

Chapter 1

From Market Place to Superstore

The origin of the square is the marketplace.¹

Cornwall Square, a heritage city block in regional Launceston (Map 1, Figure 44) has a rich community history from colonial times until the present. This chapter documents some of the historical events and occasions that led up to the Harvey Norman superstore development. Historical documents and old archived photographs from the Queen Victoria Community History Museum provided the basis for my initial exploratory artwork on the site. The prints, drawings, paintings and digital photographs inspired by this part of the study informed the direction my later work would follow when the Harvey Norman store was completed.

Cornwall Square became the focus of my study in 2001. At that time the area was a Launceston City Council (LCC) operated public car park and works depot. LCC rezoning of the site from community to commercial in 1996 allowed for sale and private redevelopment and one of the redevelopment projects in 2001 was to be a Harvey Norman franchise store. This development offered me an opportunity to document how a new 'superstore' building and retail operation developed, advertised and presented its merchandise.

Historical background of Cornwall Square

The city of Launceston, Northern Tasmania, first named Pattersonia, is the third oldest city in Australia and situated at the confluence of the North and

¹ Gustav Kahn, *L'esthétique de la rue*, (Paris : Bibliotheque Charpentier), 1901, 149. Cited by G. Le Gall *Atget, Life in Paris*, (London: Hazan 1998), 12.

South Esk Rivers, which together form the Tamar River.² In 1805 between these rivers was an undulating plain then over 3,000 acres, surrounded by hills on two sides mostly covered with dense scrub. It was remarked at the time that the settlement was ‘most injudiciously chosen’ being situated in a low marshy flat, surrounded by high hills and wholly destitute of fresh water.³

European occupation of Tasmania is barely two hundred years old and in that time the landscape has changed almost beyond recognition. John Glover’s painting from Trevallyn of *Launceston and the River Tamar* (Fig 1)



Figure 1. *Launceston and the River Tamar*. John Glover

shows a glimpse through the bush of the confluence of the North Esk and Tamar rivers.

The Palawa peoples (Tasmanian Aborigines) who lived in the Tamar area hunted and gathered their food and their diet included fresh water

mussels, water fowl, bird eggs, emu, kangaroo, wallaby, possum, berries, tubers and other food.⁴ Tasmanian Aboriginal presence after European occupation is noted by Tasmanian historian L. S. Bethell on ‘The space, now called Cornwall Square...then known as Market Green was open ground, covered with tree-stumps... Before the Black War of 1830 natives were to be seen on this reserve, idly throwing their spears at varied targets...’⁵

2 L. S. Bethell, *The Story of Port Dalrymple*. (Hobart : L. G. Shea, Government Printer, 1980), 7. Launceston was named by Lt. Colonel W. Paterson for Governor King who was born in Launceston on the Tamar in Cornwall, England.

3 L. S. Bethell *The Story of Port Dalrymple*, 19.

4 Ratio Consultants Pty Ltd ‘Foundation and History of the City’ *Launceston Central Area Development Strategy*, (2002), i.

5 L. S. Bethell *The Story of Port Dalrymple*, 129.

An early colonial map of 1826 shows streets marked out in a grid close to the river edge. Until 1824 the town was mostly confined between the bank of the North Esk and Cameron Street and there were no wharves. 'From the end of Tamar Street to that of Charles Street, there was a swamp traversed by planks to the water's edge'.⁶ Close by at the edge of the swamp was a block of ground marked on H. W. Smythe's map of 1835 as 'Government Reserve.' (Map 2, Fig. 45) This piece of land was the site of the first public market and an enduring place of congregation for the people of Launceston. It became known as Market Square (or Market Green) until 1901 when it was renamed Cornwall Square. Public gatherings, performances and celebrations occurred there for well over one hundred years. Also noted on Smythe's map within this 'Government Reserve' are two private blocks; one granted to James Henty for a residence and store, the other for Scots Church completed in 1833. These buildings still exist today and are Heritage listed.

A Public Market for Launceston

An Act for Regulation of Markets (5 William IV. No. 9) was passed in 1834 empowering the Lieutenant-Governor to establish a market in or for any town, and to appoint its limits.⁷ In terms of market facilities for the people of Launceston this was the first step taken towards the development of a public market.

By the early 1840s public pressure for the establishment of an organised public market in Launceston previously agreed upon, grew. The fact that

⁶ L.S. Bethell, *The Story of Port Dalrymple*, 66.

⁷ QVM:LCC1:79 Referred to in Proclamation by the Municipal Council of the Town of Launceston in the Colony of Tasmania – An act for the regulation of Markets – dated 15 June 1859.

Port Philip, settled later than Launceston, had almost completed its market added fuel to the argument.⁸

The Cornwall Chronicle noted significantly in 1841:

.....no such thing as a Market, Market Place, or Market House yet exists...No class of persons would feel the advantages of a Market more than the masters of vessels trading to this port, they complain now loudly of the want of a Market at which they could provide themselves with vegetables and poultry when in harbour, and a sea stock when about departing;But, for the large farmer, the operative gardener, the small settler, and every person having an excess of produce, would participate in the advantages a Market would afford, they would be enabled weekly to dispose of articles which at present are much wasted for want of a channel to dispose of them...Besides, at a weekly Market many persons would flock from the country to attend it, and a great increase of business generally would be the result...a public market would be beneficial to every member of the community – whether buyer or seller, rich man or poor man- all would reap advantage from a public market; but, above all, would be benefited, housekeepers of slender incomes with large families, who compose a very considerable portion of the inhabitants of this town.⁹

Colonial desire for a public marketplace in Launceston that would advantage every member of the community rich or poor, and particularly those with large families with small incomes, appears at odds with the aim of any contemporary marketplace today. The obvious difference is the colonial expectation of shared social and community benefits of a marketplace as set out in *The Cornwall Chronicle*.

The people of Launceston had to wait until January 1849 for the official opening of the market buildings ordered by Sir William Denison.¹⁰ The market was proclaimed in and for the town of Launceston on 'the piece of land fronting on William and Charles streets', (Government Reserve) and also the wharf at the end of Charles-street known as the Market Wharf and

8 'A Public Market Place' *The Cornwall Chronicle* May 1, 1841, Launceston Reference Library microfiche.

9 'A Public Market Place', *The Cornwall Chronicle* May 1, 1841 Launceston Reference Library microfiche.

10 Henry Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, (Launceston : A. W. Birchall & Sons, 1909), 150.

bounded in front by the River Tamar and on two sides by cuts or canals.¹¹

‘The Market Wharf was a small wharf occupying only a portion of the space between the two creeks, and was situate [sic] near or at the end of Charles-street...’¹²

Launceston became a Municipality in 1852 and regulating and reorganising the public market became one of the tasks. Once organised the market site was noted as ‘the piece of land fronting on William and Charles streets’.¹³

By 1859 the original market sheds opened a decade earlier in 1849 had fallen into a state of disrepair. The only known diagram of these buildings is noted in Map 3, Fig. 46, as ‘Market Place’. Building costs and repair estimates at the time give a descriptive summary of the quadrangle shaped market buildings as having shop fronts, wooden floors, doorsteps, small-paned shuttered windows and back and front doors. There were two offices for clerks. The quote also included ceilings to be whitened, walls repapered and fireplaces repaired in the two offices situated on the premises.¹⁴ A Clerk of the Market, Stephen Hopwood was employed in 1859 to oversee market operations and control the weighbridge and he probably occupied the renovated offices.¹⁵ In that year efforts were made to revitalise the market and a new Proclamation declared by Mayor Henry Dowling, revoked earlier proclamations thought to be inadequate to protect the Corporation’s interests. The Public Market and Market Wharf area were proclaimed unchanged but more precisely defined as:

11 QVM:LCC:3 394 Reports & Memoranda Sept. 1885 *The Control of the Market Wharf*. Legal Opinion: Alfred Green, 26 Sept. 1885.

12 QVM:LCC:3 394 Reports & Memoranda Sept. 1885 *The Control of the Market Wharf*. Legal Opinion: Alfred Green, 26 Sept. 1885.

13 Ibid.

14 QVM:LCC1 Correspondence – August 1859. A submission with cost estimates to the Council, by builder Alex Cracken summarised repairs that were required to the buildings.

15 QVM:LCC1: 82 Sept 1859 – Original annotated copy of Market Proclamation and Market Regulations belonging to Stephen Hopwood, the Clerk of the Market.

bounded on the north-west side by a frontage of 279 feet on William-street, on the south west by a frontage of 321 feet 6 inches on Charles-street; its southern boundary abuts on the Scotch Presbyterian Church and extends in a north-easterly direction 279 feet parallel to William-street.¹⁶

Regulations outlined in great detail in the new Market Proclamation and Market Regulations of 1859 indicate the market was to sell hay, straw, green fodder, corn and other grains, hides, skins, fruit, vegetables, game, poultry, butter, bacon and eggs. Open every day except Sundays, Christmas Day and Good Friday charges were levied by the Council for every cart load of goods, for stalls, fixed shops but not for goods carried in for sale by hand, tray or basket.¹⁷

Market Square (or Market Green as it was also known) was close to the river edge, swampy, uneven and subject to flooding (see Map 2, Fig. 45 and Map



Figure 2.
Henry
Button
Mayor of
Launceston
1885. *The
Examiner*, 31
December
2002.

6, Fig. 49) and before 1863 would have been a very difficult place to hold a market during wet weather before drainage and levelling of the area was carried out.¹⁸ This is reinforced by a description of the market sheds in 1863 as 'low and ragged' requiring drains and work on the foundations.¹⁹

Henry Button's (Fig. 2) description of the appearance and condition of the public market buildings on Market Square

16 QVM:LCC1:82 Letters and Petitions 'Town of Launceston. A Proclamation by the Municipal Council of the Town of Launceston, in the Colony of Tasmania' dated 15 June, 1859 p. 3 – original annotated copy - handwritten on cover 'Launceston Market, Stephen Hopwood, Clerk.

17 QVM:LCC1:82 Letters and Petitions 'Town of Launceston. A Proclamation by the Municipal Council of the Town of Launceston, in the Colony of Tasmania' dated 15 June, 1859 p. 3

18 QVM:LCC1 24 Mar 1863 Letter to the Mayor March 2, 1863 from the Town Survey noting the probable cost of levelling the holes in the Market Green and draining the square.

19 QVM:LCC1 August, 1863 The Town Surveyor recommended the laying of 'hard and even floors for storing provisions or dry goods and off which coal can easily be shovelled' and suggested replacing the existing metal with a three inch thick layer of tar which 'would present a good opportunity to try how far tar would be desirable in the forming of footpaths'. From this information it could be assumed that some of the market buildings were again being used as storerooms.

published in 1909 probably explains why they disappeared into oblivion without commemoration.

Below the Kirk, on the Charles-street frontage, was a quadrangle of low, contemptible looking buildings erected by order of Sir William Denison soon after his arrival as Governor. Designated a Market, they were opened in January, 1849, and from the outset proved a grotesque failure. For many years they were leased as stores, and having passed into the possession of the City Council, they are now used in connection with the Works Department. The large vacant block of land adjoining, known as the Market Square, was so named in consequence.²⁰

Severe economic times may have caused the failure of the market because by 1846 people had begun leaving Van Diemens Land in ever increasing numbers, among them many useful artisans and labourers. It was estimated that 2790 people had left the colony for Port Phillip during the year 1848²¹ many of them departing from vessels berthed at the wharves on the North Esk or Tamar Rivers.

Maritime Activity



Figure 3. Steamship – Queens Wharf, North Esk. The Queen Victoria Community History Museum. QVM:1983:P:1252.

20 Henry Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, 150.

21 Joan Goodrick, *Life in Old Van Diemens Land*, (Melbourne : Rigby Limited, 1977), 88.

Cornwall Square and the wharves were closely linked in the 19th and early 20th centuries when shipping on the Tamar was vital to Launceston as the only means of transport of goods and people interstate and overseas. Produce, goods and passengers were landed on Market Wharf and Queens Wharf (Fig. 3) situated at the ends of Charles Street and St. John Streets respectively. A great number of citizens and visitors used the pathways across Cornwall Square to travel to and from the wharves.²²

Off Town Point (Map 6, Fig. 49) in 1833 wooden ships of 400 tons or about the size of a modern tug could lie at anchor.²³ 'Market Wharf' can be seen close to where 'Market Place' faced onto Charles Street and merged with the Esplanade. (Map 3, Fig. 46)

The wharves were surrounded by the industrial activity of smelters, breweries, a gasworks, soap and candle works, tinsmiths, tannery, cooper, boot factory and slaughterhouses. A 'Market Street' is noted crossing the Square in 1888 (Map 4, Figure 47) but does not appear in the 1890 inaugural Tasmanian Post Office Directory. This directory lists the residents by name, the number of shops, warehouses and factories that existed just in lower Charles Street near Market Wharf and close to Market Place and included two grocers, two boot makers, many private residences, the Riverview Hotel, boarding houses, manufacturers, merchants, agents as well as butchers opposite Market Square.²⁴ Large bonded warehouses for the storage of grains, hides and goods stood close by the wharves. With so much industrial activity taking place near the river the polluted state of the Tamar's mud flats

22 QVM LCC7 No. 6, Press clippings, 15 July 1910.

23 Ian Pattie, 'Muddy picture of a river's past', *The Examiner* (August 2, 2003), 23-24. Pattie refers to Dr. Owen Inglis' comparative study of the Tamar and North Esk rivers, 1833 and 2003.

24 Tasmania *Post Office Directory* 1890-91, Launceston Reference Library – microfiche.

can be gained from a comment made in 1904 describing them as ‘a foul hotbed of disease and filth’.²⁵

A Place for entertainment

Market Square was a place for public entertainment and gatherings in Launceston. The circus was very popular during the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. There is evidence that many circuses set up their big tops on Market Square although one disadvantage of the site was the frequency of flooding after heavy rain. On one occasion Chiarini’s Royal Italian Circus had to contend with the results of heavy rain when performing there in the late autumn of 1880, although a local smelting works came to their rescue and top-dressed the arena with ashes.²⁶ Chiarini’s Royal Italian Circus based in America was one of the most spectacular of its time.²⁷

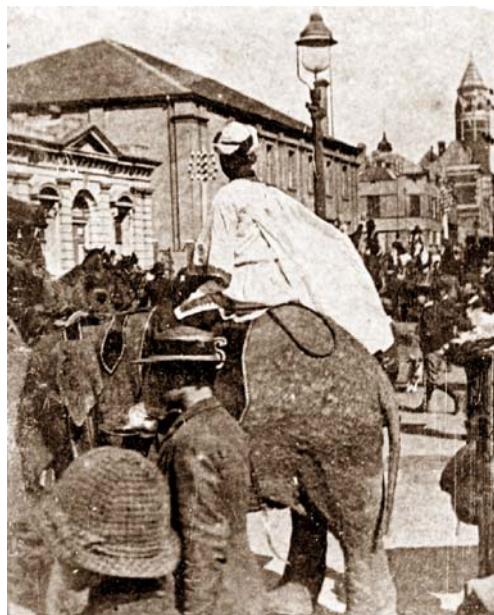


Figure 4. Circus parade from Market Square across St. John Street in 1893
OVM:1983:P:740

25 ‘Tamar’s mud flats a hotbed of filth’ : (The Examiner 100 years ago) *The Examiner* (Feb 28, 2004), 28.

