

ARTISTS SPACE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PARACULTURE

Organized by Sally Couacaud
Director of Artspace Visual Art Centre, Sydney, Australia
January 18 - February 24, 1990
Opening Reception: Thursday, January 18, 6-8pm
Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11-6

Artists Space is pleased to present **Paraculture** a group exhibition organized by Sally Couacaud, Director of Artspace Visual Art Centre, a non-profit exhibition space in Sydney, Australia. The exhibition focuses on the work of eight emerging artists: Gordon Bennett, Janet Burchill, Fiona Foley, Matthys Gerber, Jeff Gibson, Tim Johnson, Narelle Jubelin, and Lindy Lee. A catalogue will accompany the exhibition with reproductions of the artist's work and essays by Australian writers Rex Butler, Ross Gibson, and Meaghan Morris.

Paraculture addresses the nature of art production in a country which is still young in the process of forming its own cultural identity. The show attempts to refute notions of an authentic "Australian Vision" which are tied to a romanticized history of the landscape. The work in the show specifically examines this myth of Australian identity and art-making in a culture that relies heavily on appropriation from Europe and America.

The artists, whose ethnic origins are European, Asian, and Aboriginal, question notions of a stereotyped national and cultural identity. This exhibition is timely in light of recent interest in the United States in Australian work and in the work of Aboriginal artists in particular. This show will broaden the knowledge of Australian art in the United States, and locate the work of Koorie, or urban Aboriginals, in the context of contemporary art practice rather than in marginalized, ethnographic parameters. **Paraculture** suggests that a definition of Australian culture cannot be bound by a single identity, and is better delineated by a diversified, plural one.

The exhibition consists of largely two-dimensional work and the artists share a strong sense of identity, time, and place. Mainly photographic, appropriative, and non-painterly, the



work of Gibson and Burchill speaks to the absence of the artist's touch. This less regionalized style is juxtaposed with work that speaks to a strong sense of national identity, as in the petit point landscapes of Jubelin, which create a dialectic between notions of the real and imaginary, the concrete and the theoretical. Foley and Bennett are Koorie artists, whose art is informed by the particular ambiguity of their aboriginal descent, and having access to certain aboriginal forms and traditions, and yet being part of a white, urban culture. Tim Johnson explores this cultural tension from another vantage point in dreamy landscapes that layer aboriginal symbols and eastern modes of representation. Matthys Gerber and Lindy Lee both critique the history of art and painting itself as a commodified study and process.

Three of Australia's leading critics have written scholarly essays for the catalogue. Intrinsic to **Paraculture** is a position of critique and mediation necessary for what Meaghan Morris has called Australia's 'compilation culture'. Rex Butler and Ross Gibson examine this notion of an Australian culture, and its relations to postmodernist theory, while Morris addresses the concerns of feminist theory.

This exhibition is funded in part by the Visual Arts/Craft Board of the Australian Council, and the Smorgon Family Charitable Foundation.

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