



Tate Gallery

CHRISTMAS TREE

Decorations by Tim Head

This is the second time that an artist has been invited to decorate the Tate's Christmas Tree. This year's decorations have been created by Tim Head whose painting, 'Cow Mutations', won first prize in the John Moores Liverpool Exhibition in 1987.

Since the early 1980's Head's work has explored the relation of the natural and the man-made and this is reflected in his Christmas Tree installation. The motif for the tree shapes is taken from the symbol printed on the packaging of a commercial cleaning product. The obviously synthetic nature of the decorations contrasts vividly with the real tree. However, this opposition of the natural and the artificial is not as clear-cut as it seems. Although a magpie appears to perch on top of the tree, the bird is dead and is being used as an ornament. This leads us to an awareness that the tree is also dead, having been felled and moved to an alien environment. We are thus reminded that the presence of a tree in a man-made space is incongruous. At the same time, the distinction between the tree and its decorations is blurred because the tree's status as a natural object has been subverted. In this way Head's presentation of a traditional symbol of Christmas comments on the ecological implications of the consumer society.

We are grateful to Lin Pac Plastics who provided the materials for the decorations and to Clifton Nurseries who supplied the tree.

PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH THE WORK

