

The Local Group

Store 5 1989-1993

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At the Start / to Begin

Store 5 was a small exhibition space, accessed from the end of a cobbled laneway off High Street near the corner with Chapel Street, in Prahran. From early 1989 it ran a program of one day exhibitions, open from 1-5pm on Saturday afternoons. In September 1991 the space was renovated and a second room added which functioned as an office, and the program changed to a schedule of two week exhibitions open four days a week. Over the life of the gallery, which continued until the end of 1993, Store 5 presented a total of 150 exhibitions.

The gallery was initiated by Kerrie Poliness and Gary Wilson – who, with Melinda Harper, were renting living space in the building to which the former store room was attached. As art students they had attended Victoria College in Prahran at the same time – across the road in High Street.¹ The majority of artists who associated with Store 5 lived, studied, worked or had their studios in that part of town.² I came from the other side of the river to visit.

Walking up Maple's Lane to the end, a courtyard opened out, surrounded on three sides by the storied, dark, back of a building. Stairs led up to a first floor outside walkway/balcony, at the end of which was Store 5, a room approximately three and a half metres wide and six metres deep, with white painted walls and brown painted wooden floorboards. There were windows of wire netted industrial glass on the front wall facing onto the walkway and double boom doors to the left as you entered (once presumably used for winching stock up and down), that opened westward, letting light

and air in, when opened.³

Because of the size of the gallery space, the person minding the exhibition generally stood outside on the walkway (sometimes the artist and/or, as often in my experience, Gary Wilson, who took on the role of Director, or Melinda Harper, who also managed the running of the gallery). Joined by visitors before and after viewing the exhibition, a gauntlet was formed that the visitor and new arrivals had by necessity to negotiate. Approaching the gallery, at the end of the lane you naturally looked up at the walkway – looking to see who was there. Then later, outside the gallery on the walkway now yourself, you would be looking down at those who were approaching, who would be looking up at you, soon to join you. Unlike with the majority of public and commercial gallery spaces it was impossible to visit Store 5 anonymously, without a social exchange of some sort. It was inevitably therefore a self-conscious experience, and for some a daunting one. There was a performance / event status to exhibitions at Store 5 – it made 'looking at art' a form of ritual theatre (sometimes a theatre of the absurd or a theatre of cruelty, perhaps). As a visitor to Store 5, the physical set-up meant that you felt your viewing experience/practice was as much on display as the works in the exhibition itself: you were conscious of how much time you spent, what you actually looked at and how.⁴

Practical models

The first exhibition in the space in April 1989 established a 'core group': Poliness and Wilson were joined by Melinda Harper, Rose Nolan and Stephen Bram, and importantly the exhibition included work by the older artist John Nixon, who acted as a mentor, in respect of the project as a whole in the initial stages.⁵

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, alongside the more conventional form of Art Projects (with a set venue and opening hours, and a program organised in advance), John Nixon initiated a series of temporary exhibition spaces (Art Projects Annex Program, Melbourne, 1979; Institute of Temporary Art, Melbourne, 1979; Q Space and Q space Annex, Brisbane, 1980; V Space, Melbourne, 1980.) Work was displayed at a location and for a time (not more than a day) as designated by the artist and announced by a mailed out 'notification card'. Exhibitions occurred as the ideas for them developed, on an ad hoc basis, responsive to need: independent, autonomous, with the artist determining how the work was to be viewed and by whom, it was a cheap and flexible option.⁶ A punk, DIY ethic informed the idea of exhibitions that could occur anywhere (a lounge room, a car park, at McDonald's) and anytime.⁷ Their short duration promoted frequency and the responsive development of ideas amongst members of the group of like-minded peers involved in the project.

The program of Store 5 had many things in common with this model. The initial weekly turn-around of one day exhibitions similarly promoted a responsive development from one show to the next, creating a dialogue between artists and their work, particularly in relation to the nature and character of its installation, and negotiation of the space.

Where Store 5 differed from the model I am suggesting – being a permanent venue rather than a changing location – meant that one particular aspect was in fact heightened: the focus on the conceptual and perceptual aspects of the exhibition / viewing relationship. At Store 5, the physical specifications of the space were a constant, a template and a measure, allowing comparison, superimposition and development,

from one show to the next. The principle that articulation of the space and conditions of viewing were as much a part of the artists' remit as the making of objects, a legacy of Minimalism, established itself early on – an emphasis in keeping with broader trends of the time.

