

ARTS

Creative mix with subtle shifts in perspectives

Art

Imants Tillers, Queensland Art Gallery

Trace and Place: art from Papunya Tula, Queensland University Art Museum
Cressida Campbell, Griffith University, Brisbane.

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THERE are no concessions being made for the heat, holidays or the silly season; rather, Brisbane is approaching the end of the art year with a burst of activity.

There are two new, artist-run spaces just opened, one at 210 Wickham St, Fortitude Valley, and the other at 40 Charlotte St, Brisbane, two new commercial galleries preparing to begin operations and a new local arts magazine on the drawing boards.

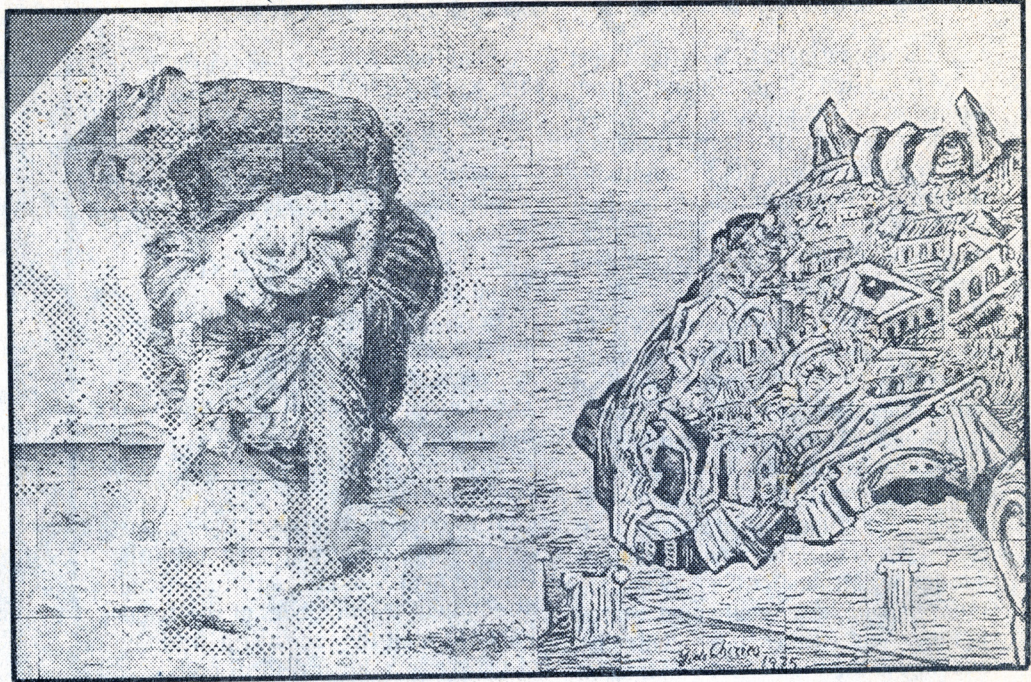
There are also some interesting shows about town.

One of the most arresting of these is the exhibition of six large paintings by Imants Tillers, who represented Australia at the recent Venice Biennale and who is starting a home tour at the Queensland Art Gallery.

These are sophisticated and complex works which are at once conceptual, painterly and wryly self-conscious.

One of the issues Tillers addresses in them, and throughout his art and writing, is the role of mechanical reproduction on our reception of art, and the resulting misunderstandings and distortions of meaning, scale and texture — the loss of "aura" that this produces, particularly in Australia, where it's the norm to be introduced to significant artworks in reproduction before seeing the usually far-distant originals.

All of the images included here are derived at least partly from reproductions found in magazines and books and are used either singly, as in *Mt Analogue 1985*, which is based on Rene Daumal's story of the same name, or in combination



Imants Tillers' *The Hyperborean and the Speluncar 1986*

Polke and David Andre-inspired *I Am The Door 1985*.

Each work is constructed according to Tillers' now well-known method of gridding up these reproductions and painting each section on to individual canvas boards, which are then arranged and re-arranged into the larger, finished works. They form richly painted and seductive surfaces. Some, like the predominantly Keifer-inspired *Heart of the Wood 1985*, are monumental yet teem with small, folk-like figures and intriguing detail. However, for all this, they maintain a sense of ambivalent distance and objectivity, imparted partly by the grid-like structure of the many small canvas boards and by the multiple shifts of scale, style and subject matter within each work.

In *Mt Analogue*, for instance, the shifts of tone between some of the canvas boards are reminiscent of the blue/yellow variations of photographs. Alternatively, in the de Chirico-inspired, neo-classical spoof, *The Hyperborean and the Speluncar 1986*, we look at part

of, and embody, cultural discontinuities; however, Tillers' creative mix of traditional, found and imagined images invests them with their own resynthesised continuity and a renewed presence.

ALTHOUGH the circumstances are clearly different, the Aboriginal artists from Papunya Tula have also creatively transformed, in their case, their own deeply rooted traditional art form, extending the tradition and investing it with new functions.

Witness to this transformation are the 25 works by members of the Papunya Artists' Co-operative, which are now showing at the Queensland University Art Museum under the banner "Trace and Place". They demonstrate the high degree of formal invention and the variety these artists achieve within the parameters of a traditional symbolism and iconography. This is evident, for example, in the vibrant, de-centered structure of Uta Uta Tjangala's depiction of women engaged in muni-muni

Bag and Flying Ant Dreaming.

Moreover, these works provide a degree of cultural rapprochement and a viable avenue of communication through which non-Aboriginal Australians have access to parts of these particular Aborigines' complex traditions and their highly abstract way of thinking about, and imagining, the world.

AT Griffith University, artist-in-residence Cressida Campbell's exhibition of woodblock monoprints demonstrates a singular vision tempered by the reductive traditions of 17th century Japanese prints and the ornamentation of Islamic art.

Each of these extremely detailed works is printed from a single, carved block and many have the tonal nuance of a finely tuned watercolour.

All depict something of the artist's environment, but altered with unusual colours, subtle shifts of perspective, multiple viewpoints and ambiguous spaces, so that some