

# JOHN NIXON

THESIS

ACCA

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SELECTED WORKS FROM  
1968 - 1993

ACCA  
MELBOURNE  
1994

'To be an artist means to question the nature of art.' [John Nixon 1993]

The thesis of this exhibition is the relationship between the monochrome and the readymade. This thesis is a proposition, a theory submitted for discussion. In its apparent singularity, the thesis has many parts, like the leaves of a book, or the apples in an orchard. The exhibition is the means of articulating the thesis. In this case the exhibition is a space consisting of three rooms. Each room contains works which deal with the use of the object as an object placed in the context 'art'. The objects can be readymades such as a bicycle, a piano, tables, or they can be monochrome paintings presented either as themselves or with other readymades as supports (the book, the magazine).

The monochrome is 'ground zero'. In Room 1 of this exhibition the monochromes are small block paintings, so-called because of the thickness of their support which gives them a sense of objecthood. In their smallness they have an intense relationship to the size of the wall and the room. The Block paintings are about the exhibition space as much as they are about the materiality of painting. In Rooms 2 and 3 the works may be bigger but the relationship to the space of each room is always relevant.

The works in Room 1 were made between 1968 and 1971 during a period of artistic and political ferment. In 1968 conventional systems were tumbling as they had forty to fifty years earlier. The era was expansive for politics, society and art practice. It was also around this time that Nixon saw a retrospective exhibition of the work of Marcel Duchamp - it was his first encounter with a 'life's work'.

Room 1 contains early experiments by the artist - the Block paintings, Untitled/Black and Untitled/Cream, examine scale, context, the monochrome and the support of a painting (the structure of the stretcher); Untitled (Black Square/Thesaurus) 1970, a black square painted on a thesaurus - the object which 'supports' the monochrome in this case being a lexicon of meanings; Untitled (Black Square/Artforum), the May 1970 Artforum (a crucial support of contemporary art practice in the 1970s) with the painted black cover - a work which Carolyn Barnes has described as 'the iconicity of painting set against the linearity of language'; and finally Notes on Duchamp's Bottle-rack 1972 - Nixon's analysis of Duchamp's bottle-rack - a seminal work of that artist which analysed 'art' and its context.

Through an act of nomination the artist declares the object to be 'art'. In 1916, with regard to his purchase and inscription on an ordinary iron bottle-rack, Marcel Duchamp said 'Simply note that it was a bottle-rack which changed its destination.' [Marcel Duchamp, Milan 1993 p. 29]. Later he remarked that 'the act of choosing a readymade allowed him to 'reduce the idea of aesthetic consideration to the choice of the mind, not to the ability or cleverness of the hand which I objected to in many paintings of my generation...' he added that he was not concerned by the functional aspect of the readymade: 'that functionalism was already obliterated by the fact that I took it out of the earth and onto the planet of aesthetics.' [Marcel Duchamp, New York 1973 pp. 275-276]

Aesthetic, anti-aesthetic - a dialogue which continues throughout the twentieth century for one cannot exist without the other. Nixon chooses the anti-aesthetic



which encompasses both the analytical and the poetic. A word is a readymade too, put into service by the speaker/writer, moved from context to context. The word is the monochrome, a blank without relationship to the world unless one places it in a context, a sentence, a poem.

John Nixon draws 'diagrams' of his understanding of the world. Sometimes these maps are lines, sometimes circles, sometimes words in different configurations - sideways, upside down. The words are colours, objects, ideas. The objects are ordinary, working things - the dignity of manual labour is the equivalent of the dignity of art practice. The bicycle included in the work Self Portrait (History Painting - Bicycle and Hessian Paintings) 1988 in Room 2 happens to be Japanese but where one uses things or who uses them is secondary to the actual use. The labourer like the artist is active, productive and often itinerant. As the labourer produces in order to survive so does the artist.

'Art as matter, not art as illusion or narrative. The works make the materials existing in life, both the subject of art and art itself.' [John Nixon 1993]

This plainness is reflected always in Nixon's choice of materials and objects - hessian, enamel paint, ordinary timbers and masonite, new and used implements from the home, the field and the factory. The humbleness of a used implement is balanced by the pristine utilitarian design of the new - these are tools and instruments which have function and form. The used is valued for its service, the new for its simplicity of purpose - awaiting action.

'The new painter creates a world, the elements of which are also its implements, a sober, definite work without argument.' [Tristan Tzara *Dada Manifesto 1918* Art in Theory, UK 1993 p.250]

In Room 2 the black square, Salon des Independents/Black Square 1979 is, indebted to Nixon's study of the constructivists. In the early 1970s he had eschewed painting altogether in order to work entirely on texts and to inquire into social and political theory, and the history and philosophy of science. The formal simplicity and rigorous materiality of constructivist work from earlier this century has been taken up by the artist and developed into manifestations which are determinedly reductive, critical and poetic. Poetic because matter (that is, colour, the support or the texture) is neither static nor finite. Nothing is empty, simplicity is complex, poetry is active.

The relationship of one thing to another, one object to another is always in flux. In this sense John Nixon's work is theatrical. In this theatre of art and objecthood, the artist is at the centre. The artist is the fulcrum, but does not entirely control for the randomness and chance strategies of other scenographers such as Samuel Beckett and Jean-Luc Godard have been absorbed by Nixon. In order for the most formal and disciplined of choreographers to exist there must always be an element of the opposite.

The Experimental Painting Workshop in Room 3 has no beginning and no end. The rearrangements from studio to studio, gallery to gallery, city to city, testify to proliferation in reductionism. The balances struck in the EPW are those of the cross to the monochrome; the monochrome to the readymade; the artist to society; the

labourer to the harvest; the one to the many. The fundamental and the esoteric are poised. The EPW is always different from its previous manifestations yet remains true to its essential tenets. It also reveals the faithfulness of the artist to the ideas and practice of Faktura, one of the crucial principles of constructivism.

'Faktura is the whole process of the working of material...Here the material is understood in its new state...The material is the body, the matter. The transformation of this new material into one form or another continues to remind us of its primary form and conveys to us the next possibility in its transformation.' [Alexei Gan, from *Constructivism 1922* Art in Theory, UK 1993 p. 319]

The EPW is a body of work in many parts: each cross, each monochrome, each object is part of the building of a whole which is constantly being redefined. The EPW is an ongoing experiment because the artist is able to re-use his own history. He is at liberty to re-activate various aspects of his past as part of his present investigation.

This present, in 1994, reveals the leitmotif of the black square which is the punctuation mark in each room of work by John Nixon. Opposite the EPW in Room 3 there is Monochrome/Piano 1992 consisting of a grand piano and a black monochrome which cuts across a corner of the modernist cube - a yellow cube, not white. The work retains its rich modernist history from Kasimir Malevich to Joseph Beuys but replaces the white space of modernism with a bright yellow.

Nixon does not look back through history with nostalgia but with knowledge and respect - the formal experiment of the constructivists is brought forward into the present and transformed through a conceptualist inquiry into the meaning of art. Each room in this exhibition of 25 years work presents a discussion of history, modernity, non-objectivity and the readymade. The rooms encapsulate historical moments in the development of Nixon's work within the project of radical Modernism.

© Judy Annear  
Sydney 1993

**NOTES ON  
THE EXPERIMENTAL PAINTING WORKSHOP  
(EPW)**

The EPW is a workshop for experimental painting. This Workshop is a vehicle for an independent investigation into painting. It is within the idea and practice of the Workshop, that painting is developed through a program of ongoing research using principles of Minimalism, the Monochrome, Non-Objectivity and Konstruktivism.

The EPW is not a physical workshop, it is an intellectual proposition, and as such can be carried out in situ in any world city where various local materials and objects are often used in the production of the works for exhibition.<sup>1</sup>

The name EPW was first used in 1990 as the title of an exhibition at City Gallery, Melbourne consisting of the previous three years work produced in Brisbane. However, the actual investigation into the fundamental tendencies of painting as indicated by the term EPW, began in London in 1978 and its proceedings were first exhibited at Art Projects, Melbourne in 1982<sup>2</sup>

The EPW ruptures the traditional limits of painting (narrative/pictorialism/realism) to question its given nature through analytical/formal research. It proposes freedom in artistic work as the organising



principle, specifically through the relationship of the essential formal elements: colour / structure, surface / plane, object / volume, form / technique, material / space and the modus operandi of pragmatism / intuition, geometry / the materials of everyday life. The EPW is a repository of ideas and models of non-objective experiment. The proceedings of the workshop are disseminated through discussion, pamphlets and exhibitions.

Work made under the banner of EPW include the categories of block paintings, monochromes, cross paintings, object paintings and constructions<sup>3</sup>. The primary materials of the work are: enamel paint, felt, masonite, cardboard, canvasboard, wood, metal, plywood, canvas, hessian and denim. The geometric forms are: the square, rectangle, cross, stripe, circle, letter, triangle, diagonal. Objects used include: the spoon, plate, bottle, hammer, saw, coins, newspaper and enamel saucepan. Konstructions are made from combinations of the above.

Paintings range in approximate size from the block paintings (9-15cm square) to medium sized works (30-60cm square) to large paintings (180-240cm square). The basic colours used are: red, yellow, black, white, dark blue, mid green, carmine, dark brown, pink, ultramarine blue.

The use of actual objects is integral to the material nature of the EPW. Often they are attached to the surface of the paintings, at other times the relationship is reversed and the object becomes the support for the painting. Objects are chosen as generic, representative of their type. In this they fulfil the same function as the limited range of colours, forms and materials used within the boundaries that define the EPW. Exhibitions titled **Experimental Painting + Object Workshop (EP+OW)** combine paintings from the EPW often with larger readymade objects such as: the bicycle, cardboard box, cupboard, grand piano, chair and suitcase.

This "culture of materials" is employed from the wider world. The works make the materials existing in everyday life, both the subject of art and art itself - they are objects, not art as illusion, but art as matter. The EPW is an index of its own materiality and its methods of production.

Within the practice of the EPW, the first problem is the resolution of the individual work, the second is the display which constitutes an investigation into the nature of exhibition practice. The methods of display used highlight the work's function as research. Each exhibition presents the range of the proceedings from a given period, from one month to five years depending on circumstances. The exhibition is provisional in relation to the particular space to be used for display and to the possibilities already realised. Paintings from the EPW are often displayed en-masse over the walls and floor, or on tables. Works can also be exhibited singularly as each is intended as an independent statement.

The EPW posits a position of critical action - a manifesto for practice.

John Nixon  
Sydney  
4 December 1993

<sup>1</sup> Solo exhibitions of the EPW and EP+OW have been held in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Geelong, Auckland, Nice, Tübingen, Brussels, Zagreb, Belgrade, Köln, Reutlingen, New York and Zurich.

<sup>2</sup> The EPW is part of the larger project of the oeuvre from 1968 onwards which includes minimal and conceptual work, film, photography, installation, artists' books and publications.

<sup>3</sup> Block paintings and Monochrome paintings from 1968 onwards are self contained subcategories which can be included within the EPW. See the pamphlets *Monochrome*, Store 5, Melbourne 1992 and *Block Paintings 1968-70, 1992-93*, Black Cherry Press, Sydney, 1993.

## INTERVIEW

John Nixon with Ben Curnow

*This exhibition at A.C.C.A. consists of a selection of works from 1968 to 1993 and specifically focuses on how your work has developed since the late 1960s in terms of the monochrome or Black Square painting and the readymade. Can you begin by commenting on the earliest paintings from 1968 and how they relate to the critical position that you have subsequently extended?*

These early Minimal works were actually a position from which I could work. I mean I had come to this position from doing other abstract paintings, but this was the hard-core version. The theory of Clement Greenberg about the primary nature of painting—that you're essentially dealing with the flat surface and an edge—were quite influential: I took this theory and then made these very simple, Minimal paintings. I thought that it provided quite an intelligent understanding and method for the analysis of painting, by looking at the basic values and functions of painting as against sculpture or other art forms.

And I'd never really been interested in illusionism, so once I'd connected with something where, okay, the surface is flat, well why not paint it a flat colour; or two colours; and why not make it thick, or make it small, or make it large? I couldn't make it large, which is what a lot of the American artists like Barnett Newman or Ad Reinhardt, whose work I admired a lot, had done. I didn't have the economic means or the studio facilities to make large paintings.

So I made these very small paintings, because I could argue my point, theoretically and intellectually, about the surface and the thickness and the objectness of the painting without it having to be ten foot square. And by placing these small Minimal paintings on one wall, I began to incorporate the other aspects of art—its display, its placement on the wall, its placement in the room—into my analysis of what art was meant to be. It was no longer in the realm of the frame. And so from that position, which brought in other things, I learnt that you have to keep asking questions. You've got an open-ended system then. You're opening up the fact that a single painting can be an exhibition—that's a proposition.

