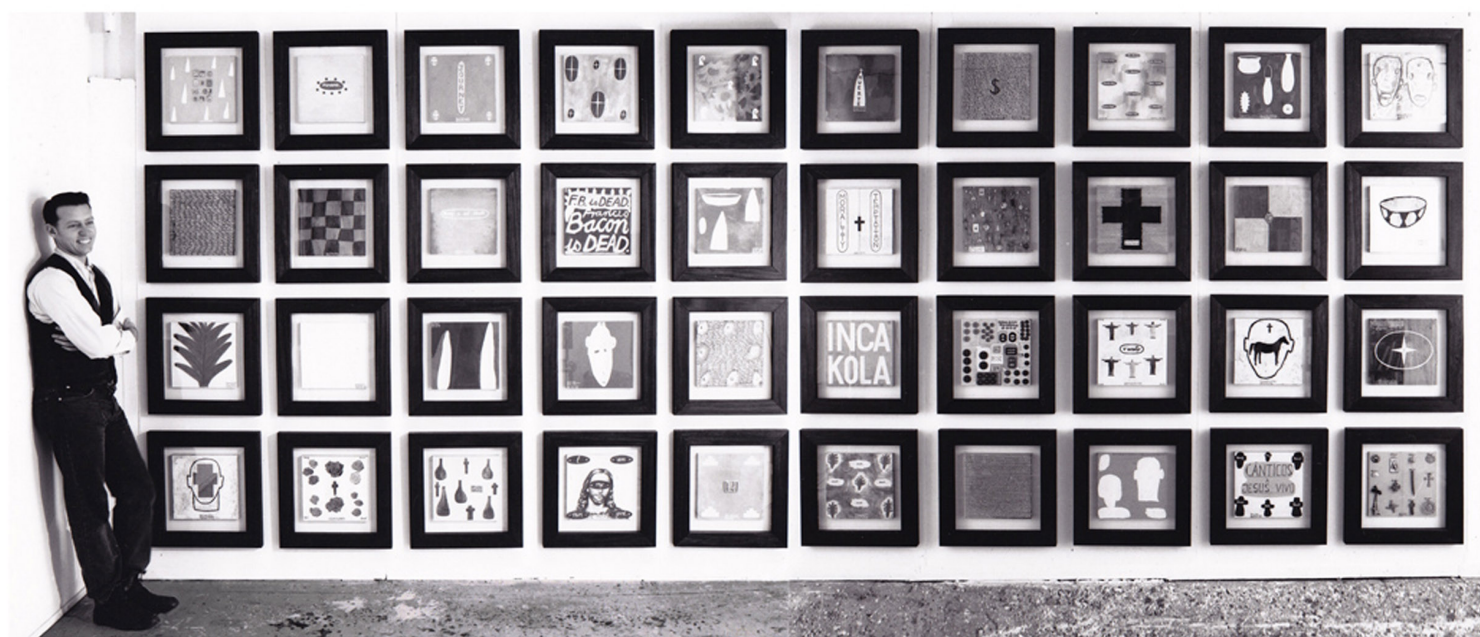


Places where Peter Atkins produced 'World Journal'



News Release

For immediate release
1 June 1993

Artist Chosen to represent Australia in The Eighth Indian Triennale of Contemporary Art

New Delhi - early 1994

Today, the Director of the Visual Arts/Craft Board of the Australia Council, Noel Frankham, announced artist **Peter Atkins** has been chosen to represent Australia at the *Eighth Indian Triennale*.

The Indian Triennale, to be held in New Delhi in early 1994, is a major recurrent visual arts event in Asia, presenting contemporary art from over sixty countries.

Australian artists who have previously shown at the Indian Triennale include Robert Hunter, Fred Cress, Jenny Watson, Marion Borgelt and Gareth Sansom.

Included in **Atkins** works exhibited at the Triennale will be a visual diary which the artist produced in 1992, over a ten month period travelling through Asia, Europe and North and South America. Each painting in the diary draws inspiration from and provides comment on the country in which it was painted.

"I am looking forward with delight to working in India again - the influences from my trip to India last year were enormous and of great benefit to my work. I look forward to repeating this experience." **Atkins** commented today.

Peter Atkins is Sydney based and his work is represented in a number of public and private collections including the Art Gallery of Western Australia and Centre for Contemporary Art, New Zealand.

....more



NEWS



RELEASE

Australian High Commission

2/94

19/1/94

Peter Atkins represents Australia at the VIII India Triennale

Peter Atkins, a-30-year-old Sydney based artist has been selected to represent Australia at the VIII Triennale-India beginning in Delhi on 16 February. He is the seventh Australian artist to represent Australia at this major art event in the Asia region. Australia has participated in the Triennale since 1971. Australian artist, Ms Jenny Watson won the gold medal at the VI Triennale in 1986.

