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Curated by Bryan Eccleshall, June 2008



“Futile Bunker”

Josh C Lancaster, 1962

During the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis Lancaster was working as a hired hand on this farm. He had travelled to England to complete a scholarship in Law at Cambridge University, but had dropped out. Having no money to return home he started work here. He lived in a caravan on site.

The reason was due indirectly to the death of his mother in 1960 (while he was in Cambridge), which led to a kind of breakdown. He couldn't travel home to attend the

funeral of his mother as loopholes in the contract relating to the scholarship wouldn't pay for it. He became disillusioned with the subject he was studying and turned his hand to farm labour and his head to sculpture.

What we see in front of us is an absurd attempt at creating a Nuclear Bunker in which to shelter from the imminent mushroom cloud. By building this up a tree Lancaster is arguing that any attempt at surviving is ridiculous. It has been used by the family ever since as a rather singular tree house, bringing joy to a piece created in a despairing time.

Lancaster returned to the States in 1966 and became of the founders of the hippy movement. He acted as legal advisor to people arrested for drugs charges in Haight Ashbury until 1970, when he disappeared.



“Something Within Me, Great God Inside”

Mary Jane Bedford, 1995

The title of this simple piece of re-appropriation refers to a spiritual blues song that uses a sewing machine as percussion. Recorded in 1959 by Odean Matthews, a prisoner in the Angola State Penitentiary, Louisiana, the song itself is about the woman's plight and her resolution to endure it.

The sewing machine here is obviously past use and becomes almost archaeological in its significance. Bedford, by placing this seized up sewing machine, is inviting us to

consider the suffering of women (by invoking a blues song), whilst celebrating the toughness of those very women.

Bedford has also talked about the selection of a sewing machine as representing the introduction of technology into the home. Initially labour saving devices such as washing machines, sewing machines and electric irons helped in the domestic sphere but now, she says, we are bombarded with “future landfill in the shape of electric tagines, coffee makers that use dedicated sachets and the like”.



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“Optical Chair (Reflection)”
Maya ‘Clipper’ Nolan, 1970

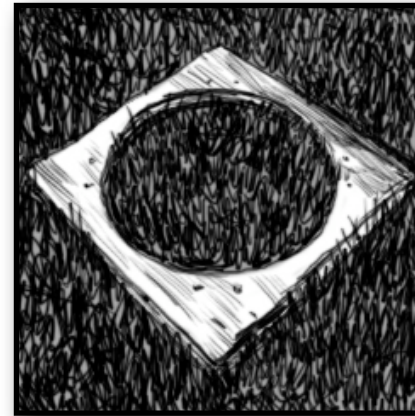
In the 1960’s Op Art as practiced by Bridget Riley and others was almost the equal of the subsequently more widely know Pop Art. Here we have a piece that has it’s feet in both camps. The chair itself resembles nothing so much as three dimensional interpretation of an Op Art painting. The tight spiraling of the cane alludes to inward contemplation in its Zen like form. Nolan, a Canadian, insisted at the time that the chair should be placed, “...in front of a mirror, large enough that the sitter can comfortably see their whole self and a good

deal of their surroundings, that they might better contemplate their place in universe,” thus placing the self-portrait squarely into a recent abstract tradition, much in the same way Warhol took portraiture forward. Nolan’s work tends to be thoughtful and positive, reflecting a belief that all the tools we need to make a good life are already in our possession if only we have the time and inclination to look for them.

From this simple comment we can fairly deduce that the artist’s intention was to see this as a seat for meditation and the pun in the title reinforces the idea of reflection.

The artist’s nickname, Clipper, comes from her predilection for tea, and lots of it.

Sadly the original mirror is lost. The one you see here is a rough approximation based on the artist’s comment above.



