

JAMES GLEESON INTERVIEWS: KEN REINHARD

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JAMES GLEESON: Ken, your career spans quite a few areas of activity as a creative artist and as a teacher but, first of all, could we begin by a few biographical details that will allow us to put together a proper catalogue of your work? When and where were you born?

KEN REINHARD: I was born in 1936.

JAMES GLEESON: Exact date?

KEN REINHARD: Oh, 17th of March 1936 in Mudgee, New South Wales. My father was a primary school teacher, and so for the next 15 years we travelled around various country towns where he happened to be appointed. Following Mudgee went to a place called Quandialla, which is out Western New South Wales, and then to a place called Moama, which was on the Murray River directly across from Echuca. It's where the Murray River sort of drops right down just above Melbourne.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh yes, yes.

KEN REINHARD: It was then that I suppose I became addicted to Australian Rules football. Anyway, when I first went to high school—

JAMES GLEESON: Where was that?

KEN REINHARD: That was at Echuca.

JAMES GLEESON: At Echuca.

KEN REINHARD: I had made up my mind—I can sort of recall almost the first day—that I wanted to be either a science or an art teacher when I left school. I'd always drawn and doodled, as kids do, and probably one of the most important influences as a small boy in the country was the ABC children's session. I used to contribute things to that, you know, and used to listen to it on the radio of an afternoon. But I went to high school down there for four years—well, it was almost four years—and then my father was moved and appointed to Fort Street Primary School, which is right near the Harbour Bridge. Something which none of us wanted to do; was to go from, you know, the country town that we knew to come to Sydney. Anyway, when we did come to Sydney I then went to Homebush Boys High School, which was the nearest high school to where we were living at Chester Hill. The whole nature of secondary education in New South Wales was very different to that in Victoria. There was no art, to start with.

JAMES GLEESON: In New South Wales you mean?

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KEN REINHARD: Not in boy's high schools there wasn't. That meant that my interest in art wasn't fuelled any more by the high school, as it had been in Victoria, and my mother arranged for me to go and take some private lessons of a Saturday morning with a chap whose Christian name I never knew, but he used to sign his pictures E D Redfern. He used to do little watercolours and he lived at Burwood. I used to go there and we used to go down and paint scenes on the Parramatta River and things like that. But the science that I was doing in Victoria was a general science, which included biology and physics and chemistry and all sorts of things like that. I did quite well at that at the Victorian High School, but when I came to New South Wales and it was separated into physics and chemistry and it took a different form, I passed it at the intermediate certificate but that was about it. I dropped it after that. So having dropped science it meant that eliminated the prospect of a science teacher. The art was carried on separately and so I still wanted to be an art teacher. Despite the protests of the people at the school I was attending, because it just wasn't done for a boy to go to art school, I then ended up at East Sydney Tech where I did three years there and one year at Sydney Teacher's College. I did the four-year special art course.

JAMES GLEESON: What years were they?

KEN REINHARD: Nineteen fifty-four, '55, '56 at East Sydney, and '57 at Sydney Teacher's College and then I was appointed in 1958 to Fairfield Girls High School, which was my first appointment. I spent 10 years as a high school teacher, the last three as the subject master in charge of the department. Then I went to the National Art School as a part time teacher of design. I'd been a little put off secondary teaching by an experience in which I had encouraged the boys at the school to produce work which I felt related very much to their environment. They were kids who lived in an industrial area in Granville, who loved the beaches and loved motor cars and all the things that you expect kids in that sort of area to be interested in. So they made very abstract paintings as their major works for the HSC. We'd also had a number of exhibitions at city galleries in which the school had had a lot of publicity, and the boys, it had done an enormous amount for their ego. We had two at Clunes and one at the Darlinghurst Gallery. Anyway, these boys' major works were failed in the assessments for the HSC. In most cases they got nothing for them, because at that time the department was encouraging a figurative approach to painting and these kids had produced work which they assumed had been very much influenced by the major American exhibitions that had come out round about then. It hadn't been; it had been influenced by the other art teachers and myself encouraging them to make work which related to the environment that they had been in.

So having been a bit shattered by this, and having been approached by one of the senior staff from the design division in the National Arts School, I thought 'Why not?'. So I actually took three months long service leave over six months and started teaching part time for the Department of Tech Ed in their division of design. Then I got leave without pay for the remaining six months while I stayed

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there as a part time teacher, and then at the end of the time applied for a position as a full time teacher and was accepted by the Department of Tech Ed; a fairly rare occurrence because there'd been a sort of gentleman's agreement between the two departments that they wouldn't swap staff. I went and saw the then Director of Secondary Education, Hedley Yelland, who had opened our particular exhibitions in town, so he knew me, and he was sympathetic to what I said and how I felt about the situation. So he supported my application and I was, in fact, transferred from the Education Department to the Technical Education Department as it was then. So I spent, how many years with them? Well, it's a total of 22 years now, of which the last four and a half to five have been with Alexander Mackie College. But I went straight from Tech Ed to Alexander Mackie when I was accepted as the Head of the School of the Art there. But as an artist I suppose, you know, that's been going on all along, although from 1958 when I first started teaching until about—well, my first one man show was in 1964.

JAMES GLEESON: That was the one at the Macquarie Galleries?

KEN REINHARD: Yes. My activity as an artist had been spasmodic and, I suppose, less than professional in that I'd sort of just done paintings when I felt I had time and I'd exhibited in sort of suburban shows and that sort of thing. But I sort of made up my mind in 1963 that I wanted to be an artist. I suppose I tended to see the two things as being separate. Being an art teacher was the ambition I had as a child, and being an art teacher I then realised that being an artist was different, quite apart from my belief now that artists are things that are born; that they're not made. It's a particular attitude which you are either born with the determination and the will and whatever it is to sort of get out and do something. I still sort of made the decision then that I would approach the whole thing more professionally, which to me at that time meant that I would go in all the exhibitions and competitions and, you know, do enough of that so that I got sufficient a reputation to be accepted by a gallery to have a one-man show, which sort of all lead up to the first show at the Macquarie. These biographical notes have got out of hand, haven't they?

