

# Towards a theory of everything



**A**rtist Patrick Pound has lived in Melbourne for ten years maintaining an exhibition programme in both New Zealand and Australia over that time. In a mid year exhibition at the Adam Gallery, Wellington, Patrick will show a group of work that comes from his long engaging series called *Towards a theory of everything*. For this exhibition, Patrick has been collaborating with two Australian artists/photographers, Charles Green and Lyndell Brown.

A major 1999 work from the series, exhibited at Anna Bibby Gallery in Auckland last year, was titled *Systematic-towards a theory of everything, 1999* and has been purchased by the Chartwell Collection. Sue Gardiner spoke to Patrick about this work and his trans-Tasman experiences.

**S.G. Patrick, can you tell me about *Systematic-towards a theory of everything, 1999*?**

P.P. It is a very large collage on six blackboards and is a key part of a larger series I am involved in which deals with the way we habitually use knowledge systems to order our worlds. I am interested in how we describe our world, how we explain it.

**S.G. The blackboard is traditionally seen as a way of organising and presenting information – of scheduling time, solving problems and emphasising expertise. We have all spent many years supposedly gaining knowledge from a blackboard!**

P.P. McCahon's *Teaching Aids* has been an important reference point for this work – there is a definite feel of the school room in it. Hannah Hoch's scrapbooks, Krutikov's *Diploma Project*, Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* panels, Richter's *Atlas* and Kabakov's bulletin boards all take a similar approach. This work of mine includes a stamp album cover, a model aeroplane manual, a page from a porcelain guide, a found photograph, pages from a violin teacher's book, a gallery floor plan, a German language book, even an old camera case. The list seems endless! I buy from second hand bookshops the way artists once drew from nature. People have started to give me things they find as well.

**S.G. What kind of activities do you focus on when you do your research?**

P.P. I am particularly fascinated by "the eccentric collector" – a person who tackles the job of describing the world in a manic, eccentric way. For example, I have a book, a thesaurus, which presents six thousand ways that booksellers can describe the books they sell. People become consumed with the need to classify, order, prioritise, collect and control. I'm interested in the approach of the natural historian, comparing like with like, succession and resemblance. *Systematic* has extracts from this list written in chalk, overlapping across its surface.

**S.G. What are some other examples of this manic collecting?**

P.P. People try to make sense of the world through assembling, listing and categorising. Collection is classification lived. I am interested in systematic collection from Noah's ark to Hitler, where those collected wore their indexation on their arms. I am interested in why people collect – and love to come across people's collections of old newspaper clippings, artists' and children's scrapbooks and lists of things. Meaning is to be found in the

Detail of *Systematic-towards a theory of everything, 1999*



