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CRAIG GOUGH

N E W W O R K S

C H R I S T I N E A B R A H A M S G A L L E R Y

"May I paint flowers?"

"Only if they are a quotation."

From: A Post-Modern Conversation.



No-junk Mail. Acrylic on canvas, 2050cm x 4090cm.

Nobody, no artist, and probably no member of the general public by now believes that visual art is just an imitation of what can be seen. Too much is known now about representation — even by persons whose chief business it isn't — for any illusions to persist about innocent, or even ingenious, transcriptions from nature. Visual art is art mediating nature, not mimicking it. It's mediating nature when it's not mediating previous art — and both courses are open to it, equally and always, now.

This exhibition falls into two parts: the large acrylic paintings, and the — much smaller — oils. A common impulse animates both sets, but each set works it out in a, slightly, different way. As one looks at the exhibition as a whole, similarities and differences come together in a nice dialectic.

The large acrylic paintings

Craig Gough's exhibition 'No-junk mail' approaches flowers — at least in the big works — as suburban gardeners may, that is, through those garden-supply firms' leaflets which come, unsolicited, through the letterbox. Gough does not junk this mail, he composts it by composing through it. Its odd layout style becomes a grid or sighting-device through which Gough looks at flowers, nurserymen's displays, gardens, and garden statues — and at things such as wheelbarrows and tree-pruners' ladders. His mixed arrays are not merely as disordered as they might

be in a snapshot. It's worse, and better, than that. A 'look' from the world is recycled through the rather unattractive layout of seedsmen's flyers; nature and bits of architecture and artefacts are seen in terms of a very banal kind of art. Almost.

The style of the junk-mail is used, but not copied. Text, now so fashionable in painting as to seem almost obligatory, has been deliberately suppressed by Gough. Overlays to the leaflet images, "Special, \$14", "20% off!", "Good blooming plant", have been reduced to bare rectangles of primary colour which float a little before the plane of the painting. There is the odd triangle, monochrome trace of a layout-artist's two-colour printed corner-label on an image. If you want to read the hovering rectangles as allusions to Hans Hofmann feel free to. Where they come from need not be where they go to. And nowadays allusion will go almost anywhere you like.

The chroma of the pictures in the present exhibition is high, raucous almost. The high comes from the high-and-shrill of the indifferent colour-printing of the junk-mail leaflets. But the shrill tone has been muted down to a deeper one: so much so that one might miss the point about the origins of the works, if one looked only at the colour. It is now rich, luscious, and a touch discordant? Ominous, perhaps. A darkness falls on these ostensibly bright

pictures. There is a residual mood, one feels, flowing on from the sadness of Craig Gough's last exhibition at this Gallery in 1989. The play of deep green and a range of wine reds reminds one of Victorian wallpapers, with their opulent heaviness. If this is a quotation, it may be unconscious. The junk-mail one is very upfront.

The garden-figures, Davids, Dianas, gods, goddesses, fairies and so on, are all casts of the cheapish cement sort. Care has been taken to retain their awkwardness, by transcription — even — or by substituting an infelicity of drawing for one of a sculptural sort. The references to Cézanne's *Still-life with amor en plâtre* (c. 1895) Courtauld, are conscious to the extent that Gough has a colour reproduction of the work in his studio. And he has on his shelves K.E. Maison's *Themes and Variations*, London, 1960, which has a photo of the plaster (Pierre Duget?), and a reproduction of a Cézanne drawing of the still-life. Gough's garden figures come with references. But this does not mean that you get elegant figures such as the one in the Cézanne. Nor does it mean that Cézanne's devices and notations, rather freely taken from him by Gough in these paintings, add up to his vision, imitated. Cézanne is by now art-history, and quotations will be made: they do not entail discipleship to, much less replication of, him.

Energy, fecundity, a sense of the seedsmen's plants actually growing, is the animating force of these pictures. Flowers as forces of nature are the topic: rather than pretty flowers, pretty as pretty flowers are, in nature and in art.

Any possible "nice garden" effect is censored by the indifferent layout grid, a layout further parodied by Gough by edge-to-edge conjunction of separate panels in some works, and by arbitrary changes of scale between elements of the one composition.

But parody, the appropriation of the rather-ungainly, has been balanced by a nice re-disposition of forms, relations and areas. The result is not too pretty, though. Gough needs (and offers) the pun on 'nice' in, 'a nice balance', in a 'nice garden'.



