



## DI FFRENCH

TRUSTBANK CANTERBURY ARTIST IN RESIDENCE 1990

**BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS AND CIBACHROMES**

MCDUGALL ART ANNEX  
31 JANUARY - 26 FEBRUARY 1991

779  
FFR

**M**y main interest is in the search for a system of meaning, of understanding the connections between images that may group to form a concept/idea. As it is the idea which permits an explanation.

Since 1980 I have been working with sculptural installations in conjunction with photographs. The action being specifically structured for the camera, so that the photograph is the prime repository of meaning rather than a subsidiary of the main event.

Currently I am interested in the photographic image being, as an imprinted memory - a slightly indistinct image where the sequence moves in and out of focus/time.

Sculptural objects made are often an integral aspect of finished works or can be removed from this context as statements in themselves.

## AWAKENING

### THE SERIES: THE IDEA BECOMES EXTINCT

**A** subversive statement on the physicality of women as the **disinterested** subject of the male gaze.

The resilient stance of a chronologically older woman exposing a positive aggressive confidence, self contained in her own focus/strength and **positioned to deny any intrusion**.

Consciously taken from the **pose** of a Michelangelo marble held in the Galleria Accademia in Florence. That of an unfinished "bound slave", the "Awakening Slave" 1520-23?

The female, **bound metaphorically** by shackles of historical emphasis on female sexuality and the resultant burden this creates, i.e. a conditioned and generalised perception of the female figure. (Michelangelo's sculptures of women have been considered androgenous because of their muscularity).

It is only now being realised that women developing the power potential of muscle groups to increase **strength** and **stamina** (rather than cosmetic restructuring) are thereby taking **possession of themselves**; physically and psychologically becoming their own subject/focus.

Becoming as opposed to being the attraction of the potential and unrealised.

Individual muscle groups are isolated and sculptured as is the coke/coal installation thus reinforcing an illusionary transparency.

This sculptural dissection of the body parallels the



The original installation in French's studio, from which the transparency for projection is made.

objectification which strengthening for stamina achieves. A felt sense of the body as perceived from within.

#### THE HEAD

The head is moving back into **darkness of coal**: Symbolic of intuition and instincts.

Carbon: The predominant chemical component in human organism.

Crystallized Carbon: Crystal clear water.

Black: The colour associated with inner or subterranean Zones.

#### MICHELANGELO

The Prigioni - Prisoners.  
Awakening Slave 1520-23?

## HUNTER WARRIOR SERIES 1990

In this series I am attempting to divide the surface into distinct sections or time zones. Linear perspective and other devices link these "layers of time", which together with environmental and architectural installations, orients, locking the subject into its own reality. Humankind is presented as a vehicle of containment - of imprinted social history and biological uniqueness.

By acknowledging the existence of aggression and attempting to understand it, one becomes aware of the necessity of aggression for survival, i.e., as a vital energy resource to be used in self defence and defending others. The use of military discipline, technology and wealth could be diverted from warfare to cleaning up pollution, starvation, disease and natural disasters on a global scale.

Positive aggression is a necessary element, an energy used in the creation of all art forms. It is energy to be used wisely.

## TAKING POSSESSION

A development from the series "The Idea Becomes Extinct"

**THE STANCE:** Indicates **defence** mechanisms. Body positioned to defend attack.

**RESTRUCTURING:** As formulated in the series "The Idea Becomes Extinct": Women developing the power potential of muscle groups to increase strength and stamina are thereby **taking possession of themselves**; physically and psychologically becoming their own subject/focus.

No longer is the body vulnerable, it has the reflex action of a shield; thus countering the generalised perception of a conditioned viewing; i.e. the female figure as forever vulnerable, with potential to be exploited.

**THE PROJECTED HAND:** A visualisation.

**The mark of the performer's hand** as a cognitive assertion of the body as a **shield against aggression** - aimed onto the **target areas** of the torso which the performer **visualises** as vital for **defence** during the kata movements (And the applications to these movements).

**KATA:** Combinations of physical movements and visualisation practice. Partly for self defence. Concentration necessary for the development of physical discipline and positively applied aggression is controlled by the brain.

## PROCESS

A complex process of transformations through illusion and light, coupled with sculptured and photographic techniques.

Subsequent to the projection of the transparency into a bed of matter (coke breeze, coal, water, bricks, wood etc.), individual muscle groups can be sculptured into solid forms which reinforce the illusionary projection. (The human form both male and female is a vulnerable one: the projection onto a harsh landscape intensifies this).



The image projected on to a bed of coal dust. Colour can be added at this stage, and the image manipulated with the addition of other objects. (The cover photograph shows the projection of the original image on to a sculpted bed of debris ready for rephotographing.)

## IMAGES

**Exploring through the illusionary aspects** of photography as a creative tool adjunctive to sculpture. A link with historical, political and technological developments, both in the past and present time scale.

**Allusions to past civilisations and events.** The perception of the viewer who interprets a range of illusions, depend on individual responses, which may channel the imagination into a whole range of associations that may or may not actually exist in the work.

**Multi layers of time.** Images of man or landscape projected onto a sculptural construction.

**An integrated matrix** of social context or place, interwoven with personal experience manifested through sculptural objects.

**Activation** of these objects in performance time integrates into one resultant photographic image, **real 3 dimensional solids** with an **illusionary 3 dimensional projection**. The resultant work creates the illusion of a new reality.

