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Neil Haddon

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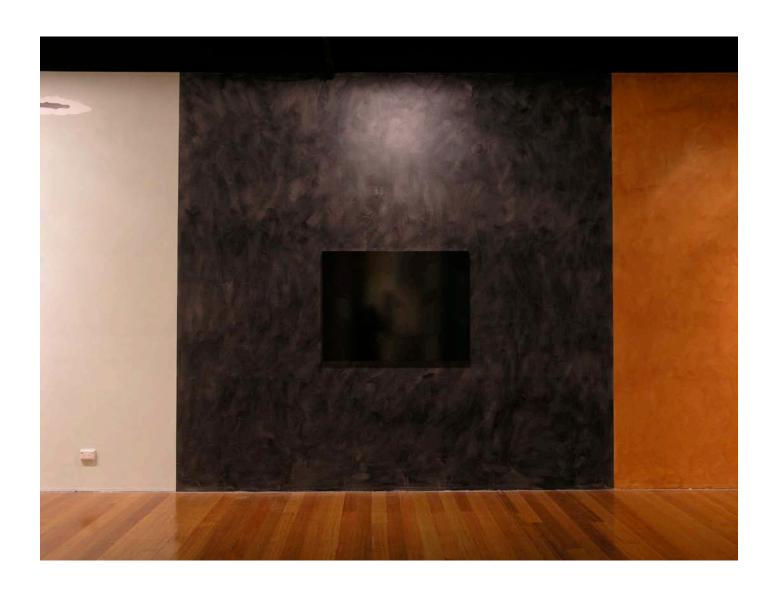
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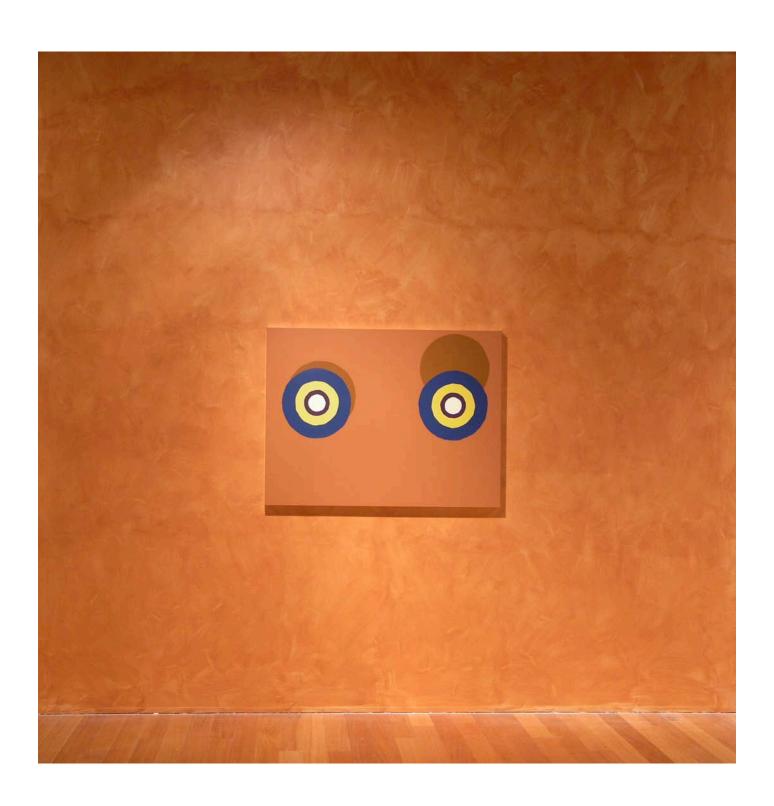