“Summer Tower”
Tina Vorwerk, 1968

This piece was never finished. All we have here are three elements - two wooden and one metal - that begin to describe a tower that would have grown year on year. Echoing the work of Donald Judd - the American minimalist sculptor - the simple elements build one on another to create a structure that would, if time and money had permitted, tower over the viewer. The circle pressed out of the centre of each layer would have allowed light to flood into the structure, thus adding an airiness that complements the

wood and metal parts. There may well be further elements hereabouts, but they have not been recovered.

Vorwerk has, since a major retrospective in her home town of Leiden in 1991, largely withdrawn from art practice, concentrating on curating shows of little known Dutch artists. She was behind the 1995 exhibition of emerging Dutch Artists’ work “The Future’s Bright”, which, much to her chagrin became the sponsor’s tagline.



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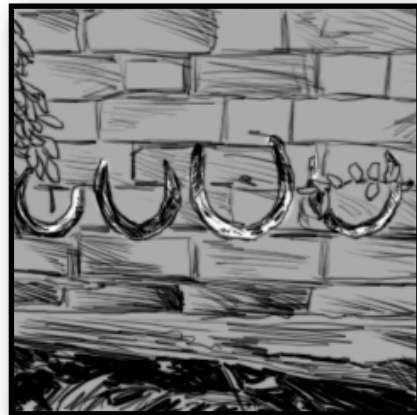
“The Relentless Gaze”
Yves Dozier, 1978

A student of Marcel Broodthaers, Dozier worked with found objects and, like Broodthaers, re-configured them creating, to paraphrase Duchamp, ‘new thoughts for the objects’. Although much of his work was political (Dozier was a lifelong Communist and relentless Anti-Viet Nam War campaigner), often using dolls heads in strange disturbing structures he also exhibited a playful side to his personality.

This piece remained, until very recently, a puzzle as to which camp - political or playful - it

belonged. Little of his work straddles the divide, but this one was suspected of being one of these rare pieces.

The title appears to refer to surveillance, a common theme in his late work which used the paraphernalia of photography in large complex installations, but the collection of jars in a bowl seems at odds with any literal meaning. Until one realises that they are, simply, lidless.



“You Should Be So Lucky”
Danny Donovan, 1987

Sydney born Donovan has placed horseshoes onto a small ledge on the side of the house, and titled the piece in a sarcastic way, implying what? Well, it’s difficult to tell. We know his time here was happy, though the manner of his leaving is a little unclear. Perhaps the piece is revenge or simply jealousy.

Traditionally the horseshoe is seen as a good luck charm, often placed above the front door of a house. Folklorists disagree as to whether the shoe should form a U (as here), to hold the luck in, or as a n which will pour the luck over anyone that walks beneath it. This debate is largely irrelevant here as Donovan has placed the shoes at such a low height that no luck would pour onto anyone.

Donovan’s work tended after this to be larger and brasher, favouring brightly coloured plastics. The horseshoe

recurred as a motif in his piece for the Sydney Olympics in 2000. Outside the Opera House five large plastic horseshoes in the colours of the Olympic Rings were interlocked in order to act as a reminder that sporting success can be as dependent on luck as on work. The Olympic Committee objected to what they called a “cynical construction that undermines the principles of the Olympic Movement, arguing as it does that effort has no place and that chance is an over-riding factor in success”. Donovan stood his ground, but the City removed the piece after three days. It is now lost, though Donovan petitioned the City for either full payment, the re-siting of the piece or its return to him. It became something of a cause celebre in Australian contemporary art circles, but stymied Donovan’s ability to move on to other projects.



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“Entangled”

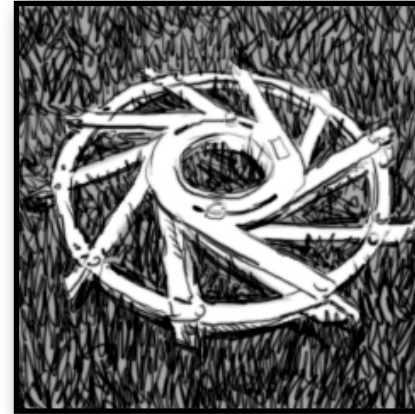
Michael Banks, 1976

Simply put this is a three dimensional Jackson Pollock. Banks discovered Pollock's work at college in the early 1990's and was drawn to what he described as it's "lack of pretension". At the time the YBA phenomenon (Tracey Emin, Gavin Turk, Damien Hirst et al.), was in full swing and Banks was repelled by its dry, conceptual foundation. He wanted art to move back to a more emotional basis and did so by self-consciously aping the abstract expressionists.

