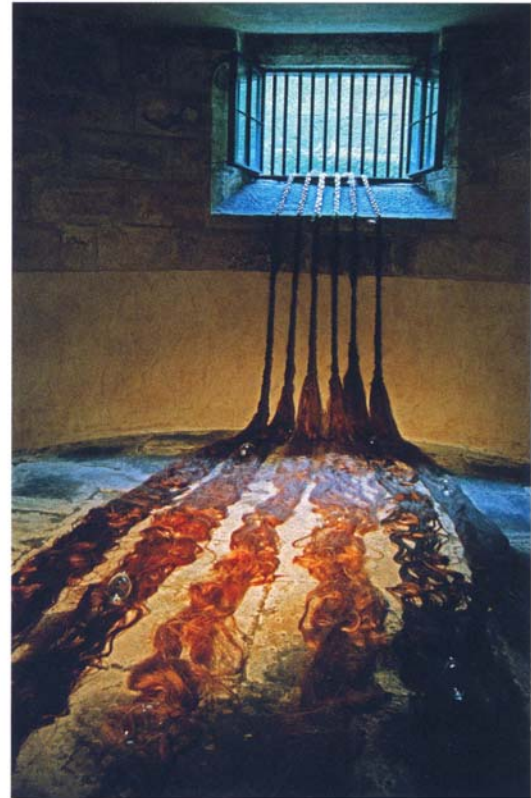


In putting the project together, Goldberg quite consciously adopted an approach that saw the entire exhibition as a form of intervention:

My role as a curator is not traditional. I chose a number of artists whose work I respected, who engaged with similar themes to my own. I said to them, 'here's the opportunity, the house, the general theme, I want to see what you can do.' There wasn't pressure to find a consistent theme, although what I was looking for was a perspective that turns the world upside down, literally and in a perceptual and conceptual way, and gets you to reappraise it. It was that diversity of personal expression and feeling that I sold the project on. So when HHT said 'we still don't know what the project is', I said it's to give artists the opportunity to respond to the House. Finally they saw the light, that it should be an individual expression, and not a high-flying consistent curatorial strategy.³⁶

At the same time, Goldberg also assumed the responsibilities of a more traditional curator, dealing with the HHT on the artists' behalf, negotiating the artists' access to EBH's archival records and introductions to the house's architecture, interiors, historical legacy and the theories underpinning the current presentation by Trust historians and curators, including Joy Hughes and Scott Carlin.

Artists in the House! opened in June 1997 with installations by Anne Graham, Jacqueline Clayton and Ken Unsworth in the reception rooms, bedrooms, basement and upstairs galleries. Graham's was the most visually arresting, swathes of hair along the dining table evoking the presence of the Macleays' six unmarried daughters who were distinguished less by their feminine charms and accomplishments than by their red hair. Clayton also responded to the female members of the household who were overshadowed by the public acknowledgement of the men. Clayton took as her inspiration a pincushion on display in what is presented as Kennethina Macleay's bedroom, to create 'daintily frilled, virginal cushions, spiked with silver points spelling out the moral code by which the young women lived their lives, piled on a windowsill and on the floor blocking an entranceway.³⁷ The program continued with artists including Bonita Ely, Chris Fortescue, Adrian Hall, Martin Sims, Tom Arthur, Julie Rrap, Debra Phillips, Nigel Helyer, Anne Zahalka, Aleks Danko and Jackie Dunn. Some artists chose to work in what art critic Dinah Dysart called an 'obtrusive' way, 'confronting' the visitor with the 'palpable presence of a contemporary art work'.³⁸ For example, Danko's pile of potatoes in the main vestibule was hard to escape, especially when within a couple of days it had attracted 'a haze of fruit flies around the candelabrum' which remained there weeks later.³⁹ By contrast, the work of other artists could have been mistaken for conservation activity. Museological work such as archiving and categorising has become a significant staging ground for artist interventions, calling attention as it does to the institutional mechanisms of the museum that often take place out of the public eye.⁴⁰ Dunn, for instance, sat sewing in a corner of the drawing room, making calico slips, each labelled with a stencilled number matching the inventory of objects on display, which she used to progressively cover the furnishings. As Dysart comments, 'by obliterating the furniture, then providing an inventory to prove its existence, Dunn made an important statement about the way in which the past is presented', bringing together both museological methods and the artist's ability to provoke the imagination to understand the past.⁴¹



Anne Graham, *Macleay Women (Hair and Bars)* (1997) (*Artists in the House!*) Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, Sydney