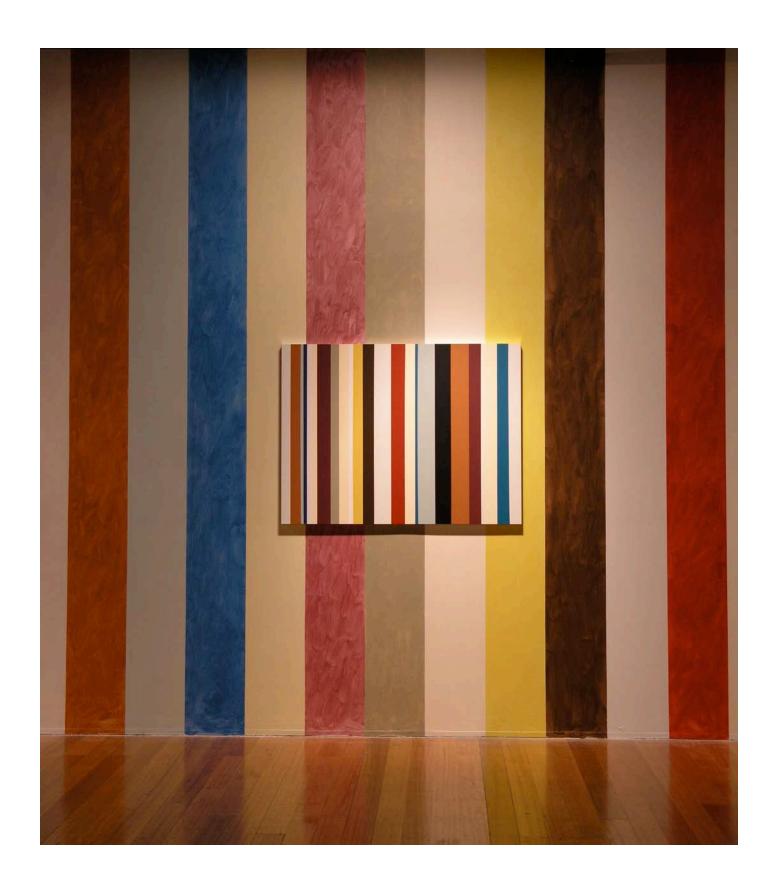
























CAST Gallery presents

# PITCH 041

Neil Haddon

August 7 - 29, 2004 opening 6pm Friday August 6

## CAST

27 Tasma Street North Hobart Tasmania 7000 03 6233 2681 castoff@bigpond.net.au www.castgallery.org gallery hours Wed - Sun 12 - 5











new art for new audiences

Contemporary Art Services Tasmania (CAST) acknowledges the generous assistance of the Australia Council, the Federal Government's arts funding and advisory body, and the Minister for the Arts, through Arts Tasmania.

Image - Neil Haddon Pitch no.2 2004 household paint or aluminium 120 x 180cm

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Pitch 041 August 7 - 29, 2004

New paintings by Neil Haddon

# The Error of the Everyday

The closed, idealised world of Minimalism is often regarded as the zenith of Modernism. Characterised by geometric abstraction and hard gloss surfaces, Minimalism is superficially based on a grid structure, which is always straight, flat, uniform and tightly contained within its own proportions. Presentation of Minimalist paintings has similarly been tightly controlled; the white cube of the art gallery providing a suitably abstracted space where presentation conditions are under the complete authority of the artist or curator. Since the beginning, the pristine, rigorously formal world of Minimalism has been regarded as an entirely separate space from the real world that surrounds it. The grid has been used as a formal, psychological and emotional barrier that contains the purity of a Minimalist work from the reality of everything else. Implicit in this, is Minimalism's condemnation of the real world as wrong or inferior; an accusation that can be seen to justify the general public's charge that Minimalism (aka high Modernism) regards itself as an overly serious elite art that has nothing to do with reality or the real world.

Enter Neil Haddon and his sophisticated and humorous obsession with questioning the statements and truths of Minimalism. Some time ago, Haddon explained that he was looking at the fragility of the grid as a barrier between the real and the ideal, a barrier that could be easily breached by the decay, erosion and wear of the real world to taint the perfection of Minimalism's idealised space. He sought to re-evaluate Minimalism by dragging it from its closed ivory tower into the realm of life: 'if abstract geometric painting is to be presented as open and *less idealised*, it must find a vehicle that is more inclusive than it is exclusive; it must recognise more human contingencies and fallibilities rather than divorcing itself from these' (N. Haddon, MFA Thesis, 2002).