26 Mark Roberts, ‘When the Circus Came to Market Green’, *The Examiner* (Dec. 24,1968), 3.

27 Mark St. Leon, *The Circus in Australia* (Richmond, Victoria : Greenhouse Publications, 1983), 73. Chiarini’s Circus was described as ‘far superior to anything of the kind ever witnessed in Australia’.

An 1893²⁸ photograph (Fig. 4) shows a crowd following an elephant and rider across Market Square. In the background can be seen horses and carriages assembled in St. John Street either to watch or to allow the safe passage of the procession.



Figure 5. Cornwall Square facing St. John Street c.1906-7
by Ebenezer Cumings QVM:1983:P:0415

Ebenezer Cumings' photograph (Fig. 5) taken during spring or summer weather illustrates how Launceston people gathered and enjoyed social occasions on Market Square or Cornwall Square as it had become in 1901.²⁹ Spectators can be seen observing from windows and from scaffolding on a building in St. John Street. Horse riders and a throng of people are assembled watching and listening. Perhaps a band is playing. Other events of significance occurred on May 20, 1910 when a civic and military service was held for King Edward VII, in June 1912 for the visit of Lieutenant General Sir

28 Cornwall Square facing onto St. John Street.

29 The name Cornwall Square was conferred on 'Market Square'/Market Green' by the City Council in 1901 to commemorate the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York. Federation celebrations were held on the site in that year.

R. S. Baden-Powell¹ and in 1918 Victory celebrations were celebrated on Cornwall Square.³⁰

The events that I find of most historical significance to the city were the celebrations for Federation in 1901 and the Victory celebrations at the end of World War I that were held on Cornwall Square. Between 14,000 and 18,000 men, women and children crowded onto and around the Square to celebrate the Armistice in 1918. There were speeches made from four specially erected platforms on the Square, four brass bands playing, masses of small Union Jack flags waving and shouts of joy from the population, interspersing the speeches. As the correspondent from *The Examiner* wrote in 1918 :

It was a gathering such never having been seen in Launceston and one that will live for all time in the memories of those who participated. Nor can it be said to have been confined to the city dwellers alone. On the other hand it was one where city and country folk joined hands in a matter of a general rejoicing. People came from far and near and with safety it can be said that there were few homes within an eight-mile radius that were not represented.³¹



Figure 6. Cornwall Square as a reserve 1911 – site of nineteenth century Market Square/Green, facing towards St. John Street *Weekly Courier*, 26 October 1911. Reconstructed Image: Edna Broad 2003.

In 1919 the following year Launceston's first modern political protest took place on Cornwall Square and was reported in *The Examiner* as 'the like of

30 QVM 1986 PO811. Community History Museum.

31 QVM:LCC7 No. 8 1915-1919, 13 November, 1918.

which perhaps has not been witnessed in this city before'.³² During April and May that year there had been a build up of public feeling against speakers advocating 'Bolshevik principles'. The protesters, many of them returned soldiers, were unhappy to find on their return home that those who did not go to the front were openly advocating Bolshevik principles in Tasmania. It was reported that a howling mob of up to 1,000 people chased 'Mr. Price wearing a red tie' through the city streets from Cornwall Square and the police had to rescue him. The result of this occurrence was a mayoral ban on political speaking on Cornwall Square to avoid riots.³³

Cornwall Square continued to be a gathering place for sport, celebrations, entertainment and parades until the outbreak of World War Two when it was required for military purposes and temporary Nissan huts and a high wooden fence were erected. These military buildings remained for another five years from 1946 as accommodation to ease the acute shortage of housing in Launceston.³⁴ By this stage the arrival of the motorcar signalled a new use for Cornwall Square.

The Motor Car

After World War Two motor vehicle use escalated and car parking became a frequent topic of discussion in the local press and led to Cornwall Square becoming a car park because of its close proximity to the city.

32 LCC Scrap Book No. 42. 'Cornwall Square - Sunday Afternoon Politicians' *The Examiner*, 14 April 1919. 'Rowdy Scenes - Cornwall Square - Police stop meeting - howling mobs in street - Mr. Price arrested on tram.' *The Examiner*, 26 May 1919.

33 Ibid.

34 2 Sept 1946 QVM:LCC3 7/1.20 Council General (1945-46) Finance Committee Council Meeting. 19/26 August. '3. Temporary Housing Accommodation - Cornwall Square. The State Government approached the LCC to lease Cornwall Square for five years to the Agricultural Bank of Tasmania. The buildings were then to be removed and Cornwall Square returned to good condition.

In 1945 under the heading 'Traffic Problems' it was suggested that a parking area be proclaimed around Cornwall Square as it was close to the business centre.³⁵ In 1946 lines were painted for angle parking around Cornwall Square although problems were perceived because if the cars were parked 'head-on to the kerb' it would mean that they would have to back out into the traffic.³⁶ By 1947 there were serious proposals to hand over the Cornwall Square lease to the Transport Department for ten thousand pounds as the site for Launceston's bus terminal. The plan was to be carried out in stages; firstly a bus depot to house 30 buses with an office block containing waiting rooms, luggage and parcels depot followed by a cafeteria with bedroom accommodation as a second storey. The bus depot plan drew an amusing comment in October 1948 from the chairman of the Northern Bus Operators' Association who responded with:

The proposed Cornwall Square bus terminal is a bus owner's nightmare and resembles a Walt Disney Fantasy...(that) he was opposed to the proposal because it will be under government control and no government controlled body has ever proved satisfactory and...cannot see how this one would be a success.³⁷



Figure 7.
F.Warland
Browne, Mayor
of Launceston
1937. *The
Examiner*, 31
December,
2002.

Many protest letters were written to the *Examiner* newspaper objecting to the loss of Cornwall Square as a reserve. One dated October 1948 written by a former mayor, F. Warland Browne (Fig. 7) who protested that:

... Cornwall Square was invested in the Council for the health and enjoyment of our citizens. To sell it for a transport park would be an error grievous beyond repair. To say that the park fills no useful purpose is not an argument for its surrender. It is a lung in the very centre of the city, an open space the value of which was appreciated by the aldermen of vision many years ago and yet is to be disposed of at a time when Launceston is making the most rapid progress in its history, when breathing spaces are becoming a matter of vital necessity.³⁸

35 LCC7:14. Newspaper cuttings scrapbook 1945-55, 28.5.1945, *The Examiner*.

36 LCC7:14. Newspaper cuttings scrapbook 1945-55, 19.2.1946, *The Examiner*.

37 LCC7:14. Newspaper cuttings scrapbook 1945-55, 27.10.1948 *The Examiner*.

38 LCC7:14 Newspaper cuttings scrapbook 1945-55, 29.10.1948 *The Examiner*.

Warland-Browne's concerns were most likely based on his knowledge that Cornwall Square had been considered by the LCC to be a park or a reserve for a considerable period of time. Launceston residents felt strongly enough in the early 1900s to fund a post and rail fence around the square in return for a promise from the LCC to provide good footpaths across it.³⁹ The Mayor's Valedictory Addresses of 1913-14, 15-16 lists Cornwall Square under Parks and Reserves and notes that children from local state schools planted young wattle trees (1913-14) for Wattle Day and that paths were formed and graveled and concrete edging laid (1915-16).

Despite a statement by the transport minister that it was the 'only feasible site' a bus terminal did not eventuate on Cornwall Square in 1948 perhaps because of public pressure or because of the requirement that some buildings would have had to be demolished to make way for it.⁴⁰ It was to take another fifty years until 2002 before a bus transit centre on Cornwall Square became a reality.

In 1955 the LCC was urged to use Cornwall Square for off-street parking (under State Government legislation revenue from parking must be used to



Figure 8. Cornwall Square car park 4 April 1980 showing kiosk and toilet block but prior to the addition of the parking deck. QVM: 1997:P:04074
Photographer: Clyde V. Coombe.



Figure 9. Cornwall Square car park viewed from St. John Street before the addition of the parking deck. Undated photograph c1960s. QVM:1992:P:1650
Photographer: W. van Nieuwkuyk.

³⁹ LCC6: Press clippings, 27 July 1910.

⁴⁰ Bus depot debate. 'We were there - The Examiner's 160th birthday anniversary'. *The Examiner* January 17, 2002, 9.

provide off street parking); it was warned that unless Cornwall Square was used, buildings might have to be demolished to make way for parking.⁴¹

By 1956⁴² measures for off-street parking were taken to gain access into the southern half of Cornwall Square using timber crossings fourteen feet wide.⁴³ So began Cornwall Square's use as a car park that eventually included a kiosk, toilet block (Figs. 8, 9) and a two-storey parking bay. (Diagram 2, Fig. 52) These were all demolished in 2001 to make way for new redevelopment projects of a Harvey Norman store, hotel, apartments, bus transit centre and retail shops.

My prints, drawings, paintings and digital photographs drawn from this historical study used narrative as a means of inventing a realizable small world that existed in another time. This work provided me with a 'feel' for the past through imagining, as well as visually providing a means of connecting existing heritage listed buildings in the vicinity of Cornwall Square to the new landscape containing Harvey Norman.

41 LCC7: 'Council Reveals Plan for Launceston parking meters,' *The Examiner* Newspaper cuttings scrapbook 19 45-55, 6 December, 1955.

42 LCC24 Pt 1 1956-58, 29 October, 1956.

43 LCC24 Pt 1 1956-58 21 November, 1956.

Chapter 2

Present Day

Urban landscapes are storehouses for...social memories, because natural features such as hills or harbours, as well as streets, buildings, and patterns of settlement, frame the lives of many people...Decades of 'urban renewal' and 'redevelopment' of a savage kind have taught many communities that when the urban landscape is battered, important collective memories are obliterated. Yet even totally bulldozed places can be marked to restore some shared public meaning.¹

Heritage Matters

During the period of my study of Cornwall Square the local media reported public concerns regarding the Harvey Norman project. One of the concerns expressed by Graeme Corney, Senior Heritage Adviser for the Tasmanian Heritage Council was the loss of a heritage site to insensitive private commercial development.² This chapter deals with heritage considerations regarding the Harvey Norman development as well as locating Cornwall Square overall in the context of its contemporary redevelopment into a place of consumption, entertainment and accommodation.



Figure 10. 61 Charles Street. Heritage listed Workers' Cottage. Photograph: E. Broad 2002.

A heritage report commissioned by Artas Architects and Planners on the proposed Harvey Norman retail store, open car park, transit centre and multi-level car park building was prepared by Lisa Nelson, Heritage Consultant and Historian, in 2000. The report examined heritage significance

¹ D. Hayden, *The Power of Place*, (Cambridge : The MIT Press, 1995), 9.

² Graeme Corney, 'Planning for the perfect heritage cocktail,' *The Examiner*, (September 25, 2002), 10.

of the three land lots sold by the LCC for redevelopment. (Diagram 1, Fig. 51) Lot 1 contained the Heritage listed Launceston Corporation Depot at 45-61 Charles Street (Fig. 10) which included the Worker's Cottages on the same title.³

The Tasmanian Heritage Council (THC) listed 45-61 Charles Street, referred to as the 'Launceston Corporation', (Fig. 11) on the 1998 register and described it as 'a significant element in the urban streetscape'.⁴ Description of the buildings covered only the two conjoined Federation style worker's cottages at 61 Charles Street, not the Art Deco Corporation Depot itself. Report author Lisa Nelson assumes heritage listing was not intended for the depot and sees it as an important question, and I believe perhaps a loophole,



Figure 11. Launceston Corporation Depot 45-61 Charles Street. Photograph: E. Broad.

as to whether the depot buildings were worthy of heritage listing on their own merits. If they had not been listed on the same title as the cottages, would the Corporation buildings as they existed in 2000 have been identified as architecturally significant in their own right?

Nelson did concede the historical relevance of the site in her report:

as a market place and timber yard before its current function, and that the Launceston City Council has had a long association with the site. Due, in part, to the fact that there are no extant remnants on the site of the earlier uses or any built evidence of the association with Corporation for 140 years these are not sufficient reasons to list these buildings for their historic heritage significance'.⁵

³ The other two Heritage listed buildings, Scots Church (1832) and James Henty's home 'Grant Staples' (c1830s) are on separately owned private titles.

⁴ Tasmanian Heritage Council : Reference R3483.

⁵ Lisa Nelson, *Heritage Report on Proposed Harvey Norman Retail Store, Open Car park, Transit Centre and Multi-Level Car Park Building, Launceston*. A Report prepared for Artas Architects and Planners, 54 Tamar Street Launceston, (2000), 22.

My investigations show a thorough assessment was carried out for this report sourcing material from the Launceston City Council, The Queen Victoria Museum Community History Unit, the State Library of Tasmania; Launceston Reference Library, State Reference Library, Hobart, and Tasmanian Library and Archives of Tasmania.

My own independent research bears out the lack of any pictorial or physical evidence available to illustrate the history of Cornwall Square as a marketplace on the site of the Harvey Norman store. There were no identifiable artefacts stored in the collection of the Queen Victoria Museum archives or its database. I sourced maps, contemporary newspaper items and written descriptions as well as Council correspondence and reports held in the collections of the Queen Victoria Museum, State Library or Archives of Tasmania.

The importance of retention of the integrity of the streetscape after the demolition of the Corporation buildings became a point of dispute emerging between the THC and the architects. In the preliminary design stages of the Harvey Norman site the THC advised that the Harvey Norman store should be built to the street edge to retain the integrity of the colonial streetscape in Charles Street. This advice was declined.

Following an appeal by the National Trust and others, eleven conditions were applied eight of which involved existing trees. Care, monitoring and maintenance of existing trees was to be carried out with replacement of those that did not survive. An arborist was to prune, advise and monitor the condition of the trees. Another requirement was the new Harvey Norman tower was to be the same height as the Riverview Hotel. Recording of buildings before demolition and placement of an interpretation panel on

Williams/Charles Street corner were recommended.⁶ Finally, the design of the Charles Street fence was to follow a THC drawing. The clumsy red brick and cement fence surrounding the Harvey Norman carpark (Fig. 12) responds to this appeal condition and is an attempt by the architects to retain the integrity of the colonial streetscape.



