

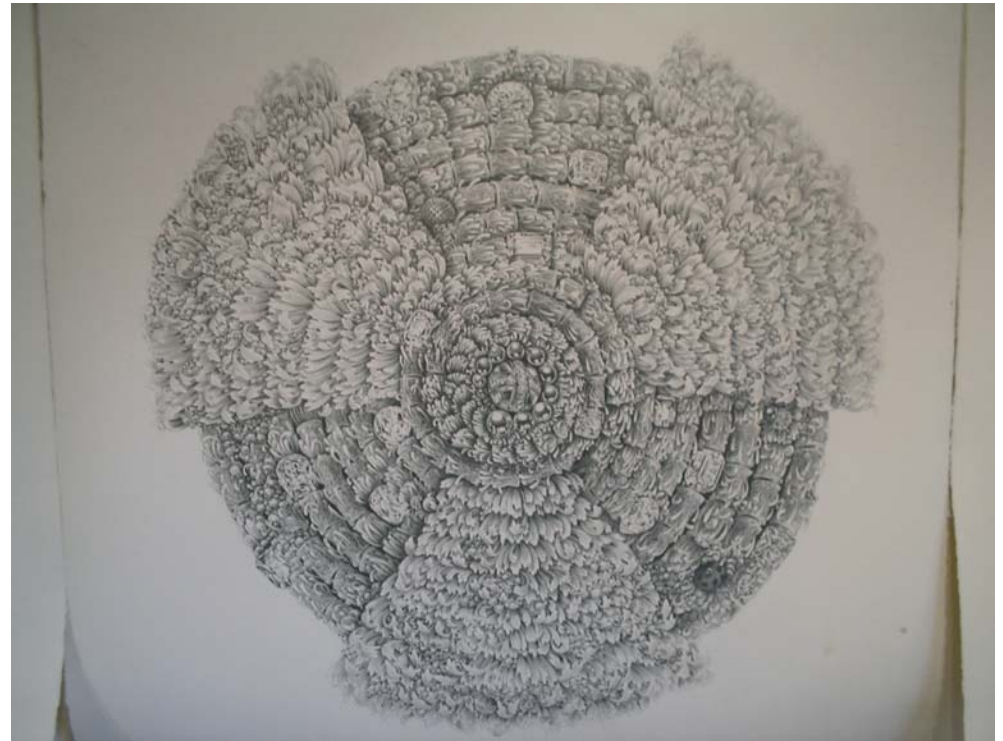


EX DE MEDICI



NAME FOR A SLAVE WHO DREAMS LIKE AN ARISTOCRAT (U235 DREAMING) : A FREENZY OF PROFIT TAKING. 2005 (106 X 114 CM)

Charcoal on paper



TERRA (APPLICATION OF THEORY : DE-CLOAKING THE APPARATUS) 610 2005 (106 X 114 CM)

Watercolour on paper. All works courtesy the artist, Canberra.

For some two decades eX de Medici has gained a reputation as an Australian artist whose professional career has been wilfully and capriciously maintained (by herself) at a position left of the official art world's centre. She describes her professional motto since 1996 as being 'to seduce and destroy'.

EX describes her tertiary education as being as recalcitrant as the career that followed: she finished her third year in the Canberra School of Art Painting Workshop in 1983, her final year was spent at the Canberra School of Music in the Electronic workshop as adjunct to her work in performance and installation.

Also well known as a tattoo artist, eX confirms that she has long had 'an issue with skin'. Her involvement with tattoo culture has provided a rich pool of experiences and imagery from which she draws. Her series of large-scale drawings began in 1996, of which the three works in this exhibition form a part, bear evidence of the artist's ongoing fascination with surfaces. And in this work the term 'only skin deep' seems to be contradicted in objects whose richly elaborate surfaces reveal a labyrinth of details that add complexity and irony to the forms they embellish. The image/objects in eX's works are often centrally placed. Like icons or emblems, their immediate impact suggests an easy reading, an immediate recognisability. Skulls, nuclear signs, helmets – they can be neatly fitted within a lexicon of ready-made symbols associated with violence. However, represented as they are, wrapped in their fluffy flurry of surface, they demand a re-think. It is as if the hard-core directness of their

communication has been muffled and ruffled. What are these symbols re-fashioned in party bunting and petals? And hidden amidst the surface softness, other more prickly details can be spied – spiky truths and glittering diadems, the booty of pearls or bubbles and the vertebrae of glittering creatures.

These are perplexing images – both flirtations and aggressive. There is a coquettish sado-masochism at play – something both tough and tender. They force us to reassess the connections between brutality and artifice, and to be cautious about wanting what we see in case we might get it. The artist makes no secret about the fact that this series was begun in a direct response to the re-election of the Howard government in 1996, after which she made a conscious decision to respond to what she and many others describe as arch conservatism in Australia. Her aim at this time was to produce the most blatantly conservative objects she could conceive. Here are works that are wilfully critical of the deathly consequences of blind obeisance to ideology.