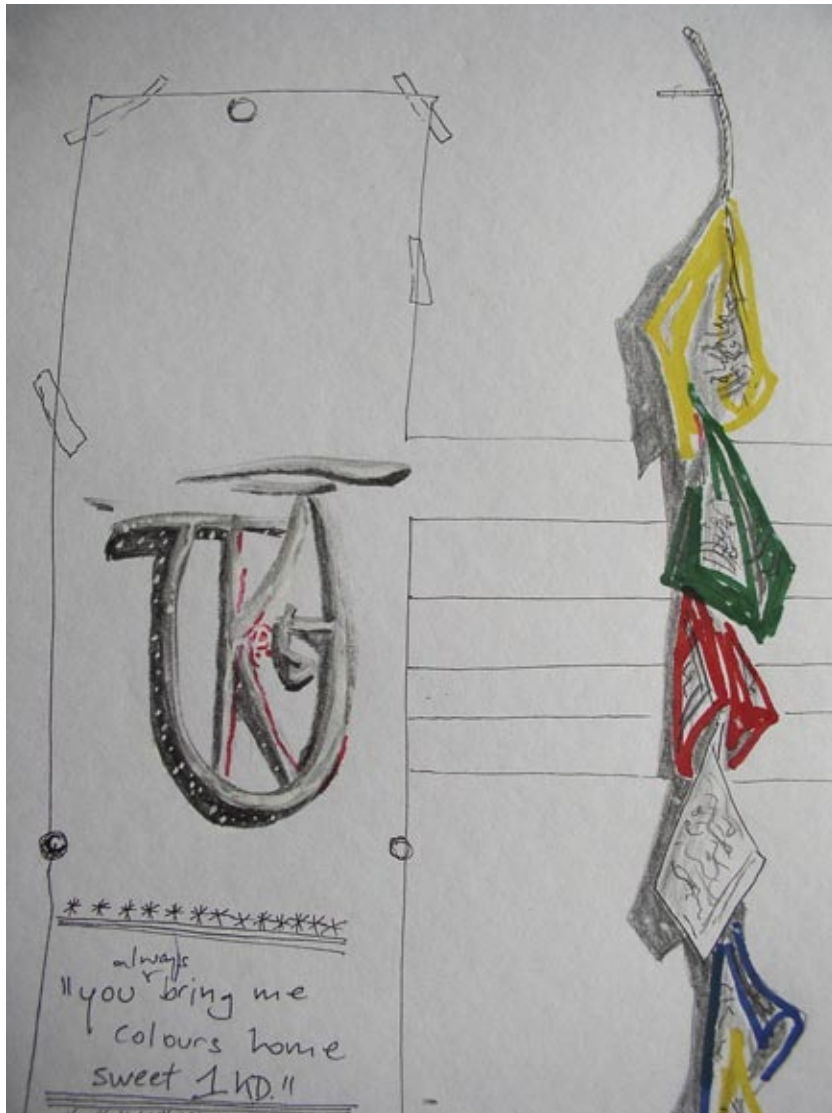
