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The Yellow House 1970-72

Johanna Mendellsohn

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List of Artists

Tim Burns
Marie Briebauer
Roger Foley
Juno Gemes
George Gittoes
Joyce Gittoes
Bruce Goold
Mick Glasheen
Franklin Johnson
Peter Kingston
Jon Lewis
Tim Lewis
Nick Lyons
Vivienne Pengilley
Peter Powditch
Julia Sale
Martin Sharp
Antoinette Starkiewicz
Albie Thoms
Dick Weight
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Brett Whiteley with Rembrandt.
Director's Foreword and Acknowledgements

This exhibition marks the twentieth anniversary of the Yellow House at 59 Macleay Street, Potts Point. In this house a group of artists set out to establish an artist colony based on the unrealised dreams of Vincent Van Gogh. Sydney provided the perfect venue for a Yellow House in the sunny south.

The artists who lived and worked in the house created their own interpretations in all the rooms; their paintings and sculptures were installed in these unique and imaginative environments. This exhibition seeks to re-create some of these and the atmosphere of those enthusiastic years of 1970-72. Large photographs of the major rooms, and recreations of others, including George Gittoes’ Puppet Theatre, the Stone Room, the Infinity Room and the Ultra Violet Room, provide an evocative image of Sydney’s Yellow House.

Martin Sharp is co-ordinating a homage to Vincent which will include works from the Yellow House as well as more recent tributes by himself and others involved in the group.

Acknowledgements

The exhibition has been made possible by the efforts of all the artists who have worked on recreations and the Homage to Vincent. In particular I would like to thank Martin Sharp for helping co-ordinate the Homage and for inspiring the others; George Gittoes and Gabriel Dalton, without her constant work to co-ordinate this difficult group exercise the exhibition could not have been realised; Greg Weight has given his time to provide us with most of the excellent images in this catalogue. Joanna Mendelssohn’s tireless research to provide the text for the catalogue and the background for the selection of the exhibition.

We have also had valuable in kind support from Colorpro who supplied the large colour photographs in the exhibition, Pascol Paints who supplied the paints for the installations; Big City Productions who have made the reconstruction of George Gittoes’ Puppet Theatre which will subsequently be housed at the Power House Gallery; Josef Lebovic; Mambo Graphics and Bob Bleach Electronics.

The early development of the project was assisted by the Visual Arts/Crafts Board of the Australia Council.

Our thanks to all those who have worked so hard, in particular Martin Sharp, in making this event possible.
The Yellow House had been over for five years when I came to New South Wales, yet I was constantly made aware of it by artists who came to see me, quoting the Yellow House much as students of Beuys quote the Dusseldorf Academy. Many of them had probably only spent a few stimulating nights there yet it had become a claim to fame. Such is the imaginative legacy of the event.

When the artists themselves proposed to make this retrospective I was delighted to become involved and to discover for myself what it had all been about. The group dynamics that created, then destroyed the Yellow House are still at work. It has made the exercise of reliving those days an eventful one.

It is possible in hindsight to see the Yellow House as a culmination of sixties pop culture in art or as the vanguard of post modernism. The model of Van Gogh’s Yellow House at Arles which was to have become a community of artists was very romantic and reflects Martin Sharp’s view of the world. The activities and rooms of the house were inspired by an eclectic enthusiasm for Pop Art, Surrealism, Dada happenings and even to a small degree Conceptualism. When these artists had finished with their assemblage of this material, Magritte, Van Gogh and Rembrandt were to be found in the same environmental installations, an unthinkable association for those artists.

Somehow it worked. A high level of energy from the individuals involved in the creation of this experiment held it together for nearly two years, quite a feat considering the volatility of such a spontaneous gathering of characters. Fortunately it did not share the tragic fate of Vincent’s dream at Arles although the end was not without drama.

It is a compelling coincidence that the Yellow House was contemporary with Inhibodress which was a focused grouping of conceptual artists of the classical late modernist avant garde. This is in contrast to the romantic post modernist nostalgia of this exhibition. What they held in common with the Yellow House was an interest in film, video, sound, performance and installation, all the media which up till then had been excluded from commercial gallery and museum displays. Both groups set up their own spaces and challenged this Status Quo.

Inhibodress remains an important part of the history of Modernism in Australia and the artists have gone on to very significant careers e.g. Mike Parr, Tim Johnson and Peter Kennedy. The Yellow House however, captured the imagination of the general public in a quite extraordinary way. There has never been an exhibition at the Art Gallery which has been more pursued by the media. This is because many senior journalists today spent memorable nights at the Yellow House in their formative years and it has become imprinted as a symbol of adventure at the end of the sixties, a time we like to remember for its optimism in the face of extraordinary political adversity. All the artists have continued in creative activities but not always in painting or sculpture. Several of them have moved into forms of media and in particular film making.

In this exhibition we have combined documentation of the house as it was then with a retrospective reconstruction of rooms and works shown in the house. The final room goes beyond this to offer a Homage to Vincent by the Yellow House artists under the guidance of Martin Sharp. I believe it will capture something of the magic of the original events for those who remember them and for a new generation of artists for whom the Yellow House has only been a legend.
Fifty nine MacLeay Street, Potts Point is one of the more significant buildings in mid-twentieth Century Australian Art. In 1957 it was the site of the first Terry Clune Gallery which showed a variety of works by younger radical artists, including John Olsen, Robert Klippel, and Ross Morrow. In the 1950s and early 60s many artists and students were living in nearby Kings Cross, which gave openings a slightly bohemian air. In 1959 Terry Clune Gallery showed Muffled Drums, a Dadaesque exhibition by a group of artists including Elwyn Lynn, Henry Salkauskas, and John Coburn.

But by 1970 the emphasis had changed to investment colonial art and the gallery moved to sedate Macquarie Street. The old building was seen as redundant, and like most of the Kings Cross area at that time was destined for demolition and development. The Vietnam war, which targeted Kings Cross Life, but now they operated on a scale unimagined by the long-term residents. Stars and Stripes appeared on pancake parlours and the Texas Tavern was "where the action is". Kings Cross became a major centre for the distribution of hard drugs, and the new trade sat uneasily with the bohemians' widespread recreational use of marijuana and LSD.

The cultural clash at the Cross was epitomised by two performances: the Pink Pussycat strip club where bored young women teased drunken soldiers with the slow revelation of most of their anatomy, and the Harry M. Miller production of Hair where the entire cast disrobed to celebrate their liberty.

In early 1970 Martin Sharp returned to Sydney. Sharp had a special place in the affections of the generation that came to...
encouraged him to take art seriously, as did his mother, Jo Sharp, but his personal vision of an artist was shaped by that painting and by Van Gogh's ideal.

In mid-1970 when he used his mother's techniques of collage to make a fabulous catalogue of ideas to go with his exhibition, the first words and images Sharp used were those of Vincent Van Gogh, and the head on the cover of the Catalog was a Van Gogh self portrait. The central idea behind what was to become the Yellow House was Van Gogh's failed ideal of brotherly love. Sharp had his portrait saying Van Gogh's words: "The more I think it over, the more I feel there is nothing more truly artistic than to love people".

Martin Sharp worked on the Catalog while sitting in his room at the gallery, where he could be seen by the curious visitor. Van Gogh's portrait was matched by a photograph of his grave: an image that recurs in Yellow House art. On one page, above the figure of a sower sowing his seed, is the hand-written quotation from a letter by Vincent to Theo Van Gogh: "Even if I did not succeed, all the same I thought that what I have worked at will be carried on. Not directly, but one is not alone in believing in things that are true."