Figure 12. Harvey Norman brick and cement fence. Photograph: E. Broad 2002.

The Harvey Norman store opened in October 2002 and the bus transit centre and offices shortly afterwards with no interpretation panels in place outlining the site's history.⁷

The dispute and appeal initially over the siting of the \$13m development, apart from the building height and parking spaces, included emotive fears of the possible destruction of trees that had been set aside for preservation on the perimeter of Cornwall Square. There was a presumption that the trees were very old and therefore part of the historic streetscape. While several of the trees are old and can be seen in photographs dating back to circa 1906, others date from circa 1960s. For example, an aerial photograph circa 1950s

⁶ Artas Architects and Planners v Launceston City Council and K Noble v Launceston City Council & Artas Architects and Planners (2001) TASRMPAT 8 (17 January 2001) File No. 215 & 217/00 P J8/2001 <http://www.rmpat.tas.gov.au/decisions/01j8.htm> (Accessed 12/11/2001).

⁷ I spoke to members of 'Friends of the Library' working on organising interpretation panels during 2002. Early in January 2003 I attended a meeting with Peter Richardson, representing the Friends of the Library, and Anne McLaughlin a heritage consultant, who has been appointed to research the background of Cornwall Square and prepare interpretation panels. To my knowledge, no interpretation panels are yet in place. (May 2004).

shows a thick row of foliage along the frontage of St. John Street that had mostly disappeared in a 1960s photograph when the area was a car park. While retention and care of some of the trees on the site perimeter were a part of the appeal platform against the new development, it appears to me what was really at stake was the loss of an historic site of social significance to an inappropriately designed commercial development, which should have been scrutinised far more closely in the design and planning stages.⁸ Final approval of the submitted projects were made by city councillors disregarding their own council planning officers' recommendations regarding heritage sensitive areas. Graeme Corney, Senior Heritage Adviser for the Tasmanian Heritage Council says that 'Launceston has an intactness of its pre-modern town fabric that most similarly sized cities in Australia would envy. However now is the time for vigilance'.⁹

Corney's belief is that the planning system for city developments in Launceston and in Hobart does not encourage quality development and cites examples of poor developments that included the Harvey Norman development 'because to varying degrees, they are disrespectful of their wonderful heritage setting.' He asserts 'at a time when we have more planners than ever before we have poorer planning outcomes than ever before' and criticises town planners as '...merely processors of development applications'.¹⁰

Similarly, Scott Salmon contends the rise of entrepreneurialism and 'imagineering' has seen a move away from comprehensive planning serving the 'public good' to a more fragmented approach designed to cater for developers. This method of operation influenced by privatization and

⁸ Graeme Corney, 'Planning for the perfect heritage cocktail,' 10.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

deregulation has brought with it changes reflecting only short-term planning. Salmon believes that the new role assumed by local governments as partner of the private sector has brought changes in decision-making with a greater emphasis on flexibility and efficiency.¹¹ Proponents of this partnership style argue that locating decision-making outside bureaucratic government structures enables the process to become more market driven, developer initiated and project specific.¹² Unfortunately, in my view, it also disenfranchises citizens who may disagree with an entrepreneurial project they believe is not in the community's best interests.¹³

Salmon points to one popular variant of urban regeneration he describes as 'post-industrial' development that rarely orients itself towards attracting industrial and manufacturing but increasingly towards cultures of consumption. Following the lead established by the successful projects (American) of the early 1980s, this

usually involved the (re)use or (re)creation of old infrastructure, preferably on the waterfront, wharves, ports, factories, historic districts, suitably rehabilitated, gentrified and, where necessary, sanitized for their new roles.¹⁴

Salmon could also be describing Launceston's river edge redevelopment when he comments on obsolete industrial sites becoming model transformations of 'what were once working waterfronts into 'walking

¹¹ Launceston City Council 5.1 Council Leadership and Commitment identifies 'A strong partnership approach between Council, community and business stakeholders' in its City Context Statement p. 15 *Launceston Central Development Strategy*, February, 2002.

¹² Scott Salmon 'Landscapes of Pleasure and the Commodification of Cultural Spectacle' in C. L. Harrington and D. D. Bielby, *Popular Culture*, (Massachusetts : Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 106-121.

¹³ An example is the Launceston Inveresk Precinct development supposedly earmarked as a cultural and sporting precinct with green spaces. During April 2004 a fully developed architect designed plan of the entire precinct was presented to the public in its final form. There had been no consultation with the public, the plan eliminated most green space and was a virtual subdivision of multiple storeyed buildings.

¹⁴ Scott Salmon 'Landscapes of Pleasure and the Commodification of Cultural Spectacle', 110.

waterfronts'¹⁵ where' the middle-classes can now leisurely stroll where working classes historically laboured'.¹⁶

The Launceston City Council does not consider Cornwall Square to be of historic significance because its own report prepared by consultants mentions only designated Launceston parklands as ground that holds history in its 'Foundation and History of the City'.¹⁷ For example Princes Square is referred to as beginning its days as a brickfield until it was levelled as a parade ground for military drills in the 1840s; and City Park noted as 'Peoples Park' dating from the 1820s.¹⁸ Cornwall Square's 2002 omission from the civic history of Launceston is most likely because its social history is remote and cannot be demonstrated through vestiges of bricks and mortar or as an enduring reserved green space in the town grid.

Yi-Fu Tuan contends that there are three reasons for wanting to preserve aspects of the past and these are aesthetic, moral and morale boosting and none of these apply to the public space of Cornwall Square. He argues the reason an old edifice should be saved for posterity is because it has architectural merit and represents an achievement of past forebears. The reason is based on aesthetics, tinged with piety. The Heritage preservation of wealthy pioneer James Henty's home 'Grant Staples' and Scots Church on Cornwall Square, Launceston could be seen as an appeal to piety, and as Tuan points out to the 'end of building a people's morale, their sense of pride'.¹⁹

¹⁵ Scott Salmon, 'Landscapes of Pleasure and the Commodification of Cultural Spectacle' cites Thaler, 1988, 35 110.

¹⁶ Scott Salmon, 'Landscapes of Pleasure and the Commodification of Cultural Spectacle', 110.

¹⁷ *Launceston Central Area Development Strategy 2002* - Ratio Consultants Pty Ltd., i.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*, (London : University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 195-197.

Perhaps, too, when people deliberately change their environment and feel that they are in control of their destiny, they have little cause for nostalgia. On the other hand if they believe that changes are occurring too quickly, nostalgia for an idyllic past becomes very strong.²⁰

The most recently issued town map for tourists (Map 7, Fig. 50) reveals that Cornwall Square no longer exists as a named place – its memory lingers on in



Fig. 13. Cornwall Square in transit. Photograph: E.Broad 2003.

the token naming of Cornwall Square Transit (bus transit centre), (Fig. 13) Cornwall Square News agency (located in the bus transit centre building) and the Cornwall building (boutique hotel, apartments and multi level parking facility). The names of Launceston, Cornwall and Tamar have inextricable colonial links to the city and should be preserved through social history rather than merely through nomenclature. That a bus depot, a newsagency and a building are named for a place that has historical, social and cultural links to the city

somehow removes any past meaning for ordinary citizens.

When does space become place? By being named : as the flows of power and negotiations of social relations are rendered in the concrete form of architecture; and also by embodying the symbolic and imaginary investments of a population. Place is space to which meaning has been ascribed.²¹

The relationship between community and place is a powerful one and each reinforces the identity of the other.²² Relph notes a type of public place that has physical or symbolic qualities of ‘placeness’ and perhaps Cornwall

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ E. Carter, J. Donald, J. Squires, *Space and Place*, (London : Lawrence & Whishart, 1993), xii.

²² E. Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, (London : Pion Limited, 1976), 34.

Square for a time up until World War Two had those qualities for the people who were associated with it.

The regular visits I made to record redevelopment of Cornwall Square during 2001-2002 became charged with a sense of loss for a place where the last vestiges of one hundred and forty years of community history were being erased - bulldozed along with the car park, council depot and kiosk. Images of the past crowded out from the archived Council records, photographs and newspaper articles. Relph's interpretation of place summarises Cornwall Square's long-standing connection to community:

Places are fusions of human and natural order and are the significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world. They are defined less by unique locations, landscapes and communities than by the focusing of experiences and intentions onto particular settings.²³

So much had happened on that piece of ground over so many years. Sadly the people who had gathered there, been entertained and celebrated were now long gone and with them their memories and their struggles to retain a piece of the 'green' space.

Traces of past use, artefacts, collective memory and time embedded in a place are the remnants left for heritage consultants to collect and ponder their significance. In this context Cornwall Square is a void with no remaining physical evidence to support its history. Yet the spirit of a place is not just defined by bricks and mortar and I believe the social history of Cornwall Square as a place where momentous celebratory occasions such as Federation and World War One Armistice occurred should be considered as culturally significant to Launceston.

²³ Ibid.,14.



Fig. 14. *Peanuts* by Schulz. *The Examiner*. Copyright 1972 United Feature Syndicate. www.snoopy.com.22 (Nov. 02).

My response to the erasure of community memory empathized with a Peanuts cartoon (Fig. 14) where Snoopy articulates his outrage at finding that a six-storey car park has been built over his puppy farm home and his memories. I felt immediately drawn to the message so simply delivered in this cartoon. The annoyance Snoopy expresses paralleled my feelings about the imposition of 'false dreams' by the Harvey Norman store over the top of community memories of Cornwall Square. The cartoon also confronted me with clarity of recognition of my own nostalgic stance. The ability of the cartoon to communicate something so complex also impressed me greatly and it became a motivation in my search for a simple expressive model to use in my artwork.

What does give a place its identity, its aura? Aldo van Eyck defines it as:

Whatever space and time means, place and occasion mean more. For space in the image of man is place, and time in the image of man is occasion.²⁴

The Harvey Norman superstore is negotiating its sense of place and relationship with the people and a very different chapter of history far removed from the original public market, industrial and maritime past is emerging. The superstore represents the contemporary marketplace and its

²⁴ Bryan Lawson, *The Language of Space*, (Oxford : Architectural Press, 2001), 230. Lawson refers to a 1962 quotation by Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck.

architectural qualities and retail presentation are 21st century.²⁵ The Harvey Norman development is at ease with adjacent new apartments, hotels and river edge redevelopment where people live, shop and congregate in an area of urban renewal that owes almost nothing to its heritage surroundings.

There may however be one enduring connection between the market sheds, the Corporation Depot and the Harvey Norman store. An 1881 plan of Launceston (Map 3, Fig. 46) shows a roadway into Market Place from Charles Street that continued in use as the Corporation Depot entrance and in all probability remains today as the car park entrance/exit of Harvey Norman. (Fig.15)²⁶



Figure 15. Entrance/exit to Harvey Norman store in Charles Street.
Photograph: E. Broad 2002.

²⁵ The architectural style of this Harvey Norman store has been described to me as 'Georgian pastiche or neo-confused' by Richard Blythe, Lecturer in Architecture, University of Tasmania.

²⁶ Lisa Nelson, *Heritage Report on Proposed Harvey Norman Retail Store, Open Carpark, Transit Centre and Multi-Level Carpark building, Launceston*. (2000), 10.

Chapter 3

Superstore superhype

...franchising is exemplary of a distinctive form of capital formation...and for the franchisee offers entrepreneurship in a package, ambition-by-numbers, capitalism in kit form. For the franchiser it gives access to capital without ceding control, reconciles integrated administration with entrepreneurial motivation.¹

In this chapter I discuss the 'world of commodities', represented by the corporate retail space linked to global financial structures. My primary interest at the outset was non-food superstores² and how they had gained dominance in the retail marketplace. The research I undertook provided me with an understanding of connections existing between advertising 'image'³ and presentation method used by superstores such as Harvey Norman. The photographs taken for my project were informed by Harvey Norman store and catalogue furniture arrangement styles.



Figure 16. Harvey Norman superstore - Cornwall Square, Launceston – weeks prior to opening in October, 2002 Photograph: E. Broad 2002.

¹ Nick Perry, *Hyperreality and Global Culture*, (London : Routledge, 1998), 151.

² B. Merrilees and D. Miller, 'The Superstore Format in Australia: Opportunities and Limitations,' *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 30, No. 6, (1997), 901. In 1997 furniture and hardware superstores are noted as measuring between 10,000 to 12,000 m² compared to traditional store size in these categories of 400 m².

³ The advertising catalogue depiction of a lounge suite surrounded by a staged living room style.

Prior to 1993 there were only a handful of superstores in Australia, namely in furniture (IKEA and Harvey Norman), sporting goods (Rebel) and hardware (BBC Hardwarehouse).⁴

Superstores offer entry into a hedonistic wonderland of consumption under huge cavernous roofs – ironic palaces of dreams to entice the consumer.(Figs. 17, 18) Wherever the eye glances manufactured goods are piled high from floor to ceiling, from front to back and towering in multiples. Brand names jostle with packaging display zones and directory signage. However on closer inspection and with a minimum of rational thought, each warehouse interior has a familiar structure, with the sameness of towers of displayed products and stacked rows of gleaming shopping trolleys. These displays are designed as part of retailing culture to attract and retain people within the store.

From a visual art perspective the interior space of the Harvey Norman store presented me with colour, light, texture and feelings of unreality when confronted with its immense size and selection of goods. (Figs. 17, 18) I was



Fig. 17 Harvey Norman, Launceston furniture franchise. October 2002 Photo: E. Broad

⁴ Ibid., 900.



Fig. 18 Harvey Norman, Launceston furniture franchise. October 2002 Photo: E. Broad

aware too when examining the advertising and merchandise that this scenario was repeated across the chain of Harvey Norman stores nationally through their franchise facilities.

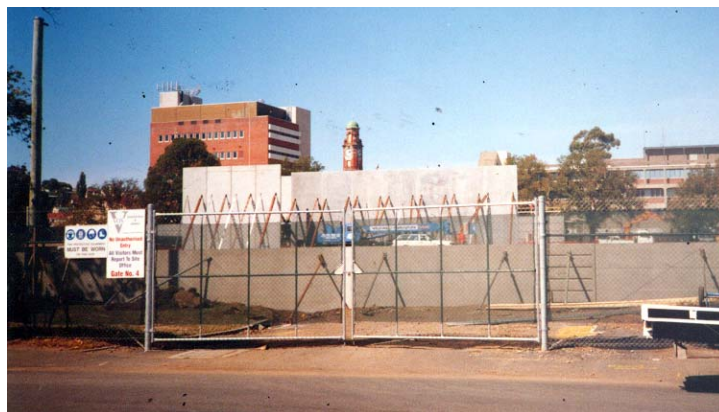


Figure 19. Harvey Norman Superstore under construction on the Cornwall Square site with tilt-panel prefabricated cement panels in place, Launceston April, 2002. Photograph: E. Broad.