The quick turn-around of exhibitions suited a process-orientated view of art 'practice'. Exhibitions were of the next idea, rather than more conventionally a distillation and summation – a statement with expectations of a certain quality, quantity and coherence. They followed the process of an artist's development as they went, rather than compressing time and filtering.⁸

The Discipline of Geometric Abstraction

What bound this 'core group' of artists together (which grew to include Eugene Carchesio, Bronwyn Clark-Coolee, Anne-Marie May and later Marco Fusinato), and bound them to Nixon, was a shared commitment to the revival/survival of the language of geometric abstraction as a compelling form of contemporary expression. Combining a Constructivist inspired reverence for materials, with the logic of formal experiment, they expressed an adherence to a still potent avant-garde idealism. As opposed to the 'new abstraction' in other places (the U.S. notably) as well as in Australia, which revisited this language under the protection of a postmodern framework of quotation or 'simulationist' strategies, these artists claimed a continuity with the 'unfinished project' of Modernism: a sincere non-objective art with real, alive and present things to say in the here and now – a truly contemporary art.⁹

To remind ourselves of the context we could list a number of exhibitions (both group and solo) in other venues, both commercial and publicly run gallery spaces, which gave coherence to 'the

new abstraction'.¹⁰ From this, we might select those exhibitions which gave coherence to this group in particular: *Geometric Abstraction* at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 1986, curated by Sue Cramer and John Nixon, included work by Harper and Wilson in their first year out of art school; and *Resistance*, at 200 Gertrude Street in 1989, curated by Melinda Harper in the year Store 5 opened, included works by the artists of this 'core group' (except Nolan). The most direct statement of their affiliations was the 1992 exhibition *Abstract Art* at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, organised by John Nixon, which brought together work by the Store 5 artists and contemporaries from First Draft (West) in Sydney.¹¹ Nixon's contribution to the catalogue acknowledged that 'each of these artists has their own project ... the exhibition constitutes a meeting ground for their ideas and their differences', while making the claim for a shared fealty to the cause of non-objective geometric abstraction. It ended with the *ad hominem* statement: 'Theirs is a transgressive but idealistic art and the world is a better place because of their endeavours.'¹²

As Stephen Bram explained that time to me in a recent email:

it seemed to me (and still does) that there was nothing so well suited to the exploration of language, meaning and representation as abstract painting, and it was a feeling i had that the works exhibited there were discovering/establishing new meanings, and new criteria for the evaluation of meaning that was exciting at the time. also that i was amongst artists who weren't prepared to simply accept pre-established mechanisms with which works would be read - the insistence on abstraction was to do with suspicion of iconicity.

what always stood out was the shock of an analytical approach to expression and meaning - and a refusal of the usual signs of meaning or analysis.

that was how things seemed then. that was according to the rules of this new world (i thought was coming) that never eventuated. very embarrassing, but i was/am a real idealist in a way. there was a threshold that was never passed. whether it was one of practice or reception i don't know.¹³

The untidiness of life, or Mondrian's Chrysanthemums

There were memorable shows of work by the 'core-group' which could be seen to be formulated within this paradigm, and advancing this agenda: Anne-Marie May's *Constructions of Grey Rays 1991* (No. 96) and Stephen Bram's 'Photomicrographs' (No. 79) – high magnification photographs of the crystalline structure of the mineral Galena – stand out as two very different examples.

But from my perspective this project is not what Store 5 was principally, and certainly not wholly about, either at the time, or looking back from the armchair of hindsight – things were too untidy, it exceeded the discipline of its original brief.

The work of artists who were ostensibly 'true believers' in the initial project of Store 5 was diverted from its 'core values', simply through undertaking the project and working through it. In the process/practice itself, things came in from outside, other things happened.

The extension of Gary Wilson's work is a case in point. Take his *Flower Construction #1* (No. 51): self-tie garbage bags dropped onto a backboard of coloured newsprint, the arrangement pressed by a covering sheet of Perspex, clamped in place by the

frame. While the work is a material composition, it is also representational – both garbage bag and flower. In another work in the series, black household garbage bags were arranged into two large crushed flower heads with abundant petals, looking ‘all but like’ chrysanthemums.¹⁴ These works use ‘poor’, everyday materials, combined with a Constructivist logic, but a Pop sensibility is also there in the mix. It was a very different look.

Rose Nolan’s *VFL Paintings 1987-1989* (No. 9) brought the language of the historical avant-garde to serve a local alignment of art, sport and religion: clever, with an historical consciousness, good to look at, funny and serious, and subject to local readings (dependant on local knowledge). In later exhibitions, from *My Ways to God* (No.39) to *Sort of Sensitive, with Standards* (No.119), Nolan pressed on with the marriage of Constructivist language and popular culture, incorporating representational motifs, humour, sentiment and pathos.¹⁵ To my mind, the work exceeded its Modernist inheritance. While the initial character of the exhibition program may be explained by the ‘core-group’ focus on the exploration of geometric abstraction and its extension of that language, it was not contained by it. The works shown at Store 5 were impure rather than purist, more decorative than doctrinaire, local in their orientation rather than universalising.¹⁶

The range of artists that became regular exhibitors and the development of their work definitively broke the mould. The conceptual text-based projects of Sandra Bridie, included imagery and narrative. Gail Hastings architectural installations (developing on Minimalist and Systems Art) opened the door to a geometry of emotion. Diena Georgetti used the language of abstraction (sometimes, along with other things) to explore a mystic parallel universe that was for the most part

all of her own making.

A concern with the exploration of materiality remained central, but Popist attitudes, an aesthetic logic approaching the relationship between abstraction and representation from the other end of the stick, and concerns from outside the circle, like feminism, jostled up, pushed in, and thickened the air.

Nothing exceeds like excess: Pop goes the easel

The presence of Tony Clark in the exhibition program (from 1990) and his influence further queered the pitch – combining a sympathy for the unwanted and the unwashed in the aesthetic pantheon, (announcing open season on whatever takes your fancy in the history of art), with a renewed energy for the ad hoc DIY self-starter (no precedents or credentials, no references required) school of creative experimentation.

