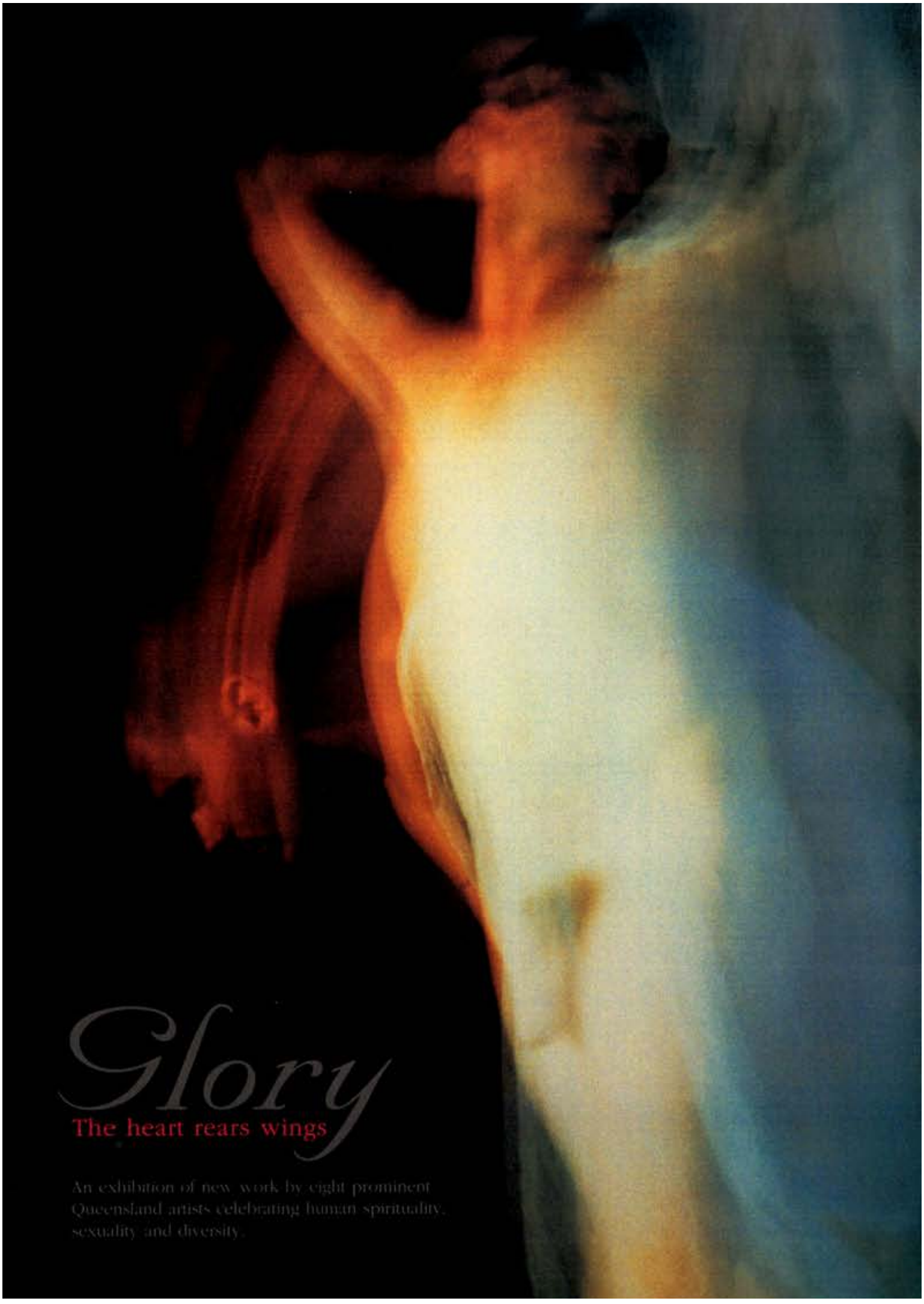

Glory
The heart rears wings
An exhibition of new work by eight prominent Queensland artists celebrating human spirituality, sexuality and diversity.

