

**IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO...
MIKE BROWN AND THE IMITATION REALISTS**

In true Dada spirit, Brown has always valued process over product, change over consistency, and chaos over final order ... Mike Brown's work of the 1960s ... struck at the heart of the lofty aspirations and the self-serving myths of Sydney's abstractionist push in a call for a return to an art reconnected with basic human experience.

Richard Haese Art & Australia 1992

***It ain't necessarily so... Mike Brown and the Imitation Realists*, 18 July – 1 October 2006, celebrates the early work of artist Mike Brown and the Imitation Realists.**

Mike Brown was an important figure in Australian art. The work in his 1962 exhibition *The Annandale Imitation Realists*, with Ross Crothall and Colin Lanceley, at the Museum of Modern Art and Design, Melbourne, was unprecedented in Australian art. The Imitation Realists' playful and often provocative constructions reflected the group's interest in American Pop-inspired assemblage, collage, junk art, *objets trouvés* and the art of non-Western cultures.

It ain't necessarily so... is divided into four main sections: Imitation Realist work, featuring two and three dimensional pieces by Brown, Crothall and Lanceley; a selection of Brown's work from the mid to late 1960s; a recreation of his Heide I mural, *It ain't necessarily so...* by a group of contemporary artists; and a film incorporating footage from Brown's exhibitions in the 1970s and 1980s, animations created by the artist and scenes of his memorial service at Heide.

Mike Brown's engaging 1969-70 mural in the Heide I dining room covered the walls, windows and part of the floor and incorporated collaged objects such as magazine cuttings and cigarette butts. Its first incarnation came about on a whim, installed in the kitchen of Heide I by Brown while Pamela and Sweeney Reed, who he was staying with, were at work. With the walls painted, and covered with household detritus and string criss-crossing the room, this impromptu installation rendered the kitchen un-usable and it had to be removed. Brown was then encouraged to take over the dining room to create a mural there. Sweeney Reed wall-papered over the mural in the early 1970s. It now exists only in the painted word "splat", which is still visible on the floorboards, two other remnants, and in photographs.

The photographs have enabled the re-creation of a temporary mural for this exhibition. Some of Mike's own collage materials and stencils, which have been preserved by his family, will be used in this process. Rob McKenzie, Nick Selenitsch and Kain Picken are leading the group of artists who will re-create the mural in the spirit of the original. The new version will include the two components salvaged from the original by Pamela Reed as well as the existing "splat".

Following his time as one of the Imitation Realists, Brown's work continued in the inventive and irreverent spirit of the group. His work critiqued the materialism and complacency of contemporary culture and demonstrated an intolerance for art world politics and pretentious high art academicism.

He exhibited extensively throughout Australia and his work remained provocative, particularly his critique of conventional social mores and cultural attitudes, his identification with revolutionary ideals, and, later his interrogation of issues surrounding the use of pornography in art. He was also known as a covert graffiti artist

producing works on walls around the streets of North Fitzroy. The artist died in 1997 and his memorial service was held at Heide.

Heide's Collection has one of the largest holdings of Imitation Realist works in Australia.

Kendrah Morgan, Curator at Heide Museum of Modern Art is available for interview.

Heide Museum of Modern Art is currently closed during the final stages of the 2005-06 Redevelopment Program. The new Heide will reopen 18 July 2006.

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18 July – 1 October 2006

Heide I

Curator: Kendrah Morgan

Heide Museum of Modern Art

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Hours: Tue-Fri 10.00am – 5.00pm; Sat/Sun/Public Holidays 12.00noon – 5.00pm

Admission: All Areas - Adult \$12, Seniors \$10, Concession \$8.

Single Area (Heide I only) - Adult \$8, Seniors \$7, Concession \$5.

Gardens – Free

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