

# scope

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**Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Art & Design)** is peer-reviewed and published annually in November by Otago Polytechnic/Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

The series *Scope (Art & Design)* aims to engage discussion on contemporary research in the visual arts and design. It is concerned with views and critical debates surrounding issues of practice, theory, history and their relationships as manifested through the visual and related arts and activities, such as sound, performance, curation, tactile and immersive environments, digital scapes and methodological considerations. Within New Zealand and its Pacific neighbours as a backdrop, but not its only stage, *Scope (Art & Design)* seeks to address the matters which concern contemporary artists and arts enquirers in their environments of practice.

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## ARAHONOHONO: INTERCONNECTING PATHWAYS

LEONI SCHMIDT

This issue of *Scope: Art & Design (Contemporary Research Topics)* holds a wealth of information and insights. Reading through the issue, one is struck by the interconnecting pathways one discovers. In Te Reo, the word arahonohono signals the existence of such pathways. Navigating across the content sequence of this issue, many of these can be identified.

Gender issues speak from the first four items in the issue. Fluid identities made manifest through textiles and costume; finding identity through processes of stitching; jewellery that speaks to the lives of wounded women; sculpture that redresses the plight of the girl in Indian culture – all of these items forge interconnections in the process of reading.

Dunedin fashion and art made a splash in Shanghai, Dunedin's sister city. Boundaries between art and fashion were questioned. The same happens through the interventions of Dada, an art clothes shop in Dunedin. The owner's own work plays out between painting, drawing, ceramics, clothes design, and more.

A third grouping highlights wearable objects as social tools. Student and staff joint projects make a collective statement that questions individualistic endeavours when jewellery goes to town and breaks down the barriers between the studio and the public domain. Art as social tool stands at the centre of the projects discussed in this part of the issue.

A next grouping focuses on painting and its relationships with the history of painting. Referring to painting conventions, reworking historical paintings, working in the same vein as genre paintings – these are ways artists keep the traditions of painting alive and align them with contemporary modes of making.

A focus on place then follows in this issue. The spirit of place and the role of architectural ruins in the experience of place are evoked. An experience of place in Christchurch during an earthquake inspires a body of work. Dunedin as a place visited by the Queen in the 1950s is recreated in a space in town to vividly bring the historical event and its attendant material culture to a contemporary audience.

Another set of items foreground printmaking and its connection with media in projects that focus on questioning of the news. These items evidence interconnections with the TransTasman News Network Group that engages with political critique of the media.

The politics of waste and consumerism takes centre stage in another set of items. One of these focuses on how a small gesture can have a big impact on our behaviour: an artist continues to make ceramic cups for a local café so we can refrain from using plastic or paper cups that add to landfill waste. Another artist recycles clothes, deeply questioning the role of fashion in our throwaway culture of consumerism while celebrating renewable waste.

It is clear from the penultimate set of items included in this issue that our artists care deeply about the environment. "What Grows Where You Live" provided people in Dunedin with an opportunity to participate in the planting of native plants across the greater Dunedin region. Participants could create a zine with information about the plants. "AWA HQ" was another project in this vein, this time focusing on the Toitū Stream, on water and its protection by the community. Environment Envoy Broker Katrina Thompson wrote: "Artists have a vital role in making new connections and enabling people to see their world in completely new ways... We are all working together to achieve the goals of Te Ao Tūroa, Dunedin's Environmental Strategy."<sup>1</sup>

The final set of items in this issue focuses on ceramics: one item brings to our attention the existence of hidden pipes in the life of our city. Underground and mostly invisible, these pipes bring electricity and water – life-giving energy – to the world of the city's inhabitants. A contemporary ceramic practice highlights their existence. A final item takes the reader directly to the ceramic studio in the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic as revisited by an alumnus many years after graduating. This visiting artist is an example of the many artists-in-residence that breathe life into our arts community from the many different places of origin they hail from. New techniques are learnt, different ways of working in the studio are experienced, and unexpected interconnections are forged: arahonohono.

<sup>1</sup> .5 Katrina Thomson, 2018, "Art makes environmental connection", Toi Oho, Hail Newsletter.

## UNBOUND THE EXHIBITION: PROJECT REPORT

Natalie Smith and Victoria Bell

### INTRODUCTION

The exhibition *Unbound*<sup>1</sup> opened on Friday 21 September 2018 to launch “Unbound: Liberating Women,” a symposium organised in partnership with the Costume and Textile Association of New Zealand (CTANZ), the School of Design and the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic – Te Kura Matatini ki Otago.

This project report records a conversation between *Unbound* exhibition curators, Dr Natalie Smith and Victoria Bell, about the signature images for the symposium (21-24 September): the suffrage cartoon *Tearing Off the Bonds* by Lou Rogers (1912) and Christine Webster’s Cibachrome photograph of model Tamati James from her series *Black Carnival* (1993-97) – bookend dialogues about women’s liberation surveyed over the weekend of the symposium.

*Tearing off the Bonds* by Rogers was chosen to promote the symposium, which was themed around and timed to coincide with “Suffrage 125” – a Tier 1 commemorative event led by the Ministry for Women and supported by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage to mark the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women’s suffrage in New Zealand. New Zealand became the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote in parliamentary elections when, on 19 September 1893, the Electoral Act 1893 was passed.<sup>2</sup> While we celebrate New Zealand’s progressive attainment of the vote for women, we didn’t get our first female MP, Elizabeth McCoombs, until 1933.<sup>3</sup>

In June 2017, Natalie Smith and Moira White, a member of the symposium organising committee, participated in “Curatorial Research: Telling Women’s Stories for Suffrage 125,” a workshop held at Toitu Otago Settlers Museum, Dunedin, organised by National Services Te Paerangi, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Highlighting the diversity of New Zealanders who have made a contribution to progressing women’s rights was one idea to emerge from the workshop.<sup>4</sup> There is a timeliness to “Suffrage 125” in light of the global voices demanding renewed resistance to patriarchal systems of power, such as #MeToo, despite the semblance of freedom and equality for all, as promoted in Western culture today.

In planning for “Unbound: Liberating Women,” Smith and Bell identified that a visual arts project that spoke to both individuals’ empowerment and the symposium’s goals would be an exciting opportunity to combine their experiences and expertise. Smith is evolving a curatorial practice and is a fashion scholar. Bell is an artist and arts educator with a specialisation in textiles. Their interests have naturally aligned around the themes of textiles, art and liberty for this endeavour.

Thus the curatorial premise of *Unbound*, derived after stimulating discussion and debate, was to invite artist responses to *Black Carnival* #48, 1995, from the series *Black Carnival* by Webster. Smith and Bell felt that the still dangerous image of Tamati James, partly veiled in a white wedding dress, body luminous in a black void, with smiling eyes, gazing at the viewer; blurred gender assumptions and notions of desire, and spoke to continuing debates on the fluidity of dress, bodies and sexualities – all relevant to the current moment of social rights activism today. While Webster’s image is from the early 1990s, in 2018 we find ourselves reiterating the goals of the suffragists and suffragettes<sup>5</sup> for equality and equity. Although suffrage is associated strongly with women’s rights, we are interested in recalling the



wider search for equality and equity for vulnerable people. In the last 20 years, we have seen the impact of queer theory and the burgeoning recognition of the plurality of gender and sexual identity. We feel that *Unbound* (the exhibition) echoes the spirit of these early women and their courage to stand up for their values.

The following Q and A session explores the conversation between these two images – one from a past we were not present in and one we can more vividly and personally remember:

## **PART ONE: NATALIE SMITH INTERVIEWED BY VICTORIA BELL**

### **Who is the artist?**

American-born cartoonist Annie Lucaster Rogers (1879-1952) was arguably the most “prolific American suffrage artist.”<sup>6</sup> She was known as “Lou” Rogers, a gender-ambiguous name reflecting a strategy adopted by other trailblazing women of the time working in male-dominated creative spheres. Paris-based American photographer and publicist Therese Bonney (1894-1978), for instance, called herself M Thérèse Bonney (Monsieur) or T Bonney; her clients were frequently surprised to discover she was a female photographer.<sup>7</sup>

*Tearing off the Bonds* is an iconic suffrage image, yet we don't automatically say “That's a Rogers,” in the same way we would recognise a Webster. This in part has to do with the nature of cartoons – we might remember the image, but we often don't remember the artist, or validate cartoonists as artists due to their high production output and publication in the popular and special interest press. Rogers' status as a woman places her in a further subordinate position, given the way that art history has been written to privilege men.

### **She was based in America and involved in the suffrage movement**

She was part of an active group of prominent suffrage artists discussed in Alice Sheppard's book *Cartooning for Suffrage* (1994). While Sheppard has captured the lives of a number of women working in this media at the time, she acknowledges the difficulties of writing about these women's lives. A significant number of women suffrage cartoonists remain untraceable for various reasons, including changing their names through marriage, or because they used pseudonyms to publish.<sup>8</sup> From diverse backgrounds, what these women had in common, aside from being American-born, was a white middle-class Protestant outlook. Many were also in their 30s to early 40s by the time they engaged in the women's movement. Growing up in the post-Civil War era, they came of age during the rise of the New Woman.

### **Did she go to art school?**

Rogers initially trained as a teacher, but her passion for art saw her save to attend the Massachusetts Normal Art School, Boston, later moving to New York to be a cartoonist. In spite of workplace barriers – one male employer in a large newspaper told her that “newspapers had no use for women in this particular line of work and not much use for them in any other”<sup>9</sup> – she persisted, and in 1908 realised her cartooning dreams. Her early work lacked a social justice message, but from 1911 she was producing work for the *New York Call* and the *Women's Journal*, and later *Women Voter*. In addition to drawing, she took part in suffrage lecture tours and as a “soap box orator in Times Square.”<sup>10</sup> She later married the artist Howard Smith, produced work for the *Ladies Home Journal*, wrote two animal adventure books and hosted a weekly NBC radio programme aimed at children.<sup>11</sup>

There is a hint of art school rebelliousness about Rogers. She did not remain long in Boston, detesting the curriculum at Massachusetts Normal Art School, which while progressive in opening up art education for women had a curriculum based on “plinths and dead white casts,” features of traditional art history. Rogers left the school and went on to teach herself. Fifteen years later she entered the Art Students League, New York, enrolling in George Bridgman's figure drawing class. This was an “egalitarian” institution which admitted female students and let them

attend classes with male students, with the exception of life drawing. The League also had women on the board.<sup>12</sup>

### **Tell us more about the image**

*Tearing off the Bonds* depicts a woman in contemporary dress wrapped in a sash-like ribbon and thick rope. As the text on her hat suggests, this woman represents the “Spirit of 1,000,000 women voters.” The sash, a feature of pageant culture borrowed by the suffragists to promote their cause, reads: “Politics is no place for women.” Published in *Judge* magazine (1912), the cartoon is one of a number of similarly themed suffrage images which influenced the development of the Wonder Woman concept. Dr William Moulton Marston’s original Wonder Woman concept, which debuted in *All-Star Comics* in 1941 and in 1942 on the cover of *Sensation Comics*, was inspired by the suffrage, feminism and birth control movements, each of which used “chains as a centrepiece of its iconography.”<sup>13</sup> Wonder Woman was the New Woman depicted in suffrage cartoons,<sup>14</sup> who, free from bondage, “developed enormous physical and mental power.”<sup>15</sup>

Freeing women from bondage, and thus freeing their mental and physical power, was a central tenet of the contemporaneous dress reform movement. Dress reformers promoted the release of women from the corset. Their motivation was two-fold. One, there was an interest in women’s physical health – the corset compressed organs. Two, garments worn by women at the turn of the twentieth century were a product of middle-class Victorian womanhood, supporting the notion of separate spheres for men and women. The heavy padding of Victorian garments echoed the elaborate padded furnishings of Victorian interiors, the domestic sphere women were ideologically bonded to. In freeing women from the corset, dress reformers simultaneously allowed women more physical mobility and freed their minds.<sup>16</sup>

## **PART TWO: VICTORIA BELL INTERVIEWED BY NATALIE SMITH:**

### **Who is the artist?**

Christine Webster is a New Zealand-born (b. 1958), UK-based artist, who came to prominence in New Zealand in the late 1980s and early 1990s<sup>17</sup> for her provocative photographic works. While Webster remains active internationally as an artist, for New Zealand audiences it is the lingering frisson of *Black Carnival* that remains prominent today. The photographic series consists of 60 linear metres of Cibachrome life-sized photographs, relating to masquerade, desire and gender, that countered the then still tightly bound Protestant moral landscape of antipodean society when first exhibited in 1994. The work has become an iconic project, especially evocative in Dunedin as Webster was the Frances Hodgkins Fellow at the University of Otago in 1991.

### **How did you come across Webster’s work and how was it received?**

I can’t recall my first encounter with *Black Carnival*, but iterations of it had been exhibited in the Dunedin Public Art Gallery (1994, 2000) and the Robert McDougall Art Annex, Christchurch (1995),<sup>18</sup> cities I lived or visited in, in the 1990s. I remember being disturbed and compelled by Webster’s imagery, and her protagonists are intermingled in my mind with the pageantry and exoticism of LGBT – lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender – pride events in Canterbury of the same era<sup>19</sup>, where the roleplays explored in Webster’s works were performed in reality. At that time, there remained a sense of danger and transgression in both spaces, the gallery for showing Webster’s works<sup>20</sup> and LGBT pride events that dared to celebrate queer identities, then still experienced as threatening due to the impact of AIDS and HIV. Nationally, Eve Van Graffhorst’s<sup>21</sup> life story and radiance challenged the assumptions that AIDS was a ‘gay’ disease – a biblical consequence of same-sex love. Internationally, Princess Diana transformed the leper-like treatment of HIV-positive people when, in 1987, she shook hands with an Aids patient without gloves in front of the world’s media,<sup>22</sup> thereby defying the belief that HIV/Aids was passed from person to person by touch. It was a time of fear and bravery.

