



Passage 2000
granite paving,
bronze, fibre-optic
lighting and mist
Installation view
Martin Place, Sydney
City of Sydney
Sculpture Walk

Anne Graham

11 July – 4 August 2001

SHERMAN GALLERIES



Stack 2001
painted foam rubber,
glass, rubber, straps
and plastic locks
41 x 61 x 10.5 cm
photo: Craig Wilson

**Anne Graham's *Passing Through:*
*Between Performance and the Object***

Susan Best

'Eating, for example, is not reducible to the chemistry of alimentionation.'

'To be sure, in the satisfaction of need the alienness of the world that founds me loses its alterity: in satiety the real I sink my teeth into is assimilated, the forces that were in the other become *my* forces, become me (and every satisfaction of need is in some respect nourishment).'

– Emmanuel Levinas *Totality and Infinity* 128–9

There is a strange ruthlessness in Levinas's description of eating. I strip what I eat of its otherness, I annex it, incorporating it so wholly it becomes me. This greedy, violent incorporation of the other faithfully follows the account of early infancy described by psychoanalyst Melanie Klein. Viewed in this more overtly psychological light, devouring is something like a developmental phase that precedes sociality. For Levinas, this phase ends when the welcoming feminine face comes into view and allows one to dwell or feel at home in the world. Interiority or 'separated being' becomes possible only when this hospitality is accepted.

This account of rapacious eating arrested or displaced by hospitality suggests that one passes through one stage to the other without residue, that inside and outside the body are somehow settled after this moment of recognition. But is the

porosity of the body really resolved in this way? Anne Graham's work suggests otherwise. Her work is informed by porosity and transitoriness: dwelling is not the safe permanent settlement of the domestic sphere but something turned outwards to be performed in the risky realm of public space, similarly the body is not the impregnable fortress built by the recognition of limits, but something still entangled with what it ingests.

This might sound like the conditions for yet another shocking encounter with the abject materiality of the body and the unpredictable terror of public space – the well-travelled terrain of much contemporary art concerned with these issues. However, this is not the sensibility we see in Graham's work. To be sure, *Art and Food* has a visceral edge: *Duck Breast* looks scarified, bright red welts peep through the snug coating of rubber; *Platzki* is swollen taut like a pregnant belly; *Spag Bol* hooks ribbons of thin rubbery intestines; the vivid red innerness of *Tom* topped with chain and bathroom plug graphically telescopes the journey from inside to outside. But these sculptures are not simply renditions of the complex relations between food and the body; they are also the result of a more playful social exchange.

Graham invited nine enthusiastic cooks to prepare a meal in the Newcastle Region Art Gallery courtyard for invited guests and then responded to the meal within twenty-four hours with these sculptures. The resulting sculptures, begun as a response to another culinary artist, circulate as a further conversation with others in their relaxed lounge-like setting. Food here becomes the currency of sociability, weaving inside and outside the body into the broader social fabric. Hospitality thus continues the blending of inner and outer experience; it does not end the play between them.

What we learn from Graham's performances is that domesticity can be a portable action, and that dwelling can take place if there is shelter for such action. Her sustained investigation into the nature of dwelling has taken her to many and varied locations: parks, railway stations, carparks, under-passes, cliff tops, retirement villages. Her raw material in these installations/performances is the basic stuff of life. Indeed, her series of temporary tent and kitchen performances from the 1990s were crafted from the stuff of everyday life: some form of shelter, gatherings of passersby, the serving of meals, conversation and sometimes the showing of films. Staged in various locations around Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Wollongong, and in Tokamachi, Japan, these works opened the safe enclosure of domesticity to the risk of 'chance encounters'. The blurring of art and life coupled with the surrealist surrender to chance is clearly evident in *Art and Food*.

This surrealist flavour is also evident in the other anxious objects in this exhibition. They, too, circulate round the body: giant combs have a kind of bodily resonance not unlike the similarly disquieting works of Eva Hesse and Louise Bourgeois. They are not quite the objects of nightmares, but they do all have teeth. Some have captured hair, and some have rubbery extrusions as if they have passed through the body's ambiguous borders and are now part of its circulation. The needles in the same room are more obvious instruments of penetration but their rounded forms makes them somehow more benign, more comb-like, just the tooth of a comb viewed in cross-section.

