the approach, the appropriate discourse at hand. This was, I think, a reasonable attitude to take when preparing for a theoretical debate. I decided that I thought Maria's objects and images were essentially simple, using the most obvious of devices to produce essentially trivial ideas. For the development of my ensuing argument I would look at the works' contexts: as solo exhibitions in different galleries in Melbourne, the inclusion in the Popism exhibition, her association with the group → ↑ → , the Sydney Biennale, Perspecta and writings about her in current publications or any other literature. Everything that would give me an understanding of the Maria Kozic framework.

Well this seems like a reasonable beginning, an approach that you make when you want to develop an argument about something. Then you go on, selecting points of reproach to prove and validate that position you are taking, look at sources, check your opinions and write about it.

Without even thinking what I was **actually** doing, I had fulfilled a pattern, a pattern of writing a paper. You look at something, you read about it and adopt a stance within its theoretical debate. To me, this seemed to require a particularly singular line of reasoning. I really don't like thinking in this way because in deciding to form a detachment from the work of Kozic and its framework, its means and its context; I am forced to ignore the exceptions that I see at the same time, those aspects with which I have an attachment.

If I am not able to accept this way of theoretical debate then there must be a good reason for having this affliction. Instead of accepting that it is necessary to use a single side of an argument to say what I think is or isn't, I am going to talk about what I think **perhaps** is. For me to acknowledge that within this debate there is an 'artist', I am going to apply an artist's way of thinking to it. Instead of using a single line of reasoning for the sake of it, I will acknowledge that there is a co-existence of levels. I simply wouldn't risk disassociating myself from an artists way of divergent thinking for the sake of writing this paper.

In this sense, being aware of a structure I am using in presenting this paper here, I apply that very question to the work and activities of Kozic. Is she aware of the structure she is using, or is it the case that she uses her art practice without confronting it as a problem? However, I want to deal with another problem first: Why should I choose to respond or disengage myself from all of Maria's work in the first place?

My opinions began to formulate when I first saw the work. At that time I had read nothing of or about it, so my opinions came from **looking** at the work. I think that in going to look at the work I was taking with me my whole particular cultural kit, the one I use when going to assimilate something I want to look at. This baggage I have is perhaps made up of a variety of experiences, the ones which affected me most when I was in the process of making its assemblage. When I looked at Maria's work there seemed to be little connection with what I know and what she had made. I am aware that my culture kit exists as it is now but I think that I could go about improving on it. Develop it by looking, talking, listening, reading, using all facilities to grapple at its structure and adjust the biases and inclinations. In this way I could digress from the point of **now**, becoming aware of alternatives, making an **effort** to assimilate more information to develop my breadth of cultural understanding.

Well I **could** go about doing this so as to make a more liberal appraisal of Maria's work, going through all the literature piled up on my desk. I've read through most of it and could go on through to find points that would enable me to expand my culture kit and my knowledge of Maria's work for this discourse. Instead, I'm going to do something else. Suppose I decide to accept myself as I am at present and let my mind stay as it is for the moment, without any input. I will drop all the newspaper articles about Maria, Popism, the papers by Philip Brophy, Art and Text, Art Network, Stuff Magazines, the publication "Made by → ↑ →", into the rubbish bin.

By dropping these things into the rubbish bin, two things have occurred: I have limited the potential for using these articles as sources to develop ideas for this debate and have finally rejected the conventional way of making some intelligent points about something. By accepting the **now** that is presented by my action, I have to rely on present knowledge. By this disengagement from the future, if I were to persist in this state, I foresee that I would degenerate in awareness to having no conscience at all.

This is of course absurd. There is always **something** happening, everything projects itself into the future and if you are doing something, like making art, then you are aware.

As an artist, I see that instead of using any notion of 'forgetting' it is invaluable to realise the intrinsic meaning of 'becoming'. However, assuming that my understanding of Kozic's work, and the theory which surrounds her is correct, then I feel that within it is a desire to become involved in 'forgetting' – disengagement from value, disengagement from reason – putting things in the bin. With Maria, I think her work is perhaps, so devoid of meaning that it becomes the ideal vehicle for other people to impose their meanings.

