

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art Dallas Brooks Drive South Yarra Victoria Australia 3141
Tel+613 9654 6422 fax+613 9650 3438 acca@connect.net.au www.artnow.org.au Mon-Fri 11-5 Sat/Sun 12-5



**ARTS
VICTORIA**

Painted Spaces
David Thomas, Wilma Tabacco, Chris Heaphy,
Simon Morris, Richard Kirk, Phil Jones, Sabina Ott
17 March to 23 April
Opening 16 March 6-8pm

Painted Spaces

The walls are the newspaper of the people.

Sol LeWitt

Historically abstraction has broadly moved through three discursive phases, from the privileging of illusory expression, to the surface of the two-dimensional object and, more recently, to the possibilities of an interactive signifying space. These theoretical conditions, in particular contemporary concerns with representational space and non-objective painting, are clearly explored in the wall paintings that constitute Painted Spaces. These works suggest a reality beyond the surface of the image.

Upon entering the gallery space at ACCA the viewer is confronted with floor to ceiling, wall to wall seamless paintings; a kaleidoscope of colours and movement. It becomes a palpable space where the viewer – physically and perceptually overwhelmed – is compelled to consider the dialectics of the experience; the relationship between each painting, its associations and its relation to self. The viewer is placed in the midst of this continuous dialogue across real and representational space wherein the difference between figure and ground seemingly collapse.

For instance, Richard Kirk's work sits quietly on the wall, its hard edges resonating and defining the internal workings of the pictorial plane. But Sabina Ott's work cries out for a different kind of attention. Its symbolic rose motifs and semi-grid like structure (overlayed by video projection) create another type of dialogue; one that toys openly with the formal abstract aesthetics in the surrounding show. Simon Morris' geometric black and white wall painting is similarly concerned with playing on formal devices and patterning. But the patterns drawn from everyday life are reconfigured so that the viewer must decipher these in understanding his work. By creating these works directly on the surface of the gallery walls, removed from the confines of the canvas/object, these artists are collectively commenting on the art 'object' and on the architectural space and function of the gallery. So, rather than being a repository for the display of artwork the gallery space becomes 'active'. Its walls speak. If we are just becoming used to the difference between painting and installation then this exhibition sits awkwardly between, alternating, extending definitions of both, marking some obscured middle ground in the equation.

For example, the viewer becomes immersed in the dark depths of David Thomas' stark black gloss work. Yet, it explicitly suggests real space in its reflective, contemplative surface. By also projecting outward it signifies another presence (like most of the work in this exhibition); the presence of the viewer in concrete space that surrounds and frames the work. So meaning is generated from within and without - in other

words, the work is both externally and internally determined.

Phil Jones employs a similar strategy in his manipulation of real and pictorial space where luminous colours and geometric forms perceptually recede and protrude. Indeed, most of the work in Painted Spaces including Chris Heaphy's and Wilma Tabacco's wall paintings – pop in and out of the picture plane through visual illusion, simple optical devices, symbolic codes and differently coloured motifs.

Finally, the works in Painted Spaces are not permanent objects. Their temporal existence is emphatic yet transient where time momentarily stands still and moves on leaving only a memory of the encounter. By shifting the focus from the fixed object to this fleeting experience, the wall paintings in this exhibition encourage the viewer to engage in the continuing dialogue about art and painting, and to explore space and to perceive shifts in time – to relish in the painted spaces.

Natasha Bullock

Natasha Bullock is a Melbourne writer

Select Exhibitions

David Thomas

1997 Placements and Juxtapositions, Robert Lindsay Gallery, Melbourne
1996 Expanded Field: 500 Sites, West Space, Melb
1995 Untitled: Light and Dust 2, Robert Lindsay Gallery, Melbourne
1994 Untitled: Light and Dust, Australian Embassy, Paris
1993 New Works, Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

Sabina Ott

1997 Forum for Contemporary Art, St Louis, Missouri
1997 Mark Moore gallery, Santa Monica, California
1996 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
1996 RMIT Gallery, Melbourne
1995 Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, California
1995 Marsha Mateyka Gallery, Washington D.C.
1994 Haines Gallery, San Francisco, California
1994 Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, California

Simon Morris

1997 Simon Morris, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland
1996 New Work, New Work Studio, Wellington
1996 Structures, Artist project, Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton
1994 Choice of chance, School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury, Christchurch
1994 Option of surfacing, Gregory Flint Gallery, Auckland
1993 Options and operations, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Hamilton

Chris Heaphy

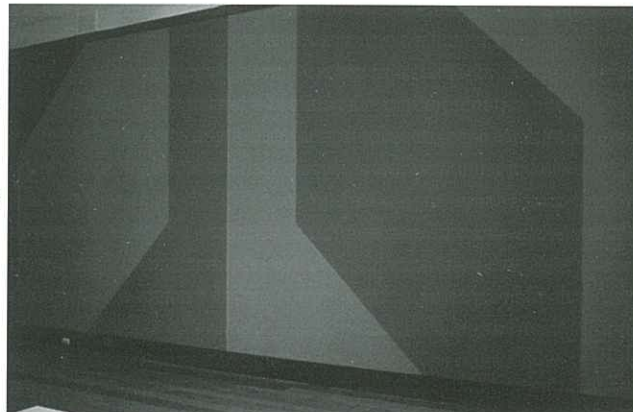
1997 In and Out of Place, 101 Collins Street, Melb
1997 Coded, Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton
1996 Visa Gold Card Award, Auckland City Art Gallery & Wellington City Art Gallery
1996 Pins and Needles, Bishop Suter Art Gallery, Nelson
1996 Kai Tahu Exhibition, Aigantighe Art Gallery, Timaru
1995 Korurangi: New Maori Art, Auckland City Gallery, Auckland
1995 A Very Peculiar Practice: Aspects of Recent New Zealand Painting, Wellington City Art Gallery

Richard A. Kirk

1998 John Gruzeliier Gallery, London
1998 Salon International d'Art, Budapest
1995 Galeries Bernard Jordon, Paris
1994 Galerie Bernard Jordon, Paris
1993 Novembre à Vitry, Paris
1992 Duncan of Jordanstone Exhibition, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Ecosse
1992 L'Entréedes Artists, Conseil General de Seine-St-Denis

Phillip Jones

1998 Interference, Westspace, Melbourne
1997 MFA show, Faculty gallery RMIT, Melbourne
1995 PJ JP, Beaumaris art group, Melbourne
1993 Meat Market community artspace, Melbourne



Images

Cover: David Thomas, 1999

Above: Phil Jones, Modular Wall Painting, 1998

Wilma Tabacco

1997 Cuts, with Irene Barberis, Victoria University Gallery, Melbourne
1997 Conversations (with Jan Murray), Westspace Gallery, Melbourne
1997 Primavera, Kookmin University Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
1997 Pot-Pourri, Savina Gallery, Seoul, South Korea
1997 Pageant, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne
1996 Tripping, Photospace, Canberra School of Art, Canberra
1995 Relocations, RMIT Gallery, Melbourne
1995 Fabrications, AGOG, Canberra
1995 Les Fleurs, Niagara Galleries, Melbourne

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Australian Centre for Contemporary Art.

Director: Jenepher Duncan

Curator: Stuart Koop

Gallery Co-ordinator: Vikki McInnes

ACCA is supported through the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria – Department of Premier and Cabinet. ACCA is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Online services provided by Spike. Printing by DI Print. Audio visual by Corporate Initiatives.

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