My premise as a young artist was to begin to analyse what it was to make a work of art, to make an exhibition; what it was to be an artist. These were all questioned, they weren't just accepted. And I wanted to be a *radical* artist. It's the same as a young person who's studying music and doesn't want to work within the tradition of the classical composers or classical performers but sees this as a position to rebel against and then analyse the situation of music from that contemporary point of view. Minimalism and Conceptualism were the movements that were questioning what art could be in the late 1960s and 1970s, so that's what I became interested in.

*Around 1971 you turned from making paintings to a Conceptual practice, using language. Throughout most of the 1970s, your work was typically presented as polemics or critiques in the form of typed text, on sheets of paper or index cards. While your earlier use of Greenberg's art theory had been oriented towards the*



*pragmatics of painting, at this time you were mostly dealing with ideas from outside of purely 'artistic' discourses, including cultural criticism and the theory of knowledge.*

Yes, that's what followed. After doing two hundred or so of these small Minimal paintings, the work then developed into using some form of text because language was the vehicle with which I could declare my intentions more clearly. I had made the most simple paintings I could—I had declared my intention in painting as minimally and as succinctly as I thought possible—and then it was a matter of developing this by analysing other aspects about art.

That's when I began to deal with Conceptual Art and with language. A study of the history and philosophy of science as a paradigm for investigation gave me some insight into how one could analyse the nature and role of art. Most of the work I did at that time was based upon reading and writing; until I'd exhausted that kind of theoretical position, and then the work developed to utilise a different kind of language. Instead of being purely analytical, it started to incorporate some things about everyday life, and some things which were quite anarchistic, kind of Dada-esque, to somehow shake up this system.

*By about 1978 you returned to a practice involving the material production of paintings again. How did that come about?*

After the period of Conceptual Art, the work moves to an analysis of the history of radical modernism. The knowledge and methodologies that I'd acquired from the history and philosophy of science—the notion of 'paradigms' and 'paradigm shifts'—were transferred onto the history of twentieth-century radical art. So Dada, Constructivism, Suprematism, Futurism, were looked at and studied then. I saw that the foundations had been laid in that period but that there was a strong position to develop from. And that's where we begin to get into the kind of analysis of the readymade and the monochrome painting, or the geometric painting, and the syntheses of these things, for which I am now known.

The monochrome and the readymade are two vehicles with which the artist can analyse contemporary art in the twentieth century. These are the two vehicles that I have chosen to work with, because they represent, let's say, the most basic forms of practice—and practice as choice (or nomination), not practice as skill. So already you're working within the intellectual terrain, not in terms of technique.

*The work 'Notes on Duchamp's Bottle Rack' (1971) is interesting in this respect, since it appears to prefigure your direct engagement with these inaugural precepts of radical modern art.*

Yes, because it deals specifically with one of Marcel Duchamp's works of art. But the books—the *Thesaurus/Black Square* and the *Black Square on the Artforum*—are both readymades, or objects from daily life; so in terms of the use of the readymade in my own work, there are some things such as these that predate the *Notes on Duchamp's Bottle Rack*.

*Other Conceptual artists were interested in the readymade as a propositional strategy during the 1960s and 1970s, but can we be more specific here about your interpretation of the readymade in these earlier works, and how this extends to the way that you use objects in your work today?*

What interested me was that I could use a *Thesaurus* or a copy of *Artforum*, which could still function as useful publications. In this way, I didn't privilege only their artistic value. This led me to work on the piece, *Notes on Duchamp's Bottle Rack*, which analyses the relationship of Duchamp's *Bottle Rack* to (a) its original function as a bottle rack, and (b) its secondary function, now its 'primary' function, as a work of art—this text is really about this paradox. The use of the everyday object, its function and role in the arena of art, is something that I have continued to work with.

*It seems to me that Duchamp's objects are usually banal, arbitrary ones in terms of meaning, whereas the objects that you choose are quite loaded. In your work from the early 1980s onwards, the piano, bicycle, suitcase and so on almost seem to function as a kind of imagery—a material form of imagery.*

The objects that Duchamp used are, within his theoretical parameters, meant to be banal and, in a way, a choice which was not a choice—because he was trying to devalue aesthetics. Also, they were objects of daily life at the time; it would be very difficult to get a bottle rack like this today; there are certain things that function in his work which are only of his time. My use of readymade objects, in relation to my own work, is not with this idea of the non-aesthetic but with the idea of a world-view; so they are deliberately chosen.

*There is a sense about the readymade objects in your work of their being 'classic' objects, and sometimes they seem to me somehow romantic or 'of the past.'*

They are actually chosen because they are classic objects of their own type. Everybody knows that a suitcase looks like this. Everybody knows that a bicycle looks like this. My intention is to present these objects in terms of their Gestalt, so that it is known and therefore not dwelt upon. In the same way, I use colours or forms in my work that have a simplicity so that the novelty value of the object doesn't take over.

The objects are chosen from my daily life, so whilst they might appear to look a little bit old-fashioned or whatever, they do exist now, in society. They can be purchased from stores. It's like saying Levi's are 'of the past' because they first originated 140 years ago, whereas they are elements of contemporary life. The objects chosen are also authentic to my lifestyle, so they have a 'real' function. Often the actual objects have had some use in my life, either before or after their secondment or placement within the exhibition. A suitcase which is in one exhibition can then be taken on the next flight to Los Angeles, as a suitcase again. Its function is not lost.

*What about the grand piano in some of your room installations? It is not so literally something you would use in your daily life, so is it a different kind of connotative object in terms of your employment of readymades?*



Yes, but it's also a matter of interpreting my use of the readymade object more generally within an Art/Life dialectic. I'm interested in utilising aspects of other disciplines or activities—such as labour (I use a number of tools in my work); or travel; or music. There are other musical instruments in the work; not only the grand piano but violins and cellos, for example.

The history of music is referred to in the work, without there actually being any audible music. Perhaps the main point is that I use these instruments as the 'tools' of another discipline; they are as functional as the tools of carpentry, the saw and the hammer. They are the possible means to make the work of art—so the work of art can incorporate its own potentiality.

*An instrument is constructed precisely to be played and heard, and its shape is a requisite of how it will sound and how it can be accommodated by the musician.*

Yes, I think that it's the 'form follows function' aspect of all of the readymade objects that I use, that interests me—their authenticity to their shape and so forth. There are also objects which, when they are dislocated from their original placement, might be seen more as a surreal object, or as an object without a function. And these are the kind of objects which I *wouldn't* use. Another artist may deliberately use these very objects.

*Duchamp's 'Fountain' (1917), for example, transforms a urinal into a 'surreal' kind of object. Other artists have followed up that aspect of the readymade.*

Yes, a whole lineage of surrealist-oriented artists. Many of the objects, because they were dislocated from their original place of function, became a kind of tricky object. Like the *Trap* [1917]—when nailed to the floor, the coat rack is something which would trip you over rather than enable you to hang your coat. There are many works of Duchamp's in which this sense of the surreal is encompassed in the readymade.

*Bottle Rack* [1914], for me, was one of the most classic works, because it was not changed. It could also still have been used to put bottles on. Whereas the *Bicycle Wheel* [1914] formed a dialogue in which the wheel and the stool were no longer able to be used according to their original purpose.

*If Duchamp tended to exploit the defamiliarising effect of placing the everyday object in the aesthetic realm, whereby the object becomes strange, is this so much a part of how you employ objects?*

Not so much. I see Duchamp's use of the readymade as basically founded on the nomination of particular objects to function as works of art. Now once that principle is accepted, you can nominate many different things, for many different reasons. That is why the readymade has an ongoing relevance to the art of today. In the case of my use of the readymade, most importantly the objects exist in a kind of two-way function.

*You have used the word 'dialectics' in your notes on the E.P.W. and on the monochrome, and since it may have some specialised meanings in theoretical terms, can you clarify your particular usage of it?*

In the Chambers Dictionary 'dialectics' is defined as: 'The art of discussing, especially a debate which seeks to resolve the conflict between two opposing theories rather than dispute any one of them; that branch of logic which teaches the rules and modes of reasoning.' Now it's really this form of the term 'dialectics' that I use in my work—not Marxist dialectical materialism, for instance. I use the term in relationship to (for example) Art and Life, Matter and Poetry, Art and Anti-Art, Logic and Illogic, Theory and Practice. It's this use of the term, as an instrument of logic and understanding, which will lead to research. Dialectics provides a type of methodological reasoning in which I maintain a dialogue between opposites.

*In the end is there some kind of equilibration or resolution of opposites within the conceptual framework of your oeuvre, or does the dialectical relation of even the parts to the whole result instead in some sort of total heterogeneity?*

What you end up with is a world-view which can encompass many positions. This is quite different from, say, the classic modernist who will continue along purist lines. My method of investigation is not, in this sense, purist—it's more anarchistic. It will allow me to do the opposite; it will allow me to be more exploratory.

*Some accounts of your work have emphasized that it is repetitive, and this surprises me because, while you do have a number of things that you're sustaining and there is a value to this insistence, it is not in any way 'serial'.*

Not at all. It's more to do with the reinforcement of the position; it's more iconoclastic. I'm not interested in serial art. I am more interested in the broader picture. My overall work is a refutation of repetitiveness.

*Can we also discuss your use of the word 'research' in reference to your work? Research is sometimes considered in strict opposition to teaching, and therefore has associations of being esoteric. On the other hand, genuine research necessarily applies to a community of research, and ultimately addresses the wider public through the knowledge it produces.*

My understanding of the function and role of the artist is that the polemic and the dissemination of a theoretical position is crucial. It's not to do with personal research for the sake of being hermetic; quite the opposite.

I'm more interested, in this respect, in what I have learnt from artists like Marcel Duchamp and Kasimir Malevich, and later Joseph Beuys, Joseph Kosuth—the function of the work of these artists is to disseminate these ideas into the wider world, and to *encourage* the research across a broader range of people. For me, the value of an artist's work is how much other artists can take from that work. If no one ever picks up the book, so to speak, finally what was the point of writing it?

I am interested in other artists—not only in Australia, but in the rest of the world—in their investigations into the same kind of territories that I have developed. I am interested in that we can have a discussion and a debate, and we have the ability, let us say, to show the differences within our research—not only



in material but in intellectual terms. And these things are also related to the country that the person is living in, and the kind of work you can do within that situation. The situation is very different in Zagreb, for example, as it is in Melbourne, or, very different in Zurich, or very different in New York. I am interested in the work of my contemporaries from all over the world who are also working with the principles of non-objective art and the readymade, pursuing these lines of inquiry as an active part of the present.

*In terms of making the 'proceedings' of your research public, your record of activity in exhibiting and publishing has been extraordinary. But the public reception of what you do is not always sympathetic, due to the fact that predominant expectations vis-a-vis artistic function (largely established through the education system and mainstream books) differ from your paradigms of practice. How is it possible to address this problem?*

Knowledge is gained through reading and through discussing, and this is how—through study—people understand things to be different from their preconceptions. If the audience will not read or will not enter into discussion, their prejudices about contemporary art will be maintained. It's the same throughout any learning experience. What I'm trying to do in my exhibitions, and my texts, is to offer an exposition of ideas. That is the primary function of the exhibition, or the manifesto or the text. It is a declaration of intention, to be received by an audience.

*The art doesn't merely invite 'intelligent' approaches to individual works, then, but necessitates serious intellectual activity. Is there an extent to which the Australian context in which your work has developed, and which may be less attuned to the intellectual parameters of your work than, say, a European context, may have conditioned your 'didactic' mode of presentation or created a need for you to 'state the obvious,' in a sense, by reiterating the fundamental premises of the work continually?*

I know what you mean, but this 'stating of the obvious' is not the obvious to most people in this country; that is one reason why it's necessary for me to continue with a didactic position—one of continually writing, publishing and exhibiting examples of my investigation.

But, in a way, it's also to generate a sense of clarity. It's to develop a sense of the essentials of what it is you're trying to do—so that the exhibition, or the text or whatever, will be clear and sound in respect of that. And I mean I would do that when I'm having an exhibition in New York or in Cologne, or in Zurich. I would do the same thing.

*Going back to the 1960s, it seems that the Australian experience of modernism in art was rather superficial as well as belated. Modernism has substantially been equated with the 'Field' generation of artists, who rose to fame on the basis of 'hard edge' styles in the late 1960s. Reactions against what that type of art was seen as standing for have basically promulgated a premise of "anything goes" which then easily merges into the arrival of postmodernist ideas. Arguably modernism itself wasn't properly understood or worked through.*

Yes, well it wasn't, and what happened was that the American version of Late Modernism became 'modernism'—whereas it was only one late cultural derivation of it. But if one looks at the actual premises of modernism, as developed in the second decade of this century, then you're looking at something completely different.

*So the revisionary aspect of your work can be understood in terms of a need to start at the beginning, in a way?*

Yes, it's like starting at the beginning. The 'alphabet' that I use was prepared during the second decade of this century. And it's an understanding of what that alphabet is that is important.