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Pitch 041

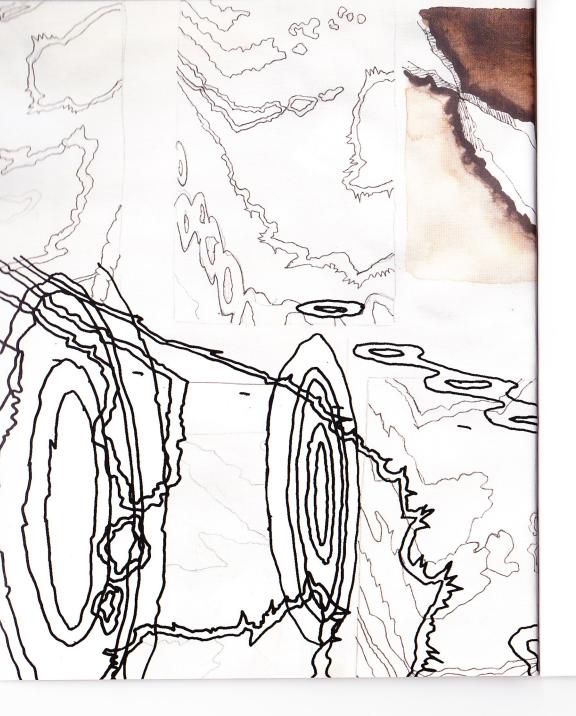
Ignoring the use of traditional art materials with all their historical baggage, Haddon chooses his paint from the home-decorating counter at the local hardware store - traditional painting classics such as Naples Yellow, Burnt Sienna, Italian Pink are replaced by Dulux favourites such as Moroccan Gold, Equador and Café Noire. Haddon misuses the system of the grid - if the ideal is to be flat, unemotional and uniform, then he skews and mis-sizes it to create dizzying effects that disrupt and disturb our emotions. While he often maintains the high-gloss flat enamel surface so characteristic of Minimalism, he introduces flaws, errors and glitches that brand it with the everyday. The conceptual discovery Haddon has made is that just below the aesthetic face of idealised geometric abstraction lies a kind of painting that is not too far removed from the world of home renovators everywhere.

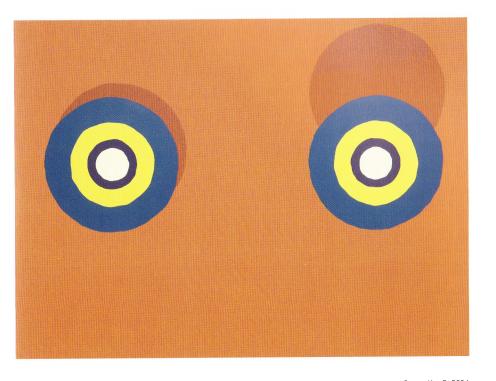
In Pitch 041, Haddon has focused on domestic painted surfaces and the surfaces of the CAST Gallery walls. In a close examination of damage to the last layer of paint he exposes past colours shimmering in their anxiety. Resisting all efforts to obliterate them beneath the pristine surface of fresh colour, these details become enlarged and form the basis of the works on aluminium; which must, as a result, hover between abstraction and narrative.

Haddon has often worked on walls, questioning the pristine white-cube presentation of Minimalist works. Here, he dives deeply and joyfully into a rococo style makeover of the gallery that gently parodies both Modernist and Post-Modernist 'looks', while being an undeniable form of home decorating. He is in love with the sample pot.

Flanked at either end of the gallery by large paintings, one seemingly derived from a tiled floor and the other from a ceiling, Haddon forces the hollow space of the gallery to outsize us. In the Minimalist tradition, the artist is in complete control of the presentation of the works and how we are to receive them, but Haddon misuses the method to create a pop version. How much of it is art and how much home decoration doesn't really matter.







# Sampled Colour Philip Watkins

In the children's story, *The Lady's Room*, by Eleanor Farjeon, a lady lives in a completely white room, which she loves. One day she looks out of her window and sighs with despondency. A fairy, with green shoes, appears and asks her what's the matter. She explains that she's sick of her white room and wants a green one instead. She is very happy with her decision until one day, looking out of the window she sighs again and the fairy, this time in pink shoes, is asked by the lady to change her entire room to pink. Next comes gold, which similarly she tires of. Finally the fairy, appearing in black shoes, is asked to make the room black. By now the fairy is tired of her indecision and casts a spell that makes the walls, floor and ceiling disappear completely, revealing the starry blackness of night.