On my study site of Cornwall Square during 2001-2002 I observed and photographed the construction of a warehouse-style Harvey Norman superstore using the prefabricated cement tilt-panel building technique. (Fig. 19) This is a relatively cheap and rapid method, making it ideal for superstore structures. The building process was swift once the cement slab

had been poured and cured during February-March, 2002. The first pre-formed tilt-panel cement walls were lifted into place by cranes towards the end of March and the Harvey Norman store was operational by October, 2002.

An interesting footnote to the new Harvey Norman store was the speed in which national franchise budget furniture manufacturer/retailer 'Fantastic Furniture' moved into Harvey Norman's old vacated site in Wellington Street, Launceston. Fantastic Furniture's opening publicity stated that it was their first store in Tasmania and the thirty-ninth Australia-wide for the group. Was this a good business opportunity to step into the already established Harvey Norman furniture site that appealed to them to make their first move into Tasmania or would they have come anyway?

Store formats are constructed using specialist knowledge of retail marketing but as Kim Humphery acutely observes, retailers construct retail cultures but they cannot create smoothly functioning consumer cultures.⁵ This must arise over time from negotiation between retailers and consumers and can take the form of media advertising, special promotions or offers of extended periods of interest-free credit. Another area of negotiation occurs within the store and relates to theatrical or entertainment aspects presented in the form of colour, spatiality, movement and interpretation of cultural aspects of the lived world. Perhaps as Walter Benjamin noted 'merchandise enthroned with an aura of amusement surrounding it'.⁶ Retailing should also be entertainment according to Dawn Robertson, Myer Grace Brothers managing director who

⁵ Kim Humphery. *Shelf Life*, (Melbourne : Cambridge University Press, 1998), 5-6. Humphery's definition as to how consumer culture arises is through an interaction between those who have something to sell and those who look, listen, watch, wander, feel, and sometimes buy. These cultures always reflect social difference.

⁶ Umberto Eco *Travels in Hyperreality* cites Walter Benjamin *Reflections*, (New York : Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983) (1978), 152.

believes in the notion of retail as theatre.⁷ I found this concept of relevance to my work because of the crossover of elements of the theatrical linking advertising, commercial television programs, and merchandising. In other words in the planning and presentation of my work I used some of the strategies of advertising and retailing in the theatrical white cube of the gallery space. These tactics included planning colour impact to catch the eye and placement, arrangement, scale and directional pathways for the viewer to follow through the gallery space.

The influence of the theatrical on consumers began conspicuously with the development of department stores modelled on Aristide Boucicault's Bon Marche opened in Paris in 1852 and copied by Macy's in New York in 1860⁸ Vitrine displays became more than a simple window display of manufactured product, they became spaces of theatrical staging for the display of the commodity offered to the gaze of the passer by in the street. Le Gall notes that the 'inside of the vitrine is a parody of a scenographic space, just as a scale model can be a parody of architecture'⁹ offering something similar to a stage-set from theatre.

My childhood memories of Myer Melbourne's mechanical Christmas window displays are of being enthralled because they were like a fairytale set from a pantomime – they were pure theatrical entertainment for children in a pre-television era. Merchandise presentations in warehouse-style superstores such as Harvey Norman are noticeably different today because they do not need to rely on window displays to draw customers. Advertising catalogues provide the 'stuff of dreams' in the first instance and multiple in-

⁷ Kate Legge, 'Retail Therapy' *The Weekend Australian Magazine* (April 5– 6 2003), 18.

⁸ Beverley Kingston *Basket, Bag and Trolley*, (Melbourne : Oxford University Press, 1994), 27.

⁹ G. Le Gall, *Atget, Life in Paris* (Hazen 1998), 34-37.

store displays reinforce the message. These are marketing strategies of today's superstores.

The rapid proliferation and dominance of the superstore format in the retail market of today has been significantly assisted by economic globalisation. This structure has had the most profound influence on the world's political and economic structure since at least the Industrial Revolution. The fundamental principles underlying the global economy include:

the primacy of economic growth; the need for free trade to stimulate the growth; the unrestricted 'free market'; the absence of government regulation; and voracious consumerism combined with an aggressive advocacy of a uniform worldwide development model that faithfully reflects the Western corporate vision and serves corporate interests.¹⁰

Having said that, I will attempt to explain the basic hypothesis of globalisation in the context of its relationship to the constant supply of goods that stock large superstores. Some of the information I have sourced comes through the globalisation protest movement.

The background to the current western world economic model occurred with government transfer of economic power into entrepreneurial hands during the Thatcher and Reagan era, informed by the economic philosophy of Friedrich von Hayek and replacing the prevailing Keynesian model.¹¹ In 1974 von Hayek was jointly awarded the Nobel Prize for economics for his conservative views for the time, on the restoration of confidence in markets. Von Hayek proposed the removal of government control, regulation and planning of economies to allow corporations and private individuals to set a

¹⁰ E. Goldsmith and J.Mander, *The Case against the Global Economy*, (London : Earthscan Publications Ltd., 2001), 2.

¹¹ D. Yergin and J. Stanislaw, eds *Commanding Heights*, (New York : Simon and Schuster Inc., 1998), 141-144. John Maynard Keynes, a British economist of the first half of the 20th century, best known for his revolutionary theories on the causes of unemployment and recession, which came to be known as Keynesian economics.

free trade model. The governments of Margaret Thatcher followed by Ronald Reagan adopted von Hayek's model of economic management as the blueprint for conversion of economies in crisis to free-market capitalism.¹²

In real terms in this climate of entrepreneurial free market activity, production of local Australian manufactured products ranging from automotive, electronics, through to textile and clothing moved 'off-shore' for more profitable investment opportunities. The 'global factory', coupled with a radically new international division of deregulated labour unfettered by union organisation, emerged. These free market conditions allow companies to search for the cheapest place to produce their products and factors such as labour costs, investment subsidies from governments and the cost of raw materials are considerations. The implication of global sourcing is that governments can be tempted to start a 'race to the bottom', or offer too many incentives to attract foreign investment.¹³

The attractive feature of the products of global companies is their low price - made possible because they are not designed to cater for specific local tastes. This results in standardised and high volume production that makes it possible to produce goods cheaply. These standardised global products stock the shelves of our superstores, hotels, restaurants and streets to create a monoculture across the world. Edward Goldsmith labels this system as 'corporate colonisation' visited upon poor countries and the poor in rich countries.¹⁴

The most important factor in the success of Harvey Norman stores is the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Professor Drs. Ruud Lubbers Homepage, <http://globalize.kub.nl/lexicon.asp?term> (accessed 28/5/2003).

¹⁴ E. Goldsmith and J. Mander, *The Case against the Global Economy*, 3.

business franchising arrangement. Nick Perry outlines the McDonald's principle of franchising that has become a metaphor of organisation and an icon of globalisation, where standardised products and standardised methods are part of the experience of consumption and are represented through a distinctive advertising style.¹⁵ Franchises have contributed to the success and wealth of CEO, Gerry Harvey of Harvey Norman Holdings Inc., his wife and other big shareholders.

Franchising as a business system has its roots in the American automobile dealerships of the 1890s ; extending from them to service stations and subsequently fast-food outlets reinforced by the US Interstate highway network in the 1950s and 1960s. Perry cites Zukin and her example that McDonald's forms part of an emergent 'landscape of power' where such landscapes are seen as a symbolic and material mediation of 'market' and 'place'.¹⁶

The big box warehouse superstores and their advertising hype style came to Australia during the 1990s styled on American counterparts. One of the most

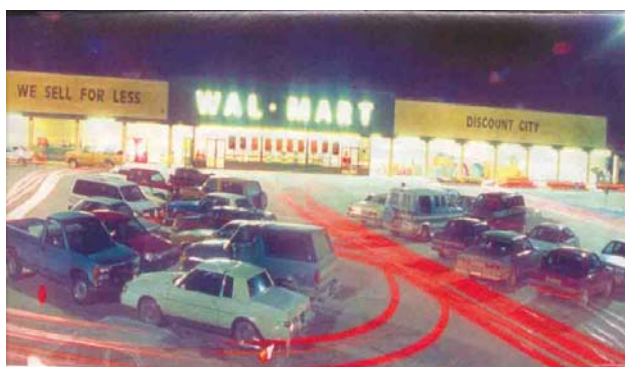


Figure 20. One of more than 4000 Wal-Mart stores attracting 100 million shoppers a week. *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, (May 4-5, 2002), 19.

successful models was the Wal-Mart chain of which there are now 4382 around the world attracting a reported 100 million shoppers per week.¹⁷ (Fig. 20) Sam Walton's successful 'buy it low, stack it high, sell it cheap' philosophy

¹⁵ Nick Perry, *Hyperreality and Global Culture*, 150.

¹⁶ S. Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, (California : University of California Press, 1991), 43.

¹⁷ Roy Eccleston 'The family store,' *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, (May 4-5 2002), 19-21.

began the Wal-Mart empire in 1962 that continues today. Wal-Mart's computer systems are second only to those of the US military.¹⁸ The expansion of Wal-Mart across America has gained its criticism and action groups such as Sprawl-Busters have united through the Internet to prevent small community devastation through the arrival of these huge stores. Protesters say companies such as Wal-Mart set up their large stores cheaply on rural land, eliminate small businesses then move on to other locations leaving behind large empty warehouses and unemployment in their wake.¹⁹

In Australia non-food superstore warehouses such as Harvey Norman franchises, Bunnings, Officeworks Inc and Big W have become accepted as part of the urban landscape in each State, immediately recognisable by their branded stores. The same product items advertised in national chain brochures can be bought in stores located in South Australia, Victoria, Canberra, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania.

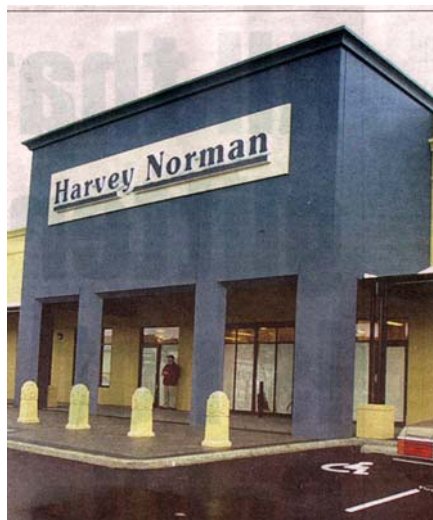


Figure 21. Logo signage – Harvey Norman Launceston superstore. Photo:

As an extension of the store message mass media advertising creates the imperative for consumption and links it to the retailer's name, becoming the

¹⁸ Roy Eccleston 'The family store,' 19-21.

¹⁹ Al Norman, *Slam-Dunking Wal-Mart!* <http://www.sprawl-busters.com/>, (accessed 2/11/2001).

brand. A very early use of logos or brand names was the insignias developed by oil companies in America in the 1920s and 30s. Mobil's flying red horse and the Texaco star became synonymous with 'gas' stations and travelling the highway. Travellers became mobile consumers of the company signs whether they bought petrol or not. Today the golden arches of fast food chain McDonald's is a symbol recognisable anywhere in the world. We are, as Susan Willis notes, 'logo collectors' and our relationship to commodity consumption is defined by the logo. Harvey Norman franchises trade on the company name as logo designated by font style and colour combination: 'Under the sign of the logo consumption is assured; the choice between various brand names superseded by the flow of commodities'.²⁰ (Fig. 21)

In Tasmania there are seven Harvey Norman stores located in Launceston, Hobart, Glenorchy, Rosny, Burnie, Devonport and Ulverstone. Harvey Norman Launceston, a multiple franchise store, issues catalogues separately or sometimes collectively, from its five business areas of furniture, floorcovering, bedding, computer and electrical.

Why are large chain retailers constantly in search of expansion into new retail locations? Humphery²¹ believes that it is to retain power over consumer spending; to maintain and maximise profit, and capture the imagination and desires of the consumer. But this newness has to be constantly worked at, reframed and reconceptualised to avoid familiarity. In a retail environment that aims to colonise everyday life the process of corporations becoming less magical and more ordinary means loss of a certain power of attraction. But power is constantly undermined by its own logic and by the people it attempts to attract. In other words there is a

²⁰ Susan Willis *A Primer for Daily Life*, (London : Routledge, 1991), 58-59.

²¹ Kim Humphery, *Shelf Life*, (Melbourne : Cambridge University Press, 1998), 19.

constant struggle between merchandiser and consumer in an effort to avoid boredom with what is offered.

An outspoken proponent of this drive for expansion is Gerry Harvey, CEO of Harvey Norman Holdings, who recently admitted that his business is nearing saturation point in Australia and named Europe, Asia, New Zealand and the UK as key targets for his global expansion plans. Mr. Harvey said the company was looking to expand its reach in the Asian market, where it has fourteen shops and in New Zealand from eight shops to twenty. A store in Slovenia opened in September, 2002. He said recently 'I really can't grow it a lot more in Australia. If I can get a global thing going, I can dwarf anything I'm doing in Australia.'

Mr. Harvey explained why overseas expansion was planned:

We can't get the growth in Australia that we've been getting every year for the last twenty years because we're everywhere....We can get growth but it means closing a store, opening a store.....We can certainly get growth but we can't get the 20-30-40-50 per cent per annum growth and doubling the size of our business every three years which we used to be able to get.²²

Harvey Norman's rapid franchise expansion history covers twenty years, but it is only one story as national and multi-national franchise stores have proliferated at a very rapid rate during the 1990s in Australia. For this accelerated rate of expansion to happen, changed attitudes in policy and planning strategies have occurred throughout local, state and federal government bodies echoing current general global business principles of deregulation and privatisation.

An example of how perspectives can change in little more than a decade is illustrated in northern Tasmania in The Tamar Region Master Planning

²² 'Retail pick-up to continue: Gerry Harvey', *The Examiner*, (September 14, 2002), 20.

Authority, Commercial Centres Report of 18 June 1990,²³ where it was noted that the Tamar Region was over-supplied with retail floor space. This assessment was based on floorspace per capita, retail/household sales expenditure and the perception of the market.

Perceptions were that more retail development would take business from existing stores; evidence that Launceston was over-shopped was shown by the 'unhealthy amount of price cutting'; the retail climate was poor due to reduced per capita sales, there was an ageing population and declining disposable income. A general conclusion was the provision of new retail space in the Tamar warrants careful consideration.