*Your employment of the Black Square or monochrome painting and the readymade sui generis, then, is basically a question of reiterating their inaugural value?*

Reiterating these values, yes, and working with them in the present. That's why I say that my work's a continuation of radical modernism. At first hand it's an understanding of the premises of radical modernism, and it's a development of those premises into the late twentieth century. That itself is a position. It doesn't have to be made into a lightbox, or we don't have to use the latest Phillipe Starck designed electric drill, to bring the monochrome or the readymade into the late twentieth century. You see what I mean? It's not that sense of progress.

*But you would maintain a position that the advent of these forms essentially rendered older ideas about art redundant, so that in effect a return to figurative or illusionistic basis for art is a regressive tendency?*

Non-objective art is the art of the twentieth century—like the skyscraper, the jet plane, pop music, cinema, television. These are great examples of twentieth century Western culture. I believe that non-objective art, Minimalism, and Conceptualism are the seminal developments in art of our time. The twentieth century has shown that visual narrative (and here I am not talking about the development of the novel over this century) can be most interestingly dealt with by the mediums of film, photography, television, the magazine and the billboard.

Therefore painting, which was re-invented with the Black Suprematist Square [1914-15] has been liberated to follow another path from that of narrative or pictorial illusion, developing the *idea* of painting and not the craft. This recognizes the demise of painting as craft, and the redevelopment of painting as an act of nomination, using, in my case, geometry, colour, flatness and material.

I would like to posit that realistic painting is outmoded and merely nostalgic in the twentieth century, due to the increase in the mechanical production of images. The function of 'picturing' the world need no longer be fulfilled by painting. I would rather be looking at a river, or swimming in it, than have a painting of a river on a wall. My art functions within the fabric of life, rather than illustrating life. The materiality of my work is part of the materiality of



experience. I work from the premise that the work of art exists in a 'real,' physical rather than illusory world.

I also respect other artists working from a position different from my own, but believe that most importantly, an artist must have a critical and questioning attitude towards the theory and practice of art.

*Considering your use of the term 'non-objectivity' and its particular identification with the work of Kasimir Malevich, how specifically does your usage pertain to its historical origins?*

The term 'non-objectivity' was originally used in respect of Russian Constructivist painting, instead of the contemporary term 'abstract' painting because 'abstract' painting tended to be able to mean many more things than 'non-objective' painting. For example, some forms of abstract art have been abstracted from nature (that's one of the usages of the term 'abstract').

I wanted to utilise a word which did not have this type of realistic basis, but referred to an art that could be constructed from its own formal and conceptual rules, not relating to mimesis or nature. I wanted to make this 'non-objective' principle quite clear.

*In certain writings by Malevich there is a dialogue with the philosophy of Schopenhauer (1788-1860) from which I believe he derived the word 'non-objective,' in the course of justifying his arrival at an absolutely non-mimetic point. Is that level of historical detail, for instance, at all relevant to your concept of non-objectivity?*

My use of the word 'non-objective' is not as specific as that.

*How does a continuity with the concerns of early twentieth-century Russian Constructivism actually come about?*

Well, really through an understanding of Minimalism. Russian Constructivism was an historical precedent to Minimalism. I began with research into Minimalism, then looked at Russian Constructivism, in which I found principles to go on with and develop in the late twentieth century rather than just repeat what happened.

Because my first interest as a young artist was with Minimalism (that was the art of the time which interested me) from that I had to, if you like, find out about another history. The finding of Malevich and Duchamp provided something which in my mind was comparative, or similar. The *Black Square* and the *Bottle Rack* became, for me, two moments of the break with tradition—of painting and of object-making, respectively—through the monochrome and the readymade.

You have to also understand that these artists did many different types of work in their total oeuvre, and that their whole life's work is not based upon these two individual works. I didn't, for example, take from Malevich the idea of Suprematist painting; it was the idea of the *Black Square* that interested me. Suprematist painting embodies very different concerns from mine—forms placed all over the picture, with many colours and many shapes, constituting relational painting.

What I saw in terms of the *Black Square* was a non-relational painting, which

was related to my understanding of Minimalism. So it's really an understanding of the *Black Square* through Minimalism, rather than an understanding of the *Black Square* through research into Russian history and the icon and so forth.

*In a sense, it is necessarily different from the original model because of an element of translation that is involved over time.*

Yes, in terms of the context of my own work, and because of the work that was interesting me at the time as a young artist. I was aware of the value of, for example, Yves Klein's paintings or Ad Reinhardt's paintings, as extensions of the *Black Square*. They were relatively more contemporaneous with my development as an artist, as were the Minimal works of Donald Judd and Carl Andre. All of this must be seen to influence a reading of the *Black Square*. You see, in that sense what we have is not so much simple information but quite complex information.

Malevich's *Black Square* was the key work, because it is the very work which forwards nomination as the 'idea' of painting. What I'm suggesting here is that we have an understanding of the *Black Square* and the *Bottle Rack*, which is where I began my investigation, and which continues into the present.

*This interview is an edited version of the transcripts of two discussions held with the artist in Sydney during early January, 1994. [Ben Curnow.]*

## CATALOGUE OF WORKS

### ROOM I

1. **Untitled (Black)** 1968, Enamel on canvas
2. **Untitled (Cream)** 1968, Enamel on canvas
3. **Untitled (Black Square/Thesaurus)** 1970, Enamel on canvas on Roget's Thesaurus
4. **Untitled (Black Square/Artforum)** 1970, Enamel on Artforum magazine
5. **Notes on Duchamp's Bottle Rack** 1971, Photograph and eleven type-written pages

### ROOM II

1. **Salon des Independents: Black Square** 1979, Enamel on masonite
2. **Self Portrait (History Painting)** 1988, Bicycle and hessian paintings

### ROOM III

1. **Monochrome/Piano** 1992, Black piano, monochrome painting and yellow walls
2. **E.P.W.** 1986-1993, Enamel on various materials with tressel tables

The photographs used to illustrate the works in this catalogue document the original installations of these works. The installation of the E.P.W. in Room III is a new installation made for the purpose of this exhibition, and the photographs represent recent examples of a similar nature.



1968

1968

1968

1968

1968

1968

1968

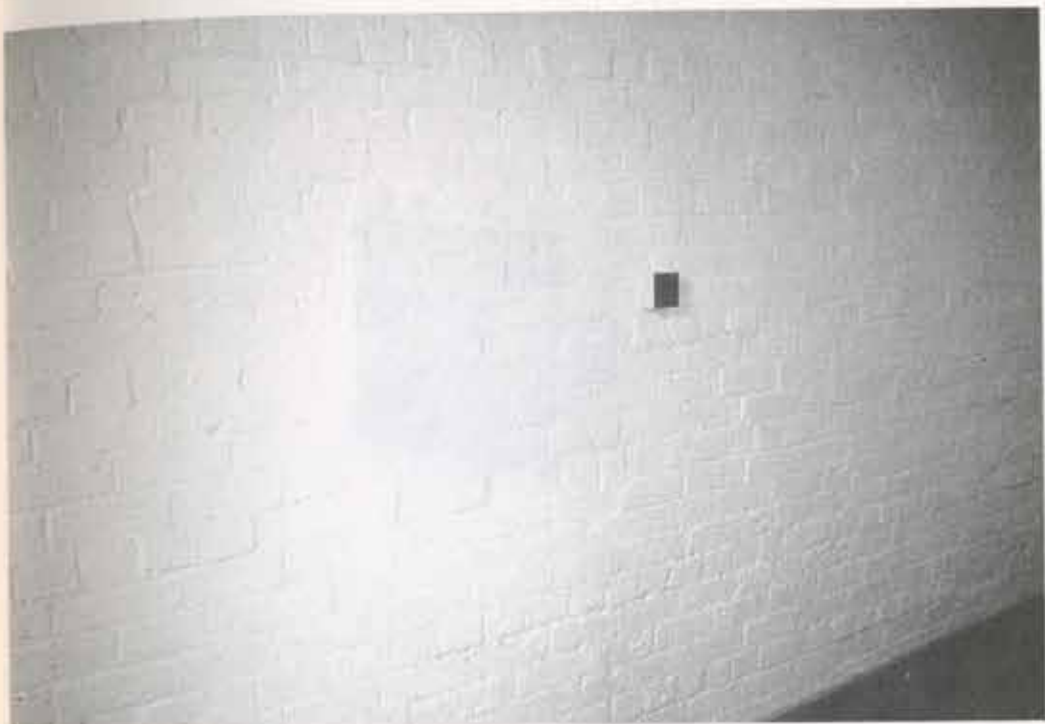
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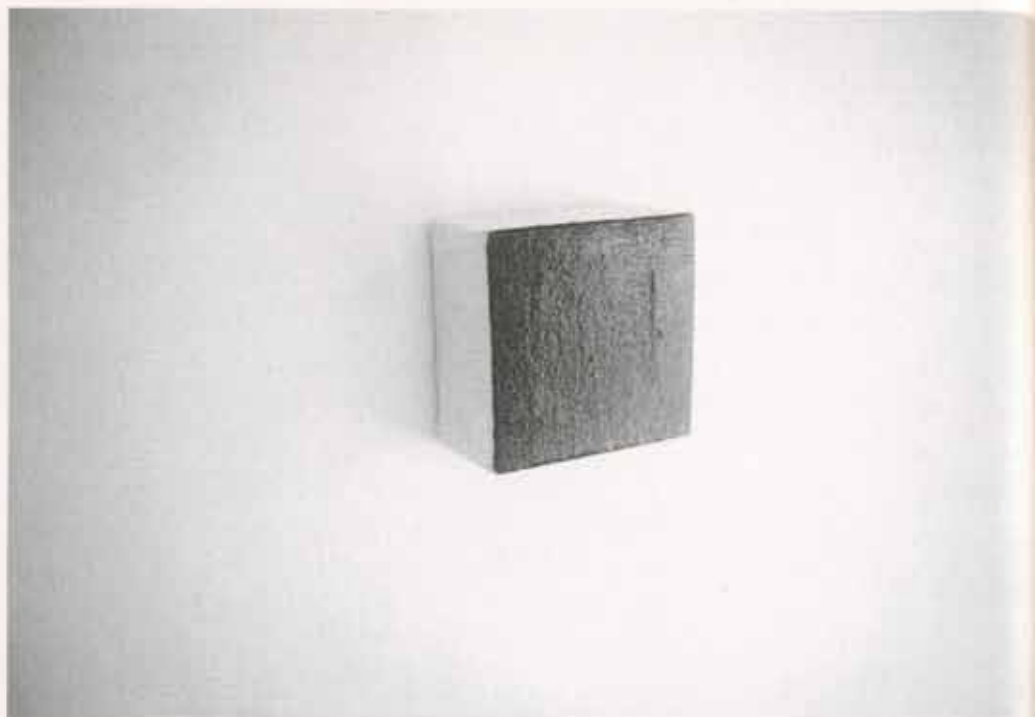
1968

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Untitled (Black) 1968  
Enamel on canvas