*Black Carnival*, when shown at the Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton (1994), was received as pornographic in some quarters.<sup>23</sup> However, central to Webster's practice is her centering of feminine desire and a female gaze, at a time when the impact of Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975)<sup>24</sup> was informing discourses on contemporary art and visual culture, especially film studies. Webster is cognisant of the tension in her work related to the naked and taboo body, but rejects any connection with pornography. In her words, "Porn is all about power and these figures are in possession of their own sexuality – there is no passivity or exploitation."<sup>25</sup>

### **What is it about this Webster image that inspires you?**

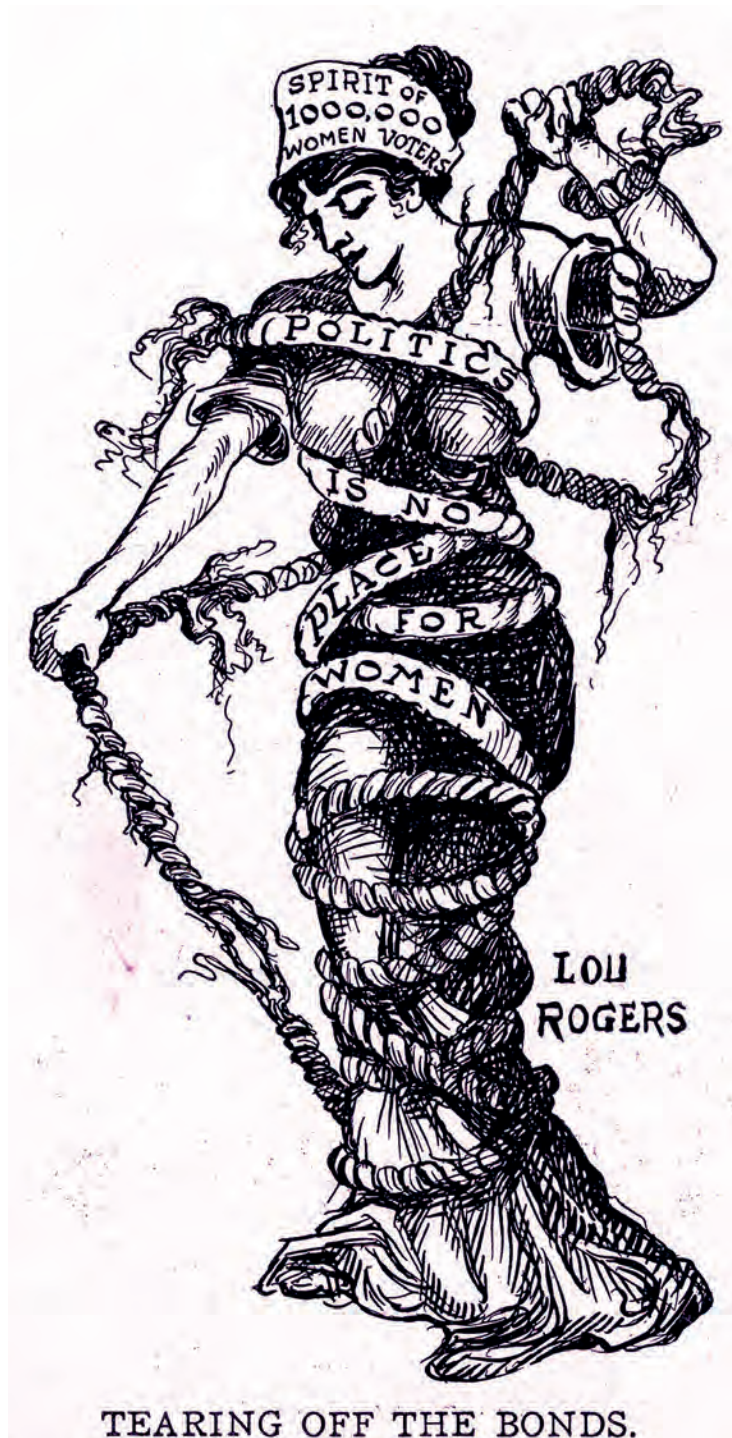
I love *Black Carnival #48* for its insolent play on sexual identity and the conventions of marriage, and for the joyous demeanor of the Tamati James character. The artwork predates the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013, that allowed same-sex couples to marry in New Zealand, and may be read as a provocation on the limitations of heteronormative love solely recognised by church and state in 1995. James' incandescent smile counters the transgressive act – to clothe a man in pearls<sup>26</sup> and white tulle. The male figure disrupts the romantic construction of fairytale weddings, a trope so readily consumed by society and exemplified by the wedding of Lady Diana Spencer to Charles, Prince of Wales, in 1981. Lady Spencer, sheathed in her iconic wedding gown, designed by David and Elizabeth Emanuel, has become the defining image of an immaculate bride. Despite the collapse of the Wales' union – a fairy tale with a tragic ending – the white wedding dress has lingering connotations of virginity, even today in increasingly secular British society and related Commonwealth states.<sup>27</sup>

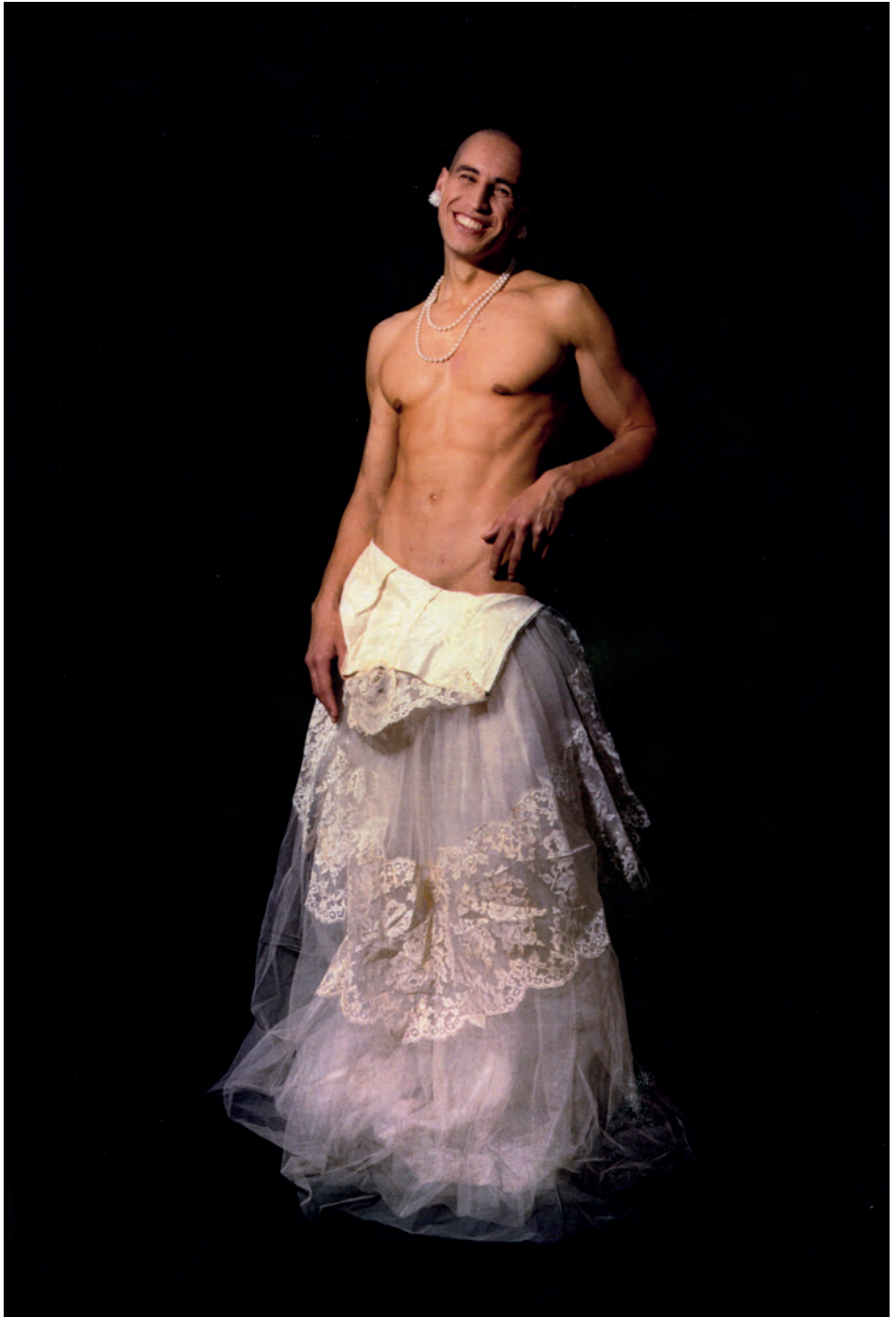
### **Why this particular image as the basis for *Unbound* (the exhibition)?**

Formally, the work is striking due to Webster's use of light (James' glowing body and iridescent, unfastened wedding gown), juxtaposed against an infinite, glossy, dark background. This play on black and white may be related to binaries – good and bad, male and female – and yet the image performs a blurring of these fixed positions; it questions our expectation of how we should act and move in the world. It allows a space for the rupture of societal conventions; a liberation of the self.

Furthermore, revisiting Webster's exploration of sexualities in the wider *Black Carnival* series is important as, today, discussions around sex remain heavily framed by the male gaze. Centering female desire, for example, in contemporary Western culture, a seemingly liberal context where anything goes, is vital, as women's perceived sexual (emotional, physical, intellectual and economic) liberation continues to be underpinned by constricted, if not outright dangerous, conditions. This is not limited to women, as LGBTQIA+ – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual – people continue to experience discrimination and inequality. Yet they are collaborators too, in dialogues for change. The Me Too movement<sup>28</sup> (founded in 2006) galvanised global communities in 2017 to address and transform sexual violence narratives with the powerful #metoo viral hashtag. This timed with the allegations of sexual harassment against Harvey Weinstein<sup>29</sup> in late 2017 that heightened the visibility of sexual violence against women and an intolerance for the repetition of this kind of behaviour by a powerful man – by any perpetrator. The women who have accused Weinstein have risen up like David to Goliath and felled him in the court of public opinion<sup>30</sup>. We are again in a time fear and of bravery. To act in the face of subjection is to emancipate oneself from the bonds of patriarchy.

In another quarter, the 2017 Netflix TV series, *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On*,<sup>31</sup> examines the impact of technology, especially our accessibility to porn, and the ways that this is rewiring our experiences of intimate relationships. Screenplay writer, director, producer and author of adult entertainment (in which the seeking of female pleasure is prioritised), Erika Lust,<sup>32</sup> states in one episode, "We can't ignore that porn today is sex education." Lust's stance on producing porn that centres on female pleasure echoes Webster's position that the figures in *Black Carnival* retain sovereignty over their bodies, and the continuing need to reframe how we see love, and sex, expressed in art and popular culture, as well as in life for everyone.







## CONCLUSION: WHAT LINKS THESE TWO IMAGES TOGETHER?

Elizabeth Wilson argues: "Dress is the cultural metaphor for the body, it is the material with which we 'write' or draw; a representation of the body into our cultural context."<sup>33</sup> Dress transcends time in its potential to speak of its cultural context because of its close relationship to the body, and with fashion which in itself is of the 'now' or cultural present. Today, we have the The Pussy Hat Project™, a social movement focused on solidarity, women's rights and social activism;<sup>34</sup> and the decision to wear black at the 2018 Oscars in support of #MeToo<sup>35</sup> as two recent examples of the power of dress to define the cultural moment.

While Rogers and Webster are geographically and historically of different places and different times, their practice is linked by an interest in identity, social justice and agency, expressed through the use of a sartorial metaphor. In depicting the trappings of pageant culture and Victorian fashion, Rogers simultaneously inscribes and critiques women's roles in early-twentieth-century Western society. At the same time, Webster's use of the white wedding dress on a male body celebrates and draws attention to societal tensions between the LGBT community and the upholders of so-called social norms, embodied in the metaphor of the white wedding which symbolises a heteronormative relationship and traditional family life. The performative dimension of both images highlights the social construction of gender and draws attention to the fluidity of identity.

The authors wish to thank Christine Webster for permission to use *Black Carnival #48*, Meg Brasell-Jones for image preparation and Otago Polytechnic for research funding in support of *Unbound* (the exhibition) and symposium.

**Victoria Bell's** art is concerned with postcolonial theory, cultural tourism, feminism and animal ethics. Known for her soft sculpture works, her practice is founded on a textile sensibility which draws on both fine art and craft histories. Bell has a B.Des. from Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology and an MFA from Otago Polytechnic. She is also an arts educator and has taught at the Dunedin School of Art since 2007.

**Natalie Smith** holds a PhD in art history and theory; her primary area of research interest is the art/fashion nexus, fashion design history and theory, and New Zealand visual culture. Recent work includes the co-curated exhibition (with Lucy Hammonds) "When Dreams Turn to Gold: The Benson & Hedges and Fashion Design Awards 1964-1998," Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin, 18 March – 25 June 2017. She is a teaching fellow in the Department of Sociology, Gender and Social Work at the University of Otago.

1 Artists selected through a peer review process for *Unbound* (the exhibition): Margo Barton, Anita De Soto, Edwards + Johann, Steve Lovett, Michelle Mayn, Dylan McCutcheon-Peat and Simon Swale, Victoria McIntosh, Marie Strauss and Susan Videler. *Unbound* was exhibited at the Dunedin School of Art Gallery at the DSA, Otago Polytechnic, 21 September – 18 October 2018, and was an Otago Polytechnic Research Contestable Fund 2017-2018 Approved Project.

2 See <https://mch.govt.nz/suffrage-125>.

3 New Zealand women gained the right to vote in 1893, but it was not until 1919 that they were able to stand for parliament. See <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/elizabeth-mccombs-elected-as-nzs-first-woman-mp>.

4 "Curatorial Research: Telling Women's Stories for Suffrage 125," a workshop hosted by Toitu Otago Settlers Museum, Dunedin, and organised by National Services Te Paerangi, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 20 June 2017.

5 While the suffragists were peaceful campaigners, the suffragettes were militant, direct-action campaigners who emerged after progress had stalled. See "What is the Difference between the Suffragists and the Suffragettes," *British Library*, 6 February 2018, <https://www.bl.uk/votes-for-women/articles/suffragists-and-suffragettes>.

6 Alice Sheppard, *Cartooning for Suffrage* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 99, 106.

7 See Lisa Schlanser Kolosek, *The Invention of Chic: Thérèse Bonney and the Paris Moderne* (New York: Thames & Hudson in association with Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, 2002).

- 8 Sheppard, *Cartooning for Suffrage*, 99.
- 9 Ibid., 106.
- 10 Ibid., 106-7.
- 11 Ibid., 119.
- 12 Ibid., 110-111.
- 13 See <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/origin-story-wonder-woman-180952710>.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 See "Feminist Dress Reform," in *The Rise of Fashion: A Reader*, ed. Daniel Leonhard Purdy (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 109-116; and Patricia A Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920: Politics, Health, and Art* (Kent, OH: The Kent State Univ. Press, 2003).
- 17 See Anne Kirker, "Recurring Undercurrents," 2010, <http://www.christinewebster.co.uk/texts/text13.html>.
- 18 *Black Carnival* has been shown in New Zealand and internationally including Australia and Scotland. See <http://www.christinewebster.co.uk/texts/cv2.html>.
- 19 See [http://www.pridenz.com/historical\\_events\\_individual\\_events.html](http://www.pridenz.com/historical_events_individual_events.html) for a history of Pride events in New Zealand, 1933-2018.
- 20 See: Jenny Harper, "Art is Not Above the Law," *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue*, 14 (2011), <http://www.junctures.org/index.php/junctures/article/view/211/281>.
- 21 Eve Van Grafhorst, b. 1982 Australia, d. 1993 New Zealand.
- 22 See: <http://www.thisisinsider.com/photo-princess-diana-shaking-hand-aids-patient-1987-2017-8>.
- 23 See Harper, "Art is Not Above the Law."
- 24 See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, eds Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), 833-44, [http://www.composingdigitalmedia.org/fl5\\_mca/mca\\_reads/mulvey.pdf](http://www.composingdigitalmedia.org/fl5_mca/mca_reads/mulvey.pdf).
- 25 See Harper, "Art is Not Above the Law."
- 26 The wearing of a pearl necklace by James in *Black Carnival #48* may be read as a double-coded action: pearls are both a sign of class and timeless elegance and "a pearl necklace" is a slang term for a sex act in which a man ejaculates semen on or near the neck, chest of breasts of another person. See <http://www.yourdictionary.com/pearl-necklace>.
- 27 Edwina Ehrman, *The Wedding Dress: 300 Years of Bridal Fashions* (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2011).
- 28 See <https://metoomvmt.org>.
- 29 See <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/05/us/harvey-weinstein-harassment-allegations.html>.
- 30 See <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/may/25/harvey-weinstein-surrenders-over-sexual-misconduct-charges>.
- 31 *Hot Girls Wanted: Turned On*, dir. Jill Bauer and Ronna Gradus (Two to Tangle Productions, 2017).
- 32 Born in 1977 in Stockholm, Sweden, Erika Lust (born Erika Hallqvist) studied human rights and feminism at the University of Lund, graduating with a degree in political science. See [https://www.imdb.com/name/nm2848796/bio?ref\\_=nm\\_ov\\_bio\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm2848796/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm).
- 33 Elizabeth Wilson, "Fashion and the Postmodern Body", in *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader*, eds Julie Ash and Elizabeth Wilson (London: HarperCollins, 1992), 6.
- 34 See <https://www.pussyhatproject.com>.
- 35 See <https://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/why-wearing-black-oscars-2018-12116680>.

## “NINETY”

Victoria Stevens

my grandmother was a seamstress

my mother was a seamstress

I am a seamstress

*Ninety* is an installation of 90 individual textile works which are predominantly hand-stitched. They represent each year my mother lived without her mother. I produced this body of work for my Master of Fine Arts degree, which I completed in 2017. The pieces are constructed from recycled clothing and utilise various textile processes including shibori, immersion and hand-dyeing, solar printing, appliqué and a variety of stitch and embroidery methods. The works are constructed from cotton, silk, wool and lace, with occasional unavoidable additions of synthetic fibres.

