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Rituel Commun + Common Ritual

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Gerry Weise

Publication Details

J. P. Cockburn and G. Weise 1987 Rituel Commun + Common Ritual, Paris. Australian Embassy 25 September to 30 October 1987

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Rituel Commun + Common Ritual

Abstract

Jon Cockburn exhibited, in conjunction with works by expatriate Australian Artist Gerry Weise, at the Australian Embassy, 4 rue Jean Rey, Paris, France between the 25 September to 30 October 1987 in an exhibition entitled by Gerry Weise 'Rituel Commun + Common Ritual'. The exhibition was listed in French art journal Art Press and gained other print media publicity (two further exhibitions of works by Cockburn and Weise using the title 'Rituel Commun + Common Ritual' also took place over the following months at privately run galleries in Reims and Toulouse). In August 1987, Jon Cockburn sent to Paris a total of 17 works for exhibition in the Australian Embassy

Keywords

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Disciplines

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INFORMATION SHEET ON WORK BY JON COCKBURN EXHIBITED AT THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY, PARIS, FRANCE FROM SEPT-OCT 1987

The following information sheet documents work by Jon Cockburn exhibited, in conjunction with works by expatriate Australian Artist Gerry Weise, at the Australian Embassy, 4 rue Jean Rey, Paris, France held between the 25 September to 30 October 1987. The exhibition was titled by Gerry Weise 'Rituel Commun + Common Ritual' and was listed as such in French art journal and press publicity (two further exhibitions of works by Cockburn and Weise using the title 'Rituel Commun + Common Ritual' also took place in the following months at privately run galleries in Reims and Toulouse). In August 1987, Jon Cockburn sent to Paris a total of 17 works for exhibition in the Australian Embassy.



Cover of *Art Press*, No 118, October, 1987: In 1987, the Head Office for *Art Press* was at Art Press, 2, rue Saint Simon 75007, Paris, France.



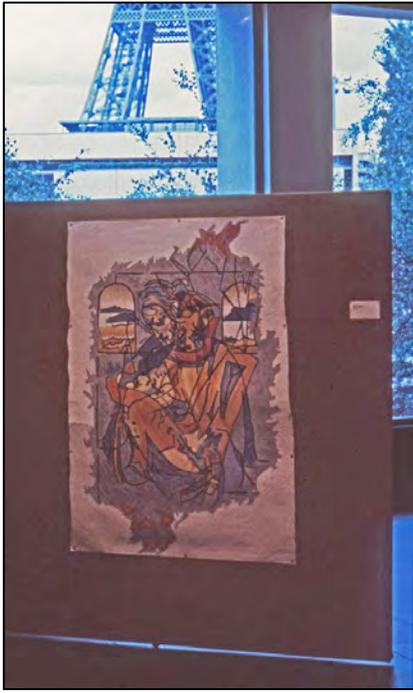
Exhibition notices in *Art Press*, No 118, October 1987, p.86, including the exhibition notice for Jon Cockburn and Gerry Weise 'Rituel Commun + Common Ritual' at the Australian Embassy, 4 due Jean Rey, Paris, France, 25 September to 30 October 1987.



Detail of exhibition notices in *Art Press*, No 118, October 1987, p.86, showing notice for Jon Cockburn and Gerry Weise 'Rituel Commun + Common Ritual' at the Australian Embassy, 4 due Jean Rey, Paris, France, 25 September to 30 October 1987 (a work by Jon Cockburn is on the left – an ink on paper figure drawing).



Trio Agora from Reims, playing at the opening of Jon Cockburn and Gerry Weise 'Rituel Commun + Common Ritual' 1987 Exhibition at the Australian Embassy, Paris (works by Gerry Weise can be seen in the background).



Installation view of Jon Cockburn and Gerry Weise 'Rituel Commun + Common Ritual' exhibition, Australian Embassy Paris, 1987, at the far end works by Gerry Weise can be seen, on partitions are works by Jon Cockburn.

Jon Cockburn (b.1953),
Madonna and Demoiselle
(installed in Australian
Embassy Exhibition, with
Eiffel Tower visible through
window behind the artwork),
1985, wax oil on paper, 150
cm x 103 cm, collection of the
artist.

It was not possible for Jon Cockburn to travel to Paris, France for the general organization, hanging and opening of the exhibition at the Australian Embassy. On the basis of the photographic documentation of this event, while not exhaustive, all indications are that most the works were not displayed in the thematic clusters Jon Cockburn had in mind, disrupting a certain narrative clarity to the various elements.

