

ALAN PEARSON

Within, Within: Heads c. 1988 - 1994

26 February - 15 March 2008

SERIES NOTES

Alan Pearson is an iconic New Zealand artist with a growing international reputation. Having appeared in several major public exhibitions, including *Portraits and Personalities* at the Christchurch Art Gallery in 2004, and *Likeness and Character* at Auckland Art Gallery in 2008 (in addition generally, to widespread representation in New Zealand public collections), Pearson has reached a level of recognition consistent with his status as one of New Zealand's predominant modernists, and Neo-expressionists in particular.

However, for most of his life, Pearson has had to fight for the right of recognition, *and* at 78 years, this dynamic and enigmatic artist not only manifests the scars of battle but is proud of them. It is thus not surprising that the faces which confront us in *Within* are far from pretty, reflecting at once doleful wit and irony, but also powerful economy, and an honesty of intent and execution. Like the man himself, they demand attention.

Using a compact direct language, Pearson flushes out the ugly (and yet humorous) side of life. With the authority of an artist long practiced, Pearson's spectre like and mocking images stare back at us, underwriting the much ignored but ever present, underbelly of existence. He lines up different personalities, "the dirty little private school boy", those who promise much and deliver nothing, the seedy and the shady, the superficial and the shabby; skewed characters who inhabit the past, present and future.

Seemingly irrepressive, these images exhibit a total disregard for social norms and conventions.

Like many great 19th and 20th century artist's before him, Pearson has spent a great part of his life as an artist on the margins of the art world. As one "marginalised" he has personal understanding of the concepts of hypocrisy, alienation and isolation, however, Pearson's brilliance lies in the way he condenses personal issues to present a universal view of humanity through his uncompromising and "inimitable vision."

Kim Atherfold (Sanderson Gallery curator)