

Tim Burns - A Pedestrian Series of Postcards

Acclaimed Western Australian artist Tim Burns produced his artist's book *A Pedestrian Series of Postcards* in 1976. It documents his guerrilla – style postcard project and subsequent print media response to his campaign to raise public opinion regarding the introduction of pedestrian crossings in Mildura, a regional City in northern Victoria.

Burns' relationship with Mildura began in 1973, when his landscape piece *Minefield* was withdrawn from Mildura's Sculpture Triennial on the grounds of public safety¹. However, it wasn't until two years later, when visiting Mildura with his mother that Burns would set a course for his postcard action, a trajectory largely framed in response to his mother's near miss with traffic while attempting to cross a busy road.

Burns would later photograph the intersection at Deakin and Eighth Streets in the town centre and months after, from a printers shop in New York, launch a postcard mail-drop of a series of 5 postcards to 100 households in Mildura over a six month period. The postcards would carry a number of reworked photographic montages including the Mildura intersection, an outline of a hit-run victim crosswalk painter and computer generated self portraits, produced at the World Trade Centre the same year. Each postcard was emblazoned with details of the sender and airmailed directly to the resident asking the question - What about crosswalks in Mildura?

Burns used a Xerox colour photocopier to print the postcards and a limited print edition of the series sold through Watters Gallery in Sydney, to fund the publication of an artist's book². Following an award in 1977, the book was acquired by Libraries in the US and Galleries in Australia³. In interview for this exhibition, Burns commented that the project gained momentum when he was living as an illegal alien in New York City and beginning to engage with the political discourse of the arts scene and the 'culture of the car'; a focus which influenced the production of his seminal super-8 feature films *Why Cars*, *CARnage!* (1977) and *Political Transmission* (1978)⁴. *A Pedestrian Series of Postcards* captures the success of this conceptually astute project and unique aesthetic dimension, enhanced by the rich printed images produced with the then emerging print technology.

Tim Burns was born in Cunderdin WA in 1947. A painter, performer, printmaker, film & video maker and Theatre director, Burns studied sculpture at Western Australian Institute of Technology before living in New York between 1976 -1996. During this period he forged a multidisciplinary international practice underpinned by protest, intervention and social interactivity where he often broke ground in the innovative use of new media. His works have been exhibited widely in a range of gallery, public contexts and broadcast on TV networks internationally. Highly regarded, his prints are held in public collections nationally including the National Gallery of Australia, where examples of his work were included in the major survey exhibition *Printed Images by Australian Artists* (2007). He was awarded an ArtsWA Fellowship in 1999 and an Australia Council Fellowship in 1996. Burns currently lives and works in York, Western Australia. In partnership with the local Nyoongar community he has acquired a disused granite quarry and land encompassing Dale's Hill known as Cave Hill, a sacred site and water source for Balladong men.

This exhibition includes a copy of the book, individually framed bookplates and access to an audio commentary of the artist talking about *A Pedestrian Series of Postcards*.

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City of Fremantle Art Collection Gallery
26 September – 22 November 2009

¹ In 1973 Burns' anti-Vietnam installation *Minefield* was bulldozed before the opening of Mildura Sculpture Triennial *Sculpturescape '73*, when Burns was injured by one of the charges exploding prematurely.

² Burns generated enough income to produce 1000 copies of the book, a quarter of which were distributed in Australia.

³ *A Pedestrian Series of Postcards* won the American Institute of Graphic Arts Book Award in 1977.

⁴ Burns was a pioneer in the Super-8 New Wave in New York and received the State Council Film Award in 1978 for *Why Cars*, *CARnage!*.

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Check list

All artworks are from the City of Fremantle Art Collection and image/plate dimensions are given as height by width by depth in centimetres. Courtesy and © the artist.

Tim Burns (1947-)