*Ninety* is my approach to negotiating and recording the construction of my identity as an individual living in contemporary New Zealand. New Zealand is a country of migratory arrivals, people who derive their sense of identity, their tribal roots, from different pathways – the tangata whenua waka migrations, Canterbury's 'first four ships,' postwar immigrant ships. As a Pakeha, I felt culturally ambiguous, with no identifiable 'marks' with which to name myself.<sup>1</sup>

*Ninety* is my journey toward identifying my tribe – seamstresses – and the power of inherited memory. *Ninety* is a show about layers. Layers of fabric, layers of storytelling, layers of pathos. At first look, it is an eclectic blue assortment of a young child's garments and toys. But, the more you look, the more you see, the more you look and begin to appreciate the power in the multiple representations.

In this digital age, the revival of interest in the handmade – slow, mindful, contemplative and labour-intensive<sup>2</sup> – encourages debate about the second-class status of handwork in relationship to the fine arts.<sup>3</sup> My works apply traditional domestic skills, interpreting them in new ways to challenge accepted notions of what textiles can or should depict. Each piece is representational; while each stands alone to tell its own story, they come together as a collection to tell a bigger story.

Femme artist Miriam Shapiro explains that

Women have always collected things and saved and recycled them because leftovers yielded nourishment in new forms. The decorative functional objects women made often spoke in a secret language, bore a covert imagery. When we read these images in needlework, in paintings, in quilts, rugs and scrapbooks, we sometimes find a cry for help, sometimes an allusion to a secret political alignment, sometimes a moving symbol about the relationship between men and women.<sup>4</sup>





Figure 1. Victoria Stevens, *I Love You Doll*.  
Photograph: Victoria Stevens.

The series is cohesive, grounded in a palette of blue, which references the traditional practice of 'blueing' domestic laundry to make it appear new and fresh, defying the passing of time. The blue dye, applied uniquely to each piece, is a metaphor for how experiences strike a person, randomly and unexpected, creating a massive emotional catalogue and constructing personal identity. My experiments with these textiles, changing their shape and their colour, reflect my belief that we are neither static as persons nor bound by our genetics. Every individual carries within them convoluted experiences, stories and backgrounds. How we elect to live and respond to our given circumstances is a question that makes an essential link to my work.

My inspiration is personal. Last century – 1925 in Central Otago, to be precise – my seamstress grandmother died in childbirth. She left a daughter; aged three – my mother; who lived until the age of 93 – and two siblings, aged two and one. I am the third generation of family seamstresses, skilled with fabric and thread. Needlework is the vehicle through which I chose to express myself artistically and, in *Ninety*, merge my personal history with elements of New Zealand's social history. These 90 pieces are a compelling, multi-layered portrait of the women who have influenced me – weaving fabrics old and new, stitching the threads of poems and the poets who wrote them, lacing images and ideas, history, dreams and destinies, humour and poignancy.

Sewing represented the home, women's conventional role of caring for the family, and was associated with concepts of frugality, obedience, domesticity, even sexual morality. Although political inequality meant a woman's silence on these issues could be falsely claimed as agreement, it is woefully accurate that disadvantaged people will work for nothing in order to survive. While stitching provided a refuge for traditional ideas about women before an age of dramatic change, it is extraordinary that within three generations a core domestic skill has all but vanished.<sup>5</sup>

Against the tide of the times, I like stitching by hand as it allows the sewer to become more contemplative and mindful. Textiles bring an emotional warmth, as I am directly involved with the making of clothing. This sense is heightened if they are constructed from repurposed garments, in which it is possible to feel the presence of the people who wore or used them previously. I am inevitably reminded of where clothing comes from, which produces a respect for authenticity and my heritage. Even the tiniest scraps pieced together can become a metaphor for a life lived, through which a social history can be recorded.

Artists using textile skills often have to negotiate ideas that are entrenched in the past, concepts that are involved in the 'gentle arts'; yet by using economically redundant technologies they are able to produce contemporary objects. My dyeing, printing, stitching on the surface of the clothing has brought a tactile awareness not found in some other art forms, and has enabled me to communicate a unique set of sentiments. The over dyeing of preused clothing has

produced a dissonance between the expected and the actual outcome. Blue is the colour of introspection, of the individual looking inward to their own resources. Because dyeing permeates the fabric rather than obliterates what is already there, this process is fundamentally different from overpainting, and the unpredictability of the outcome is part of the process. Experimenting with reactive textile dyes, in particular Japanese Black (which curiously produces the colour blue), the works shifted in character from being solely garments to garments as canvases. This transformation significantly changed their potential reading and also the way in which the multiple works would impact the audience as an experience.

While I relaxed into treating the dresses as canvases rather than literal constructs, I was simultaneously looking at other cultures and their chosen methods of restoring, saving and resurrecting textiles for further wear and for subsequent generations to cherish. I have had a long fascination with indigo dyeing techniques,<sup>6</sup> and am a follower of Japanese textile practices in terms of repairing and recycling everything, including rags and patches (boro), with generational additions and the cultural legacy ensured by a people valuing their past. While I am not Japanese, I am aware that there is a universal connection within the community of women stitchers which crosses geographical and cultural borders regardless of personal traditions.



Figure 2. Victoria Stevens, *Ninety* exhibition, March 2017, Otago Polytechnic Dunedin School of Art (detail). Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

I see the continuation of domestic traditions such as stitching as an important archival method of celebrating and honouring previous generations, a visual link which is open to viewer interpretation. My practice reflects a repertoire of unfinished but tenuously connected relationships. Whatever the age at which a child is orphaned, the loss of what we knew and what we could have known is palpable. As tattoos are drawn on skin, my stories are written on and within clothing for the present and next generations to read. The connections which I have tried to form with my grandmother through my practice are my attempt to see backwards, to negotiate a way to access her knowledge. To know her and love her.

You can't connect the dots looking forward, you can only connect them looking back. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect to your future. You have to trust in something: your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever; because believing that the dots will connect down the road, will give you confidence to follow your heart, even when it leads you off the well worn path. That will make all the difference.<sup>7</sup>

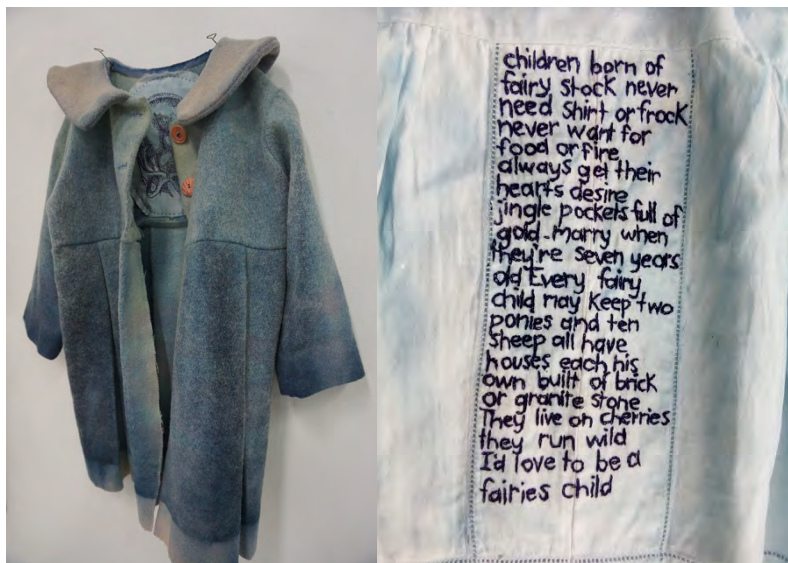


Figure 3. Victoria Stevens, *Warmly Yours*. Photograph: Victoria Stevens.

Figure 4. Victoria Stevens, *I'd Love to be a Fairy's Child* (detail). Photograph: Victoria Stevens.

**Victoria Stevens** is an artist who lives and works in Central Otago. Her current practice is purposefully based around the use of textiles as clothing. She is a graduate of the Dunedin School of Art, receiving a Bachelor of Visual Arts in 2012, a Bachelor of Visual Arts Honours 1st class in 2014 and a Master of Fine Arts with Distinction in 2017. Her *Ninety* exhibition was an extension of her studies towards her Master of Fine Arts.

- 1 See Julian Baggini, *The Ego Trick: In Search of Self* (London: Granta Books, 2011).
- 2 See Claire Wellesley-Smith, *Slow Stitch: Mindful and Contemplative Textile Art* (London: Batsford, 2015).
- 3 See Rosemary McLeod, *Thrifty to Fantasy: Home Textile Crafts of the 1930s-1950s* (Auckland: HarperCollins, 2005).
- 4 Miriam Schapiro and Melissa Meyer, "Waste Not, Want Not: An Inquiry into What Women Saved and Assembled – Femmage," *artcritical*, 24 June 2015, <http://www.artcritical.com/2015/06/24/femme-by-miriam-schapiro-and-melissa-meyer>: "Femme: (feminine + collage) composition of paint, fabric, and other materials with deliberate reference to feminine imagery or icons," Thalia Gouma-Peterson, *Miriam Schapiro: Shaping The Fragments of Art and Life* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999).
- 5 See R Parker, *The Subversive Stitch, Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (New York: The Women's Press, 2006).
- 6 See Catherine Legrand, *Indigo: The Colour that Changed the World* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013).
- 7 Steve Jobs, Stanford University Commencement Address, 2005. See <http://newentrepreneursfoundation.com/steve-jobs-stanford-commencement-speech>.

## “BECAUSE I AM A GIRL, I MUST STUDY”

Arati Kushwaha

“A father asks his daughter:

Study? Why should you study?

I have sons aplenty who can study.”

Kamla Bhasin<sup>1</sup>

‘Because I am a Girl, I Must Study’ is a remarkable poem on paper. I have heard this poem by Kamla Bhasin (b.1946), an Indian developmental feminist activist, poet, author and social scientist, read in Hindi and it was even more impactful. Her work focuses on gender equity and education and is incredibly inspiring. In the text, Bhasin describes why gender equity and girls’ education is vital in Indian society. In particular, as far as education is concerned, girls in rural areas are especially deprived and female enrolment in schools is very low, due to the ignorance of parents and societal norms. In addition, gender discrimination is common in rural districts, where there are high mortality rates for girl children.

*Slow Decay* (2017) is a project which seeks to contribute to a vibrant conversation about challenging traditional cultural views (relating to ideas, social behaviour, politics) of the girl child in India, as well as more general feminist discussions. Taken as a whole, this study articulates the poor treatment and attitude towards the girl child in Indian society, especially in the form of gender inequity and the struggle for girls to find acceptance and a place in a hierarchical society which is often structured not in terms of affection, but by rigid social norms, parental ignorance and traditional values. My work explores the themes of identity, gender, sexuality, femininity and selective self-induced abortion. I want to advocate for gender equality because the current situation is unfair and unacceptable. I ask the question: Why are gender equity and girl’s education so vital for Indian society?

Indian society is largely composed of hierarchical systems within families and communities. These hierarchies can be broken down into age, sex, ordinal position, kinship relationships (within families), as well as caste, lineage, wealth, occupation and relationship to the ruling group within the community. From birth, girls are automatically entitled to less; from playtime to food to education, girls can always expect to be entitled to less than their brothers. Girls also have less access to family income and assets. India is a patriarchal society; men are generally in control of the distribution of family resources. Women are considered to be ‘worthless’ by their husbands if they are not ‘able’ to produce a male child, and often face considerable abuse if this is the case.

*Slow Decay* deals with the theme of gender discrimination, executed by means of soft constructions, video, waxwork and found objects; it seeks to represent diverse and critical ideas and raise public awareness of the issues examined. My inspiration derives from old traditions. I have always been fascinated by soft sculpture, not only from a technical perspective, but also because it often generates interaction between the concepts of hard and soft. I also exploit the softness of materials to translate the emotions and sensitivities generated by social issues.

*Monster* (2017) is a three-dimensional sculpture and hybrid being – a combination of human and animal, the classical

water monster Hydra and the Hindu Goddess Durga.<sup>2</sup> Hybrids have become a focus for much recent art. My engagement with hybrids has opened up a new perspective on gender discrimination, which has parallels in human society. *Monster* is an expression of the psychic state of Indian society, the apathy shown toward the girl child who is often considered a liability or burden from her birth. *Monster* represents the awkward position of the girl child in society, one who cannot demand equal rights from her father, brother, husband or son. More specifically, it sends a broader social message about the disparity between male and female.



Figure 1. Arati Kushwaha, *Monster*, 2017, steel, chicken wire, dacron, Kalamkari fabric, papier-mâché. Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

In her 2010 book *Goddess Durga and Sacred Female Power*,<sup>3</sup> Laura Amazzone explores how, in many human societies, an empowered model of the divine and fearless female is absent. Traditional depictions of Durga show a warrior woman with eight hands. Her sacred female power reflects a duality: on the one hand, she is fertile and warm-hearted; on the other hand, she is aggressive, a fearless destroyer who offers an alternative model of female potential and empowerment and a willingness to unleash her anger against wrongdoing, using violence to achieve liberation.

Monsters figure in the mythology of many cultures. Inspired by the ancient Greek myth in my choice of form and pattern, I chose the water monster Hydra, a legendary creature in the form of a monstrous water snake. Thus, I compare the Indian girl child to (a) *Monster*.

The notion of the monstrous-feminine is the focus of feminist theorist and cultural critic Barbara Creed (b.1943). In her book *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*,<sup>4</sup> she explores the importance of gender in the





Figure 2. Arati Kushwaha, *Monster*, 2017, steel, chicken wire, dacron, Kalamkari fabric, papier-mâché. Photograph: Pam McKinlay.



Figure 3. Arati Kushwaha, *Monster*, 2017, steel, chicken wire, dacron, Kalamkari fabric, papier-mâché. Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

construction of woman's 'monstrosity.' Creed discusses how, historically, in all human societies women's sexuality has been portrayed as something scary, weird, threatening and terrifyingly abject, more monster than human. I believe that artists have a responsibility to articulate their outrage at such a caricature. *Monster* (2017) declares my reaction to the experience of inequality that flow from such constructions.

A linguistically based sculpture, *Education and the Girl* (2017) represents the notion of border; it is an expression of deprivation, of repressed female sexuality. It is the expression of Third World personhood. In India, girls are exposed to traditional customs and rules and household activities by parents and society, and are caught in the cycle of early marriage, between the ages of five and 12 years. The girl child has to confront a border. This sculpture, made of paraffin wax moulded into small pink-and-red alphabet candles, represents her social context, with a strong feminist message attached. Red is the colour associated with anger, warning or death, particularly because of its association with blood. An engagement with language and transformation of materials is the chief rationale behind the sculpture.

Ten feet long, this 'border' spells out 12 statements which carry a powerful political message:

Education and the Girl  
Custom and the Girl  
Bias and the Girl  
Repression and the Girl  
Gap and the Girl  
Disparity and the Girl  
Protocol and the Girl  
Guilt and the Girl  
Shame and the Girl  
Mortality and the Girl  
Deprivation and the Girl  
Treatment and the Girl



Figure 4. Arati Kushwaha, *Education and the Girl*, 2017, paraffin wax and wooden plank.  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

*Education and the Girl* embodies a potential burning process – burning would destroy the unseen border:

My sculpture *Utero* (2017) derives its title from a Latin word meaning womb. It is inspired by Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos's work *The Bride*,<sup>5</sup> an enormous construction representing a magnificent chandelier consisting of thousands of tiny tampons. Vasconcelos places her focus on the female genitals and the beauty of menstruation and repressed feminine sexuality.

Similarly, *Utero* playfully simulates a chandelier made out of pre-existing objects, using metal coat-hangers to expose issues around the girl child. *Utero* depicts the female reproductive system to highlight sex-selective self-induced abortion, a major social issue in India. A self-induced abortion (or self-induced miscarriage) is often performed by the pregnant woman herself or with the help of non-medical assistants. In India, women frequently attempt to remove the fetus with a metal coat-hanger inserted into the uterus through the cervix. *Utero* transforms these coat-hangers into a uterus using a bending technique, thereby placing the focus of the work on the female body.