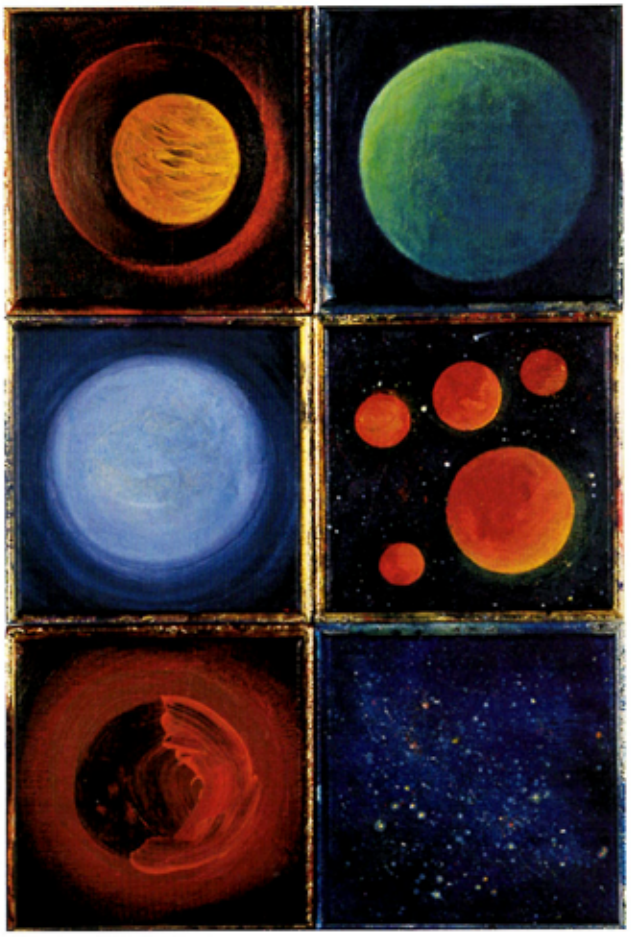
GLORY

The heart rears wings

The heroic, the noble is unfashionable. We feel we cannot escape the true grit of reality.

It is difficult for the people of our age to go direct to *Glory*, not because it is too bright (we like extreme adventure), but because it always seems to be false. The glory of Rome is long gone. The glory of nature is revealed as cruel or polluted. The glory of conquest in battle is covered in mud and blood. The glory of a victorious athlete is tainted with suspicion. The glory of heaven glosses over earthly injustice and makes light of earthly struggle.

Yet the great Romantic themes of the nineteenth century perdure: the love of liberty, delight in unspoiled nature, the lure of the exotic, fascination with the supernatural. For the new century, they articulate a human yearning for something greater, a longing for transfiguration, the promise of something more grand. The hope of glory remains in our grubby lives, gold in a pan of dirt. In unguarded moments, we catch a glimpse of it in the margins of our existence.



This exhibition of glory does not present rows of brocaded saints in a gilded heaven. In an earlier age, artists could paint the Last Judgement without irony or embarrassment. Farmers and bishops rub shoulders around the throne of glory and people were inspired to goodness. The eight artists in this exhibition cannot escape the cynicism of the post-modern. The delight in this ensemble of their work is to follow the various paths they have chosen, to see how sometimes they cross, and to come to various vantage points from which one can gaze upon *Glory*.

Darren Jones offers a suite of small works exploring the glory of creation. The geometric shapes and patterns embrace both the micro-structure of sub-atomic chemistry and the macrocosm of the planets in their orbit. The circular movements suggest the cycles of days and years, of energy and evolution. The spheres spin like bright halos around Man and Woman, both glorifying them at the centre of the universe and trapping them within it.

Catherine Chui glories in the creative interaction of the cultures of East and West. Her works, like mandalas, portray the eternal Yin-Yang: feminine-masculine, potency-action, shade-light, yielding-assertion, soft-solid. Juxtaposing such opposites, she rolls her experience into balls which she constantly juggles. The music of her spheres is as public as the creation of the world, as intimate as a knot in the stomach.

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Sebastian Di Mauro, in his Taboo Suite, locates glory in the space between the physical and metaphysical. Taking pictures of details of his own body, he adds symbols and text to expand our understanding of the reality of being human. He does not transcend the physical but transforms it into a metaphor for the personal and inter-personal. In his Trunk Series, he takes the rather ridiculous appendage of the elephant's trunk as an ambiguous natural shape, affirms the connection between all living things, and exalts in life-forms and in life itself.

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Thomas Justice reads between the lines of the great story of salvation, Adam and Christ, creation and redemption, and finds his own individual story inscribed within its parameters, the concrete in the context of the cosmic. He touches the paradox and ambiguities of human existence described by Alexander Pope: created half to rise and half to fall... the glory, jest and riddle of the world.

Fiona Fraser, alias Can(n)on Girl, inserts herself into the *canon of art history* as a mock-heroic artist celebrity. She sets out to make a big splash, and does so with all the glitz of shimmering sequins. In thus covering herself in glory, she exposes the superficiality of fame but taps into the deep human desire to make a difference to the world.