JAMES GLEESON: That's exactly the sort of detail we want. What sort of work? I remember that show very well; in fact, I bought one from it.

KEN REINHARD: Yes, that was the highlight of that show for me, I can assure you.

JAMES GLEESON: You began by being sort of more figurative; landscape, was it?

KEN REINHARD: Well, when I left art school, see, I went into art school having developed a little bit of skill at doing the sort of gum tree watercolour thing as I'd done with this Mr Redfern that I worked with. I went into art school thinking that Hans Heysen and Elioth Gruner would have to be the most important, exciting and provocative artists the world has ever produced. I left art school being

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absolutely and totally confused. I remember—it's terribly embarrassing now—I had an argument with Lorna Nimmo about a print of Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* in which, as you'll recall, the ellipse to the top of the vase isn't an ellipse at all. It's a series of straight lines, and the same with the bottom, you know. I couldn't understand why anybody could draw a vase out of perspective.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

KEN REINHARD: Because when I did come to high school in New South Wales I didn't do art; I did a thing called descriptive geometry and drawing.

JAMES GLEESON: Did you indeed? Well, that's quite interesting.

KEN REINHARD: Which is a thing I loved. I had done that all the way through high school because in Victoria boys were allowed to go from the high school to the technical college and to do what was called tech drawing and woodwork and metalwork, and I did those things. So I suppose, you know, rather than being an artist I'm a reasonable home handyman. I'm not bad with my hands, you know, I can drive a nail in straight sometimes. When we came to New South Wales I then continued doing this thing called tech drawing at high school and I got an A in the leaving doing that. Obviously, a lot of the things that have happened in that have very much influenced things that I do in my paintings. I just couldn't understand why Van Gogh ever drew this vase with the top not having the ellipse in perspective, see. So I argued with Lorna Nimmo about this. I don't know who won. I'm sure she must have won the argument, you know. I saw her the other day, actually. But it's a terrible embarrassment to think back on that now. I left art school, as I said, being fairly confused but obviously I must have also been reasonably open-minded to various influences that come along. I hesitate saying this because it sounds egotistical, but I would like to think that now I'm as Catholic in my acceptance of the range of approaches and styles in the visual arts as is anybody that I've come across, even though I have very strict and specific likes and dislikes in what I do myself. I think I can appreciate an enormous range of things through body art and earthworks and lord knows what through to the fairly straight, you know, painting and printmaking and what have you.

But what I was painting myself at that time were very—well, they were horrifying blue period Picasso's. They really were terrible when I look back at the one or two that are left stuck in my Mother's garage. I sort of doodled around at those and then I was influenced, I think, by the paint quality. Despite what I do now, I still can enjoy a sensual paint surface; which people wouldn't think I can when you see that I'm using photographs and plastic. But I was very much influenced by people who did do that sort of thing, such as Tom Gleghorn and Leonard Hessing and Charles Reddington and various others that were working at that time and showing at that time. I recall the first show of John Olsen's that I saw at the Clune Galleries. I was absolutely appalled. This was soon after leaving art school. I couldn't believe that anybody would throw paint around like that and sort

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of apparently throw it around so indiscriminately. It was frightening. Yet the second show, which was only 12 months later, I thought they were absolutely marvellous; you know, this change had taken place. I was absolutely delighted with, you know, the enjoyment I was getting from the Olsen's. So I was painting things myself; I was using oil paint and I was painting on hardboard, and I was sort of pushing paint around and paddling it here and scraping it there and this sort of thing. Even though, I suppose, there was some satisfaction from it, I recall that I never really knew how to start a painting or when it was finished. It was sort of finished when I got fed up with it. But there wasn't a real conclusion. They began by me simply making marks on the board and, I suppose, drawing upon vague experiences that one could remember of landscapes in the past. But I must say, even though I spent my early life in the country, I don't have an enormous sympathy for the Australian bush. That's more a comment on me than the Australian bush.

JAMES GLEESON: Ken, can I just interrupt there? I take it from that, that you don't normally work from a sketch, a preliminary study, up till the finished work?

KEN REINHARD: No, never.

JAMES GLEESON: You work straight on to the main work. Do you have a clear idea in your mind of what it's going to be like, or is it just something that evolves bit by bit as you work on it?

KEN REINHARD: I would say I have a very clear idea but nothing ever, ever works out as precisely as one would like. I'm always disappointed with what I produce. You know, the best picture is always going to be the next one. But I can't bear to do some sort of preliminary theme for something. Even at art school when the exercise was that you did six or eight sketches and you picked one out and then you blew it up. I used to always do the final one, then go back and do the others to try and make them look like the final one, you know; always cheated, which I never got away with. But, no, the things are always, I invent them in my head and in most cases that's where the satisfaction and the hard work is done. This is why for the last show that I had at Bonython's in '72, a lot of the work was produced by other people.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

KEN REINHARD: I'm perfectly content to create the thing or design it, or whatever the word one might like to use, and then have somebody else make it, if they'll make it to my standards.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

KEN REINHARD: You can get people to do that but you can't afford to get them to do it has been the big trouble. But I don't get much satisfaction from the doing of it. Because the sort of thing that I'm doing now I expect a certain sort of standard in the finish and in order to achieve that there's an enormous amount of

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tension involved. Because, you know, a knife slips or a screwdriver slips and you've scratched it and you've damaged it and that's it; it's a write-off. So there's the tension in that. There's a great deal of satisfaction getting the ideas as to what you're going to do and how you're going to put it together, but the actual putting it together is a very laborious and time consuming and tension filled period.