This piece is an early attempt at re-making painting into a sculptural equivalent. Sadly his other attempts - flooding a pool of water with maroon paint to produce a giant Rothko, stripping wallpaper at the British Library to make a Clifford Still, were less successful and resulted in him being bound over to keep the peace. For his final year show he recited the complete works of Clement Greenburg, the critic that wrote extensively in support of Abstract Expressionism, while wearing a white boiler suit in a paintball arena.

His tutors, when grading his degree show, conceded that he was committed to a cause, but failed him because "his cause was not just".

Banks retired from making art and now runs a small art bookshop in Hay-On-Wye.



“Ten Fold Path”

Bovan Nera, 1984

While studying sculpture at St Martin's College, Nera (the name is Czech though he is English), became interested in comparative religion. This metal wheel exhibits his opinion that all religions along with secularism and atheism have truth within them and that we should study all and commit to none in particular.

Each spoke represents a world view - Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, Wicca, Animism, and Atheism -and comes from a central core -

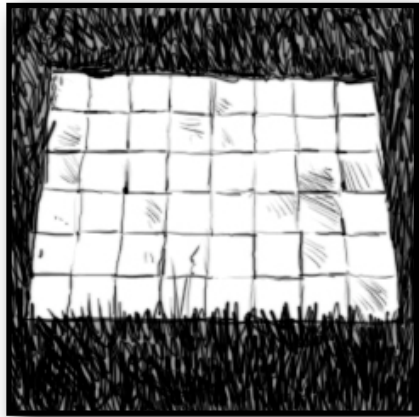
human experience - and all are attached to a perimeter that Nera equates to "our hope". The title, of course, refers to the Eight Fold Path that Buddhists follow in order to reach nirvana. Nera conceded that this gave Buddhism a bit of a head start when it came to the comparisons between the religions, but he claimed that Buddhism deserved it, believing that "no wars have ever been fought in the name of Buddha."

Nera's subsequent work has taken him further into the realm of belief systems. He followed his horoscope for a year in the early nineties and on the twentieth anniversary of the Berlin Wall falling he intends to run the perimeter of old West Berlin while wearing a suit on which is printed The Communist Manifesto. Permission for this piece (due in late 2009), has yet to be granted.



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“Homage to Carl”

Stanislaw Arciszewski, 1974

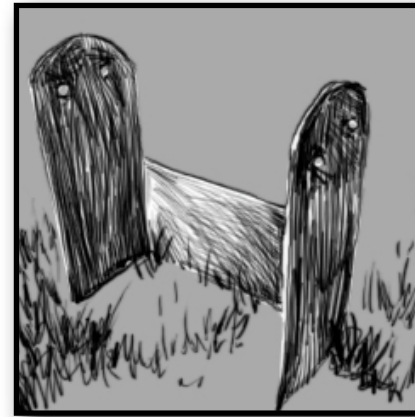
Carl Andre, best known in the UK for the ‘Tate Bricks’ scandal of 1972, though the Bricks (actually called *Equivalents VIII* dates from 1966), was a leading light in the American Minimalist movement which also included Donald Judd, Richard Serra and composers like Philip Glass and Steve Reich.

Andre’s austere formal sculptures often took the form of a repeated element laid out in a regular configuration.

Arciszewski, the creator of this whole collection, was taken with Andre’s simplistic forms and decided that, after watching artists make their own work, it wouldn’t be too difficult to make some himself. This small vinyl offcut, laid on the ground, echoes the steel pieces Andre was making at the time. This, however, reflects Arciszewski’s attitude that anything that could be done, could be done more easily.

