

GALLERIES



■ HARD CELL ■ ARRESTING IMAGES ■ SWISH LIST

ALONE among Mardi Gras Festival exhibitions this week, Edifying Sappho and Socrates references the origins of the event itself.

Claustrophobically installed in two cells that held the arrested marchers of 1978, this project from the freelance German curator Rafael von Uslar takes the fictional form of an international competition for a gay and lesbian monument.

Although artists as diverse as Rosemarie Trockel and George Segal have produced such structures in reality — Trockel features in the show — most of the present “entries” inhabit the realm of fancy. For some, this equivocal zone of occupation is the right and proper place for the artefacts of Queer.

Whimsy, satire, bombast, shock and subversion mingle in a psychic stew that I found exhilarating and exasperating by turns. On the earnestness meter, the show gallops from Hollywood horrors to haunting

evocations of the homosexual holocaust, and back again. Don't be deterred by the insolent fragility of some submissions or the *lederhosen* chic of the curatorial premise.

Artists such as Cary S. Leibowitz, aka Candyass, and Leroy “King of Art” are savvy thinkers with more to offer than up-yours aliases. Names such as Wolfgang Tillmans, Candida Hofer and Annie Sprinkle comprise a contingent of the famous and fashionable. Locals Brook Andrew, Janet Burchill, Hany Armanious, Gary Carsley, Sue Saxon, Tony Clark and William Yang make distinguished contributions. Deej Fabyc proposes a hilarious *Cathedral of Conscience* shaped like a stack of lavender flapjacks. Scott Redford's tongue-in-cheek take on Aussie iconology honours a beachside beat with the fibreglass sacrament of a surfboard.

Conceived by von Uslar and his team as an organic entity, Edifying Sappho and Socrates will travel and

mutate over the next two years. Don't miss the chance to inspect this modest but meaty show in its inaugurating venue, the former Darlinghurst Police Station, now the Darlinghurst Health Centre. Phone 9549 2122. Closing February 27.

LINKING nicely to Sappho and Co, Lachlan Warner's *Evidence at First Draft Gallery* explores surveillance and the violated self. Rows of solarised images of personal effects relinquished in the evidentiary processes of arrest and investigation are balanced by first-person accounts from the gay-bashed citizenry of Sydney. Collaborating with the Anti-Violence Project and Melissa Lee, Warner displaces his usual acerbic humour with sober meditations on the ugly side of homophobia (not that there's a pretty one). Visitors get to empty their own pockets in a DIY version of state harassment, and pin up the results. Work by this inventive video and photo-media artist also figures in *Rampant at Raw Nerve Gallery*, to be reviewed in this column next week. Phone 9698 3665. To February 21.

SWISH is the meeting of camp and queer, and the title of a clever exhibition at Casula Powerhouse. As a contributor to the catalogue I am disqualified from critical comment, but feel obliged to mention this significant Mardi Gras event in my dispatches. Photographer Kaye Shumack co-exhibits. Phone 9824 1121. To February 22.

■ BRUCE JAMES

Once more onto the beach, dear friends . . . *The Spit, Gold Coast* by Scott Redford, as part of Edifying Sappho and Socrates.