*Utero*, constructed using more than 500 galvanised metal coat-hangers, brown pigment, glue, and cinnamon powder,

is an appropriation and manipulation of pre-existing, common objects. As commonly practised in India, consuming fine cinnamon powder stimulates the uterus and procures abortion: take two tablespoons and repeat this dose daily until the abortion occurs. The found objects used here are intended to generate questions about female social dilemmas, the interpretative role of the artist and the purpose of art in its social context.

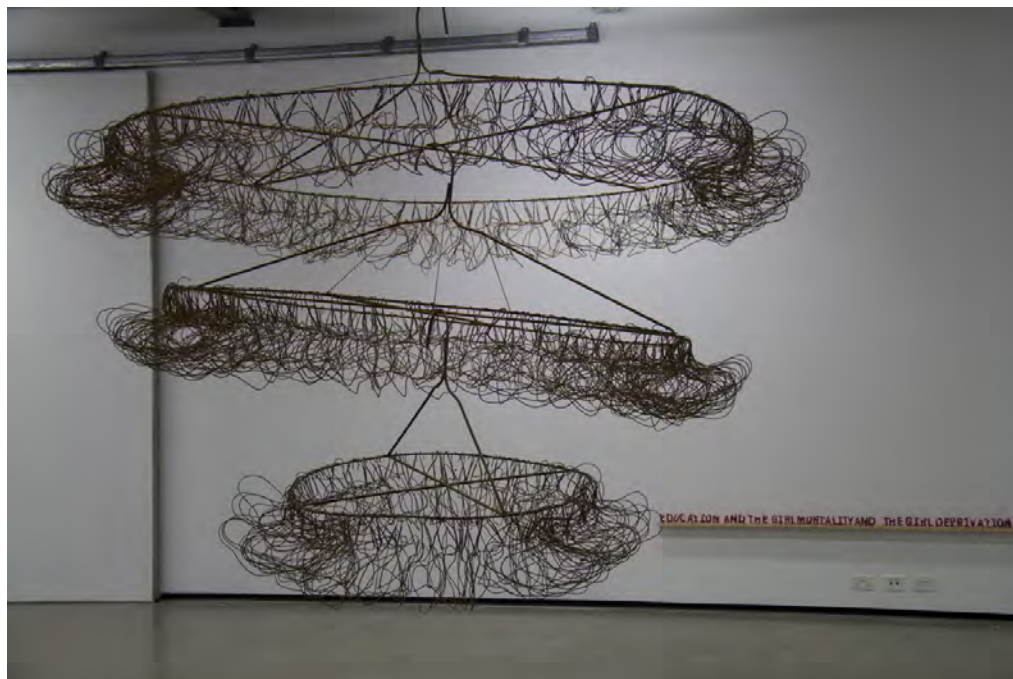


Figure 5. Arati Kushwaha, *Utero*, 2017, metal coat-hangers, brown colouring, glue, cinnamon powder. Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

My work *Vulnero* (2017) takes its name from a latin term meaning damage. A colour video installation of 15:41 minutes duration, without a soundtrack, *Vulnero* portrays the silence of the girl child whose voice is not heard. Silent and non-verbal, the piece captures the brutal treatment and silent destruction of the girl child in Indian society. Throughout the making of the work, I asked why gender equity and girls' education are so important. The white gauze rolls, woven material and breathable fabrics I utilised in the video can be used to protect an injured part of the body. The colour red is associated with blood, a vital body fluid. The oscillation between white and red expresses the action of breathing in and out.

Through my *Slow Decay* project, I have sought to interpret why gender equity and girls' education are so important in the Indian context. The stories and allusions portrayed in my work force the viewer to ask questions about the current situation. Kamla Bhasin's poem – interrogating a social context in which girls' education is seen to be pointless because they are considered secondary in terms of familial priorities, and their traditional roles are fixed – provided me with a convenient starting point.

In aesthetic terms, *Slow Decay* was intended to explore new ways in which soft constructions, found objects, video, and wax could be employed to explore social issues in a way that would have an impact on the viewer. My use of found objects and my video work attempt to generate questions about female social dilemmas, the interpretative role of the artist and the purpose of art in a particular social context. Indeed, the ultimate aim of my work is to spread awareness of issues of gender equity through my art practice.



**Arati Kushwaha** completed a Master of Visual Art in 2018 at the Dunedin School of Art. Arati's deepest commitment and greatest challenge is to raise awareness about discrimination against the girl child in the Indian context through sculptural installations.

- 1 Kamla Bhasin, *Voices from the Frontlines*. April 26, 2012. <http://www.peacexpeace.org/2012/04/because-i-am-a-girl-i-must-study/>.
- 2 Durga is the fierce manifestation of the protective mother goddess, willing to unleash her anger against wrongdoing, using violence to achieve liberation and destruction to empower creation...
- 3 Laura Amazzone, *Goddess Durga and Sacred Female Power* (Lanham, Boulder; New York, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: Hamilton Books, 2010).
- 4 Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).
- 5 Crispin Sartwell, "Beauty and Reconciliation in the Art of Joana Vasconcelos," *Joana Vasconcelos: Material World*, 2015, [http://joanavasconcelos.com/multimedia/bibliografia/2015\\_MaterialWorld\\_CSartwell\\_EN.pdf](http://joanavasconcelos.com/multimedia/bibliografia/2015_MaterialWorld_CSartwell_EN.pdf)

## WEARING THE WOUND

Susan Videler



Figure 1. Susan Videler, *Wearing the Wound* exhibition, Dunedin School of Art Gallery, 2018 (detail). Photograph: Jodie Gibson.

After writing, rewriting and coalescing this work with crafting over a period of months and years, the final trial in the educational ritual of the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) is staging one's own exhibition, with a side dish of documentation.

How to articulate all this? How to engage the curiosity of those who have no knowledge of your field, crop, stalk or kernel of interest? It is advisable to keep in mind this last hurdle while you are making and researching, and my supervisors kept me on point with this. At first, I had an interest in tactility and skin that was analytical and somewhat detached. As my work progressed, a distinctly feminine undercurrent developed that encompassed skin, wounding and the protective devices employed. A less clinical and more ritualistic, intimate space would be required to examine these relationships.

Because of its three dimensionality, size and relationship to the body, jewellery has always presented a display conundrum. Conventional jewellery – by which I mean gemstones housed in precious metals – has traditionally been a way to secure, display and pass down wealth. Affluence, taste and ownership have driven the mining, faceting and setting of gems and the mining of metals for centuries. The prosperous often wish to make their position in

the pecking order clear; and adornment with jewellery has long been one of the codes employed to demonstrate this. There is then the tension between display and security, whether on the body, in a safe or behind a glass case.

Contemporary jewellery or art jewellery – there are various names to describe the practice I am engaged in – uses an unlimited palette of materials to deliver a concept. The result may lie inside, on or nearby the body; it does not have to be worn to be considered jewellery. New Zealander Lisa Walker relies heavily on her glue gun, and her workshop shelves are littered with wood, plastics, fibres, fabrics, glitter and toys. I saw this first hand when a group of us from the Otago Polytechnic jewellery department visited her home prior to heading to Auckland for the annual *CLINKProject*. In another part of her Wellington house/workshop, her partner Karl Fritsch works among desktops covered in uncut gemstones, a haul of ancient rings sent to him by a friend, yet-to-be-completed gold and silver rings, castings and moulds, with various rings and valued trinkets dispersed on shelving around the walls. Both practitioners have distinct methods and both are internationally renowned jewellers.

Having worked with gemstones and precious metals prior to starting my MFA, I was excited by the challenge of new techniques that would need to be acquired for working with alternative materials: skin (rawhide), beef bone, antler, glass, fabrics (silk) and wood (ebony). Having developed a real addiction to working with silver, I included it, alongside gold and gold leaf, enjoying the unexpected relationships that developed between materials. Tactility became a focus in both writing and making; initially working with skin, stretching and wrapping it, I investigated touch within the sensory hierarchy. (I discuss this in my *Scope* #13 essay.)<sup>1</sup>

Researching wounding and talismans used as protection, particularly during the medieval period, it became clear that tactility was inherent in the talisman. Not only in their construction, but in the sensation and assurance provided by having these items worn against the body.

These were dark days of religious persecution. Growing populations put pressure on economies, science and religion fought a battle behind the scenes, and out of this wrangling for control scapegoats emerged. Initially, the Jews and Muslims were driven out of Europe or killed. Then the spotlight focussed on the group of individuals who controlled matchmaking, healing, abortions and birthing – women. Effectively, we controlled population growth and this threatened both church and state. With the help of the newly devised printing press, propaganda was distributed by the church damning people, predominantly women, as witches. The *Malleus Maleficarum* (The Witches' Hammer), written by two Jesuit priests, became a handbook for the secular courts. "Women were accused primarily by men, tried by male juries, examined by male searchers, sentenced by male judges, tortured by male jailers, burned to death by male executioners."<sup>2</sup>

In these times the clergy, royalty and peasants wore talismans wrapped or hung about the body, secreted in clothing or worn as rings. They were as ubiquitous and functional to them as our cellphones are to us. They were a conduit to other realms, beliefs, gods, the deceased and the living. The talisman could be a piece of writing, an animal or human part, a stone or gem, plants, bones, iron or precious metals. Intricately worked with astrological detail or alchemical lore, incorporating the finest materials or hastily written words, a mix of biblical and pagan, wrapped to an arm or leg with silk. The belief engendered was the real locus of power.

In *Wearing the Wound*, I wished to create a space that generated an atmosphere representing evidence of an intimate feminine environment, a sense of ritual, mystery and loss. The bedroom was an obvious choice, a private space that could be read as distinctly feminine, furnished with pieces that announced ritual by their presence – a dressing table with a large mirror; a single bed, two chairs, a wardrobe and a bookshelf. It was necessary to bind these elements, and colour became the tool for this – matt black. It was an obvious colour choice, given the emphasis in my writing on the witch hunts, torture and death. Black speaks also of the shadow self, the unseen and magic, invoking the need for talismanic protection rather than adornment, an important point of difference.



Figure 2. Susan Videler, *Wearing the Wound* exhibition, Dunedin School of Art Gallery, 2018 (detail). Photograph: Jodie Gibson.

After considering other options, I chose the Dunedin School of Art Gallery for my exhibition, a neutral space that I could occupy and make my own. At first the amount of white expanse was daunting, but a darkened room and the use of spotlighting reduced visible space to selected units within the whole, each with its own narrative. The matt black was stark in this white space and even the glow of the spotlight did not settle the furniture into belonging, so I trialled brushing the bookshelf with graphite powder. Immediately, the surfaces changed and reflected the light instead of absorbing it, and this subtle patina gave a sense of depth to the furniture.

As I have noted, with jewellery the issue of tactility can be fraught. Against a desire to have the work touched and examined runs an equal desire to have it protected from damage or moved out of its narrative context within the exhibition. I witnessed people picking up and holding or examining the work and this was pleasing – presumably curiosity overcoming reservations about display.

Although most of my pieces were designed to sit around the neck, an ebony and antler flame ring and three antler brooches sat on or in the drawers of the dressing table. *Panoptes' Wand*, an antler and sterling silver wand with 100 eyes cut into the silver (referencing Panoptes the sleepless, all-seeing Greek giant with his 100 eyes), lay almost secreted in a bottom drawer. A place of reflection both literally and figuratively, the dressing table has, like our bodies, hidden compartments and surfaces for display. Two neckpieces on the wall opposite the dressing table mirror were spotlit, ensuring that their reflections could be seen as soon as one entered the gallery. Glass and mirrors have featured in both my BFA and MFA shows, and this initial glimpse of work in the mirror was an acknowledgment of this. One neckpiece, *Breastplate for the Heart*, an asymmetric sheath of antler slices bound together with fine silver wire, was designed to cover chest and heart. The second was a rosary of sorts – a stag antler rose carved with a Christian cross on one side and the Egyptian ankh on the other, suspended on a chain of antler rings and knotted skin, the hollows in the rings occupying the spaces where the missing rosary beads would be.

The single bed, with its grey sheets pulled aside as if someone had just emerged, had a sterling silver capsule hanging from one post. This was a protective measure for sleep. Sterling silver invokes the moon and inside the capsule was a piece of rawhide tattooed with an ancient Wiccan symbol of the Triple Moon, correlating three moon phases – waxing, full and waning – with the three phases of a woman's life – youthful promise, womanly power and the wisdom of the crone. On the bedsheets lay a glass vial containing deer velvet stoppered with antler; sterling silver and raw silk, the contents alluding to reproduction and fertility.

The bookshelves housed a collection of four glass talismans filled and stoppered with the full range of my materials. They were displayed as books are, ready to be chosen as required. Lying on the top of the shelves was a Spanish higa hand (protection against the evil eye) carved in ebony, attached to a three-dimensional sterling silver solar cross. This hung on a piece of black raw silk that was literally held together by two ebony hands that slide along the silk to provide the fit around the neck required. These are 'eye catching' items – in other words, designed to draw the evil eye away from the wearer and onto the talisman itself.



Figure 3. Susan Videler, *Wearing the Wound* exhibition, Dunedin School of Art Gallery, 2018 (detail). Photograph: Jodie Gibson.

The human must protect himself or herself against the penetrating gaze of others. That requires covering oneself – even if, as in many cultures, this is done merely through symbolic ornaments or a specific inner attitude that regulates the act of looking. What we are dealing with is the archaic fear of the magical, possession taking the gaze of the other; a fear of a look that can rob one of something if one is not careful, and at the same time with that fear of being fascinated and blinded by what is seen, the desire for possession and incorporation.<sup>3</sup>

In the wardrobe, a black silk dress hung, and about its neck the *Chainmail Choker*, linked ovals of polished stag antler sealed with gold leaf, wrap and rustle protectively, like the warrior's form of protection, about the throat. A phallic antler was reduced to a series of circular, feminine links. Hanging in the darkness of the wardrobe were a pair of

fallow deer antlers. Dangerous on the beast, they still held an aura at once of damage and beauty, even hanging upside down. Some of us have hung these about our necks – the natural curve of the bone splays out – and around the hips and pelvis, oddly protective and heavy.

Hung on the wall, the final neckpiece, *Forget-me-Knot*, encapsulates all aspects of my talismanic language. Made of a lambskin rawhide I had prepared, it is knotted together and stretched over wax-covered sterling silver bells and glass magnifying domes, under which lie bone, antler and silver.

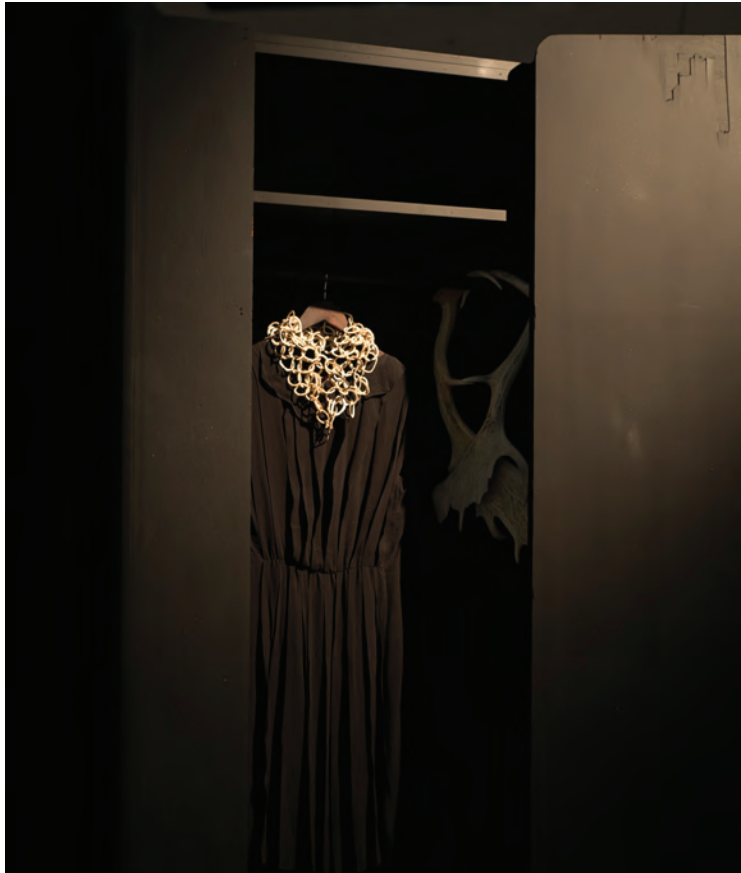


Figure 4. Susan Videler; *Wearing the Wound* exhibition, Dunedin School of Art Gallery, 2018 (detail). Photograph: Jodie Gibson.

