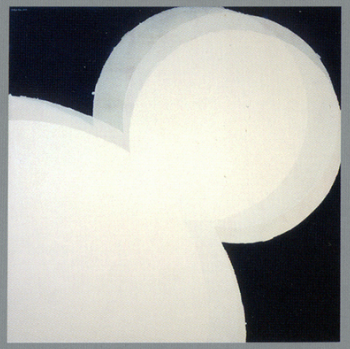

Mickey's Ear, 2005
Oil & enamel on canvas
180 x 180 cm

COVER
Paperform No. 4, 2003
Oil & enamel on canvas on wood panels
200 x 200 cm

PERCEPTUAL IDENTITY

Peter Atkins is a prodigiously accomplished Painter, a constantly absorbing consumer of the visual, an obsessing observer and, not coincidentally, a collector, of things: items, both splendid and mundane: textiles, fabrics, pieces of furniture, ceramics, plates, cups, handles, beaded handbags, colourful plastic buckles, beer mats, endless buttons, enticing fragments of Edo period and other patterned fabrics; all manner of ingeniously crafted human accoutrements even everyday things like sponges (should one mention the famous foam toe separators?), and countless other things more random from the streets that most would either overlook or dismiss as detritus; things thrown away: pages, postcards, bottle tops, tags, condom packets, occasionally the contents of same: scraps of paper variously embellished: etcetera. Most of which at some point re-emerge collaged or transformed as painterly objects in a world of heightened sensory concentration.

There is an attraction in found things – the unexpected – the different. They are surprise encounters; diversions into unprepared terrains that elicit correspondences in the self of an unprepared kind: an unravelling ensues and new insights emerge. During the many years I have observed artists I have known many who rigorously maintain side aspects to their practice: using the found, the unintended element, resulting in some or other form of visual sounding via the varied processes of collage, in works which often seem to bear little to no evident similarity to the artist's more intentional areas of practice.

This function is an essential one, of purposive disengagement; dislocation of the conceptual and sensory centres of focus; a modus engendering a re-location of vantage. In Peter Atkins' work however there is a deeper interconnectedness between the encountered, the chance discovered, and their later translocation into works of art: the fragments then collaged and sequenced and their painted counterparts are not merely rendered decorous: more importantly, in their second life, as collage and painting, they undergo a process of intensification, a distillation into essence according to the necessity of Peter Atkins' expansive artistic vision.

Peter Atkins' *Journals* are comprised of these poignantly *essential* found images collected as a matter of compelling observation. Found on both distant travels and local meandering, sometimes unobtrusive, sometimes startlingly visual these vibrant collaged fragments are a way of encapsulating experience of the many and diverse places he has been to or lived; of retaining essential memories of times, places and people. They function as distillations, poignant illuminations of the society at the transient point in time: raw, untransformed cultural signs of quotidian life in the perceptual present. These 'journals' are a diary of the eyes and senses, acquiring by the same processes a further, more singular essence; that emerges as a unique a kind of perceptual identity.

While Peter Atkins is fundamentally an artist of our time - his work utilises the materiality and excess of contemporary life with a closeness of visual attention unparalleled - his work also engage painterly attitudes and skills which span the decades and the centuries, qualities of colour, space and displacement common to very good painting in other times, all times.

More specifically Peter Atkins is of an artistic lineage that emerged definitive in the work of developed artists of the great European tradition such as Claude Monet and Henri Matisse, among later others traversing the influence of the British artist William Scott and the Australians Ian Fairweather and Tony Tuckson. It is a lineage of artistic character, of an informing spirit that is emphatically visual.

Peter Atkins' painting is declarative. It has the power of clear, often strident image, a power supported by a gradual and layering process in its formation: in its unequivocal finality it is visually and sensually attuned. Peter Atkins is widely respected as one of a very small number of truly gifted and developed contemporary painters in Australia.

William Wright
14th August 2003
Revised, 4th June 2005