

# To the centre of the city, where all roads meet

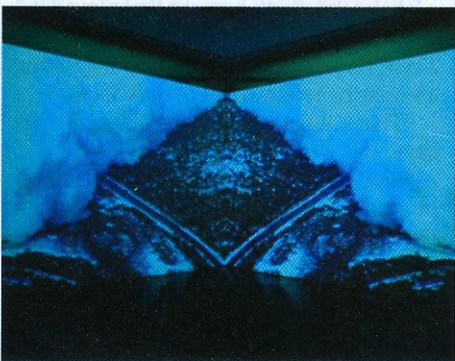
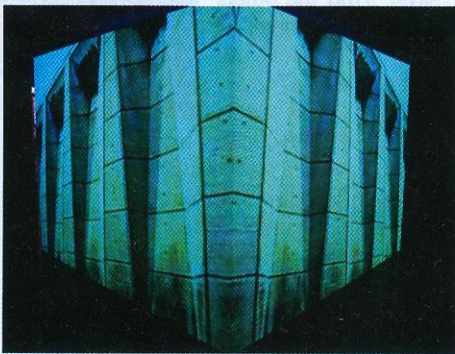
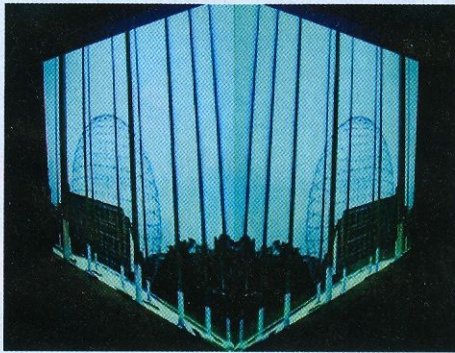
BY BRIDIE LONIE

Ideas of mapping and co-ordinates are often used by artists to indicate a sort of objectivity, a structural overview of such emotional variables as journeys, migrations, separations and memories of time and place. Mladen Bizumic's year as Frances Hodgkins Fellow at the University of Otago was marked by travel.

Bizumic visited Rakiura/Stewart Island to research the Norwegian whaling station that had flourished briefly in the 1920s. He says, in his statement for *Aipotu: Love Will Tear Us Apart (Again)* at the Hocken Gallery, that his intention of photographing the site was defeated by the landscape: it refused to be represented. Flying to New York and noting the inevitable differences, he proposed Manhattan and Rakiura as opposites and worked with that dissonance rather than with the original site.

Dissonances are binaries and binaries engender grid systems. Like the colonial surveyors of the 19th century, he imposed the grid system of, in this instance, Manhattan's street map on the Mandelbrot interlacing of the Rakiura contours and coastlines. On those grids, he jotted down the sorts of notes about art theory that one might write at midnight, in the false certainty that they will be self-explanatory in the morning. These images form the background to two sets of double-projections, one in the Hocken and one in the Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

The CAD (computer assisted drafting) drawing at the Hocken derives from a small photograph of the original Norwegian whaling station, reduced to a grid formation that is divided horizontally and moves constantly along its axis. The sound track is Joy Division's "Love Will Tear Us Apart" played on strings. Mirrored projections face each other, pulsing like an underwater shot of baleen, white tissue-like net moving in and out. The projections expand and contract around the line dividing earth and water, "reality" and reflection. Bizumic calls this a psychedelic image. It's like being inside an eye: not so much representation as



**Mladen Bizumic: seeking an equation between natural and cultural phenomena.**

immersion in a sensation that is like the thing that started the process: whales and their deaths. So in the end, it's poetic, or that's where it takes off. A love story of an interior space that sings to itself ...

The Dunedin Public Art Gallery installation similarly seeks an equation between natural and cultural phenomena. Here, two walls form a right angle; all four sides carry a projection, one doubled and mirrored on the inner side, another on the outer. The outer side is a tracking shot of the increasingly derelict modernist UNESCO buildings. Inside, an avalanche falls in the New Zealand alps. The mirroring of the scrolling, expanding snow makes folded inkblot-like shapes, with all their connotations of procreative secrets.

A slight gap in the registration of the two screens makes a sharp leak of light, providing a moment of irony – "this is a digital representation, don't fall into a dream-state" – that is missing in the Hocken installation. But then, it doesn't provide the same secure reverie.

The jottings on the maps are to do with illusion and reality, and the politics of representation. The dissonances – UNESCO and avalanches, Manhattan and a wilderness that was once a slaughter ground – are proposed as opposites and the word modernism arises frequently in the texts and in the gallery notes. The work's strengths lie in the way it engages with the productive ambivalence that the term "modernism" gives us just now: ideals of order, harmony and simplicity, countered by impossibly grand schemes and the erasure of difference and specificity. And one might argue that all these contradictions can be sustained in the act of making and experiencing art, but I'm not sure that Bizumic quite believes this. Instead, the political has become visual.

**Mladen Bizumic: *Aipotu: Love Will Tear Us Apart (Again)*, Hocken Gallery, Dunedin; event. horizon.black.hole, Dunedin Public Art Gallery (until March 6).**

MALDEN BIZUMIC