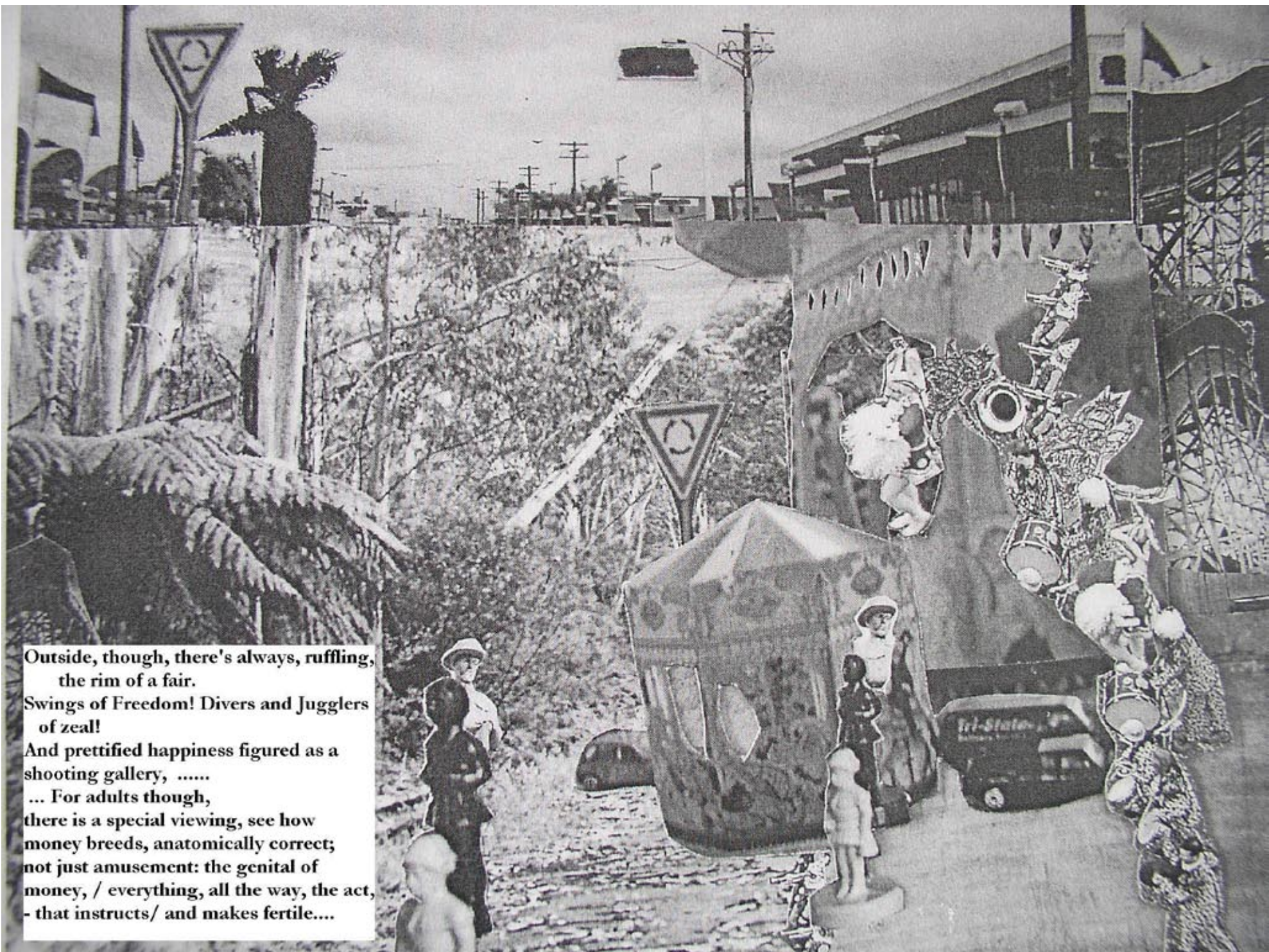


