

TOLARNO GALLERIES

Jan Minchin
invites you to view

Handmade

by

Peter Atkins

on Friday 3 August 2001
6 - 8 pm

Level 4, 289 Flinders Lane
Melbourne Australia 3000

RSVP by Monday 30 July
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This exhibition will remain on view
until 1 September 2001

Handmade

In the fourth century writings of St Basil, the word *kosmos* signifies at once ornament and order, cosmos and cosmetics. Basil concentrates these meanings into a single pun - *kosmou kosmon* - which translates as 'making the ornament of the world'. Significant in all this is a conception, in contrast to much western aesthetic thought, of ornament's not supplementary, but intrinsic and fundamental, nature.

Basil is, of course, talking about God's handiwork, and we live in famously godless times. And yet, everywhere **Peter Atkins** travels, he seems to see the ornament of the world. His bricolaged journals and paintings hum with *pattern* and *design*; on the two dimensional plane, in fabric, wallpaper, cups and saucers; and also through time in the successive, mutating borrowings of almost Platonically ideal forms. And where he doesn't find it, he makes it himself; collecting, arranging and putting into repeat found objects. Not just things, but loaded things: car accident debris and condoms, auspicious messages from fortune cookies, and lotto tickets coloured in like the patterns of some demented jacquard or Fair Isle; things that speak of chance or destiny, birth and death, form and entropy. Atkins' collecting, arranging, repeating and copying hand injects rhythm into detritus, creates order out of chaos - and vice versa.

Currently, he's in Brunswick - where the Virgin Mary was last seen looking a little worse for wear outside the Barkly St public toilets, - but here as elsewhere, in God's absence other forces are jostling to fill the breach, leaving the traces of *their* handiwork in the world - and their makers' marks as proof of authorship, paternity or possession.

Technology, commerce and children, most notably. Witness the mechanical signatures in Dana's label collection; Luke Williams' and Enid Blyton's battle to the death for naming rights; and the evacuated plastic frame, a discarded technological afterbirth, of a child's - Atkins' child's - DIY robot.

Nearby, confetti, the constitutively chaotic ornament of the old fertility rites, is ordered, gridlike, by Atkins in a way that only accentuates its febrile energy. And who would have noticed, had Atkins not taken them, one by one, out of the picturesque realm of Lovers' Lane and ordered them into the eternal but restless world of pattern, that discarded condom wrappers are now sprouting sex organs, their insides curling outwards in the sun into silvery alumino-plastic lips in some divine technological joke?

Max McLean 2001