Junk-mail! — Source material

The wheelbarrow carries blood & bone, lime, potash, compost and odds and ends. It, in these pictures, is a self-referring image of the miscellaneous freight carried by them.

The ladder, strong diagonal at once dividing and linking the major areas of the composition of the largest work, the eponymous "No-Junk Mail!", offers us — as ladders do — a possible way out, a way up to a higher view — to an Edenic garden of the imagination. But pre-lapsarian nostalgia is dampened by the very everyday look of the motifs. This is a look, made more everyday by the arbitrary gridding, whose source we know, and are not allowed to forget, and which is insisted on by the — erased — price labels on plants still in their black plastic nursery pots.

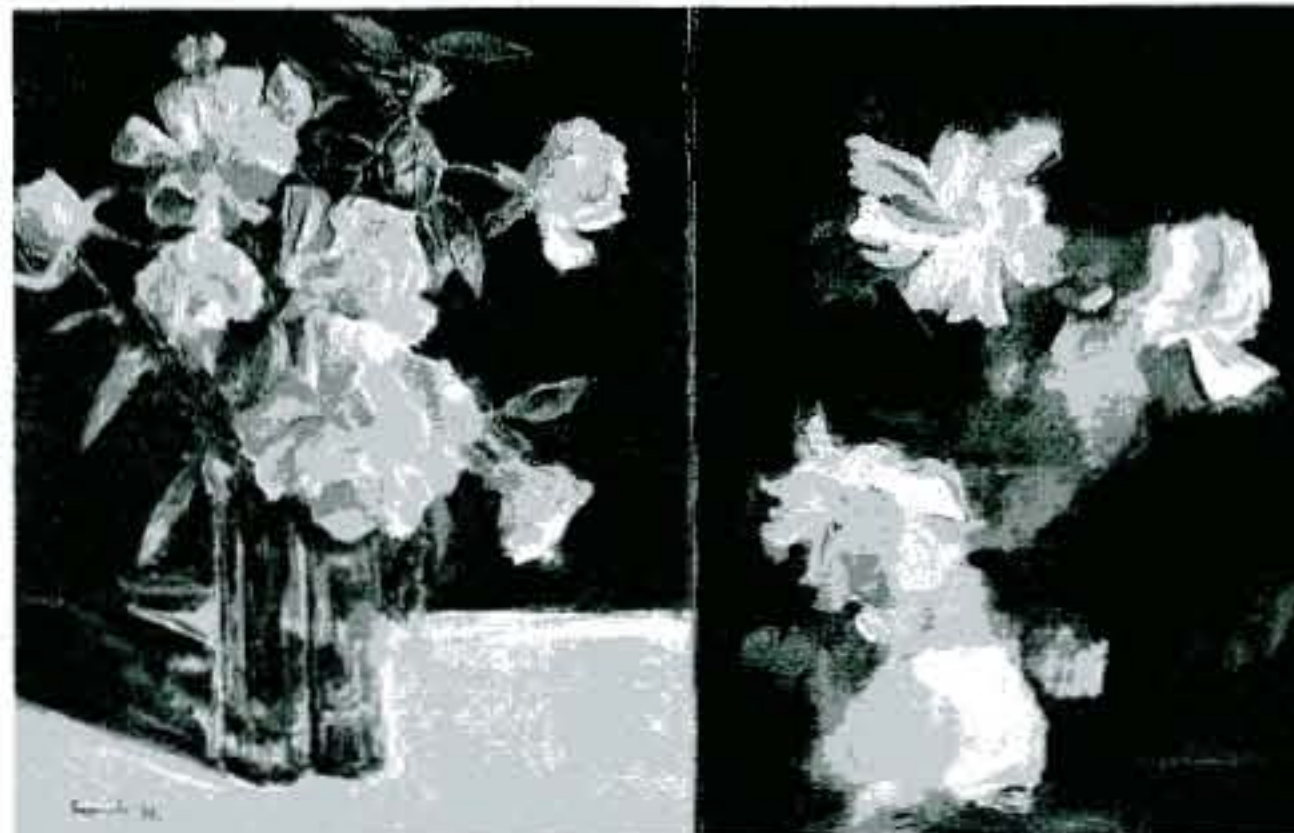
The picture "Inter' flora?" bounces off the old cliché of flower-painting as a women's activity: "Yes," Gough says, "I'm inter' flora, too!". The big camellia says so!". But the garden is not all flowers. The left panel — carefully separated off, though the work is one continuous canvas — holds a theatrical array of garden statues. There is no play, no Goldoni or Sheridan. There is only the play which fascinates Gough, of the organic and the architectural: the living flowers, and the stiff, unlively, garden figures, not sculpted but lumpishly cast. It is a mere cast, or cast of casts, this piece of theatre, but enlivened by the overall aesthetic effect.