As the sculptures come into focus as a collection or constellation of objects, combs start to proliferate; they come in many different forms: rakes, fans, individual teeth. It is as if this shape or implement has a curious will to form, a will that quietly



Street Light 1993
Installation 4th Melbourne Sculpture Triennial
canvas, kerosene lamps, wooden and metal frames
photo: Tony Bond

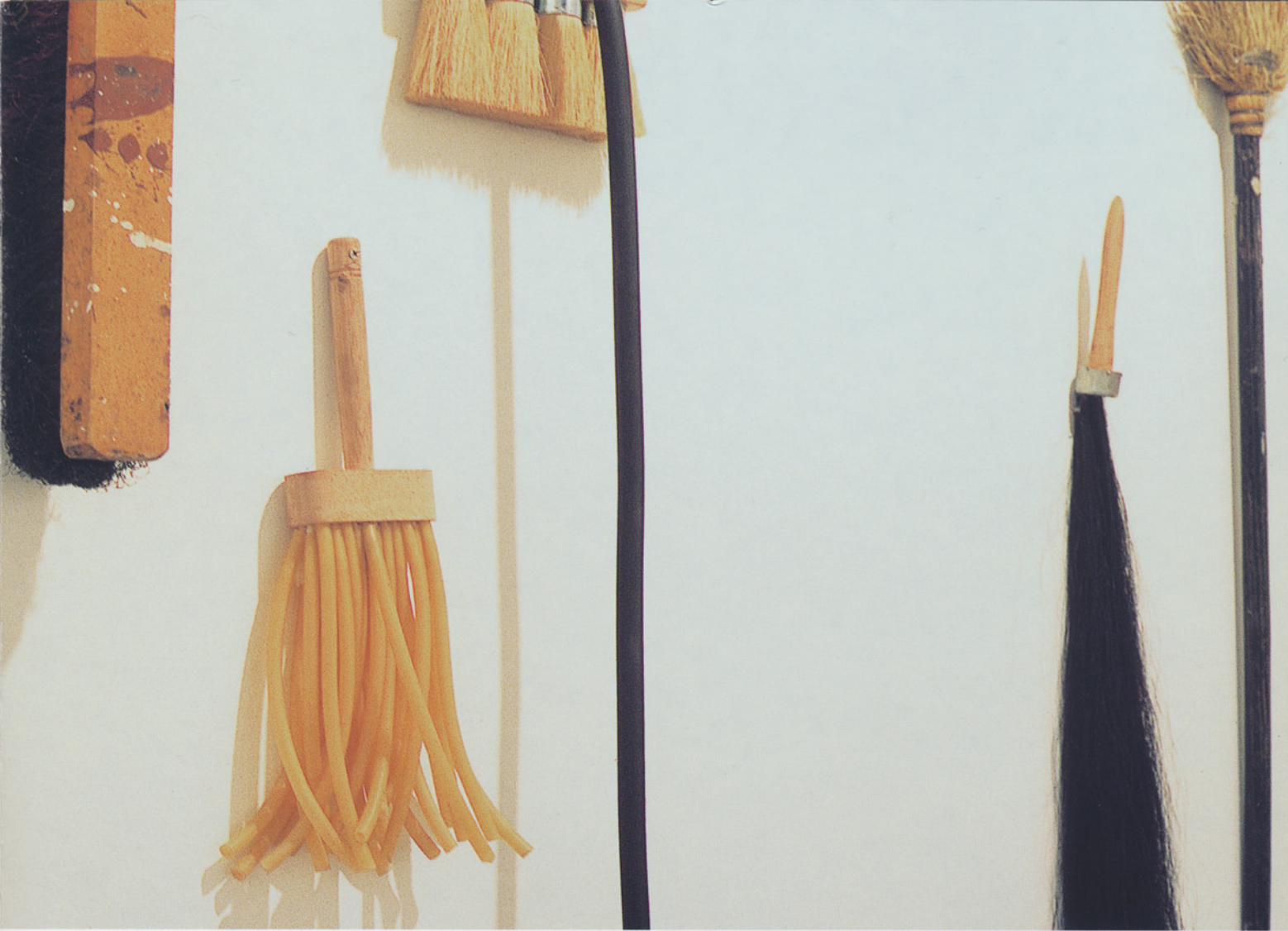


The Macleay Women 1997
Elizabeth Bay House, Historic Houses Trust, Sydney
hair and glass globes
photo: Jenni Carter

insinuates itself into very different everyday objects as though marshalling some unseen voracious energy for transformation. Objects are slowly but surely assimilated into the category of combs and teeth. An instrument for grooming the outside of the body becomes aligned with eating in its Levinasian form – rapacious incorporation.