There were also selected quotations from William Blake, Antoine de Saint Exupery's The Little Prince, Tielhard De Chardin, Oscar Wilde, critiques of the exhibition, memorabilia from past lives, comic strip characters, and the lyrics of popular music. Although the Catalog appears disjointed, there is a consistency in its argument: a belief in the importance of the life of an artist, the need to pursue noble ideals for the sake of art. Martin Sharp's vision for the future, and also his feat of it is expressed in the comic strip thought balloon on the title page: "Great Cosmos! I ... I'm on my way! But to where?! I've got to see if I can control this thing ....!"

By the time the Catalog was printed, 59 MacLeay Street was more than an exhibition. It was used for performances. Stockhausen's Hymnen had its Australian premiere at the old gallery. There were poetry readings, music — any event that was out of the ordinary seemed appropriate. Art students and would-be artists found the place seductive, and started to haunt it. Sharp, with the aura of international success and local notoriety, was a charismatic figure for the younger generation.

With Martin Sharp overseas, media interest in the project waned. But Bruce Goold continued to renovate the building. Upstairs, in a room where he could not be disturbed, George Gittoes painted a glowing environment for a magic theatre. Gittoes, Charlie Brown, Jon Lewis, "A girl called Lynn and a man called David", continued to haunt the place, staging Gittoes' mystical plays about St Francis of Assisi and Seven Swords. They also staged performances of plays inspired by reading about Expressionist theatre, for small audiences of those who just came.

In October Sharp wrote to Gittoes that he had bought some Magritte etchings and lithographs, and suggested that the gallery should perhaps have "a room ... a la Magritte to house them". At the end of the year Martin Sharp returned to Sydney, still wanting to pursue his ideal. When in London he had talked about the artists' community with his friends.

Albie Thoms was a young Australian film maker who had been travelling Europe and America, promoting his experimental film, Marinetti. When Sharp had told him about the gallery, he thought it could be expanded to include a cooperative school, teaching in a way that was not possible in Sydney's narrow art education system. At first it was to be a "School of Arts". But as they talked of red headed Vincent Van Gogh and red headed
Ginger Meggs, they changed it to "The Ginger Meggs Memorial School of Arts.

Thoms, Goold, Sharp, Dick and Greg Weight and others spent Christmas at Palm Beach planning the future, while Gittoes stayed at the building, refining his now completed Puppet Theatre.

Early the next year they were joined by David Litvinoff, whom Sharp had known in London. Litvinoff was the kind of forgetful figure that adds to any group of people without leaving a permanent record. He described himself as "a modest Hebrew boy", but his manic lifestyle and verbal swordplay led to the legend that he was the inspiration for Mick Jagger's "Jumping Jack Flash".

The new gallery still did not have a name, but with its ideals forged by Martin Sharp's Catalog and Vincent Van Gogh, there was only one possible title. The white walls were painted bright yellow and it was renamed in honour of the house at Arles. Bruce Goold helped transform the spaces into a maze of enticing interiors. According to Peter Wright he became "the blythe spirit of the Yellow House", for his performances as well as his sense of beauty.

The original contingent had been joined by others. Greg Weight's photographs were transformed into "The Incredible Shrinking Exhibition". His brother Dick had flippantly said that the Harbour Bridge should be painted yellow, and this idea led Sharp to invite his participation. Franklin Johnson, whose brother Michael was already a well known artist, was involved as were others who were better known by stage names of Jewellion, Moth, and Bliss. There was also Tim Lewis, a young art student, who eventually left the National Art School to further his education, and Mai Ramage who became a mordant observer of the ways of the artists. Always their guide was Sharp's

Daniel Thomas, who was to prove one of the most supportive writers on the Yellow House, wrote: "Obviously op-art and psychedelics have now settled down to being a cheery, rather mindless minor decorative style. Present-day Charm school." 6

The "Incredible Shrinking Exhibition" opened on April Fool's Day 1971, the anniversary of the first issue of OZ magazine. The project first canvassed on the cover of the Catalog was opened to the public at last. Reid continued his patronage by adding a second house to the first, and many of the participants moved into the Yellow House for the duration.

As a counter to the sparse walls of Inhibodress, Sharp claimed that the vibrant Yellow House was "Probably one of the greatest pieces of conceptual art ever achieved." It was to be accessible pleasure, art for touching, rather than art for museums.

Inside the Yellow House, small photographs of Sharp's collages were transformed into "The Incredible Shrinking Exhibition". His brother Dick had flippantly said that the Harbour Bridge should be painted yellow, and this idea led Sharp to invite his participation. Franklin Johnson, whose brother Michael was already a well known artist, was involved as were others who were better known by stage names of Jewellion, Moth, and Bliss. There was also Tim Lewis, a young art student, who eventually left the National Art School to further his education, and Mai Ramage who became a mordant observer of the ways of the artists. Always their guide was Sharp's Catalog with its message of art and life and love.

Other artists living nearby were also drawn into the community of artists. Peter Powditch introduced Vivienne Pengilly, a young English weaver, who was living in Victoria Street with her husband and four children, and Roger Foley better known as Ellis D. Fogg, the lightshow magician also gradually gravitated to the building.

It was at the time received wisdom that the old inner-city communities of artists were dead, artists now lived in the suburbs, and critics wrote nostalgically about the old days. But the Yellow House seemed to defy many orthodox beliefs.

By 1971 colour field painting was starting to look old fashioned. The new orthodoxy held that serious modern art was minimal, highly theoretical and not necessarily visual. It was typified by Inhibodress, which had recently opened at the bottom of the hill at Woolloomooloo. This was not art for the unitituated. In an interview on his installation, The Fierce Blackman, Peter Kennedy claimed that "appreciation requires some education, but this is what is going on in the avant-garde world at the moment." 5

Op art, and those movements which could be linked to psychedelic experiences, were no longer to be taken seriously. In March 1971...
For Thomas, this was "Looking-glass world . . . quite an enchanted place"8, where the innocence of childhood mingled with the icons of art.

But the other people introduced to the Yellow House were making their distinctive contributions. Albie Thomas was indefatigable as principal of the Ginger Meggs Memorial School with classes in film and folk music. The first, and possibly only graduate of this school, was Jon Lewis.

The film programme at the Yellow House, which showed both very old and very new experimental films, brought together people who were to find their future in the fledgling Australian movie industry. Their films were shown, with discussion, on filmmakers' nights. Aggy Read and Mick Glasheen, both of whom had known Thoms through UBU, ended up as Yellow House activists, assisting in the cabarets and helping in the classes.

Despite the radically different approaches of the Yellow House artists and those at Inhibodress, there was some cross-fertilisation, especially with video taping of performances. Roger Foley who was involved with both groupings remembers that while the ascetic Inhibodress demanded cleanliness and a precious approach, the Yellow House was rather more relaxed. George Gittoes continued his puppet theatre, described by Michael Symonds in the *Sydney Morning Herald* as "the most haunting delight"9. Sometimes it was puppets alone, in the small canvas theatre he would set up in the courtyard. His characters parodied the world of the artists' themselves, and at times posed moral dilemmas for the viewers. One character, Friar Leo, a personification of chastity and abstinence, was once physically attacked by Bruce Goold to silence his preaching. The shocked audience realised they were supporting the persecution, not the persecuted.

Other theatre took place in the upstairs puppet theatre, now completed with an elaborately painted floor. These performances included mirre by Jewellion, a clown and Columbine, at first played by Little Nell Campbell, and later by Antoinette Starkiewicz. Bruce Goold also took an active part. There were plays by Cocteau, adaptations of themes from Sophocles and original dramas. Most memorable were the traditional Sufi works where Gittoes played Khadir the green robed story teller, and actors would whirl like dervishes. Sometimes the performances would flow through the building and out into the street. On several occasions performers were arrested, and bashed by an unsympathetic police force.

After the exhibition, the gallery temporarily closed its doors. Sharp, Gittoes and Jewellion took the canvas puppet theatre and the exhibition to the first Aquarius festival in Canberra. There was nowhere to hang the pictures, so they placed them in the trees and around the sides of the theatre. The Ginger Meggs school continued its activities, but in private.