JAMES GLEESON: Ken, about, say, a work like the Marlin (inaudible) sculpture, how would you have gone about that? Did you make drawings of that, plans? How did you get it to the fabricators, to the people who actually put it together? You must have had a very clear specification for what you wanted.

KEN REINHARD: Well, I made a marquette which I made, although there were frames used in that which were commercially made. I had a person weld up stainless steel frames. But I knew what I wanted. I wanted five—in that case they were one foot cubes which were then blown up to five foot cubes in the finished product. They were to have glass infills or mirror infills, and then they'd have things inside them. So I knew what I wanted. Then, having made the cubes and knowing that at least one would be standing on top of two others, it was then a fairly simple object to arrange them and decide on which was the most appropriate arrangement and then to fix them in that way. Having then made the model, I was then able to take that to a firm of industrial design consultants, who translated that into engineering drawings, blowing the thing up the five times from the original. So using a firm of engineers who built it and the industrial design consultants who did the engineering drawings and the tests on making the thing both waterproof and dirt-proof and that sort of thing, and the various other people that we had to consult along the way in order to use the particular materials. The people who built it, in fact, had built the glass windows in the Opera House. So they had had experience in the sealants that were used for the glass panels in the Opera House, and the same sealants used there are used in that sculpture in (inaudible).

JAMES GLEESON: Whose idea was it to use the nitrogen gas inside to prevent any sort of fungus or (inaudible)?

KEN REINHARD: Oh, that came from the industrial design people, who realised that not only did we have to make sure that all the materials used inside were non-hydroscopic. The base panel, it's a timber impregnated with one of the plastics. I can't think at the moment. I mean, it's seven or eight years ago. I've forgotten it all. So that it will not absorb any moisture, and then we used acrylic sheet, chrome plated brass and stainless steel and the glass. I think that's about all, but there's nothing in there that will absorb moisture of any sort. But one, that, and two because of the quick changes in temperature that you can get in Melbourne, we had to make sure that if moisture did get in there, that if it condensed inside the cubes, well, of course, you'd have water running around, you know.

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JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

KEN REINHARD: For it to get in it would mean the dust could get in, insects could get in, the next thing you'd have spiders in there growing webs or whatever they do, spinning webs. So they came up with the idea of a gentle pressure of gas in there and, by using dry nitrogen, the gas pressure meant that any holes, you've got gas leaking out rather than air and insects coming in.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

KEN REINHARD: By using dry nitrogen it meant that any moisture that might be getting in through the holes or any other way would be absorbed by the dry nitrogen. Apparently it's worked in the years that it's been down there. I don't think there's any change inside the thing. Also the dry nitrogen will stop if the sealants around the edge were to be affected in any way, which theoretically they shouldn't. You'd just have the pressure of that, and the pressure would be evident or the loss of gas would be evident on the gauges that are underneath on the cylinders that are putting the gas in.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. Ken, you mentioned two things that you studied when you were young, science and technical drawing. Now, it seems to me that both of those interests do emerge in your art. Would that be true, do you think?

KEN REINHARD: Yes, I think so. You know, it's not the easiest thing to be your own psychoanalyst but I'm a gadget freak, always have been, and I make art objects or I have made art objects which come very close to a lot of the gadgetry of modern technology. I love cars, so consequently that comes out in the things that I do. To be quite honest, I don't know where this puts me as an artist. But, to be quite honest, I get far greater satisfaction and even emotional stimulus from the sight of and the contact with one of the exotic Italian or German pieces of motor car than I get from almost any of the sculpture I have seen anywhere in the world. I get an enormous emotional charge out of a lot of sound equipment, out of, you know, watches, out of any piece of equipment.

JAMES GLEESON: This is an aesthetic response, is it, or is it just an emotional reaction?

KEN REINHARD: No, it's an aesthetic one.

JAMES GLEESON: Do you think they're beautiful?

KEN REINHARD: Yes. Yes, no question in my mind. I mean, I think that the concept of form following function applies just so well in things like aeroplanes.

JAMES GLEESON: Things that work?

KEN REINHARD: Yes, and certainly in earth-moving equipment. I find, you know, earth-moving equipment to be absolutely superb pieces of sculpture.

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They're painted yellow for a particular reason and everything is where it is because it has to be, not because somebody's decided to make it look pretty and put it there. It's there because it has to be. I find these things terribly exciting and much more visually satisfying than the majority of things that are designed the way they are because somebody thinks it should be there, you know, which is what your sculptors doing. He's putting it there because he's made some sort of rational or irrational or emotional decision that it's there. It doesn't have any practical application as well. I don't mean that unless sculpture's got a practical application, it's a write off. But, just for me, these thing that can do both I find are very, very exciting. I think that the aesthetic decisions made by the designers are as valid and often more—I'm not quite sure what word to use—significant, more comprehensive, more important than the decisions made by the artist who has no parameters placed on what he's doing, whereas your designer usually has enormous parameters. It can't be bigger than, it mustn't cost more than, it has to be, you know, and within that he's working his backside off to make the thing look as good and work as well as possible, whereas your artist is working his backside off just to make it look the way he wants it.

This just happens to be, you know, a little I suppose sort of fetish of mine. I'm not suggesting that I would denigrate the work of any artist because of it. But often I don't think artists quite extend themselves and therefore succeed as well as a lot of the designers that are really put on a spot to be successful in what they're doing. You know, they're really is enormous pressure, I would think, on a lot of your designers and the things that, I mean, you know, that Natamichi produce or what's the organ, Bang and Olufsen, you know, the sound gear that they produce, which is a continental firm. It's absolutely brilliant stuff, you know, both technically and visually.