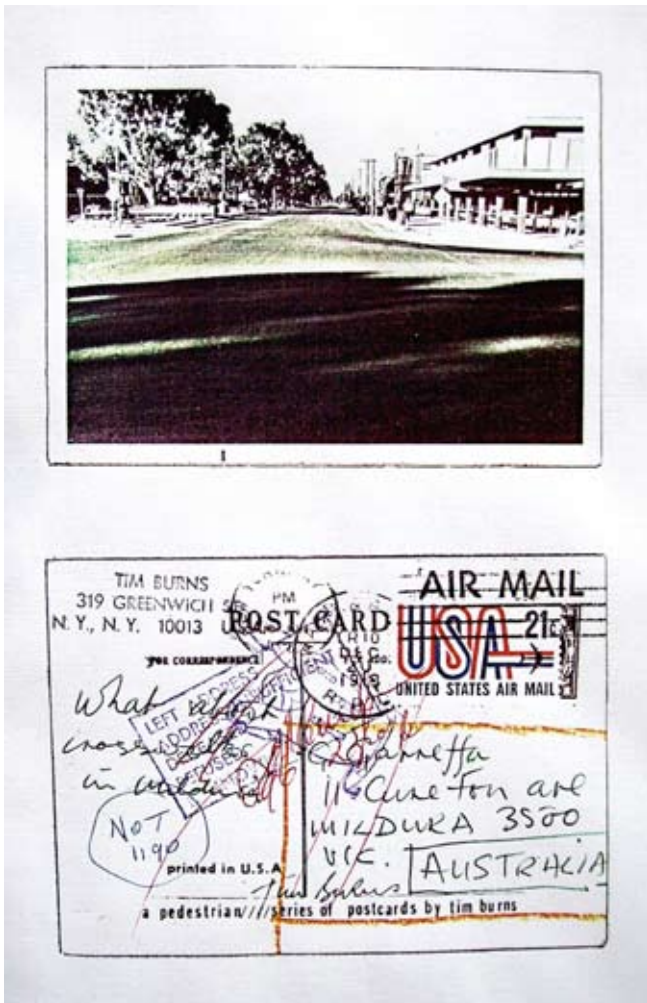
A Pedestrian Series of Postcards 1976

unbound artist's book, photocopy print on of 25 pages

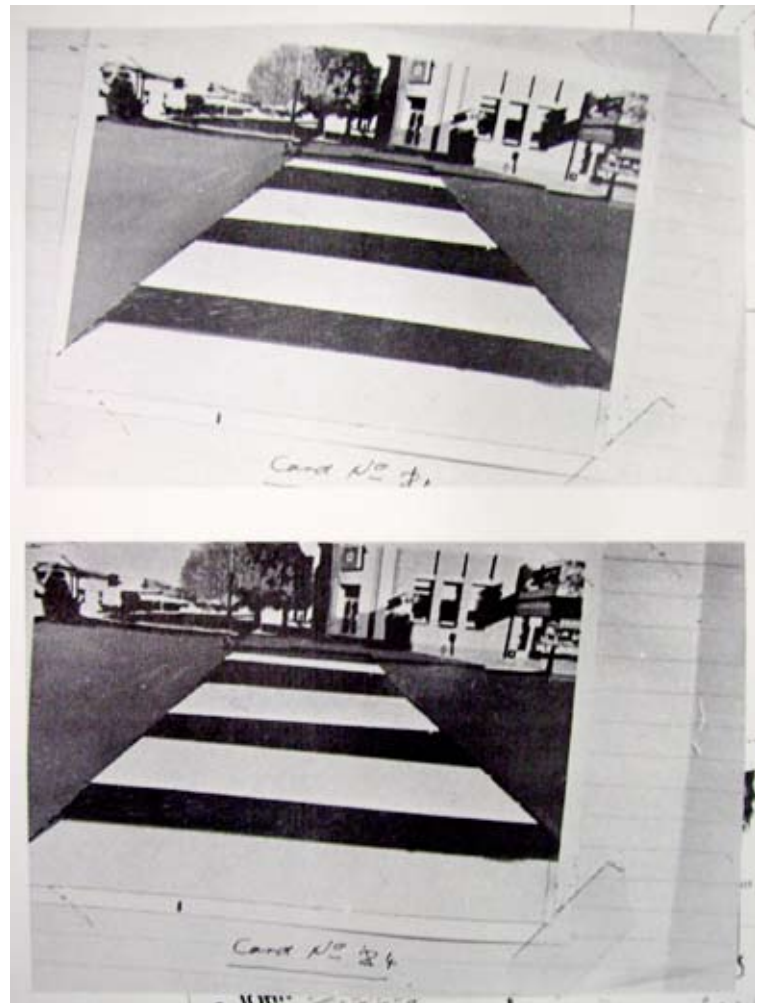
28 x 21.5 cm

no. 1237.1-25

donated by the artist, 2008



1237.6



1237.19

Tim Burns (1947-)

A Pedestrian Series of Postcards 1976

artist's book, photocopy print ed. 1000

28 x 43 cm open dimensions

no. 1238

acquired from *On Record – Tim (3rd Degree) Burns Retrospective Exhibition*, Urban Dingo, 2008