Quite obviously market perceptions have changed and for these views to be held or applied in relation to approval of new developments of national and multi-national retail superstores seems at odds in 2004. In fact lobbying pressure from corporations is so powerful it has undoubtedly led the Tasmanian government to legislate changes in shop trading hours to allow seven-day trading. The pressure applied by one corporation was that it would not build its three new superstores in Tasmania if seven day trading did not occur.²⁴ 'Open-slather' seven-day trading commenced in Tasmania on December 1, 2002.

To continue and maintain their supremacy these large superstores generate advertising through radio, letterbox, television, telephone canvassing, billboards and moving vehicles. This blitz of competitive marketing has

²³ Launceston City Council Tamar Master Planning Authority – *Commercial Centres Report* (18 June, 1990).

²⁴ 'Big W store hinges on seven-day trading: \$10m carrot' *The Saturday Examiner*, (March 16, 2002), 1.

produced a level of post-cynicism²⁵ from consumers making advertisers promote their messages louder thereby compounding the onslaught on the senses. Harvey Norman is one merchandiser whose television advertising messages are faster, louder and more invasive than most. During my study period 2001-2004 the voiceover on their commercials was so rapid it was almost incomprehensible and of particular irritation was the 'go Harvey go' high-pitched screech at the end of the advertisements.

It is hard to imagine that one hundred years ago customers had to write to a store to request a store catalogue, as noted in the Launceston *Examiner* of 1904:

The large Launceston shop of Dempsters has hit on the idea of sending a 'catalogue' to anyone who requests such a piece of correspondence. A letter sent to Dempsters will elicit from the store a price list of some 2500 bargains.²⁶

Today very few people can avoid being exposed to advertising, and regardless of whether we consciously notice the constant barrage of words, images and logos, they must eventually have some effect, even negative ones. Once inside a store the contemporary strategies of selling are brought into play using subtleties and all manner of ideas from trick mirrors, aromatherapy, subliminal tracks to colour conditioning. The senses of sight, sound, touch and smell are elements that ignite a consumer response.

Natasha Bitá points out Swedish-based furniture retailer Ikea relies on a well-worn path to lead shoppers through its stores. Ikea national deco (sic) manager Albert Barsoum says '...we have short cuts for our regular customers who have been to the store before and...use night-based lighting in room displays so shoppers can imagine relaxing on a sofa after a day at work...' Ikea also uses colour to influence its customers.²⁷ Strategies such as

²⁵ Con Stavros, Marketing Consultant ABC TV, *Consumer Dimensions*, 30 May, 2002.

²⁶ 'The Examiner 100 Years Ago' (July 5, 1903) *The Saturday Examiner* (July 5, 2003), 25.

²⁷ Natasha Bitá, 'Shopping and faking' *Inquirer, The Weekend Australian*, (July 7-8, 2001), 23.

these are about creating a shopper friendly environment; part of the theatre of entertainment in retailing.

Harvey Norman's Launceston store has a focus walkway from the main entrance right through the centre of the furniture franchise area leading directly to computers and electrical – the two most visited franchises. This effective arrangement means that customers are forced to walk past furniture settings to get to computers and electrical. The franchises of flooring and bedding are at a disadvantage because both require a deliberate detour by the customer to the left or right of the main entrance. The store lighting is subdued with the use of nightlights here and there amongst the lounge settings to simulate the home environment.

Advertising and sales methods and strategies have changed considerably over time and Nick Perry points out under the old rules of advertising up until the 1980's the dictum was 'don't sell the sausage, sell the sizzle'; likewise in the garment business this became 'don't sell the clothes – sell the body'. This old fashioned notion of advertising as primarily a source of product information belongs firmly to the past. Perry points out the purpose of this classic axiom was twofold – first to forge a link between a commodity (sausages or clothes) – second, to make this claimed relation between a particular object and a specific cultural value appear to be a given. Construed this way traditional advertising acted as an unlicensed broker between the circulation of commodities in the market and the circulation of meanings in the culture flowing one-way from the culture to the commodity. Meanings were just there to be taken and used and any consequence for culture was

seen as no more than an accidental by-product of value adding to the product.²⁸

As advertisers learned more about what constituted culture they realised there wasn't a sausage that didn't sizzle superbly or clothes that weren't attractively embodied. And consumers knew it - and because advertisers knew that consumers knew, advertisers were pushed to further colonise and cannibalise culture and existing cultural meanings to construct new signs of distinction.²⁹

What messages are contemporary retailers giving us? Harvey Norman's TV advertisements come in the form of an assault on the senses, enforcing their retailing brand logo, followed by a message that primarily informs the public to come to Harvey Norman where they can afford to buy because of the long periods of interest free credit available to them. Harvey Norman catalogues present their merchandise with a dream of a penthouse or poolside view. Along with the dream Harvey Norman informs us that we can trust them because they are specialists in their area and many of us believe them because they say so.

Harvey Norman's computer catalogue offered special 'Christmas scratch & Win Giveaway 2002 of over \$800,000 in total 'if you spend more than \$20 in their computer store', with a Harvey Norman offer on the cover of 'If you find a lower advertised price you'll be refunded 110% of the difference', appearing as a circular seal. Christmas 2002 brochure offers from the furniture, bedding and electrical franchises were 'free photo with Santa in

²⁸ Nick Perry, *Hyperreality and Global Culture*, 37.

²⁹ Ibid., 37.

store' and 'pre-Christmas delivery on orders placed up until December 1, 2002'.

In January 2003, Tasmanian-wide Harvey Norman catalogue and TV advertising coincided with Australia Day and offered a measure of patriotism with 'The Great Aussie 3 Day Sale'. Images of a koala with bush hat offering 'mates rates', a cockatoo, an echidna, wattle, parakeets, a frill-necked lizard and a kookaburra were posed amongst the advertised merchandise. The brochure combined all franchise products of electrical, furniture, bedding and Manchester, home electrical and computers in folded broadsheet form.

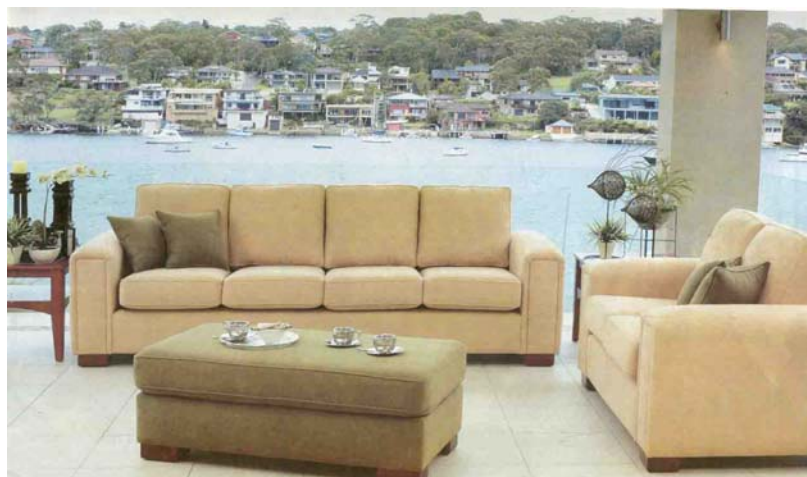


Figure 22. Harvey Norman catalogue front page Winter 2004

Harvey Norman's winter 2004 furniture and bedding catalogue presented a changed format. A front page heading of 'Inspiring Contemporary Look for 2004' introduced an element of contemporary modern style missing from catalogues issued during 2001-2003. (Fig. 22) Whereas previous catalogues gave an impression of clutter and bright colours, feature lounge suites in the 2004 catalogue are predominantly subdued colour ranges of beige, cream, grey and dark red. Colour presentation of the catalogue itself is lighter toned

with images more sparsely arranged. My impression is of a change in style bringing it closer to a Myer or IKEA catalogue.

In April 2004 another change was evident on a visit I made to photograph signage in the car park area of the Harvey Norman store in Launceston. A security officer approached me and asked my reasons for taking photographs and I had to satisfy him that a franchise manager could verify my purpose. The security officer informed me he had previously observed me weeks before taking photographs outside the car park in the street. This extra security vigilance was explained to me later by a Harvey Norman staff member that a bomb threat had caused the evacuation of the Harvey Norman store a week or two before my photography in their carpark. This bomb threat had not been mentioned to the media for fear it might encourage other attempts. It seems to me that post September 11, 2001 and the invasion of Iraq have bought fear of terrorism to Harvey Norman that might require more vigilant security surveillance inside and outside their stores.

The spaces occupied by the old 'Market Place' and Market Green have changed vastly from a public place and congregation site to a slick commercial marketplace – Harvey Norman - an archetypal superstore, offering not fruit, vegetables, grain, hides, bacon and poultry, but 21st century entertainment products and household items they say none of us can survive without. It seems that the world of chain retailing so closely associated with advertising is dependent on ever-increasing public consumption of commercial product reinforcing the message to us that it is our duty to consume. And while we continue to consume are we presented with what we asked for, or are we subjected to what the market wants us to think we want? Perhaps endless manufactured product presented in glossy

advertising brochures with imaginary scenarios and concepts makes it difficult for us to distinguish between the reality of the product and the fantasy of the dream of what the product can offer.

Chapter 4

Lifestyle Pop

This chapter outlines the sources that have been most instrumental in the formulation of my art making process. Apart from a central focus on Harvey Norman's lounge settings and associated advertising, I have addressed influences derived from commercial TV 'lifestyle'¹ do-it-yourself home renovation programs through the metaphor of the dolls house; discussed miniaturisation as a tool in establishing shifts in scale and altered perception and the placement of a real Harvey Norman setting in the gallery. I have also noted the relevance of Pop art and artists who have had direct influence on my work and defined within the limitations of my study the idea of comfort and style.



Figure 23. *Back to the future - 1906-2002*. Photographs, etching, ink and transparencies. E. Broad 2001-2.

¹ I have used 'lifestyle' in this context as the generic term used by commercial television and the media to describe programs and written articles on home decoration, renovation, gardening and leisure activities.

As mentioned in previous chapters Cornwall Square and its history were the threads I followed to the new Harvey Norman superstore. During that time I produced prints, drawings and paintings based on reconstructed narratives. Processing these images was a nostalgic trip and romanticized the past but served to ground the project and crystallize my focus through familiarization with the site and its past use. (Fig. 23)

The Harvey Norman superstore opened for business in October 2002 and I was given permission by all five franchise managers to photograph their merchandise displays in-store. From a series of digital photos of electrical goods, computers displays, floor coverings, bedding and furniture I determined that furniture, particularly lounge suites offered me the most suitable merchandising imagery to concentrate on because the lounge suites were individually staged scenarios directly involving the home, comfort and style. I felt that this connection could be used to set up a dialogue between Harvey Norman catalogue presentation and the in-store arrangements as a basis for my interpretive imagery.

While my gallery installation critiques Harvey Norman's retail design presentation of lounge suite ensembles it acknowledges the relationship that can exist between artist, retailer and merchandise. Because of the nature of my planned investigation to photograph Harvey Norman lounge settings within the store, I approached them at the outset with assurance that my photographs were to only focus on their merchandise. This assurance was necessary because without the cooperation of the Harvey Norman Furniture franchise I would have been unable to freely photograph in-store or borrow merchandise. This relationship can be seen as a partial collaboration between myself as artist, and Harvey Norman as retailer, commercial entity and subject. The development of a relationship with the furniture franchise was

made easier because Harvey Norman is already a sponsor and art patron of the University's Academy Gallery at Inveresk.

Concentrating on Harvey Norman merchandise as the basis of my imagery presented challenges in locating it within the context of a contemporary art setting. At the outset I experimented with drawings of lounges to portray the retail object as art image. (Figure 24) A difficulty I faced in taking photographs, especially coloured photographs, directly from a retail environment, was that they lacked artistic presence. New furniture pictured in a catalogue or for sale in a Harvey Norman store was about commodity not about art.



Figure 24. *Beige Lounge and Blue Lounge*. 2002 Pastel. E. Broad.

One of my objectives was to ascertain whether some relationships that exist between advertising, commodity, domesticity and popular culture are still problematic in the way they can be presented in an art context. A starting point was to establish if the lounge suite as retail commodity acquired an aura of something more than seating when it was featured in advertising material and lifestyle programs. Did it assume a particular style when placed in staged domestic or exotic settings with other objects such as lamp, rug,

artwork, coffee set and harbor backdrop for the purpose of advertising promotion?

The significance of the arranged and enhanced lounge room (Fig. 25) is that it is a 'dream' room constructed to encourage the consumer to desire the lounge suite. But can the lounge suite be separated from the dream fashioned around it? I don't believe that it can. Featherstone asserts,

the consumer society must not be regarded as only releasing a dominant materialism for it also confronts people with dream-images which speak to desires, and aestheticise and de-realise reality'.²



Fig.25 Harvey Norman catalogue advertisement. 2003

My approach to recording the qualities of lounge suites and accessories in the Harvey Norman store at the outset was through digital photography – an appropriate medium for the project I believe, because it mimics the slickness of advertising catalogues. Digital photography is also direct and immediate and a medium now in general everyday use.

² Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, (London : Sage Publications, 1991), 65-69.

The Harvey Norman store presented a fascinating visual panorama – a smorgasbord of texture, colour, shape, light and shadow to photograph. I was drawn to feathered lampshades, fruit, vegetables and flower arrangements, woolly throw rugs, cat sculptures, carved elephants, rustic wooden boxes, woven bolsters and to the contours of heavily padded sofas and chairs. The video produced as part of my installation and included in my presentation results from the many tours in and around the Harvey Norman furniture settings.

The major series of digital photographs in my presentation consists of five large images. *Still Life at Harvey Norman I-V* depicts green apples (Fig. 26),



Fig. 26 *Still Life at Harvey Norman – Green Apples*. 2004. Kodak Lambda print on glossy Metallic 2. Dimensions: 120cm x 80cm E. Broad.

pomegranates, pumpkins, sofa and bolster and striped cushions. The photographs (120cm x 80cm) are printed on glossy metallic finish photo paper to correlate with elements of Harvey Norman's slick advertising style. Each of the five photographs concentrates on a furnishing accessory arranged to harmonize with a lounge setting. The fruit, flowers and cushion arrangements reflect Harvey Norman's method of store and catalogue arrangement. For example the two small glass bowls each containing two artificial green apples (Fig. 26) were photographed on a smoked glass coffee table complementing a black leather lounge setting. While there was nothing in the five photographs to suggest where they were taken, the connections I made to the Harvey Norman store were through larger-than-life photo size, glossy metallic surface finish and high colour tone.