His exhibition *Platoon* (No. 77) – a ‘what have I got at home’ meditation on masculinity – consisted of a cheap pine bookcase placed against a wall to form a plinth displaying items from Clark’s collection of objects: a medical écorché figure in active pose with one arm raised, skinless in plastic; a mass produced Chinese ceramic ‘Red Guard’ boy doll; an Ancient Greek coin with the head of Alexander the Great. In his work in this exhibition, *Landscape* (from the group show *Works on Paper* No. 111), he appears to be messing with the high cultural form of the decorative arts (Meissen, Wedgwood et. al.), bringing it down to the level of the paper cup. Or conversely, it is the ‘poor’ materials used that brings the work up into the realm of fine art (avant-garde *arte povera*), from its sources in the ‘decorative’ tradition. At this time Clark’s project (including his work with the landscape *genre*) generally addressed painting through reworking paradigms of decorative design.

While not present in the program the influence of others of Clark's generation could also be seen there: Howard Arkley in particular, Juan Davila, Elizabeth Gower, Jenny Watson.¹⁷

Exhibiting at Store 5 while still at art school and immediately afterwards, Kathy Temin's installation *Wall Drawings* (No. 64) – its combination of formalist aesthetics with figurative representation, home-craft materials and emotional (sentimental) content – was a watershed not only in her evolution as an artist but in the exhibition culture of the space. She followed up with *Repenting for My Sins* (No. 66), a strung together rag-tag team of modernist masterpieces of abstraction, redone in fake fur. The group exhibition *Exultate Jubilate* (No. 81) – curated by Elizabeth Newman and Angela Brennan – crossed the crowded hang of the nineteenth century exhibition hall with the syncopation of domestic home decoration, arranging the work of five artists (Newman, Brennan, Hastings, Louise Forthun and Temin) into a single 'feature wall' of unrestrained colour, undisciplined form and unhealthy 'feminine' feeling.

It is perhaps inevitable that contemporary abstraction is located in relation to Modernist paradigms. But this view of the work – whether it is seen as a tribute and development or a critique of those models – refers the work back to Modernism as its primary cause, obscuring the influence of present circumstances and meanings, and negating the specificity of the work as a set of positive aesthetic choices. There is another way to look at it – for this generation of artists references to or borrowings from past art (quotation if you prefer) was a given form of creative imagining – material to make something with. The history of art was like a found object. What you did with it mattered (as much as / more than) where it came from. Pilfering was an anarchic, piecemeal,

sometimes offhand or incidental, and, above all, pleasurable activity, rather than programmatic or strategic.¹⁸ It could be both homage and at the same time critique, and so much more.

In Constanze Zikos's work geometry was a function or attribute of pattern. The grid, while an organising principle, was not foundational. In works exhibited at Store 5, using stencils (which could be repeated in different combinations) and a spray can, he embellished a variety of different material supports. *The Wonder of You* (No. 74) lined-up chromed circular cardboard cake bases, with stencilled abstract patterns (funerary flower arrangements), to make up a floor to ceiling column. Similarly, the colourfield abstractions of his later works explored the décor of a contemporary Greek-Australian identity: Laminex and lamé, funerary monuments and the grave, the temple and the bar. The work holds contradictory attitudes at the same time – on the one hand disciplined and ordered, quiet and contemplative, on the other operatic (in the scale of address) and high-keyed (in colour), an hysterical drama, a Greek tragedy.

Not transgressive and oppositional but alternative and complementary

In his catalogue essay for the exhibition *Recession Art and Other Strategies* (1986), Peter Cripps gives a summation of the problems with the 'Australian art system', as diagnosed by radical artists in the 1970s, which led to some of the moves, picked up and taken forward by Store 5. He accounts for the momentum behind 'recessional strategies' – ephemeral work displayed in temporary spaces, the use of publication as an alternative exhibition venue – sheeting back to the fact that the audience/market was not significantly developed (simply not large enough, or with enough depth) to

provide viable support for (pretty well) any artist's work. He makes the point that the involvement of artists in 'alternative' exhibition spaces had more to do with the kind of work they wanted to produce, than whether or not they had commercial representation (although those two things could be related).¹⁹

The artist's showing at Store 5 were for the most part 'emerging'.²⁰ Even so, in some cases before and after, but mostly during the run of Store 5, the majority obtained commercial gallery representation.²¹ During the life of the gallery, Store 5 artists, either as individuals or in group exhibitions, had a significant presence in both the commercial and public gallery sectors. Store 5 was not positioned as oppositional to the art world system, but was very much a part of it, in that its activities complemented those of the commercial and public networks, as demonstrated by the inclusion of Store 5 artists in those spaces.

Certainly by the late 1980s when Store 5 began, if not before, the art world system had fundamentally changed from the situation artists were responding to in the 1970s, as described by Cripps. He identifies the development of 'alternative' exhibition venues as symptomatic of that time – the Ewing and George Paton Galleries, Melbourne (1972), the Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide (1975) and the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (1975). These were collective artist-run enterprises,²² dedicated to showing new experimental work, that would otherwise find a difficult reception in the public domain.