The central figure in "Garden Display" articulates the two visual spaces of the work, which is presided over by yellow roses. The process of reading the

work, left to right, from the roses to the pinkish-purple area, gives one a sense of how the artist has ordered the various bits and pieces, bandstand, statues, flowers, into an aesthetic whole. As the eye proceeds across the work, they fall into a pleasing order.

"Garden Furniture" progresses from garden-shop stuff — pivoting on a wheelbarrow — to a set of garden figures, seen in a shower of roses or peonies. The whole work is a kind of transformation-scene, like the ones in old fashioned theatre productions, pantomimes and fairy plays. Gough's motto for the whole show might have been, "Scenes transformed". Happenstance becomes elegance.

"Nursery" shows little plants in pots, and all the clutter of a nurseryman's display: on the left of the big composition is a *putto* on a globe. The *putto* is unresolved as drawing: this is a metaphor for the potential of seeds and seedlings. We must wait upon the season, to see what may come of all this. The image is balanced on a point between "now" and "then-in-the future"; it is of course static, but it captures, even so, some sense of process, of the procession of the seasons.



Yellow Roses. Detail, Oil on 3 canvases, each canvas 50cm × 40cm.

Not Edenic, not even conventionally pretty gardens, much more like commercial seedsmen's displays than like the Festival of Melbourne's "Botanica", these large acrylic pictures are places where the banal advertising leaflets bloom into 'actual' leaves. That's the metaphor.

There is renewal here. That's art: and it's Gough's art.



Nursery. Acrylic on canvas, 1200cm × 2100cm.

The Oil Paintings

The oil paintings in this exhibition are all small flower pieces, rather in the tradition of Fantin-Latour. They tend to avoid impressionism, and to combine decorative realism with strong ploys with colour. The focus can vary, sharp or hazy: but prettiness is usually permitted, rather than courted. Gough's interest in the living contrasted with the architectural persists here: the vases are always as important as the flowers. They are more, in the picture, than just the things to put the water in that they may be in reality. Sometimes window-frames or the backs of stretched canvasses intrude, slightly,

into the pictures' rectangles. We are reminded, always, that visual reality is being represented, not presented. The bunches of flowers are not quite in quotation marks — that would be too post modern. Quotations here would not be too easy to source either: flower painting is a great leveller.

There is in Gough's flower pieces no nonsense about art just being about what one sees. The flower-pieces are about art's being about the world, and being another activity in the world, along with carpentry and gardening. Gough taught art for thirty years: he does not propose to feign innocence about it. His bunches of flowers come wrapped in

artifice: florists wrap in paper, and may hide the flowers. Painters wrap flowers in paint, and reveal them.

"One must cultivate one's garden"

Candide, Voltaire.

Craig Gough works, always, with great energy: and over thirty years of painting — and teaching others to paint — he has shown an indomitable persistence.

Persistence as well as energy is needed in any kind of gardening. We can see the blooms, here.

Patrick Hutchings

January and February 1995



Garden Display. Acrylic on canvas, 2050cm x 3120cm.



Interflora. Acrylic on canvas, 2050cm x 3050cm.



Barrow of Specials. Acrylic on paper, 107.5cm x 150 cm.



