

Finders, keepers

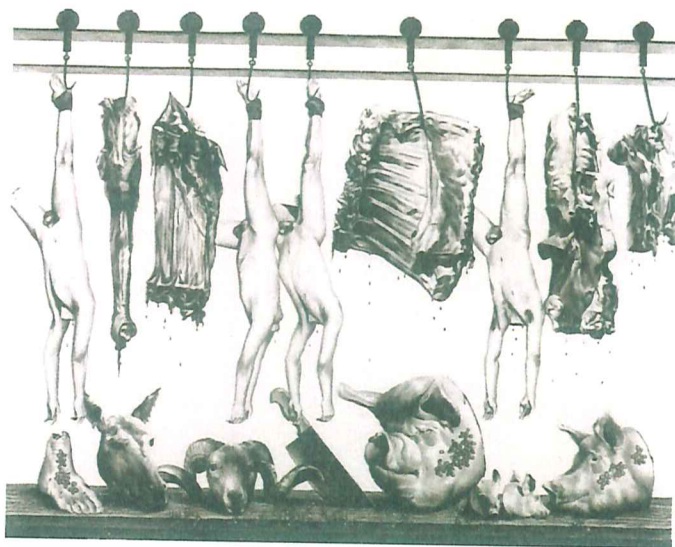
Loss, reclamation and immensity are the catchwords for this issue. The 2008 TarraWarra Biennial, *Lost and Found: An Archaeology of the Present*, curated by Charlotte Day, is reviewed here by Geraldine Barlow, who takes us into the 'Arcadia' of the Yarra Valley and the exhibition to gently excavate its meanings. *The Lost Buddhas: Chinese Buddhist Sculpture from Qinqzhou* is an exhibition made possible through a more hands-on excavation with the accidental discovery and reclamation in 1996 of these 6th century sculptures from a construction site. Though vandalised, and banished from view from the 12th century, thirty-five of these exquisite sculptures evocatively emerge from the shadows in this Art Gallery of NSW (AGNSW) installation, curated by the gallery's Dr Liu Yang and, as Jeremy Eccles's exhibition appraisal suggests, serving to commemorate the 30-year milestone for noted Sinologist Edmund Capon as AGNSW director. At TarraWarra, the museum approaches mausoleum through Callum Morton's pointed signage in *Lost and Found*. At the AGNSW, it is a temple ... regained.

Loss of face, culturally speaking, is at stake in Rupert Myer's timely article, 'International promotion of Australian art', with a view to the release of a relevant Australia Council for the Arts report early next year. As Myer concludes: 'Australians wouldn't tolerate the idea of elite athletes being denied the opportunity to compete internationally ... (and) cannot afford to be uncompetitive in any endeavour where it engages with the region or the world. This applies as much to our creative pursuits as to any other.'

The great sport/art divide also plays into John Montgomery's essay examining another aspect of 'loss of face' in Australia with its ever-persistent Cultural Cringe. Like Myer, Montgomery re-visits the recent 2020 Summit, each with differing emphases but equally convinced that it's no longer our artists who feel this cringe, but rather politicians and bureaucrats. The desire for international experience and exposure for artists these days is less about making up for a perceived loss of culture than the pursuit of a level cultural playing field.

Indigenous Australian art, and indeed the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award (NATSIAA) are foregrounded in Myer's article (and also in his 2002 Myer Report¹) as key entities for international promotion. In the second of our 25th NATSIAA-related articles, 'veteran' NATSIAA attendee Suzanne Spinner reviews not only the Award exhibition for this month's lead article but the rising crescendo of Indigenous art exhibitions in Darwin coinciding with the 'living core' of the Award. This month's Letter, by Desart's John Oster, takes umbrage with our preceding NATSIAA article by Jeremy Eccles (AMA #214) which took aim at related ethical and political issues regarding Aboriginal art's representation.

John Kelly has had his share of frustration with bureaucracy as an artist seeking support for international projects. His Letter in AMA #213 to this effect, particularly critical of the Australia Council for the Arts, is in part taken up by Myer's article, just as Montgomery is in part responding to an earlier article by Michael Denholm (AMA #209, 'Whatever



Happened to the Age of Art Criticism?'). Kelly leads our excursion this month into the immensity of the current Asian biennial/triennial circuit: from macro-philosophical considerations of the 'end of history' and art's end-game immersion in the capitalist economy, to the microcosm of his Guangzhou hotel-cum-studio as an exhibiting artist at the Guangzhou Triennial. Sophie McIntyre tackles three in the circuit – Guangzhou, Taipei and Shanghai – with the even-keeled overview of someone who knows the territory well, while I, a newcomer to Shanghai, do my best to stay afloat as a guest of the second *ShContemporary 08* art fair.

Never shy to unleash a few home truths, Michael Denholm hones in on some global-local politics in the art of fellow Tasmanian Jamin who features in the Queensland Art Gallery's latest triennial initiative, *Contemporary Australia: Optimism*, which opens this month. Jamin reclaims the mass-mediated image through his large-scale screenprints. Emily Jackett (one of our Em Files artists) on the other hand, reclaims a batch of photographs which one day mysteriously materialised in her front garden. Illusion – both optical and literary – makes for some fascinating feats in the versatile art of Chris Bond, this month's other Em Files artist.

To lose one's self in the immensity of space, in the nebulous state of being, Holly-Mae Emerson finds rejuvenation in the pure visual poetry of *An Ever Expanding Universe*, a recent group show at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art curated by Melissa Keys. And the paintings of Micky Allan – worlds within worlds, 'both dream-like and conceptually rigorous' – are the subject of Jenny McFarlane's fine analysis.

Finally, we welcome Tania Evans, our new Advertising Coordinator, to the behind-the-scenes realm of the *Art Monthly* universe.

Yours (in a twinkle)

Maurice

Cang Xin, *Shamanism Series - Variation* (detail), 2005, pencil on paper, triptych, 200 x 250cm. White Rabbit Collection. Photograph: Silverpixel. Courtesy the artist, White Rabbit Collection and Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Sydney.



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