Where's my Model?
An Essay about Drawing and Copying the World

Uli Krahn



I like to draw the world around me. Drawing is a physical, spontaneous art; it appeals as the record of a single moment, a particular motion, or feeling, the “vibrations of a human hand, which result in a drawing that can open worlds inside the viewer himself” (Koschatzky, 1981, 2003; 20). Drawing is related to writing, in instrument and the “free movements of the hand over the plane of the paper, in condensing thoughts which thus become visible, and in the individual character of movement,” which is “in itself a part of the unconscious becoming visible” (Koschatzky, 1981, 2003; 20). Thus, drawing brings together my body, my emotions, my vision, the things I see, the materials and what happens while I’m doing it. Much of it happens in the mind, the artist’s and the viewer’s imagination. Drawings are almost by definition unfinished fragments. I like to see how far you can push the elements which balance a drawing and still get a balance. Not all my drawings are drawings.



**Outside, though, there's always, ruffling,
the rim of a fair.**

**Swings of Freedom! Divers and Jugglers
of zeal!**

**And prettified happiness figured as a
shooting gallery,**

**... For adults though,
there is a special viewing, see how
money breeds, anatomically correct;
not just amusement: the genital of
money, / everything, all the way, the act,
- that instructs/ and makes fertile....**

What's around me includes me. My dreams merge the places I've lived at and visited into fantastic assemblies – Australian cities between Austrian mountains and Adriatic sea, and so on. The landscapes behind my eyes interact with the visual and physical and emotional and social situation outside; seeing and projecting is often the same act. Then there's the opinion of the hand. The hand doesn't only push pens, there's buttons and knives and glue sticks to wield. Translating Rilke's 10th Elegy gave me an opportunity to create physical images of my multilingual nights. They suited the amphibian feel of translating. Photos of Old and New and Different Countries were copied again and again and cut apart and re-combined. Something happens when you play with a photocopier and a photo. I'd enlarge and reduce and darken and lighten until the details disappeared. After ten copies, you're left with the soul – whatever that is – or a near abstract visual image. The visual work was another mode of translating, of finding images in the new country which linked it with another. Working in this way with the photocopy machines, I couldn't predict results. It was a matter of trying out, changing plans, adapting and re-inventing; and of the machine itself occasionally spitting out a magical image. The pictures don't really have originals, and exist only on decaying copy paper and digital files – ephemeral, or durable, depending on what mode of reproduction I chose next.

And she leads him lightly through the large landscape of the laments, shows him the pillars of temples, or the ruins of castles, from where the Lament Dukes once wisely ruled the land. Shows him the tall tear trees, and fields of blossoming sadness (the living know them as gentle foliage): shows him the beasts of mourning, grazing, -