Photograph — Source material



Junk-mail! — Source material

CRAIG GOUGH

- 1938 Born in Perth, W.A.
- 1958-65 Studied at Perth Technical College and WAIT.
- 1958-67 Art Teacher in W.A. High Schools.
- 1968-73 Lecturer in Fine Art, Claremont Technical School, W.A.
- 1969-70 President of Contemporary Art Society of Australia (W.A. branch)
- 1972-73 Art Critic - "The Sunday Times", Perth. Festival of Perth Committee Member.
- 1974 - Moved to Melbourne
- Present Senior Lecturer in Painting at Monash University, Caulfield Campus (formerly Chisholm Institute of Technology)
- 1988 Overseas Studio 'Il Parettaio', Tuscany, Italy (3 months)
- Overseas travel: Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Holland, Britain, U.S.A. (3 months)
- 1991 July Acting Head of Department
- 1992 March Fine Art, Monash University
- 1992 Overseas travel: Spain (Madrid, Toledo, Cuenca, Valencia, Barcelona, Seville); and Paris.
- 1994 (December) Voluntary early retirement from teaching to paint full time.

ONE-MAN EXHIBITIONS

- 1968 The Old Fire Station - Perth
- 1970 The Old Fire Station - Perth
- 1972 The Old Fire Station - Perth
- 1974 Stewart Gerstman Galleries - Melbourne
- 1976 Collectors Gallery - Perth
- 1977 Warehouse Galleries - Melbourne
- 1980 Gallery 52 - Perth
- 1983 Christine Abrahams Gallery - Melbourne
- Quentin Gallery - Perth
- 1984 St. Kilda Library (drawings) - Melbourne
- Quentin Gallery - Perth
- 3 man Exhibition with A. Sibley and D. Rankin)
- 1985 Quentin Gallery - Perth
- Christine Abrahams Gallery - Melbourne
- 1986 Anima Gallery - Adelaide

1987 Christine Abrahams Gallery - Melbourne
 1989 Christine Abrahams Gallery - Melbourne
 1990 B.M.G. Fine Art - Sydney

SELECTED GROUP SHOWS AND INVITATION EXHIBITIONS

Perth Prize for Paintings (and drawing international) - regular exhibitor since 1960 - W.A. Art Gallery.
 Helena Rubinstein Portrait Prize. Selected for Exhibition 1960, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65 - Award ceased 1965.
 University of W.A. - Guild Exhibitions
 1965 Won Guild Prize
 1966 Won Rothmans Prize
 1966 Gallagher Portrait Prize - Sydney - exhibitor.
 1966 Religious Art Prize - Perth
 Third Prize
 Judges: Archbishop of Perth, Rev. G. Appleton and I. Wroth
 Contemporary Art Society of Australia
 1966-69 Exhibited in Sydney
 1968,69 Exhibited in Brisbane
 1966-70 Exhibited in Perth
 1966 Young Contemporaries National Exhibition - Perth
 1968 Shafsbury Art Prize (W.A.)
 Hon. Mention. Judge: G. Grey-Smith
 Meerlinga Art Exhibition (invitation)
 5 paintings - Festival of Perth
 1969,75 Tasmania Art Gallery Purchase Exhibition - exhibitor
 1970 Bunbury Art Prize, W.A. Winner (Acquisitive). Judge: I. Templeman
 1970,71 W.A.I.T. Invitation Art Exhibitions
 1970 Flotta-Lauro Art Prize Exhibition - Sydney. Exhibitor
 1972 Invited to exhibit 5 paintings in an exhibition of religious and liturgical art - The Old Fire Station Gallery - Perth, as part of the 'Festival of Perth'
 1973 Selected by W.A. Art Gallery to exhibit two paintings at the Concert Hall, Perth on the occasion of its Official Opening
 1973 Invited to take part in the '5 Screens' exhibition, Fremantle Art Centre (W.A.)
 1974 'WA Artists' - Festival of Perth, Invitation Exhibition - Art Gallery of W.A.
 1974,75 Inez Hutchinson Art Award (Vic.)
 76 Exhibitor. Hon. Mention each year
 Judges: 1974 Patrick McCaughey, 1975 Robert Grieve, 1976 Fred Cress
 1975,76 Invited to exhibit in 'Sir William Angliss Art Awards' - Melbourne
 1975 Invited to exhibit in the John McCaughey Memorial Art Prize - Melbourne
 1976 'Alice Art Prize' - Alice Springs, exhibitor
 1977 Capital Permanent Art Award - Geelong, exhibitor
 1978 Inaugural 'Sandringham/ Beaumaris Art Award' (Acquisitive)
 Winner. Judge: Roger Kemp
 Capital Permanent Art Award - Geelong, exhibitor
 1979 Invited by Victorian Ministry of the Arts and Melbourne Tramways Board, to paint a tram
 1980 'Still Life', Group Exhibition, Victor Mace Gallery - Brisbane
 Invited to exhibit in 'Centenary Exhibition Buildings Art Prize' (\$17,000) - Melbourne
 1981 'Homage' - Group Exhibition, Victor Mace Gallery, Brisbane
 Group Exhibition - works on paper - Quentin Gallery - Perth
 1982 'Survey' - Invitation Group Exhibition - touring Bunbury and Busselton Regional Art Galleries, W.A.
 Gallery Artists - group exhibition - Axiom Gallery - Melbourne
 1983 Invitational Drawing Exhibition - Caulfield Arts Centre, Victoria
 The John McCaughey Memorial Art Prize - Acquisitive Invitational Exhibition
 Joint Winner (with Mandy Martin) - at National Gallery of Victoria - Melbourne.
 Judges: P. McCaughey, R. Kemp, P. Rankin
 1984 St. Kilda Art Prize Winner. Judge: Patrick McCaughey
 Staff Exhibition - Chisholm Institute of Technology - Langwarren Regional Gallery - Victoria