Dr Neil Brown (UNSW, Sydney) kindly agreed to write a catalogue and general publicity statement on behalf of Jon Cockburn for the Australian Embassy, Paris exhibition and the subsequent exhibitions in Reims and Toulouse. Dr Neil Brown's statement reads as follows:

THE WORKS OF JON COCKBURN

Jon Cockburn is primarily a maker of icons. An icon maker is not always an originator of icons. Sometimes he merely endorses icons while at others he resuscitates and reaffirms icons that have lapsed.

The work of the icon maker is motivated by one overriding objective, the innovation and maintenance of the imagery which serves as a mirror for

some powerful, remote and usually mythical or totemic experience. The making policies of icon makers are thus usually preservationist and imbued with a keen sense of the significance of important and culturally enduring images.

The influences that show up in an icon maker's work are thus directly traceable in the work, often in the most obvious way. Compositional subterfuge and formalistic sophistication is at a minimum in iconic imagery. The denotative relations that give icons their meaning remain easily read and readily translatable into the original idea.

The images of icons can range from the archetypal to the portrayal. Whatever form it takes an icon expresses the cultural as dominating over the personal. At its most powerfully mythic an artist's imagery gives cognisance to both the idea and the experience within a particular work. At this level the artist resembles the mythic, acting as an agent of direct cultural generation.

From a personal perspective Jon Cockburn's icon making splits into four distinguishing types:

The first type unites Western iconic images of Renaissance painting with 20th century Western images. The unification is affected in a typically obvious way with an overlay of four images drawn from Picasso, Da Vinci (a Hermitage Madonna and Child), and an angel from the Signorelli frescos in Orvieto. The wax oil drawings on arch paper superimpose images of the Madonna on the left, with *Les Demoiselle d'Avignon* on the right. The superimposition simply plays out critical feints at the expense of the traditional humanist influences in Western Art.

The second type is characterized by the resolution of Cockburn's own understanding of Western art with selected Melanesian forms from his childhood experiences. In a reversal of the synthetic process of his pastels Cockburn shows how the Melanesian images endure, surviving the purging effect of his Western tertiary art education. The image of the proto-fish is cultivated in a matrix of formal chevron patterning.

A third type sets all of the first and second type images free where stars, proto-fish, flaming hearts and cracked hearts are denoted by classical titles, such as Helen and Menelaus. All are set free in a quintessential plane of stars and chevrons that lock the images to the frame of the drawing.

A fourth type is characterized by a counter-transfiguration. In these small paintings certain basic symbols such as the crucifix and the image of fire are transfigured into the commonplace of easy to hand media such as packing case and hardboard. The burning is symbolized in the coarse red oil painting contrasted against the careful application of silver enamel. These works exemplify the ordeals of the Saints Catherine of Alexandria and St. Catherine of Siena.

Cockburn's work has that stamp of earnestness that accompanies all icons, that sense of overstatement that leaves his audience with a feeling of cultural endorsement.

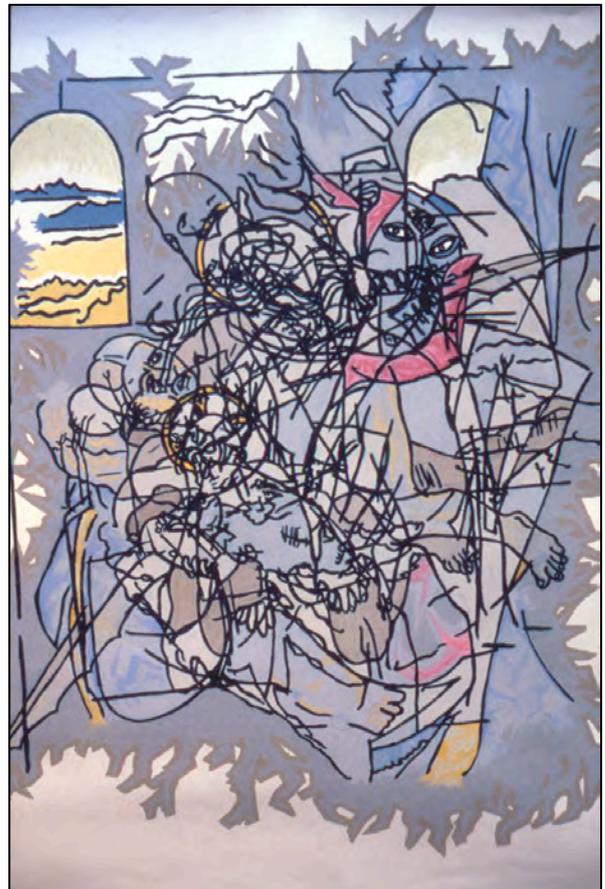
Dr Neil Brown
Sydney, August 1987.