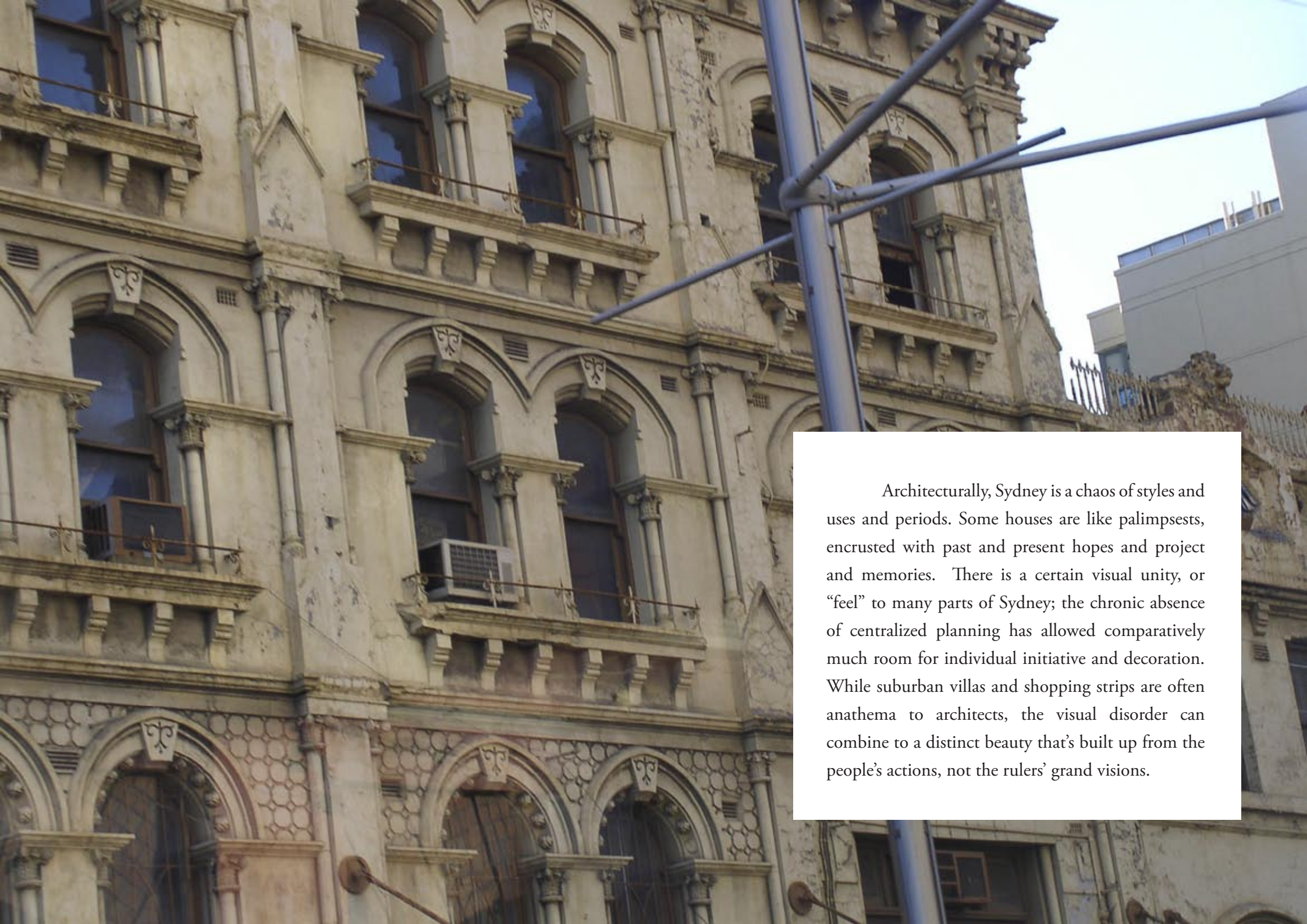




But where's the world ? It's present in the machines and the photos; the landscapes however are serial fantasy, built from the world to reach inside. Sometimes I don't want to re-arrange things, just draw "what I can see". The landscapes inside and outside can be very similar though. Look at the flowers curling into themselves, and the wordy pelican, galley and containership drawing doing exactly the same. The object drawing and the fantastic composition could be combined along their Large Lines. I like to imagine the Large Lines as visual traces of interaction, or the possibility thereof, enacted by the imagination. In practice, the Large Lines are where I can join disparate objects or landscapes in a credible, strangely organic form. I think they're derived from my more Art Brut type work, where imagination overdrive throws too many -almost organic- lines of imaginary fit over things, tying everything together in a powerful vortex of hallucinatory perception. Too much interpretation. It's useful to switch that mode on briefly, to see where things can be joined.

Lately, I've been looking for Large Lines in the shadows and reflections of urban and suburban life. I often take photos from a moving car or bus, another mode of reducing control – especially as the digital camera has a very slow shutter. There's the physical aspect of crawling like a monkey over the backseat, and then doing that deep breathing thing to hold the camera very still. That bit feels like drawing. If you look at Sydney, there's not only buildings and people and cars like on a traditional photo. The city is alive with words and facades and reflections and desires and dreams conjured up by adverts, shimmering with things half-seen. I try to photograph these flicks of light and presences just perceived; when I'm lucky, I catch glances of the shared imagined city in people's heads.





Architecturally, Sydney is a chaos of styles and uses and periods. Some houses are like palimpsests, encrusted with past and present hopes and project and memories. There is a certain visual unity, or “feel” to many parts of Sydney; the chronic absence of centralized planning has allowed comparatively much room for individual initiative and decoration. While suburban villas and shopping strips are often anathema to architects, the visual disorder can combine to a distinct beauty that’s built up from the people’s actions, not the rulers’ grand visions.



It's hard to make pictures of "what's around me" without intrusions of the fantastic. Perhaps our imagination has been trained to think in terms of the impossible vistas and deeds in films and cartoons. Often you're meant to think in this way to appreciate a new building. On the other hand, the deceptiveness of art and vision is an old problem. Behind the portrayed flowers, my window looks on cars turning left, apparently in the treetops which are inhabited by cricketers and footballers on the weekend. (Ambitious landscaping around where I live). There's usually physical reflections of yourself or the world outside to be found when you look at objects long enough. 16th century Dutch Still Life painters were fascinated by this, the window reflected on a smooth copper vase, and close up you see the church and the painter's wife and so on. It's strange drawing the world around you because a few lines of text become an object on the page if you have been taught to shade them in the correct manner. And as my drawing teacher told me, that's technique and convention and don't even look at anything but the page while you're doing it.

References

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