JAMES GLEESON: Ken, from the earliest work of yours that I remember, you've never restricted yourself to, say, one medium. Your work is spread out over a whole range of different kinds of mediums. It's hard, in fact, to call them pictures or sculptures. They somehow live in an area—what did you call it before, transmedia?

KEN REINHARD: It's a term, yes, the term we're using at the college. I think this is because for me to function as an artist I believe I've got to have all avenues open. I don't want to feel that there's a sort of gate that shuts me off from having access to any modern technology that comes in, or even any ancient technology that might be available to us. What I do ends up being very limited, you know, and I think it's readily identifiable as having been made by my clumsy hand. But I would still like to feel that if I wanted to draw something, I could draw it; if I wanted to paint it, if I wanted to photograph it, if I wanted to make a print of it, if I wanted to, you know, use a laser, that I could. All these things are there to be drawn upon. The only thing that prevents me using them is that I don't need them at that time. I may never need some, or may never need a whole range of them.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, quite.

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KEN REINHARD: But, you know, I could never function on the sort of Ad Reinhart principle that it's black on black and it's flat and, you know, you look at a fairly narrow thing and you exploit that to the nth degree. The greatest frustration, I suppose, for me is that there is just so much there that you can make things about, or of, or just make things.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

KEN REINHARD: And that one's life and the amount of time that you can spend is just quite finite, whereas the range of experiences are infinite.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. Somewhere I read about you that your art was inspired by pop art, which is something that I've never really been able to see. Would you say that that is true?

KEN REINHARD: Well, apart from Lamborghini's, Maserati's, Ferrari's, Porsche's and the like, the art which I enjoy the most is pop and pop related. I'm an enormous fan of the American pop, the real pop stuff. I enjoy the British derivation of but it always had the softness and, you know, it was watered down slightly compared to the brashness of Westman and Warhol and Rauschenberg and company. What I do I think is purely a product of my environment and background. I think it's perfectly reasonable to rationalise that what I do at the moment reflects my experiences and my background and obviously, as my interest and affection for pop is part of that, that will influence it. But I don't believe that I deliberately at any stage produced work which related directly to the work of the American popsters. What I produce, or have produced, I don't believe is in fact pop in the pure sense.

JAMES GLEESON: No, no.

KEN REINHARD: The affinity that I would have with pop is that part of my approach—I'm putting in an awful lot of ums, aren't I? They get written out, I hope. There it goes again. The affinity which I have with pop is that I believe—and this relates to this technology bit—that the technologies of the commercial art world are just as valid as the technologies of the fine art world. Where your fine artist wants to use his paint brush and his oil paints, or his hand drawn etching plate or his hand drawn stone for lithography, I see no reason why one can't use a photographic printing process, or one can't use a pressure pack can of paint or whatever else it might be. I feel all of these things which are available to us now, and probably the most exciting thing being a person involved in creative things in the late 20th century, is the enormous range that's there. I would like to feel that it's as valid to use any one as any other. I've just discovered of late a way in which I can produce coloured realistic images up to 50 feet square, if I wanted. It's going to cost the earth but it can be done, you know. So when I can afford it I'm going to do one.

JAMES GLEESON: What is this, a photographic process?

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KEN REINHARD: It's a printing process whereby taking it from an original piece of artwork, whether it be drawn or whether it be photographed, a computer operated machine which has a series of nozzles can spray this thing for you. It produces a different image to a coloured photograph, but it produces a bigger image. You can't get a colour photograph the size that you can get these things. You can do it on canvas so it sort of has the subtlety of the image on canvas, it has the accuracy as though it were done with an airbrush, but it's of a size that it would take a lifetime to do it with an airbrush, but you can get it done by this machine.

JAMES GLEESON: It looks like a large coloured photograph printed on canvas. Is that the sort of thing?

KEN REINHARD: Yes, that's right. That's right.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, I've seen one of those. It's done with a computer, is it?

KEN REINHARD: Yes, there are two of these machines in the Southern Hemisphere and they're both in Perth, of all places. So you have to send your material over there and get it back.

JAMES GLEESON: There was one painting, if I remember, in this University of New South Wales.

KEN REINHARD: That's right.

JAMES GLEESON: Was that done by—

KEN REINHARD: That's right. That's right.

JAMES GLEESON: I've forgotten the name of the artist.

KEN REINHARD: Yes, it was only a young fellow. That was the first time I had ever seen one. Ironically, having seen that, I then started a little hunt. I was going to ask the person who did it how it was done, and rather than do that I went to a photographic place and asked them and they didn't know, but they passed me on to somebody else. So using the usual street directory and yellow pages technique, which I believe are my two most important tools, I that same day found out how it was done and all the information and costs and everything else. So as soon as I can save up I'm going to one.

JAMES GLEESON: It's costly, is it?

KEN REINHARD: It is, yes. It costs round about 8 to 10 dollars a square foot. But it's not that so much is that there is a minimum size and the minimum size is a bit over 40 square feet, which is a fairly decent size to start with. So you're up for about \$350 just to get the smallest one done, you know.

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JAMES GLEESON: A lot of your work is in using material that is costly in the sense that it is, well, chromium plating and that sort of thing, much more expensive than if you were just working with paint or stone.

KEN REINHARD: This has just, I suppose, been the natural evolution of the sort of thing that, you know, I've done of late. Because of the interest in strong colour, clean edges, gadgetry, you can't help when you're on to those things to sort of move into plastics and metals and electric motors. So, you know, once you get into that you're getting into cost. Not only that, but you're producing objects which are difficult to store; they have problems as far as maintenance is concerned. I mean, you end up in the same area as a household appliance which needs looking after and maintaining. If the things do become a nuisance, they're very difficult to destroy. So, you know, you're stuck with a whole range of problems there.

