

success. This equation of success and opulence brings us back to the role of those public service collectors but is hectares away from the essence of the work itself.

The now well related Geoff Bardon story tells of a transition during the 1970's from an ephemeral visual experience to the tangible. In contemporary terms, "process art" became a product.

Once a product the paintings of the Western Desert had a marketing potential. This has been a success story and continues on an increasing incline.

Through introduction into the Art Museum arena during the 1980s, these paintings have been legitimised in contemporary art practice circles. Their worth has been debated, dissected and dismissed, their aboriginality revered or ignored. To our public servants, however, this art production is an example of the conceptual made palatable through aesthetic appeal.

Perceptually it is difficult for whitefellas or the uninitiated to approach the work of painters like Charlie - it is a shorthand, part of a multi-layered process highly conceptual in nature. As (and I draw the analogy loosely) in Action painting the process becomes the important element. Singing, dancing and painting processes allow important details of stories to be checked, ownership reinforced and crucial information passed on to potential heirs.

The whitefella adaption to paint on canvas is the vehicle (if you excuse the pun) to the Toyota, once painted, the story transcends leaving a visual shell. It is always amusing to watch potential purchases of such works clamour for explanations and "authentic" documentation of notations before making final decisions...would you disclose publicly the combination of your safe?

These "dot" paintings are a small part of a cultural transference but a large part of a process to accommodate white intrusion.

Historically the paintings have helped in the return to tribal lands and subsequently lifestyle, after mass interference by whites during the 70s. Their production has captured the interest of wayward tribal youth rekindling cultural awareness, but more importantly has provided crucial documentation of land ownership.

Alice Springs public servants fight for their bar-gain painting with little regard to the above - but that is the marketplace and how many European artists get such consideration? Outside that necessary but claustrophobic arena can we approach, appreciate or critically appraise from a non-sociological viewpoint?

Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi's paintings record a survival during 200 years of upheaval and destruction, an unquestionable endurance and a pure belonging.

ELIZABETH BATES

SHERIDAN KENNEDY and BARBARA HEATH NEW ICONS

Roz MacAllan Gallery
October 15 - November 3, 1987

"Magic rose into religious dogma and gradually succumbed, or is succumbing, under the attrition of modern science." (Odell Shephard *The Lore of the Unicorn*)

New Icons is about creating new magic, about the re-mystification of the ritual of body ornamentation. Barbara Heath and Sheridan Kennedy have created both non-wearable objects and body ornaments, investing them with new symbols and new values, drawing from a craft steeped in tradition and ritual.

Kennedy and Heath see body ornamentation as an affirmation of personal definition, a complex form of language touching on the visual recognition of status, power and beliefs. Through rationalisation and proliferation this visual language has become trite and meaningless. Jewellery today largely expresses fashion trends and "image" rather than personal symbols and momentos.

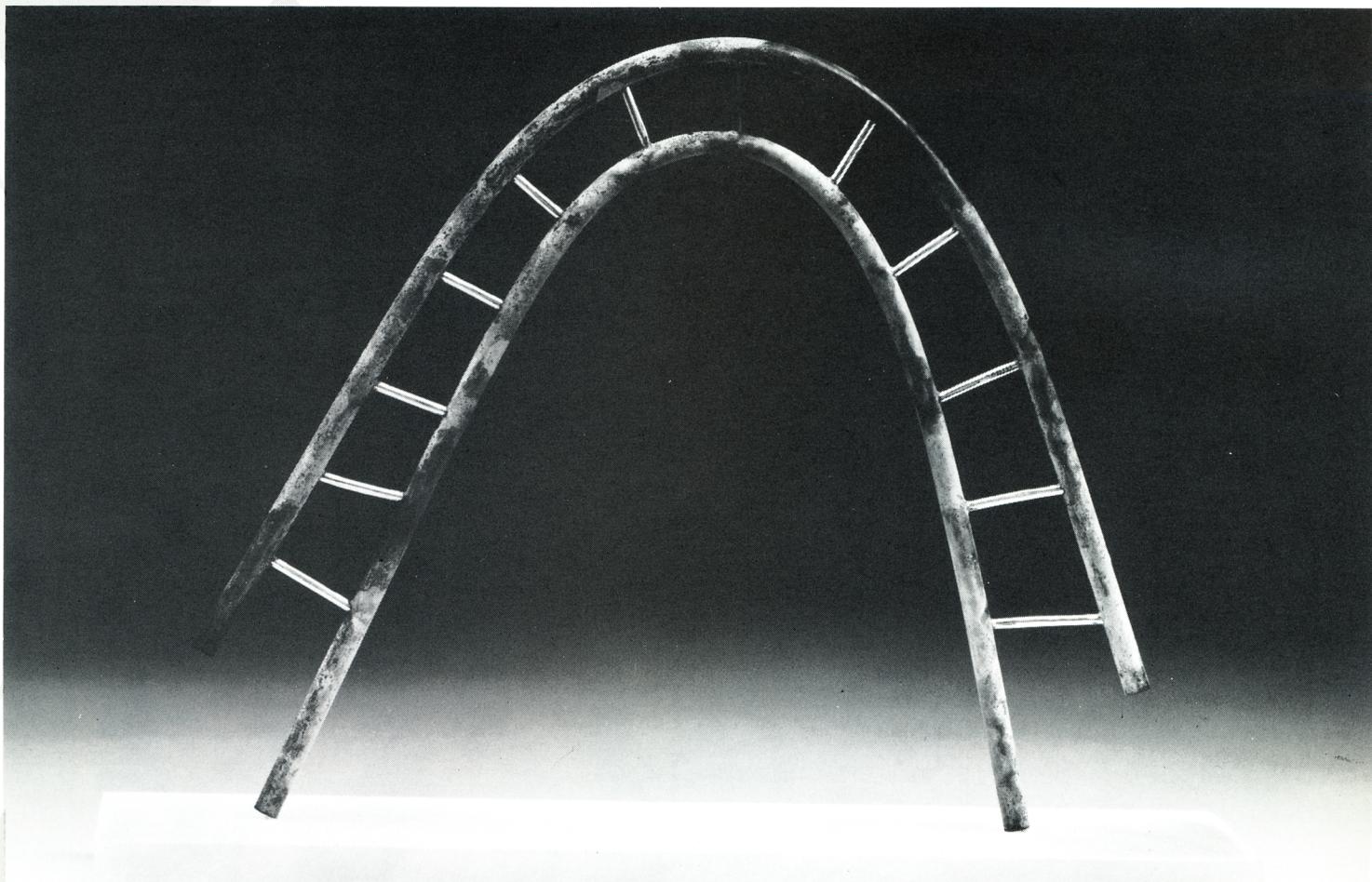
Heath is creating contemporary symbols, markers to define oneself by or from which to