In July they held a small exhibition of cartoons by 'Hop', a neglected part of Australia's artistic history. They had hoped to raise money by selling these conservative works, but did not even cover the cost of the frames. An application was made to the Australian Council for the Arts and a small amount was granted, but it was nowhere near enough to pay the debts. Martin Sharp drew on private resources and George Gittoes drove taxis at night, after his performances. Occasionally he would drive the people who had attended his shows, and hear critiques in the cab. Somehow the Yellow House continued.

From July onwards there were constant reports of an exhibition which was always just about to happen. Richard Weight's suggestion of a Yellow Harbour Bridge was recycled and turned into a competition for the *Sunday Telegraph*’s 'Groovers Magazine'10. The Yellow House wanted people everywhere to find a love of art. There was no shame in publicity in *Dolly*, *Woman's Day* or *Man* magazine, but while the policy of popularity made many short-term friends, it led to some suspicion in academic circles. Could art which was so deliberately popular also be good?

The September exhibition was the culmination of the work of the Ginger Meggs School and all the other Yellow House activities, and many peripheral figures were also participating.

Brett Whiteley, the golden boy of Australian art had found that the Yellow House artists shared his love of Van Gogh and Asia, and he created a special room for the exhibition. It was a bonsai room, painted pristine white with polished wood floors. In this room many different artists interpreted the same dwarf plant. But most of the Yellow House was less of a gallery. Bruce Goold took a polar bear skin, crimson flock wallpaper and a two seater couch to create a 'Belgian Bourgeois Interior'. This was an extension of what became the Magritte Room. Jo Sharp painted cloud frames on the prints Martin had brought back from Europe, Vivien Pengilly made a Magritte applique, Peter Powditch hung paintings. Brett Whiteley painted a 3-dimensional head of Rembrandt. There were ceramic sculptures by Joyce Gittoes, sculpture by Peter Wright and the walls were decorated with murals in the style of Magritte, painted by Tim Loughman and others under Martin Sharp's direction. It was a room in which nothing made sense, and where the ideas of many people came together in harmony.

The ultimate act of Yellow House co-operation was in the Stone Room. It was as though one of Martin Sharp's Artoons had turned into three dimensions, and everyday objects looked like stone. Various artists claim credit for the idea, and many worked on it. The original grey stone paint was laid by Gittoes who persuaded his mother to make stoneware fruit, bowl and book. It was finally completed by Peter Kingston, who created the scumbled cracked stone appearance. The Hokusai wave was pure Martin Sharp — except that Brett Whiteley altered it, before Martin Sharp changed it back to its original shape. The Stone Room was also a salute to George Greenough, whose film The Innermost Limits of Pure Fun, was almost a leitmotif for the Spring exhibition.

The new rooms included Spookyland with ultra

violet illusions, Ellis D. Fogg’s womb-like capsule, Tim Burns’ absurdly realist *Mary in the Bathroom*, Richard Weight’s Hokusai Room and Albie Thoms’ *Catapillar Room*. Antionette Starkiewicz, a young art student from Melbourne, helped modify figures liberated from the old Trocadero dance hall. There were twenty rooms between the two houses. Paolozzi prints hung on the staircase and joined with pictures by local artists. Doorknobs turned into other objects, confusing the unaware. Always there was music, changing appropriately for each room, adding to the totality of the experience. There were more activities than could be easily absorbed, and many visitors were shocked by its intensity.

Noel Hutchison, writing for the *Sydney Morning Herald* found it a confronting experience when he wrote:

"I found that I suffered an increasing anxiety that I was doomed never to escape from the place or that the room that I was in was really out of bounds." 11

But Daniel Thomas felt no such threat. He praised “this careful embrace of family, old friends and a shared past”. He also noted that while such art could be mindless, the Yellow House was both energetic and intelligent. 12

Fortunately more visitors accepted Thomas’s verdict than Hutchison’s. While Terry Smith may have criticised the *benefit concert staged at the nearby Cell Block Theatre to solve the immediate financial crisis was to launch the public career of Madame Lash. Despite officially severing his ties with the Yellow House, Albie Thoms continued with the Ginger Meggs School, and Christine Koltaï also ran classes. It became a city version of a country commune, a lifestyle which was a fashionable remnant of the 1960s. Because Martin Sharp’s room was still intact, he appeared to have a tangible presence, even though he was overseas.

Atter some months Foley returned Sharp’s books and personal effects to his mother. He was going on tour with Sylvia and the Synthetics and Madame Lash. When he returned the Yellow House was painted white. Ian Reid had discovered that a skylight had been cut in the roof, and this finally led him to end the experiment.

Most of the artists associated with the Yellow House have kept to its spirit. Martin Sharp and Tim Lewis held an exhibition of Yellow House Paintings in 1973. Later he became the benign spirit of Luna Park, until the ghost train fire eliminated innocence. But for many people Martin Sharp’s name still conjures up images of art in an environment of brotherly love.

George Gittoes led a group of performance artists in the White Company, and later he created TREE and performances with light at Watamolla.
lagoon. In his recent Heavy Industry project Gittoes has involved the subjects of his art, rather than merely painting them. Albie Thoms continued with film, and Roger Foley with light-shows. Antionette Starkiewicz turned to animation, Richard Weight makes film sets and Bruce Goold illustrates magazines and makes prints. In almost every case Yellow House artists have aimed their art at a wider audience than that which normally receives the avant garde. Although their paths diverged, the artists have, on the whole, remained friends, and for Martin Sharp friendship is the most important legacy of the Yellow House. For the other Yellow House habitues, Arthur Karvan and Frank Elgar found its cooperative spirit imbued their later projects.

The building was not demolished. It was saved by the new aesthetic of preservation. It still survives, an unacknowledged piece of history of taste.

JOANNA MENDELSOHN
George Gittoes
The Steps from the
Hotel Kennedy Series 1971
"The letters have taken a large place in my life already, since the beginning of Theo's illness. The first lonely evening which I spent in our home after my return I took the package of letters. I knew that in them I should find him again. Evening after evening that was my consolation after the miserable days. It was not Vincent whom I was seeking but Theo. I drank in every word, I absorbed every detail. I not only read the letters with my heart, but with my whole soul. And so it has remained all the time. I have read them, and reread them, until I saw the figure of Vincent clearly before me. Imagine for one moment my experience, when I came back to Holland—realizing the greatness and the nobility of that lonely artist's life. Imagine my disappointment at the indifference which people showed, when it concerned Vincent and his work.... Sometimes it made me very sad. I remember how last year, on the day of Vincent's death, I went out late in the evening. The wind blew, it rained, and it was pitch-dark. Everywhere in the houses I saw light and people gathered around the table. And I felt so forlorn that for the first time I understood what Vincent must have felt in those times, when everybody turned away from him, when he felt "as if there were no place for him on earth...." I wished that I could make you feel the influence Vincent had on my life. It was he who helped me to accommodate my life in such a way that I can be at peace with myself. Serenity—this was the favorite word of both of them, the something they considered the highest. Serenity—I have found it. Since that winter, when I was alone, I have not been unhappy—"sorrowful yet always rejoicing," that was one of his expressions, which I have come to understand now."
My dear Bernard,

It is a very good thing that you read the Bible. I start with this because I have always refrained from recommending it to you. Whenever I read the numerous sayings of Moses, St. Luke, etc., I couldn’t help thinking to myself, Look, that’s the only thing he lacks, and now there it is in full force ... the artistic neurosis.

For the study of Christ inevitably calls it forth, especially in my case where it is complicated by the staining black of unnumerable pipes.

The Bible is Christ, for the Old Testament leads up to this culminating point. St. Paul and the evangelists dwell on the other slope of the sacred mountain.