Baudrillard notes his belief that all cultural forms are absorbed into advertising and that

art ceases to be a separate enclaved reality; it enters into production and representation so that everything even if it be the everyday and banal reality, falls by this token under the sign of art, and becomes aesthetic.³

In this context the lounge suite could be described as being enveloped in an aura that is simultaneously fantasy and reality. During the period from 2001 to 2004, I observed what could be described as fantasy and reality being played out in a plethora of reality TV programs centred on home renovation and instant interior makeovers. These programs were the outcome of the intermingling of sponsors' products with reality TV renovation and presented as entertainment. They suggested to me strong associations with

³ J. Baudrillard, *Simulations*, (1983) cited in Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, (London : Sage Publications, 1991), 68-69.

the dolls house – of adults playing house games with an affinity to Barbie dolls - expressed through flashing super white teeth, skin tight work clothes, bulging muscles and the clichéd ‘Oh my God’ in response to whatever scenario, good or bad, confronts them. There was obsessiveness and playfulness in these do-it-yourself programs where the hosts were served up as ‘burnt popcorned soft porn’⁴ and equally as much a product as the Black and Decker drills and building materials that sponsors advertised in the programs.

The Miniature

The relevance of miniaturisation to my work was its use as a strategy to create a shifting scale of perception between the various components of photography, three-dimensional and the ready-made components. It was also a device to conjure up elements of childish fantasy in the viewer, to lead them through a scaled down imaginary parade intimating a connection to dolls furniture as well as to invoke Harvey Norman’s tableaux of furniture design settings.

The clichéd interior design fantasies that flowed from lifestyle TV programs became influential in my visualization of the carefully arranged and coordinated tableaux of retail lounge settings in Harvey Norman’s Launceston store. The playfulness of the ‘lifestyle’ TV programs fired my enthusiasm to make miniature versions of lounge settings and a pink plastic folding Barbie Dolls house that I bought became an inspirational backdrop when making my miniatures. (Fig. 27)

The miniature can be seen as a metaphor for the interior space and time of

⁴ L. Hjorth ‘Ben Morieson Versatiles – a subsidy of Rational Building Products’ art review *Broadsheet* Vol.32, (Nov.2003), 35. Hjorth’s description of ‘lifestyle program’ personalities.

the bourgeois subject.⁵ The miniature exists in a skewed time peculiar to its own boundaries. Its fixed form is manipulated by individual fantasy because



Fig. 27. 2002-2004 Miniature ceramic furniture with pink Barbie Dolls house. Photograph E. Broad

the body is the means of perceiving scale where the eyes perform certain operations, manipulating and attending in certain ways to the physical world. 'Miniature time transcends the duration of everyday life in such a way as to create an interior temporality of the subject'.⁶

The toy as miniature opens an interior miniature world to test the relation between materiality and meaning. Susan Stewart notes 'like the fashion doll, the dollhouse was originally (and still is) an adult amusement'.⁷ And in this regard my small ceramic furniture pieces became metaphorical references to the dolls house influenced by commercial TV lifestyle program such as

⁵ S. Stewart, *On Longing, : Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), xii.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

Changing Rooms.⁸ Of particular interest was the fast forward program segments used to highlight 'before and after' contrasts of how a lounge suite with different covers and cushions, repainted walls and a baby's christening gown trimmed and hung from a ceiling light makes a room so dramatically different and presumably more pleasurable to live in.

The mixing and matching of lounge suites with accessories was an activity that I consciously played out many times when I was setting up my miniature furniture settings to either photograph or to finally set up in the gallery. And, just like the viewers who watch the lifestyle programs to learn how to do 'makeovers' themselves, I played out my fantasies of choice on a miniature scale.

Susan Willis asserts that the technology of each era is replicated in its toys⁹ and during my study dolls houses and dolls accessories have increased in popularity with children and especially adults.

One intriguing miniature example is an American architect designed Kaleidoscope Dolls House (Figs. 28, 29) complete with miniature designer furniture, rugs and artworks such as Barbara Kruger's *I Shop Therefore I am*.¹⁰ Available throughout the world, the Kaleidoscope House was conceived and designed in America by artist Laurie Simmons and architect Peter Wheelwright and comes with a floor plan, a dream world of Pool Pavilion, accessories of interchangeable designer furniture and four dolls that are tiny images of the designer and architect's family: 'Laurie Simmons her daughter

⁸ 'Changing Rooms' A Nine Network TV program produced by Leeane Hynes that gives tips on cheap ways to transform rooms. Two teams directed by interior design 'experts' change each other's living rooms. The changes are meant to shock and delight the other team and present them with a new perspective in room design and lifestyle.

⁹ S. Willis, *A Primer for Daily Life*, (London : Routledge, 1991), 92.

¹⁰ Bozart Toys - Kaleidoscope homepage <http://www.bozart.com/2003>,

Grace, the architect Peter Wheelwright and his son Matt'. Bozart toys sell their Kaleidoscope House and accessories through many outlets across the



Figure 28. Kaleidoscope house manufactured by Bozart Toys. <http://www.bozart.com/> (accessed Dec 31, 2003).



Figure 29. Kaleidoscope House accessories featuring reproduction Jasper Morrison Elan modular sofa system in white imitation leather and rug by Judy Ross. <http://www.bozart.com/31> (accessed Dec 31, 2003).

world, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York.¹¹ Although

¹¹ <http://www.akta.co.uk>, 2004. Kaleidoscope distributor. (Accessed 22/6/04),

designed for children from six years onwards it is avidly collected by postgraduate adult designers.¹² Its architectural design base with artist designer reproduction furnishings very successfully merges design, art and commercial success.

The dolls house, Willis notes, is a tangible allegory for the coming into being and development of the bourgeois class and the paramount expression of the origin of the nuclear family and the private world of the home. Willis asserts that

such objectification is itself coincidental with capitalism and demonstrates the penetration of the commodity form into daily life that was felt first by the bourgeoisie class who could afford commodity consumption on a grand scale.¹³

Dolls houses, she believes, represent also a very important phenomenological dimension through the translation of social activities into the objects that represent those activities, and the translation of social relationships into spatial relationships.

The Ready-made

To expand the scope of my project beyond photography and miniaturisation of the lounge setting, I planned for an actual Harvey Norman lounge setting to be transferred from the store into the gallery. It did not seem plausible to have multiple Harvey Norman lounge settings because that would have been a duplication of the store inside the gallery. I needed to have a scale of negotiation within the gallery to attract the viewers' attention so they did not take my installation in at one glance. My aim was to translate the merchandising ploy of retailing – of drawing the consumer into the store to negotiate their way around the tableaux of arranged attractions

¹² Julia Richardson, 'Smallville' *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, (December 20-21, 2003), 33.

¹³ S. Willis, *A Primer for Daily Life*, 1991, 65, 93.

here and there. Therefore, I decided to place one ready-made furniture setting in the gallery and isolate it from its store environment, as well as creating a physical connection between Cornwall Square and Harvey Norman.

The arrangement in the gallery of a Harvey Norman lounge setting may appear problematic as a fine art object and it is relevant at this point to make deference to Duchamp and his readymade objects. An inverted bottle dryer or urinal will forever be associated with Duchamp but art discourse has given these objects an authenticity that was not Duchamp's intention.¹⁴ The culture ingrained in Duchamp's work is a subversively enduring message of 'recognition of the lack of art in art and the artfulness of everything'.¹⁵

Thomas Girst notes that every artist borrowing Duchamp's visual vocabulary walks a fine line between creating a token pastiche defined as an art-world inside joke based solely on recognising affinities, and intellectually engaging the ideas surrounding the work.¹⁶ How to classify this work is perhaps through the application of the 'institutional theory of art'¹⁷ judging not the work of art but the conferral on certain objects the status of works of art by a set of representatives of the art world nominated as art critics, curators,

¹⁴ Thomas Girst, 'Using Marcel Duchamp: The Concept of the Readymade in Post-War and Contemporary American Art,' Part 1 in *Tout-fait: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal* Vol.2 Issue 5, April 2003 cites Werner Spies, *Max Ernst, Collagen, Koln: 1988, p.23* Duchamp always worried about the unavoidable aesthetics of patina – thought of swapping them for newer mass produced objects, replacing, for example, the *Bottle Dryer* with a plastic bucket.

¹⁵ Thomas Girst 'Using Marcel Duchamp: The Concept of the Readymade in Post-War and Contemporary American Art,' – Part 2. Robert Rauschenberg comments on Duchamp's major contribution to art in *Tout-fait: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal* Vol.2 Issue 5, April 2003.

¹⁶ Thomas Girst 'Using Marcel Duchamp: 'The Concept of the Readymade in Post-War and Contemporary American Art,' – Part 2 *Tout-fait: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal* Vol.2 Issue 5, April 2003.

¹⁷ D. Cooper (ed.) *A Companion to Aesthetics*, (Oxford : Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 425.

owners of galleries. Where does a new Harvey Norman lounge setting fit within this equation?

During the course of my project I did not have the opportunity or access to try out different ways of setting up the Harvey Norman lounge setting within the gallery. This was due to the rapid turn-around of exhibitions, changing of wall partitions and gallery maintenance time. My calculations for constructing the partitioned wall in the gallery for my presentation were based on a 1:30 scale model I made of the Academy Gallery.

Pop art

My artwork is based on the assumption that the materials making up my visual art practice surround me in daily life. This conjecture is supported by the premises behind the production of Pop art derived from the imaged consumer world, commercial television, magazines and popular entertainment. The term 'Pop' coined by Lawrence Alloway during the early 1950s referred to the widespread interest in popular culture expressed by the British Independent Group whose membership included Richard Hamilton. Alloway called for an 'aesthetics of plenty' in his 1959 essay 'The Long Front of Culture'.¹⁸ This call was broadly in response to post-war austerity in Britain. After years of rationing, the products of American culture were tantalising. Reyner Banham, also a member of the Independent Group wrote 'Theory and Design in the First Machine Age' (1960).¹⁹ His theory of the 'aesthetics of expendability' was based on the constant need to stimulate market interest through stylistic change and planned obsolescence.²⁰ Following this generalised description of Pop, young British artists from the

¹⁸ D.McCarthy. *Pop art*. (London : Tate Gallery Publishing, 2000), 9.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Royal College began using popular culture imagery, such as that found in mass-circulation magazines, American culture and the latest consumer goods in their paintings and the term finally became definitively known as 'Pop art'.²¹

British artist Richard Hamilton's collage of 1956 *Just What is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?* (Fig. 30) features all the commodities



Figure 30. Richard Hamilton *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?* 1956 Collage. 26 x 25 Kunsthalle Tübingen, Prof. Dr. Georg Zünel Collection - D. McCarthy *Pop Art*, Tate Gallery Publishing, London, 2000, 2.

that resonate with my early perceptions of pop culture - slick design and bright colour celebrated in a fantasy world of consumer desire with no moralising overtones against gluttony. Hamilton's collaged image with its well-proportioned designer couple; he flexing his muscles; she reclining on a large sofa, posing with all the recent luxury technologies of television, reel-

²¹ L. Cooke. 'The Independent Group: British and American Pop Art, A "Palimpsestuous" Legacy' from K. Varnedoe and A. Gopnik (eds.) *Modern Art and Popular Culture*, (New York : Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1990), 204.

The wrap around effect of disjointed text struck a chord with me because I was investigating the wordiness of corporate advertising with an emphasis on dominant logo imagery. MacPherson's work impressed me because of his method of using the recognisable style, materials and messages of commerce subversively and effectively, through repetition and scale. I found a connection in MacPherson's work to the pitch of television advertising, and the experience of walking through retail stores such as Harvey Norman where price tags, advertising signs and logo brand names jostle for attention. There is the compulsive need to read and put the words together but the sentences form into slogans and advertising jargon.



Fig. 32. *The Message* 2002-04. 120 kg of guillotined and wrapped advertising catalogues. E. Broad

In the early stages of my project I referred to MacPherson's use of the materials and language of commerce to present a subversive message. My work *The Message* (Fig. 32) consisted of 120 kgs of guillotined advertising catalogues, individually wrapped and featured on the front of the packages the basic message that I considered was being given by the retailer to the consumer. While I felt this work was moderately successful it did not suggest a way forward for future work.

Pop art continues to be a creative source for contemporary artists and a recent Australian touring exhibition *Pop: The Continuing Influence of Popular Culture on Contemporary Art*²³ appraised 'Pop' sensibility from the 1980s until the present time. Takashi Murakami, a Japanese artist whose work was included in this exhibition, characterises a new genre of contemporary artists who engage with a 'critical pop' approach to comment on the current climate of rampant consumerism.

Murakami was influential in terms of my understanding of contemporary post Pop art and its antecedents. His 'Superflat' style that he proposed was a

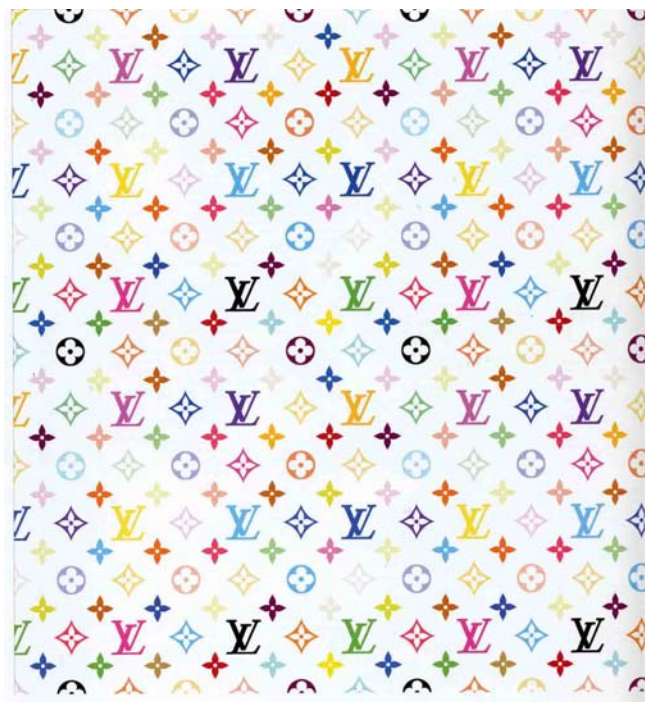


Figure 33. Takashi Murakami 2003 *Superflat (Louis Vuitton) Monogram*. Acrylic on canvas mounted on board 1800 x 1800. Courtesy Kaikai Kiki. *Art Asia Pacific* No. 38 (2003), 94.