The following pages reproduce 9 images from the selection of 17 works that were sent by Jon Cockburn to Paris for the Australian Embassy Exhibition, 1987.

Conceptual Premise or Theme – Burning Off Reproductions:

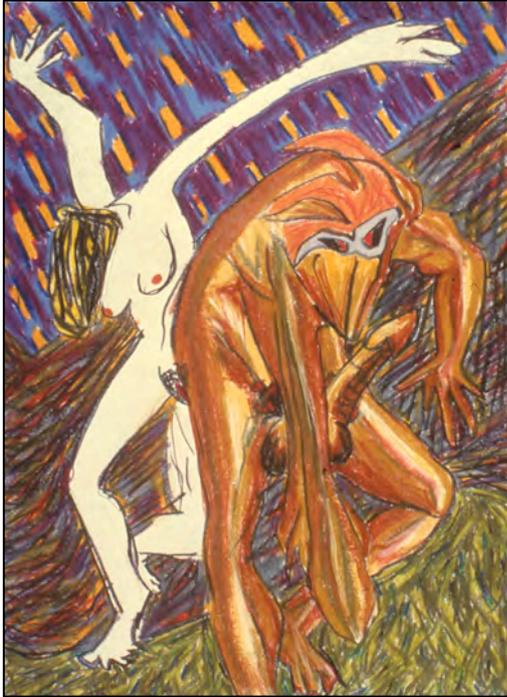


Jon Cockburn (b.1953), *Madonna and Demoiselle*, 1985, wax oil on paper, 150 cm x 103 cm, Collection of the artist

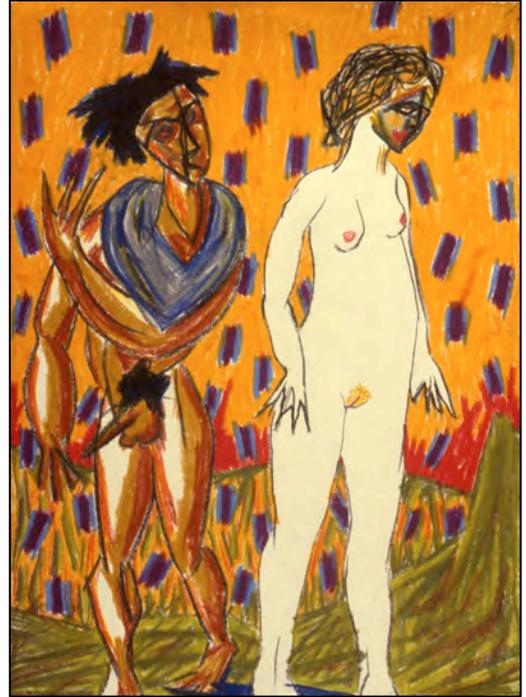


Jon Cockburn (b.1953), *Four Aspects toward being engulfed by bland nothingness*, 1985, wax oil on paper, 176 cm x 136 cm, Collection of the artist

Conceptual Premise or Theme – Four Classical/Contemporary Themes:



Jon Cockburn (b.1953), *Helen and Menelaus – My Agony, Your Agony*, 1984, wax oil on paper, 28 cm x 38 cm, collection of the artist



Jon Cockburn (b.1953), *Calchas Gift – Achilles sights Iphigeneia: The Agony*, 1984, wax oil on paper, 28 cm x 38 cm, collection of the artist



Jon Cockburn (b.1953), *Agamemnon and Cassandra Fallen, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus leave: The Younger Paramour*, 1984, wax oil on paper, 28 cm x 38 cm, private collection



Jon Cockburn (b.1953), *Orestes, Electra, Clytemnestra – She Screams*, 1984, wax oil on paper, 28 cm x 38 cm, collection of the artist

Conceptual Premise or Theme – The Proto Fish Series:



Jon Cockburn (b.1953), *Two Proto Fish of Ambivalent Sexuality and Species; One Proto Fish disturbs Five Spikes of Pubic Triangles; as they, the Fish, avoid a Falling Bolt of Two Nuts under Three Sainthoods*, 1985, wax oil on paper, 24 cm x 32 cm, location unknown.



Jon Cockburn (b.1953), *Three Proto Fish of Ambivalent Sexuality and Species adore a sainted rod and a sainted nut. The saintly rod discharges Pubic Triangles as Two Red Stars Shoot*, 1985, wax oil on paper, 24 cm x 32 cm, location unknown.



Jon Cockburn (b.1953), *Transformation: Proto Fish becomes Shooting Star, Shooting Star Becomes Proto Fish (photographed through a window at the Australian Embassy in Paris by Gerry Weise)*, 1987 (July 1987) wax oil and enamel paint on paper, 57 cm x 77 cm, location unknown.