

From the display of gay and lesbian art at Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Andrew Frampton's 'They Can't see our thoughts'. (1992)

## I Am/Ko Ahau open to public

Dunedin's gay and lesbian community is in the spotlight with the October 14 opening of the 'I Am/Ko Ahau' exhibition at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Works from nine gay and 21 lesbian artists make up the exhibition which runs for seven weeks.

One of the exhibition's coordinators, Shane Luskie, says several other events are running in conjunction with the exhibition. The Dunedin University Bookshop has a display of lesbian and gay literature, videos from the *Out on Tuesday* BBC television series are being shown and there is an accompanying programme of forums and

workshops.

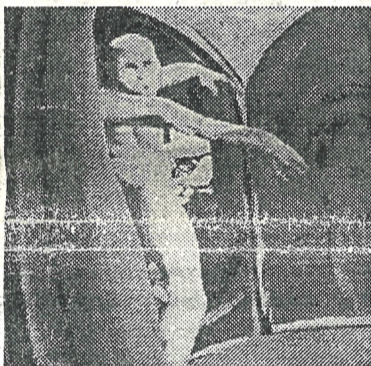
The exhibition has already been attacked in the Letters to the Editor column of the Otago Daily Times, with some people saying the gallery will be 'desecrated' by the exhibition.

However, Luskie says 'I Am/Ko Ahau' has also attracted positive media attention, with the Listener planning an article.

The exhibition aims to provide positive role models for younger gays and lesbians, raise the visibility of gays and lesbians among the general public, and to try to give people an understanding of the relationship between creativity and sexuality.

## M+M Review

# Implicated and Immune: artists focus on AIDS



Detail from 'Wish you were here', Stephen Lovett.

### IMPLICATED AND IMMUNE: ARTISTS' RESPONSES TO AIDS

(Fisher Gallery, Pakuranga, 23 Sept to 20 Oct.)

Reviewed by Art Historian Professor Don Bassett

'Implicated' and 'Immune': the words, derived from an essay by Richard Goldstein in the book *Disease in our Society*, get straight to the complexity of the AIDS problem in 1990's New Zealand.

With AIDS still heavily, but not exclusively, a disease of gay men, has the straight world side-lined this life-and-death crisis? Separate and 'objective', 'above' and unstigmatised, do they see themselves as immune and beyond implications?

There have been few exhibitions in New Zealand which have explored the problem of AIDS, though Peter Wichman's strong show at Gallery Pacific (1988) should not be forgotten. The current exhibition at the Fisher is the first major group show to focus on AIDS. Backed up by NZ AIDS Foundation safe-sex posters, a video and some pieces from the Quilt Project, a range of prominent artists explore the complexities of AIDS in the 90s.

The curators have deliberately aimed at no specific audience, for this is not just a 'gay problem', gay problem though it is. So, if some of the works in the show are by gay or lesbian artists and reveal this fact through clear ho-

moerotic reference (eg. Jack Body's celebration of the male nude), others are more general in their concern, exploring issues of choice and responsibility (eg. Lesley Kaiser and John Barnett's *Blind Acts of Fate/Blind Axe of Faith*); life's pleasures and dangers; death.

Rick Killeen's *Burial Mound* arranges his familiar cut-outs not just as acknowledgement of a solemn fact, but to suggest by their open form the failure of certainties. Similarly, Malcolm Harrison concerns himself with death and with too-easy solutions in his diptych *Hygienically Sealed/Letting the Spirit Go*. Tight-patterned forms in red talk of over-quick judgements ('blame it on the bossa nova'); the eerily beautiful blues and purples of the second part are an acceptance of the death of the body.

John Reynolds and Fear Brampton are more concerned with the complexities of life. Reynolds uses the scientific probings of Leonardo da Vinci (one of history's greats) as a foil for life's uncertainties in his powerful work *The Cause of the Movement of the Heart*. Brampton uses the human faced snakes of Renaissance Expulsions from Eden to populate his mysterious photo journey (*Sojourn*). As in a *Temptation of St. Anthony* there are temptations of both body and spirit along the way.

If Paul Rayner and Richard Wearn further explore pleasures and dangers and the struggles of the heart and head (albeit with amusing double meaning in Rayner's *Cactus Head*), Fiona Pardington's *Relâche* appears to opt depressingly for the head (with only the intellectual meaning): an erect penis is covered with a cloth. The artist's interest in Egyptian myths of death and re-birth fails to emerge from the negativity of the title: in theatrical parlance it means 'no performance' or 'closed'.

'No Performance' might best describe Lillian Budd's *AIDS Bag* as well. Done two years ago (not for this exhibition), its presence in this show is problematic. A camp little handbag is covered with a collage of old-fashioned

house-hold appliances and advertising clips: 'AIDS AROUND THE SINK. What's new for your home?' In this context is it wit or insensitivity?

But another work done years ago is perhaps the most sensitive and moving

in the show. Richard McWhannell's *This Man Shriev* (an elegy for Russell Wells) recalls Kafka, or Goy's *Caprichos*, as in some dream world those near death appear pilloried from crimes they do not understand.