**Untitled (Black) 1968**  
Enamel on canvas

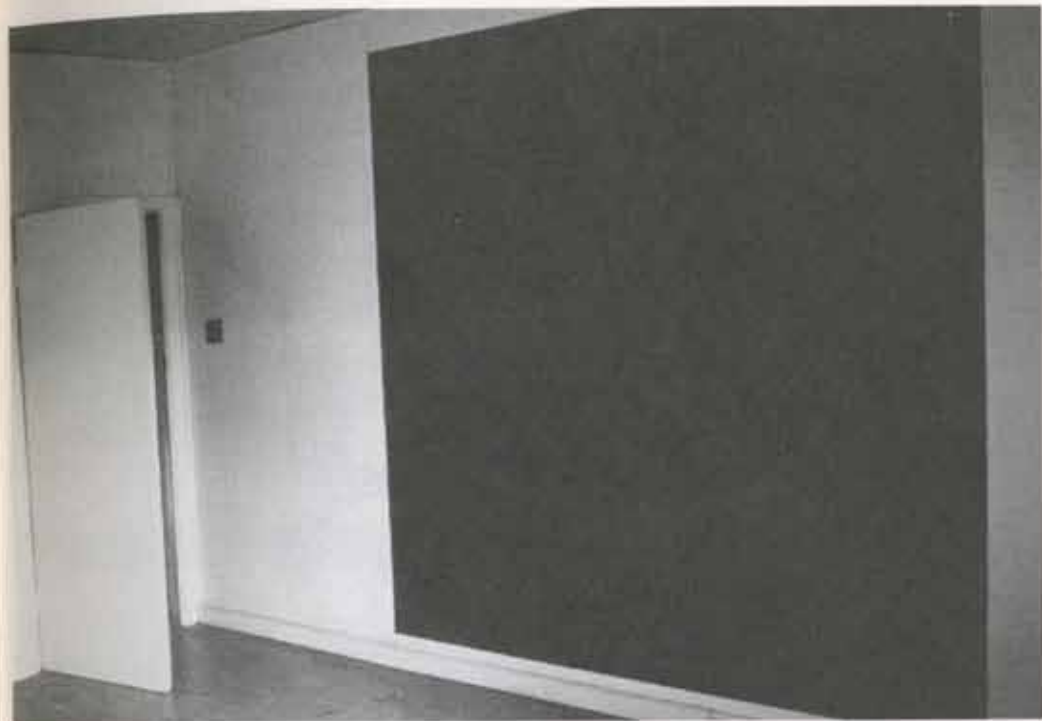


**Untitled (Black Square/Thesaurus) 1970**  
Enamel on canvas on Roget's Thesaurus

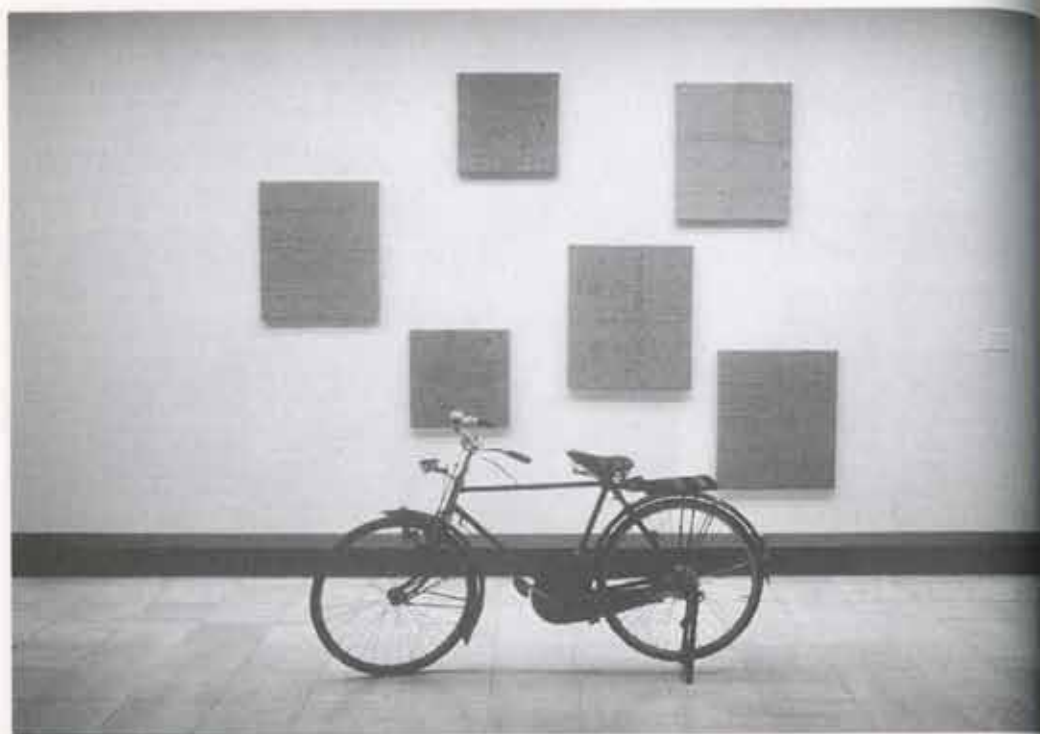




**Notes on Duchamp's Bottle Rack 1971**  
Photograph and eleven type-written pages



**Salon des Independents**  
**Black Square 1979**  
Wall Painting  
(Exhibited: European Dialogue, Biennale of Sydney,  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 1979)

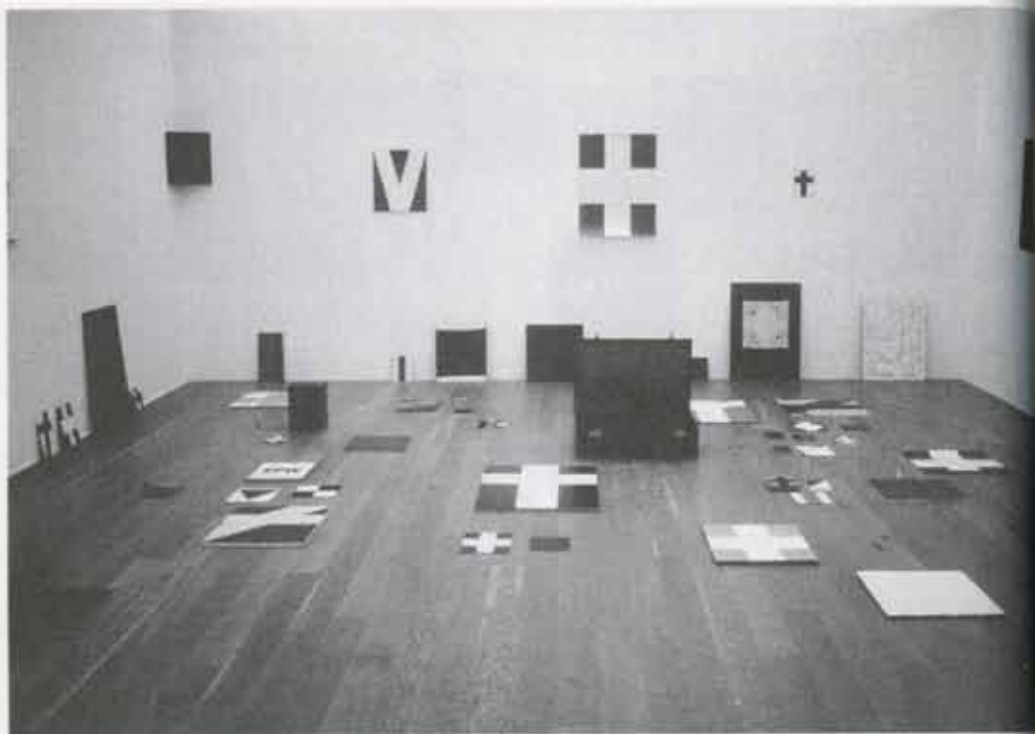


**Self Portrait (History Painting) 1988**  
Bicycle and hessian paintings  
Edge to Edge, Australian Contemporary Art to Japan  
The National Museum of Art, Osaka, 1988



**Monochrome/Piano 1992**  
Black piano, monochrome painting and yellow walls  
Strangers in Paradise, Contemporary Australian Art to Korea  
The Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, 1992





**E.P.W. 1985-1981**  
Enamel on various materials  
Stiftung für Konkrete Kunst, Reutlingen, 1991-1992



**E.P.W. 1990-1993**  
Enamel on various materials, with tressel tables  
Galerie Mark Müller, Zurich, 1993



# FAKTURA

**JOHN NIXON  
ARTIST**

Small, faint text at the bottom left of the page, possibly a footer or contact information.

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Small, faint text at the bottom right of the page.

1913

Klein

Turin Hannover

Manson

(the artist)

white Malevich

1915

Amsterdam NYC

red

Duchamp yellow

(the musician)

1914 Newman

Dusseldorf (the poet)

Munch

brown Oslo

Blok The Black Square

1916

Paris Artists Shit

(the flute) Melbourne

Brecht (the grand piano)

The Sun

Schwitters

Beuys

1918

Kandinsky MERZ

black

St. Petersburg red

(the violin)

hobby-horse

Fontana Rodchenko

The Bottle Rack

# FAKTURA

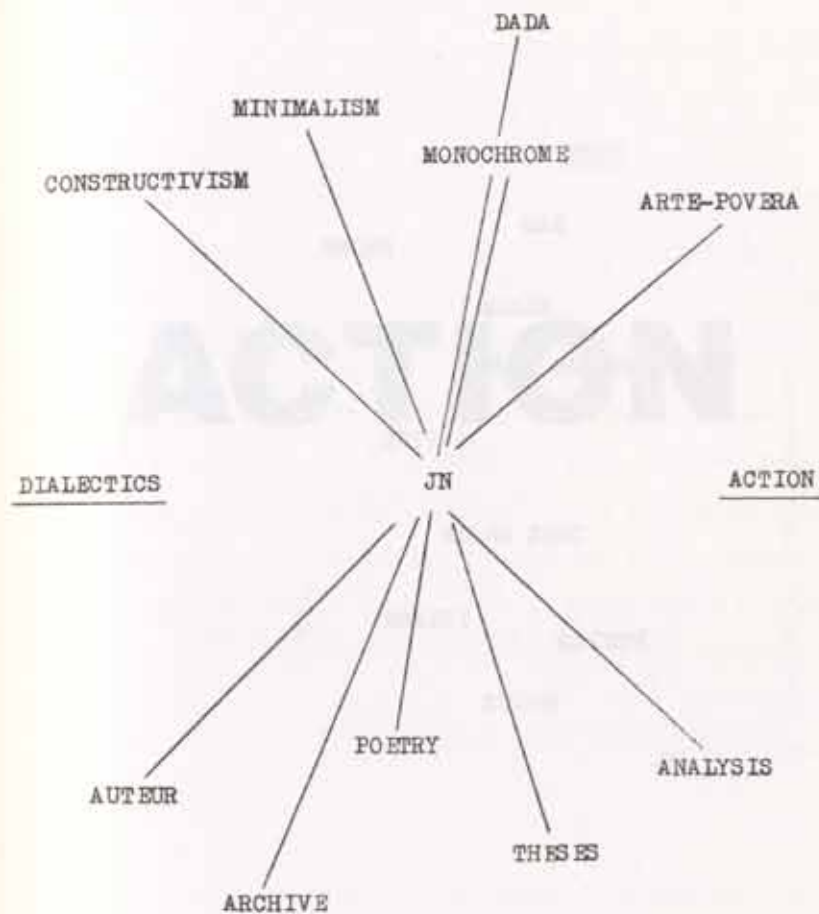


Manuscript Paper No. 4

B. 100



# EPW



1968-1992  
SYDNEY 1992



# ACTION

1911

FROM A PUBLIC LECTURE: NICE 14 OCTOBER 1988

The historical avant-gardes of the first decades of the C 20 produced a platform of theoretical principles. The foundation of the guidelines (models for action) represents an active field for continued vision.

In my work and practice as an artist, there is an understanding of what has come before - the reaffirmation of a creative methodology based on the knowledge and complexity of an historic memory (with the intention of developing experimental, spiritual, poetic and material consciousness in art). From this position I aim to make and develop radical work within the field - the field of work (discussion / labor) which directly engages in critical dialogue and which values ideas and ideals.

The works are rooted in a common practice of critical post-conceptualism; if they teach anything, it is a way of analysis rather than a style / look. The work itself functions as an action / an intervention. The work represents a model of positive action.

JOHN NIXON  
NICE 1988

*Filz GROSS* GmbH

Filzwarenfabrik  
Apostelnstr. 21  
5000 Köln 1

Telefon 0221 / 21 45 08  
Telefax 23 31 36



PAINTING / OBJECT / WALL / ROOM / COLOUR

The particular works in this exhibition:

the monochrome paintings (Black, Yellow, Blue, Pink, Carmine and Brown),

the object (Black Grand Piano),

the walls (Yellow, White) represent examples within the wider work of the project of experimentation into the nature of art.

Each exhibition represents a demonstration of ideas and ideals about art. Here there is a belief in a non-objective art, a non-narrative art, one which does not tell stories but deals with the fundamental principles of Art. The painting, the object, the wall, the room, the colour - these are the poetic matter with which to Konstruct.

