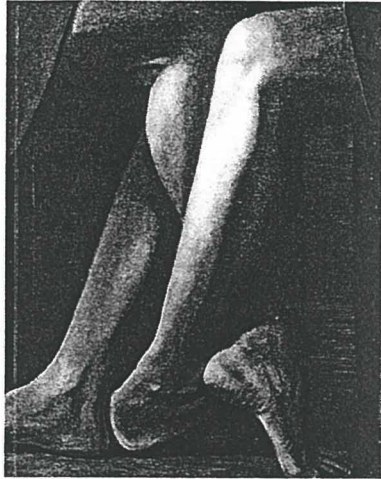


AN UNCERTAIN SMILE



AUSTRALIAN ART IN THE '90s  
R E X B U T L E R

oblivious to the pristine formalism of glass and concrete and the 'typed' up naturalness of the surrounding bush environment. It all becomes an invisible surface linking Humanities, the Faculty of Law, the Graduate School of Management and the Environmental Sciences block. Through their own modes of discourse, each of these operatives of institution forms its own mythic narratives. Everyday lived experiences are transformed through theory into a legitimate 'something else'. They become the very means by which the system of order speaks for us. It creates a totalising authority, articulating experiences into dominantly masculine, logocentric, Eurocentric narratives. *Lozenge* also provides a series of interconnecting paths. Rather than being pristine and formal, its spoken paths were constructed through what is normally rejected, dealing as they do with eccentricity, deviance, sickness, aging, death, sex and our powerful personal feelings of grief, anger and joy.

These taped voices were played as the audience faced into the empty space of the twenty-two metre Central Theatres Foyer. Campbell operated the sound from a position behind the audience. Just beyond this clustered group, an assistant directed a beam of torch light to illuminate and guide the viewing/listening of the audience toward speakers positioned on either side of the foyer and above. The stories were woven together at connecting points where subject matter intertwined momentarily before taking a turn into a new trajectory of experience. In response to these turns of

talk, the guide changed her position within the space, so that a zigzagging pattern was traced up the length of the foyer. The audience moved forward at the same pace, likewise following the traces of sound and light. At the far end of the foyer, and beyond the glass wall, the original source tapes were also physically combined in an open diamond weave taking the form of a hammock.

Text, written or spoken, literally derives from the Latin *texere*: to weave, to make material. Materiality took three forms throughout this work: the voices weaving the stories of loss; the movement of the audience tracing the stories; and the woven hammock. In weaving the experiences of women, Barbara Campbell emphasises the interrelation of the material and the conceptual as a means of constructing new narratives. The awareness of voices of 'others' and the plurality of available stories has produced what Foucault describes as "a new form of history that is trying to develop its own theory...to specify the concepts that enable us to conceive of discontinuity".<sup>1</sup> Discontinuity was reinforced in *Lozenge* through the parallel between the spoken utterances and the walking of the audience. De Certeau claims that the 'uttering' function of walking is a process of appropriation of sites. "Just as the speaker appropriates and assumes language; pedestrian utterances are a spatial realisation of the topographic system".<sup>2</sup> In *Lozenge*, it is the taking up of fragments of utterances both spoken and pedestrian that creates discontinuity.

De Certeau refers to such spatial practices as reflecting, "another spatiality; an anthropological, poetic and mystical spatial experiment".<sup>3</sup> The beauty of *Lozenge* is that it made us aware of the poetry and mystery of ordinary, everyday life by introducing us to our own behaviours, expectations, senses and perceptions. Everyday we move through spaces and our physical actions and interactions record those spaces—similarly the voices were recorded onto the magnetic tape. We move through life, winding and rewinding experiences, picking out the things that are significant, following traces. We find our traces by listening to our senses, by switching off logic and following the external field of incoming information. It is not a quick intellectual grasp of the world that Barbara Campbell presents to us but one aimed at a deeper, existential understanding.

heather inglis

notes

1. In *Remaking History: Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, Kruger & Mariani (eds). DIA Art Foundation, Bay Press Seattle, 1989, p. 10.
2. M. De Certeau, "Practices of Space", in Blonsky, M. *On Signs*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1985, p. 130.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

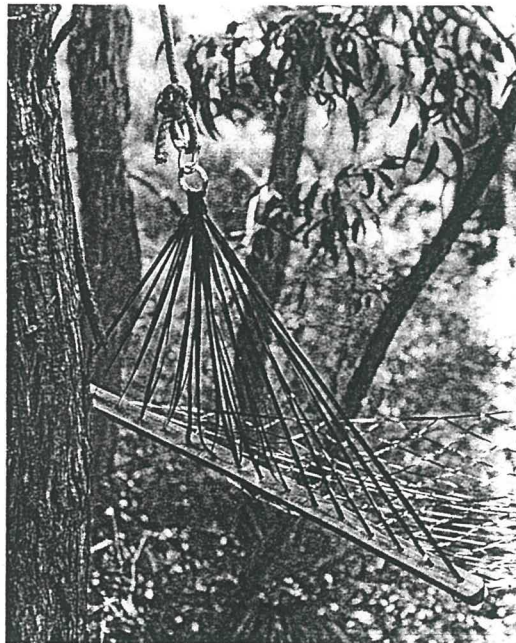
barbara campbell: lozenge (an audio installation)

Central Theatres Gallery  
Nathan Campus, Griffith University, Brisbane

The conditions of loss, as they are investigated in Barbara Campbell's *Lozenge*, are constructed through the minutiae of experience and related in private stories from daily life.

It seems appropriate that *Lozenge*, the result of Barbara Campbell's four week residency at Griffith Artworks, should deal with recovery of discourse and multiple stories of loss. Not far from the Central Theatres Foyer where *Lozenge* took place, and a couple of weeks prior to this event, students staged a protest. It was against the present Government's policy of extending the previous Government's decision to include fee paying student places within educational institutions. The protest represented a rejection by individuals of the functionalist administration of governments, which appear determined to transform social institutions into systems of profit, and therefore of loss. It is also a reminder that all cultural sites are political and therefore contentious. Campbell's *Lozenge*, likewise appears as an act of resistance and re-appropriation, skilfully played out within a labyrinth of academic identities.

If you stand near the Central Theatres Foyer, or anywhere on campus for that matter, you are confronted by the movement of people passing this way and that via a series of prescribed interconnecting paths. It is easy to become



Barbara Campbell, *Lozenge*, 1997. Audio tape, wood, and snap fasteners (detail). Photo: Kayleen Biggs

watch this space: alice springs

Including exhibitions by Pam Lofts; Annie Taylor; Robert Kleinboonschate; Anne Mosey and Dolly Nampijinpa Daniels; Margaret Roberts

From a viewer's perspective the most significant contribution of Alice Springs's only artist-run exhibition space has been to challenge the local dominance of two-dimensional art. While landscape is no longer the overriding impulse in the making of art in Central Australia, painting certainly remains the dominant form. This is possibly due, in part, to the invigorating influence of Indigenous painting since the late 1970s. It may also be that artists of European origin who have chosen to base themselves here—as opposed to the cities where, for most, their art practice originally developed—have done so in order to continue to paint.

However, two artists with an installation practice recognised across state borders have been based in Alice Springs since the early nineties. They are Pamela Lofts and Anne Mosey, both among the founding group of artists of the gallery they dubbed Watch This Space (WTS). Others in the group were textile artist Jan Mackay, painter Angela Gee and ceramicist Pip McManus. A survey of events in WTS since it opened in February 1994 reflects the diverse interests of all these artists as well as a commitment to exhibiting opportunities for visiting artists from