I know that the experience of looking at Maria's work is very different from perceiving it via other people's discourse. I don't think that I like to rely primarily on other people's explanations, without any aptitude being exhausted first. If, then, my ideas differ from the ones I read, it is worthwhile to analyse why. Having become aware of these sorts of things about Kozic, is there some way in which I can account for it? If I had only read articles about Maria, the glossy-speak in magazines, the criticisms in other magazines, then I know I would have missed something. By being in the very space in which her objects and images existed I could sense and see the very things themselves. I would also be in the place that they were and this would form a context around them, making meaning around her meanings. With this analysis I want to make a point about what I think the importance is of making sure that you are as close to a source that you can get.

From the position as an observer of Maria's work, I want to imagine my position as being the maker of something and will use the example of falling off my bicycle. In making a story out of it, this is like making an object or image out of something. With my story I could relate to you very vivid descriptions of how it all actually occurred, second by second. The structure of this story could be a very sophisticated one, in the words I used, in the feelings it evoked, in the emotive manner in which I told it and you would have a sense, an understanding you received from me telling you. Perhaps this is the opposite of what I see in most of the work by Maria.

However, if I were to tell you about a bicycle accident that I saw in a film, on television or read about in a newspaper I would be reiterating a story of an event that was structured by someone else. There would be things left out, according to the media involved. In any of these media the way the bicycle crash is used fulfils a specific need for a specific purpose and the accident becomes formulated. Now to observe the conventions of imaginative, descriptive or emotive writing with the idea that I could grasp the same qualities as that bicycle crash I had myself, using any of the sources I have suggested, then I would be facing restrictions that come from a pre-formulation of the bicycle experience.

I've tried to grasp substance from a form which has removed most of it already. You could say that while not achieving the intention I thought I had in the first place, unknowingly had made a comment on the nature of multi-media, but I would have to be honest and say you were mistaken.

The point about sources I have in relation to Maria's work is that when I begin to produce my piece of writing about the bicycle event, I don't have to go to the trouble of trying to grasp the essence of the event in its raw state, I don't have to decide what to include or exclude when there are not many alternatives to consider and I don't have to do any real, hard thinking. It seems that it is all very much easier using pre-formulated experience as subject matter. In looking at Maria's work I am able to see very little meaning, her objects and images do not show anything about the nature of her sources.

After having said all this, I want to go back to the point I was making about writing this paper itself. Having realised that when I was thinking about the **actual** pattern of writing a paper, I was making an acknowledgement. This acknowledgement was toward the context in which I would be making this presentation and within the presentation itself the ideas I wanted to talk about. So there was an understanding of structure and if I wanted to succeed in gaining your attention I will have to fulfil your expectancy in some way. It is all an intelligent structure, and for me to ignore it would reduce the potential of me saying anything comprehensible at all.

To use alternatives of only sitting here saying nothing, or indulge myself with your attention and talk nonsense, then it should make you very suspicious of me. Equally, for me or any one else to go about producing art in the same manner, ignoring the structure that is there by its very being, should make you suspicious of me as an artist, as I am suspicious of Maria Kozic as an artist. Of course I don't suggest that the structure of anything should create an inhibition, that there should be an obsession with method. There is no absolutely correct method but you can take advantage of how a structure exists and by being astute, develop on it.

I will finish this paper by asking if Maria is either dealing with convention knowingly, confronting it directly or simply making works for their amusement value? Whichever of these is the case it leaves my approach and hers open to debate. Will I fall off my bicycle?

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## ON BARREN/NESS

I would like to pun around about barrenness about being **incapable of bearing**, children, young, fruit, vegetation or produce – the word comes from a herb of genus thought to cause sterility; Barrenness is **meagre, unprofitable and dull**.