Mr Atkins participation at this event has been made possible through the support of the Australia-India Council (AIC), the Visual Arts/Crafts Board of the Australia Council and the Australian Exhibitions Touring Agency (AETA).

The Australia-India Council was established by the Australian Government in 1992 to initiate and support activities that promote people-to-people and institutional links between Australia and India, notably the arts, sport, youth, commerce, the news media, education and science and technology.

Mr Atkins was awarded a Travelling Art Scholarship by the New South Wales State Government in 1985. He has had solo exhibitions in Sydney, Melbourne and Paris since then and was included in Australian Perspectives 1989 at the Art Gallery of NSW and in the 1990 and 1992 Moet & Chandon exhibitions which toured Australian galleries.

The works Mr Atkins will exhibit at the Indian Triennale are titled "World Journal", and are a visual diary produced in 1992 during a ten month period travelling through Asia, Europe, and North and South America. Mr Atkins' images incorporate objects. He finds stimulation and information for his work by placing himself in unfamiliar environment and then selects everyday images and objects from them that particularly appeal to him as representative and interpretive. The forty pieces in "World Journal" allow the viewer to follow his perceptual journey.

Another side of Mr Atkins' work is being displayed at the Triennale along with the World Journal - four large paintings titled 'Katab' painted during his four-month art residency in India before the Triennale.

Annette Larkin, who formerly worked for Macquarie Galleries in Sydney, has been appointed Commissioner and Curator for Mr Atkins' works for the Triennale. Ms Larkin who has been curator for a number of exhibitions in Sydney, says of Mr Atkins' work that : " he is continually intrigued by the strange juxtaposition of opposing cultural elements - tribal and contemporary; paganism next to christianity. These relationships could not be more evident than in the social and cultural relations in India".

Mr Atkins says of his work : "Travelling gives a new inspiration to my work. My visual language is constantly changing. There now seems to be an intrinsic relationship between my journeys and art".

The Indian Triennale is beginning to have a significant impact on the Australian art scene. According to Ms Victoria Lynn, curator for the VI Triennale, "The Triennale is an extraordinary opportunity for the Australian contingent to see what our neighbours are producing and to be exposed to a different culture and attitudes". Her exposure to Indian art and the deep impression it left on her were influential in her decision to curate a successful exhibition in Australia in 1992 of Indian contemporary art, titled "India Songs : Multiple Streams in Contemporary Indian Art".

Australia places a priority on its presence at key events such as the Triennale-India and believes that representation at major recurrent international exhibitions is one of the most effective ways of promoting Australian art and craft as well as of helping Australian artists and Australians to experience the life and culture of the Asian geographic region of which Australia is a part.

For further information, please contact :

Gavan Bromilow, Counsellor (Public Affairs)
Australian High Commission
Tel # 6888223.

Leader of the Opposition



JRH:JB:AL
28 FEB 1994

Mr P Atkins
PO Box 1192
STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2010

Dear Mr Atkins

I wish to extend my congratulations on your winning a gold medal at the Eighth Indian Tiennale in New Delhi.

It is heartening to see Australian Artists succeeding on the world stage.

Good luck for the future!

Yours sincerely



JOHN HEWSON MP

Peter Atkins 'World Journal'

Works from the VIII Triennale-India



The artist and a selection from **World Journal**, 1992. Photo: Richard Ludbrook

This exhibition of works by Sydney-based artist Peter Atkins was awarded one of the nine awards at the VIII Triennale-India 94 in New Delhi, India during February-March 1994. The two bodies of work which form the exhibition include 'World Journal', a series of forty small works, and the 'Katab' series of four paintings which Atkins made during a four month residency in New Delhi during 1993-94.

Peter Atkins' recontextualised objects and images offer us a complex view of that which is familiar. Not quite romantic, and never ironic, his work records a succession of impressions left upon him during time spent travelling. By placing himself in foreign environments, Atkins incorporates both the unfamiliar and the everyday into his own language. Through this process of self-discovery, Atkins explores the bounds of cultural and personal identity.

It is curious that such an approach should be taken by someone who grew up during the 60s and 70s in a quiet Australian town, whose main connection to the rest of the world was a major highway leading to Sydney. When Peter

Atkins received the New South Wales Travelling Art Scholarship in 1985, he did not realise that this experience would develop into a continuing relationship between travelling and his art practice. It was on this first journey (through Asia, the Middle East and Europe, finally settling in Paris for six months) that Atkins began not only to learn about other cultures but to record, almost to the point of obsession, the images and bric-a-brac he found. For Atkins, the discovery of objects and the creation of art is a pursuit which he embraces as part of the meaning of his own existence.