What could be read as a parable about the dangers of inconstancy, and the need to be contented with your lot in life, also has literal (in terms of colour) and psychological significance, when contemplating Haddon's recent work. His wary choice of colour springs from a sense of lost innocence, defined by a refusal of direct symbolic and personal identification with colour, in favour of its temporal and contextual interest. As in Farjeon's story, time and place undermines the integrity of colour, when its psychological/optical intensity is revealed as temporary. Colour is exposed as an optical phenomenon that connects us to the world of objects but belongs to none of them.

Like Farjeon's lady, Haddon is a *sample pot* addict. He uses commercially produced house paint, straight from the tin, to cover the surfaces of his paintings. You could be forgiven for thinking that this is simply convenient given the extensive range of colour available in hardware stores. As long as it looks like a painting what difference does it make? What's significant for Haddon though, is that it might not matter. Just because paint is



Slide No.2, 2004 low-sheen household acrylic paint on aluminium, 90cm x 120cm

designed for domestic use, doesn't mean that it can't be looked at with an artist's eye. Besides, what's the difference between the artist's aesthetic sensibility and the amateur home designer's, or the paint manufacturer's for that matter? What's the measure by which such sensibility is determined? Is a painter made an artist through their ability to mix colour? The abdication of control over the pigmented ingredients of each hue isn't visible, and compliance to what's already there reiterates Marcel Duchamp's declaration that all paint is a *readymade* merely requiring a choice to be added to the mix.



 $\label{eq:slide_solution} Slide~No.~1,~2004$  low-sheen household acrylic paint on aluminium,  $90\text{cm} \times 120\text{cm}$ 

(opposite) Shift No. 1, 2004 low-sheen household acrylic paint on aluminium, 90cm x 120cm Such procedural compromises, in the context of *colour field* abstraction, continue to fuel Haddon's artistic output. These concessions to the visibility of integrity and the *inconsequential* domain of décor humanise abstraction. The mistakes and the flaws, visible and invisible, which occur in the production of his work, are as important as the end product.

Combining fine art painting with the standardised colour charts of *Dulux* or *Wattyl*, Haddon is deliberately challenging a hierarchy of aesthetic choice. One that not only brings décor and fine art closer together but also suggests how the function of such aesthetic choice changes through proximity. Colour is confused between the

universality of Modernist abstraction and quotidian domestic taste. It becomes a *sign-of-the-times* rather than a discrete element. Haddon's layering of colour reflects an



exposed archaeology of ephemeral choice. Fragments of anonymous style determined by hardware store availability and market forces. Colours that might have been *right*, creating a perfect environment for living; layers that protect a personal dream, punctured by the reality of fashionable obsolescence. This is where colour and lifestyle meet. Where the surface of materiality and the psychology of the domestic alloy perceptions. As with Eleanor Farjeon's inconstant lady in her many-coloured room, the surfaces of the ordinary world dissipate in contextual complexity, pitching off balance distinctions of literalness and illusion.

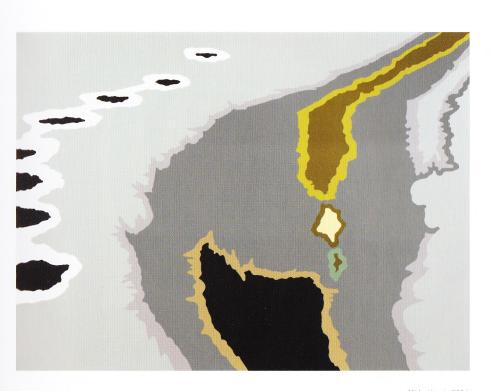
The aesthetic choices of non-artist and artist can no longer be critically polarised between the petty and the historically inflated. For better or worse they have become disrespectfully close. Whatever the market value of a Neil Haddon, by painting on the walls of the gallery, knowing that it will be erased in a month's time, he makes his decisions as ephemeral as those of the home decorator armed with sample pots allowing for endless trial and error. Of course, Haddon's paintings will be documented, written about and thereby placed into the mix of a possible art history. All artists live with this gamble, one that may very easily fail to pay off. So that at the time these aesthetic decisions are made, the choice of the anonymous painter/home decorator and the named painter/fine artist are similarly transient. Both making a series of intuitive mistakes made significant, or not, only in retrospect. The artist cannot know how pertinent the decisions they make now will be, just as the non-artist is oblivious to such repercussions. The fear of invisibility for the artist, despite the effort and best of professional intentions goes to the core of the possible futility of all our personal choices. In this exhibition Haddon's colour returns to the wall that it was designed for as if anonymity and fleeting energy, akin to that of the home decorator, is a paradise lost to the artist.