²³ *Pop: The Continuing Influence of Popular Culture on Contemporary Art*. A travelling exhibition of works drawn from the Queensland Art Gallery's collections. August 2003-November 2004.

form of 'post Pop art' or a descendent of pop defined in relation to Richard Hamilton's eleven rules of Pop art provided a connection between early Pop art and contemporary Post pop.²⁴ In his 'Theory of Super Flat Japanese Art' Murakami expands on Japanese art historian Nobuo Tsuji's idea that 'formal characteristics such as flat, shallow space and bold linear elements found in the ambitious traditional paintings of Japan are also evident in contemporary art forms such as animation' and he began looking at anime cartoons and manga comics.²⁵ Murakami sees his heritage as the key to his art because 'The Japanese don't have a difference in hierarchy between high and low.'²⁶ Murakami's presence acknowledges the international impact of post 1945 American art: 'He's high art. He's low culture. He's a one-man mass-market machine' and has been billed as the next Andy Warhol because he lives and works in an art making factory.²⁷ However Warhol's Factory mimicked machine production with colourful personalities as helpers, producing multiple disengaged images. And after almost fifty years Warhol's machine philosophy of planned duplication has to be seen in the context of its alienating response to Abstract Expressionism's mantra of artist as spontaneous genius.²⁸

Murakami has his own art-making corporation, Kaikai Kiki, known as the Hiropon Factory, employing 25 assistants and producing a very large range of consumer goods using technology to create his designs. Murakami's work

²⁴ Takashi Murakami, 2002. 'The Superflat revolution', transcript of lecture at the Royal Institution, Royal Academy of Arts, London. <http://www.royalacademy.org.au/?lid+831> (accessed 11 January, 2003),

²⁵ Cheryl Brutvan, 'Takashi Murakami: Made in Japan', Museum of Fine Art, Boston April 25-September 3, 2001. <http://www.mfa.org/exhibitions/takashi.html> (accessed 27 August, 2004).

²⁶ Jeff Howe 'The Two Faces of Takashi Murakami.' <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/11.11/artist.html> (accessed 5 March 2004).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

celebrates commerce and his Hiropon Factory has accountants, publicists, managers and a computerised administrative system. Murakami runs his international factories as a corporation employing and paying workers to mass-produce consumer goods ranging from \$3 stickers to key chains and T-shirts. Murakami's work employs art, value and consumerism. His latest business venture, a collaborative Louis Vuitton monogram design has created culture for a corporation. *Superflat Monogram* (Fig 33) transferred onto commodities (Fig. 34) has created fetish objects of desire, fantasy and elitism for women and girls to collect. Why do they want that handbag?



Figure 34. 'Speedy 30' Louis Vuitton/Murakami bag featured on eBav.com for resale

Because it says 'Louis Vuitton'? Because it's cute? Because it's well made?...Because we are Japanese and it looks French? Because we are American and it looks Japanese? Because everyone has one? Because no one can get one? Looking can make you want, and wanting can get you thinking.²⁹

The iconic Louis Vuitton (LV) monogram transferred to commodities combined with Murakami's name ensures that even as objects for resale they remain desirable. Ten Murakami LV items of purses, socks, Zippo lighter and handbags were listed for bidding on eBay.com on 28 August 2004.³⁰

²⁹ K. Siegel 'Planet Murakami' *ArtReview* LIV (November 2003), 53.

³⁰ eBay.com.au: Murakami. (Accessed 28 August, 2004).

It is pertinent to note that some scholars view Murakami as a market strategist or producer rather than an artist, and ask how this will change his imagery and his stance as something of an iconoclast in the contemporary art world. An exhibition in the Marianne Boesky Gallery New York attempted to validate his Vuitton venture by exhibiting mostly acrylic paint on canvas versions of Louis Vuitton monograms executed by assistants at his Hiropon factory in Brooklyn.³¹ (Fig. 33)

Murakami's 'Theory of Superflat Japanese Art' bridges the gap between early Pop and post Pop art of the 21st century. Of particular influence on my work is his monogram design collaboration with Louis Vuitton. (Figs. 33 and 34) My Harvey Norman monogram design (see Chapter 5 Development of the Art work) was incorporated into the series of miniature ceramic lounge settings as a token of the collaborative relationship I developed with Harvey Norman.

Comfort and style equals lifestyle

A Harvey Norman lounge suite advertisement (Fig. 25) offers 'affordable style' and 'luxurious comfort' with 'super-soft pillow-top seating and extra plump back cushions'. Luxury is also alluded to with background harbour views and swimming pools.

The idea of owning a luxuriously comfortable lounge suite such as the one described above that we take for granted today, is a relatively new concept. During the Middle Ages symbols of authority were chairs because only important people sat in them and everyone else sat on benches.³² Those in

³¹ M.Yoshimoto, 'Takashi Murakami', *Art Asia Pacific*, No. 38, (Fall 2003), 81.

³² W. Rybczynski, *Home*, (New York : Penguin Books, 1986), 26.

authority were raised up and also carried. A medieval chair had a hard, flat seat and a tall straight back and even those people considered to be important were forced to sit upright. Comfort appears to have been a small consideration and Walter Scott's description of a 12th century castle as 'magnificence there was...but of comfort there was little and being unknown it was unmissed',³³ bears this out. The scarcity and simplicity of medieval furniture was in keeping with the way people used their homes not so much living in them but camping in them. The nobility owned many residences and traveled often rolling up tapestries, packing chests and taking apart the beds, to move their household with them. This explains the reason why so much medieval furniture is portable or demountable. The French and Italian words for furniture – *mobilier* and *mobilia* – mean 'the movables'.³⁴

The modern European fascination with furniture began in the 17th century when it became a valuable possession and room decoration. By the 18th century fine furniture design came to be associated with British cabinetmakers such as Sheraton, Heppelwhite and Chippendale who were draftsmen, businessmen, shop and factory owners. Rybczynski notes there were over two hundred cabinetmakers in London alone at this time and competition pressed them to innovate.³⁵ By paying close attention to the dimensions of the chairs and including exact sizes of chair heights, widths and depths in their popular pattern books English cabinetmakers produced a more comfortable chair with less padding.

The English cabinetmakers pattern books also contained domestic furniture, door handles and picture frame illustrations.³⁶ Thomas Chippendale's

³³ Ibid., 31

³⁴ Ibid., 26

³⁵ Ibid., 126.



Figure 35. Thomas Chippendale rococo style Sofa Art Print 56 x 36 cm

http://posters.seindal.dk/artist_Chippendale_Thomas_byrank.1.html (accessed 4 Oct 2003).

published compilation *Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* of 1754 offered designs that covered a wide range of styles from Rococo (Fig. 35) to Gothic.³⁷ These manuals could be considered forerunners of advertising catalogues.

Before 1850 in England when architectural education was formalized, upholsterers, concerned solely with textiles and upholstery coverings enlarged their services to include coordinating all interior furnishings and employed trade journeymen such as cabinet-makers, glass grinders, carvers for chairs and a vast army of tradesmen. Rybczynski notes 'by the time architects realised that they had lost control of the interior arrangement of the house, it was too late [and] upholsterers, or interior decorators as they were later called, came increasingly to dominate domestic comfort'.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ David Ross and Britain Express 2000, <http://www.britainexpress.com/History> (accessed 9/10/2003).

³⁸ W. Rybczynski *Home*, 128.

The history of the way we view our lounge rooms, and furnishings is a relatively new home experience and one associated with the Modern era. From the elaborate and overly fussy furniture of the late 19th century there emerged the 20th century aesthetic of stripping away modern interiors evidenced with the Viennese architect Adolf Loos³⁹ who wrote an essay 'Ornament and Crime' in 1908 advocating the abolition of all ornament from everyday life, including from architecture and from interior decoration. As Rybczynski points out, Loos was a reformer, not a revolutionary – he opposed ornament but not decoration.⁴⁰ For example, the interiors of the plain white unadorned villas he designed were finished in rich materials of marble cladding and parquetry with Chippendale and Queen Anne furniture. Loos questioned ideas of the past and a new era of architectural austerity emerged. Architects began to take a master designer approach, later promoted by Bauhaus principles of integrated modern architectural design, with a view to industrial implementation.⁴¹ With this concept of total building design, architects reclaimed interior decoration as part of their brief.

One furniture design example of this era can be seen in a much admired and classic chair of 1925-26, the Wassily Chair by Marcel Breuer. The chair, constructed of chromed-metal tubing with unpadded leather stretched across it to form the seat, back and armrests, however elegant, does not allow anyone to fall prey to comfort while sitting in it. There are no adjustable parts, it is not ergonomic and half an hour sitting in it is enough time to feel uncomfortable. It was designed as a machine for sitting and despite being so uncomfortable is still being manufactured by Knoll (Knoll 2003) in the USA

³⁹ Adolf Loos, 1908 'Interiors in the Rotunda' in *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays 1897-1900*, trans, J. Newman and J. Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982), 27. Originally published 1921. Cited in W. Rybczynski *Home*, 199.

⁴⁰ W. Rybczynski, *Home*, 199.

⁴¹ Harrison C. and Wood P. (eds.) *Art in Theory*, (Oxford : Blackwell, 1999), 'The Modern as Ideal,' editors' note, 338.

at \$US1,218 plus shipping costs.⁴² While this modern classic chair is still available to collectors it does not represent contemporary production line furniture available in retail furniture franchises such as Harvey Norman.

How have we arrived at the soft multiple-cushioned lounge ensembles of the 21st century? These are not machines for sitting in but comfort zones for sprawling and embedding ourselves in, 'veging' out, becoming 'couch potatoes' and being entertained in front of the TV. From this perspective the lounge suite reflects contemporary life provided by 'luxurious comfort' through 'super soft pillow-top seating' and 'extra plump back cushions' offered in a Harvey Norman mass-produced lounge suite. (Fig. 25) From an 18th century British craftsman's perception of more comfort with less padding by paying attention to individual chair heights and dimensions, the idea of 21st century mass-produced 'comfort' is about excessive padding as compensation for no choice.

In this chapter I have traced sources and outlined their connections to my artwork. I have discussed strategies of scale used in the various components of my presentation, such as the miniaturised tableaux of lounge settings, photographic close-ups of merchandise, and the placement of a new Harvey Norman lounge setting in the gallery.

⁴² Arstis/Seating/Marcel Breuer 'Wassily Chair' by Knoll, http://www.arstis.com/shop/category/seating/item/knoll_wassilychair.html (accessed 13/10/03).

The Artwork: Development and Self Reflection

Development

While the background study of Cornwall Square provided insights of how a contemporary superstore evolved, the Harvey Norman superstore furniture franchise was the focal point of gathering my art material. The concept articulated in my work was the formulation of an art image that was representative of Harvey Norman lounge suites, using means and methods adapted from retailing such as in-store photography, actual merchandise and arrangement strategies. My work sought to ascertain if the lounge-suite-as-image retained its aura of 'aesthetic expendability'¹ and collapsed into contemporary art when transferred to the gallery space.



Figure 36. *Still Life at Harvey Norman II*. 2002. Artificial apples. Digital Print. E. Broad

¹ D.McCarthy. *Pop Art*. (London : Tate Gallery Publishing, 2000), 9. Reyner Banham a member of the British Independent Group wrote 'Theory and Design in the First Machine Age' (1960). His theory called attention to an 'aesthetics of expendability' based on the constant need to stimulate market interest through stylistic change and planned obsolescence.

While my first impressions of the Harvey Norman store interior took in the huge size and immense selection of lounge room settings, my initial photographs of their merchandise were of the abundant displays of artificial fruit and flowers around the store. (Fig. 36) Later visits and closer scrutiny provoked a response to the colour and texture of the furnishing fabrics around me. As a result my later photographs portray a more intimate view of the seductive qualities that make up the store presentation.

After several series of photographs my view of the Harvey Norman furniture franchise gradually changed because of an ongoing association and familiarization with the staff where for example, they would let me know of various changes in furniture arrangements, arrival of new accessory stocks, or a visit from an in-house designer. This familiarity may also have influenced the kind of photographs that I took in the store.

My first series of digital photographs of Harvey Norman merchandise were taken during 2002 with a 3.1 megapixel Fuji digital camera A4 (297 x 210 mm) size images. Many of the photographs were disappointingly blurry as close-up views until I discovered that in the transfer and saving of images from my camera to Adobe Photoshop in JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) resolution decreased each time the image was altered and resaved. I resolved this problem by saving the images in PDF format (Portable Document Format).

In 2003 I upgraded to a Sony Cyber-shot 5.0 mega pixel camera and a Canon A3 printer for improved picture resolution, increasing the size of reasonable resolution images to A3 size - 297 x 420 mm. (Fig. 37)

A problem I encountered during mid 2003 was how to produce large-scale digital images with the technology available to me. In the space of three years of my candidature, I had purchased two digital cameras and software, a PC computer upgrade and an A3 printer. During this period digital camera technology and supporting computer software changed



Figure 37. *Still life at Harvey Norman Series III* montage of 20 images 402mm x 297mm 2003-2004 E. Broad

and updated regularly, becoming incrementally cheaper and technically superior.

Despite my camera and software upgrades in 2003 I was unable to produce quality large format images with the technology available to me. To upgrade again beyond mid-range computer, scanner, digital camera, printer, and Adobe Photoshop software was a quantum leap in technology and cost. Expensive professional digital camera equipment and supporting computer software to produce large format good quality digital prints was unavailable at the School of Visual and Performing Arts computer laboratory and I needed assistance outside the University. Tasmanian professional photographer, Rob Burnett of Rob Burnett and

Associates provided me with the powerful digital camera and software required to produce such large scale images (120 x 80 cm). These were printed in Melbourne by 'The Edge Photo' on metallic photo paper finish. (Fig. 38)

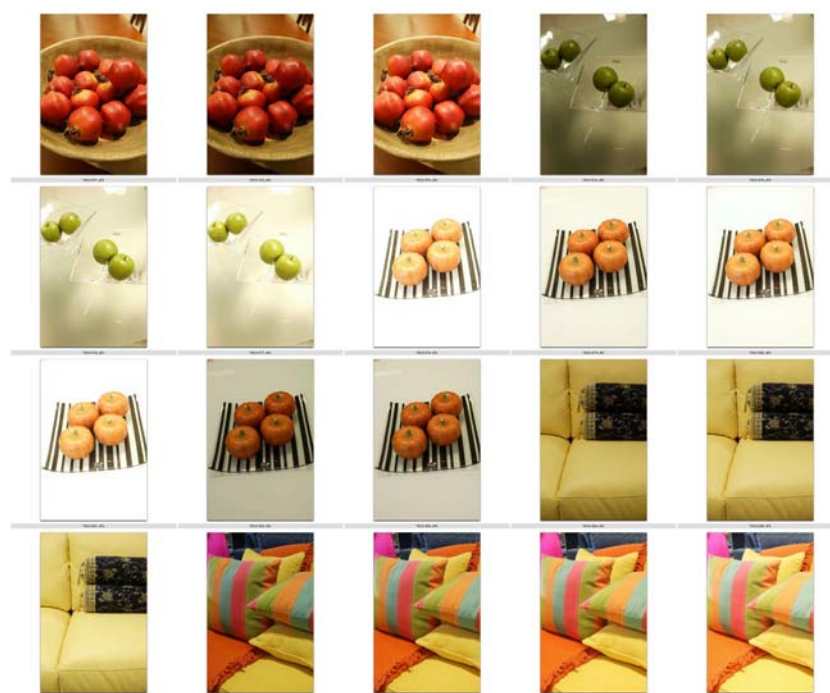


Figure 38. *Still Life at Harvey Norman Series IV*, digital photo proofs Rob Burnett & Associates. August 5, 2004.