In looking more closely at Atkins' obsession with collecting, we can discern a particular relationship to memory. He has an aversion to the idea of photography as an authentic record of a given situation, believing that the photographic image cancels out the peripheral experiences that relate to a place, resulting in a distortion of memory. Since 1985 Atkins has been compiling the objects he has collected into small journals. In these are included bus tickets, pieces of fabric, advertisements from local

magazines, bottle tops, newspaper articles, plastic religious figures and collections of writings by the artist. This became the way he would document key moments in his process of self-discovery. Atkins uses these journals to recall images and situations that he re-presents in his artworks.

The forty pieces in 'World Journal' are the culmination of this process. The works were made during the artist's travels through Thailand, India, Turkey, Europe, Ireland, North, Central and South America in 1992. Atkins allows us to follow his spiritual journey, tracing his discoveries and collaborations. Each of the works contains a narrative which is controlled by the artist's exact textual references to his own thoughts.

Another aspect of Atkins work is the creation of large paintings which are usually made in his Sydney studio after returning from months of travelling.

In the past, these works have often included uncomfortably misshapen forms drawn from indigenous artefacts from Papua New Guinea, Africa and parts of South America. For this exhibition, he was given the opportunity of a four month residency in New Delhi, allowing him to draw upon the early twentieth century appliquéd fabric designs from Gujarat, locally known as Katab, which he found during his residency. Atkins' interest in documenting

the remnants of another time and culture suggests that he sees his work operating as a resource to an understanding of the past mediated through his own eyes.

In the studio environment (whether Australia or India), Atkins is a painter rather than a collector of objects. The journal is now transformed into a two-dimensional surface made up of found tarpaulins and wood taken from rubbish tips and railway yards. The collected designs, words and icons are now incorporated into his work as part of his own visual language. This is achieved using commercial paint of a type typically used for the painting of houses.

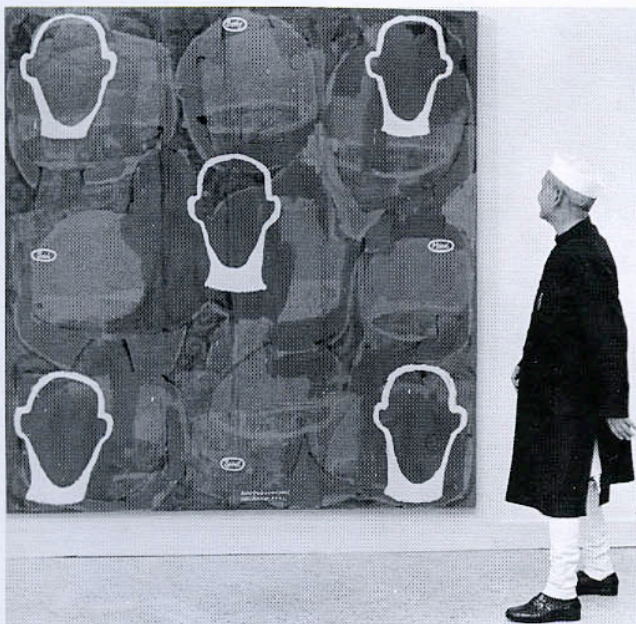
These works in particular are about mark-making and start from the incidental stains and blotches that are already on the found materials. There is a strong tradition of abstraction through mark-making in Australia, and Atkins has aligned himself with the genre which includes artists such as Ian Fairweather, Tony Tuckson, Michael Johnson and Roy Jackson. Atkins has also seen and been influenced by the work of American Abstract Expressionists and contemporary painters Julian Schnabel and Robert Ryman. Since 1985, his concerns have shifted from a concentration on line to the use of simple shapes, in order to reference more complex thoughts.

Triennale-India

The Triennale-India is the largest forum of contemporary art in the Asia-Pacific region, with over 80 countries being invited to attend. It began in 1968, when the artworld of New Delhi wanted to become more involved in an international contemporary art dialogue, allowing a large selection of Indian art to be viewed within the context of art from other countries.

Australia has participated since 1971 and has been represented by Robert Hunter, Ewa Pachuka, Michael Taylor, John Davis, Keith Looby, Fred Cress, Jenny Watson, Marion Borgelt and Gareth Sansom. Australia's contribution has always been highly regarded among the foreign participants and it is through our continual participation that many cultural ties have developed between the Australian and Indian art communities.

