

**MALCOLM ENRIGHT**  
**INSEPARABLES 1974-1986**

**Michael Milburn**Galleries

MR. PECK AND MR. FREAN

How nice it would be to be  
able to say:

'We've biscuits for all—any kind,  
any day.'



But the thought that's beginning  
to keep us awake  
is that people may even forget  
what we make!

(Frean, staking dough)



By Appointment  
Peck Frean & Co. Ltd.,  
Bakers to the Royal  
Warranted Manufacturers

PECK FREAN  
BISCUITS

DICTIONARIES, thesauri, encyclopaedias, glossaries; these books, all these lists of words, move us no closer to fixing the meaning of things. Instead, they present us with substitutes, approximations, other terms and phrases that can be slipped under the original word, without there ever being a perfect match. Meaning, rather than being the product of equivalences, of positive relations, ends up being found in the gaps between words, and in that conceptual gulf that lies between words and things. WORDS are not simply labels which are fixed to objects or pictures. Rather, they operate as elements of a language system, in which any unit means what it means because of its

difference from the other elements in the system. The pleasure (and pain) of the reading process is to be found in the impossible task of trying to achieve an equivalence between what is written and what is meant, in carrying out an endless process of substitution.

If words did operate as a simple set of labels it would be much easier to translate from one language to another, to slip noiselessly from the verbal to the visual.

READING, rather than simply looking, is the process demanded by Malcolm Enright's *Inseparables*. Each piece provides a frame which seduces the viewer into an intellectual game, stitching words and images together in an attempt to fix the relations between the elements in the system, or pulling a loose thread and letting language run away with itself. With this kind of crude verbal/visual mental hand sewing, stitches often slip, and the pieces of fabric pull apart, the threads stretch (the imagination). In the gap between the pieces of the patchwork, a web is spun, in an attempt to catch just what the whole thing means.

DRAWING together the images which have reactivated within the *Inseparables* has been an on-going process of collecting, which Malcolm began over twenty years ago; a long term accumulation of a composite "personal history" from a mass of visual debris.

However, these visuals need not be read as some simple trace of the artist's life as, in many respects, there is nothing on their surface to show just how specifically personal they might be. They are, as it were, the spoils of the thief, the junk man, items abandoned as part of a deceased estate; stolen rubbish, the "dead images" from someone else's past, selected from available material, rather than being bought "brand new" with something particular in mind.

IMAGES, despite the fact that they often seem to have a life of their own, are always open to appropriation and reclassification. Much of the intellectually exciting art of this century has depended upon such processes; the shifting of an "ordinary" object into an art gallery, the addition of a frame, a statement which suggests redefinition as ART. In the *Inseparables* the major shift in the life of the image is brought about by the this/that word pair. Rather than operating as a simple caption to an illustration, these words act as a mechanism for "skewing" the picture, forcing the viewer to come at it from angle, to read the image in a particular way (perhaps to adjust the vertical hold).

CONSTRUCTING these works is an ongoing process that demands a certain sense of humour and those flashes, when pennies drop and things just fall into place. The initial demand which set the Inseparables project in motion, was a request from painter Stephen Killick to be included in an international exhibition of some forty artists, to be held at the Contemporary Art Society's Gallery in South Australia during 1982. The constraints of this exhibition required that all works be able to be folded down to 10 x 15 inches and mailed to Adelaide in a padded post bag. The theme of inseparability was sparked by a Japanese match-box label which included the series title in its graphic. Coupled with the word pair ORIGINAL/BEST, this label now functions as No. 1 in a series of some 200 "simple" Inseparables.


CONTINUATION of the series beyond the 30 works sent to Adelaide, occurred in 1983, when the Institute of Modern Art suspended the normal curatorial selection procedures and invited all artists practicing in Brisbane to show their work in an exhibition entitled NO NAMES. The 100 Inseparables Malcolm exhibited generated a good deal of interest amongst those artists involved in the show. Some people began to see readymade Inseparables everywhere, as the demand for viewer involvement, to make each work more than a simple illustration/caption, produced a spin-off effect, and the idea became the basis of an intellectual game which anyone can play.

ART, under these conditions, is no longer the preserve of the inspired genius. Instead, it starts to move closer to the world of games which can be played by anyone who knows the system. In this case, the rules of the game, the system of each work, are fairly self evident. Malcolm has also begun work on two other series which deviate from the oppositions and common places of the "simple" Inseparable. Of these, the "Attributes of Man" series is yet to have a substantial public showing, while twenty-four of the "Product/and" series were shown earlier this year at THAT Contemporary Art Space.

The material pressed into service in the Product series allows a degree of amusing self-referentiality to develop, as product labels and advertising material are forced to play back on themselves.

PRODUCING these Inseparables is an activity which does not necessarily end with a final verbal visual matrix that holds once and for all. Rather, the practice continues on an almost daily basis, with pictures being "re-worked" and "old" verbal combinations adjusting in the light of new images. The works in this exhibition could be seen as a kind of sampler, a report on the current state of play. However, rather than presenting the viewer with "originals," photographs freeze the configurations that hold together now, leaving the scraps and fragments of language free to be shuffled, sorted, mixed and combined in an endless verbal/visual "speech."

Catalogue Essay by Peter Anderson.



MR. RETAILER,  
THIS OUTER  
CONTAINS AN EXTRA  
10 PIECES FREE OF  
CHARGE.

PRODUCT/HYPE

**Malcolm J. Enright**

Born Brisbane 1949

Practicing Artist Since 1966

Various Curatorial and Art  
Commentary Productions Since  
1974

Commenced producing, one-off, found and titled objects, following the theme  
of inseparability in 1982.

**Contemporary Art Society – Adelaide 1982**

'Air Show' Various Contributors. 30 Produced. Reviewed Adelaide Advertiser  
by Neville Weston.

**Institute of Modern Art – Brisbane 1983**

"No Names" Group Show. 100 Produced.

**Advertising Art – Melbourne 1984**

12 Page Review. 42 Reproduced.

**Belltower – Brisbane 1985**

'O Flate' Collective Show. (Special Number).

**Philis Kind Gallery – 1986 NYC**

Children's Book. Curated by Roland Hagenburg. Published by Egret.  
New York. (Special Number).

**No Se No – Rivington Street. NYC 1986**

Group Show. (Special Number Stencil Work).

**'THAT' Space. Birthday Group Show 1986**

'Product/and' Series. 24 Shown.

**'THAT' Space. NYC Street Art 1986**

Group Show (Special Number Stencil Work)

**Michael Milburn 1986**

Solo Show. First Edition of 100. Ciba Copies Mounted and Stamped by the  
Artist. Catalogue Essay by Peter Anderson.

**Michael Milburn Galleries**

1st Fl 336-338 George St Brisbane Qld 4000  
(07) 221 5199 Hrs: Mon-Fri 10am-5.30pm Sat 1-5.30pm