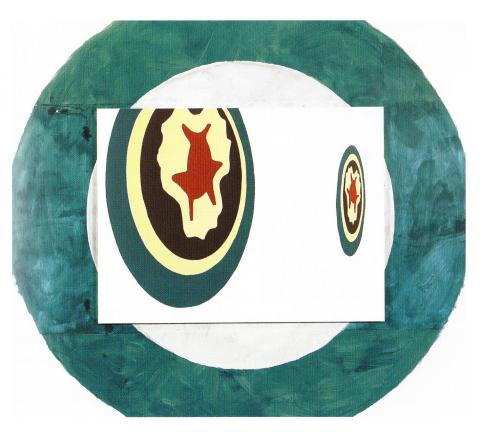
Pitch No. 4, 2004 low-sheen household acrylic paint on aluminium panels,  $240 \mathrm{cm} \times 360 \mathrm{cm}$ 



 ${\it Pitch~No.~5,~2004} \\ low-sheen household acrylic paint on aluminium panels, \\ 240cm \times 360cm$ 



Slide No. 1, 2004 low-sheen household acrylic paint on aluminium,  $$90 {\rm cm} \times 120 {\rm cm}$$ 



 $Raw\ No.\ 1,\ 2004 \\ low-sheen\ household\ acrylic\ paint\ on\ aluminium, \\ 90cm\ x\ 120cm$ 

# Excerpts from an interview with Laurence Counter, July 2004

Blue, blue, electric blue
That's the colour of my room
Where I will live
Blue, blue

Pale blinds drawn all day

Nothing to do, nothing to say

Blue, blue

I will sit right down, waiting for the gift of sound and vision

David Bowie

NH

You spoke recently about a connection between the wall paintings you have done over the past few years and a notion, borrowed from the world of theatre, of the 'fourth wall'. That is, the invisible barrier that separates audience from what is happening on the stage. To what extent are these paintings equivalent to that 'fourth wall'?

To answer this I have to back track some years to when I lived in Barcelona. I remember going to see La Fura Dels Baus, a theatre troupe that involve the

audience in their productions in confrontational and often quite alarming ways, there is no stage as such and the action happens in amongst the crowd. I felt uncomfortable with this, like I felt uncomfortable at pantomimes as a boy when characters would leave the stage and charge off down the aisles. It was impossible to 'sit back and relax'. To get to the 'Fura' performance you had to walk through a neighbourhood that was undergoing a huge urban renewal program and there were many old blocks of flats that were in the process of

being demolished. Some had the exterior walls ripped away exposing living rooms, bedrooms and so on. All that was left was a different patchwork wallpapered or painted walls. The usual situation of viewing the outside world from the comfort of one's home was here turned on its head. These two experiences have been conflated in this recent work so that the implied barrier or 'fourth wall' is present but its seamless integrity is nonetheless breached.



Arbour No. 1, 2004 high gloss household enamel paint on aluminium, 90cm x 120cm

LC Is this theme of interior versus exterior, or the flimsy interface between these two played out further in the painting *Arbour No. 1*? The arbour is traditionally a garden seat enclosed in an arched trellis on which vines and climbing plants

are encouraged to grow. Does the trellis become the barrier that both encloses and excludes?

Yes. Though I am not so interested in the idea of the arbour hiding two lovers from prying eyes, rather as a place for contemplating the outside world from the perceived safety of the arbour. Günter Grass writes about this in *The Flounder* where he recognises the need for a place from which to get perspective on "the horrors" of the world but also acknowledges that the arbour itself is really just a fragile construct.