JN

Seoul

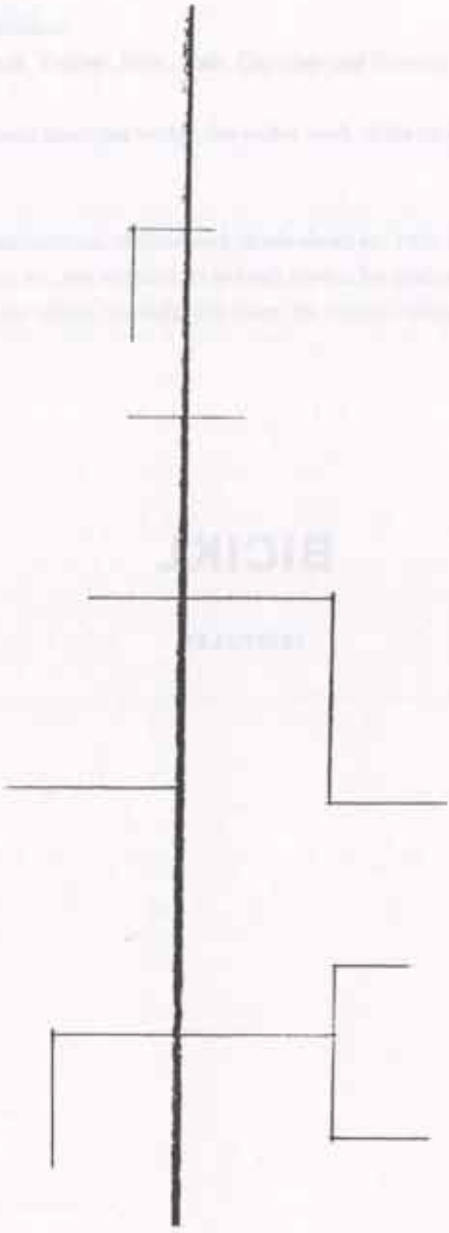
2 Nov. 1992

BICIKL

(BICYCLE)

TW

1968



1988

THE TREE OF LIFE 3

- MONOCHROME    MUSIC    STANDARD    RED    OUVRE    BERLIN    SUITCASE
- IDEOLOGY    PAINTING    CROSS    OBJECT    CONCEPTUALISM    POTATO
- PLATE    RED SQUARE    DEBATE    LIFE    EXPERIMENT    BROWN    HAMMER
- WORK    MORAL    1=1    ARTE POVERA    BOX    BREAD    THE PROJECT
- DIALECTIC    WINE BOTTLE    BROOM    STRATEGY    LIFE WORK    FLAG
- APPLE    CARDBOARD    VIOLIN    TICKET    BOOK    CHAIR    HARE (for Beuys)

JN  
BRISBANE/ STUTTGART Jan-Feb 1989



# STANDARD

PROVISIONAL FILM

DIRECTOR JOHN NIXON, VIDEO 8, COLOUR, SOUND, 52 MINS\*,  
SYDNEY 1991

PROVISIONAL FILM IS A SAMPLER OF IMAGES FROM THE  
GESAMTKUNSTWERK (1968-PRESENT). IT PRESENTS A VERSION OF THE  
WORK OF JOHN NIXON, AN ARTIST WHO HAS BEEN PRACTISING FOR 20  
YEARS PRODUCING ROOM INSTALLATIONS, PAINTINGS, OBJECTS,  
PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILMS ETC.

LIKE THE RECENT 16MM FILM WORK1990, PROVISIONAL FILM OFFERS A  
DIALECTICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OPPOSITES WHICH ARE BOTH  
CLOSELY RELATED TO THE NATURE OF FILM, AND TO THE THEORY AND  
PRACTICE OF NIXON'S ART, INCORPORATING THE CENTRAL METAPHORS  
OF ART + LIFE / LABOUR + NATURE.

PROVISIONAL FILM IS DELIBERATLY STRUCTURED AS A WORK IN  
PROGRESS, IN THAT PARTS OF THE FILM MAY BE ADDED TO THE WHOLE  
AT ANY TIME. IN THIS SENSE, THE FILM REMAINS AN OPEN, RATHER  
THAT COMPLETE DISCUSSION OF NIXON'S OEUVRE.

THIS WORK HAS BEEN SHOT ON VIDEO 8 INCORPORATING STILL AND  
MOVING IMAGES. IT IS A MONTAGE DIVIDED INTO 7 PARTS - EACH MADE  
UP OF VARIOUS SECTIONS. EACH PART IS SELF CONTAINED WITHIN THE  
WIDER STRUCTURAL AND CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION OF THE TOTAL FILM  
AND CONSISTS OF NUMEROUS SECTIONS (IMAGES). A TOTAL OF 75  
SECTIONS HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN THE FILM TO DATE.

IN PART II, THE FILM FOCUSES ON THE ARTIST INSTALLING AN  
EXHIBITION ENTITLED PAINTING ROOM AND OBJECT ROOM AT ROSLYN  
OXLEY 9 GALLERY IN SYDNEY. PART V PRESENTS A PARTIAL HISTORY  
OF NIXON'S WORK FROM 1968-1991 SHOT IN BLACK AND WHITE AND  
OVERLAYED WITH A MOVEMENT OF CLASSICAL MUSIC.

THE FORMAL 'PROVISIONS' OF THE MEDIUM, (HERE VIDEO 8), ARE USED  
TO DEFINE THE MAKING OF THE FILM. THE METHOD INCLUDES BOTH THE  
EXPERIMENTAL AND THE DOCUMENTARY.

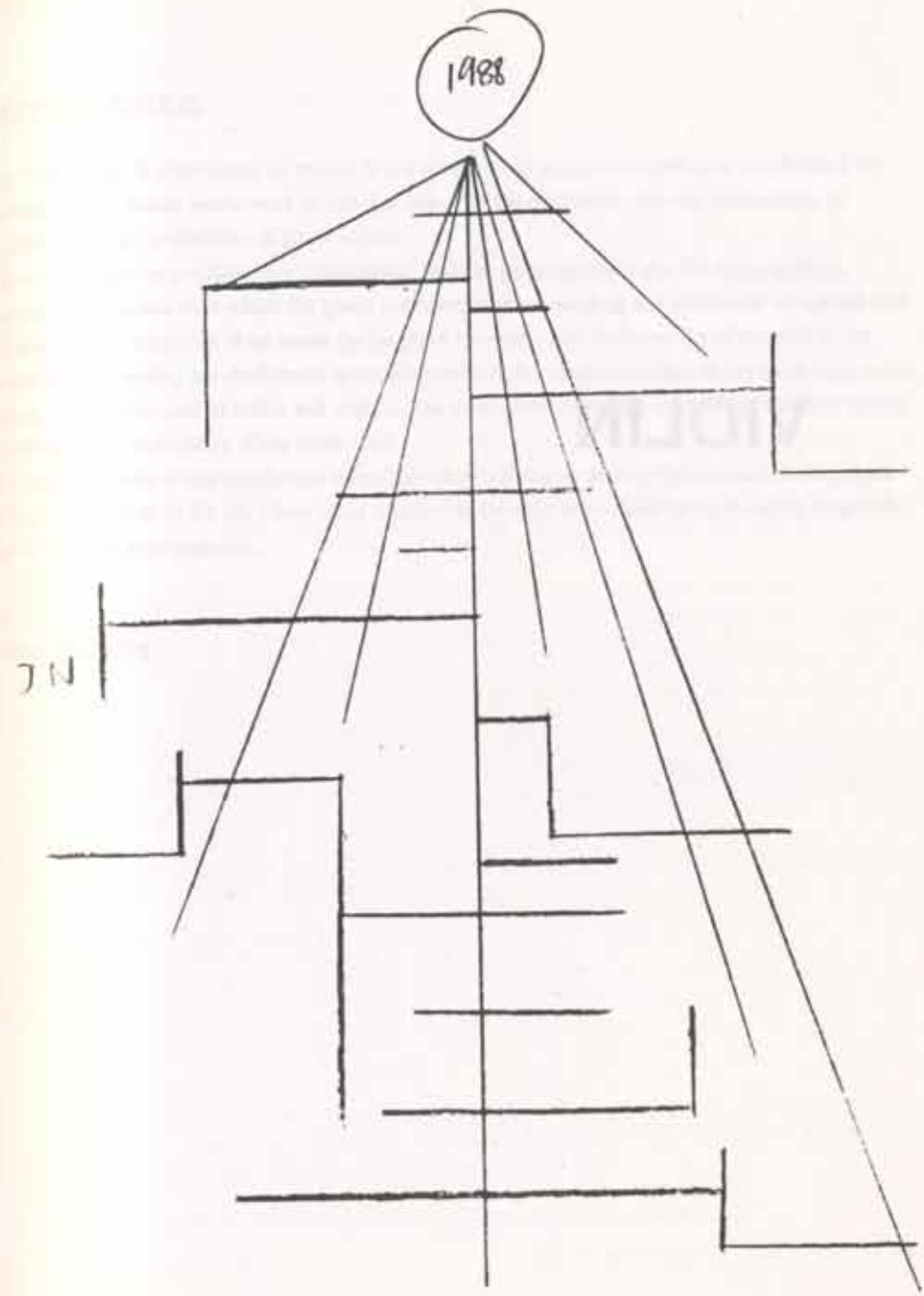
PROVISIONAL FILM REMAINS IN PROGRESS \*

26.10.1991 PROGRAM NOTES NO 2

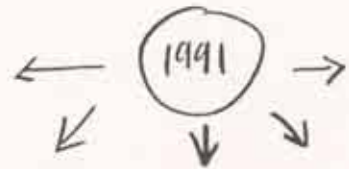
(PARTS 1-V ON UMATIC 44 MINS)



**K**



JN



JN  
MELB.  
1991  
2 AV4

B

# VIOLIN

## ON THE EXHIBITION

The 'Exhibition' is provisional by nature. It is a statement of intention related to or conditioned by various factors: studio work, work in situ, the space for the exhibition, the city and country of exhibition and the availability of given objects.

The art of exhibition is a dialectical relationship between painting/object and the room (gallery, warehouse, museum, etc.) which the given orthodoxies about hanging and placement are questioned. For example conventional ideas about the height of the works and the hierarchy of the wall as the central site of painting are challenged by installations which include paintings on the floor, high in the corners of the room and on tables and objects. The monochrome colours of the walls (cloth or paint) counterpoint the orthodoxy of the white wall.

The exhibition here is not merely 'the frame' for the works but an active / (provisional) arrangement of its parts, integral to the art. These same separate works may be re-installed by the artist singularly and in different arrangements.

JN

Sydney Nov 1992

DEFIANCE IS A CONSTRUCTIVE PRINCIPLE

J.N. MELBOURNE 1980

## WORK

Director John Nixon, 16mm, colour, sound, 45 mins, Sydney, 1990

**WORK** is a 16mm film which dialectically engages with the nature of film practice. It is texturally rich with opposites, a film which montages movement and stillness, sound and silence, clarity and ambiguity, text and image, colour and black and white, super 8 and 16mm. It is a film which unfolds and develops to form an anti-documentary.

This film is both a work in itself by John Nixon and a film on the work of John Nixon. For 20 years, Nixon has been a practising artist producing room installations, paintings, objects, photography and films etc.

The film is divided into 19 sections including 16mm footage of the artist at work installing a major exhibition of 3 years work entitled EPW (Experimental Painting Workshop), at City Gallery in Melbourne. These sections are interspersed with some alternate sections from nature which act as metaphors for the work, and other footage from studios and exhibitions, including *Documenta 7*, at Kassel, Germany in 1982.

The film **WORK** also incorporates various earlier 3 minute super 8 films. Some of these films document studio rooms since 1980. Others take as their subject matter realistic and abstract images, such as *Flowers 1988* and *Red Film 1970-1980*. These films posit within film-making similar concerns to those which the artist explores in his oeuvre. Film is used as a first-order media explored by the artist as one of the mediums within the totality of his art.

Film-making has developed as a parallel concern to Nixon's total work as an artist. In this sense, **WORK** is not a conventional "documentary" or "educational" film about the artist. Rather it offers a direct, experience of the artists work, a compilation of both historical and recent material.

The simplicity and aesthetic economy of the production is essential to the meaning of the film and to the nature of John Nixon's work.

The eye of the camera is the eye of the artist.

Producer Gary Warner Cinematography Kriv Stenders 16mm Gary Warner John Nixon super 8 Editor Nick Meyers Additional Photography Simon Von Wolkenstein 16mm Sound Mixer Peter Purcell Neg Matcher Debra Prince

Produced with the assistance of the Australian Film Commission

© John Nixon 1990

Thanks to Philip Brophy, City Gallery Melbourne, Sue Cramer, Anne-Marie Crawford, Alex Danko, Maria Kozic, Nick Meyers, Peg Nixon, Mike Parr, Denise Robinson, Kriv Stenders, Ken Unsworth, Gary Warner, Anna Weis, Gary Wilson.



# EP + OW

EXPERIMENTAL PAINTING + OBJECT WORKSHOP

# ZERO

## K = Konstruktion

The artist is a producer not of consumer goods but of ideas, methods, strategies, information, organization, research and demonstration.

The artist realizes ideas in practical form, i.e. the painting, object, etc. and the exhibition.

The function of the artist is to act as a laboratory of ideas of the experiment of art. The resulting proceedings from such developments = Konstruktion.

JN

N.Y.C. Oct. 1992

## STUDIO OF THE MONGROBONES

SOME FORMAL ANNOTATIONS CONCERNING JOHN NIXON'S WORK FOR THE PURPOSES OF HIS EXHIBITION AT THE GALERIJA PM, ZAGREB, SEPTEMBER 1990

On Looking and Seeing Today...

Is everything visible at the first sight? Ten paintings, here pieces of paper from various provenances, from found newspapers to abandoned posters. Squares and rectangles of easel size, simply painted with vivid enamel paints bought at the hardware store. The colour range is reductive: bright red, carmine, brown, deep yellow, black and white. And there are four objects: (found in situ, here in Zagreb), a plate of bread, a jar of beetroot, a bottle of wine and a box of potatoes. These ready-made objects, are a part of the everyday: a visible de-mystification of the Art Object which does not lead to its dematerialisation. On the contrary to an assertion of its materiality.

