Please judge my art, not my sex

IRON just has to enter your
hand without letting it be-
come hard," says Julie Ewington.
A lecturer in the department
of fine arts at Sydney University,
Julie spoke of how difficult it is to
god women's work accepted in
what is, traditionally, a society
pivoted around men.

"It's not that women haven't
been effective in lots of artistic
fields, but they have been invis-
ible.

She believes the festival will
help to change that by directing
attention to both art work and
theory.

The theoretical side will be-
arded at a seminar at Paddington
Town Hall from Saturday to
Monday. Julie Ewington will pre-
serve a paper called Talking About
Women Artists.

Among the less traditional top-
ics will be the paper presented
by photographer Helen Grace on
The Revenge of Lady Di — the
personal/political continuum.
Helen says she will be using
popular cultural artefacts to an-
alysie a phenomenon in which a
shy schoolgirl became a media
everynight.

"Does this represent a giant
leap forward (or backward) for
Womenkind? What lessons are to
be learned from this about femin-
iste creativity?" asked Helen
Grace.

Of the Lady Di phenomenon,
she said: "It strikes me as the
triumph of a particular world
view — a conservative world view —
about the position of women."

She believes that view must be
taken into account if women are
to challenge their position in
society. "In this art festival,
assumptions are made about femi-
iste creativity that I'm not sure
are taken too far.

"It's almost as if a festival will
mean that everyone will con-
centrate for a month on an issue
which will then cease to have any
interest."

She is afraid that the work
which women are doing, and will
continue to do, will remain
invisible.

"We need to be aware of the
dangers of State-funded cultural
festival of this kind because they
tend to be formalistic."

"Women have put a lot of work
into the month. I just hope it
doesn't disappear at the end of
October."

To help prevent that dis-
appearance, a research project is
being conducted alongside the
festival.

The project examines the posi-
tion of women and their employ-
ment in the arts. Julie Ewington
says the project is important be-
because it confirms "suspicions
and impressions about the way
women have failed in artworking.

"There are male teachers and
women drop-outs, and in that
context we must look at the
educational effectiveness of art
schools," she said.

She said that women were
associated with art only if they
were at the bottom of the educ-
ional ladder.

"At school, I was discouraged
from doing art because I was
supposed to be concentrating on
going to university and art was
not a university subject."

She also believes that there are
a number of male critics who
have no understanding of femi-
iste art work, and who don't wish
to understand it. "They don't
understand the ramifications of
the political struggle of women."

A postcard advertising one of
the festival exhibitions makes a
plea for all women networkers:

Don't judge me as a mother,
Don't judge me as a woman,
Just judge me as an artist.