1984 Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Art Awards (Drawing) - Perth, W.A.
 Winner. Judge: R. Heymans
 1985 Box Hill Acquisition Prize Exhibition
 Winner (Drawing Prize). Judge: Jennifer Phipps
 1986 Faber-Castell Award for Drawing, Sydney
 Purchased for international collection.
 Judge: Robert Lindsay
 Gold Coast Acquisitive Art Prize
 Drawing purchased. Judge: Joseph Brown
 1986 'Victoria, Views by Contemporary Artists' - touring exhibition, curated by Joe Pascoe
 1988 'Episode I' - Selected Invitation
 Exhibition of Chisholm Art Staff (Past and Present) curated by Jenny Zimmer
 1989 Kingfisher Art Prize - Gosford Art Gallery, N.S.W. Invitation - curated by Laura Murray
 Group Exhibition - Gallery Artists.
 B.M.G. Fine Art Gallery - Sydney
 1990 Scotchmans Hill Vineyard Art Prize - Geelong Art Gallery, exhibitor.
 1992 Castlemaine Drawing Prize, exhibitor
 1994
 1992 Mandorla, Religious Art Prize, invitation - Perth.
 1994
 1993 James Farrell Self-Portrait award - exhibitor, Castlemaine Art Gallery.

AWARDS

1965 Guild Prize - University of W.A. Guild Exhibition
 1966 Rothman's Prize - University of W.A. Guild Exhibition
 1970 Bunbury Art Prize - W.A.
 1978 Inaugural Sandringham/Beaumaris Art Award - Melbourne
 1983 John McCaughey Memorial Art Prize - National Gallery of Victoria
 Joint Winner
 1984 St. Kilda Art Prize
 Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital Art Award
 Drawing
 1985 Box Hill Acquisition Prize Exhibition (Drawing)
 Penleigh & Essendon Grammar School Art Award (Drawing)
 Mornington Peninsula Art Award (Drawing)
 1986 Bunbury Acquisition Prize (Drawing)
 Gold Coast Art Prize (Drawing acquired)
 1988 Visual Arts Board Studio, 'Il Paretaio', Palaia, Italy

COMMISSIONS

1973 Commissioned to paint one of 5 screens for '5 Screens' exhibition at the Fremantle Arts Centre - Fremantle, W.A.
 1979 A Painted Tram, joint venture by Victorian Ministry of the Arts & the Melbourne Tramways Board
 1986-87 Painting of 'Melbourne' for inaugural Hugh Williamson Collection, National Gallery of Victoria
 Plus numerous corporate and private commissions

COLLECTIONS

Australian Embassy, Saudi Arabia
 National Gallery of Victoria
 University of Western Australia
 Rural & Industries Bank, Perth
 St. Kilda City Council
 Sandringham City Council
 Claremont Teachers College, W.A.
 Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, W.A.
 Mornington Peninsula Art Gallery
 Newcastle City Art Gallery, N.S.W.
 St. George's College, University of W.A.
 Bunbury Art Gallery, W.A.
 Monash University
 W.A.I.T.
 Artbank
 Faber-Castell, Germany
 Fremantle Arts Centre, W.A.
 St. George's Cathedral, Perth
 Box Hill City Council
 LaTrobe Valley Arts Centre
 Victorian Ministry for the Arts
 Kyneton Shire Council