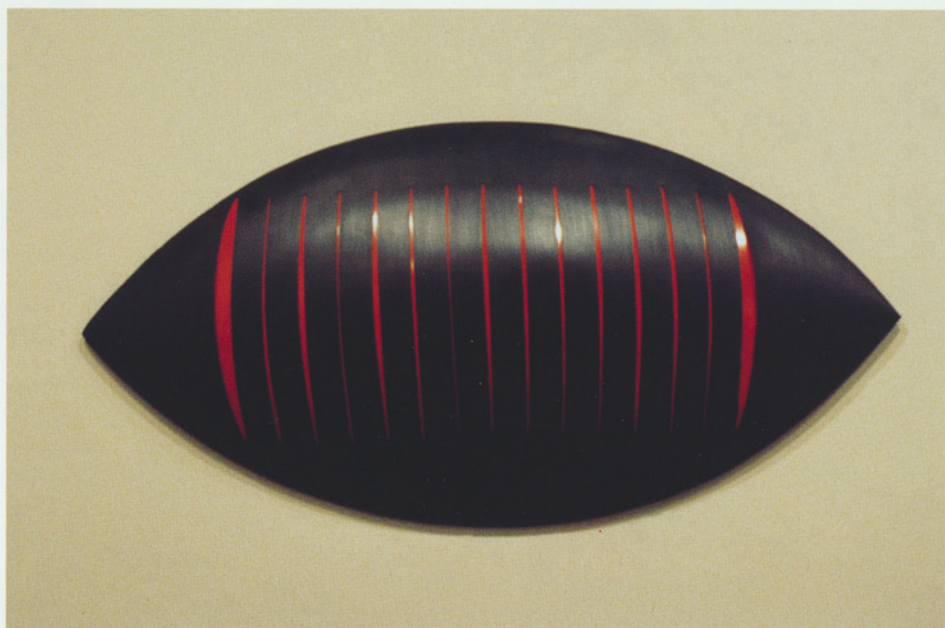
There is, then, a curious reversal in this exhibition: ingested food does not signify eating, instead we find the character of eating in comb-like objects. The two parts of this exhibition thus work in concert to unsettle our perceptions of what is inside and what is outside the body. In the *Art and Food* installation eating is turned inside-out, food doesn't simply become incorporated into the body, it triggers quirky external objects for contemplation and social play. On the other hand, combs which are designed to simply pass through and untangle the hair, to only touch or stroke the outer threshold of the body, have somehow grown large and annexed the inner functioning of eating. Such entanglements of bodies and objects must surely be one of the ways in which we make ourselves at home in the world.

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Doing Time 1994
hair, rubber and wood
dimensions variable
Australia Council
Green St Studio, New York
Installation view
photo: Anne Graham

Breast 2001
fibre glass and rubber
78 x 123 x 15 cm
photo: Craig Wilson





Roll 2001
M.D.F, lacquer,
hair and string
73 x 80 x 4 cm
photo: Tony Bond

Biography

- 1969 Dip.AD, Manchester Polytechnic
1973 MA, Royal College of Art
1983 Grad. Dip. Ed., Western Australian Institute of Technology
1999 PhD Candidate, RMIT, Melbourne
2001 Professor, Chair of Fine Art, University of Newcastle
Currently lives in Newcastle, NSW

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2001 *Grooming and Eating*, Sherman Galleries Goodhope, Sydney, NSW
Food & Art, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, 5 May–1 July
2000 *The Silk Plaza*, The Echigo – Tsumari Art Triennial
Passage, permanent public art work in Martin Place for the City of Sydney Open Museum and Sculpture Walk, Sydney, NSW
1999 *People in Glass Houses*, Royal Botanic Gardens, Historic Houses Trust, Sydney, NSW
1998 *Timepiece*, Sculpture Forum, Canberra, ACT
Tunnel Vision, Canberra School of Art Gallery, Canberra, ACT
1997 *The Cooling Tower*, Museum of Sydney, Historic Houses Trust, Sydney, NSW
The Macleay Women, Elizabeth Bay House, Historic Houses Trust, Sydney, NSW
Transitions, Melbourne Festival, VIC
1996 *The Chain of Chambers*, for Volt at the Brisbane Festival, Queensland
Off the Rails, Adelaide Festival, curated by Erica Green for the University of Adelaide and Adelaide Festival, SA
1995 *Sweat*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, NSW
Sarashi, The Hinode-Machi residency exhibition at Hinode Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
Steriliser, Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, SA
1994 *Sweat*, street performance, July–September, Manhattan, NY, USA
1993 *Through the Glass*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, NSW
Lap, Artspace, The Gunnery, Woolloomooloo, NSW
Toll, Lewers Bequest and Penrith Regional Art Gallery, Penrith, NSW
1992 *Noemata*, Performance Space, Sydney, NSW
1991 *Anne Graham*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, NSW
1988 *So What*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, NSW