The glass domes, the sound of the bells, the scent of beeswax and the knots formed an amalgam of the senses and of the techniques I worked on during my Masters. Since Mesopotamian times, knots have been used to control the forces that activate both men and nature. "During the witch-hunts, a frequent accusation was that certain women had the capacity to deliberately make men impotent. Many women put on trial by the Inquisition under suspicion of practicing magic admitted to having made ligatures at the request of other women, and even of men, so as to arouse love or to prevent a certain man or woman from having sexual relations with other people."<sup>14</sup> This talisman references pagan times, evoking reactions relating to my use of primal materials; it is a reminder of corporeal power, particularly involving the senses.



Figure 5. Susan Videler; *Forget-Me-Knot*, 2017, rawhide, sterling silver; nickel silver; glass, 400 x 300 mm. Photograph: Jodie Gibson.

Unconsciously, I had laid the furniture out in the form of a cross. Chairs faced each other; as did the wardrobe and bookshelf, with the bed in the centre. The upright lone male hero of the crucifix was replaced with an absent horizontal female, her empty bed the crux of the matter. I had been made aware during my research how pervasive the tale of the lone male hero has become, and how in these histories women are portrayed as negligent and unaware, at best. At worst, as enemies (mothers included) that must be destroyed. It was the crucifix that first alerted me to the reality of ancient symbolism and Christianity tangled within the talisman, a pagan symbol embellished with a tortured, dying man.

Even as I despised what has been done to women in the name of Christianity, I was unable to escape my own conditioning, resulting in the emergence of the cross, although black and subverted.

*Wearing the Wound* occupied the gallery space as I had hoped it would, echoing the dualities I have addressed in my dissertation: absence and presence, the hidden and the exposed, magic and science, male and female.

**Susan Videler** completed her Master's degree in 2018. She runs her practice from a jewellery workshop shared with three others and teaches a jewellery nightclass once a week at the Dunedin School of Art in New Zealand

1 Susan Vidler, "Wound and Talisman", *Scope: Art & Design*, 13, 2017, 131-136

2 Anne L. Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (San Francisco, CA: Pandora, 1994), 9.

3 Claudia Benthien, *Skin: On the Cultural Border between Self and the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 99.

4 SA Nashim, *The Book of Women's Love* (Abingdon, Oxon, and New York: Routledge, 2014), 61.

## FIRST DO NO HARM

Vivien Dwyer

### HOSPITAL CEILINGS

Hospital ceilings are not very interesting. I should know because I have spent rather a lot of time staring at them. There are little red lights on circular things and water sprinklers at intervals.

Occasionally there is a damaged panel just to liven things up.

Travelling in a moveable bed, there are doors and lifts and occasionally people talk to you but mostly you appear to be just an object that has to be moved from point A to point B and then parked until they decide to do something to you. Then you get parked again until they move you back to point A.

Point B can be scary. Specially if it is the ante-room to the operating theatre and you are all covered up with a warming blanket and wearing white compression socks with no toes and shorts that dome up at the sides and a gown that opens down the front. So you stare at the ceiling and what walls you can see and read some of the packages stacked high on all sides and try not to think but not fooling yourself for even a second. It looks like you have been abandoned in a storage room and each minute seems as long as an hour. You don't want them to come but you don't want them to stay away too long either. You're just petrified in both directions.

Then they come.

I wrote this after I was hospitalised for a breast cancer operation, and the events that led up to and continued after this operation became the motivating force behind this body of work.

The first iteration of this voyage began somewhat earlier when I began looking at the screen print as a medium in 2015, resulting in a rather unsuccessful series focusing on communication towers. This gave me a taste of how a basic print could be altered and enhanced with the addition of paper, string and paint. I was particularly drawn to the work of Willy Schut, with her use of atmospheric effects in a monochromatic field. Her stark foreground in the work *Wat Zeg Je* stood out very clearly to me as a beacon, a power in the landscape both figuratively and in reality.<sup>1</sup>

I was very much looking for this sort of power in my own work to emphasise the questions I was asking of the institution that gave me my treatments. However, I did not find the photographic transfer process used in screen printing to be conducive to my style of attack, and instead looked at doing a series of free-motion machine-stitching pieces along the lines of my final project, *Journeys*, in 2015, with enhancements using charcoal, pencil and crayons. I was leaning towards a landscape element, as this was something I felt I had not finished with.



I began with a number of sketches using photographs from my medical records, transforming them into landscapes. I stopped at this point and began to look into making a completely new start, as the medium did not fit with my ideas. I had been powerfully drawn to the work being done by Alicia Hall and asked her if she would teach me her method of screen printing, as I felt that this might well be what I was looking for. She spent a very enjoyable day showing me the basics of this process and, finally, I had my foundation for the new work. The book *Breakdown Printing* by Claire Benn and Leslie Morgan was my starting point, especially this passage which I took to heart:

We would exhort you to be willing to have a go, play and practice just for the sake of finding out what can happen. At the same time, you'll be producing cloth that's based on your experiments and samples, your subsequent observations, your modifications, your choices – truly your own, personal cloth. How then you use that cloth is up to you.<sup>2</sup>

The main attraction of this process for me is the immediacy of the result. I like to work in the moment, and with some alacrity, once I have decided what I am trying to achieve and have, over the years, favoured the monoprint over the set pattern of the screen print. In this new process, I was able to combine both, with the dried surface of the printing ink standing in for the photographic element and producing similar, but diminishing, details over the series as the surface gradually broke down.

Throughout this process I was also able to add to the screen again and again, with new dried patterns flooding over and intermingling with the old.



Figure 1. *Untitled*, early *First do no Harm* piece, 42x47cm, deconstructed screen print on cotton.  
Photograph: April Nunn

I experimented with a number of surface masks using paper, wool and various weights of thread to enhance the prints. These left their own traces on the screen, both before and once removed from the screen during the print process. I found that I could get one or maybe two prints with the surface masks in place and another two or three after the mask was removed. I did not clean up between prints as this would have interfered with the deconstruction of the screen. For this reason, I was careful about what colours were in my backgrounds so as to avoid too much of a muddy result. I found that using heavily thinned colours was preferable to using heavy and more solid colours on the whole, although this depended on the outcome I was after and any further processes that the print was to undergo.

The first large work I made was constructed using two prints from the same series, both cut in a similar way and then applied to a black background over a pin board. At this point, none of the pieces were ironed down, but all had fabric adhesive on their backs to aid in ironing them on later. Once the main parts were in place, I set about cutting and trimming them further; as well as adding more pieces to the mix. I carried this process on for several weeks, making occasional alterations until I was satisfied with the positioning of all the pieces. I then ironed the cloth just enough to allow the removal of the pins before taking it down and ironing the work fully. It then went back on the wall for further appraisal as I wanted to add a label to it, either sewn on or directly embroidered onto the background cloth. To this end, I made a series of machine-embroidered captions including my name and some random numerals from one of my medical scans.

It was at this point that I discovered that the fabric glue I was using on the back of the small pieces was not secure enough to hold the work together. To counteract the lifting in the work, I free-motion stitched all the edges down. This did not affect the look of the work, much to my relief. The free-motion effects were absorbed fully into the overall look, and I felt encouraged to use this method again for enhancement as well as for the stability of the works. I made several of these pieces, as my aim was to create a deconstructed view of a person undergoing treatment – but in such a way as to distort their skeleton into something that resembled a sort of medical remnant rather than a real person. The 'real' has been diminished so that only vestiges remain. The human has been replaced with fragments.



Figure 2. *Diagnostic One*, 105x132cm, deconstructed screen print on cotton. Photograph: April Nunn

In undertaking this project, I was influenced by the experiments in forensic science made at The Body Farm in Texas, where donated cadavers undergo experiments to see what effects insects, weather conditions and such like have on the body. This is done as an aid to the investigation of murder cases. These images have remained in my mind as a sort of gruesome but intriguing sediment that has inserted itself into my own works, even though they were not about corpses as such.

The work of women's health campaigner Sandra Coney has added an additional layer of imagery in my mind, in that the women involved in "the unfortunate experiment" at the National Women's Hospital in Auckland during the mid-twentieth century had no say in what was done to them and, in fact, most did not know that they were a part of an experiment at all.<sup>5</sup> This has always seemed to me to be the absolute worst thing that could ever happen to anybody. It is one thing to lose control of your body knowingly, but it is outrageous that you should be totally uninformed and have no say at all in that process.

I now began to think about how I was going to connect foreground to background. There were suggestions about making the background more clothing-oriented, but my one experiment with this approach on a smaller work had been a dismal failure, and I was reluctant to repeat that. I also considered extending the inner pieces themselves in a sort of shadow play across the ground, but this would, I felt, obscure and clutter up the main part of the work too much – although I considered trying this technique later with works that are less complex.

I had been experimenting with embroidered lines on some of the smaller works, mostly in red, and revisited this idea, too, but decided that the red was not bold enough for the bigger works. However, I did like the idea of a contrast between the very organic main section and the stark grid over the top. This was something I felt would help to bring the work together, so I experimented with positioning masking tape until I felt the balance was right and, using just a plain running stitch in thick, white cotton, made one horizontal and one vertical line over the whole surface. This tied the organic body to the inorganic ground, rather like an insect pinned helplessly inside a display case.

Some of the individual prints I have made are stand-alone works that I have left unembellished. However, there was a second group of prints that I brought into alignment with my ponderings on institutional medical issues using surface embroidery and selective cutting and trimming. The embroidery works really well when kept simple. A few basic stitches are far more effective than more complex stitching. The stitches used in these pieces are chain, running and herringbone, with a few variations; my thread has been the distinguishing factor, in that I have varied the weight of the thread rather than the colour. Some of these works have been reduced almost to fragments before embroidering, while others have mostly retained the overall shape of the original print – all depending on which elements of a given print I felt should be the focus of the final work.



Figure 3. *Mend One*, 20x25cm, deconstructed screen print on cotton with hand embroidery.  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.



Figure 4. *Mend Four*, 1m x 75cm, deconstructed screen print on cotton with hand embroidery  
Photograph: Pam Mckinlay

One artist who particularly speaks to me is textile artist Vanessa Rolf.<sup>3</sup> I can see in her work shades of the way I work, especially in her use of embroidery and the freedom of her stitching in *East Siberia*. This piece gives the merest idea of trees using single lines of stitching, and yet you can feel the whole landscape rise up in front of you as you view it. Just a few random lines on a white ground, but perfectly executed to evoke the feeling of place.

My aim has always been to enhance the organic feel of the prints I make and to hint at medical procedures. With this project, I was now beginning to explore and feature a more clinical dimension to my original approach, with the addition of lines and angles as well as labels. These elements not only bind the foreground to the background, but also add a much more invasive appearance to these works, almost as if they have been nailed to a screen. I am hinting at body parts under investigation here, and joining with stitches without trying to overwhelm the viewer with nastiness. Adding medical labels to some of the works is intended to enhance this process of institutionalising the organic into the medical and trapping it there.

There is a beauty in the organic nature of the body that I do not wish to hide in a morass of blood and gore. This is not the main thrust of my work, so the hints of overlying technical details that imprison the organic structures beneath give a much better impression of my intentions in a way that enhances the overall aim of *First Do No Harm*, as an exhibition.<sup>4</sup>

Having worked for some time with small prints, for this project I made up a large screen and began the process of setting up some very large prints which I could use as stand-alone pieces. I made up several prints in this way and began the process of cutting them down to enhance their organic nature, and stitched them as I had with the smaller pieces. Rather than placing them on a black ground, I let these works hang free from the wall so as to emphasise their fragility and also to make use of the shadows they cast. I allowed the threads to hang free rather than trimming the ends, so that they suggest a rather imperfect attempt at mending. This is how I see the processes

used by the medical profession – they cannot give a perfect outcome, but simply 'oversee' the problems that they see and hope that this is enough for life to continue.

In the process of cutting, I have tried to give an organic feel to the pieces and form a structure within the rather random print process, so that they can be seen as either complete bodies or parts of some larger body with interconnections of their own. In this way, they hang as an entity and the mends become a binding for parts that need connection to the whole. I have tried to suggest here that all the parts are connected to the whole.

In conclusion, I am very much looking forward to the next phase of my exploration into the world of printmaking. The pieces I have constructed are markers into the world that I entered on being diagnosed with breast cancer, and they have set me on a new path into the art of my existence. They mark a trying part of my life, which is now in the past, and have helped me deal with a variety of outcomes I had not foreseen and would not have expected. I look forward to whatever comes next with enthusiasm tinged with some sadness (over what I have lost) and also some trepidation (over what I might yet face).

**Vivien Dwyer** is a recent graduate with an MVA . She has been a practicing artist for some years and returned to art school after her children grew up and became independent. She works in textile art with a special focus on printmaking and felting.



Figure 5. *Untitled, 2mx2m*, detail from *First Do No Harm Exhibition*, deconstructed screen print on cotton with hand embroidery. Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

- 1 "Willy Schut Interview: An Intuitive Process," *TextileArtist.org*, 2 May 2014, <http://www.textileartist.org/willy-schut-interview-intuitive-process> (accessed 26 October 2015).
- 2 Claire Benn and Leslie Morgan, *Breakdown Printing: New Dimensions for Texture & Colour* (Oxted, Surrey: Committed to Cloth, 2005), 1.
- 3 "Vanessa Rolf Interview: Drawing with the Thread," *TextileArtist.org*, <http://www.textileartist.org/vanessa-rolf-drawing-with-the-thread> (accessed 1 May 2017).
- 4 On the connections between the body, medicine and commerce, see Deborah Harris-Moore, *Media and the Rhetoric of Body Perfection: Cosmetic Surgery, Weight Loss and Beauty in Popular Culture* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014); Elizabeth Ettorre, *Culture, Bodies and the Sociology of Health* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010); Benjamin Barber, *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole* (New York: Norton, 2008).
- 5 Sandra Coney and Phillida Bunkle, "An 'Unfortunate Experiment' at National Womens'," *Metro* (June 1987), 47-65. See <https://www.womenshealthcouncil.org.nz/site/aklwhc/files/Metro%20article%201987.pdf>.



## ANYTHING DID HAPPEN WHEN DUNEDIN ART AND FASHION WENT TO SHANGHAI

Jane Malthus, Antony Deaker and Margo Barton

The path through the bamboos leads into the unknown

Ji Cheng 1635

Well, anything could happen and it could be right now

And the choice is yours to make it worthwhile

The Clean 1981

*Anything Could Happen* was an exhibition of contemporary art and fashion held in Shanghai during May-June 2017. The works of some artists and designers from Dunedin, New Zealand, were shown in Yu Gallery in the city's Yu Gardens (Yu Yuan).

Shanghai, with a population of approximately 24 million, is situated on the south side of the Yangtze River estuary, and is a major global financial and commercial centre. It has one of the world's busiest container ports and is known for its distinctive skyline of skyscrapers. Dunedin (population 128,000), a southern city in New Zealand known for its tertiary education, neo-gothic and modernist architecture, stunning landscape, great music, and innovative art and fashion, has been a sister city of Shanghai since 1994.