Julie Kristeva in talking of her rejection of that which causes revulsion says:

“I expel **myself**. I spit myself out, I abject **myself** within the same motion through which ‘I’ claim to establish **myself**. ‘I’ am in the process of becoming at the expense of my own death”.<sup>1</sup>

Put another way, it means that there are lives not sustained by desire, as desire is always for objects. Such lives are based **on exclusion**. In this work the unconscious contents remain bare **excluded** but in a strange fashion: not radically enough to allow for a secure differentiation between subject and object, and yet clearly enough for a defensive position to be established – one that implies a refusal but also a sublimating elaboration.

Who or what reduced the unconscious to this state of representation? It is a system of belief put in the place of **productions**. In our reality, social production becomes alienated into allegedly autonomous beliefs at the same time desiring production becomes enticed into allegedly unconscious representations.

The link between representation/belief and the family is not **accidental**. Representation **inflates** itself. In Oedipus it represents the family as myth and tragedy. The father has a role only as an agent of production and anti-production. The daughter confused the father body and the father’s love. In desiring seduction she is seduced/complies with the law of the father. (Maria Kozic, a woman artist within Popism).

Why have these forms and a whole **theatre** been installed where there were fields, workshops, factories, **units of production**. Michael Foucault has shown the break that production can make in the **theatre/world** of representation.<sup>2</sup> Production can be that of labour or that of desire, it can be social or **desiring**, it calls forth forces that no longer permit themselves to be **contained** in representation.

As Marx says, in capitalism the essence becomes **subjective**<sup>3</sup> – the activity of production **in general** – an ‘abstracted labour’ becomes something ‘real’ from which all the preceding social formations “some forgotten ads/what is this thing called Disco” can be reinterpreted from the point of view of a generalised decoding or a generalised process of deterritorialisation.

The identity of desire and labour is **not a myth**, it is rather the active utopia the capitalist limit to be overcome through desiring production. Capitalism is inseparable from the movement of deterritorialisation but this movement is exercised through factitious and artificial re-territorialisations. What is this thing called Disco?

Images, nothing but images. What is left in the end is an intimate familial theatre, the theatre of private man/woman which is no longer either desiring production or objective representation. The issues of this representation **now presents itself** (imaginary) infinite subjective representation – theatrical representation – structural, re-representation. The earth is **dead**, the desert is growing. We can muster all our strength so as to believe in these images, in a structure that governs our relationship with them (Popism, NGV, Melbourne Cool, at the National Gallery, Art and Text), and our identifications become as so many effects of a symbolic signifier.

What is represented is a lack – **desire** is necessarily a **missing** term whose very essence is **to be lacking**. Oedipus is **the displaced** – represented. Castration is the representative, the displacing agency, the signifier. Two operations of capture are – repressive social production replaced by beliefs/ideology;  
– repressed desiring production replaced by representation.

The dream theatre is everyone's in as much as everyone is within the closure/'subject', which is to say – has been reduced to a unified stable, sexually indifferent subject, "trapped in the old dream of symmetry". Sexual indifference is not lack of sexuality but lack of **any** different sexuality but woman as other – his appropriate opposite sex.

What is excluded from representation here but women's desire. According to Freud, the sight of women's genitalia horrifies the young boy because he sees **the lack**. Freud's theory must **oc/cult** female sexuality in order to manifest symmetry. Blind – also like Oedipus is blinded. There is an effervescence of object and sign – not of desire but of intolerable significance; they tumble over into non-sense or the impossible real, but they appear even so in spite of 'myself' (which is not) as abjection. Luce Irigaray <sup>4</sup> suggests that in Freud's theory the materiality of sex is obliterated by the **idea of sex**. In Luce Irigaray's reading of Freud she lays fiery siege to the phallus/the father's law, out of yearning to get beyond its prohibitions, and touch some masculine body. To get beyond the phallic representations in which women do not appear. Luce's reading of Freud's theory continually discovers an ignoring of pleasure. The theory of sexuality is a theory of the sexual function (ultimately the reproductive function) and the production of pleasure is displaced/re-territorialised in a capitalist economy. As long as woman has no desires that don't complement his, so she can mirror him, provide him with a representation of himself which calms his phobias about his castration anxiety (her otherness and difference) and support his narcissistic overinvestment in his penis.