Annette Larkin, Commissioner/Curator



The President of India, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, in front of Peter Atkins' work at the VIII Triennale-India 1994.

This exhibition is managed and toured by the Australian Exhibitions Touring Agency (AETA) on behalf of the Australia Council, the Commonwealth Government's arts funding and advisory body, with the support of the Australia-India Council

Design: Sarah Bartak, AETA
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MARCH



1994

AUSTRALIA WINS AT THE 1994 INDIAN TRIENNALE

Peter Atkins, the 30 year old artist representing Australia at the VIII Triennale-India, took one of nine equally placed awards at this prestigious international art event. He wins Rs100,000 (AUD\$5,000) and a gold trophy. Commissioner Annette Larkin declared the award to be "a recognition of Australia's commitment to the art of the Asia-Pacific region".

Atkins' works include **World Journal**, a visual diary comprising 40 small works of mixed media (measuring 30 x 30cm) produced in 1992 while travelling through Asia, Europe and the Americas, and four large works which the artist made during a three month residency in New Delhi late last year.

The International Jury for the Triennale comprised William S. Lieberman, Director of 20th Century Art for The Metropolitan Museum, New York; Doug Hall, Director, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane; and prominent Indian artist Shri Satish Gujral. Atkins' works were selected from over 480 works.

The Lalit Kala Akademi, India's premier fine arts institution, is host to the Triennale-India and invites



Peter Atkins in his studio, 1993. Photographer: Richard Ludbrook

countries to participate in each Triennale which is exhibited in the grounds of the Akademi. A variety of media is shown including painting, sculpture, works on paper and installation. Australia has participated in the Triennale-India since 1971.

Australia's representation at the Triennale-India is supported by the Australia Council and managed by AETA on its behalf. AETA will tour the exhibition to various venues in Australia upon its return in July. (See our calendar inside for venue details). ■

NEWS



RELEASE

Australian High Commission

07/94

10 February 1994

AUSTRALIAN ARTIST WINS VIII INDIA TRIENNALE AWARD

Australian artist, Peter Atkins' work "World Journal", has been adjudged winner for the 1994 India Triennale award, it was announced here today by the organisers Lalit Kala Akademi.

The award carries an artist designed gold trophy, and a cash reward of of Rs one lakh each, payable in foreign exchange to foreign artists, Prof B P Kamboj, Secretary of the Lalit Kala Akademi, told a press conference in New Delhi.

An international jury of eminent persons from the art world comprising Mr William S Lieberman, Curator of The Metropolitan Museum, New York; Mr Doug Hall, Director, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane and Mr Satish Gujral, Indian painter, selected the nine award winners out of a total of 483 works from 28 participating countries.

The exhibition will be inaugurated on Wednesday 16 February by the President of India, Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma. The awards will be presented on the 14 March.

Mr Atkins work World Journal, a visual diary comprising forty small works of mixed media will be on display at the exhibition. The work draws upon images and materials the artist experienced over a 10-month travel in 1992 through Asia, Europe, North, Central and South America.

"Travelling gives a new inspiration to my work. My visual language is constantly changing. There now seems to be an intrinsic relationship between my journeys and my art," says Mr Atkins.

Ms Annette Larkin, Australian Commissioner and Curator for the VIII Triennale-India 1994, said " the award is a recognition of Australia's commitment to the art of the Asia-Pacific region".

A series of four paintings, titled 'Katab', produced during Mr Atkins residency in New Delhi since October 1993 will also be exhibited at the Triennale.

He is the seventh Australian artist to represent Australia at this major art event in the Asia region. Australia has participated in the Triennale since 1971. Australian artist, Ms Jenny Watson won the gold medal at the VI Triennale in 1986. Mr Atkins representation at the Triennale has been made possible through the support of the Australia-India Council (AIC), the Visual Arts/ Crafts Board of Australia Council and the Australian Exhibitions Touring Agency (AETA).

The Sydney Morning Herald

ARTS

Monday, February 14, 1994 24

A journey built on obsession

By CARMEL DWYER

THE top prize at the Eighth Triennale-India has been won by a Melbourne artist, Peter Atkins, for his work *World Journal*, the sole Australian work in the competition.

World Journal comprises 40 separate works measuring 30 x 30 centimetres. The "journal" chronicles the artist's journeys through Asia, Europe and the Americas. Since visiting India, Atkins has added four larger works to the suite. The format is described as mixed media and in addition to gouache, enamel and Texta Colour, Atkins has used anything from safety pins to paper money, buttons, scraps, logos, postcards

and memorabilia.

