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REFLECTIONS FROM MATARIKI

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Editorial

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Scope: Art & Design 23 is a celebration of our arts community here in Ōtepoti and beyond, a time to bring together a feast of creative projects that we edit and layout during the winter; for you to enjoy in the summer-break and beyond. I am writing this year's editorial at Matariki – a special time of the year in Aotearoa. At Matariki we look into the future with hope for new beginnings. We celebrate our whānau and attune to and connect with our environment.

It is also a time to remember and honour those, that we as an arts whānau, have lost in the past year. In particular, I would like to acknowledge artists Marilyn Webb, Peter Nicholls, and Martin Thompson who in their very different ways have added to our rich creative lives here. I have been liberal with the timeframes here because, although Peter died more than a year ago, his loss still resonates deeply within in our community. Both Peter and Marilyn taught for many years at the Dunedin School of Art and not only mentored generations of younger artists, but also created a legacy of artworks of local and national significance. Martin, familiar around Dunedin, was an outsider artist with an international profile who made his intricate drawings in his 'studio' of local cafes.

Professor Rangī Mātāmua of the Matariki Advisory Committee explains how Matariki is fundamentally connected with our environment "Matariki is more than just our connections to each other; it is also about our connections to our place in the world and our responsibility to the environment. During Matariki we hope people reflect on what they can do to ensure the wellbeing of the earth"¹.

The notion of "our connections to our place in the world"² is a key value Caitlin Donnelly explores in "Māmā." In this article she details her newfound connection to whakapapa. She says that she came to terms with her previous dislocation as an adoptee and an identity of "iwi unknown," and created her studio project in response to three vital markers of her identity: Māori, wāhine, and kowhaea.

In this journal issue many of the articles are focused on environmental and or botanical themes, these also reflect the values mentioned by Mātāmua above. In her article "Immersed" Becky Cameron engages with the ecology of her suburban garden, "paying careful attention to what is here and now and to produce multiple responses to my coexistence within a web of relationships."³ Alysha Bailey also works with a botanical theme. Creating digital images by placing plant materials directly onto a flat-bed scanner, she links (and names) each image to a historical female figure "freezing the garden and each plant in time, the images function as a portrait, as a document, and as monument."⁴

Artist in Residence, Amanda Watson's practice is also deeply connected to the land. She situates her explorative painting practice in context of new materialist theory, whereby she works 'in collaboration' with the land. She talks of the paintings carrying "a kind of whispered trace of the interactions between the land, the painting process and myself."⁵ In Thomas Lord's photographic explorations, he also works *with* the land. He writes that his project "Super Sport Sunday"⁶ "required a slow and unspoken agreement with the location."⁶ Unlike snapshot photography where an image is 'taken,' Lord's slower process allows "the image time to make itself."⁷

The politics of sustainability and engagement with environmental concerns caused by “the endless gluttony of capitalism”⁸ is the focus of Nilgun Salur’s sobering, yet delightful, interview with Turkish graphic designer Savaş Çekiç who considers “that in terms of sustainability, producing without causing environmental degradation should be the primary goal of designers.”⁹ Inge Andrew’s reflection on her teaching practice outlines the development of an interdisciplinary course using design based thinking, where learning is a social process, supported by collaboration and social interaction, in situated learning.

“Gift: Reflections on Journeys, Knowledge, Labour and Love” by Victoria Bell and Natalie Smith is the first of three articles focusing on the development of curated group exhibitions. It follows the development of “Gift” an exhibition at The Ashburton Art Gallery in 2022. The curators developed the notion of “Gift” as a foil for the “traditional consumer notion of the boxed, wrapped and ribboned gift” to explore gifts that were more enduring, yet less tangible such as “our natural environment; journeys; gifts of knowledge, labour and love,” themes that also resonate with the time of Matariki.¹⁰

For several years *Scope: Art & Design* has published a series of articles from the Art+Science exhibition series (now in its ninth year) and in this issue we are including recent research from Sierra Adler and Jenny Rock who interview a range of SciArt practitioners about their intentions, motivations, and perceived levels of audience engagement with their projects. Also, included in this issue are related articles from the 2022 Art+ Science exhibition themed “Air.” Pam McKinlay’s entertaining and informative article “Life’s a Gas” ranges over the role of air from ‘macro to micro’ including molecular, human, and planetary perspectives. We look to the night sky in Faye Nelson and Christine Keller’s project “Excited Oxygen” whereby ‘excited’ gases form auroras—that are equally exciting to those lucky enough to see them with naked eye.