The exhibition was the result of an invitation from Yu Garden managers to a Dunedin delegation to Shanghai in early 2016. Enterprise Dunedin (Dunedin City Council) then reached out to Prof Margo Barton and others at Otago Polytechnic to propose a curatorial collaboration involving local art and fashion. Curators Margo Barton and Dr Jane Malthus from the School of Design at Otago Polytechnic and Antony Deaker of Enterprise Dunedin worked to plan and implement the exhibition, meeting again with representatives from Yu Garden in Dunedin to discuss plans in late 2016.

*Anything Could Happen* was named after the lyrical song of the same name written and performed by famous Dunedin band The Clean. They contributed to the popular post-punk movement of the late 1970s and 1980s known as 'the Dunedin Sound.' This title was suggested by Craig Easton, who had first-hand insight into both Dunedin culture and the cultural thinking and design philosophy of Yu Yuan. Advice, support and funding for planning, curating and implementing all aspects of *Anything Could Happen* came from the Shanghai Government and Huangpu District Government, Otago Polytechnic, the Dunedin City Council (DCC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Creative New Zealand, Yu Yuan, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise and the Prime Minister's Scholarship Asia, for student involvement.

The exhibition was inspired by the sister city relationship between Dunedin and Shanghai; the relationship between Yu Yuan and the Lan Yuan (the Dunedin Chinese Garden); the Otago Polytechnic's collaborative fashion projects with fashion schools in Shanghai (especially the longstanding partnership and projects with Shanghai University of Engineering Science); and by wanting to widen and strengthen the creative threads joining our cities. The Sister City Agreement between the cities of Shanghai and Dunedin was renewed in 2016, and the desire to cooperate through arts and culture and also through response to climate change was included in it. The chair of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Shanghai, Madam Yin Yicui, came to Dunedin to sign the new agreement in October 2016, and this event included the unveiling of photographic artworks gifted to Dunedin by Shanghai and now on permanent display in the Shanghai Room in the Municipal Chambers. So the exhibition to be sent to Yu Yuan was seen as a very good next step in enacting the renewed Sister City Agreement.

The curators wanted to represent the diversity, quality and connectivity of the many artists who have connections with Dunedin, and were keen to include artists and designers who had or were developing a commercial track record, and could potentially exhibit other work in China. A series of meetings and discussions took place in Dunedin and Shanghai in order to confirm the event, and we were thrilled that the Yu Gallery and Garden offered us a four-week display period. Dave Cull, Mayor of Dunedin, said in conversation, "The relationship between Yu Garden in Shanghai and Lan Garden in Dunedin is hugely important to us and we are very grateful for the generosity of Yu Yuan in hosting this exhibition in their beautiful gallery."

Yu Garden is a famous classical garden located in Anren Jie, Shanghai, and is a nationally protected cultural relic in China. Dating from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), it was created as a private garden by Pan Yunduan for his parents. Yu in Chinese means pleasing and satisfying, and this garden was a place for them to enjoy peace and comfort in their old age.

Yu Garden occupies an area of 20,000 square metres (about five acres). However, its small size belies the attractions within the garden. Pavilions, halls, rockeries, ponds, bridges and cloisters all have unique characteristics and create beautiful spaces for contemplation. Modifications have occurred over the last 400 years, of course, but the garden retains its original beauty and has been one of Shanghai's major tourist attractions since it was renovated in the 1950s.

There are six main scenic areas and more than 40 old buildings in the garden: Sansui Hall and the grand rockery, Wanhua Chamber; Dianchun Hall, Huijing Hall, Yuhua Hall and the Inner Garden. Each area features several scenic spots within its borders, which are formed as 'dragon walls.' Sculptures, carvings, calligraphy, inscriptions and paintings from famous Chinese poets and artists are part of the many details to be found amongst the trees, plants, rocks and waterways. The true treasure of Yuyuan Garden is the Exquisite Jade Rock. Located across from Yuhua Hall, it is one of the three famous rocks in the southern region of the Yangtze River.

The large Ting Tao Tower exhibition hall that housed *Anything Could Happen* comprises two floors of display spaces and cases. We are very grateful for the involvement of the New Zealand Consulate-General in Shanghai in facilitating the planning. Antony was in close contact with them and Jane met consulate staff in October 2016 in Shanghai. They assisted with documentation of the space, going to the Garden to photograph the entrances and spaces for us, among many other things. We kept them informed as the exhibition progressed, and appreciated their presence and support at the opening function.





Figure 1. Yu Gallery staff in front of one of the display cases before installation began.

## SELECTION OF WORKS

An early decision in our planning for *Anything Could Happen* was to make the selection process as democratic as possible, so that anyone who felt they met the criteria could apply with work, even though we knew there would be space constraints. A call to submit images of their work and a short CV or statement about their practice was sent out to many artists and publicised on various networks. These included Ara Toi networks, city galleries, marae offices, direct contact, print, radio and digital media, Otago Polytechnic alumni, and DCC websites and connections.

Applications were received from 60 artists and designers, with nearly 200 works. A panel of five selectors, with a mix of fashion, visual art and toi Maori experience, independently chose their preferences within the established criteria, and then those choices were compiled to reach the final works shown in Shanghai. This process to identify the most supported work from the selectors was also managed independently. Final decisions had to include consideration of the space constraints of the Yu Gallery cases – which are vitrine-like enclosures around its walls with doors opening into them only at the ends – so artists were mostly represented by one or two works rather than a whole suite of works.

The works selected included paintings, photography, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, weaving, ceramics, jewellery, shoe-making and fashion, a rich cross-section of the arts of Dunedin. Thirty-three artists and designers were represented.<sup>1</sup> In early April 2017 the works were gathered together at Otago Polytechnic's Art School gallery for photographing by Justin Spiers, after which they were professionally packed for airfreighting to Shanghai.

A catalogue was produced – mostly before we went to China – including a brief introduction and mayoral message; an essay by artist Dr Craig Easton, a Dunedinite who also lives, works and studies in Shanghai; and text and images from each artist or designer. Eleanor Ainge Roy wrote artist profiles, and Martin Kean designed the overall look and layout of the catalogues. English and Mandarin versions were printed in China and were available free to visitors. Having seen on a previous visit to Shanghai how popular and useful QR codes are there, the curators included a QR code in the catalogue and one for each artist on the label with their work in the Yu Gallery. These codes took the viewer to the Dunedin website, to Antony's WeChat feed or to artists' own websites.

## INSTALLATION

Antony Deaker travelled to Shanghai on a nine-week DCC staff exchange. As part of the sister city agreement, the DCC and Shanghai Government host an annual staff exchange and Antony's was the fourth such exchange. He was able to liaise with the Yu Gallery, arrange for the arrival of the artworks and organise workspaces at New Zealand Central in Shanghai for us to work on installation details. Again, thanks are due to the New Zealand Consulate-General's Guergana Guermanoff for the free provision of this space to the City. Margo Barton and Jane Malthus arrived in Shanghai later, accompanying a group of ten fashion and communication students from the School of

Design at Otago Polytechnic who had been awarded Prime Minister's Scholarships for Asia (PMSA) to work on an extended collaborative project in China.

The installation of *Anything Could Happen* was part of their six-week project, and we were very grateful for their assistance and that of local Shanghai artist Joyce Huang, who translated for us when necessary. Students worked with the curators and locals on many aspects of installation; finalising the text, images and printing of both versions of the catalogue, including choosing paper stocks with the local printer; writing the labels; and unpacking, hanging and installing works in cases on the two floors of the gallery. They also filmed the Yu Garden and views of the exhibition for the Dunedin website ([www.dunedinz.com/anything-could-happen](http://www.dunedinz.com/anything-could-happen)) and made their own blog posts.



Figure 2. The works had to arrive at Yu Garden late at night to avoid pedestrian and traffic congestion.



Figure 3. Crates signed in and awaiting opening in the morning. Antony Deaker and one of the Yu Gallery staff members.

We had developed a plan for the placement of objects in advance, of course, but until we saw the actual gallery and case spaces we were not sure it would all work. The gallery spaces presented numerous challenges, being quite different to a Western white box gallery. Some changes had to be made to accommodate access to both galleries and cases. Stair access, a single hanging system, one size of plinth, not being able to easily fix work to the walls or to the ceiling, and an in-case lighting track set-up were all limitations we needed to work within. The hanging system was not best suited to all the works, and some work would not fit around the corners inside the cases. Thank goodness for Kiwi ingenuity. The wonderful staff at the Yu Gallery were welcoming and accommodating, letting us do most of the installation and make our own decisions about arrangements and hanging of works.



Figure 4. Corey Adams and Joyce Huang opening crates with whatever tools they could find.



Figure 5. Antony Deaker, Joyce Huang and Margo Barton working on the exhibition at "NZ Central."



Figure 6. Holly Kumbaroff, Erin Broughton and Katie Willis editing the catalogue and labels.



Figure 7. Choosing paper stocks with the local printer.



Figure 8. In the environs of Yu Gardens, the Otago Polytechnic PMSA students with a dressform that we managed to transport on the metro!



Figure 9. Jack Weily and Erin Broughton installing a fashion photograph of Mild Red.

## ANYTHING DID HAPPEN

The exhibition's title proved to be apt for various other issues that arose during the installation. Working across language, culture and political system differences created some 'lost-in-translation' moments. One rather major hiccup for the curators was that for some unknown-to-us reason, the fashion garments sent in a hanger box with the packed artworks were not approved for importing into China. We were instructed that they had to be removed from the crates before arrival in Shanghai. This happened in Christchurch, and the pieces were freighted back to Dunedin to be returned to the artists. We are grateful to Pip McQuillan for facilitating this. Luckily, we could use the images taken prior to packing, and some that the designers had, to get large photographs printed. Thank you to Shanghai printers able to work to tight deadlines! Luckily too, a few garments travelled in our personal luggage, having not made it to packing in time, so were not subject to the same scrutiny, and we were able to exhibit them

Little things also came under the *Anything Could Happen*



rule: the nails holding the crates shut when they left Dunedin got replaced with square head screws somewhere along the journey (a customs check, we assumed), and it seemed there was no appropriate screwdriver to undo them in Shanghai. Brute strength and levering eventually worked, thanks to student muscle and determination.



Figure 10. The Pounamu

A wonderful and moving occurrence concerned a pounamu stone gift from Dunedin City's Mayor to the Director of the Garden. This was a form of koha from us in return for the generous gift of exhibition space and time from Yu Garden. Ewan Duff had prepared the stone with an inscribed Maori pattern in gold called 'aukaha': a representation of the binding that joins a double-hulled waka. It symbolised the way that the sister cities were binding themselves together over the period of their relationship. The pounamu was the first item of the exhibition for its duration, so also had a guardianship role for all the other exhibits. What we only understood when at Yu Garden was the significance of inscribed rocks in that space and to our Chinese hosts. They are a revered art form throughout the garden. It was fitting too, that Martin Kean's catalogue design featured the rocks of Long Beach as part of Dunedin's turangawaewae, given the significance of rocks in Yu Garden and elsewhere in Shanghai.



Figure 11. The sign outside the gallery entrance.



Figure 12. Joyce Huang, Craig Easton, Antony Deaker, Jane Malthus and Margo Barton after completing the installation of the exhibition, at the site of the forthcoming opening function in the Yu Garden.

## OPENING AND AFTER

The opening event was a collaboration between the sister cities and the Yu Garden. It was held in a courtyard in front of a building called Big Stage, with refreshments featuring New Zealand seafood, lamb and wines supplied and cooked on site by Future Cuisine, a New Zealand company that Antony met while working in NZ Central in Shanghai.

The opening was led by a mihi from Ngai Tahu kaumatua Edward Ellison and was attended by Chinese, New Zealand and Australian dignitaries, artists, designers and creative professionals, as well as media people. Some of the artists were present: Tara Douglas was living in China at the time, as was Craig Easton, and David Shields came for work as well. It was exciting to see the work of Dunedin artists and fashion designers in such an international setting. Yuyuan Garden has the second highest visitor numbers of Shanghai tourist attractions; so 40,000 visitors from all parts of the world got to see the exhibition over its month-long duration.

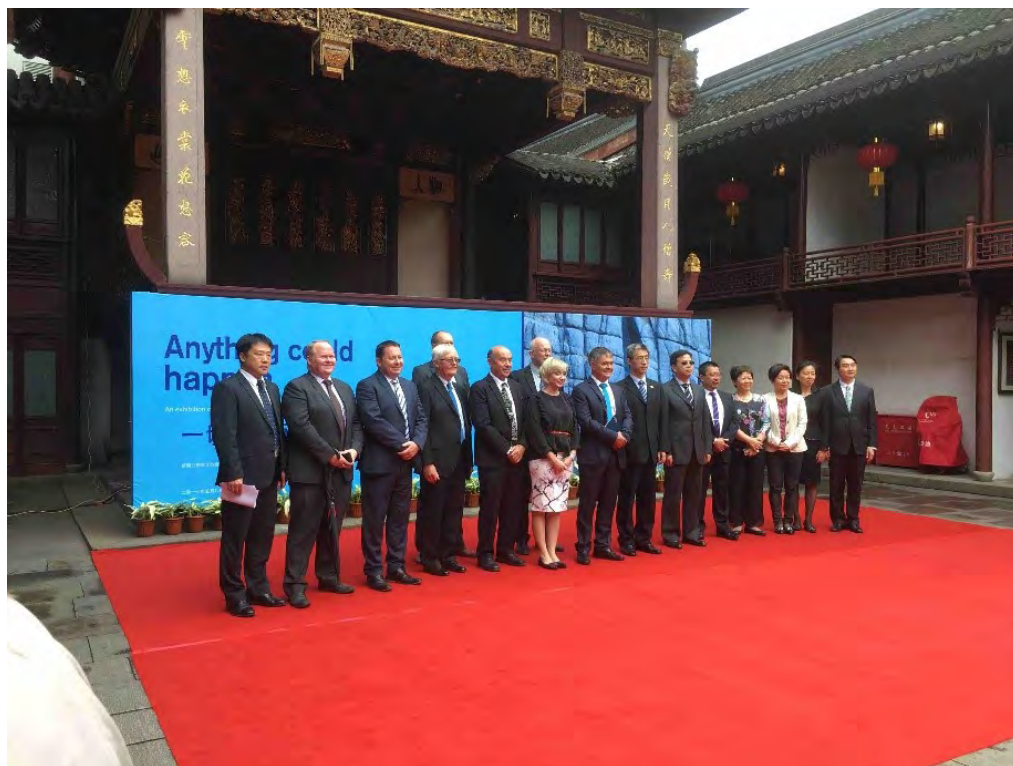


Figure 13 New Zealand Consul-General Guergana Guermanoff and Dunedin Mayor Dave Cull in the centre, with dignitaries from Dunedin and Shanghai.

After the show opened we all had other commitments, so we were grateful that the Gardens staff and management took real pride in the show, generously hosting the exhibition and introducing people to it. They took various VIP visitors to the Gardens to visit the exhibition specifically, including a mayoral delegation from a French city and government ministers from Thailand. They also engaged with us, sharing their favourite elements, asking questions about what various artworks mean, and have given us great feedback.

Yu Gallery typically shows quite traditional work and, in many cases, antiquities. The staff didn't reveal until after the opening that they were very nervous about having contemporary art and fashion there, and allowing us such curatorial and display freedom. It was unusual for them, but thankfully the director and others were thrilled with the outcome and thought that the show 'has a great feel.' This was significant praise for us. Feel, synergy or feng shui is an important factor in the whole garden.

The staff at the New Zealand Consulate-General in Shanghai also kindly promoted the exhibition to their networks. The consulate invited Antony to various events where he met people running Kiwi businesses and encouraged them to visit the show. Craig Easton – whose PhD from the University of Melbourne was on Chinese literati gardens in connection to contemporary abstraction – brought many local curators and collectors to Yu Gallery.