Atkins won the \$5,000 prize from a field of 480 works from throughout the world. The jury included William S. Lieberman, the director of 20th Century art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; Doug Hall, the director of the Queensland Art Gallery; and the Indian artist Shri Satish Gujral.

Atkins was selected to represent Australia by the International Committee of the Australia Council's Visual Arts/Craft Board and sponsored by the Australian Exhibitions Touring Agency (AETA).

Like previous entrants to the Indian triennale, Atkins accepted a three-month residency in Delhi which was organised by the

Australia-India Council and the Australian High Commission. It was during this period that the four larger works were created.

Explaining his work before he went to India, Atkins said his repeated use of forms reflected his obsession with objects such as boats, feathers and crosses, obsessions which he cultivates to aid the creative process.

Atkins explained that *World Journal* stems from the small works and diaries he has kept on his travels during the past eight years, consisting of notes, images and found objects. They are comments on the societies he has visited and on contemporary art, as well as tangible reminders of places and cultures.

Atkins's first travel journal concerned his 1990 sojourn in the United States. *World Journal* was developed on 40 weeks' travel in 1992, starting in Bangkok and travelling to India, Turkey, Amsterdam, London, Dublin, New York, Central and South America.

Ann Lewis, the chairwoman of AETA, said Atkins's win in India was a great triumph for Atkins and contemporary Australian art as it showed its acceptance in the Asia-Pacific region. Atkins is the second Australian artist to win a major prize in the region in the past four months. In October, Immants Tillers won the prestigious and lucrative Osaka Triennale.



Peter Atkins ... work stems from reminders of places and cultures he has visited.

Peter Atkins *painter*

Peter Atkins remembers walking into the dim light of a mud hut in Honduras a year or two ago and being entranced by the sight of an old woman sitting crosslegged on the floor, weaving.

"I thought, 'Oh, this is great, it's really authentic, so traditional.' I walked out and looked up, and there was this satellite dish on the outside of the hut. They all get CNN."

That sort of ludicrous cultural juxtaposition is one of the dominant themes of Atkins' work of 40 pieces, each 30 x 30cm, called *World Journal*.

The 30-year-old painter spent almost all of 1992 journeying through parts of Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Britain, Central and South America, painting as he travelled and often using found objects and materials from the places he visited: a Honda badge, volcanic ash, leather from a shanghai sold outside a church.

"Places like the Amazon were really incredible. You have tribes of Indians running around with feathers and red paint plastered on, drinking cola and eating chips out of packets."

One of the *World Journal* pictures, *Bottles and Crosses*, was inspired by seeing empty medicine bottles, branded with red crosses, dotted along the road to a cemetery in Antigua. The bottles hold hospital alcohol which the locals buy cheaply; eventually the pure spirit sends them blind. "It was so ironic that they should line the road to the cemetery. For me, it became linked with notions of colonialism and the arrival of white man, the desecration of the indigenous culture."

At the 1994 VIII Triennale-India in Delhi, *World Journal* and four new large works by Atkins will represent Australia, under the aegis of Australia's curator for the show, Annette Larkin. Atkins left for India late last year to take up a four-month residency prior to the exhibition.

When *HQ* met him on

the eve of his departure for Delhi, he had just finished kitting himself out in a cream Hard Yakka outfit, pith helmet to come, and was bracing himself for the inevitable round of expatriate cocktail parties. "I can just see it," he laughed. "Lots of 1960s women in those great dresses and their hair done up."

Atkins is used to being away from home. In 1985 he won the NSW Travelling Art Scholarship and the following year set off on a two-year odyssey across the Middle East, Asia and most of Europe. In 1990, he did North America and Central America.

"At home, my work becomes more self-obsessed. The imagery is more what I'm thinking about inside. When I go out, there's such a wealth of inspiration everywhere, and those images get incorporated in my work."

The *Journal* maps his state of mind as well as his environment. Early on, Atkins was absorbed by notions of death, prompted by the death of his art dealer and close friend Gary Anderson after a long illness. Catholicism — and its failure to seriously confront the problems of Latin America — was another preoccupation for this ex-Catholic, who also revelled in its kitsch imagery.

Thus he was devastated to read a Melbourne review of the journal that described the works as "cheery renditions of a backpacker's trip".

"I was just horrified by that. The journal is just so personal and the imagery is so potent for me; it's not trivial in any way and the idea of, like, trinkets picked up on a backpacker's tour just really demeans the whole notion of what it's about. I hate the idea of people thinking it's some sort of travel thing."

FS ■