You often document scuffs, scratches, screw holes and so on that then appear in the paintings but transformed into polished, slick even pristine surfaces. This is a compromised renovation, a re-painting of the desired seamless surface but as a patchwork of breaches.

The paintings present the unvalued mark both as a desirable pseudo-historical account of human presence and paradoxically as a renovation paint-job whose aim is to reinstate a uniform, unified *superficial* surface.

NH It is possible to talk about a historical aspect but it would be a history that goes back only so far. In fact only really to the last renovation job. What interests me about those marks is that they bring the wall or whatever into uncomfortable focus - it has been damaged. Tracing a history back through various layers of paint is fascinating but I am looking more for that moment of anxiety when the first mark is discovered on the freshly painted substrate. This moment seems to contain a strange array of emotions that involve both material concerns as the new becomes the nearly new and more personal

feelings of time passing, akin to that moment when we notice our first grey hair. The compulsion to renovate and renew is on one level a simple desire to undo that damage and remove the grey hair.

LC Or dye it?

NH Disguise it. The paintings on aluminium which are hung against or on wall paintings are disguised, albeit poorly. The colours are the same colours from artwork to paint job. It is unclear which is being disguised - the painting or the wall.

LC So the wall becomes a Painting and the Painting becomes a wall. This staging becomes quite theatrical. I find myself becoming quite absorbed by this play, taken in rather than threatened, especially in a painting like Screw No.5.



Screw No. 5 (detail), 2004 low-sheen household acrylic paint on aluminium, 90cm x 120cm

NH I think there are times when these marks you have mentioned can become the catalyst for a moment of quiet contemplation - they become a small point of

focus within an abstract field of colour. They can be as absorbing as a Rothko painting, depending on the context, the colour of the wall, the light - which of course are all things that Rothko wanted to have absolute control over. This is sort of like David Bowie's 'electric blue' room in which he can drift into his solitude. But then again, it doesn't take much to set these things out of kilter - a jarring colour here, a ripped edge there and just like Grass' arbour the insubstantial artifice soon becomes apparent for what it is. And things shift again.

Lawrence Counter lives and works in London

(opposite) Nihil Sub Sole Novum, 2001 LSSp Project Space, Hobart

> We Got Him, 2004 Inflight Art, Hobart

Pitch, 2004 Prospect High School, Launceston

## Other Walls



#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Neil Haddon (b.1967 Epsom, England) moved to Tasmania in 1996 from Barcelona, Spain where he had been working as an artist and teacher for six years. His work is held in several private collections and also by Artbank, Sydney, the University of Tasmania and internationally by the Colecion Sunyol and British Council, Spain. In 2002 he was awarded a MFA from the Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania and has lectured in Painting at the School since 1999. Haddon is a founding member of Letitia Street Studios, LSSp exhibition space and INFLIGHT artist run gallery.

#### **SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

2004	Wear 04, Criterion Gallery, Hobart Pitch 041, CAST Gallery, Hobart Pitch 042, Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne	
2002	Wear 02, Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne	
	More Minimal Conditions, Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart	
1999	Nihil Sub Sole Novum, LSSp, Hobart	
1998	Purblind, Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne	
	Purblind, Gallery Dunce, Hobart	
	Artspace/Workplace, Moonah Arts	
	Centre	
1995	Galeria Carles Poy, Barcelona, Spain	
1994	The British Council, Barcelona, Spain	
1992	Galeria Carles Poy, Barcelona, Spain	

#### **GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

2004

	Tasmania	
	Group Material, Tasmanian Museum	
	and Art Gallery, Hobart	
	IXL Art, Plimsoll Gallery, Centre for	
	the Arts, University of Tasmania	
	US, Inflight art, Hobart	
2003	Wish You Were Here and Painting the	
2003	Home, Inflight, Hobart	
	HWY 1 (Ten Days On The Island),	
	Kempton	
	Bodybag, Academy Gallery,	
	Launceston and Carnegie Gallery, Hobart	
2002	There, Plimsoll Gallery, Hobart	
2002	collaboration: Happy Birthday,	
	Aleksandra Mir, Gavin Brown's	
	enterprise, NYC & Greengrassi	
	Gallery, London, Publishers	
	LSS@Arts@Work, Arts At Work, Hobart	
	Pattern as Subject, CAST Gallery,	
	Hobart	
	Conrad Jupiter's Art Prize	
2001	Fisher's Ghost Art Prize Exhibition,	
	Campbelltown City Gallery	
	CAST Members' Show, CAST Gallery,	
	Hobart	
	The Hutchin's Prize Exhibition, The	
	Long Gallery, Hobart	
2000	Square, Circle, Rectangle, Entrepot	
	Galleries, Hobart	
	Cache, Glen Eira City Gallery	
	Artfair 2000, Melbourne, with Bett	
	Gallery	
	Buffalo, Letitia St Studios, Hobart	
	Shifting Axis, Bett Gallery, Hobart	

