

ARTS

The Sydney Morning Herald

Friday, September 24, 1993

At the Legge Gallery in Redfern are paintings by Julie Harris, and *Dark Cars With Maps*, paintings and works on paper by John Bartley.

All of the work of Bartley, a Sydney-based artist, begins as montage. It is evident that this approach carries through to his larger oils on canvas where figurative elements jostle with abstract areas of colour.

It is his works on paper, however, which I found the most seductive, with evocative titles such as *Once Upon A Time With A Pomegranate*, *Once Upon A Time With Hidden Lips*, or *Once Upon A Time With Crossed Legs*.

At the Ray Hughes Gallery in Surry Hills are paintings and drawings by Tom Risley, and work by Tony Twigg.

Twigg's *A Portrait Of Mary Jane Hicks* reveals the artist's continued exploration and examination of a horrific historic event – the 1886 pack rape of a 16-year-old girl, Mary Jane Hicks.

According to Twigg, there are no pictures of Mary Jane, yet there is a statement made by her in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of September 13, 1886, which begins: "My name is Mary Jane Hicks, I do not know where I was born ..."

Twigg has built up his own portrait of Mary Jane – but this is no traditional portrait. Part of his interest is in Mary Jane's "random fate" and he has acted on this by creating his own random action using his trademark "stick story".

In the "stick story" he drops a handful of sticks on the floor which fall into random patterns. This is a method Twigg has been using in his artistic practice since the 1980s and this latest exhibition continues the narrative of the life of Mary Jane.

Finally, there are several exhibitions by three artists who are well known in their home towns but whose work is rarely, if ever, shown in Sydney – Malcolm Benham, Guy Grey-Smith and Douglas Chambers.

Malcolm Benham, an abstract painter and sculptor, is showing at

the Beatty Gallery in Darlinghurst. Since 1972 Benham has had 30 solo shows in New Zealand, Britain, Hong Kong and Australia, but this is his first solo show in Sydney. *Towards Real Objects* is like a mini-survey show, covering paintings, constructions and drawings dating from 1988 to 1993.

At the Olsen Carr Gallery in Paddington are works by Guy Grey-Smith, an artist whose work is rarely seen in Sydney.

Born in Wagin, Western Australia in 1916, Grey-Smith first became interested in art as a prisoner of war in Germany. After contracting tuberculosis he was sent to a sanatorium in England where he continued to paint and became even more committed to becoming an artist.

Grey-Smith then studied painting and drawing at the Chelsea School of Art under, among others, Henry Moore. He returned to Perth in 1948 and became interested in the remote north-west of Western Australia. This interest is evident in the exhibition through landscapes which reflect the brutal dry outback, such as the etching *Sandstone Country*.

Before he died in 1981, Grey-Smith established a reputation as a significant landscape artist.

At the Rex Irwin Gallery, Woollahra, is Douglas Chambers, who is showing for the first time on the east coast.

Born in London in 1935, he attended the Royal College of Art where his art was obviously influenced by contemporaries such as Kitaj and Hockney. Chambers decided to migrate and arrived in Western Australia in 1976.

In this recent work there are both melancholy and humour. Animals are the dominant theme, as in *End Of The Jetty I*, but what really links the work is the application of paint to the surface and the fact that there are several layers of meaning.