

Thursday Arts

Emblem of eternal decay

THERE is always something special about an exhibition in a public gallery. The extra factor may be because the show is a tribute collected from a number of sources or because it has some quality that a dealer gallery would shy at exhibiting.

It is into this class that Mediatrix falls. It is an

to her installation but to an extraordinary installation by Denise Kum.

The work is called *Victuals* and is principally made up of a restaurant fitting designed to keep food hot.

Under its lamps are five trays of spiced food.

The food is rotting and a fan spreads the smell of its decay through the gallery.

Nearby hangs a group

their presence felt in less obtrusive ways.

The installation by Deborah Smith very thoughtfully contrasts big photographs of porcelain images of dancers pulled slightly to give the effect of movement, with x-ray photos of dancers' feet, ribs and spines. The x-rays are set on corbels to show that the enshrining of art depends on these. The Boucher-like delicacy of the figurines is ironic in the comparison.

Nothing of the photographic process is denied, even the sprocket holes on the side of the film are printed in these large images.

Yet, without frames, the big prints bend and convey a sense of casualness. The visual intelligence shown in this installation deserves better.

There are levels of meaning, too, in the impressive *Love Phillips* by Julia Morrison. In this work a veil of honey has been painted down a wall and illuminated by a big spotlight to make a honey moon.

In front of the wall of honey are 10 candles each with a candle and a cake of wax marked with a cabalistic sign.

On the top of each tripod stand is a collection of piercing and thrusting objects and domestic objects, chimbleys and a button-hook, of the kind used only by women.

The whole is moving, not in a celebratory way but in the sense that there is another victimising side to conventionally ritual events.

Mary-Louise Brown shows sand-blasted texts on a variety of ornate mirrors. The texts which are sometimes cleverly matched to the shape of the mirrors take on a deeper significance when they are read in conjunction with commentary on the wall.

This links them with the historical women who made the utterances and when the reflected viewer is a woman the effect must become even stronger.



● A new painting by Dean Tercei at the Oedipus Rex Gallery.

An outstanding painting by Barbara Tuck takes her beautifully surfaced oval paintings a stage further by uniting them by links like a model of a molecule. The flat aluminium shapes have the remarkable power to be floating clear of the wall on which they hang and take on an independent life.

The exhibition is completed by a woven hanging in the shape of maiden hair by Aromea Tahiri and a lively animated video about a sculptor and her chosen medium by Marie Shannon. These witty, varied

works would only be possible in an innovative forum such as Artspace.

Another public gallery is the Fisher Gallery in Reeves Rd, Pakuranga, and it has given the outstanding New Zealand painter, Max Gimblett the accolade of a retrospective exhibition.

Since Gimblett divides his time between Auckland and New York there are aspects of his work in this show that have not been seen much here including his work on ceramics where his fluid style makes for dynamic

decoration.

There are also fine examples of his early minimalist abstractions and his rich, shaped canvases which evoke emotional response by their colour and heightened perception by their gestural painting contrasted with severe formality.

Simplicity allied to the emotional effect of colour is most notable in the huge circular painting *India* which dominates the gallery. By contrast there is a pearly quarrelsome painting and an almost monochrome black painting that are equally effective. This retrospective of

the years 1965-1993 gives an insight into the nature, if not the extent, of Gimblett's achievement.

Also at the Fisher Gallery is a work by Julian Dashner which is a net hung on a vine in the courtyard allied to a grid pattern made with cooking oil on a steel plate by Denise Kum.

On the other side of town at the Lopdell House Gallery, Titirangi, is a very special exhibition of photography called *After the Fact and Silence* by two photographers, Mark Adams and Haruhiko Sameshima.

The photographs by Adams are a valuable documentary of aspects of the life of the late Tony Fomison.

The unique personality of Fomison as well as the background of some of his paintings is evoked by these pictures of him against a backdrop of studio, and acquiring the tattoos he felt he needed to become fully part of the South Pacific.

Images of his studio, his library and his astonishing collections of curios throw further light on Fomison but also add up to a tribute to an unparalleled artist and his original, oblique view of the world.

These images, many of them beautiful platinum prints, are placed alongside similarly toned small images by Sameshima, who has photographed places he visited with his geologist father.

Predictably, many of these small, exquisite black and white prints show rock formations. Particularly fine in this respect is *Palmerston* North with stratified rock and a sweep of river bed.

There are also other magical prints, notably at the fall of light in *Stairs*, Auckland War Memorial Museum.

A trip around the dealer galleries might well begin at the spectacular show on *Born on the Couch*, new paintings by Dean Tercei at Oedipus Rex Gallery in

Achilles House.

His previous painting owed much to Egon Schiele and in this show he has allied his Schiele colour and bony outlines to a fleshy style of thick paint, twisting as it describes flesh and muscles very much in the style of Francis Bacon. From Bacon too, comes the couches and the rooms defined by simple lines which become an arena.

Though the images are violent and show their teeth they do not have the passionate, intense intensity of Bacon's work but they do achieve a disquieting sense of bony energy and the unusual viewpoint can make the composition of these works quite startling.

More poised is the work of Marian Maguire at the Lane Gallery in O'Connell St. Her large woodcuts show a great deal of authority and her small works play elegant variations on the theme of the heart.