JAMES GLEESON: Ken, you've just shown me some of your recent works on paper which seem to have been perhaps a simplification of your approach in the sense that you're back to working with much more rudimentary materials, but getting a very complex and even poetic affect at times. This is using print release techniques and drawing and making very evocative use of what, say, stemmed from your experiences as a technical draftsman; diagrams, figures, lettering, that sort of thing.

KEN REINHARD: Yes, I think they're the natural continuance of what I've been doing before. They're probably a slightly watered down version in as much as I'm working on paper. It all began because I wanted to try and get a coloured realistic image using photography. I've used black and white photography over about the last 10 years both as continuous tone and then with tone drop outs you get a black, white and in between dot or textured image. Then I printed those on coloured photographic paper so, in fact, I got a black and red or black and blue or whatever it happened to be image. But I wanted a coloured one and the problems in colour photography as far as paper size and development and processing of this mean that there's a certain constraint on the size that one can get, unless one has an endless pocket. So I'm doing these little ones on paper and I've devised a way in which I can print off certain magazines, the image that's there. In the process it becomes a much softer image than the original, which doesn't matter because I then throw in all my cliches round it, as Wallace once described it, with arrows and dotted lines and stripes and so forth and the inevitable numbers and letters which I use for a twofold reason. I realise that they are evocative because I'm quite aware that people expect them to mean something, even though I'm using them in a totally abstract context. It sort of delights my peculiar nature to think that I'm puzzling people with the things I'm producing.

But, I suppose, they're a little bit like a sort of grace before the meal, in that I wanted to start on something that was inexpensive and easy to store or destroy during this period when I'm on leave before I got onto doing some bigger works.

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Because once you do the bigger things there's more money involved and storage and destruction is a problem. So with the smaller things and being on paper, it doesn't present these problems and I quite enjoy doing them. Also it allowed a little more sort of freedom and the gesture bit to come back, because what I was producing before had become so mechanical in that very rarely did the human element tend to appear. If the photograph was, you know, a straight photograph that was blown up fairly large and then other commercially produced letters either stamped out of metal or stamped out of plastic were added and the stripes were masked and sprayed and so, you know, this sort of thing; it became a very industrial looking sort of quality about the thing. Which I didn't mind; that's what I think I'm about. You know, once again, I hope if I've got anything to contribute, it's posing the question about the pre-conception that most people have that commercial art or design is one thing and fine art is another. I don't believe that's true. I think that they're a continuum. In fact, a horizontal continuum rather than the vertical one that most people put fine art up there and designer commercial art down there. I'd think it goes horizontally.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

KEN REINHARD: You know, you get good and bad in both and the two can overlap. I would hope that what I'm doing is in that area where they overlap. That the technology is the commercial, the industrial, whereas the attitude and the concept is of the fine art variety. I'm not producing things that have a practical application or that would be mass-produced. I'm producing the one only object, but I'm using mass production technology or commercial technology in it. I forgot whether I answered the question.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. Let's go now to the works that we have in the gallery, and the one that offers the real problem to us is this one because there's a part missing in the photograph.

KEN REINHARD: Yes, from memory—

JAMES GLEESON: Now, what's it called?

KEN REINHARD: This is something delightfully obscure like *One nought nought one nought nought one nought nought one nought nought one nought*.

JAMES GLEESON: How did you arrive at that title?

KEN REINHARD: Well, I think at the time, if I can recall, I was fascinated by the binary number system which they use in computers. I have a feeling that that can be translated into some number which might even have been the date when it was done. I can't remember now, you know.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, I see.

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KEN REINHARD: But a computer, because it works on masses of miniature sort of switches that you either have a positive or a negative charge, so the one's a positive and the nought's a negative, and by feeding this in it can be read.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

KEN REINHARD: I think there are no—look, no, to be quite honest I'm not sure. But at the time I think I understood what it meant, but I've certainly forgotten it now. I, up until recently, have only named things I did as a means of identifying them. Quite often the name for something would simply be some number or letter that appeared somewhere in the picture itself. The small works on paper have all been given names and I suppose it's my warped sense of humour that has caused the names, where I've chosen something which in lots of cases has a sort of double entendre to it and maybe has a slight satirical element to it in some way. But certainly at this time, it wasn't, it was just a way of identifying it, and obviously a rather obscure way.

JAMES GLEESON: But still it gives a title to go by.

KEN REINHARD: Yes, it has four panels.

JAMES GLEESON: Only three represented in this photo.

KEN REINHARD: Yes. The first one's a tone dropout nude.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

KEN REINHARD: Which goes from shoulder to sort of knee. The head's missing. That's printed on white paper, so there's the black speckled figure on a white background. The next panel that it should have—

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, which is missing here.

KEN REINHARD: Which is missing in the photograph—the whole thing, I think, from memory is about six feet high.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

KEN REINHARD: And if these are about 18 inches, so that would be three—no, it's a bit longer than six feet square, in any case. The next one has this triangular acrylic box that comes out from one end.

JAMES GLEESON: Projects out.

KEN REINHARD: Projects out and back again. The bottom section of it's opaque and there are a series of globes set in that, and on one side there's a translucent panel with lights behind it that flicker, like a sort of computer faced panel, as they used to once upon a time. Above it are a series of clear acrylic rods that come up

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at different heights. Then there are dental mirrors attached inside so that the light that is projected out of the bottom box up the rods, hits the dental mirrors and is reflected out into the room where the thing's showing. So they're a series of spots of light that end up out in the room.

