

Marie Sierra-Hughes, 'The different Seven', (Seven Histories of Australia), Arts and Entertainment, **Herald Sun**, Wednesday 37 September 1995, p.58

The different Seven

REVIEW

visual arts

Seven Histories of Australia

Where: Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, South Yarra

When: Until October 29

Domenico de Clario

Who Says Words With My Mouth (Why Organise a Universe This Way?)

Where: Michael Wardell Gallery, Richmond

When: Until October 7

By MARIE SIERRA-HUGHES

In *Seven Histories of Australia*, seven different artists tell seven different histories reflecting personal and public pasts.

The artists are Gordon Bennett, Lauren Berkowitz, Elizabeth Gertsakis, Anne Graham, Fiona McDonald, John Wolseley and H.J. Wedge. But this show is also another pearl in the chain of exhibitions that curator Clare Williamson has organised at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art.

Williamson has the ability to unite a disparate group of artists with one idea and then cause enough friction to make that show challenging and thought-provoking.

Nearly all the works here are strong but those by Bennett, Gertsakis and Graham stand out.

Bennett's two large panels in the large room at the centre deal with the larger frame of history; the displacement of Aborigines and their ongoing strength in the face of destruction to their culture. But in another room, there are more personal works, narratives drawn from Bennett's life experience as an urban Aboriginal in white suburbia.

These are extremely



Dose of art: Christopher Langton's exhibition *Sugar the Pill* is both a humorous and serious comment on the ills of modern culture and the cures we seek for them. More than 100 inflatable pills, tablets and capsules are piled up in the gallery space of The Basement in Collins St which — appropriately — began its life as the mixing room of an apothecary. Langton has had several shows here and this is one of his best. *Sugar the Pill* is on show until October 1.

powerful, addressing a range of issues about family, neighborhood and culture.

Back in the large room, Gertsakis displays three triptychs each starting their title with the words *Three Devotions*. They deal with concepts that loom large in white Western consciousness such as time, heaven, and destiny.

Partly derived from old school books and religious texts, Gertsakis' work also examines the history that is constructed through education and the danger in believing in what you're told. She exposes the ability of literature to construct several possible "truths".

Graham's work, done in

collaboration with Jacqueline Clayton, examines the suppressed history of the female inmate in Australia, particularly in the early part of this century.

THERE is a wall of mug shots and two glass showcases filled with items used by the inmates such as tailor's chalk and buttons.

Graham weaves a poignant story of oppression, often disguised as madness, but the works discussed here form only a part of the show. For a fine example of good work and good curatorship, don't miss this one.

Domenico de Clario's *Who Says Words With My Mouth*

(Why organise the universe this way?) is a small but powerful show combining poetry attributed to Jalal-al-din Rumi with drawings and text by the artist.

While this work attempts to identify and locate an "I", a tour around the room takes the viewer on a journey through the possible formulations of the self.

It finishes with a poem about the organisation of the universe, suggesting that in this life we should put most stock in our work. That is what is most enduring.

Written in a rather specialised handwriting, de Clario's exhibition is engrossing and contains a great deal of expansive thought in a very small room.