It looks like the strategy of John Nixon's art is defined by the meeting of mutual spaces, intellectual and architectural: the spaces of history, and the spaces of memory, of John Nixon artist of today, and of twentieth century art. Also the real topographical spaces of a given gallery (here Galerija PM), and of the exhibition itself, paintings and objects installed in this room.

It appears that every exhibition is a specific articulation of Nixon's ideas and ideals. Whilst it could be said that every new work and exhibition is a re-work of the previous works and exhibitions and part of a wider matrix, the very act of exhibiting is a new and direct meeting of the mutual spaces. The wider dialectic is brought into action and the work, here brought together on the occasion of the exhibition, (as the location for the dissemination of ideas about the function of art) is provisionally created in situ.

You can see how the work of John Nixon is articulating itself across the various histories and works of the historical avant-gardes of the twentieth century. But it is obvious too that this gesture cannot be absorbed by the act of neo-dada meta-ironical appropriation. On the contrary Nixon's labour is about the re-construction and the re-establishment of hope in the possibility of existence, "of going-on", of being a poet.

JELENA STOJANOVIC, SUE CRAMER, JOHN NIXON, SYDNEY, SEPTEMBER 1990

## STUDIO OF THE MONOCHROME



SPOON

HAT

SAW

WHITE FISH

CUP

SICKLE

CANDLE

T

HOE

K.M. / AN ENGLISHMAN IN MOSCOW

POEM  
J.N.  
1968-1987

CULTURE OF MATERIALS

# INDEPENDENCE

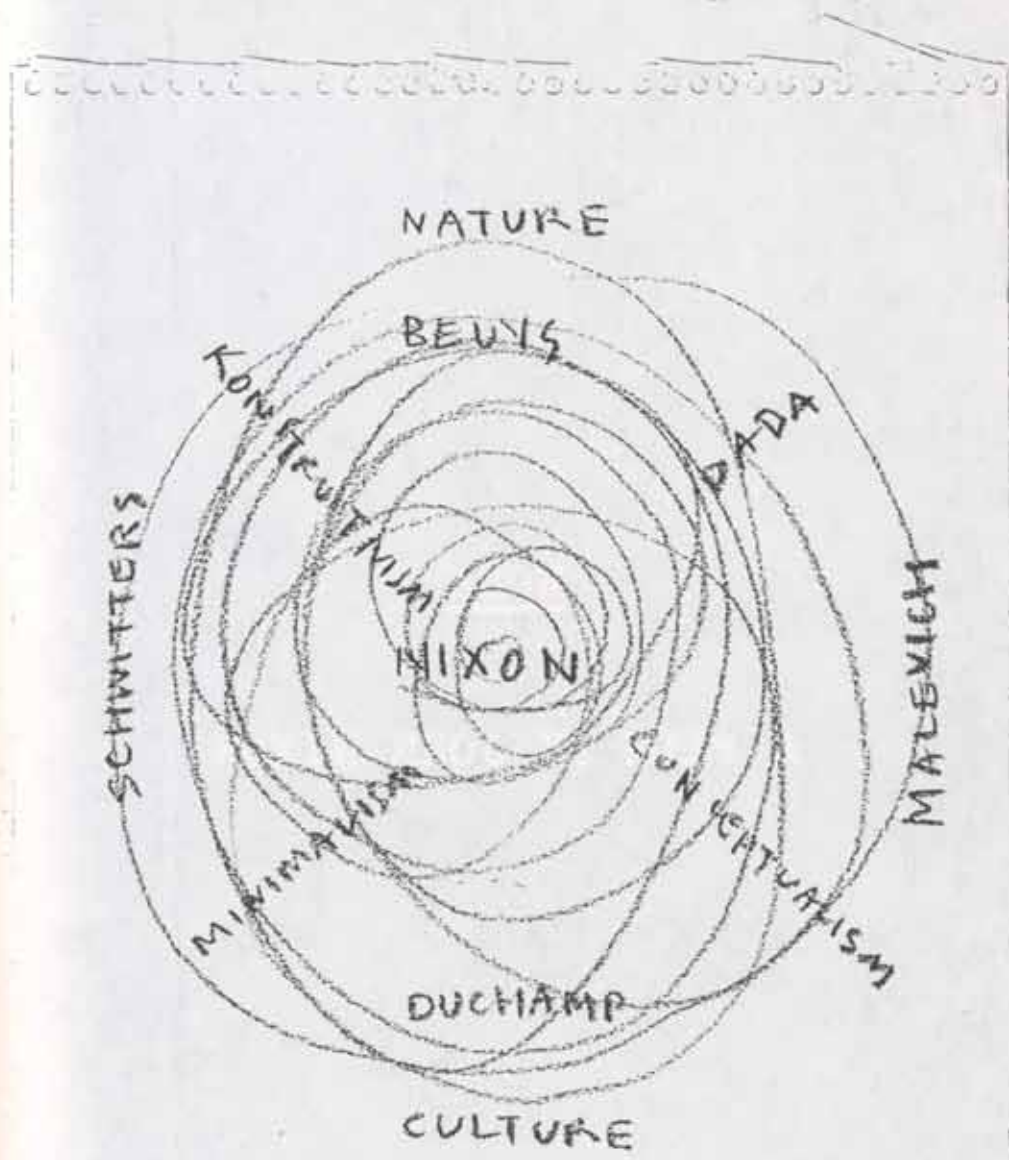
## MONOCHROME

1. THE MONOCHROME IS AN EXISTENTIAL 'FREE SPACE'.
2. MONOCHROME PAINTING IS AN IDEOLOGICAL MODEL OF ART AGAINST THE CONVENTIONAL, THE PICTORIAL, THE ORNAMENTAL AND THE NARRATIVE.
3. THE PAINTINGS ARE BY DEFINITION MINIMAL AND REPRESENT AN ANALYSIS OF THEIR OWN EPISTEMOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY FOCUSING ON THE FUNDAMENTALS OF PAINTING, ITS FORMAL AND ANALYTICAL NATURE AND ITS NON-OBJECTIVITY.
4. IN TERMS OF A THEORY OF ART THE WORKS ARE LITERAL AND DEFINITIVE (AUTONOMOUS) BUT AS SUCH OFFER A FREEDOM OF DEVELOPMENT AND EXPERIMENT.
5. WHAT MAKES ALL MONOCHROME PAINTINGS DIFFERENT FROM EACH OTHER ARE PRECISLY THOSE ELEMENTS WHICH MAKE THE OBJECTS OF EVERYDAY LIFE E.G. CHAIRS, COATS, PLATES, DEMONSTRABLY DIFFERENT IE. THEIR MOMENT IN HISTORY, THE CITIES WHERE THEY ARE MADE, THE METHODS OF THEIR PRODUCTION, THEIR SIZES, MATERIALS AND COLOURS.
6. THE PRACTICE OF MONOCHROME PAINTING IS A CONTINUUM WITHIN A HISTORY THAT IS NOT LINEAR, BUT IS A WIDER ONGOING RESEARCH INTO THE THESIS OF PAINTING.
7. THE RESEARCH IS DIVERSE, POETIC AND CRITICAL.
8. THE MONOCHROME IS THE CONSTANT ZERO-POINT GROUNDING THE WORK IN A DIALECTIC BETWEEN PURITY AND ANARCHY, HISTORY AND THE PRESENT.

JOHN NIXON  
SYDNEY 3.12.93

# INDEPENDENCE

AUTEUR



JN

WORLDVIEW

1984-89



WORK

A FILM BY JOHN NIXON

BICYCLE	FAHRRAD	BICIKL	VELO
RED	ROT	CRVENO	ROUGE
SUITCASE	KOFFER	KOFER	VALISE
MASONITE	MASONT	MASONIT	
BOTTLE	FLASCHE	BOCA	BOUTEILLE
ORANGE	ORANGE	NARANDZASTO	ORANGE
CUPBOARD	SCHRANK	ORMAR	ARMOIRE
WHITE	WEISS	BIJELO	BLANC
BOX	SCHACHTEL	KUTIJA	BOITE
BROWN	BRAUN	SMEDA	BRUN
POTATOES	KARTOFFELN	KRUMPIRI	POMME DE TERRE
CARDBOARD	PAPPE	KARTON	CARTON
MONOCHROME	MONOCHROM	MONOKROM	MONOCHROME
CARMINE	KARMINROT	KARMIN	CARMIN
VIOLIN	GEIGE	VIOLINA	VIOLON
WOOD	HOLZ	DRVO	BOIS
BOOK	BUCH	KNJIGA	LIVRE
BLACK	SCHWARZ	CRNO	NOIR
WINE	WEIN	VINO	VIN
TEXT	TEXT	TEKST	TEXTE

JUNE/JULY 1991

German translation - Sophia Ungers, Ruby Atkinson

Croatian translation - Branka Stipancic

French translation - Alain Noirhomme

"Freedom is a positive condition - specifically freedom to create, freedom to become what one is. The word implies an obligation. Freedom is not a state of rest, of least resistance. It is a state of action, of projection, of self realization."

Herbert Read, "Chains of Freedom" in Anarchy and Order 1954, Faber and Faber, London.



# RESTAURANT SMUTNY

1010 Wien, Elisabethstraße 8

Telefon 587 13 56

Geöffnet von 9 - 1 Uhr

Warme Speisen bis 23.30 Uhr

**Kein Ruhetag**

Ein Gastbetrieb der Firma

*Hansy*

'NOT FOR THE NEW, NOT FOR THE OLD

BUT FOR THE NECESSARY'

V. TATLIN  
1920



RESTAURANT  
SMUTTS

1979  
Melbourne  
Australia



Studio  
Melbourne, 1979



Studio  
Brisbane, 1980



Studio  
Melbourne, 1983



Studio  
Melbourne, 1984



Studio  
Melbourne, 1985





Studio  
Lilydale, 1985



Studio  
Lilydale, 1986



Studio  
Brisbane, 1989



Studio  
Sydney, 1990



Studio  
Sydney, 1991

JOHN NIXON

BLOCK PAINTING

1958 - 1970

1992 - 1993



**JOHN NIXON**

**BLOCK PAINTINGS**

**1968 - 1970**

----

**1992 - 1993**



- 1968 Untitled / Black, First Block painting. Black enamel on canvas on wooden block stretcher, 9 x 9 x 4 cm. Approximately 200 Block paintings were made between 1968 - 1970 - the simplest being monochromes using basic colours and paintings which use 2 colours, black and white, red/white, etc. with simple divisions/ vertical horizontal, diagonal, cross, border, stripe, square. The designs were based on equal division of the square or the width of the stretcher (2cm). Unprimed canvas was stretched around the small blocks and in most cases only the front surface was primed and painted. (But note there are some Block paintings with 4 sides also painted the same colour, notably black, white and yellow monochromes.) Enamel paints were used and off-cuts of canvas and wood. Some Block paintings used unprimed canvas and felt as material, the first being grey felt and later the colours black, white, red and yellow. Often on these works the sides were also covered or partially covered. Some works were painted directly onto the square wooden surface of the block stretcher. Each Block painting was to be exhibited singularly in a room. During this period a number of groups of five works were completed. Each group was to be exhibited together in a room - one in the centre of each wall and one in the corner join between two walls. Some Block paintings were presented in the studio in the corner join as corner paintings. A later group, on 18 cm squares of flat canvas and plywood, were to be glued directly to the wall.
- 1975 Untitled / Red, 1 Red Monochrome Block painting. Red enamel on canvas on wooden block stretcher, 18 x 18 x 4 cm. This was the first 'return' to the principles laid down in 1968.
- 1987 Reconstruction of first Block painting in Brisbane to show interested people. (The original painting was in storage in Melbourne.)
- 1992 On reviewing the 1968 - 1970 Block paintings, the original use of grey was rejected and all grey works or those which used grey, e.g. black and grey, cream and grey, were painted over with brown enamel. This re-opened the possibility of continuing the earlier project. Reconstruction of first Block painting and Untitled / Black and White cross painting in Furka, Switzerland to show examples in Zurich. (The original painting was in storage in Melbourne.) A return to the principles of the early Block paintings to develop further and different versions. Beginning again with the basic unit of 9 x 9 x 4 cm used in 1968, the scale was extended in various stages by 1.25 cm., up to 18 x 18 x 4 cm, developing a group of variously sized works. The use of the wooden stretchers is now exposed to show the construction and to clearly show the difference between the early and later work. The painting surface is now of cardboard or canvas board or hessian primed white. There is the use of primary and secondary colours using enamel paint as before. Apart from the monochromes the divisions of the surface include stripes, crosses, circles, diagonals and triangles. There are also works which are completely covered in coloured felt or hessian, some which use circles of plexiglass, numbers and letters, circles of tin or ceramic tiles. Other textured materials like sand paper have also been used as a painting surface and some works have included holes cut into the surface. Each work should be hung approximately 145 cm from the floor.