Christ alone—of all the philosophers, Magi, etc.—has affirmed, as a principal certainty, eternal life, the infinity of time, the nothingness of death, the necessity and the raison d’être of serenity and devotion. He lived serenely, as a greater artist than all other artists, despising marble and clay as well as color, working in living flesh. That is to say, this matchless artist, hardly to be conceived of by the obtuse instrument of our modern, nervous, stupefied brains, made neither statues nor pictures nor books; he loudly proclaimed that he made ... living men, immortals.

This is serious, especially because it is the truth.

And who would dare tell us that he lied on that day when, scornfully foretelling the collapse of the Roman edifice, he declared, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

These spoken words, which, like a prodigal grand seigneur, he did not even deign to write down, are one of the highest summits—the very highest summit—reached by art, which becomes a creative force there, a pure creative power.

These considerations, my dear comrade Bernard, lead us very far, very far afield; they raise us above art itself. They make us see the art of creating life, the art of being immortal and alive at the same time. They are connected with painting.

The patron saint of painters—St. Luke, physician, painter, evangelist—whose symbol is, alas, nothing but an ox, is there to give us hope.

Yet our real and true lives are rather humble, these lives of us painters, who drag out our existence under the stupefying yoke of the difficulties of a profession which can hardly be practiced on this thankless planet on whose surface “the love of art makes us lose the true love.”

But Christ, I repeat, is more of an artist than the artists; he works in the living spirit and the living flesh, he makes men instead of statues. And then ... I feel only too well that I am an ox—being a painter—I, who admire the bull, the eagle, Man, with a veneration that will prevent me from being ambitious.

A handshake,

Yours sincerely, Vincent
November 15, 1891

In order to give him (the child) healthy fresh air I went to live at Bussum—to earn a living for both of us I am taking boarders—now I must be careful that I shall not be degraded to a household drudge by all the housekeeping worries, but I must keep my spirit alive. Theo taught me much about art, no let me rather say—he has taught me much about life.

Besides the care for the child he left me yet another task, Vincent’s work—to show it and to let it be appreciated as much as possible. All the treasures that Theo and Vincent collected—to preserve them inviolate for the child—that also is my task. I am not without an object in life, but I feel lonely and deserted.

These last days I have spent every free hour I had absorbed in the letters. I postponed it far too long, but from now on I am going to undertake it as a regular task—working steadily on until it is finished. Not with the passion of the first days—for then I was occupied with it until deep into the night—such extravagances I must not permit myself. My foremost duty is to be spry and healthy to be able to care for the child. In thought I am living wholly with Theo and Vincent, oh, the infinitely delicate, tender and lovely [quality] of that relation. How they felt for each other, how they understood each other, and oh, how touching Vincent’s dependence at times—Theo never let him feel it, but now and then he feels it himself, and then his letters are very sad—often I wept over them.

My darling—my dear—dear Theo—at every word, between every two lines, I am thinking of you—how you made me part of yourself in the short time we were together—I am still living with you, by you. May your spirit go on inspiring me, then everything will be all right with our little fellow.

Who will write that book about Vincent?...
Yellow House 1971
Group effort
The Stone Room
Design Martin Sharp,
completed by George Gittoes,
Joyce Gittoes and Peter Kingston
Fantomas Hall
Martin Sharp
Tribute to Hokusai
Richard Weight
Infinity Room with Sculpture
Greg Weight and Julia Sale
Rembrandt to Magritte
Brett Whiteley and Martin Sharp interior
Magritte Room with Belgium Salon
Martin Sharp and Bruce Goold
Yellow Room

Rene Magritte, Peter Powditch, Martin Sharp, Philippe Mora, Peter Wright, Vivienne Pengilly and Tim Lewis
Ultra Violet and Kinetic Light Installation
Peter Wright
Footprints on the Road to the Yellow House
Martin Sharp
Puppet Theatre
George Gittoes
My dear brother,
Thanks for your kind letter and for the 50-fr. note it contained.
There are many things I should like to write you about, but I feel it is useless. I hope you have found those worthy gentlemen favorably disposed toward you.
Your reassuring me as to the peacefulness of your household was hardly worth the trouble, I think, having seen the weal and woe of it for myself. And I quite agree with you that rearing a boy on a fourth floor is a hell of a job for you as well as for Jo.
Since the thing that matters most is going well, why should I say more about things of less importance? My word, before we have a chance to talk business more collectedly, we shall probably have a long way to go.
The other painters, whatever they think, instinctively keep themselves at a distance from discussions about the actual trade.
Well, the truth is, we can only make our pictures speak. But yet, my dear brother, there is this that I have always told you, and I repeat it once more with all the earnestness that can be expressed by the effort of a mind diligently fixed on trying to do as well as possible—I tell you again that I shall always consider you to be something more than a simple dealer in Corots, that through my mediation you have your part in the actual production of some canvases, which will retain their calm even in the catastrophe.
For this is what we have got to, and this is all or at least the main thing that I can have to tell you at a moment of comparative crisis. At a moment when things are very strained between dealers in pictures of dead artists, and living artists.
Well, my own work, I am risking my life for it and my reason has half foundered because of it—that's all right—but you are not among the dealers in men as far as I know, and you can still choose your side, I think, acting with humanity, but que veux-tu?

1 Note on the letter in Theo's handwriting: "Letter found on him on July 29."
My dear Aurier,

Your absence from Paris must have left you unaware of a dreadful piece of news that, nevertheless, I cannot put off telling you:

Our dear friend Vincent died four days ago.

I imagine that you have already guessed that he killed himself.

On the walls of the room where the body reposed, all his last canvases were nailed, making a kind of halo around him and, because of the lustre of genius that emanated from them, rendering this death even more painful for us artists. On the coffin, a simple white drapery and masses of flowers, the sunflowers that he so loved, yellow dahlias, yellow flowers everywhere. It was his favorite color, if you remember, symbol of the light that he dreamed of finding in hearts as in artworks. Also nearby, his easel, his folding stool, and his brushes had been placed on the floor in front of the casket.

There we are, gathered around this coffin that conceals a friend in the greatest silence. I look at the studies: a very beautiful episode of the Passion interpreted after Delacroix's *The Virgin and Jesus*. Convicts walking in a circle in a high-ceilinged prison, a canvas after Doré, a symbol of terrible ferocity for his end. For him, was life not this vault, were these not the poor artists, the poor accursed, treading under the whip of Destiny? ...

At three o'clock the body was raised. Friends carried it to the hearse. A few people in the gathering cried. Theodorus van Gogh, who adored his brother, who had always supported him in his struggle for art and independence, did not stop sobbing painfully. ...

Outside, there was a fierce sun. We climbed the hill of Auvers talking about him, about the bold thrust he gave to art, the great projects that he was always planning, about the good that he did every one of us.

We arrived at the cemetery, a small, new graveyard dotted with new headstones. It is on the knoll overlooking the crops, under that great blue sky that he would have loved still ... perhaps.

Then he was lowered into the grave....

Who would not have cried at that moment; that day was too much made for him for us not to imagine that he could still have lived happily....

But that's quite enough, my dear Aurier, quite enough, isn't it, about that sad day? You know how much I loved him and you can guess how much I wept for him. So do not forget him and try, you, his critic, to say a few more words about him so that everyone may know that his burial was an apotheosis truly worthy of his great heart and his great talent.

Yours affectionately,

Bernard
From a letter of Theo’s to his mother: “One cannot write how grieved one is nor find any comfort. It is a grief that will last and which I certainly shall never forget as long as I live; the only thing one might say is that he himself has the rest he was longing for.... Life was such a burden to him; but now, as often happens, everybody is full of praise for his talents.... Oh Mother! he was so my own, own brother.”

Theo’s frail health was broken. Six months later, on January 25, 1891, he followed his brother.

They rest side by side in the little cemetery amid the wheat fields of Auvers.