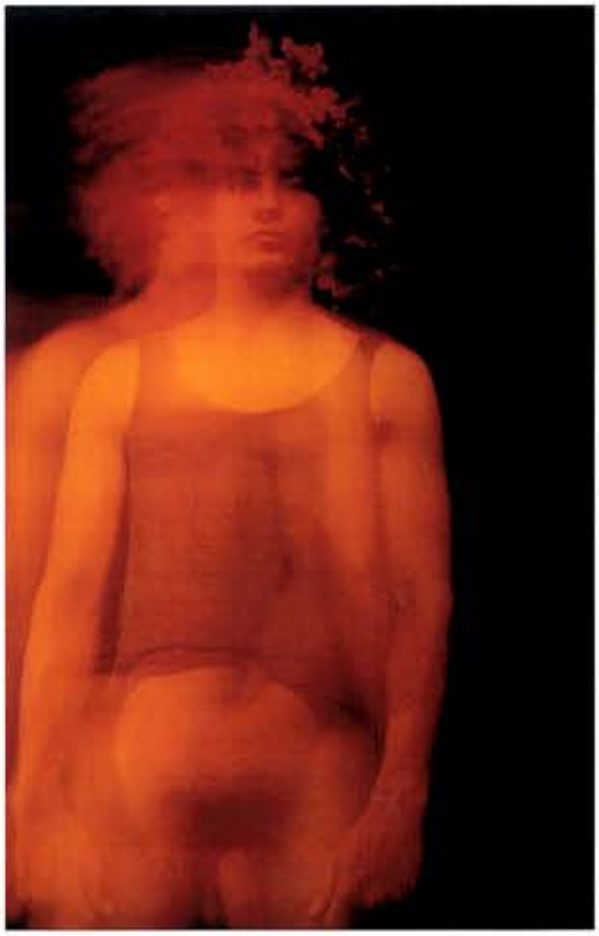
Richard Stevens, at the opposite extreme, presents documentary images of an anti-hero – an old man against scenes of street life. The images remind one of the proverb, Grey hair is a crown of glory. The true glory of human existence lies not in fame but in wisdom and depth of life experience

David Sawtell explores the ambiguities of masculinity in his on-going study of working-class men who have same sex encounters but who do not identify as gay. He makes portraits of those who wish to remain anonymous. In this case, the glass not only evokes the invisibility they seek, but fills them with light and transports them to the ethereal realm of the numinous. The black glory hole of depersonalised sex is transfigured by the white-hot glory hole of the glass furnace.

Maree Cunnington refers to ritual, magic, and the construction of a supernatural world of glory. At the centre of her multi-layered work is a stark image of the absent male, recalling drowned sailors who succumbed to the violent tropical fever, Calenture. A woman, siren or sorcerer, hovers

over the waters divided into 78 glasses each containing a card from the tarot pack. An air of mystery. Does this ritual foretell or remember, invoke or repel the hypnotic illusions of the sea? Ritual action deals with death and life, dissolution and transformation, and constructs those fictions within which we live.

The Romantic poet Gerard Manley Hopkins is modern in his perceptions. Once when *Hurrahing in Harvest*, he admired the sky and the "lovely behaviour of silk-sack clouds".



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I walk, I lift up, I lift up
heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the
heavens to glean our
Saviour...
These things, these things
were here and but the
beholder,
Wanting; which two when
they once meet,
The heart rears wings bold
and bolder,
And hurls for him, O half
hurls earth for him off
under his feet.

The eight artists in this exhibition do not so much present us with the glory in the heavens but show us how to glean it from the grit, from the remnants, from the edges. The sky is reflected in the puddle. And with a glimpse of glory, the heart rears wings.

Tom Elich

Glory

The heart rears wings

23 March – 18 April 2001

Gallery 482

Colour Plates

1 Darren Jones
Universe [2001]
Acrylic paints over gold and silver leaf on wood

2 Sebastian Di Mauro
Trunk Series [2001]
Copper wire and copper pot scourers

3 Thomas Justice
Eccē [2001]
Acrylic photo transfer on linen

4 Fiona Fraser
The Launch of Canon Girl [2000]
Recycled wood, concrete, lino, plastic, cardboard, sequins and enamel paint

5 David Sawtell
The Affinity of Men [2001]
Slumped glass and charcoal

6 Catherine Chui
Operation and Acupuncture Ball
East Meets West Series [2000]
Lithography on Magnani Incisioni paper

7 Maree Cunnington
The Sanctuary of Falling [2001]
Digital Lambda Duotone Prints from 6 x 6 gelatine silver negatives

8 Richard Stevens
Street Life [2001]
Digital print on rag paper

Dr Tom Elich studied in Paris for his doctorate in medieval culture and religion. He has written about contemporary art in the journal *Liturgy News*.

Darren Jones is an Honours graduate who regularly contributes to the Visual Arts by producing work and curating exhibitions such as *Glory*.

Front cover: **Thomas Justice**
Gabriel [2001]
Acrylic photo transfer on linen

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