of moon and hunt, is portrayed as virgin/sister/feminist/competitor in *Snare for Artemis*, while *Aphrodite's Ladder* expresses the conflict between lover and creative woman (Aphrodite is the goddess of love and beauty). Heath believes that we seek to model ourselves on these goddess archetypes, and that each is an unattainable contradiction.

Kennedy draws upon the shapes and materials used by past cultures to evoke a kind of presence. She is interested in the power inherent in a personalized object and how this power is transferred to the wearer. Her Totem pieces; dagger and three pins; represent the energy between person and object; incorporating pieces from animate and inanimate objects. Much of her work seeks to trace the evolution of myth through various civilizations and the

mer she draws the accumulation of myth and icon, the latter influences her use of material and colour; bone, burnished copper, stones, broken glass. Using her research, her writing and her sketches, she incorporates myth and material into each individual object. Kennedy's last exhibition, *Venificus* was accompanied by performance; a complex rite of fire, water, chanting and invocation.

Heath has worked extensively in her field. After her initial studies and apprenticeship in Melbourne, she moved to Sydney where she worked for ten years before moving to Brisbane. In 1984 she moved her studio from the Brisbane Community Arts Centre to her current premises in Brisbane Arcade. Here she was able to both earn a living from her work and concentrate on one-off conceptual pieces. In



Barbara Heath, *Aphrodite's Ladder* - brass, silver, 1987

define change. Symbols by which to physically anchor a displaced sense of self. Her *Aids for the Hopelessly Inarticulate* are large smooth surfaces layered with secrets and barely discernible signs. Her Flag and Marker pins speak of indicators one must always be searching for; their transparency and ambiguity contradicts their necessity. The series *Satori Views* are small windows; objects of enlightenment.

Following one from her Role Model series earlier in the year, Heath has shown four non-wearable pieces; small sculptural forms that play on paradoxes of contemporary female roles. She traces the formation of these roles back to ancient goddesses; Artemis, goddess

way roles are created and used to control and oppress. The role of women, she feels, is particularly relevant. She has produced a helmet dedicated to Medea (wife of Jason of Golden Fleece fame - when rejected by him she murders her children; rejecting her status of nurturer and supporter). The helmet re-interprets the myth of Medea as one of regeneration and reassertion of power. Her daggers are a response to her research on matriarchal societies; she seeks to "re-arm" woman, to "re-interpret old myths, rediscover old roles and create new icons".

Kennedy's work is strongly influenced by both her feelings toward her European origins and her ties to central Queensland. From the for-

1986 Kennedy began a twelve month Australia Council Traineeship program studying with Heath. Upon completion of her studies in Visual Arts at Queensland College of Art Kennedy had begun experimentation with less familiar forms of body ornamentation.

Many of the themes and ideologies running through New Icons are shared by both Kennedy and Heath, although their expression, and style remain individual. Both have found that their production work has forced them to work to considerable limitations. Overcoming these using experimental techniques introduces a change in working practices and the work itself becomes more spontaneous.

LEANNE RAMSAY