

200 GERTRUDE STREET

MARGARET ROBERTS

DOWN-FALL



FRIDAY 6 APRIL – SATURDAY 28 APRIL 1990

200 GERTRUDE STREET, INCORPORATING GERTRUDE STREET ARTISTS SPACES
200 GERTRUDE STREET FITZROY 3065. TELEPHONE (03) 419 3406. TUESDAY – FRIDAY 10 – 5.30, SATURDAY 1 – 5.30
THE ASSISTANCE OF THE VICTORIAN MINISTRY FOR THE ARTS, AND THE VISUAL ARTS/CRAFTS BOARD
OF THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL IS GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGED.

DOWN - FALL

In 1966, Eva Hesse made an artwork of a 6' x 7' picture frame which hung on the wall with a long thin metal rod projecting as a loop and flopping onto the floor about 10 feet in front. She called it *Hang-Up*, and said that it was the most ridiculous and absurd structure she had ever made and that was why it was really good.¹

Twenty years later I made an artwork made up of framed wax pictures with cast wax fruit scattered on the floor beneath. Then I remembered Eva Hesse's *Hang-Up*, and partly because of a degree of similarity, called it *Down-Fall*, as a reference to this work, and also in memory of a great artist who I wished was still alive and working.

With the dominance of Post-Modernism at the time, and the popularity among Post-Modern artists of making work which referenced earlier work, my titling of *Down-Fall* could become a signpost to read it in that context. But I think there is little value in reading it this way. Firstly, the Post-Modern aim is to deconstruct and expose what it sees as grandiose claims to originality, universal truth, etc. However, as Eva Hesse's claims to absurdity are diametrically opposed to these, and I see no need to deconstruct them, certainly not along Post-Modernist lines. Secondly, I suspect that it is no coincidence that women's art work was not a popular object for the Post-Modern critique. Art History did not tend to make grandiose claims on its behalf.

Moreover, the Post-Modern critique sometimes resembled an art world version of the archetype of the Sons challenging the authority of the Fathers. Like many archetypes, this one is sex specific, and does not translate into a 'Daughter' - 'Mother' challenge.

So why title a work in such a way that causes all this confusion? Firstly, the confusion was not of my making. I do not support what has, ironically, become a dominance of Post-Modernism in the art world, and feel reluctant to make modifications to accommodate it. I oppose this dominance because it has a centering effect on how artworks are generally encouraged to be seen. Specifically, it encourages work to be seen through a particular theoretical framework; this tends to pre-empt the experience of looking at work, an experience which, unlike attempts to decode and discover more literal meaning, can accommodate subtleties and ambiguity. It is in this experience of looking that I am most interested, and I think it is important that art theory is derived from this experience, rather than inhibiting it.

Secondly, despite the above disclaimers, I could see some point in the signal that the title makes to Post-Modernism. I thought it would be valuable to take the opportunity to point again to work which, if past Art History is any guide, will be lost in the dust of the Post-Modern rush to give yet more attention to the Masters by deconstructing as many as possible. This opportunity was provided by a degree of similarity between *Hang-Up* and *Down-Fall*, and the processes and interests used in making them. However I have always thought that titles should be kept in their place, and so I seldom use them. Because they are words, they tend to be given priority over the visual nature of the work, and thus are always problematic.

MARGARET ROBERTS

March 1990

1. 'Eva Hesse', Lucy Lippard, New York University Press, 1976, p. 56.

MARGARET ROBERTS

STUDIED

1967-70 Bachelor of Arts

(English Literature and History),
Diploma of Education,
La Trobe University.

1984-86 Bachelor of Visual Arts

(Sculpture and Painting),
Sydney College of the Arts

1987-88 Graduate Diploma in Visual Arts

(Sculpture),
Sydney College of the Arts

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1985 *Whip Ray But Watch*,

Smith Street Gallery,
Sydney College of the Arts

1986 *Hungry*,

The Performance Space, Sydney
Art-Bites, Pier 2/3, Sydney

1987 *Bondi in 3D*,

Bondi Pavillion Gallery, Sydney
Histories,
The Performance Space, Sydney

1988 *Maiden Voyage*,

First Draft, Sydney
My Arm Covers The Distance,
338 Pitt Street Gallery, Sydney

1989 *1988 Graduate Diploma in Visual*

Art, Pier 2/3, Sydney
Sculpture, First Draft, Sydney
The Performance Space, Sydney

INSTALLATION

Down-Fall

1986, wax oxides, paper and wood
approximately 5 x 5m

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