From the mid 1970s the newly formed Australia Council provided 'general purpose grants' for such organisations, which was regarded as 'seed funding'. In the early 1980s, the Australia Council undertook a review of its support of contemporary art spaces,²³ which led to what

became known as its 'Flagship Policy', of on-going funding to one contemporary art space in each capital city, with allowance for a small number of other organisations which served a national function.²⁴ Amongst the conditions that needed to be met in order to receive funding the galleries had to be legally constituted organisations, with democratically elected boards of management, full-time professional directors, and an open membership. (Other contemporary art spaces and artist-run initiatives would only be eligible for special project grants.)²⁵ This was one of the ways in which avant-garde contemporary art was institutionalised in Australia during the 1980s.

Alongside this quantum leap in the development of a public sector supporting the exhibition of what was variously called experimental, developmental or progressive art, a generation of new professionals graduated from art schools and universities willing and able to service this sector as curators and writers. In the 1970s, contemporary art (art post-1960) began to be addressed through newly instigated, structured 'Art History' programs in art schools, as well as in universities. The teaching of contemporary art in tertiary institutions in Melbourne was pioneered by Margaret Plant at RMIT from 1967-1974. (Norbert Loeffler began teaching at Victoria College, Prahran in 1975, Janine Burke at the VCA in 1976). Margaret Plant went on to teach at Melbourne University (with the official title, 'Senior Lecturer in Renaissance and Contemporary Art'), and then, in 1982, was appointed Professor of Visual Arts at Monash University. An engagement with contemporary art practice was a foundational plank of the new Department when it was founded in the mid-1970s, with Patrick McCaughey as its inaugural Professor.²⁶ This emphasis was enhanced and developed under Margaret Plant, whose own

interests and scholarship in the area promoted a rigorous critical approach to its study.

When I studied at Melbourne University in the early 1980s contemporary art was off the menu in the Fine Arts Department, with its preference for a more traditional Art History profile.²⁷ It was slow to reappear – not surfacing in the curriculum until the mid-to-late 1980s, in subjects taken by Roger Benjamin and Chris McAuliffe. I returned to the University in 1991 to teach ‘Issues in Contemporary Art’, one of the first dedicated subjects in the area. A seminar topic I developed at that time looked at the work of Store 5 artists among others, under the title ‘Local Abstractions’. That there was enough documentation of this very recent history in the form of exhibition catalogues, magazine articles and reviews to construct a bibliography of sources for art history students to use in an undergraduate setting, speaks of the enduring value of the culture of criticism and commentary around contemporary art which had developed through the decades of the 1970s and 1980s.²⁸

The level of critical commentary (‘by journalists, essayists and eventually historians’) can be taken as one of the key indicators of the process of institutionalisation of avant-garde art movements.²⁹ In the 1980s, as well as the redoubtable enterprise of Ashley Crawford’s independently published *The Virgin Press* and *Tension*, the VAB began to establish support for a national network of contemporary art magazines, parallel to the contemporary art spaces network. In Melbourne *Agenda Contemporary Art*, published (initially independent of VAB funding) by the Ewing and George Paton Galleries under the editorship of Juliana Engberg, was founded in 1988. *Art & Text*, founded in Melbourne in 1981 by Paul Taylor (a graduate of Monash University) and now edited from Sydney by Paul Foss, had taken on the status

of a national ‘flagship’ publication, with Review Editors in each of the state capitals. Both of these magazines followed the progress of Store 5 and its artists.

It should also be noted that in the early 1990s both Monash and Melbourne Universities (the later, through the Vizard Collection), were routinely purchasing the work of contemporary artists, including those from Store 5.³⁰ The National Gallery of Victoria, through the Margaret Stewart Endowment, (dedicated for the purchase of work by younger and emerging practitioners), also acquired work by Store 5 artists at that time.

‘Alternative’ artists of the 1970s did not work outside the system necessarily as a matter of choice or principle,³¹ and this generation didn’t have to – largely because the system, and what it valued, had changed. Store 5 was always aspirational – while attracted to the siren song of avant-garde outsider status at the same time they recognised (and had no problem with) the appeal of meaningful careers as artists in ‘the mainstream’. Perhaps they wanted it both ways, and perhaps they got it.

Part of the motive of the activity of artists involved in ‘alternative’ practices in the 1970s was ‘to determine the content of their own artistic biographies’ – in effect writing their own CV’s – partly out of the desire for autonomy and self-definition, but also simply because of the lack of people and opportunities available to do it for them.³² The initiative of Store 5 was, as stated by Gary Wilson, undertaken ‘in the spirit of affirmative action, as the most direct and constructive way of addressing the limited and limiting exhibition opportunities available to myself and my peers.’³³ Due to the attention the gallery attracted under this very different set of conditions, the capacity of the artists to exercise autonomy, independence

and self-determination was to some degree compromised.