**Di ffrench**

1990/1



## DI FFRENCH SELECTED BIOGRAPHY

- 1946 Born in Melbourne, Australia
- Prior to 1976 Worked privately - *Art in the Mail* projects  
Outdoor hanging - Sydney, Australia  
Broadway Galleries - Milwaukee, U.S.A.  
Washington University, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.  
*Mail Art Show* (Sculpture)  
Govett Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, with Michael Smither - 4 works  
Glenfield Public Library - Auckland  
Sunderland Library - Tyne and Wear, England  
Photographic Study, Albert Park, Auckland  
Pakiri Beach - Environmental works/performance  
*Guerrilla Art Show* - Superior, Wisconsin, U.S.A.  
*Fibre Show* - Superior, Wisconsin, U.S.A.  
Sculpture Festival, First Church Grounds, Dunedin
- 1978 Hansells - invited sculptor - Masterton  
Wellington City Art Gallery - Invited Artist  
*Aramoana Exhibition* - 3 large works - Installation  
Women's Art Gallery, Wellington - Invited Artist  
*Sculpture Project* Slide performance, *Fractures* work with Rosemary Johnson and Bridie Lonie  
Hocken Library - Dunedin - Aramoana - 2 outside works  
Women's Art Gallery, Wellington - *Mothers*  
National Tour 1981/82  
University of Canterbury, Christchurch - Installation & Slide Presentation - performance  
*Gut Reaction*  
ANZART - performance - *Fontanel*  
Wellington - performance - *The same leaves*  
National Art Gallery, Wellington - Performance/Installation  
Dunedin Art Gallery - one woman exhibition  
*FI*, Wellington - Photographs
- 1983 ANZART - Tasmania - Invited Artist - Work  
*Asters*
- 1984 CSA Gallery - Invited Artist - Sculpture - Peace  
Exhibition  
*The Opinion* - Artist's Project - Invited Artist - Auckland City Art Gallery  
*Photographs from Sculpture* - Cibachromes and Black and White - Real Pictures Art Gallery - Auckland
- 1985 Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch,  
Installation/Performance - *Spare Parts* Exhibition
- 1986 Suter Gallery, Nelson - Invited Artist: *Self*  
Exhibition - Photography (touring)  
Robert McDougall Art Gallery - Invited Artist -  
Photography - *Peace* Exhibition  
Auckland City Art Gallery - *New Acquisitions*  
1985, Photography  
*Content/Context*, Shed 11, National Art Gallery,  
Wellington
- 1987 George Fraser Gallery (Opening exhibition)  
Auckland, sponsored by QEII Arts Council  
Victoria University, Wellington  
Carnegie Centre Gallery, Dunedin (One woman  
exhibition)
- 1988 Louise Beale Gallery, Wellington (one woman)  
Jonathan Jensen Gallery, Christchurch (one  
woman)  
Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland (group)  
Real Pictures Gallery, Auckland (one woman)  
Southland Art Gallery, Gore (one woman)
- 1989 Fisher Gallery, Auckland (group)  
Hocken Gallery, Dunedin  
Moray Gallery, Dunedin (one woman)  
Jonathan Jensen Gallery, Christchurch  
Trustbank Canterbury Artist in Residence, Arts  
Centre, Christchurch  
The Arts Centre of Christchurch (one woman)  
Salamander Gallery, Arts Centre, Christchurch

- 1990 School of Fine Arts, University of Canterbury  
Sarjeant Gallery, Wanganui, *United/Sarjeant  
Gallery Photographic Award* (group) (invited)  
Jonathan Jensen Gallery, Christchurch (group)  
CSA Gallery, Christchurch (group)

### GRANTS

- 1982 QEII Towards the cost of one woman exhibition  
1983 QEII Travel - ANZART - Tasmania  
1985/86 QEII Major Individual Grant  
1990 Trust Bank Fellowship, Christchurch - major  
individual grant

### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Hurrell, John. 'The New Zealand presence in Tasmania:  
Performance art, photography at ANZART-in-  
Hobart', *Art New Zealand*, 1983; 28:21-23.
- Lonie, Bridie. 'Diaries', *Art New Zealand*, Summer 1981; 18:14  
(illus).
- Christensen, Margaret.  
'In Their Element', *New Zealand Listener*, 24 May  
1980; 34-35.
- Rowe, Neil. 'Twenty One Sculptors in Masterton', *Art New  
Zealand*, 1980; 16:48-53 (illus).
- Smart, Jonathan and Lauder, Hugh.  
'Ideology and Political Art in New Zealand',  
*Landfall*, March 1985, 153:81-100 (illus).
- Strathdee, Barbara.  
'Women Artists at the FI Sculpture Project', *Art  
New Zealand*, 1983, 26:54-55.
- Sotheran, Cheryl.  
*Art New Zealand*, 33:14-15 (illus).

### BOOKS

- Content/Context, A Survey of Recent New Zealand Art*. National Art  
Gallery, Wellington, 1986.  
Eastmond, Elizabeth, and Merimeri Penfold. *Women and the Arts  
in New Zealand*, Auckland, 1986.  
Kirker, Anne. *New Zealand Women Artists*. Auckland, 1986.

### REVIEWS

- Auckland, Terry Snow, T.J. McNamara  
Christchurch, Brett Riley, Jonathan Smart  
Wellington, Elva Bett  
Australia, Art Link

### COLLECTIONS

- Auckland City Art Gallery  
Bridgit Ikon, Auckland  
John Gellert, Auckland  
Mr McCavley, Auckland  
Private Collection, Wellington  
Private Collection, Dunedin  
Hocken Library, Dunedin  
Janet Frame  
Christine Hellyar

- DRONE** Auckland conceptual sound performance  
A collaborative event.  
An interpretation.  
Two Performances.

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