December, 1913

Johanna van Gogh-Bonger

In 1891, after a year and a half of happiness, Johanna returned to Holland with her little son, some furniture, and a great number of pictures, which at the time were looked upon as having no value at all.

Her diary, in which she had not written during her short, happy marriage, starts again in 1891 with the words: “Tout n’est que rêve!” (Everything is but a dream!).
Films At The Yellow House 1971

(Screening dates in parenthesis)

Artaud, Antonin/Germaine Dulac The Seashell and the Clergyman 1928 (April 30, June 10).
The Beginnings of Cinema (April 24).
A Lumière Programme (31 April).
Belson, Jordan Bop Scotch (April 7).
Buñuel, Luis/Dali, Salvador Un Chien Andalou 1929 (June 10).
Cantrill, A. & C. Mooron 1970 (March 9).
Chaplin, Charlie (May 15).
Clair, Rend The Italian Straw Hat 1928 (July 8).
Clair/Picabia, Francis Entr'acte 1924 (June 10).
Clark A Moment in Love (May 8).
Disney, Walt Alice and the Three Bears 1924 (July 1).
Dumbo 1941 (April 24, 30).
Eames Toccatto for Toy Trains 1958 (April 24).
Glasheen, Mick World 1968 (April 22).
Greenough, George The Innermost Limits of Pure Fun (July 1, and daily throughout September).
Harris, Hilary Highway 1958 (March 1).
Harrington On the Edge (April 17).
Hugo, lan Jazz of Lights (April 17)
Beils of Atlantis (June 17)
Al Ye (May 29).
Dr Kingston's Casebook 1970 (April 29).
Leichhardt 1971 (April 29).
Kuchar, George Unstrap Me 1968 (22 July).
Lang, Fritz Metropolis 1927 (May 15).
Liebling & Downs Pow Wow (April 17).
Longford, Raymond On Our Selection 1920 (24 June).
Begone Dull Care (June 22).
The Sentimental Bloke 1919 (April 30).
Ladys, David Motion Analysis/Mood Evolution 1970 (June 3, July 29).
Project One 1969 (June 3, July 29).
Lye, Len A Color Box 1935 (April 7).
McLaren Fiddle De Dee 1947 (April 17).
Begone Dull Care 1949 (May 29).
McCullough, Chris Vision for a New World (May 13)
Or Forever Hold Your Peace (May 13).
Marx Obrmaru (May 8).
Méliès, George Conquest of the Pole 1912 (June 10, July 1).
Noyce, Phil Better to Reign in Hell (April 17).
Obern, Vaughn Hey Mama 1968 (July 22).
Ordell, Tall Kid Stakes 1927 (April 7).
Perry Mad Mesh (April 24).
Petty, Bruce Australian History 1971 (June 17)
Hearts and Minds 1968 (June 17).
Porter, Edwin S. The Great Train Robbery 1903 (July 8).
Pudovkin, Vsehold The Mechanics of the Brain 1926 (June 3).
Read, Aggy Far Be It Me From It 1968-71 (June 24).
Reiniger, Lotte The Adventures of Prince Achmed 1926 (April 17).
Riefensthal, Leni Olympia 1938 (May 23 1971).
Performances at the Yellow House took place in the upstairs Puppet Theatre, in the courtyard with the small puppet theatre, and in the Cloud Room where there was a raised stage. Sometimes they would travel through the Magritte Room entire house and onto the street.

In addition to the specific performances listed below, there were many unrecorded events. The Cloud Room had music recitals, the Boston Blackie Cabarets organised by Peter Wright and tap dancing by Nell Campbell. The puppet theatre, used large character puppets, and different narratives were constructed around them. Performances were daily, and as the audience tended to be the same, the performers felt obliged to constantly change their script.

There was the white-faced lady who told stories of her lover, the artist; a clumsy sad clown; a three eyed horned dragon ... of St Francis of Assisi. These performances took place in both the portable puppet theatre and the upstairs theatre.

The upstairs theatre was the site for many performances of modern and experimental drama. Jewellion often performed solo mime, or sometimes mime with the puppets. Gittoes would enter these performances as an Islamic turbanned figure. Other mime included Comedy del arte Mime with Pierrot, Raolaquin and columbine, usually telling stories woven around tragic love. The performers also staged adaptions of Sophocles’ Medea and Beauty and the Beast.

The most traditional theatre form used in the Yellow House was Sufi theatre, and adaptions from Sufi poets, including Attar, Rumi and Nasrudin.

Modern plays performed included works by Cocteau, Dadaist, Surrealist and Expressionist plays as well as Theatre of the Absurd. There were also experimental theatre pieces, often using dance. These were created by the cast to deliberately challenge the audience.

The usual troupe for performances were:
George Gittoes, Jewellion, Moth, and Bruce Goold. On occasion these were added to by other Yellow House residents, including Bliss and Albie Thorns. The Magician Jeff Crozir came to the Yellow House and instructed Gittoes in some of his simpler tricks. Peter Kingston also had his magic show as “Kingo the Great.”

Performance list
(according to Yellow House archives)
Allen Murawalla (2 June 1971) Aboriginal music.
The Beard (June 1971) play by Michael McLure.
Contemporary Australian Folk Compositions (22 June 1971).
An Evening Dedicated to Tightrope Walkers Everywhere (7 May 1971) Included Arthur Dignam reading Genet’s “The Funambulist” and mime, puppet theatre.
Fifties Cabaret (25 April 1971) — Poetry and jazz.
Henderson, Marion (9 June 1971) folk music.
The Incredible Oz Band (29 June 1971).
An Invocation of the Spirit of Antonin Artaud (30 April 1971) — mixed media seance.
Journey by Sound and Vision, Lindsay Bourke (5 May 1971).
Kinetic Poetry (14 May 1971).
Lewis, Jeannie — concert, (July 1970).
Modern Jazz (16 May 1971).
A Night of Magic (30 May 1971) “Kingo the Great” and Arkie Whiteley.
Puppet Theatre and Mime (April/June 1971)
performances directed by George Gittoes.
Greg Quill’s Margaret & Lowndes, Graeme — concert (19 April 1971).
Stockhausen, Karlheinz Hymnen (July 1970).
Surreal Soiree (16 April) — Plays, poems by Tzara.
Thirties Cabaret (16 April 1971) — Music, dance and film.
A Tribute to Harry Hooton readings of Hooton’s poems (9 May 1971).
Ubu Cocu (28 May 1971) — Jarry’s play.
Yellow House Band (September 1971) Director, Sebastian Jorgensen.
Yellow House Cabaret (June 1971) mixed.
Biographical Notes

MAGDALENE (MARIE) BREIBAUER

ROGER FOLEY (ELLIS D. FOGG)
Born Cairns, 1942. 1966-69 studied at National Art School, Sydney and engineering at the University of NSW. From 1967 designed and produced the first Australian rock concerts and psychedelic lightshows with Albie Thoms' Ubu Films. Early 1971 created WOOM exhibition with Vivienne Binns at Watters Gallery.

In the Yellow House he was responsible for the Capsule Room and the Mirror Infinity Room as well as experimental work in expanded cinema and cabaret lighting. In 1978 created "Fog in Fog" environment with sculptor Fujiko Nakaya outside the Art Gallery of New South Wales at the Biennale of Sydney.

In 1985 created "Starry Night" diorama, homage to Van Gogh and later the cubist audio-visual "Picasso's Women" at the National Gallery of Victoria. Currently he designs and produces special events, fantasy and art environments.

JUNO GEMES
Born Budapest, Hungary 1944 and immigrated with her family in 1949. Studied at NIDA, University of NSW graduating in 1965. Then travelled to London where she worked in theatre before returning to Sydney. Worked in various artists collectives in the late 1960s and in 1969 travelled to Central Australia researching film, Uluru.