JAMES GLEESON: It needs to be plugged in to a source of light.

KEN REINHARD: That's right, yes. Now, that panel isn't here. Then the next panel is a panel, from memory, of either stainless steel or aluminium. It's a metal panel, shiny, silver metal, which just has one or two objects just sort of floating on it.

JAMES GLEESON: Is there a right way up? You mentioned a doubt that there might be a right way up.

KEN REINHARD: I'd have to see that the thing to know. Knowing me, the back would have arrows on it.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see. So there'd be no problem checking.

KEN REINHARD: Yes. They all bolt together. It will come apart.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

KEN REINHARD: In fact, ever since this one was bought out of a show at Bonythons I'd wondered what on earth had happened to it and whether it had ever got together again.

JAMES GLEESON: Apparently not.

KEN REINHARD: It hasn't. One bit's missing and seen as something separate.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

KEN REINHARD: Then the last panel is the same nude as the first one, only this time printed on red paper. So it's black on red and it has some stripes across by the look of this, which I can't recall. Maybe they're white, maybe they're yellow, I'm not sure, and some other coloured shapes on it.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

KEN REINHARD: And the usual numbers and bits. But it worked quite well as a total piece. It was the piece I put in the Transfield, the last Transfield competition before it went to—I think you've been given wind up.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, okay. Well, we'll leave it there and turn the tape and go on to the other side.

KEN REINHARD: Right.

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JAMES GLEESON: We were talking about when this was first exhibited. You said it was shown in the Transfield (inaudible).

KEN REINHARD: Yes, it was the last Transfield competition before Transfield changed it to being just for sculpture. It was the one, in fact, that Bill Clements won with the series of roneoed sheets and the ball of string that he brought from Adelaide in his briefcase. That was the one that was judged by Fitzsimmons from Art International. So it was done for that and then the—

JAMES GLEESON: You exhibited—

KEN REINHARD: Yes. It was exhibited at Bonython's. That's where the Transfield thing was shown. So it was only in that one exhibition that it was ever shown.

JAMES GLEESON: The Commonwealth Art Advisory Board bought it from that exhibition?

KEN REINHARD: Yes, from the Bonython Galleries.

JAMES GLEESON: Good. You mentioned that it had been reproduced, or it had been photographed with you standing in front of it and used as an advertisement in Art International at one time.

KEN REINHARD: Yes. I don't think it shows all of it. It certainly shows the panel that's missing here, and part of the photograph. It may show most of it; I just can't recall. It was only a quarter page ad that was taken for the Bonython Gallery, which must have been about 1970, one of the 1970 issues. This was purchased in—what does it say?—I thought it said '70 or '70 something on it. Yes, 1970. Sixteenth of January 1970. So it might have been a '69 issue, late '69. I could probably find it with the one in, you know, but it's only a small—

JAMES GLEESON: Well, as long as we've got it on record, we'll be able to look back at it. Well, the only other one we have are *Boxed grader 1971*, screenprint.

KEN REINHARD: Yes, that's one of four silkscreen prints that I did at the time. It's dated '71. Now, they were done for that same exhibition, were they? No, '71. They were done for—dear, oh dear, it's all confusing, isn't it? It's dated '71 so they must have been done in '71. But there are only four of them, *Boxed grader*, a thing called *E type stripe*, *Body stripe*, and *Double stripe*.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

KEN REINHARD: There were 50 in each edition, and they're the only prints that I've ever done. There was another print that I did before that which was a terrible thing, which fortunately I didn't let too many out of my sight.

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JAMES GLEESON: Where did you do these? Did you have your own equipment to do them?

KEN REINHARD: No, no. I did the original art work for them and then I supervised their printing.

JAMES GLEESON: When you say 'they'?

KEN REINHARD: Well, the four of them. It was done by a firm in Oxford Street, Rowell Screenprints, I think they were called. I don't think they're there anymore.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

KEN REINHARD: But they were done on a fairly large manually operated screenprinting machine because they're about—well, it's got a size on there, hasn't it, which is in centimetres? Which throws me totally; I still think in inches. Ninety-one point four by sixty-six point six. Is that the size of the image or the size of the paper, would that be?

JAMES GLEESON: I think it would probably be the size of the paper.

KEN REINHARD: Size of the paper. Yes, I've got them over in the studio. I've got other copies of them. But it was a fairly simple three-colour. I think there's black, green and blue in that. I think this part's green and there's blue behind that, using in this case a photograph of a road grader, which is earth-moving equipment, which I took near where I used to live.

JAMES GLEESON: You've never done any other screenprinting since then?

KEN REINHARD: No. Primarily because the imagery and the technology that produced that is so close to the imagery of the one only objects.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

KEN REINHARD: That there seemed little reason to do it other than commercial reasons. I must admit that up until quite recently commercial motives were absolutely non-existent in my attitude to my work. In fact, I recall having said to somebody that I'd be very upset if my work sold because it would mean I was producing work at the level of public understanding which meant I wasn't extending myself. I do recall quite deliberately following the one show that did sell of saying to myself 'I'm not going to do any more pencil drawings because people will buy them'. Now, of course, being a little older, a little wiser, a little more mature, I'll do anything that people will buy.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, Ken, now this one, another enigmatic name, produced a from c and this is—

KEN REINHARD: That was from the show that people bought them.

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JAMES GLEESON: Oh, was it?

KEN REINHARD: Yes, that was the show at The Hungry Horse that Anne Von Berto managed for Kym when he first bought The Hungry Horse.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

KEN REINHARD: There was a whole series of these in which I was using letters of the alphabet and sort of suggesting that there was some sort of story to them.

JAMES GLEESON: Can you remember the medium?

