



OUTCOMES

BY
LAUREN
LYSAGHT

FISHER GALLERY



Poverty Related Suicide, Brainstormed, User Paid, Asset Tested, Dobbled In...

The last work I did was on poverty. I feel that a lot of these issues are being... passed by. I have a growing concern for the silence, I think, around the government in New Zealand and the way... I keep thinking people must know it's a con or what's happening. Are they all on Prozac or are they all asleep?

Lauren Lysaght works and creates on this side of injustice. She moves in an artistic arena where the audience, the viewers and spectators, actually become eyewitnesses to the impoverishment of being which is effected by public policies and complicit neglect. Lysaght's feeling that she is alone in her outrage at the status quo recalls the poet June Jordan's comment that we need 'to identify and connect with what we are trained to ignore, what we are bribed into accepting, what we are rewarded for doing or not doing.'

Unequal, ignored, invisible, dismissed, the "fretful sleepers" lie beneath their cardboard tombstones tossing and turning in eternal wakefulness at the unjust and unfair acts that have landed them in the Outcomes graveyard.

Lysaght champions these unnamed victims of bureaucratic mismanagement in her role of artist as social/political commentator wielding her intelligent subversive humour to expose the blind side of justice. To Lauren Lysaght, social issues are inextricably allied with art making, which in turn gives rise to expressive art forms grounded in life experience and nurtured by empathy.

Unequal,
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There are two reasons why I make art mainly. One is I can't stop doing it. It's like an obsession. But the other one is injustice. I know that you can argue until the cows come home that art and life...? Can you have art and social issues together? Well, don't even talk about it, because that's what it's about for me.

But injustice is the thing. I think it really hits a raw...it hits a nerve for me. I think that comes from having a lot of that in my own personal life in the past, not now... I remember making a vow to myself once, "if I can ever stop injustice being done that I would do it." So, I speak about it through my work. That's one of the main reasons for doing it. (Lysaght 1999).

Outcomes is the site where the banal meets the profound, where the slightest breeze threatens the very idea of timelessness, where "in perpetuity" becomes swiftly obsolete, and the notion of pre-packaged instant sacred space flirts with managerial mandates from "on high." Lysaght's serial rows of graves carefully created from the ephemeral (office supplies, generic file boxes and split pins) are both fragile and powerful. The impact of repetition and labelling is heightened by the tension between the strength of multiple images and the erasure of those forgotten, disenfranchised individuals who are only identified by their epithets, "Asset Stripped," "Underfunded," "Re-deployed," "Re-purposed." In fact, highlighting the absurdity and folly of this kind of language usage, is one of Lauren Lysaght's favourites, "re-referred," which she imagines to be an endless sequence of "re-re-re-re-re-re-re..."

Culling many ideas for words to add to her lexicon of "bureau-speak," Lysaght is like an urban anthropologist collecting suggestions from friends, artists, doctors and beneficiaries alike, social service bureaucrats, and the media. As well as consultation with others, her artistic methods are also collaborative. In order to complete the





laborious and demanding task of embossing the cardboard headstones by pressing letters and working backwards, Lauren Lysaght enlisted the help of a friend, a woman on the Benefit with three children (women are the largest group below the poverty line). "She got right into this. What about "Supplemented?" She gave me some really good words."

Imperfections in the headstone texts remain because these effects emulate the roughness and individuality of the early stonemason's craft. The coexistence of the awkward with the meticulous is the hallmark of Outcomes as an installation. Carefully assembled gravestones arranged like a series of rhythmic necro-files reveal the frail joinery of their stapled edges in contrast with the boxy proportions of their slabs. A brand of bargain basement aesthetics drives this exhibit from the stencilled lettering to the fluoro-flower arrangements alluding to discount specials yet offering a floral homage to the departed, the absent, the "dodged in." This temporal but sacred landscape, which folds up into two portfolio cases, memorialises the disempowered as well as represents an evacuation of human or spiritual presence—the poignant after-image of individuals silenced and filed away.

Outcomes is Lysaght's clarion call to vigilance for us all to be attentive to the deceit of injustice.

