

Time and Tide

questioning the practice

Plimsoll Gallery, Centre for the Arts, University of Tasmania, Hobart

19 June – 12 July 1998

Gallery A, University Gallery, University of Tasmania, Launceston

24 July – 19 August 1998

Devonport Gallery and Arts Centre

14 September – 4 October 1998

CraftWest Gallery, Perth

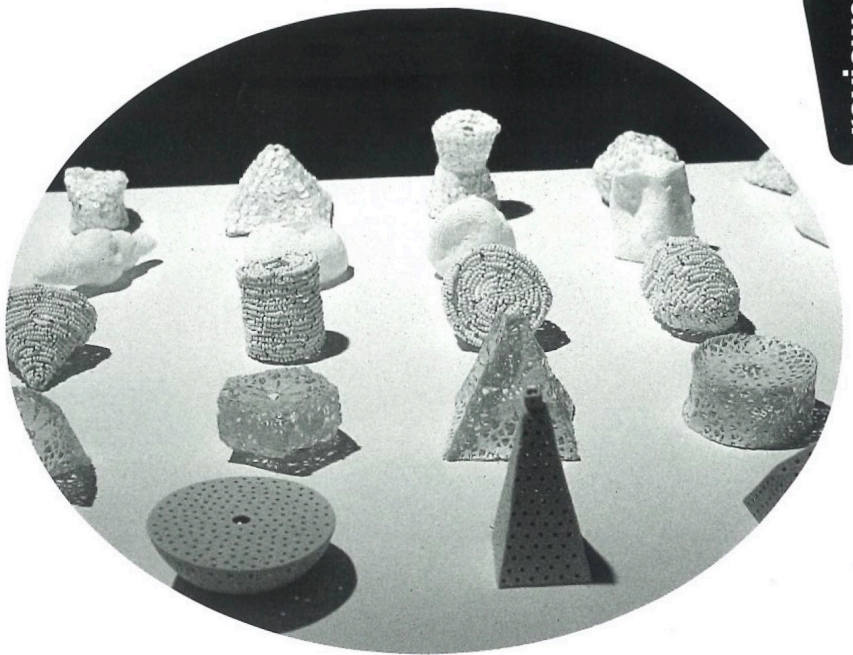
29 April – 30 May 1999

TIME AND TIDE IS THE FOURTH EXHIBITION DEVELOPED BY THE TASMANIAN SCHOOLS OF ART AT HOBART AND LAUNCESTON UNDER THEIR *QUESTIONING THE PRACTICE* PROJECT. Funded by the Australia Council's three-year Contemporary Craft Curator Program, the two university galleries have appointed three guest curators, charged with curating two exhibitions each which critique current as well as traditionally held assumptions about craft and curatorial practice. The series began in 1997 with two exhibitions: *Containment* and *In Praise of Make-up* curated by Clare Bond.

The program's second curator was Bridget Sullivan. Her first exhibition *Ecologies of Place and Memory* explored ecological sensibility in current craft practice. Most of the works in this exhibition reflected the physical environment in which they were made, while the objects in her second exhibition *Time and Tide* source cultural environments that exist only in memory or as second-hand experience. They examine the numerous cultural reference points now operating in Australia.

Pilar Rojas' *Recollections*, consisting of twenty-five intimate objects made from glass beads, mother of pearl, buttons, cotton, plastic and Limoges porcelain, speak of a very personal, recollected and geographically distant past. Many of the objects, collaborative efforts with her mother in the latter's kitchen in Spain, are mysteriously and affectionately covered with evocative crochet.

The traditions that Catherine Truman and Rowena Gough reference are not their own—the netsuke carving tradition and the material cultures of the Pacific Islands and New Zealand. The results however are powerful works, which together with Pilar Rojas's 'recollected' objects, create individual and unique aesthetics. All three artists refer to and transcend a specific cultural tradition, and make work of achingly eloquent beauty.



Gay Hawkes' pieces, fashioned out of found materials, are perhaps not of the strength we have learned to expect from her. The cross between Australian folk, kitsch and the 'European furniture (tradition)', results in an awkward hybridity.

Lin Li's *Dowry Box* seems out of place with the rest of the work. A trail of inner-soles, brightly embroidered with traditional and auspicious Chinese symbols, track up the wall of the gallery in an unresolved arc. They allude to Lin's Chinese past and specifically, the 100 embroidered inner-soles that every betrothed girl in the villages of the central Chinese province of Hu Bei, has to make.

Lin Li's work does not sit comfortably within the tradition that the other artists in this exhibition have come from. She makes her point through the irony of the assembly line of ready-mades, rather than through the ritual of *making*—which all the exhibitions in the series so far have been at pains to argue, is at the very heart of craft practice.

This reviewer saw the exhibition in Launceston, at the University Gallery. While much of the work was exquisite, the effect was considerably lessened by the inability of the work as a whole to claim sufficient presence for itself in an uncompromising space, too large for what was on offer. At the Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart, it may have been a different story, as a discrete space was especially constructed for the work.

Greg Leong lectures at the Tasmanian School of Art at Launceston, University of Tasmania. He is a practising textile artist and exhibits regularly in Tasmania, and in national touring exhibitions.

Pilar Rojas,
Recollections,
1998. Cotton,
glass beads,
Limoges porcelain,
mother-of-pearl
buttons, plastic,
wire, wood. 25
components, each
10 x 5 x 5cm
approx. Table 100
x 75 x 75cm.
Photo: Rosa
McManamey.