Disorientation, Plimsoll Gallery,

Centre for the Arts, University of

	CAST Members' Show, CAST Gallery, Hobart	SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
1999	Cache, CAST Gallery, Hobart	
	Warp - Neil Haddon, Philip Watkins	
	and John Vella, curated by David	'Wear 04', Joerg Andersch, Saturday Mercury,
	Hansen, CAST Gallery and touring	15/5/04
	The City of Hobart Art Prize	'Seductive Talents', Diana Klaosen, RealTime,
	Exhibition, Carnegie Gallery, Hobart	June/July 04, no. 61
	The Hutchins Prize Exhibition, The	'Body Bag', Briony Downes, Australian Art
	Long Gallery, Hobart	Collector, May 2004
1998	Upbeat and Lively, Bett Galley, Hobart	'10 Days on the Island', Daniel Thomas,
	Sixth Australian Contemporary Artfair,	Australian Art Monthly, May 2003, no. 159
	Melbourne, with Dianne Tanzer Gallery	'Australian Art in Public Places', Artbank 2001
	Trust Bank Art Award Exhibition,	'Nihil Sub Sole Novum', Jane Rankin-Reid, The
	Launceston (highly commended)	Sunday Tasmanian, 16/9/01
	Making Waves, Dianne Tanzer Gallery,	'Undiscovered Artists', Edward Colless, Australian
	Melbourne	Art Collector, issue 16, 2001
1997	Poets and Painters, Dick Bett Gallery,	'Warp', Sally Rees, Artlink, vol.19, issue no.4
	Hobart	'Cache', Jenny Spinks, Artlink, vol.19, issue no.3
	Trust Bank Art Award Exhibition	'Warp', Joerg Andersch, The Saturday Mercury,
	Logan City Art Prize Exhibition	18/6/99
	The Hutchins Prize Exhibition, The	'Warp' (catalogue essay), David Hansen, CAST
	Long Gallery, Hobart	Gallery
1996	ARCO, Madrid, Spain, with Galeria	'Purblind', Joerg Andersch, The Saturday Mercury,
	Carles Poy	23/5/98
	Toowoomba Regional Art Prize	'Poets and Painters', The Dick Bett Gallery
	Exhibition	Newsletter, no.36
	Logan City Art Prize Exhibition	La Vanguardia, Spain, 10/11/95
1996	La Pintura Considerada Como Una de las	La Vanguardia, Spain, 7/3/95
	Bellas Artes, Galeria Carles Poy,	'Neil Haddon - Galeria Carles Poy', El Punto de las
	Barcelona, Spain	Artes, Spain, 2/9/92
	Por Al Buit/ Medio Al Vacio, Galeria	'Entre L'Occultacion i la Transparencia', Avul,
	Carles Poy, Barcelona, Spain	Spain, 4/10/92
	collaboration: <i>Past Lives</i> , performance	'Neil Haddon', Jorge Luis Marzo, <i>Lapiz</i> , no. 89,
	with Jefford Horrigan, Adam Gallery,	September 1989
4005	London	
1995	collaboration: Sapering Moments,	

performance by Peter Hone, Barcelona

Young Painters, James Hockey Gallery,

Farnham, England

1990

Neil Haddon would like to thank Michael Welch, Helene Czerny, Dianne Tanzer, Edwina Bolder, all at Letitia St Studios, Catherine Wu for the extra space and all at CAST.

Special thanks to Ros, Joseph and Alfie for their patience and encouragement.

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