The photographs produced from this series (Fig. 38) emphasise the visual impact of close-up views of textile, colour, pattern, richness and texture of furniture and accessories. They have been digitally brightened in tone and colour to emphasis the slickness of advertising. Three of the images portrayed are of artificial green apples, pomegranates and pumpkins. While providing colour and decoration within the store the artificiality of all the fruit, vegetables and flower displays also add to the sense of the unreal and staged theatre setting.

While the large (120 x 80 cm) digital photographic images form one component of my installation I experimented in extending the size of images from camera to PC using maximum allowable image transfer from my camera to Photoshop. Using a Sony 5.0 megapixel digital camera with a 'fine' resolution at an image size of 65.58 x 91.44 cm set at 300 pixels/inch I divided the images into four 42 x 29.7 cm parts. Eight images from this series form the second part of the three sets of photographs in my presentation. The white borders of the segmented photographs alter the optics of the image so they are viewed as a whole, or as four abstract parts. The reason for segmenting the photographs was to create a shift of scale between the first and second photographic series.

As a means of introducing a three-dimensional perspective into my work I returned again to the inspirational Peanuts cartoon (Fig. 14) to examine how I could create small simple forms that would be instantly recognizable as lounge suites. The most obvious feature that greets the visitor to the Launceston Harvey Norman store is the tableaux of furniture. Various construction materials such as wood, clay, modelling compound and ready-made toy wooden or plastic furniture were considered.

Clay was the material of choice for the miniature lounge suites because it was malleable yet diametrically opposed when fired, to the softness and comfort of the real object. At the outset the ceramic pieces were bisque fired, unglazed and constructed in separate modules of frames and multiple cushions that fitted together to emulate the contemporary construction method of lounge suites. To offset the unglazed cold finish of the ceramic pieces, furnishing fabric samples and finally digital faux fabric were tested as a base - illustrated in Figure 39.

A trial presentation format for *Comfort Zones* was the use of a low platform plinth with the ceramic settings arranged to suggest Harvey Norman's montage of furniture arrangements. The pieces, representing cold comfort zones, were set on digital images of furnishing fabric.



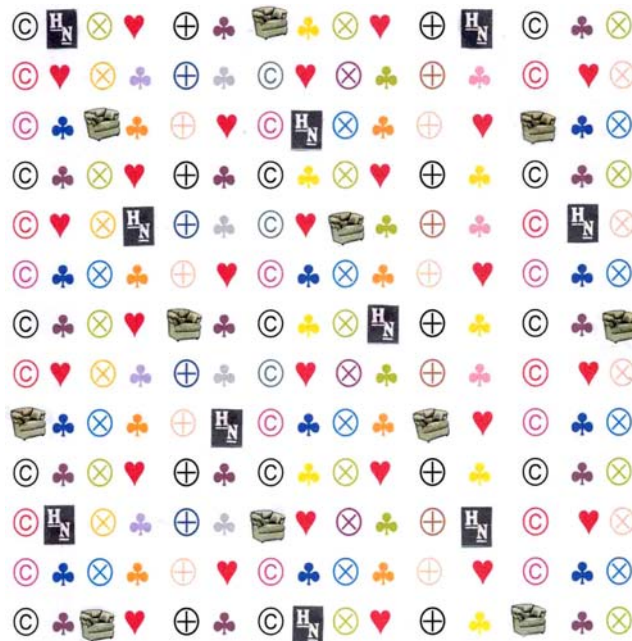
Figure 39. *Comfort Zones* 2004 Bisque fired ceramic, digital prints. Dimension of board 193 cm x 100 cm E. Broad. Poimena Gallery, March 2004.

On reflection this format of low platform and grouped arrangement of unglazed ceramic pieces was unsuccessful. The low plinth was the wrong height to engage the viewer and the unglazed ceramic pieces did not make a connection with the colourful close-up images of textures and colours that were intended to draw the viewer into contemplation of Harvey Norman merchandise. A means of expressing customer/viewer store negotiation was required for separate contemplation of each setting. Investigations involved trials of presentation methods such as viewer height, navigation through the work, and surface treatment of the pieces.



Figure 40. *Comfort Zone – Purple suite*. 2004 Photograph: E. Broad

The appearance of the ceramic sets was an important consideration and various treatments were considered. Although glazing and firing were options I used acrylic paint finish to give the pieces a shiny colourful 'funky' appearance. This treatment was to suggest a link to TV lifestyle programs and a playful reference to dolls furniture. (Fig. 40) To further enhance the notion of dolls furniture I made DAS modelling compound accessories of cushions and bowls of fruit as seen in Harvey Norman's arrangements.



Figures 41. *Harvey Norman Monogram*. Digital Print E.Broad 2003

In an allusion to floor coverings and to my collaboration with Harvey Norman, I referenced Takashi Murakami's *Superflat Monogram* (see Fig. 33) collaborative design for Louis Vuitton handbags to generate a Harvey Norman monogram (Fig. 41) as a 'carpet base' for the settings. The Harvey Norman monogram image scaled down through Adobe Pattern Maker filter has been generated into eighteen different variations of the original. (Fig. 42)



42. *Comfort Zone – Red suite*. 2004 Ceramic setting with Harvey Norman monogram base, floor rug and DAS accessories. Photograph: E. Broad

Although actual in-store floor covering used by Harvey Norman to display their furniture is self-patterned neutral colour my 'carpet' base reflects a higher keyed more colourful dynamic. Harvey Norman's purpose in using a neutral carpet base is to offset their furniture arrangements to advantage.

Recurring features in Harvey Norman lounge suite advertisements are coffee tables and floor rugs. I have responded with individual floor rugs derived from designs presented in Harvey Norman floor covering and

lounge suite advertisements for my miniature settings. While the colours and tones of the rugs have been altered by scanning and Photoshop transfer, the designs have been retained.

During the process of painting the ceramic settings, choosing the style and colour coordinating the rugs with the lounge suite, cushions and accessories I became aware of how subjective my choices were. I was also aware from experience in setting up objects for still life painting, that I had consciously approached the juxtaposition and colour coordination from this perspective while referring to Harvey Norman in-store merchandise as the still life model. As a result the eighteen settings present my individual 'taste', and include variations from beach house, modern, conservative, chic, scholarly brown leather and sultry seductive styles. They echo the arrangement of the 'the real thing' and emphasis the playfulness of furniture arrangement. Eighteen 24 cm² x 105 cm tall plinths were custom made to display the miniature lounge settings at viewing height.

The series of eighteen photographs of my miniature settings evolved as part of the process of setting up, re-arranging and photographing the results. (Figs. 41 and 42) I have included these photographs in my presentation because they offer a different perspective – a dolls house view - of my choice of arrangement of the constructed images of 'still life' reflecting Harvey Norman's arrangements. They also create illusion because are they photographs of normal sized settings or are they miniature? This can only be ascertained by examining them closely.

My gallery plan of work for presentation drawn up during 2003 was to include an iMovie projection or a looped video and over six months I

experimented with a Sony DCR-TRV Mini DV digital video camera recorder and image transfer. The movie combined still images of old photographs of Cornwall Square, Harvey Norman advertisements, excerpts from *Changing Rooms* home renovation television program and dolls house stills. The purpose of the projection was to link the past use of Cornwall Square to the present Harvey Norman store. The use of footage of photo stills, TV clips, advertisements and interview became problematic because of a heightened awareness of stringent copyright laws that precluded using most of the movie. I decided not to continue with a movie projection as part of my presentation because without the relevant footage I was unable to connect the recognisable links.

An alternative solution was to make a video of the Harvey Norman furniture franchise area. Leading the viewer/consumer on a tour at walking pace the video silently negotiates in and around and across the furniture arrangements, examining textures, colours and shapes of cushions, lamps, bowls of artificial fruit and flowers.

In collaboration with Harvey Norman, Launceston the final component of my installation was in the form of a new lounge suite setting and accessories. Prior to the presentation the colour, style or accessory range was unknown to me. It was to be representative of their current merchandise.

Reflection

Set in the gallery space, two sofas and accessories on loan from Harvey Norman were separated from their retail environment. Partitioned off by wall panels, but not completely separated from the other series of artwork

in the gallery, the setting was positioned in front of the large gallery window adjacent to the double glass door entry to the Academy Gallery.

The setting on loan was featured in tones of aqua and orange and could be defined as being representative of Harvey Norman merchandise. The orange cylinders looked oddly reminiscent of witches' hats used on roadways, and the tall side tables were out of proportion with the sofas. The orange shag pile rug contrasted in colour with the two aqua sofas and the two sets of white striped and orange cushions. (Fig. 43)



Fig. 43. Furniture on loan from Harvey Norman. Academy Gallery, Inveresk December 2004. Photo: E. Broad

I feel that the concept of using a real Harvey Norman setting was successful. It reached my expectations in acting as a representative connection between my study site and the gallery presentation. Using wall panels to partially separate the real life setting from the other art works enhanced this message. In this regard the constructed 'room' allowed the Harvey Norman setting as the prominent component, to stand slightly apart from the other work and to supply its own aura of retailing.

The placement of the Harvey Norman setting in front of the large gallery window echoed the metal framed shop windows of Harvey Norman and acted to duplicate the store environment. The incongruity of the lounge setting positioned next to the window was reinforced by a view of other student's artwork seen through the large gallery window.

With regard to the interaction between the Harvey Norman setting and the other art work in my presentation. The large digital photographs provided a two-dimensional representational support for the concept of the retailing aesthetic. By contrast, the three-dimensional miniatures led the viewer on a tour through a parade of settings allowing for individual interpretation. They provided overtones of the fantasy of dolls furniture and references to the plethora of choices available in contemporary retailing. The overall relationship between each of the components of the presentation was that each provided for a different level of viewer engagement.

From an overall perspective of the strategies used in my presentation, I could have presented the 'lounge-suite-as image' 'floating' under a bank of spotlights, centred in a darkened gallery, with a large screen looped video projection focused on interior views of Harvey Norman. It was not my intention however, to mystify the setting in this way, but to present it as commodity without any adaptation or concessions. I wanted the work to be accepted as having its own presence directly from the store. Likewise the digital photographs were presented with the brightness and flatness of the TV screen picture, and as commodity without adaptation other than heightened colour.

Appendix III contains photographs of the presentation installed in the Academy Gallery during December, 2004.

CONCLUSION

Cornwall Square as a named place no longer exists. Changing economic tenets and community and commercial needs have dictated the terms of its use during the 19th and 20th centuries, and its demise in the 21st century. The most recent changes have left Cornwall Square behind without memorial. The unique social history connected to colonial settlement has been erased. A franchised Harvey Norman superstore now operates from the site where Launceston's first colonial public market place stood.

While background study of Cornwall Square provided insights into local history and socio-economic factors, the Harvey Norman superstore furniture franchise was the focal point for gathering my art material. The concept underpinning my work was to formulate an art image from retailing, advertising and specific elements derived from popular commercial TV 'lifestyle' programs. The means and methods used to produce the art were in-store photography, actual merchandise, retail arrangement strategies and miniaturised models. The outcome of this work was to ascertain if the lounge-suite-as-image retained its aura of 'aesthetic expendability'¹ and collapsed into contemporary art when transferred to the gallery space.

An assessment of the success of my presentation was reached retrospectively. This reflection is focused particularly on my untested

¹ D.McCarthy. *Pop Art*. (London : Tate Gallery Publishing, 2000), 9. Reyner Banham a member of the British Independent Group wrote 'Theory and Design in the First Machine Age' (1960). His theory called attention to an 'aesthetics of expendability' based on the constant need to stimulate market interest through stylistic change and planned obsolescence.

placement of a Harvey Norman retail lounge setting into the white box of the gallery space. The questions I asked were, did the creation of a separate 'room' for the lounge setting function effectively; was there a need to place the setting in front of the large gallery window; how did the setting work in relation to my other artwork in the presentation?

My view of the effectiveness of the partitioned 'room' separating the lounge setting from the other elements of my presentation was that it successfully aestheticised a Harvey Norman lounge setting within the gallery. Placing the setting in front of the large gallery window helped to emphasise the degree of similarity and difference between store environment and gallery. The window also had an unexpected benefit with its view out onto other students' work. A series of drawings visible through the large window provided a foil for the incongruity of the Harvey Norman setting inside a 'room' in the gallery.

From an overall perspective I feel that the transfer of a Harvey Norman lounge setting from its retail environment into the gallery was the most successful element of my presentation. The other elements such as photographs, miniatures and video were reliant on connections made to this setting. In this respect various strategies of placement of the miniature settings, photographs and video were used to lift and enhance the dynamic between the real and the unreal. The series of large digital photographs added a flat static aura of the retailing dream. The introduction of movement through a looped video provided a link to my work and to the retail culture of the Harvey Norman site.

The Harvey Norman setting and the other elements of my presentation were planned to engage the viewer at different planes of perception. With

this in mind the partial separation of the 'real' setting by wall partitions from the other work acted effectively to allow differentiation between varying scales and tactility of photographs, video and miniature work to take place.

The artwork presented an alternative critique of retailing and advertising in the form of the lounge suite as merchandise and image, sourced from a site representing the market economy.

EPILOGUE

The history of retailing in Australia since colonization reveals the changes that have taken place in the structural design of shops and their facades as well as methods of selling goods. The rise of the superstore warehouse structure is yet another change that has occurred in response to global market forces. In one hundred years time market forces may present a very different scenario.

While editing my exegesis I had a dream that I entered a gateway into a large walled garden where a pathway led me through shrubs, fruit trees, flower and vegetable beds. I was told that this beautiful garden was once a car park. On the perimeter of the garden was a huge rambling crumbling cement building and in a doorway was the figure of a man. I approached him and asked him did he have a chair I could buy because I needed one at home to sit on. Inside the huge collapsing building were partitioned sections where people were sorting through goods. The man directed me to his section of the market where jumbled pieces of furniture, some complete some in pieces, were arranged. I bought an intact moulded plastic and metal chair dating from the early 21st century.

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