Looking at the program of Store 5 from this distance one can track the ebb and flow of currents in the art world over that time. As much as what was happening at Store 5 radiated influence, what was happening at Store 5 was reciprocally influenced by what was going on around it. It was one meeting point in a network of relationships between people and ideas,³⁴ and Store 5 artists turned up in a variety of other settings and contexts, concentrating/offering particular and sometimes contradictory readings of their work.³⁵

To conclude

Store 5 was an effective proving ground for artists to engage and develop their skills and their idiom. It was a place for trying things out and trying things on.³⁶ And importantly it was not a space for hire.³⁷ Store 5 was a social artefact. The term 'the local group' is the name given to the group of galaxies that our galaxy belongs to, which our solar system forms a small part of. As Astronomy 162, the website, says: 'galaxies are enormous, but they are not the largest structures in the universe.'³⁸ Despite the diversity of their stylistic and aesthetic orientations, some basic gravitational forces held this group of artists together: what is around and who is around that exerts some attraction.

With thanks to Roger Benjamin, Stephen Bram, Tony Clark, Deborah Hennessy, Norbert Loeffler, Chris McAuliffe, David Pistorius, Margaret Plant, Kerrie Poliness, Kathy Temin, Gary Wilson, Constanze Zikos and especially Max Delany and the staff of MUMA.

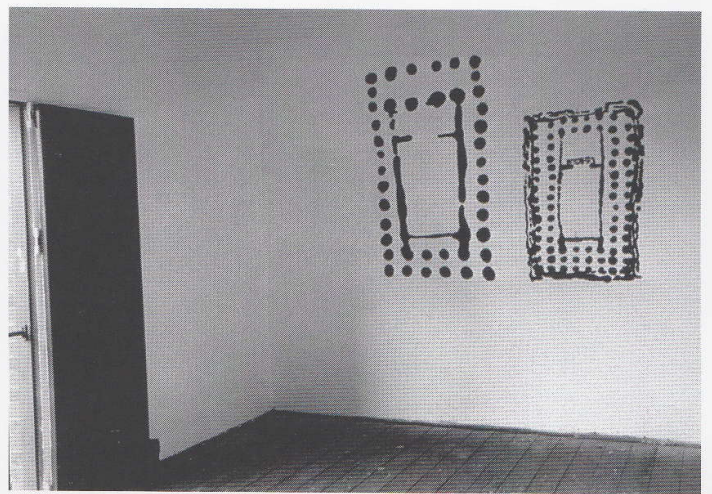
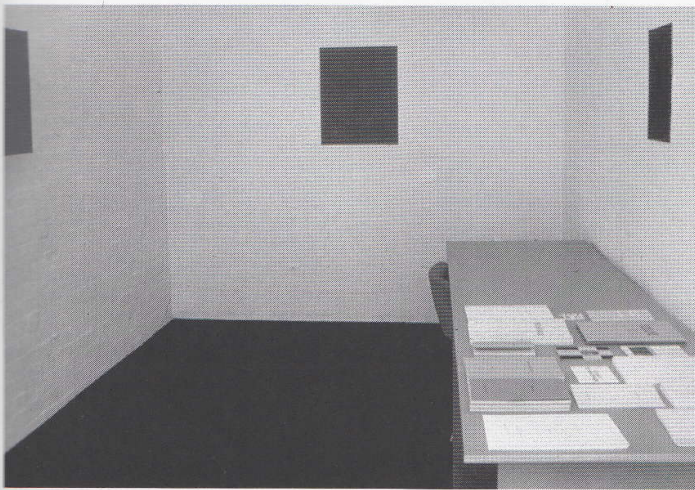
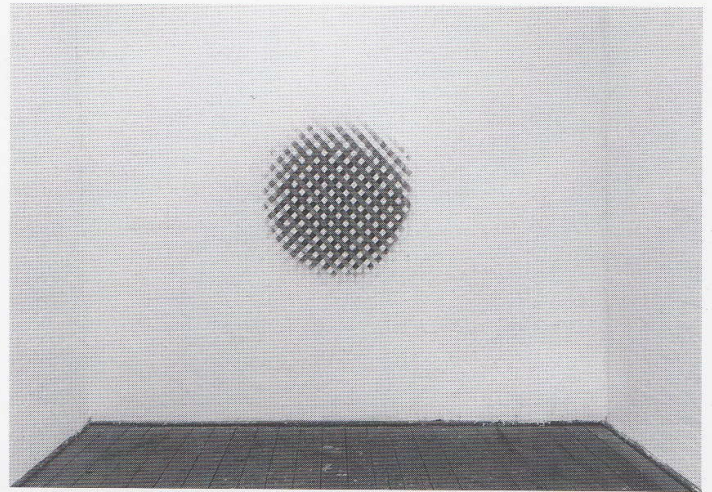
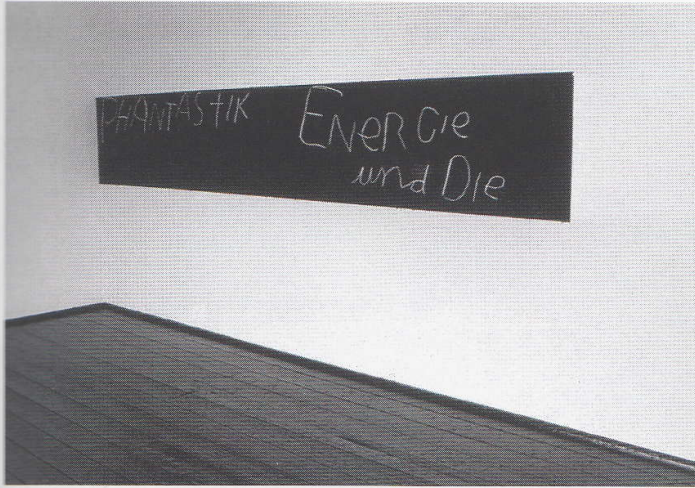
1. Gary Wilson and Melinda Harper studied for a BA in Fine Arts (Painting) at Victoria College, Prahran from 1983-85. Kerrie Poliness was a year ahead, completing her degree in 1984.
2. For example, Constanze Zikos did a BA at Victoria College, Prahran (1982-84) before going on to a Postgraduate Diploma at the VCA (1985-86). During the years Store 5 was active he had a studio above Dan Murphy's in Chapel Street, Prahran. Kathy Temin did a Foundation Year in the Tertiary Orientation Program at Prahran College in 1986, then a BA at Victoria College, Prahran (1987-9); after leaving art school she had a studio above a shop in Chapel Street. Tony Clark, who taught in the Foundation Studies Program (later T.O.P) at Prahran College, for a time had his studio in the store room next to Store 5. Anne-Marie May who also completed a Foundation Year (1984) and then a BA (1985-87) at Prahran, lived for some time in the Store 5 building, as did Callum Morton and Fiona MacDonald.
