

# VISUAL ARTS

unless Australian artists stop  
fretting about it, it never will.  
(MC)

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Selected news, reviews, events, talks and exhibitions listed A-Z by venue. For inclusion, which cannot be guaranteed, send info to Mark Currah to arrive by Mon, ten days before Thur publication. See listings index page for key to access codes.

## REVIEWS

### ICA: Another Objectivity

Another Objectivity is not a show to set the pulse racing. Photographic objectivity means for many excluding colour, and the eye behind these cameras is intent on being cold and puritanical. Any hint of a dramatic visual affect will be ruthlessly rooted out. Not unnaturally it seems to be a peculiarly North European practice. The German partnership of Bernd and Hilla Becher, who serve as introduction to the nine other photographers grouped with them, exemplify the systematic approach to objectivity. They've been recording the beautiful abstractions of industrial plants for 20 years now, framing the quiet greys of blast-furnaces and steel-works, extracting utilitarian geometry from the noise and dirt that might suggest another kind of objectivity. And the show's title nicely pinpoints objectivity's difficulty. It is almost a kind of religion, one whose followers are thoroughly versed in its complex tenets but due to a central contradiction of dogma are doomed to forever failing to put it into practice. And it is within that central contradiction that this show operates. Patrick Tosani's objectivity, for example, is a kind of fetishism, three large and ludicrous wedged heels, and printed with heretical colour too! Suzanne Lafont takes time-lapse shots of screaming babies, or finds sinister men while out walking in the country. Surely Jean-Louis Garnell's objectivity is fake, all those intellectuals living in flats where the debris of a bohemian existence is just too carefully contrived. Objectivity is all down to the eye of the beholder as Günther Förg appreciates: he includes mirrors in his installation. (Mark Currah)

### Rebecca Hossack: Paintings of the Dreaming

Coming so soon after Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri's one person show at the ICA and with the London artworld gripped with bicentennial fever some might consider a show of paintings from the Papunya Tula Company a severe case of overkill. Set up to market and promote aboriginal paintings the company's influence is much in evidence in this show. The sale of artists' work, indeed their output, is carefully regulated to ensure there is always a demand for aboriginal work, it being readily acknowledged that currently fashionable status is as significant as aesthetic demands. Lesser known artists are given exposure beside those internationally known, here Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri's superb painterly skills are highlighted against less accomplished work. But what unites the artists is a common sensibility: the paintings are physical representations of individual and collective rights, normally recorded in a non-literate society by ceremonial and song-cycles. As such they have been recognised by white authorities in land

disputes, though not universally, and it would be interesting to know how many of the paintings wealthy purchasers are also aware of their significance. Descriptive notes accompany the paintings, so it is possible to grasp something of the true nature of the work. In this light an energetic but crude painting by Charlie Tararu seems as valuable as Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri's virtuosity, here including in the familiar scheme of dots, lizards depicted as Western eyes would see them. Normally a group show involves a number of artists scrambling for attention; here the collective effort is what counts. (MC)

### Hayward: Angry Penguins

The name of a literary journal and used by the art establishment in Australia to pour scorn on the ideals of artists grouped around it, 'Angry Penguins' charts the work of Melbourne painters of the late '30s and '40s. Their intention was to develop an Australian school free from the dominant influence of European Surrealist modernism and replace it with a realism that acknowledged Australia's isolation from Europe. The effects of the war, when the threat of invasion by Japan was substantial, only increased the painters' sense of desperation. The Angry Penguins express themselves through crudely finished drawing and expressionist brushwork. Sidney Nolan's Ned Kelly series dominate in the Hayward and represent the highpoint of the movement. Kelly, the outlaw of the homemade armour plating is for Nolan the quintessential Australian hero, stubborn, anti-establishment and like the way in which Nolan chooses to paint, naive. Reducing the outlaw to the ungainly box of his armour he places him like some big black question mark at the heart of Australia. Besides this great series Nolan's other paintings and the work of his compatriots lack purpose. John Perceval and Arthur Boyd's mystical escapism places personal concerns before national ones. Not a bad thing but against their avowed aims. A national identity only arrives through time and chance, and

# CITY LIMITS MAGAZINE

The powerful rhythms of 'The Dreaming'. Anatjari Tjampitjirpa is one of the aboriginal artists showing at Rebecca Hossack: See Preview.