Plus numerous corporate and private collections including Holmes a Court, Besen/Suzannes, Margaret Carnegie, E. Hirsh, Price-Waterhouse, Mahlab, Ryder-Hunt.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

C. G. Hamilton - 'Rubinstein Portrait Winners on Show' The West Australian, 7/6/61
 Laurence Knott - 'Church to Run Art Contest' (Painting - 'The Crucifixion' reproduced) The Sunday Times (W.A.), 18/12/66
 I. M. Mason - 'Exhibition by Five Dominated by Two' The West Australian, 21/10/69
 I.M. Mason - 'Pleasure in Display of Colour, Form' The West Australian, 25/2/70
 Murray Mason - 'Craig Gough Exhibition Successful' The West Australian, 13/10/70
 Murray Mason - 'Success for an Unlikely Union' The West Australian, 13/9/72
 Alan McCulloch - 'A Special Way of Seeing Things' The Herald, 16/10/74
 Patrick McCaughey - 'Selected Paintings from the Monash University Collection', Catalogue - 'Expanding Blue' reproduced, March 1975
 'Ten Caulfield Artists' - Catalogue for exhibition at Monash University, Painting "Zwang" reproduced, October 1975
 Jeffrey Makin - 'Putting the Art Before the Course', 8/10/75
 Laurie Knott - 'Message in Boldness' The Sunday Times, September 1976
 Staff Reporter (Interview) - 'Artist Aims to Disturb' The West Australian, 17/2/77
 Richard Jasas - 'Gough has Hot Colour Sense' The Sunday Times (W.A.), 7/9/80
 Robert Rooney - 'New Freedom in Limited Palette' The Australian, April 1983
 Sue McCulloch (Interview) - 'Tough Entrance Exam into Elusive, Exclusive Enclave' The Australian, 20/4/83
 Murray Mason - 'Maturity in Landscapes' The West Australian, 11/7/83
 James Mellon (Interview) - Oral history recording, State Library of Victoria, 1984
 Joseph Pascoe - 'Victoria, Views by Contemporary Artists' - Catalogue to exhibition touring regional galleries - 'Sandringham No. 21' reproduced, 1985
 Julie Prott - 'Painter Opts for Nautical Overtones' The Sunday Times (W.A.), 30/6/85
 Murray Mason - 'Wider Visions from Gough' The West Australian, 2/7/85
 Ted Snell - 'Heavy Weather at Quentin' Western Mail, 6/7/85
 Heather Kennedy (Interview) - 'Painted Trams, Merry-Go-Rounds and All That Jazz' The Age, 27/7/85
 Rod Carmichael - 'Images of Horses that Cavort Around Luna Park' The Sun, 10/8/85
 Neville Weston - 'A Real Sense of Style Evident in Three Shows' The Advertiser (S.A.), 8/5/86
 Peter Ward - 'Alien Landscapes that Leave Us in the Dark' The Australian, May 1986
 Maria Prendergast - 'Australian Art Diary, 1986' - "St. Kilda" drawing reproduced
 Catalogue - Chisholm Artists Staff Exhibition, Photo and detail of "Sandringham 23" reproduced, 1986
 Gary Catalano - 'A Fusion of Impulses' The Age, 27/5/87
 Larry Berryman - 'Four Australian Artists' Arts Review, Vol. XXXIX, No. 12, London, 19/6/87
 Jenny Zimmer - 'Chilling Mix of Pain and Power' The Age, September 1989
 Bernard Hoffert - 'In Pursuit of the Ideal' The Advocate, September 1989
 Laura Murray - 'The Kingfisher Prize Exhibition' Catalogue - "Rebirth" reproduced, September/October 1989
 Catalogue/Poster - 'The Horse Show', Heide Park and Art Gallery, "Merry-Go-Round" reproduced, 1989
 Max Germaine - 'Artists and Galleries of Australia and New Zealand'
 Alan McCulloch - Encyclopaedia of Australian Art
 Susan McCulloch - Revised edition, Encyclopaedia of Australian Art
 Victorian Ministry for the Arts - Exhibition
 Catalogue - 'Transporting Art', image on cover

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 Tuesday - Friday 10.30am - 5.00pm
 Saturday 11.00am - 4.00pm