The term Block painting is used retrospectively in 1992 to demarcate this large group of early and late paintings from the general EPW project. It is both included in and separate from the EPW.\* The original 1968 - 70 work was seen as valuable and available to redevelop. The early work was consistent with my beliefs of the present. The working method is not systematic but more like proceedings for possible solutions/versions. The block paintings were initially developed as a unit sufficient in size and intensity to hold and explore a content about painting and because of their economic viability, (the works were initially made from off-cuts). These concerns are still valued today. It should be noted that the small size of the works was a direct response to the large-scale colour-field paintings of Barnett Newman and Ad Reinhardt and the work of the Australian field generation artists.

The return to the Block paintings is polemical to reassert the simplicity and 'straight-forwardness' of Minimalism and to bring attention to the idea of the circular nature of the development of art and in particular to the 're-use' of one's own history.\*\*

It is a demonstration.

In 1992 the Block paintings have been presented in private galleries in New York, Los Angeles, Koln, Zurich, Auckland, Sydney and Melbourne.

Approximately 100 Block paintings have been made to the date of this pamphlet, and production will continue into 1993.

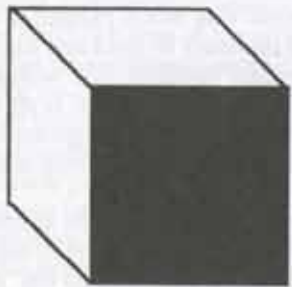
Sydney  
1/12/92  
20/1/93



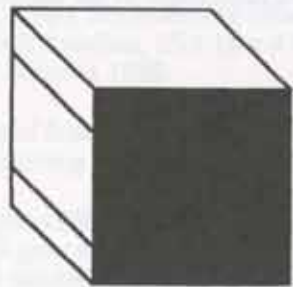
NOTE:

\* This work is continuous with the on-going development of the other projects: Installation, large paintings, EPW, EP+OW, objects, drawings, prints and multiples, photographs, film and collaborative work.

\*\* The purpose of this return and re-presentation is in order to address the amnesia in Australian art history towards minimal and conceptual art of the late 1960's and 1970's in general.



1968 - 1970



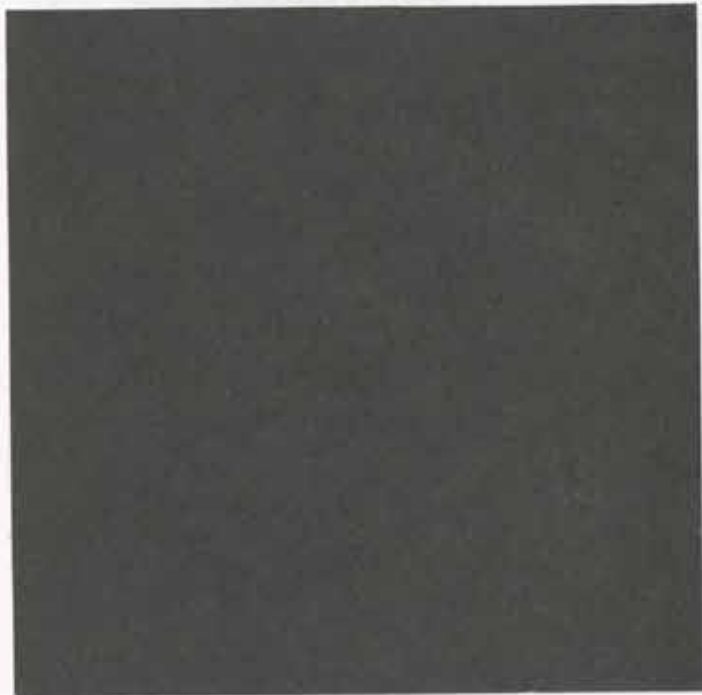
1992 - 1993

BLACK CHERRY PRESS  
PO BOX 1029  
POTTS POINT 2011  
SYDNEY AUSTRALIA

JOHN NIXON

MONOCHROME

STORE 5  
Melbourne



MONOCHROME

1968 - 1992 -

YELLOW

BLACK

LOVE

WHITE

EARTH

BROWN

PINK

REVOLUTION

purity

romanticism

TRUTH

tradition

PURE PAINTING

GREEN

RED

ESSENCE

ULTRAMARINE BLUE

(STANDARD)

JOHN NIXON  
MELBOURNE  
MARCH 1986  
SYDNEY  
JAN 1992



## TWENTY YEARS OF MONOCHROME PAINTING

John Nixon's research into the reductive (the monochrome) began in 1968 and has played a consistent part in his ongoing oeuvre. This research shares the same historical period as the experiments with the monochrome by Knoebel, Palermo, Ryman, Richter et al and stems from the pioneering work of Malevich, Rodchenko, Klein, Manzoni, Reinhardt.

In these paintings there appears a longing for an absolute, (here a 'standard' for painting) - of what reductive painting can be and continues to be. Although ostensibly 'simple', the activity is diverse, poetic and critical. The conceptual texture of these paintings and cloth pictures is rich.

Here within the ground rules (painting/room) of the exhibition, Nixon offers us a display of critical/dialectical experimentation that presents us with a 'standard' (ie. a moral option) for the deconstruction and reconstruction of both painting and its display - (room for painting).

LÁSLÓ RÉBER

June 1989

## A PROPOSITION FOR PAINTING:

MONOCHROME

FAKTURA

9 OCTOBER 1988 NICE

BROWN

APPLIED  
COLOR

BLACK

COLOR

BLUE

HESSIAN

MATTER

RED

FELT

1988 →

WHITE

PLYWOOD

GREEN

CANVAS

TEXTURE

ENAMEL

CLOTH

CARMINE

YELLOW

1968 →

METAL

MASONITE

CARDBOARD

PINK

MATERIAL

RED  
OXIDE  
ET AL

EXHIBITION  
FLOOR  
WALL  
ROOM  
SUITCASE  
ARCHITECTURE  
NATURE

WOOD

JOHN NIXON



### Art and Ethics

In his work, painting (art) as we "know" it to be - "pictures, things, people, landscapes" - is criticized and a Utopian alternative developed as a model. It is here that we must learn from history.

Nixon's works are prototypes of (belief) - of having a model, an idealism (beyond pictorialism). This thesis functions both as a vehicle for the production of art and the social role of the artist - a direction - something to struggle and hope for.

The monochrome presents the spiritual and emotional effects of pure colour and form as well as poetic and pragmatic solutions to the possibilities of painting.

Utopia is an ethic ideal. The value of ethics transforms life. This dedication, this commitment to essentialism and to ideas (in times of the promotion of the "excessive" / the "picture of the thing" / the abberation of "nature" / the plea for the "figurativ") -

John Barlycorn 24.1.1988 Melbourne

### NOTES ON PRODUCTION

The works in this exhibition have been painted in enamel using the colors blue, red, black, brown, yellow, carmine, orange and pink.

The paintings are both reductive and material.

I am interested in the difference between a painting on hessian, wood, masonite, plywood, metal, cloth, cardboard, poster paper and on the wall.

These various materials are only the supporting structure for the poetry of the paintings and one material is not valued over another - each is equal to the ideology.

The size of the works in this exhibition are the norm - whilst larger and smaller works are produced these works here are 'classic' to the oeuvre.

The enamel paints and materials used, masking tape and house painting brushes employ a tradesman-like approach to the making of art.

The materials and paints are from the wider world.

John Nixon  
March 1992

STORE 5  
PO BOX 1210 WINDSOR MELBOURNE 3181  
AUSTRALIA  
1992

**JOHN NIXON**

- 1949 Born Sydney, Australia  
1993 Lives and works in Sydney, and travels
- EDUCATION**  
1967-68 Preston Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Australia  
1969-70 National Gallery of Victoria Art School, Melbourne (Diploma of Art)  
1973 State College of Victoria, Melbourne (Diploma of Education)
- SOLO EXHIBITIONS**  
1994 Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne  
Stiftung fur Konkrete Kunst, Reutlingen, Germany  
Galerie Ingrid Dacic, Tübingen, Germany  
Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney  
Galerie Sophia Ungers, Cologne, Germany  
CBD Gallery, Sydney  
Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne (John Nixon/Mike Parr)  
David Pestorius Gallery, Brisbane  
Art & Public, Geneva, Switzerland
- 1993 Store 5, Melbourne  
Apartment 9, Sydney (John Nixon/Mladen Stilinovic)  
Private Apartment, Zagreb, Croatia (John Nixon/Mladen Stilinovic)  
Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne  
Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand  
Galerie Mark Muller, Zurich, Switzerland
- 1992 Store 5, Melbourne  
City Gallery, Melbourne  
Wooster Gardens, New York, USA  
Post - West, Adelaide  
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (John Nixon/Mike Parr)
- 1991 Galerie Christine + Isy Brachot, Brussels, Belgium  
Salon Muzeja Savremene Umetnosti, Belgrade, Serbia  
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
Galerie Ingrid Dacic, Tübingen, Germany  
Galerie Sophia Ungers, Cologne, Germany  
City Gallery, Melbourne  
Store 5, Melbourne  
Ars Multiplicata, Sydney  
Deakin University, Geelong  
Stiftung fur Konkrete Kunst, Reutlingen, Germany  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (Mike Parr / John Nixon)
- 1990 **EPW**, City Gallery, Melbourne  
Store 5, Melbourne  
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide  
Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney  
Store 5, Melbourne  
First Draft (West), Sydney  
Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand  
Galerija PM, Zagreb, Croatia

- 1989 Institute of Temporary Art, Brisbane  
 Artspace, Auckland, New Zealand  
 Galerie Ingrid Dacic, Tubingen, Germany  
 Chameleon, Hobart  
 Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney (Mike Parr /John Nixon)  
 City Gallery, Melbourne (Mike Parr /John Nixon)  
 Milburn/Arte, Brisbane (Mike Parr /John Nixon)  
 Store 5, Melbourne  
 Independent Exhibition, Brisbane  
 Store 5, Melbourne (John Nixon / Stephen Bambury)
- 1988 The Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney  
**Twenty years of Monochrome Painting**, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
 Gallery 14, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane  
 City Gallery, Melbourne  
 Villa Arson, Nice, France  
 Institute of Temporary Art, Brisbane  
 Institute of Temporary Art, Nice and Paris, France
- 1987 University Gallery, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne  
 Institute of Temporary Art, Lilydale  
 Institute of Temporary Art, Brisbane  
 Institute of Temporary Art, Paris, Kassel, Dusseldorf, Turin  
 Roz MacAllan Gallery, Brisbane  
 Centre for Contemporary Art., Hamilton, New Zealand, (with Jenny Watson)  
 Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
 United Artists Gallery, Melbourne
- 1986 United Artists Gallery, Melbourne  
 Galerie Dusseldorf, Perth  
 Sue Crockford Gallery Auckland, New Zealand, (with Jenny Watson)  
 Roslyn Oxley9, Sydney
- 1985 Institute of Temporary Art, Melbourne  
 Institute of Temporary Art, Melbourne  
 Institute of Temporary Art, Melbourne  
 Institute of Temporary Art, Melbourne  
 Studio, Melbourne  
 The Studio of 100 Days., Melbourne  
 Roslyn Oxley9, Sydney
- 1984 Art Projects, Melbourne  
 Art Projects, Melbourne
- 1983 Roslyn Oxley9, Sydney  
 Art Projects, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
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 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 Roslyn Oxley9, Sydney  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne
- V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne
- 1982 V Space, Melbourne  
 Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane  
 Art Projects, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne, (John Nixon and Imants Tillers)  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 Institute of Temporary Art, Kassel, Germany\*  
 n-space at Documenta, Kassel, Germany(John Nixon & Imants Tillers)  
 Institute of Temporary Art, Dusseldorf, Germany  
 Institute of Temporary Art, Paris, France  
 V Space Annex (Paris), Paris, France  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 Art Projects, Melbourne, (John Nixon and Imants Tillers)  
 Q.E.D., Sydney, (John Nixon and Imants Tillers)\*  
 V Space, Melbourne  
 Yuill/Crowley, Sydney, (John Nixon and Imants Tillers)
- 1981 Q Space Annex, Brisbane, (John Nixon and Robert MacPherson)  
 The Office of the Institute for Artistic Culture, Brisbane (announcement)  
 Art Projects, Melbourne  
 Watters Gallery, Sydney  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
 The Office of the Institute for Artistic Culture, Brisbane (announcement)  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
 V Space (Retrospektiv Part 2), Melbourne  
 n-space, Sydney  
 School of Art and Design, P.C.A.E., Melbourne  
 Art Projects, Melbourne  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
 The Office of the Institute of Artistic Culture, Brisbane (announcement)
- 1980 Barry Barker Ltd.London, England  
 Q Space\*, Brisbane  
 Art Projects, Melbourne  
 Q Space, Brisbane  
 Q Space Annex\*, Brisbane  
 Q Space, Brisbane  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
 Q Space, Brisbane  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
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 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
 Q Space, Brisbane, (John Nixon and Robert MacPherson)  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
 Art Projects, Melbourne  
 V Space, Melbourne, (John Nixon and Robert MacPherson)\*  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane  
 Q Space Annex, Brisbane, (John Nixon and Robert MacPherson)

- 1979 Art Projects, Melbourne  
 Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane  
 Art Projects Annex Program, Melbourne  
 Watters Gallery, Sydney  
 Art Projects Annex Program, Melbourne  
 Art Projects, Melbourne  
 Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide  
 Institute of Temporary Art, Melbourne\*  
 Institute of Temporary Art, Melbourne  
 Art Projects Annex Program, Melbourne
- 1978 Barry Barker Ltd, London, England
- 1977 Pinacotheca, Melbourne
- 1976 Watters Gallery, Sydney  
 National Gallery of Victoria (with Peter Kennedy), Melbourne
- 1975 Pinacotheca, Melbourne  
 Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide
- 1974 Pinacotheca, Melbourne
- 1973 Pinacotheca, Melbourne
- 1968-72 Unexhibited, five years work

\*Note: Most Institute of Temporary Art/ Q Space/ V Space/ n-space/ and Q.E.D. Exhibitions are of one days duration. Such has been an appropriate method for continual exhibition of current production.

#### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1994 **White**, Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney  
**Colour**, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne  
 Group Exhibition, David Pestorius Gallery, Brisbane
- 1993 **Marginal**, Galerie Sophia Ungers, Cologne, Germany  
**Sight Regained**, Artists/Architects, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney  
**Monster Field**, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney  
 Group Show, Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand  
**Residence 2**, Residence, Sydney  
 Galerie Mark Muller, **Basle Art Fair**, Basle, Switzerland  
**The Black Show**, Geelong Art Gallery, Geelong and Regional Art Gallery Tour  
**Strangers in Paradise**, Contemporary Australian Art to Korea,  
 Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
**Monochrome**, Apartment 9, Sydney  
**Art of this World: the MCA Collection**, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney  
 (includes Room of Work 1968-1993 by John Nixon)  
 Sarah Cottier Gallery, **Unfair**, Cologne, Germany  
**Straw Dogs** (Claus Carstensen), Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen, Denmark  
**10 Years**, Galerie Ingrid Dacic, Tübingen, Germany
- 1992 Group Exhibition, City Gallery, Melbourne  
**Compost**, Critical City, Adelaide  
**Furkart 1992**, Furka, Switzerland  
**Sight Regained**, Artists/Architects, Westpac Gallery, Melbourne  
**After Dark**, Govett - Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, New Zealand  
**Blau**, Galerie Mark Muller, Zurich, Switzerland  
**Strangers in Paradise**, Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea  
 Group Exhibition, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
 Christopher Grimes Gallery, **Art LA 92**, Los Angeles, USA  
**International Group Show**, Sue Crockford Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand  
**60 Ausstellung**, Galerie Ingrid Dacic, Tübingen, Germany
- 1991 **Early and Recent work by 8 Contemporary Artists**, City Gallery, Melbourne  
**Gullivers Travels**, Galerie Sophia Ungers, Cologne, Germany  
**The Painted Desert**, Galerie Rennos Xippas, Paris, France  
**Off the Wall / In the Air**, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne  
**Authentic Copies**, Lazelle Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand  
 No 100, Store 5, Melbourne  
 No 101, Store 5, Melbourne  
**Artist's Books**, Grahame Galleries, Brisbane  
 Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, **Art Cologne**, 25 International Kunstmesse, Cologne, Germany  
**Opening Transformations**, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney  
**Models**, Ars Multiplicata, Sydney  
**Drawings**, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
**Icon = das Bild**, Stiftung für Konkrete Kunst, Reutlingen, Germany  
**First Draft (West) 1985 - 1991**, First Draft (West) Sydney  
**Cross Currents**, Waikato Art Museum, Hamilton, New Zealand
- 1990 City Gallery, **ARCO '90**, Madrid, Spain  
**The Readymade Boomerang: 8th Biennale of Sydney**, Bond Store 3/4,  
 and Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
**On Kawara, Today, and Works from the Museum of Contemporary Art**, Ivan  
 Dougherty Gallery, Sydney  
 Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
**Abstraction**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (and regional tour)  
**Redevelopment**, Bond Store 3/4, Sydney



- Defective Models, Australian Portraiture 19th & 20th Centuries**, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne  
**Greenpeace Exhibition**, Linden, Melbourne  
**Artists Against Animal Experimentation**, Deutscher Brunswick Street, Melbourne  
**Construction in Process**, Lodz, Poland  
**Inland**, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne  
 Scotchmans Hill Vineyard Exhibition, Geelong Art Gallery, Geelong  
 Experimenta, M.I.M.A., Melbourne  
 City Gallery, Melbourne  
**Loaded**, 13 Verity Street, Melbourne  
**Aus Australien**, Ars Multiplicata, Sydney  
**50 Ausstellung**, Galerie Ingrid Dacic, Tubingen, Germany
- 1989** **No. 1**, Store 5, Melbourne  
**Cosmos**, City Gallery, Melbourne  
**Other Photography**, Store 5, Melbourne  
**Freestyle; Australian Art 60's to Now**, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
**Sets and Series**, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
**Experimental Films by Contemporary Australian Artists**, Institute of Modern Art Brisbane  
**4th Melbourne Super 8 Film Festival**, Melbourne  
**The Donkey's Tail**, Store 5, Melbourne  
**Other Photography/2**, Store 5, Melbourne  
 Sue Crockford Gallery Auckland, New Zealand  
**Sequences, Australian Print Acquisitions**, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
- 1988** **History**, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane  
**7th Biennale of Sydney**, Pier 2/3 and Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
**Group Show**, Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery, Sydney  
**Stories of Australian Art**, Commonwealth Institute, London, England  
**La Boheme**, City Gallery, Melbourne  
**Edge to Edge; Recent Australian Art to Japan**, National Museum of Osaka, Japan (+ Japanese Tour)  
**British International Print Biennale**, Bradford Museum, Bradford, England (+ English Tour)  
**Olympic Arts Festival**, Olympic Games Park and National Gallery of Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea  
**Australian Art Post-1960**, Deutscher Gertrude Street, Melbourne  
**The Self Portrait**, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney  
**How to Read a Picture**, Manly Art Gallery, Sydney  
**Experimenta**, MIMA, City Gallery, Melbourne  
**The Cocktail Party**, Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery, Sydney  
**Five Australian Artists**, Cultural Centre, Brest, France  
**France/Australia Artists Exchange**, Chapelle de la Salpetriere, Paris, France  
**The Australian Exhibition**, Frankfurter Kunstverein, and Stuttgart Kunstverein, Germany, 1988/1989  
**Images of Religion in Australian Art**, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
- 1987** **The Shadow of Reason**, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane  
**Australian Art 1960 - 1986. Field to Figuration**, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
**Emerging Artists 1978-1986: Selections from Exxon Series**, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, U.S.A.  
**The Australian Bicentennial Perspectives**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
**The Chartwell Collection**, Centre for Contemporary Art, Hamilton, New Zealand  
**In Print Vol.1. Artists' Books**, Power Gallery of Contemporary Art, Sydney  
**10 x 10 : 1975 - 1985**, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne
- 1986** **Slouching Toward Bethlehem; An Exhibition of Preparatory Drawings**, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne  
**The Forbidden Object**, Roslyn Oxley9, Sydney  
**Origins, Originality + Beyond: 6th Biennale of Sydney**, Pier 2 / 3 and Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
**Artists + Architects**, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne  
**Primal Painting**, Heide Park and Art Gallery, Melbourne  
**Tableaux Abstraites**, Villa Arson, Nice, France  
**Recession Art**, Artspace, Sydney  
**Geometric Abstraction**, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne  
**Q Space + Q Space Annex 1980 + 1981**, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane  
**New Work**, M.I.M.A., Glasshouse Cinema, Melbourne  
**The Repeated Image (Part Two)**, Griffith University Art Collection, Brisbane  
 Civic Art Gallery, Brisbane  
**The St.Kilda Collection - Recent Acquisitions 1985 - 1986**, Caulfield Arts Centre, Melbourne
- 1985** **Architectura Picta**, Artspace, Sydney  
**Australian Visions**, (Australian Tour) Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; Australian Centre for Contemporary Art and Monash University Gallery, Melbourne  
**Visual Tension**, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne  
**Queensland Works**, Queensland University Art Museum, Brisbane  
**Recession Art**, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane  
**Close Remarks**, Artspace, Sydney  
**Isolaustralia**, Galleria Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice, Italy  
**Artists Bookworks**, Anzart/Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand & Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide  
**Isolaustralia**, Studentski Kulturni Centar, Belgrade, Serbia & Zagreb, Croatia  
**Design for Living**, Artspace, Sydney  
**Australian Perspectives 1985 (Instruments of Art)**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
**Ninth Anniversary Exhibition**, Galerie Dusseldorf, Perth  
**Biennale Des Friedens**, Kunstverein + Kunsthaus, Hamburg, Germany
- 1984** **Group**, Art Projects, Melbourne  
**Dreams & Nightmares**, Roslyn Oxley9, Sydney  
**Australia: 9 Contemporary Artists**, Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, U.S.A.  
**Australian Linocuts + Woodcuts**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
**Symbols, Emblems, Signatures: Australian Drawings**, Govett - Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth. National Gallery, Wellington; Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui; Robert McDougall Gallery, Christchurch; Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North, New Zealand  
**Architectura Picta**, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne  
**Australian Visions: 1984 Exxon International Exhibition**, Solomon R.Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA  
**Painters Sculpture**, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne
- 1983** **Project 40: Australian Artists at Venice and Kassel**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
**Masterpieces: Out of the Seventies**, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne  
**Tall Poppies: An exhibition of five pictures**, University of Melbourne, Melbourne  
**Artists Books**, Artspace, Sydney  
**Australian Perspectives 1983: A Survey of Contemporary Australian Art**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
**Minimalism x Six**, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane

- Minimalism x Six**, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane  
**The End of Civilisation Part II: Love Among the Ruins**, George Paton Gallery, University of Melbourne, Melbourne  
**A Melbourne Mood: Cool Contemporary Art**, Australian National University, Canberra  
**Australian Perspecta: Works on Paper**, Heide Park and Art Gallery, Melbourne Museum and Art Galleries of the Northern Territory, Darwin; Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane; Tamworth City Art Gallery, Tamworth  
**Robert MacPherson, Jenny Watson, Mike Parr, John Nixon**, Art Projects, Melbourne  
**Stuff Concert 2**, Glasshouse Cinema, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne  
**D'un Autre Continent: l'Australie. Le Reve et le Reel**, ARC, Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France  
**Australian Art in Amsterdam**, Galerie Biederberg-Mueller and Wetering Galerie, Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
**Recent Australian Painting: A Survey 1970 - 1983**, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide  
**Drawings (Schematic, Expressionist & Psychological)**, Art Projects, Melbourne
- 1982** **Archibald Prize, (Rejected Entry)**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
**Painting / Painting**, Art Projects, Melbourne  
**Georges Invitational Art Award**, Georges Gallery, Melbourne  
**Documenta 7**, Kassel, Germany  
**The Temple of the Winds**, n-space at the Temple of the Winds, Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne
- 1981** **Archibald Prize, (Rejected Entry)**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
**The Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes: Three Rejected Entries**, (Imants Tillers, Peter Tyndall, John Nixon), Art Projects, Melbourne  
**The Beacon**, n-space, Sydney
- 1979** **Biennale of Sydney: European Dialogue**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
**Some Biennale Works and Information**, Pitspace, School of Art and Design, Preston Institute of Technology, Melbourne  
**Group Show**, Art Projects, Melbourne
- 1978** **Act 1: An Exhibition of Performance and Participatory Art**, Australian National University Arts Centre, Canberra
- 1975** **Art and Language**, National Gallery of Victoria, and Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

**FILM / VIDEO SCREENINGS**

- 1991** **Work**, 16mm  
 Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney  
 Hochschule fur Angewante Kunst, Vienna, Austria  
 Galerie Sophia Ungers, Koln, Germany  
 MIMA program, State Film Theatre, Melbourne
- Provisional Film** Videofilm  
 Hochschule fur Angewante Kunst, Vienna, Austria  
 Deakin University Gallery, Geelong
- 1990** **Super 8 Films 1970 - 1990**, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney



**John Nixon  
Thesis  
Selected works from 1968 – 1993**

Exhibition dates: 18 February – 20 March 1994

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Telephone (03) 654 6422

Affiliated with Monash University

Director: Jenepher Duncan  
Curator: Clare Williamson  
Administrator: Mary Dancuk  
Secretary/Assistant: Penelope Aitken

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 **Allans**

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Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne  
Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney  
David Pistorius Gallery, Brisbane

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**Australian Centre for Contemporary Art**