3. See Andrew Hurle, catalogue statement, in Deborah Hennessy (ed.), *Store 5 Is...*, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne, 2005, p. 45.
4. I remember on one occasion, (after the 2nd room / office had been added where the person minding the gallery now sat), becoming aware of my footsteps, echoing loudly off the wood floor into the cold air, marking out the choreography of my spectatorship. Shelley Lasica, in two solo dance performances at Store 5 (Nos. 128 & 148) explored this aspect of the rhetoric of the space. She stood casually talking to people in the audience and then, unannounced, would 'begin'. Using the intimacy of the space, with the audience lined-up around the sides of the gallery, she turned the tables to make the 'behaviour of viewing' part of the performance itself, blurring the distinction between artist and spectator, exhibition and looking. Videos documenting these performances record people in the 'audience' intently hunched over with concentration, and others wearing dark glasses to escape the discomfort of the situation. I recall being as conscious of my own stance and movements as those of the performer.
5. Exhibitions of 'Other Photography' (Nos. 6 & 36) – Nixon being founder and co-ordinator of the Society for Other Photography – and the use of the photocopied publication as an alternative form of exhibition (*Rosebud*), are two direct examples of the influence of Nixon on the activities and style of Store 5.
6. For a survey and analysis of this activity, its antecedents, and fellow travellers (ie. 'The Fosterville Institute of Applied and Progressive Cultural Experience' founded by Peter Tyndall and Christopher Hartney in 1972), see Peter Cripps, *Recession Art & Other Strategies*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 1986, pp. 2-6.
7. Bronwyn Clark-Coolie, 'Fiction of the Real', in Ross Harley (ed.), *Know Your Product*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 1986, p. 9.
8. For comments on this aspect of Store 5 see statements by Sandra Bridie, Melinda Harper and Anne-Marie May in Deborah Hennessy (ed.), *Store 5 Is...*, Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne, 2005, pp. 32-33, 12, and 16 respectively.
9. For an account of this position made in relation to the work of John Nixon, see Carolyn Barnes, 'Recent Abstraction in Melbourne', *Art & Text*, no. 30, September/November 1988, pp. 80-83.