The third group exhibition featured in this edition *Scope: Art & Design* is the development and hanging of the photo alumni show “A Little More Magenta.” The article by Mark Bolland and Rachel Hope Allan is an exploration of the curatorial process in successfully showing a collection of somewhat disparate works during the challenge of Covid. And... we find out about the secret life of magenta.

Other texts in this issue centre on projects relating to the challenges of maintaining physical wellbeing. In “Threads of survival” Megan Griffiths discusses the four stages of her experience with intense physical pain and the subsequent gruelling experience of medication, addiction, and withdrawal. She shares with the reader this intensely personal journey and the artworks she made throughout her ordeal. Tracy Kennedy’s article “Memory on Cloth” also relates to the experience of chronic pain and sensory loss. She explores her experience with Fibromyalgia, through the surface manipulation and printing of textiles.

In “The Beast Lives on” painter Charlie Rzepecky writes with a vitality and fury that matches the energy and black humour of his paintings—works that refer to his female to male transition. As he says “The paintings are the visual equivalents of deafening screams. They encapsulate experience and shove it in your face.”¹¹ In contrast, Charlotte McLachlan’s narrative paintings reference early European fairy tales, they employ symbolism “to represent an abstract idea or to suggest a certain mood or emotion.”¹² In these works you are invited into an imagined and contemplative world, a state that is almost within reach. The writing is also contemplative, matching the mood of the paintings. However, what they have in common with Rzepecky is their dark side.

In “I am the Walrus or is it you?” Maggie Covell investigates the changing face of social activism with the advent of technological media— and the changes it brings to participatory projects. She discusses a public intervention “Hidden in Plain Sight” staged as part of her evolving masters’ project.

In contrast to a world packed with art that has meaning, the contemporary ‘OP art’ inspired work of Matthew Truhović takes an entirely different approach. He says that his work attempts to minimise outside distractions “in order to become absorbed in a singular sensory experience.”¹³

Lastly, we have a grouping of vastly different ceramics projects starting with Pam McKinlay's article on the making of "Neil Grant: Master Potter." This book, released to coincide with the survey exhibition of Grant's work was written by art historian Peter Stupples, backed with research from McKinlay and features photographs by Thomas Lord. This article is followed by an artist's page from Eva Ding a Chinese undergraduate student in ceramics. She tells of the joy of creating contemporary works in New Zealand, a freeing from the weight of the Chinese ceramic tradition. The tradition of creating multiple examples of the perfect bowl was the starting point of Liz Rowe's MFA project "The Exchange." As each bowl took one hour to make Rowe exchanged them for goods and services valued by the recipients for something worth an hour of their time. She says that "by eliminating a fixed price for the bowls, access was equal for all and not dependent on income or perceived status."¹⁴

Although not ceramics, the copper vessels of Sabin Perkins also speak of exchange and ritual. He describes his approach to life "through the metaphor of communion and spiritual identity"¹⁵ which he expresses in his daily art practice. Spirituality is also a cornerstone of Wi Taepa's life and practice as a ceramic artist. Tracey-lee McNamara's article is a diary of the time Wi Taepa spent as Artist in Residence, 2021 in the Dunedin School of Art. She writes with a great deal of warmth about her experiences of his residency and the generosity he expressed to students and staff during his stay. In this article, Taepa speaks of *Waka Huia* one of his works

Waka Huia holds within itself all the memories of my time at Otago Polytechnic School of Art in 2021 – all of myself, all the people, students and tutors I met, all the new friends I made. It holds inside itself all that I did from the beginning to the end of my stay.¹⁶

Although many of these texts in *Scope: Art & Design 23* could be seen to connect to the underlying values of Matariki, it is evident that some projects detailed here have a more individual approach. They are conceptual, or they focus on materials and processes rather than overarching political or environmental themes. Enjoy the feast and share your copy, and please come back for seconds.