What we end up with, ironically, is a piece of Duchampian re-appropriation of the highest order. A small piece of DIY material has been pushed into the arena of contemporary art by a simple force of will.

After this piece, Arciszewski refrained from further creativity.



“For Dave”

Jane McEwan, 1990

McEwan, a British sculptor who studied under Sir Anthony Caro, created this piece to mark her marriage.

The steel represents strength and longevity and the two figures, complete with eyes face each other while being linked to one another. Another reading of the configuration shows that the figures look out from the relationship, while each depends on the other for support. Either way it is a thoughtful and accomplished meditation on partnership and

brings to mind Kahlil Gibrain’s words on Marriage from *The Prophet*:

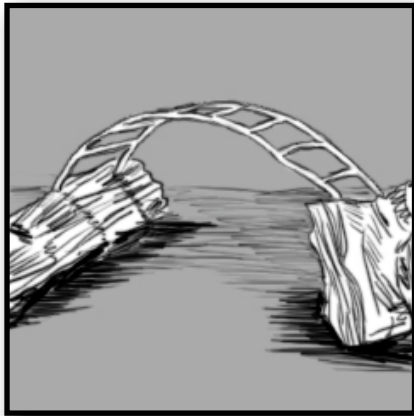
“...Give your hearts, but not into each other’s keeping.
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
And stand together, yet not too near together:
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other’s shadow.”

McEwan’s marriage is still strong and her work retains an interest in such subjects as decency and how to be happy in life.



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“Mostar Bridge”

Vinko Papić, 1993

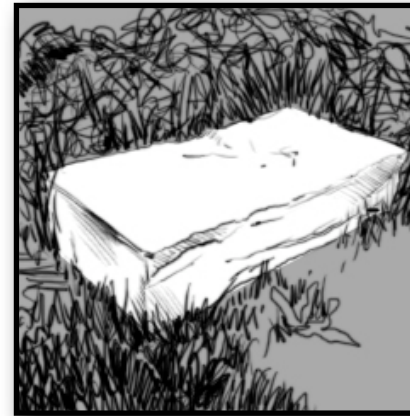
In 1993, during the conflict that took place after Yugoslavia broke up, the iconic bridge at Mostar was destroyed by the Croatian Defence Council. The bridge symbolised a multi-ethnic approach and its destruction became an equally potent symbol of the rejection of that approach.

Papić - a Croatian artist based in the UK - created this arch a simple response to this act of vandalism. He was quoted at the time as saying, “We have to speak out against these act.

They are designed to de-stabilise our society and to somehow put the clock back. Bridges are so much more important than chasms”.

The sculptor’s remaking of a war-destroyed bridge echoes something that took place in the Second World War. On 10th June 1942 the village of Lidice was destroyed by the SS in an act of revenge for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich. All the men over the age of 16 were executed and the women and children taken to Concentration Camps. The Nazi’s boasted of their actions precipitating worldwide condemnation. Several towns worldwide renamed themselves Lidice in order that the memory of the village would live on.

“Mostar Bridge” attempts to symbolically keep the way open for a rapprochement down the line. The real Mostar Bridge was rebuilt in 1995.



“Brick”

Nicola Wright, 1979

This is only a fragment of a huge piece that Wright produced in the late 70’s. The complete piece was a giant replica of a dog kennel. It stood 80 feet high and was made of 600 of these bricks.

The piece was only shown once, at a one-off Biennale in Cincinnati, Ohio. In all, 200 bricks were shipped to the UK and auctioned off for charity. It is thought that this one was bought for £250. The others are in private collections world

wide. A total of £75,000 was raised for Orphan Relief.

Wright is notoriously reticent to talk about her work but it is thought to draw on her childhood in the Midwest USA. She usually creates models - large and small - of vernacular architecture from her past and places it in settings more accustomed to sophisticated buildings at the cutting edge of design. Her most famous piece was the inflatable farmyard placed in front of the new Guggenheim in Bilbao.