Analytic work, writing/theory, is always political, always involved with power structures. To shore up the master's power, institutional power, and to ensure submission to the institutionalised discourse of POPISM is not my desire. I am here to lay witness to the works power to obliterate desire and specificity, specificity in an art historical Australian historical conjuncture, the specificities of women's desire – (not written in the work of Maria Kozic). An alternative reading is indicated which suggests a more incisive polemic concerned to challenge dominant conceptions of political and economic power, sexual relationships, social structure and **central** to popism-language and forms of discursive order.

What we have to question is the system of representation the discursive system at work in this socio-cultural functioning – a new Australianism. Instead of the visible/the specularisable being the dominant criteria it is the touch which for the female sex seems to be primordial: these "two lips" of mine are always joined in an embrace.

The fact that a good many of the psychic mechanisms discovered by Freud (such as repetition, death wish, sublimation or displacement) operate in our culture does not imply that they will always do so/nor that they should be 'normalised'.

Marcuse has pointed out that Art has the potential for radical form. <sup>5</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari theorise molecular biology in their “**desiring machines**”<sup>6</sup>. Irigaray says western thought has been dominated by the physics and the mechanics of solid matter whereas the feminine refers much more to the “mechanics of fluids” which has barely been elaborated<sup>7</sup>. Heterosexuality once it is exposed as an exchange of women between men (Levi Strauss) reveals itself as a mediated form of homosexuality – all penetration considered to be the sadistic penetration of the body’s unity, is thought according to the model of anal penetration<sup>8</sup>. But the vagina has a juicy receptivity which makes penetration not painful, but a free flowing exchange leaving no solid borders to be violated. The vagina flows with desire. It also flows with menstrual blood, which remains the last taboo because it is not a wound in the closure of the body – **it ignores the distinction virgin/deflowered.**

Representations are of the effects **on women** of male desire – (sex images, fetishised images, territorialised images). They are symptoms of the way in which women are subjected to this desire’s economy. By producing children, by reproducing the labour force, they continue to mediate the exchanges between men. Women’s bodies constitute the infrastructure of our society: they reproduce the forces of production without being recognised as a force of production.

Representation denies womens reality. Under the guise of the flesh/blood opposition the bloodless flesh is destined for man and the blood for god. (The blood of animal sacrifice). But blood as a vital element also refers to women, fertility and the assurance of fecundation. If thus becomes a fascinating semantic cross-roads, “the propitious place of abjection” where death and femininity, murder and procreation, cessation of life and vitality all **come together.**

Women are totally ‘censored’ in their carnal relationship with their mothers and other women. A woman if she cannot in one way or another recuperate her first object i.e. the possibility of keeping her earliest libidinal attachments by displacing them, is always **exiled** from herself.

The depositories of the body are women i.e. men can find the body in women and also the primal substance – but women cannot find this in men. The mystic’s familiarity with abjections is a point of infinite pleasure. Francis of Assisi visited leproseries to give out alms and left after having kissed each leper on the mouth. It would be necessary for women to be recognised as bodies with sexual attribute(s), desiring and uttering, and for men to rediscover the materiality of their bodies. There should no longer be this separation: sex/language on the one hand body/matter on the other. Then perhaps another history would be possible or another art than that which we are presently asked to contemplate.

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School of Art

University of Tasmania

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## FOOTNOTES

- (1) Julia Kristeva: *Powers of Horror: An Essay of Abjection*, Columbia U.P. 1980
- (2) Michel Foucault: *The Order of Things*, Random House, 1970
- (3) Karl Marx: Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right', Cambridge U.P. 1970
- (4) Luce Irigaray: *Ce Sexe Qui N'En Est Pas Un*, Editions de Minuit 1977
- (5) Herbert Marcuse: *The Aesthetic Dimension* MacMillan 1978
- (6) Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Anti Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* Viking Press, 1977
- (7) Luce Irigaray: La "Mecanique" Des Fluids *L'Arc* 58, 1974
- (8) Claude Levi-Strauss: *Totemism*, Beacon Press 1963  
Sigmund Freud: *Totem and Taboo*, Random House 1913