

NEW ZEALAND

# LISTENER

March 10-16 2007



## HOW WOMEN GET AHEAD

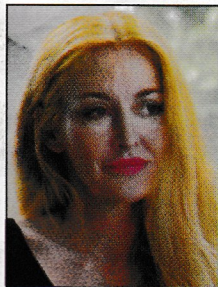
Are female bosses better?

10 strategies for success

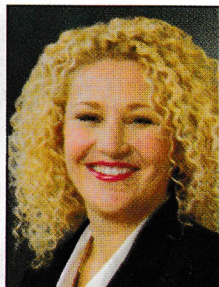
\$3.80 inc GST



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Josephine Grierson



Catherine Savage



Ann Sherry



Maris O'Rourke



Theresa Gattung



Jane Diplock

Why CD sound  
lets you down

The man who killed  
2 million penguins

Among the virgins  
of a religious sect



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JANE USSHER



JANE USSHER



JANE USSHER

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# New school

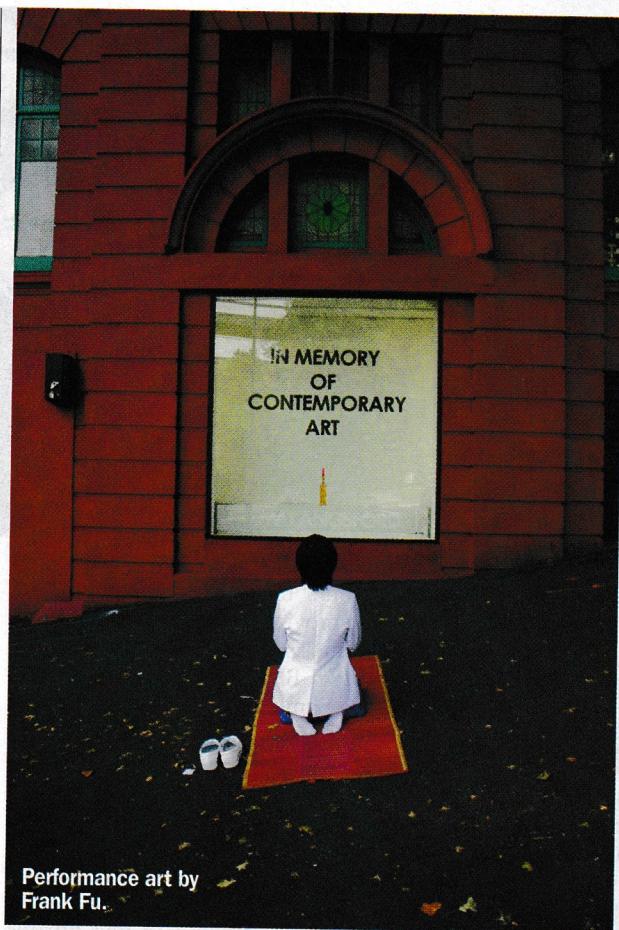
The era of glamorous art stars has been replaced by the era of the casual collective.

BY TESSA LAIRD

The past month in Auckland mixed the anarchic with the predictable. Auckland Art Gallery's *Summer Daze* may have been billed as being for "kids of all ages", but real kids were frostily scolded "don't touch the artworks". Waiheke's *Sculpture on the Gulf* seemed under par this year, while the Gus Fisher and Gow Langsford exhibitions of contemporary Japanese and Chinese painting (respectively) were surprisingly dull.

Gow Langsford's conservatism was relieved, however, by an ongoing endurance performance by Frank Fu, a Chinese graduate of the Manukau School of Visual Arts. Last year he made a name for himself by disrupting openings, ringing bells and bellowing barely comprehensible manifestos. This time he took a quieter approach, meditating in front of the Gow's window, which was set up as a minimalist shrine, "In Memory of Contemporary Art". Fu took it upon himself to kneel in white for an hour at a time, three times a day, perfectly still. The tableau he created was perplexing and poignant in a city where shrines, public displays of spirituality and street performance are equally rare.

You might well have cause to mourn contemporary art in the city centre, but elsewhere it's fighting fit. Michael Lett's group show kicked off the year with mad humour as his stable vied for attention in a crammed room. Michael Parekwhai's giant pneumatic bunny towered over a video work by Hany Armanious, in which the artist walks through Sydney sporting prosthetic buttocks. To an annoyingly goofy-funky synthesiser soundtrack, Armanious, after stopping at Emporio Armani, ends up at a parade where streamers and canned string look like so much jism. Other gems – Steve Carr's *Oil Paintings*, which are really just pizza boxes sporting the greasy shadows of former meals, and newcomer Rachel Walters's spooky photographs and



Performance art by Frank Fu.



Tahi Moore's *German Sands/Our Faces*.

sorcerer's sticks. Her plastic bunnies covered in ectoplasmic ooze made a nice link to Parekwhai's robo-Rabbit.

Lett's show was punctuated by big, declaratory paintings by Tahi Moore. On raw canvas, or board, or pretty much anything he can get his hands on, Moore paints pretty much any words he can think of. Place-names are popular – at Lett's it was Naples and Austria, as well as Problems. And in the inaugural show at Gambia Castle, *German Sands/Our Faces*, it's Sweden, and then Cigarettes, painted out and covered up with Klaus Kinski!

Gambia Castle is a collective of artists showing their work above what was Ponsonby's Open Late Café. There's space galore, so Moore got to fill four rooms,

while two stockrooms contain selections of work from Dan Arps, Daniel Malone, Kate Newby, Simon Denny, Nick Austin and others. A lot of these works are indistinguishable from one another, and this blur is something the artists encourage. You might even say a new "school" is emerging, although what it would be called, I don't know. Perhaps it could be described by current catchphrases "Random", "Whatever," or "Kinda", as its adherents practise an intuitive approach to objects and text.

Moore's selections, which include mineral water bottles, planks of wood, magazine advertising, shoes and rope, are almost irritatingly nonchalant. Yet the beauty of Gambia Castle is that it allows someone as idiosyncratic as Moore the space and freedom to cut loose. Gambia Castle feels like the freshest thing to happen in this town since Teststrip, and that's saying a lot.

At Artspace, curatorial intern Laura Preston has capitalised on some of this freshness; Denny, Moore, Newby and Tao Wells are all part of her *Moment Making* "graduation" show (Newby's handmade Oooh! flag flutters triumphantly from the top of the build-

ing). Also included are international stars Bruce Nauman and Diana Thater, and our own prodigal son of performance, Bruce Barber.

Like the Gambia Castle stockroom, the works here segue into each other effortlessly – I'm lost as to who's who, but it doesn't seem to matter. The era of glamorous art stars has been replaced by the era of casual collectives. Preston's take is cerebral but not cold; there's a thoughtful invitation to engage beyond superficial opening-night impressions. Preston is taking her attention and care to Rotterdam where she will be working at Witte de With on the German Pavilion for the Venice Biennale. Now *there's* some Euro-verbiage for Moore's brush! ■