KEN REINHARD: This was ink drawing.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

KEN REINHARD: The numbers and things were letraset. What I did with a number of them was to try and integrate the mount, because they were works on paper under glass, integrate the mount in with the work itself, which is what I'm back doing again now.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

KEN REINHARD: So, you know, maybe I'm going backwards instead of forwards. It's rather strange. But the mount here is this piece which was red, I think, was red cardboard. There was a mount over that part of it and then this was cut out of it so the red and black check showed through.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. So that the actual glass or whatever, perspex, stood out what about half an inch from—

KEN REINHARD: No, in this case it would have been straight on top.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, I see.

KEN REINHARD: These were the lot. I tell you what probably isn't here with this one. It was glass that I used and I had a number of little perspex blocks that were about an inch and a half square by an inch thick that were polished so they were clear. I used to stick those on the glass on the front. I think this one would have had one over the top of that and it might have had one over there.

JAMES GLEESON: I see.

KEN REINHARD: Because the glue that I was using wouldn't stick perspex to glass, quite a few of them fell off. Where I heard of this—if people let me know who had them—I used to get them back and replace the glass with a sheet of perspex. Then it was simple to stick the perspex blocks on to a block, on to a

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sheet of perspex and it would stay there. So I would tend to think that there's something missing off that one.

JAMES GLEESON: But there would have been a sheet of glass onto which a perspex cube would have been pasted over this?

KEN REINHARD: Yes, I think so. One would soon know because, if you had a look at the glass, you'd see that there was like a little sort of watermark where the block was sitting.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes. So that's something for us to check on in Canberra, whether the glass is still with the painting; whether it's been taken out of its glass to be photographed.

KEN REINHARD: There's a vague shadow in the photograph there so it may, in fact, still be sitting there. If it is, I'd be very surprised; but if it is, well and good. But, you know, as I said, what I did was to take the glass out and put perspex in and then there's no problem about it.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. If by any chance that is missing, would it be possible to replace it?

KEN REINHARD: Yes, yes. I have some of the blocks here; I can soon fix it up.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh, good. Well, before that goes up on the wall we should check with you to make sure that it is in its full condition.

KEN REINHARD: Yes. Well, also—I don't know whether that's feasible—I'd love to check that one to see what condition it's in. Because it's a very fragile and sort of tricky bit there, the kinetic bit in it is, you know, and if it ever does see the light of day I'd like to have the opportunity to—

JAMES GLEESON: Well, I'm sure there's no problem about that.

KEN REINHARD: Conduct any repairs that are necessary.

JAMES GLEESON: Oh well, we always do if the artists, you know, available to do it, have them look at it and make sure that it is in proper condition before it—

KEN REINHARD: Well, I mean, you know, I hate doing repairs but I'm only too happy to do them if the work is not as it should be. Because, you know, I would hate to think that something I made is seen by people in other than the condition that it left the studio.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, exactly, quite rightly so. All right, Ken, well we'll arrange for you to have a look at those as soon as it's possible. We'll be moving into the new building, you know, within a year or so, and at that time might be the

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right time when it gets into the new building for you to come down and check before they get up on to the wall.

KEN REINHARD: I'll be flattered if they do end up on the wall.

JAMES GLEESON: That covers, I think, that part of it very well. But, Ken, earlier in the day we were talking about the Alexander Mackie School and your work there. Now, I think that's an important contribution you've made. Could we, you know, rehearse a bit of what you've told me about that? How did it first start off?

KEN REINHARD: The school happened as a result of the recommendations made in the second Gleeson Report which came out about '71-'72, I think. The report recommended that there should be a college established which offered tertiary level courses in art and design and that there should be a professional art school established in an existing college. The first report, in fact, only recommended that the college should be established, which was rather strange because New South Wales up until that time had one art school, only one. One which I believe was the biggest art school in the world. It had 7,000 students spread all over New South Wales.

JAMES GLEESON: This was the tech?

KEN REINHARD: This was the National Art School, yes. Although it occupied a number of sites, it was all under the one management which was a monopoly in this state compared to the other states that had a number of art schools—certainly Victoria. So as a result of the second Gleeson Report's recommendations, and a certain amount of agitation by the art world in Sydney, the Minister for Education agreed to the establishment of the School of Art within the Alexander Mackie College. It unfortunately happened in the middle of a triennium funding period and it meant that because it began in 1975—the funding period I think began '74 and finished in '76, that particular one—it meant that no funds had been put aside to establish the school. Also because of pressure which had been placed on the minister for the school to be established in the premises of East Sydney Tech, it meant that the school—and he had agreed that this would happen—it meant that the school had to occupy part of the East Sydney Technical College. But that part was not large enough for the whole school. So part of the school went in there and part of it had to go somewhere else. As it happened, there was a building that we got access to in Cumberland Street, The Rocks, which part went into. But that still wasn't big enough and we also occupied the old Marist Brothers High School in Liverpool Street. So the school began on three campuses and it began with funds that had been sort of plucked from odd sources in order to buy its equipment and everything that was necessary to get the thing under way. But we began 12 months before the college that was named in the report, which was the Sydney College of the Arts that began 1976, and we were lucky enough to sort of have first bite at the cherry as far as teaching staff were concerned. I believe we gathered the very best that were available at that time and we've added to that.

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JAMES GLEESON: Who are some of the members of staff, full time and part time?

KEN REINHARD: If I can just sort of try and visualise who there are there. We've got Kevin Connor, Stan de Teliga, Syd Ball, Earle Backen, Alun Leach-Jones, Alan Oldfield, Terry O'Donnell, Brian O'Dwyer. In photography Bill Mansell, George Schwartz, Ernie Lancaster, Joe Peroni, who's part time. Then other part time staff we've got Bob Klippel, Marea Gazzard, Fay Bettrell, Elizabeth Barker—or Elizabeth Cummings she paints under—Philippa Raft, Jutta Feddersen.