In 1971 moved into the Yellow House and participated in its activities, encouraging younger artists especially Antionette Starkiewicz.

JOYCE GITTOES
Studies ceramics at St George Technical College in 1960, after earlier working as a watercolourist. Worked extensively as a potter acting as a consultant to manufacturers of ceramic equipment. Through the involvement of son George, she produced ceramics for 1971 installations.

Subsequently has held many exhibitions of her work at Barry Stern Galleries. She also exhibited in the Northern Territory and made the mural at the Berrima Police Headquarters, in Darwin.

MICK GLASHEEN
Born Sydney 1942. From 1960-66 was enrolled in architecture at the University of NSW where he started making experimental films. Was also a staff artist on OZ and helped stage the OZ Super Art Market exhibition at Terry Clune Gallery, August 1966. After university made WORLD, a three screen projection, and worked on other films including Mick Jaggers's Ned Kelly. Also worked on the film accompaniment to the Rock Opera Tommy.

His films were screened at the Yellow House. He and Collete St John were briefly at the Yellow House before going to Central Australia where they were joined by Juno Gemes. Uluru, a colour video was completed in 1977.


BRUCE GOOLD
Born 1948 Newcastle, NSW. Initially encouraged by his father, started drawing and attended Saturday morning printmaking classes. From 1964 studied painting at Newcastle Technical College. A drama festival in Newcastle introduced him to the work of Artaud, Jarry, and Schwitters. From 1967 he was a student at the National Art School, Sydney.

In 1970 joined with Martin Sharp during his exhibition at 59 Macleay Street. Became one of the longest continuous residents at the Yellow House. Created the Doors of Perception, and the Belgian Bourgeois interior in the Magritte Room. Worked on many other installations throughout the building. Goold was also an active participant in Yellow House theatrical performances. After the Yellow House was opened to the public acted as a vendeuse and as guide.

After the Yellow House closed worked with Noel Sheridan in his shadow play at Central Street Gallery. Later travelled through Asia before settling at Palm Beach where he started to make linocuts in a style reminiscent of the artists of the 1920s and 30s. Has held many exhibitions of his prints and his work has been widely reproduced.
PETER KINGSTON
Born Sydney 1943 and was first introduced to art at school with Justin O'Brien. Studied architecture and arts at the University of NSW. Made his first cartoons for Tharunka, and graduated to OZ. His first exhibition was at Hyde Park with Mick Glasheen and John Allen. Later participated in the OZ Super Art Market exhibition at Clune Galleries. He also made experimental movies.
In 1971 drifted into involvement at the Yellow House. He completed the Stone Room, made the Elephant house created magic shows and participated in some of the performances.
Since the Yellow House he has exhibited his work in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Newcastle, New York, London, Hong Kong, Switzerland.

JON LEWIS
Born Maryland USA 1950, but came to Australia when he was a year old.
Became involved in Martin Sharp's 59 MacLeay Street exhibition in 1970 and found himself enticed into what became the Yellow House. Describes his involvement as a 'student': painted walls, made photographs, shot film, cleaned floors and performed in various performances.
In 1974 held his first photography exhibition at Bonython Gallery in Sydney. Since then has held numerous exhibitions of his photography. His work is included in most Australian public galleries and in Parliament House, Canberra as well as the Polaroid collection, USA. Is currently in Paris on a Visual Arts and Crafts Board travel grant, and is working towards an exhibition of recent work.

TIM LEWIS
Born 1949 Sydney. Studied at the National Art School, Sydney. While there became involved with the Yellow House and dropped out of art school.
He was one of the most active painters at the Yellow House and made a major contribution to the Magritte Room, as well as painting clouds in the Cloud Room. Towards the end of the Spring exhibition he left.
In the post Yellow House era continued his close association with Martin Sharp, and helped make the paintings for Sharp's 1973 Bonython Galleries exhibition. Also held two exhibitions of his own work. Later worked with Sharp on the Luna Park entrance, a project which was aborted by the Luna Park fire. Completed his documentary film, 7 Yellow Months, was never completed because of lack of funds.
In 1972 travelled to America where he worked on the movie Crystal Voyager. Later taught film and drama at Flinders University, and worked at the South Australian Film Resource Centre. Was a co-founder of the Experimental Art Foundation. Joined the South Australian Media Resource Centre.
Now lives in Brisbane where he is a full-time student in sports studies, and the state coaching director for croquet.

AGGIE READ
Born Sydney 1941. After studying engineering and arts at University of Sydney joined with Albie Thoms to make films. From 1966-69 was the manager of UBU, and then joined Mandala theatres.
At the Yellow House taught film classes and documented events when could find the film and the camera. Also participated in the cabarets. When Martin Sharp left, he left. His documentary film, 7 Yellow Months, was never completed because of lack of funds.
In 1972 travelled to America where he worked on the movie Crystal Voyager. Later taught film and drama at Flinders University, and worked at the South Australian Film Resource Centre. Was a co-founder of the Experimental Art Foundation. Joined the South Australian Media Resource Centre.
Now lives in Brisbane where he is a full-time student in sports studies, and the state coaching director for croquet.

JULIA SALE
Participated in Yellow House co-operative activities including Peter Kingston's magic act. Made the Feathered Table and Chair.
Now makes silkscreen fabrics and prints.

JO SHARP
Born 1915, the mother of Martin Sharp. She made collages for pleasure and passed her joy in art on to her son.
In the Yellow House she made the cloud painted frames for the Magritte prints. Was a frequent visitor, and proud of the achievement of her son and his friends.
MARTIN SHARP
Born Sydney 1942. From an early age was encouraged by his mother to work in collage. Taught by Justin O'Brien, his teacher at Cranbrook, to think of art as a serious pursuit. Enrolled at the National Art School, but found it unsatisfactory. From 1962 to 1964 worked on OZ magazine, and in 1965 held an exhibition of his work at Terry Clune Gallery. Later travelled to London where he published Magic Theatre Oz in 1969. Also held an exhibition of his work at the Sigi Krauss Gallery.
In 1970 returned to Australia with an exhibition of his London work, which was held at 59 MacLeay St: the start of the Yellow House. Sharp worked on or supervised many Yellow House installations, and when he left in October 1971, the best of the Yellow House was over.
In 1973 held an exhibition of Yellow House inspired work at Bonython Galleries, painted in conjunction with Tim Lewis. Has since worked on a film and tapes of Tiny Tim and Luna Park, but all pleasure there ceased after the 1979 fire. In 1981 the National Gallery of Victoria held a survey exhibition of his work. Is represented in most public galleries in Australia, and in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

ANTIONETTE STARKIEWICZ
Born in Poland in 1950. Came to Sydney as a child in 1960. From the age of four had trained in singing and dancing, but on leaving school chose to study painting and graphics at the National Gallery School in Melbourne.
Came to Sydney in 1971, in the spring vacation of her final year at art school. Joined in the Yellow House preparations for the Spring Exhibition. Worked on the Trocadero figures. Returned late to her studies, and wrote a thesis on the Yellow House. Later returned to the Yellow House for an exhibition of her own work.
In 1972 returned to Melbourne to set up a studio for drawing and painting, while experimenting with film. 1973-74 attended the London Film School and in 1975 her film High Fidelity was the official British entry in the Cannes Film Festival. Has since worked as a film director, animator and painter. Pussy Pumps Up won AFI award 1980. Other films, notably Pianoforte and Koko Pops have been widely acclaimed both in Australia and overseas.

