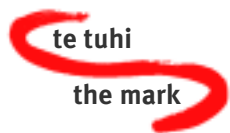


maree horner

- 2004 **te tuhi – the mark**, the Cameo Project
- 2002 Solo exhibition – *Monumental obsessions*, Grodentz, works on paper, Wellington
- 1998 Group show – *Action Replay*, revisiting post object art of the 1970s, GBAG, NP
- 1996 Solo exhibition – *Familiar monuments*, GBAG, New Plymouth
- 1994 Solo exhibition – *Monolandscapes*, Lesley Kriesler Gallery, NP
- 1993 Group show – *How am I placed*, celebrating Taranaki's cultures and identities, curated by Robert Leonard, GBAG, NP
- 1975 Group show – *Drawings by Young Auckland Artists*, ACAG
- 1974 Master of Fine Arts – Elam School of Art, Auckland University
- 1973 Sculpturescape – Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Mildura, Australia



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maree horner

monumental obsessions – wallpaper

6 march – 14 april 2004

monumental obsessions wallpaper

The archaeology of the ideas in this work can be traced back to much earlier works and series. *The Chair* (1974) could be said to be the concept godparent of this work, for it too was a work which dealt with a familiar object, and had radicalising features which opened up new spaces for contemplation. In that case it was caused by enmeshing and electrification; a bitter commentary on the anomie and stifling indifference of the era. However *The Chair* lacked the tropes of modernist monumentalism which have become a leitmotif of Horner's subsequent work.¹

The *Monumental obsessions* series features renderings of articles of domesticity such as boxes, sheets, bags, suitcases and a couch at life size with addition of diminutised monuments; disassembled archways and pyramidal columns. At first glance, Horner's work appeals simplistic, perhaps even banal and the product of arcane aggrandisement, but this impression is an entirely false one. Intertextually, the works create a hubbub of conversation, highlighting the frisson between mind and body, the erotic, the corporeal and the cerebral. Her work has a decided architectural quality. Her detail lines are illuminating, and deeply subversive. The real subversive quality however lies in the rendering of the various images in contrapuntal connection, creating a landscape which fetishes the monumental and eroticises the familiar; the notes playing harmony and discordance. The pictorial incongruity belies a sardonic fidelity. The pieces offer tantalising glimpses of alterior space; what is not revealed is just as powerful as what is.²

Wallpaper, a work on a grand scale, continues this approach. The 'characters', a couch, a lampshade, and a pyramidal column and an archway seem burlesque but it is the dialogue between which is intriguing. As a backdrop to this milieu, the wallpaper backing is culled from the hatches, matches, and despatches' columns of *The New Zealand Herald*. Moments of joy, grief and celebration become the background, seemingly inconsequential, but anything but. Life affirming, the wallpaper reminds of how glibly we live our individual lives, and how the cycle of life is ever present but sometimes barely detectable. The works materiality and its particular action through time have necessarily been elided.

The life size couch is a kind of inversion. It looks monumental, dwarfing the more monumental structures that march towards the doorway. The couch appears as a benign object, but it is the principle auteur. Its size enables the work to induce in us a sense of familiarity, a sense of immediacy, an appeal to our nostalgic memories, and a possible unravelling of our public defences. For me, the artist's exploration of phallocentricism and gender relations makes her work so fecund. The couch, shimmering clitoral pink, reinforces the subterranean eroticism that inveigles the viewer subconsciously into a reverie of homeliness and creature comfort.

By re-drawing the landscape in the domestic, Horner may be valorising the domestic labour of women

and the private sphere, whilst lamenting the fixation with large public erections, and the world dominated by masculine morays. However, it is the suggestibility, the multiplicity of readings which is a feature of her work. The pieces are contemplative and interrogative. New puzzlement can be found in each panel, as intricate detail takes on new connotations. Although her technical proficiency is admirable, it is on the conceptual plane where the artist generates her font of ideas and inspires paradigmatic shifts in the viewer. Recasting the traditional paradigm, where the male is in the ascendancy and female is subordinate and an object of sexual desire, also could be seen as a critique of marriage, domesticity and female subservience to 'the monumental'.

The background to this is the wallpaper itself, which features both monuments as a repeating motif. This is where the monumental and the quotidian meet, as if each is jostling for the viewers' attention, a complex interplay of the familiar and the erotic. The pyramidal column, like a tumescent penis, (or worse, the impersonality of a marble dildo), is juxtaposed against a softer archway, uterine or cervical in nature; an unmistakable feminine form, the undulating surface perhaps a labial imitation. There is opining dialogue between the two articles, a process of inquisition and re-positioning.

Trevor Landers

Managing editor of *The Zealot Press*, art critic and accomplished poet.

1. *New Art, Some recent New Zealand sculpture and post-object art*, edited by Jim Allen & Wytan Curnow, Heinemann (1976)

2. Trevor Landers, 'Monumental obsessions', *Vibe*, issue, (2003).