10. A significant exhibition at this time, *Abstraction* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, curated by Victoria Lynn, mounted the argument that there was a broad, irreconcilable range of tendencies that could be collected under this rubric, and rather than being 'new' they could be linked to developments in Australian abstraction which had taken place since the early 1950s. See Victoria Lynn, *Abstraction*, AGNSW, Sydney, 1990, pp. 4-11.
11. Artists from First Draft (Vincente Butron, A.D.S. Donaldson) had shown at Store 5 and vice versa. The catalogue to this exhibition included statements by Gary Wilson as Director of Store 5 and Vincente Butron, one member of the collective Directorship of First Draft, as well as an essay by Carolyn Barnes specifically addressing the work of the Store 5 artists, and their project. Prior to this, one of the first identifications of a collective Store 5 identity was the exhibition *New Melbourne Abstraction*, curated by Ben Curnow at Artspace in Auckland in 1990.
12. John Nixon, 'Introduction', *Abstract Art*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, 1992, unpaginated. *Abstract Art* was held in Jan/Feb 1992. *Octopus*, at the University of South Australia Art Museum followed in Oct/Nov that year – also with a catalogue essay by Carolyn Barnes. In 1994, after the closure of Store 5, Nick Tsoutas at the Institute of Modern Art mounted a Store 5 'retrospective'. Exhibitions of the core-group of Store 5 artists in different configurations continued into the late 1990s: *Primavera 1995*, curated by Sue Cramer at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; *Stephen Bram, Rose Nolan, Melinda Harper, Gary Wilson*, AGNSW Contemporary Projects, Sydney, 1998; and *Open House*, curated by Ben Curnow at the Pestorius Sweeney House, Brisbane, 1999.
13. Email correspondence from Stephen Bram to the author 3 May 2005.
14. I reviewed this series of works when it was originally shown at Deakin University Gallery. See Robyn McKenzie, 'Gary Wilson: Flowers', *Art & Text*, No. 40, September 1991, pp. 91-92. Ben Curnow, the inaugural Director of the Deakin University Gallery, was a supporter of Store 5 artists: Stephen Bram and Kerrie Poliness, as well as Gary Wilson, all had individual shows at the gallery during 1991, making up a significant part of its program.
15. See Robyn McKenzie, 'The Last Temptation of Rose Nolan', *World Art*, Vol.1, No. 2, 1994, pp. 40-43.
16. For a commentary on local precedents and parallels to this approach to abstraction, see Chris McAuliffe, 'Don't Fence Me In: Art and Suburbia in the Sixties', in Sarah Ferber, Chris Healy and Chris McAuliffe (eds.), *The Beasts of Suburbia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton 1995, pp.94-110.
17. Those members of Store 5 who attended art school at Prahran (referring collectively to both Prahran College and Victoria College, Prahran) had contact with the following artists, who were members of staff at different times: Howard Arkley, Tony Clark, Aleks Danko, Lesley Dumbrell, Robert Jacks, John Nixon, Jenny Watson. It is also worth noting here the relationship between Prahran and 1st Floor. Key initiators of the project went through T.O.P at Prahran College, including David Rosetzky, Lyndal Walker, Megan Marshall and Alex Pittendrigh.
18. See Robyn McKenzie, 'Infantile Terrible: Object Relations and the Problem Child', *Art & Text*, no.45, May 1993, p. 30.
19. Peter Cripps, *Recession Art & Other Strategies*, pp. 2-6.
20. The VACF currently defines an 'emerging artist' as 'an artist in their first five years of professional practice'. <www.ozco.gov.au/grants/other_support_vac/artist_run_initiatives_2005/>
21. Stephen Bram had his first solo exhibition at City Gallery in 1988; Melinda Harper was represented by the gallery from 1992 and had her first solo exhibition there in 1993; Gary Wilson joined that stable (now Anna Schwartz Gallery) in 1994. Kerrie Poliness had her first exhibition at Tolarno Galleries in 1991; Rose Nolan was represented by Tolarno from 1992, holding her first exhibition there in 1993. Kathy Temin and Constanze Zikos both held individual exhibitions at Sutton Gallery in 1992.
22. With the exception of the Ewing and George Paton Galleries which was funded and administered by the Melbourne University Student Union.
23. Among the factors that spurred this review was the further expansion of contemporary art spaces, the insecurity of the present funding arrangements, combined with a general increase in demand on limited VAB resources.
24. 'Flagship' contemporary art spaces were identified as Artspace and the Australian Centre for Photography (Sydney), the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (Melbourne), Chameleon (Hobart), the Experimental Art Foundation (Adelaide), the Institute of Modern Art (Brisbane), and Praxis (Perth). Melbourne also was home to the Ewing and George Paton Galleries which enjoyed the support of the VAB, however the majority of its funding was derived from the Melbourne University Student Union.
25. The 1984-85 *Review of the Visual Arts Board's Program of Assistance for Contemporary Art Spaces* was conducted by John Aquino and Karilyn Brown for the Australia Council. Their report, published by the Australia Council in March 1985, set forth a body of conclusions and recommendations which were adopted by the Visual Arts Board and outlined in its *Assistance for Contemporary Art Spaces: Policy Guidelines*, Australia Council, March 1987. See Max Delany, 'Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council Funding Policy: Institutionalising the alternative: contemporary art spaces 1975-1985', unpublished post-graduate seminar paper, Department of Visual Arts, Monash University, October 1993.
26. This was also a focus of the Power Institute at the University of Sydney established in 1968, under Bernard Smith.
27. This lacuna was offset by the presence of the Ewing and George Paton Galleries on campus, and the efforts of the students themselves to access this realm independently of their formal studies. When studying at Melbourne University I belonged to a student society (FASS), the central aim of which was to redress the lack of teaching and information in the area of contemporary art by independently inviting speakers to address the student body.
28. See Donald Brook, 'From the Margin', Terry Smith, 'Art Criticism in Australia: The Mid-1970s Moment', Suzanne Davies, 'The Feminisms of Lip 1975-1985', and Adrian Martin, 'Before and After Art & Text', in Robyn McKenzie, (ed.), *Art Papers: the present and recent past of Australian art and criticism*, special supplement, *Agenda*, No. 2, August 1988, pp. 8-10 and 12-19. See also, Roger Benjamin, (ed.), *Practices of Criticism in Australia*, Art Association of Australia, 1986.