ALBIE THOMS
Born 1941 Sydney. 1961 graduated B.A. from Sydney University, where had written for Horti Soit and university reviews. Interest in Surrealism and Theatre of the Absurd led him to work as a producer/director with SUDS, Contemporary Theatre Co, Elizabethan Trust. From 1965 worked as a film and television producer/director/writer with UBU films, ABC, Karvan International, Fauna Films in projects that included both Marinetti and Skippy. In this period helped found the Sydney Filmmakers co-op and edited Ubunews. Also wrote for OZ. In 1969 met with Martin Sharp in London, returned to Sydney later that year and joined the Yellow House in early 1971.
Described himself as the principal, Ginger Meggs School of art, and co-ordinator of performances and screenings. Creator of installations: Whaam Wall, Homage to Meret Oppenheim, Catapillar Alcove, Homage to Man Ray’s Homage to Isadore Ducasse. Produced Yellow TV. Made archival tapes and film footage used in later documentaries on the period.

GREG WEIGHT
Born Sydney 1946, the brother of Richard Weight. After left school in 1963 started working in an advertising agency. In 1965 helped Martin Sharp with the framing of his first Clune exhibition, and in the same year started to work as an assistant to a photographer. In 1968 opened his own photographic studio.
Photographed Sharp’s 1970 exhibition. The photographs were translated into the “Incredible Shrinking Exhibition”. In 1971 became closely involved in Yellow House activities, where exhibited his Cronulla sand dune photographs, and recorded events and installations, including the Spring Exhibition of 1971.
In 1974 was awarded Visual Arts Board assistance for a photographic exhibition and held his first exhibition at the Australian Centre for Photography. Has continued to work as a photographer, specialising in fine art photography as well as photojournalism.

RICHARD WEIGHT
Born Sydney 1940, the brother of Greg Weight. Studied at both Julian Ashton School and East Sydney Technical College. Afterwards worked at various jobs including property manager on a wheat/sheep station, prawn fisherman, restaurant manager, and manager of a pin ball alley. By the early 1970s he was painting portraits.
A suggestion that the Sydney Harbour Bridge be painted yellow prompted Martin Sharp to contact him for the Yellow House. He was responsible for the Hokusai Room as well as contributing to the Bonsai show, some theatrical performances, and in-house catering.
Later held exhibitions of his paintings at Hogarth Galleries. Currently makes props and special effects for film and television.

BRETT WHITELEY
Born Sydney 1942. Attended Julian Ashton Art School from 1957 to 1959. In 1960 travelled to Europe on a Flotto Lauro Travelling Scholarship. Settled in London and established himself as an artist with successful exhibitions in Britain, Germany, France, USA, and Rhodesia, as well as sending work back to Australia. In 1968 painted a study of Van Gogh, an artist he had always admired, and in 1969 returned to Sydney.
In 1971 spent considerable time at the Yellow House. With his then wife, Wendy, made the Bonsai Room. Also corrected the Hokusai wave in the Stone Room, and painted the Rembrandt head.
In later years became addicted to heroin, and was simultaneously hailed as Sydney’s most popular living artist. Was awarded the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman prizes and has been the subject of a biography by Sandra McGrath. In 1983 held an exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW which was tribute to Vincent Van Gogh.
PETER WRIGHT

Born Sydney, 1941. In 1957 enrolled in East Sydney Technical College part-time to study sculpture under Lyndon Dadswell. The next year enrolled in Julian Ashton's. In 1960-61 was again at East Sydney, but livened up the curriculum by going to Mary White's with John Olsen. In 1962 joined with Peter Powditch and Martin Sharp at the Rocks studio.

Held exhibitions at Gallery A in 1966, 1968. Working on light shows with UBU led to stage production on Hair, where was responsible for the tripping sequences. In the late 1960s returned to school to do the HSC and then started a science degree which he never completed.

Became involved in the Yellow House in April 1971. After the Incredible Shrinking Exhibition moved into the house next door to the Ginger Meggs School. Worked on the Saturday night cabarets, using lights from Ellis D. Fogg, experimenting with ultra violet light effects. These experiments led to Spookyland.

After the crisis at the end of the Spring exhibition left Sydney for the desert. Later travelled to Bali, returned to Australia in 1973 and held several exhibitions of his Australian landscape paintings, while finishing art school. Since 1984 has been full-time teaching art at technical colleges, but is still painting.
Select Bibliography

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Memorandum from Harry M. Miller, 1 June 1970.
Letter from Jewellion to George Gittoes 7 September 1971.
Letters from Martin Sharp to George Gittoes, 1970.
Typescript of interview with Martin Sharp 1971.
Albie Thoms’ miscellaneous papers.

Film and Television Archives
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ABC radio archives.
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Elwyn Lynn Quadrant February 1977.
Nepean Review No.7 (no date, but 1980s).
Catalogue of Works in the Exhibition

Curator's Note
Since the installation of the exhibition will be done by the artists in keeping with Yellow House style there are a number of elements which will be kept flexible until the last moment. The following list therefore leaves some areas open but provides as much information as was available at the time of publication.

TIM BURNS
Is represented in the Film Programme in the Theatrette. See the film programme for details.

MARIA BRIEBAUER
A montage of works done at the Yellow House.

ROGER FOLEY
Is contributing to the Kinetic Light Installation and the Capsule Room 1971-1990 with mirrors and light.

JUNO GEMES
Is contributing to the Tribute to Vincent.

GEORGE GITOES
Reconstruction of the Puppet Theatre with the assistance of Big City Productions and Bob Bleach Electrics, Courtesy of the Power House Museum. This recreation includes gouaches and watercolours originally displayed in the theatre at the Yellow House. In the Cloud Room there are 24 etchings of the Hotel Kennedy Series August-October 1971.

He is also contributing to the Cloud Room the Tribute to Vincent and the Documentation Room.

JOYCE GITOES

BRUCE GOOLD
Has designed and realised the Title wall of the exhibition and the Banners for the front of the Gallery. With the assistance of Josef Lebovic and Mambo Graphics.

MICK GLASHEEN
Is included in the Film Programme and a colour video tape of Uluru Tests 1971 will be played in the Video Room next to the Ultra Violet Room.

FRANKLIN JOHNSON
The All Seeing Eye 1970 biro on paper
As Sharp as Ned Kelly 1970 biro on paper
Blow Your Mind 1970 ink and coloured pencil on paper
The Spark that Starts 1970 biro on paper

PETER KINGSTON
Is contributing to the Tribute to Vincent.

JON LEWIS
Is contributing to the Tribute to Vincent.

TIM LEWIS
Is assisting Martin Sharp with new works and the Tribute to Vincent.

VIVIENNE PENGILLEY
Magritte collage 1970
Wall hanging
Collection of Amanda Zsebik, USA

PETER POWDITCH
Seascape I 1969
oil paint on plywood

JULIA SALE
Chair & This is Not a Table 1970
Feathered chair and Ladder installation

MARTIN SHARP
Wishes to keep his options open till the exhibition is complete. His vision has inspired the Tribute to Vincent which is his special project. Some works that are expected to be included are:
A large painting based upon Vincent Van Gogh's The Painter on the Road to Tarascon, 1988.
A new version of Marilyn and the Sunflowers.
Vincent, collage 1975
Pentecost 1970-1990, acrylic on canvas
Also a selection of "Artoons" and Vincent related works to be included in the Tribute Room.
Poster Macquette for 'The Cream' Poster 1968
Bob Dylan Poster
Collection of Pierre Cavalan

ANTOINETTE STARKIEWICZ
Vietnam Statement, Man 1970-71 silk screen print
Vietnam Statement, Woman 1970-71 silk screen print
Bruce in his Salon at the Yellow House 1971 drawing on paper
Bruce Posed 1971 drawing on paper
Also contributing to the Tribute to Vincent Room.

ALBIE THOMS
Creator of the Wham Wall and the Fur Tunnell. Albie is also organiser and contributor to the film programme, see below.