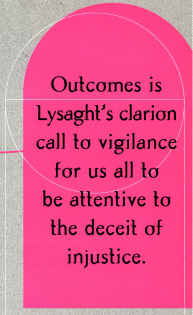
The whole thing about the government worries me. The cardboard graveyard is from a funny scene in an [old] Ed Wood movie, a Z-grade horror movie. There's one particular scene where they're shooting in a graveyard, and one of the technician's yells out, "We're going to have to re-shoot that because..." (...because the cardboard tombstones keep moving everytime there is action). And Ed Wood yells out, "Don't worry about that. Everyone will know they're cardboard. It's a take!"

I feel like yelling that out to New Zealand. "It's cardboard!" I just don't know and I think, "Am I the only one who feels like this?" However, when you start talking about these issues with people, everyone has the same feeling. Where do we go from here? So, at best I can make art that challenges those things...all those issues (Lysaght 1999).

For Lauren Lysaght life invades art. Thus, she dedicates every creative gesture and artistic action to uncovering the relationship between art and social problems through pungent humour and largesse of spirit.

I find that sometimes the work is a catalyst for dialogue, which I think is wonderful. It's exactly what I want. And everyone who has seen this, are all going, "Absolutely! What can we do?" (Lysaght 1999) ■

Suzanne MacAulay, Ph.D. 21 March 1999



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Born Hamilton, NZ 1949. Italian Irish Descent

"At the age of sixteen I was wrongfully incarcerated in prison and a maximum security psychiatric hospital. This episode in my life has given me an ability to recognise injustice. The process of examining injustice is my impetus for making art"

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

T.T.2

Bowen Galleries, Wellington, March 1998
Exhibition Centre, Hastings, December 1998

Four Legs Good

Hawkes Bay Museum, Napier, September 1996 - January 1997
Canterbury Museum, Christchurch, June - August 1997

Emovere

McDougall Art Annex, Christchurch, August-September 1996

Embracelets

Bowen Galleries, Wellington, October 1995
Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton, September-October 1996

Hidden Agender

Rotorua Museum of Art and History, Rotorua, February 1995
Bowen Galleries, Wellington, September 1993

Sentimental Journey

Bowen Galleries, Wellington, January 1995

You Are Now Leaving The Comfort Zone

Judith Anderson Gallery, Auckland, April 1994

Filling The Tins

Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North, July 1993

Standards Must Be Maintained

Bowen Galleries, Wellington, August 1992

Genuine Synthetics - (Part of Body Adornment Series)

Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt,
December 1990 - January 1991

Out Of The Woodwork

Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt, 1987

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Art Addiction Annual Exhibition Gold Medal Award winner.
Museum Corner
Venice, Italy
May-June 1998

Stazione Topolo/Topolove

New Zealand Participant Topolo project.
Northern Italy
May-June 1998

Strizisce Znojile

Group exhibition.
Znojile, Slovenia
August-September 1998

Ha O

Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt, August 1995 - August 1996

Kia Ora Paora

RKS Gallery, Auckland, August 1995

Elvis In Geysersland

Bathroom Art Museum, Rotorua,
December 1994-February 1995

Childs Play

Robert McDougall Art Annex, Christchurch,
December 1994-February 1995

Taking Stock Of The Nineties

Sarjeant Art Museum, Wanganui,
September - November 1994

Artists Books

Manawatu Art Gallery, Palmerston North, August 1993

No Mans Land

(Extending the Boundaries of Women and Art in Aotearoa)
Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt, December 1992

Sacred Way

City Art Gallery, Wellington, June 1992

The Skullery - (Installation, The Big Green Show)

Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt, January 1992

HomeMade Home

City Art Gallery, Wellington, November 1993

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Museum Of New Zealand
Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington
Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt
James Wallace Collection, Auckland
Wairarapa Arts Centre, Masterton
Hawkes Bay Museum, Napier

RESIDENCIES

Hawkes Bay Museum, Napier,
September - October 1996
Wairarapa Polytechnic and
Wairarapa Art Centre,
September - November 1994
Visiting Artist, Bannerworks
Leeds, Yorkshire, UK
April - July 1993

GALLERY STAFF

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