JAMES GLEESON: That's very impressive.

KEN REINHARD: Oh dear, there's a whole range of people. Mike Kitching. Who else have I left out? Terrible to do that but there's 40 on the full time staff and about 40 on the part time staff, so there's 80 people. It's a bit hard to try and remember the lot at the moment.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, that's an impressive list of talent involved.

KEN REINHARD: Well, quite often people have come to Sydney and they've sort of gone around talking to different artists who've either come from interstate or come from overseas. Then I sort of get the message back when I see them later that everybody they meet seems to work for Alexander Mackie College, you know. It's not surprising when you have a staff of that size, you know. It's a very competent staff and a very good one; they work all very well together. But we began in 1975—I think this was the question I was supposed to be answering—at which point we took over the second, third and fourth year of the Painting and Sculpture Diploma that was being offered by the National Art School in the tech. So we took our first first year people into a four-year diploma course in 1975. When I was appointed in October of the year before, I was told, 'Well, you'll have 650 students on the 1st March, and you now have to find the staff, the accommodation, the equipment and so forth to cope with that', which was, I suppose, about three months off.

So we found the accommodation and staff but it took, oh, probably two to three years to get the equipment, because people don't keep lithography presses on the shelf. We got, in the case of one lithography press, from Melbourne and another one from overseas. We got an American etching press. Well, you write to them and then they send you back quotes, and then you get back to them and then they decide to make it. So two years later you get the press and it's been a while to sort of get things together in that way. But we also decided early in the piece—we isn't royal plural; it's because, you know, there were a number of very committed people on the staff who got themselves very much involved in the process of setting up the school—we decided that there were certain things that we wanted to do with this school that were different, were constructive we hoped, and to reject some of those things which we'd all experienced in other places that we felt weren't very constructive as far as providing an appropriate environment

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for young people to study the visual arts. The sorts of things we did, we do not have departments in the school because that's something that we considered were destructive artificial barriers which didn't allow young people working in the late 20th century to draw upon the range of technologies, to work across these things, force people into having to comply with in some cases 19th century concepts as to what sculpture might be and to where it's boundaries extended, and the same as far as painting was concerned. So we don't have departments but we offer an extremely wide range of disciplines from the normal of painting; sculpture, drawing, etching, lithography, silkscreen printing, photography, film-making, video, sound, textiles, jewellery, ceramics. I've just about covered the lot, I think. Students elect all the courses that they do, and they do two practical studies and two theory studies each semester. So their face-to-face contact with lecturers is around 16 hours a week. Then on top of that they're expected to spend a certain amount of time, roughly the same amount of time, getting on with their work in the workshops and studios that are provided.

JAMES GLEESON: You mentioned that there was a general introductory course?

KEN REINHARD: Yes, there's a foundation semester. The semesters are 16 weeks long; we have two a year. There's a foundation semester in which they're required to do drawing, design, art theory and art history, and then they elect two other disciplines out of five. Then at the end of that semester they then elect all the other courses that they do, both theory and practical.

JAMES GLEESON: I see. This introductory course is designed to let them see the range of possibilities that exist.

KEN REINHARD: That's right.

JAMES GLEESON: And to allow them to find out where their interests really lie.

KEN REINHARD: Yes. Also to introduce them to the sort of, I suppose, atmosphere of this sort of school. In the National Art School, which is our only major reference point in the state because it was the only art school that's existed throughout the last 50 odd years, courses were based on the system that technical education had. That is that it was post secondary and that the time that the student worked in whatever discipline it was, be it sheet metal or hairdressing or ticket writing or art, was the time that it was required to attend and was time when a teacher was present. So all the courses were basically 30 to 32 hours a week, and the student would be there for six hours a day with a lecturer for six hours, or a teacher for six hours a day. Now, universities and colleges of advanced education don't work on that system as far as the provision of staffing, as far as the provision of money to pay staff is concerned. They work on a system where you have a fairly intensive lecture period, and then a period of time when the student works on whatever the discipline is, be it medicine or be it librarianship or be it art, on their own. So it takes a little while for students coming

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straight from school to realise that there is an enormous amount of self-discipline necessary, because there are also an enormous number of distractions.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes.

KEN REINHARD: If they have a lecturer with them for 16 hours a week, the temptation is often that for the remaining 14 to 20 hours a week when the place is open and you don't have a lecturer, well, you just sort of swan off somewhere or go to the movies or go to the park or go to the pub or whatever it might be. The foundation semester is aimed at giving them time to discover that they're going to have to put in a good deal of time outside of that time when they're in actual confrontation with the lecturer. Not literally in confrontation; figurative speaking.

JAMES GLEESON: I know what you mean. Yes.

KEN REINHARD: So it's a fairly rigid first semester, and the assessment is such that the student is either allowed to progress to second semester or they repeat the first semester or they're excluded. The number of exclusions fortunately are not that many because we have a fairly comprehensive selection process that they go through in order to get into the place and up till now we've tended to only take about one in ten of those that are eligible and those that apply, which tends to suggest that there are still not enough art schools in New South Wales.

JAMES GLEESON: Yes, yes.

KEN REINHARD: You know, because there are a lot of people who would like to study art and just aren't being given the opportunity.

JAMES GLEESON: Well, Ken, thank you very much. I think that covers it very well. Anything else you would like to add on any area of your activities?

KEN REINHARD: Good heavens. I don't think so. I've just about talked myself hoarse I think and filled up your tape, so that's probably—

JAMES GLEESON: I think that's covered it very well. Thank you very much, Ken.

KEN REINHARD: Right, thank you.