RICHARD WEIGHT
Tribute to Hokusai, 1971, 1 panel of a folding screen. Assisting with various aspects of the installation including the Ultra Violet Room and Tribute to Vincent and Wham Wall.
GREG WEIGHT
15 large colour photographs of the Yellow House rooms, courtesy of Colorpro:
1. Yellow House 1971
2. The Stone Room
3. Fantomas Hall
4. Magritte Room (North)
5. Magritte Room (South)
6. Rembrant To Magritte
7. Magritte Room with Belgium Salon
8. Yellow Room
9. Franklins Hallway
10. Footprints on the Road to the Yellow House
11. Puppet Theatre
12. Infinity Room with Sculpture
13. Ultra Violet and Kinetic Light Installation
14. Tribute to Hokusai
15. Paolozzi Stair Well
Also "The Infinity Room" incorporating Black and White Silver Gelatin prints and a monochrome frieze.

BRETT WHITELEY
The Night Café, or The Virus Inn 1970-72 oil on ply
Collection of the artist
Concerning What's Real & What's Time 1970 oil on ply
Collection of the artist
Portrait of Martin Sharp in the Lyrebird Tradition 1970
oil, photograph and magnifying glass on board
Private collection

PETER WRIGHT
The Ultra Violet & Kinetic Light Installation including 3 ultra violet paintings:
Reflections II 1971/1990
Mistake Creek Dreaming 1971/1990
Blue Moon 1971/1990
2 panels of 15 kinetic images each in the Fur Tunnel
(1) Karma
oil on canvas, 15 panels
(2) The Ferry to Luna
screenprints, 15 panels

Also included in the Exhibition

RENE MAGRITTE
Clarity of a Young Glance, The Festival of An Old Tree, lithograph. Collection of Ian Reid
A Tube Discharges it's Bouquet of Flames, lithograph. Collection of Ian Reid
The Beautiful Prisoner, lithograph. Collection of Ian Reid
The Difficult Crossing, lithograph. Collection of Mr Eden Munford

Films to be shown with the Exhibition

1. Screening in the Mirror Room:
Marinetti, Albie Thoms, 1969, 80 mins — 16mm film transferred to videocassette
Leichhardt, Peter Kingston, 1970, 20 mins — 16mm film transferred to videocassette
Uluru, Mick Glasheen, 1971 (completed 1977), 24 min — 16mm film transferred to videocassette
(Note: Marinetti was frequently screened in the Yellow House, usually in the Colour Room, but also in other rooms, and often in an "expanded" form with a lightshow; Leichhardt was partly shot in the Yellow House and had its premier there; Uluru was begun in the Yellow House, where test footage and rushes were shown).

2. Screening in the corridor beside the "Stone Room":
The Coming of the Dawn, George Greenough, 1970 (excerpts from The Innermost Limits of Pure Fun), 10 mins — 16mm film transferred to videocassette
(Note: This was the film that inspired Martin to place a mirror ball on the end of Hokusai's wave and call the Stone Room "A Tribute to George Greenough from the Outside Looking In" — it was shown daily during the Spring Exhibition, frequently in the Stone Room).

3. Screening in the documentation section:
The Yellow House, Albie Thoms, 1976 (excerpts from Something Old, Something New . . .), 9 mins — 16mm film transferred to videocassette
(Note: This consists of an interview with Martin Sharp intercut with film clips of the Yellow House, 1970-71, and was broadcast by ABC-TV in 1976). Excerpts from Yellow TV, Albie Thoms, Peter Wright, Mick Glasheen et al, 1971, compiled by Albie Thoms, 1973, 60 mins — ¼" videotape transferred to ½" videotape and copied onto videocassette
(Note: These are excerpts from the 50 hours of video documentation shot in the Yellow House in July 1971 and exhibited in the Spring Exhibition. The National Film ;and Sound Archive is currently making a videocassette copy for the exhibition).
Artists Statement

GREG WEIGHT

The photographs of the Yellow House hopefully will say more than I could say with words. Many more people were part of activities, events and exhibitions than were recorded with photographs so therefore the existing photographs are predominantly from the period covering the six to nine month lead up to the Spring show 1971. There was an air of expectancy about the place and from that point the possibility of some exciting images was everpresent.

The Infinity Room photographs come from a session shared with that once remarkable environment known as the Cronulla Sand Dunes, they are about journeys into the landscape, sand, yin & yang, photography environmental destruction and Aboriginal History. Although these dunes were formed 10,000 years ago it has taken only 20 years to remove them from the face of the earth.

ROGER FOLEY, a.k.a. ELLIS D. FOGG

In those days I felt my work was ephemeral. A process, not a product, with no remains. I did not take photographs or video recordings. My work left nothing to clutter walls.

The energy and excitement in Sydney in the sixties was created by Oz magazine, Ubu films, the ‘underground’, the first rock concerts, psychedelic lightshows, environments and happenings, ‘art’ and ‘life’ experiments.

And by the breaking down of arbitrary establishment rules and taboos and the growing awareness of alternative lifestyles and issues concerning the environment. For me, all this energy arrived together at a nodal point — The Yellow House. Then expanded in all directions.

My multi-media events and environments attract your senses and like a beautiful veiled woman lead you forward. The event ... the environment, new delights are revealed. I ensure that these are romantic and fun, with guts, wit and integrity.

These days I record my work. I am a father. I design fantasy environments and produce special events for friends, private clients and corporations, who give me the freedom to get on with the job. I explain to television producers that to get a dynamic tape, the camera crew have to record the event as though it was a football match. The ball can be anywhere.

PETER WRIGHT

I saw a seahorse Once
It hovered inches from my face mask
I have wanted to thank someone for this.
Thank you.
Read 10 times.

ALBIE THOMS

I think we got it right: the Magic Theatre that Hesse described, brought to life; the Theatre of Cruelty that Artaud conceived, operating day and night; the community of artists in the south in the sun that Vincent longed for, made real.

It was hard work; a blending of artforms that allowed painters, poets and performers to combine in a way that permitted their differences, yet embraced their common purpose. But it required total devotion and was too difficult to maintain forever.

Martin suggested the scenario and we came up with the sets, costumes, music, lighting and performers, mixing the media in live collages that drew on our experiences with happenings, lightshows and underground movies.

What we produced was shamelessly derivative, but we believed it was the art of the future that Vincent would have hoped for. Now it is all around us, in galleries, movies and television, and is called appropriation.

But what we had was something more: an artwork we lived in, a commune of kindred spirits where life and art were one. It was something special and precious, a kind of organised anarchy that was ultimately cathartic. It affects us still.

GEORGE GITTOES

My sole aim at the Yellow House was to create total art environments with the all round impact of an Islamic mosque. I wanted the ability to link symbols, colours, shapes and ideas, to have them flow around and over the viewer, inseperable from one another.

This was a recreation to the dull streets of Askin era Sydney, the violence of Vietnam and the general public belief that art and mystercism were other ways to describe madness.

When the ‘Pupper Theatre’, titled ‘The Marriage of Heaven and Hell’, was completed I became, Khaadir the sufi puppeter and worked there with mimes and clowns to entertain audiences.

At the time I thought art was changing and what we were doing was revolutionary. It would only be a short time before the rigid conformist and materialist forces in our society would begin to weaken and the total art approach would infiltrate spaces everywhere. This spiritualisation of man-made environments would assist in the transformation of peoples consciousness and thus help to save the planet.

Twenty years on I have recreated this space, as closely as I could to the original, in every detail, and I still believe in revolution.

FRANKLIN JOHNSON

Franklin Johnson was born in Sydney, Australia in 1942. He studied at the Julian Ashton School and the National Art School 1958-1960. He exhibited at the Australian Galleries in Melbourne 1970 and the Yellow House in 1971. Since then he has had exhibitions with several Sydney galleries and participated in a number of group exhibitions in private galleries. He is represented in the collection of the National Gallery in Canberra. He now lives and works in Adelaide.
The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Puppet Theatre of Opposites

black and white
silver and gold
black ade white

Maurice and Yeats

Dhriti and Christ
Revolutionary Art
Magritte Room, detail