29. Roger Benjamin, 'When is art academic? Notes on the 'new Academy', *Art Monthly Australia*, no. 24, September 1989, pp. 8-10. Benjamin identifies four criteria for examining the process of institutionalisation: access to exhibition space; level of critical commentary; evidence of converts / imitators / followers; art market performance. In his article of 1989, written before Store 5 had become Store 5, Roger Benjamin concluded that 'perhaps the best way to rule finally on the validity of claims for a 'new academy' is to see whether its putative members have spawned a school. For academic art is pre-eminently art which re-produces itself.' The 'Ecole de Nixon' was one perjorative nickname given to the 'core-group' of Store 5 artists. Whilst their conviction in undertaking an exploration of the language of geometric abstraction as a continuation of the Modernist project might have been given impetus and direction through John Nixon's engagement and support, as I have argued here, through undertaking this process of exploration, they extended that language (in the directions of their own individual projects), in ways which exceeded the definitional boundaries of the radical Modernism Nixon identified in his own project; as it equally exceeded the category of critical post-conceptualism Nixon is associated with by contemporary critics. It does however remain, I think, a moot question whether this work can be taken as that of a school: it is not imitative, but it does take a form of analysis and applies it: (under different conditions, offering different choices, with different results). How the work looks in context, in relation to the historical circumstances and environment in which it operates, brings further readings again into consideration.
30. In the Monash University Collection as well as the *Caboose* portfolio of prints purchased in 1993 (the year it was exhibited at Store 5), there are works by eight of the thirteen Store 5 artists in this exhibition, mainly purchased during the years the gallery was operating (in 1992 and 1993). In the Vizard Collection which focussed on emerging art (initially in Melbourne) of the 1990s, there is a suite of paintings by Kerrie Poliness dated from 1989 to 1992, purchased 1993; works by Constanze Zikos, one of which is from 1991, purchased 1993; a work by Kathy Temin from her exhibition at Sutton Gallery in 1992, purchased 1995; and a 1996 work by Rose Nolan.
31. Cripps claims that he and Nixon chose their position 'outside the parameters of the existing gallery structure'. However, in his essay he describes a dialectical process in which 'methods and techniques' from 'Minimalism, Process and Conceptual art', incompatible with existing commercial and institutional structures, were assimilated into art practice, at the same time as there was a developing perception of the inadequacies of 'the system', and its ability to serve artists needs, with the consequent development of these 'other strategies' to fill the gap. It is not clear which came first, and where the choice fitted in. See, Peter Cripps, *Recession Art & Other Strategies*, pp. 3-6.
32. See Peter Cripps, *Recession Art & Other Strategies*, p. 6: 'The development of alternative spaces can be seen as part of the move by artists to become responsible for their own promotion. It also registered a desire to determine how their work was to be viewed. Throughout the seventies the commercial galleries were unable to provide the promotion or the professional support structure desired by these artists with their increasing output. An exhibition every two years seemed totally inadequate. Other strategies evolved to fulfil these needs.'
33. Gary Wilson, *Abstract Art*, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, 1992, unpaginated.
34. SWIM (Support Women Image Makers) is just one example: a student initiative at Victoria College, Prahran, instigated, in 1989, by Kathy Temin and Megan Marshall, among others who came to be involved with 1st Floor, the group invited 'practitioners' (artists, curators and writers) to speak about their work and their interests. Artists from Store 5 spoke to the group in a weekly program which included among others, artists Elizabeth Gower and Elizabeth Newman, (a member of the artist collective 'A Constructed World'), curator Juliana Engberg (Director of the Ewing and George Paton Galleries and Editor of *Agenda*), and writer Brenda Ludeman.
35. Seven, of a total of eleven, artists in *The Subversive Stitch*, 1991 at Monash University Gallery, had connections to Store 5: Bronwyn Clark-Coolee, Melinda Harper, Anne-Marie May, Rose Nolan, Kerrie Poliness, Kathy Temin, Constanze Zikos. The premise of the exhibition as outlined by curator Natalie King, was that these artists rather than 'pay homage to the forefathers of modernist abstraction', offered a critique, 'problematiz[ing] the limits of abstraction', 'subvert[ing] its 'formalist discipline' and its 'authority'. See Natalie King, *The Subversive Stitch*, Monash University Gallery, Melbourne, 1991, pp. 3-8.
36. Linda Marrinon, for example, (already established as a painter, and represented by Tolarno Galleries since 1986), exhibited works of sculpture for the first time at Store 5 (No. 27), in October 1989, alongside mixed-media works by Rose Nolan. Marrinon's *Albury* 1989 consisted of two blocks of quartz stone placed on top of each other with the plastic armature of a six-pack of beer sandwiched in-between. The exhibition was noticed and well-received in a review in *Agenda* magazine. See Naomi Cass, 'Linda Marinon', *Agenda*, No. 9, December 1989. Later, in 1993, Marrinon exhibited related works along with sculpted terracotta pieces, at Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne.
37. Exhibitions at Store 5 were organised by invitation. Artists paid basic costs including a contribution to the rent and covering the expense of a mailout if there was one, but additional overheads that could have been accrued (things such as staffing) were not factored in. It ran under a (volunteer) DIY ethic.
38. Astronomy 162 <csep10.phys.utk.edu/astr162/lect/gclusters/gclusters.html>



Diana Georgetti installation view 1992



top l: Dina Georgetti installation view 1992
top r: Kerrie Poliness *Wall painting* 1991
bottom l: John Nixon installation view 1992
bottom r: Tony Clark *Two temples* 1990