Yu Yuan is the second most popular visitor attraction in all of China after the Great Wall, and teems with people most days and for most of the day. The gallery is inside the walled gardens which are themselves within a larger zone of traditional tea houses, restaurants, arts businesses and every shade of retail you can imagine. This area is about four large city blocks. The people visiting the gardens are not only local Shanghai families, but also visiting Chinese from other parts of the country and, significantly, large numbers of Western tourists. There are walking tours through the gardens and gallery, and independent tourists come from diverse European and Asian countries, the Americas and Australia. So the exhibition has reached a truly international audience of culture consumers. Yu Yuan staff reported that 40,000 people visited *Anything Could Happen* over its four-week duration.

As Margo pointed out to the *Otago Daily Times*, "The exhibition gives designers a rare chance to promote their work to an international audience at one of Shanghai's leading tourist spots."<sup>2</sup>

## POST-MORTEM

This exhibition was a snapshot of some of the artists and designers working in Dunedin or working elsewhere with strong connections to Dunedin at present. More submitted work, but weren't selected and others again weren't able to submit proposals at the time we opened applications. So what we had in this small collection is an example of the diversity, quality and connectivity of our artists and designers. Yes, there were some big names missing, but this show wasn't curated conventionally: we didn't go out with a theme or a look in mind, we just put the call out to local artists and designers to offer images of the work they had on hand. Our independent panel worked through a blind voting process to select the works in the show and the fact that they came together so well, with obvious aesthetic and intellectual connections to each other, says a lot about the creative energy of our city.

These artists and designers were excited to have their work shown in Shanghai, and especially at Yu Yuan. They of course hoped that collectors, agents and dealers would notice them, but equally they hoped that through this show the artists, designers and curators of Shanghai would feel the call to engage with them. They will welcome invitations to collaborate in Shanghai or with Shanghai people, and we welcome Shanghai to send their artists, designers and artworks to Dunedin soon.

Antony was kept busy after the opening with a programme of meetings and visits that his hosts at Shanghai Municipal Government and Huangpu Government set up for him. He was introduced to some truly impressive museums, galleries, all levels of schools, organisations and institutions including M50, which is an industrial-scale contemporary arts zone with very cool galleries, studios, design stores and cafés. Several of the curators and directors from these spaces visited the exhibition and received catalogues. Shanghai's commitment to its cultural heritage is inspiring – food, architecture, dance, theatre, opera, jewellery, games, arts, dress, literature, calligraphy, language – all are important. They call this 'intangible culture,' and the government has initiated amazing programmes and investment to honour and support this 'intangible culture.'



Margo and Jane and the Otago Polytechnic students continued their project in collaboration with students at the International Fashion Academy at SUES and Shanghai Art and Design Academy; attended China Graduate Fashion Week in Beijing; and visited a number of university fashion and textiles departments in Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen and Hong Kong.

The curators were determined to produce a high-quality catalogue for the exhibition, with professional photographs of work by Justin Spiers and artist profiles penned by Eleanor Ainge Roy, as well as the essay by Craig Easton. Wherever we all went, we gifted Mandarin or English *Anything Could Happen* catalogues, talked about the show and encouraged people to visit it, giving free entry passes when appropriate. Antony was able to guide some groups through the exhibition. Academic institutions, galleries public and private, and other cultural organisations including some in Beijing now have copies of the catalogue.

A catch phrase repeatedly used in different contexts in Shanghai is "yesterday and tomorrow, today." In the context of *Anything Could Happen*, this idea was translated to probing questions about the various artworks' relationship to cultural traditions, a real appreciation of the technical skill shown in the works, and an ongoing conversation about the way artists reflect different influences in Dunedin and New Zealand. Antony's WeChat QR code was included in the catalogue and exhibition signage so he could be contacted directly. Interesting conversations with strangers via WeChat, which has a translation feature, included the meaning of "anything could happen," explaining The Clean and discussion about various artworks.

Through their participation in the preparation of the exhibition, the students learned a great deal about the process of curation; the challenges, joys and synergies of display; and the issues of working under pressure in a country where you don't speak the language, of solving problems as they arise, of working with printers. We were very lucky to have the services of Joyce Huang and recent Otago Polytechnic fashion graduate Yifan Yin to help us all navigate the local situation in Shanghai. And the Yu Gallery staff were very welcoming, helpful and understanding.

## POST-EXHIBITION POSSIBILITIES

*Anything Could Happen* opens us all to the realm of possibilities. Our artists and designers are not constrained by convention. Dunedin has always nurtured an innovative and diverse cultural scene, and what was seen in the show is a snapshot of the creative energy and style of Dunedin. There should be no surprise that Dunedin and Shanghai are both UNESCO Creative Cities.

The exhibition, Antony's exchange and Otago Polytechnic student and staff collaborations have created opportunities for artists and designers to work and exhibit in Shanghai. Offers of collaboration and exhibition spaces in Shanghai have already been made, and the Huangpu Foreign Affairs Office in Shanghai has offered an exchange arrangement for artists and designers to work out of their maker spaces. While this is still in the negotiation stages, one artist/designer has already met with a potential collaborator.

Antony came back to his role in Enterprise Dunedin with plenty of ideas, as well as further development points for future exhibitions and projects. One objective is to create more employment for practitioners in the arts and culture area in Dunedin through the connections established. Exchanges like the Shanghai Film Festival, recently hosted in Dunedin, and this exhibition of Dunedin art and fashion in Shanghai bring our two sister cities closer together. They provide cultural understanding and insights into our differences and similarities.

The project and exhibition was a means to create new and evolving personal relationships – such as artist visits and exchanges, which may be city-level or artist-to-artist, artist to gallery or artist to educational institution. Creative New Zealand are excited about what we have achieved and created in *Anything Could Happen*. Dunedin City's relationships with Shanghai are precious, and need to be continually nurtured. We could not have mounted this exhibition without the many goodwill gestures this relationship inspired, and it was responsible for the very generous four-week exhibition period, in a setting where other countries may be granted a week or two at most.

**Jane Malthus** is a dress historian, lecturer, museum curator and artist.

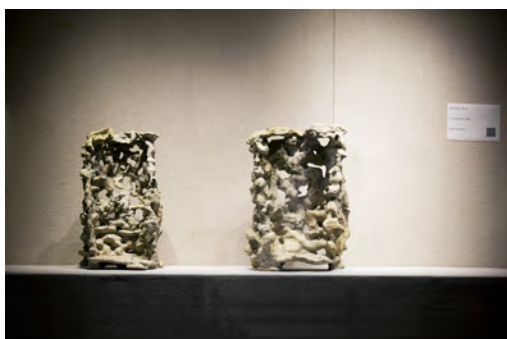
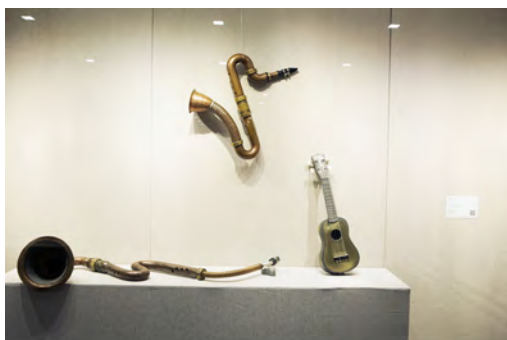
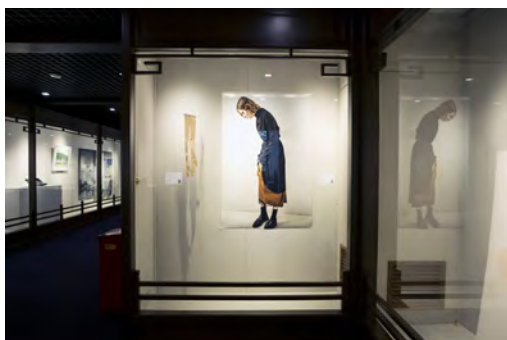
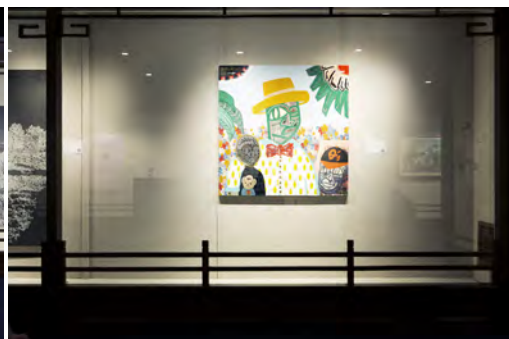
**Margo Barton** is the Academic Leader for Fashion. She has a Dress Design Certificate from TAFE's Fashion Design Studio in Sydney, Australia, and worked in the fashion industry for many years. Her PhD is from RMIT, Australia. Margo has been a member of the Executive Board of iD Fashion Week Dunedin since 2001 and Deputy Chair since 2015, and is a member of the executive board of the International Foundation of Fashion Technology Institutes (IFFTI).

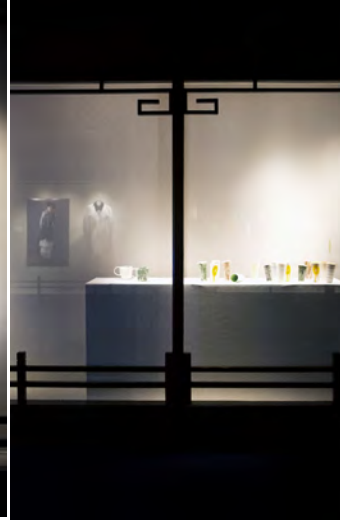
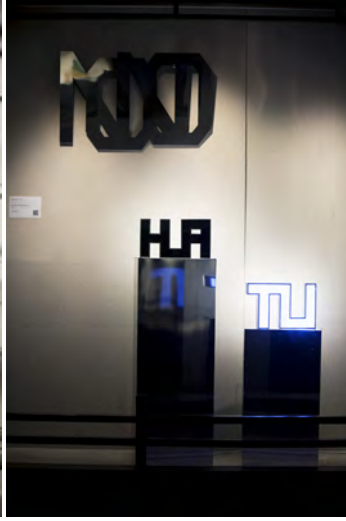
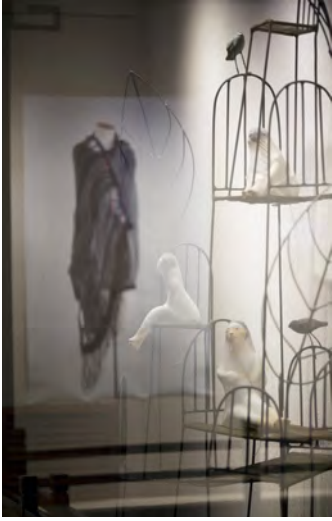
**Antony Deaker** is the Ara Toi Project Coordinator at Enterprise Dunedin. His role in the Council is to support the economic development of the creative sector in Dunedin, developing projects to support creative tourism, export, audience development, business vitality, career development and more.

- 1 Artists and designers selected for the *Anything Could Happen* exhibition were: Rachel Allan (photography), Jane Avery (fashion), Ariane Bray (fashion), Louise Clifton (shoe-maker), Moira Crossman (weaver), Anita De Soto (painting), Inge Doesburg (printmaking), Tara Douglas (photography), Alan Dove (photographer), Craig Easton (sculpture), Kirsten Ferguson (ceramics), Kate Fitzharris (ceramics), Guy Frederick (photography), Emily Hlavac-Green (photography), Rowan Holt (fashion textiles), Jay Hutchinson (sculpture), Alex Kennedy (painting), Ewan McDougall (painting), Victoria MacIntosh (jewellery), Phillip Madill (drawing), Mary McFarlane (sculpture), Juliet Novena Sorrel (sculpture), Jenna Packer (painting), Steev Peyroux (painting), Abby Pullar and Emilie Van Schreven (fashion), Amanda Shanley (ceramics), David Shields (photography), Holly Simpson-Howe (jewellery), Donna Tulloch (fashion), Fiona Van Oyen (printmaking), Jane Venis (sculpture), Yonel Watene (painting).
- 2 *Otago Daily Times*, 12 April 2017, <https://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/dunedin-artists-work-bright-lights-shanghai>.

Figures following pages, installation view of exhibition *Anything Could Happen*, 2017.







## MARIE STRAUSS- ARTIST AT LARGE: FROM PAINTING TO FASHION DESIGN

Hilary Radner

### AN INTERMEDIAL PRACTICE

Dunedin artist Marie Strauss produces a range of work in different media, marked by the intermedial nature of her practice.<sup>1</sup> For Strauss, "Fashion for me is like painting, or making a meal or creating a pot – to me it's all the same."<sup>2</sup> Through the intermedial continuum of her engagement, 'art' is released from traditional hierarchies and boundaries. While locally, perhaps, more routinely associated with her fashion label Dada Vintage and shop Dada Manifesto, located in Dunedin, Strauss is also a painter and ceramicist. The everyday practices of eating and dressing inflect the meaning of her ceramics (which are sculptural rather than utilitarian in nature) as well as her paintings.



Figure 1. Marie Strauss, Dada Vintage garment, 2014. iD Dunedin Fashion Week.  
Photograph: Chris Sullivan, courtesy Dada Vintage.





Figure 2. Marie Strauss, *Autumn*, 2016, oil on canvas, 60 x 75 cm. From the exhibition *Four Seasons*. Courtesy Eskdale Gallery.



Figure 3. Ceramics by Marie Strauss. From the exhibition *Nocturnal*, 2017. Courtesy Eskdale Gallery.

Strauss, who holds an MFA (2010) from the Otago Polytechnic/Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, immigrated to New Zealand from South Africa with her husband and three children in 1993, where she now lives in the South Island. She divides her time between her working farm (where her studio is located) in North Taieri and her shop in Dunedin on Moray Place, Dada Manifesto, which celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2018. More of a gallery than a boutique, this space boasts a curated collection that includes her own label, Dada Collection and Dada Knit, a selection of curios and jewellery, garments from international designers, and the creations of local artists including Madeleine Child and Philip Jarvis, as well as her own paintings and ceramics.

Strauss embraces fashion design in all its aspects and has regularly participated in iD Dunedin Fashion Week; however, she also has a national reputation as a painter and ceramicist. Her art has been the object of 48 solo shows since 1982 (South Africa, France, Australia and New Zealand), most recently at Mint Gallery, Dunedin (2015), and Eskdale Gallery, Dunedin (2017). Her work can be found in collections located in South Africa, France, Australia, New Zealand and Korea. In New Zealand, the Dowse Museum, the Forrester Gallery and the James Wallace Collection boast examples from her oeuvre.

Strauss explains that “for me ... ‘make’ is called art. But it doesn’t have to be art ... For me ... to cook, or to be involved in fashion, to make choices about knitwear, or colours [gives me] the same satisfaction as making a painting, a pot. Every now and then ... I have this need to paint.”<sup>3</sup> A preoccupation with colour, texture and form lends coherency to the objects that she makes, which emerge through a discipline that engages with traditional forms while working outside conventional practices. For example, she fires her ceramics multiple times to create a patina and layering of glazes. For New Zealand art historian and critic Rob Garrett, her “pots ooze: leaking surfaces and insides suggest the percolating of sodden ground and the weeping of mud banks of deep-cut streams,” evoking the landscapes of the South Island.<sup>4</sup> Her garments, impeccably tailored and cut, juxtapose unexpected textures, colours and fabrics, recalling a baby’s fascination with light, pattern and changing intensities. “My voice,” explains Strauss, “is in everything I do.”

Strauss admits that when she first came to New Zealand, she suffered from a sense of exile and dislocation,<sup>5</sup> particularly given that her creative impulses arise in response to her immediate environment. She expands: “My art

is about what I am doing at the time. ... I always work with what I know and what I live with. ... When my children were small, a lot of my work revolved around them." As her children matured and developed lives of their own, her sense of isolation increased; however, in 2008, she established Dada Manifesto, which gave her a new sense of belonging and place. In her own words, "The moment that I had the shop, things just settled down."

## DADA: WORKING OUTSIDE THE FASHION SYSTEM

The shop serves a number of purposes, including a financial one. Marie frequently comments that it is easier to sell clothes than 'art.' The shop provides a practical solution to the perennial problem of artists whose work arises out of passion or a drive to create, but who also have monetary obligations. While this eclectic boutique ensures Strauss a modest income, her relationship with fashion is unconventional. She does not produce a new line with each season, but operates through accretion, creating new patterns based on the old through subtle variations in cut and fabric. The fabrics themselves are sourced internationally, with a coat, for example, often made from a single unique piece of cloth brought back from Europe in a suitcase. She frequently claims that her designs are not about fashion – meaning the fashion system, with its cult of the new and of brand visibility.