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2001 *Patricia Wilson Adams and Anne Graham*, School of Fine Art Gallery, University of Newcastle, NSW, 15 Aug–9 Sept
Relative Values: Common Ground, School of Fine Art Gallery, University of Newcastle, NSW, 9 May–3 June
Group Exhibition, Sherman Galleries Goodhope, 28 Feb–17 March
7th NICA: International Contemporary Art Festival, Tokyo International Forum, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 28 March–1 April
2000 *Olympic Theme – Pathways*, Maitland City Art Gallery, Maitland
Call & Response, School of Fine Art Gallery, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, NSW
Soft House 1, Installation for the Newcastle Botanical Gardens, Newcastle, NSW
Soft House 2- Construction and Process, International Artists Museum, Poland
1996 *Carburettor Parking*, Casula Power House, Liverpool Regional Gallery, Liverpool, NSW
Doing Time, Tamworth Fibre Biennale, Tamworth Regional Gallery, Tamworth, NSW
A Sense of Place, Bede Gallery for Northern Arts, Newcastle, UK
Flagging The Republic, Sherman Galleries Goodhope, Sydney, NSW
The Beggars Banquet, A Progressive Dinner, Performance Space, Sydney, NSW
1995 *Doing Time, Seven Histories of Australia*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art
Doing Time, Casula Power House, Liverpool, NSW
Compound Time, Canberra National Sculpture Forum, Canberra, ACT
The Nuns Pool, Viewers and Audiences, Wollongong Regional Gallery, Wollongong, NSW

- 1994 *Working with the Wall*, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW
1993 *Hypothetically Public*, Lewers Bequest and Penrith Regional Art Gallery, Penrith, NSW
Black, Regional Galleries Touring Exhibition
Fifth Australian Sculpture Triennial, Melbourne, VIC
1992 *Working in Public*, Public Art Project, Artspace, Sydney, NSW
Transgressions, Australian National Gallery, Canberra, ACT
1991 *Dissonance: Aspects of Feminism and Art*, The Wharf, Sydney, NSW
1987 *The Third Australian Sculpture Triennial*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, VIC
1986 Biennale of Sydney, Pier 2, Sydney, NSW
1984 *Wardrobe*, Mad Love Gallery, Adelaide, SA
Thin Skin, Performance Space, Sydney, NSW

Selected Awards and Grants

- 2001 *RMC Project Grant*, University of Newcastle
2000 NRAG Artist-in-Residence Program, Newcastle Region Art Gallery
2000 *NAWIC Award, National Association of Women in Construction Merit Award*, awarded to *Passage*, Martin Place, Sydney, NSW
RMC Conference Travel Scholarship, International Artists Museum, Lodz, Poland
1999 *RMC New Staff Grant*, for *The Mnemonic Function of Objects and Materials as Constructors of Identity*, University of Newcastle
Sydney City Sculpture Commission, *Passage*
1998 *Nepean Research Grant to Support Faculty Publications and Visiting Fellowships*

Selected Bibliography

- Thomas, Martin, 'The Cooling Tower', *Uncertain Ground: Essays Between Art and Nature*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2000
Engberg, Julian, 'Breadline', *Artlink*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2000
Dauth, Louise, *Site*. Parliament House Construction Photography Project, Parliament House, Canberra, 2000
O'Brien, Geraldine, 'Ghostly Walk in a Misty Metaphor', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 March 2000
Thomas, Richard, 'The Bridge, Construction in Progress V1', International Artists Museum, Melbourne
Best, Susan, 'Elemental Constructions: Women Artists and Sculpture in The Expanded Field', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, September 2000
Coucaud, Sally, 'New Look Martin Place', *City of Sydney Quarterly*, Public Affairs Unit, City of Sydney, Town Hall, 2000
Dysart, Dinah, 'In House Intervention', *Art and Australia*, vol. 36, no. 3, 1999
Best, Susan, 'Art in Other Spaces', *Watch This Space: A Conference on Public Art*, ed. Debra Malor and Heather Johnson, *Australian Journal of Art*, Sydney, p. 73, 1999
Best, Susan, 'Public Art in the Olympic City', *Architecture Australia*, September/October, p. 82
Best, Susan, 'Elemental Constructions: Women and Sculpture in the Expanded Field', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, vol. 1, no. 2

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