Garments by local designers (such as the label Karena Carran), New Zealand designers (such as Karen Walker), a few European designers and companies operating in a national (Standard Issue) and international (American Vintage) market complement Strauss's own creations. All garments are carefully chosen by Strauss, with the clothing taking its identity from the shop rather than from a 'brand' or 'label.' The particular aesthetic of the shop is emphasised through the inclusion of artwork by Strauss and other local artists, as well as a selection of costume jewellery in bright colours. The boutique enjoys a certain status as an insider's retreat, facilitated by its location near the back entrance of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, slightly removed (yet accessible) from Dunedin's principal shopping area and offering an alternative to the New Zealand look routinely associated with Dunedin and its "Black Brigade."<sup>6</sup>

Strauss frequently explains that the shop makes it possible for her to work as an artist; it supports her art and, in particular, funds her trips to Europe. Undertaken with a view to ordering stock for her shop, they also fulfill the more personal goal of developing Strauss's extensive knowledge of art. On occasion, she also has organised tours for groups of women who are similarly motivated to explore the art of the past, who share her passion and appreciate her perspectives. The shop provides a locus for various entrepreneurial initiatives; however, the boutique (and by extension the tours) are in addition and, perhaps more importantly, a manifestation of Strauss's philosophy of art and life.

She explains: "Art is part of life ... What you wear is part of art and art is part of life. So, you can live that. That's the main, the important thing ... that you can live art. It's a creative choice. ... There are aspects that you can incorporate into your life ... [something] that gives you joy. I mean that's what art also does." Fashion, here, becomes an extension of that impulse to make art, but also a means of extending the reach of art. As Strauss points out, many people are intimidated by art but not by fashion. Dada Manifesto offers that group the possibility of experiencing what Strauss feels to be the joy of art as an inclusive experience, expanding her practice within an arena that specifically addresses women – that of fashion.

## DADA MANIFESTO

The name "Dada Manifesto" itself refers to the European post-World War I avant-garde art movement that, in Strauss' words, "embraced the absurd." The original Dada movement had a political side and was highly critical of the social conditions that had produced World War I and later World War II; Strauss, however, does not directly address the overtly radical goals of the movement. Rather, she seeks joy in the absurd as an antidote to the rationalisation of human existence that subtends modernity and contemporary urban life. Her activities constitute a form of resistance to the impersonality and flat affect promoted by contemporary corporate culture, for example.



The joy in the absurd constitutes a refutation of a philosophy in which human activity must have a utilitarian purpose and be remunerated accordingly, but also a world in which speculation and the accumulation of capital are the ultimate goal of human enterprise. Strauss confesses: "I am not actually going to the dark side." Rather, she feels an affinity with Dada as it leads into Surrealism, what she calls its "silliness," its "playfulness." The shop is marginally successful in monetary terms; Marie has no desire to make it more 'profitable' from a financial perspective. She does not seek to expand its market and demographic, for example, these being the kinds of issues that preoccupy most contemporary designers, whether on a small scale, in the case of designers with a regional reputation, or on a larger scale in the case of the global brands, typically owned by multinational corporations.

Strauss's endeavours function much like the traditional potlatch, a ceremony in which gifts are exchanged and which was attributed to indigenous peoples in North America. The point of these ceremonies was to give away as much as possible, with respect and influence accorded not to the person who had amassed the largest amount, but to he (and the hosts were male) who could give away the most. While ethnological understanding of the potlatch has evolved in the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this initial conceptualisation was extremely influential during much of the twentieth century, within political and artistic circles, with the potlatch considered to reflect a general resistance in certain sectors to the idea that the accumulation of wealth for its own sake was a laudable human goal.<sup>7</sup>

This dimension of Strauss's project is most obviously present in the events that she initiates in collaboration with the Antarctic Riviera Collective (Madeleine Child and Philip Jarvis), held at the Mint (Eskdale) Gallery in Dunedin.<sup>8</sup> At these events, she will typically serve food that she has cooked herself. Indeed, she frequently regales a customer stopping by her shop with a piece of cake, chocolate or honey-lavender oil (with the lavender and honey from her farm). She orchestrated, with Antarctic Riviera, an ambitious *happening* that served as a ten-year birthday celebration for her shop and customers, "DADa Birthday," held in the Dunedin Public Art Gallery on 2 May 2018, which sat comfortably between performance art and a fashion show. "Models" were members of a dance collective, or neighbours, incorporating a range of sizes and ages not routinely seen on the catwalk.

In her refusal to subscribe to the new credos of what has been termed the "creative industries," with their focus on profit margins, Strauss and her work occupy a place outside the dominant fashion and art systems of the twenty-first century. Strauss's relationship with art in its expanded form is deeply personal; her preoccupation with community seeks not to enrich it materially, but to evoke a common ground of joy and pleasure in life as it presents itself at a primary level – the play of intensities that pediatrician and psychoanalyst Daniel Stern describes as "vitality affects." These are evidenced in the pleasure that a very young child, an *infans*, before the acquisition of language, takes in movement, colour and sound, for example, when looking at the mobile hung above his or her head, or when experiencing a rocking movement in the arms of his or her mother, accompanied by the changing tones of a lullaby.<sup>9</sup> It is a preoccupation with this level of experience (Stern's "vitality affects") that unites Strauss's work as a whole across the various media with which she works.

#### "DREAMING ONESELF INTO EXISTENCE" <sup>10</sup>

Art within this context targets psychic existence, making manifest the emotional life of the artist. The multifaceted nature of Strauss's practice serves as a means whereby the artist dreams herself "into existence" – giving birth to a 'self' constituted through emotion, attachment, play and desire. This self emerges out of the personal work of the artist into the environment, one that encloses and invites the viewer into this dream world, encouraging, within the constraints of a profit-driven economy, a more democratic encounter with art, beyond the 'white cube.' Pursuing this perspective, the three primary media (design, painting and ceramics) of Strauss's corpus correspond to the different dimensions of the self-world that she has created.

The first, most obvious world, manifested through the environments that she creates in her home and in her shop (encompassing activities such as cooking, sewing, embroidering) is one that revolves around inclusion and sociality, the creating of a communicative fabric with others. In, perhaps, overly simplistic terms, women who enter the shop dress themselves for themselves, encouraged rather than instructed by Strauss. The garments that she designs are transformed and made over (as are all garments) by those who wear them and those who participate in their creation. They are always collaborative from their inception, as are most garments, transformed anew by the wearer. The second world is provided by her painting, which Strauss herself compares to dreaming. For her, "painting is like dreaming." It is an activity undertaken by a subject who is conscious of that activity, but not completely in control of it. A third world, or underworld, is manifested through the ceramic pieces that further escape the subject's control and that are very specifically of the 'earth.' Not coincidentally, Strauss's engagement with ceramics emerged only after she had immigrated to New Zealand. The latter two activities exist at a certain remove from her social world; they are solitary pursuits that nonetheless have a communicative function.

The nexus of activities surrounding the shop Dada is perhaps the most visible dimension of her work, at least with regard to the Dunedin community; however, in some ways both her painting and her ceramics are more fundamental to her interior identity as an artist. She has often confided that she loves the shop and fashion, but that she could also conceive of a life without them. In contrast, she could never stop painting.

## PAINTING: THE DREAM

Strauss's painting is expressive and personal, engaged with the play of textures, surface and colour. It serves to express the emotions aroused by certain kinds of everyday moments, to make those emotions visible and palpable to the viewer and perhaps the artist herself. The works become a means of seizing intangible feelings and thus recording and examining them. A 2014 painting, *Newborn*, offers an apt example of the role played by painting for this artist.



Figure 4. Marie Strauss, *Newborn*, 2014, oil on canvas, 92 x 62 cm. Photograph courtesy Mint Gallery.

Commemorating the birth of her first grandchild, a little boy, the work illustrates the intimate connections between Strauss, art and her immediate emotional life. The child's clothing is rendered in pink, or pinkish hues, giving the child a rosy glow; he is a being not as yet subject to the expectations of society and culture. The baby sleeps peacefully, occupying the right side of the canvas, the hood of his buggy illuminated by the play of sunlight, the flowers in the garden echoing the tones of the baby's garments. A dog, belonging to the parents of the child, occupies the left side of the canvas. The dog is alert and watchful, looking attentively outside the frame of the canvas, addressing the viewer. The child's eyes appear slightly open; he may be slyly looking at the viewer, while still ensconced in his cozy nest. The dog, in contrast, is mindful of his surroundings, taking a protective stance vis-à-vis the helpless baby. The viewer is then caught between the animal gaze and the softer look of the child, situated outside the frame to the left as an observer who is secondary to the scene depicted.<sup>11</sup>

This is a family scene, infused with delight, expressed through colour and the vibrancy of the brush strokes, their happy abandon, that figure forth the artist's own pleasure and quiet joy at the new addition to her family. The watchful dog, a black and imposing figure on the canvas, conveys a lurking concern about an inevitably uncertain future. The painting can be read as a commentary on the complexity of the artist's response to the birth as a moment to be celebrated and a subject of tacit maternal concern, emblematised by the watchful dog. While not all her paintings are as obviously autobiographical as *Newborn*, they convey a similar emotional intensity in their depiction of everyday objects and scenes. The ceramics are much darker in nature, much more difficult to grasp than the paintings, though they frequently evoke an immediate and almost visceral response.

## CERAMICS, MUD AND THE "UNTHOUGHT KNOWN"



Figure 5. Marie Strauss, *Untitled*, 2003, hand-built stoneware with multi-fired slips and glazes, 24 x 29 cm each. Collection of the Forrester Gallery (FG2003.8.1). Photograph courtesy Forrester Gallery.

Strauss's 2003 ceramic figures – for example, those owned by the Forrester Gallery – defy analysis, their suppurating surface recalling their literal origins in the earth.<sup>12</sup> They evoke what the psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas terms “the unthought known,” ideas and emotions encompassed by the unconscious, but not obviously available to the conscious mind.<sup>13</sup> As the product of a very visceral engagement with a primary material, earth or mud, that is

indigenous to New Zealand and a direct consequence of being *here* rather than *elsewhere*, these objects, at least initially, perhaps, express her difficulty in anchoring herself in New Zealand at a very primal level as an immigrant. From a broader perspective, they raise questions about the relations between the imagination and the material reality of existence, about our ability to give form to that existence when it is located, as it is in various instances and various times in our lives, on the very periphery of meaning.

Some of her more recent ceramics, while retaining a sense of affinity with the earth as *dark matter*, have acquired a more playful dimension, as in the case of the figure of the morepork, repeated in several different forms as part of a 2017 exhibition, *Nocturnal*.



Figure 6. Marie Strauss, *Untitled* ["Morepork"], 2017, hand-built stoneware with multi-fired slips and glazes, 20 x 28 cm. Photograph courtesy Eskdale Gallery.



Figure 7. Marie Strauss, embroidered morepork on Dada Vintage jersey. Marie Strauss, "DAda Birthday," 2018, performance, 2 May 2018. Photography courtesy Justin Spiers.

The morepork or owl motif<sup>14</sup> also reappears on an embroidered jersey, transformed into a carnivalesque celebratory figure as part of the "DAda Birthday" performance/event. The model/dancer completes her outfit with Dada Vintage trousers made of Dutch wax-printed fabric by Vlisco (historically one of the most prestigious firms engaged in the making of this fabric), marking the formative influence of Strauss's childhood in South Africa. The handbag worn as a hat, hiding the performer's face, contributes to the general elated anarchy of the *happening*. The choice to incorporate a Vlisco textile into this performance highlights the complex interweavings of personal memory and global history in the creation of individual subjectivity.<sup>15</sup>

## THE JOYFUL RETURN

The image of the owl on the Dada Vintage jersey re-emerges as an emblem of joy. The ceramic moreporks' expressions of sadness, and their status as nocturnal, secret and even abject (with "more pork" recalling the child's plaintive cry for more food, more nurturance) has been answered and requited in this later embroidered depiction. Similarly, the viewer is invited to remember the past, but to also appreciate the inherent aesthetic qualities of the wax-printed fabric in terms of colour, composition and surface. Notably, the figure of the black owl recalls for Strauss both the African owl of her childhood and the moreporks around her New Zealand home – one in particular that was rescued by her husband and which he and she nursed to maturity and then returned to the bird's natural habitat.<sup>16</sup> She also has plans to create a summer dress that displays a painted line drawing of an owl on its front panel. The dress would be cut to accommodate the drawing as the first stage in the creation of the garment. Regardless of whether Strauss makes this dress in due course, the use of the morepork figure in her work offers a clear example of the function of art (here as an intermedial practice) in appeasing, taming and transforming the desires and anguishes (sometime inchoate) of the human psyche.

Fashion within Strauss's work as defined intermedially becomes a highly personal expression of allegiance, festivity and attachment. The play of colour and vibrancy of texture, as shifting intensities, evoke the innocent delights of childhood and an optimism about the human condition in which such mutual pleasures provide a common ground that promotes our understanding of a more utopian future. The double valence of fashion, as both a *consumer non-durable* and art, recalls the views of the German Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin who saw in fashion, and our acquiescence to its system, a symptom of commodity fetishism in one of its more virulent forms, but also deemed it a manifestation of the human subject's continued search and desire for a more utopian future.<sup>17</sup> Fashion by its nature as ever changing expresses a dissatisfaction with the present and a belief in a better future, according to Benjamin's formulations of its paradoxical role. The intermedial connections sustained by Marie Strauss's project demonstrate fashion's potential to connect the subject to the aesthetic impulse defined by Stern through his notion of vitality affects – an appreciation of life and beauty that is arguably a human right allocated to all by birth, the sign of a shared humanity that has the potential to draw us together in celebration rather than war.

**Hilary Radner** is Professor Emeritus at the University of Otago/Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo in the Department of History and Art History. Her numerous publications on visual culture include a trilogy of monographs published by Routledge that explores representations of contemporary femininity as a cross-media phenomenon. Her most recent works include a co-edited special issue with Vicki Karaminas on fashion and the moving image for *Fashion Theory* (2017) and, with Alistair Fox, *Raymond Bellour: Cinema and the Moving Image* (Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

**Marie Strauss** holds an MFA (2010) from the Otago Polytechnic/Te Kura Matatini ki Otago and currently resides in Dunedin. Since moving to New Zealand from South Africa, she has developed a national reputation as a painter, a ceramicist and more recently a fashion designer through her label Dada. Her art has been the object of 48 solo shows since 1982 (South Africa, France, Australia and New Zealand), most recently at Mint Gallery, Dunedin (2015) and Eskdale Gallery, Dunedin (2017). Her work is included in collections in South Africa, France, New Zealand, Australia and Korea. In New Zealand, the Dowse Museum, the Forrester Gallery and the James Wallace Collection boast examples from her oeuvre.



- 1 This article was initially inspired by a verbal co-presentation scheduled for inclusion in "Unbound: Liberating Women – A Symposium," CTANZ, Dunedin, New Zealand, 21–23 September 2018, by Hilary Radner and Victoria Bell.
- 2 Hannah Collier, "Interview: Marie Strauss – Owner and Designer at Dada," *Critic*, 23 March 2014, <https://www.critic.co.nz/culture/article/3722/interview-marie-strauss>.
- 3 All quotations by Marie Strauss are from recorded conversations held in March and April 2018, unless otherwise indicated.
- 4 Rob Garrett, "Marie Strauss: Mud, Coats and Cheese," *Ceramics: Art & Perception*, 70 (2007), 25.
- 5 Elizabeth Rankin and Marténe Mentis, "Unsettled/Unsettling Images: Issues of Identity in the Work of South African Artists in New Zealand," *de arte*, 40:71 (2005), 49–50. DOI: 10.1080/00043389.2005.11877036.
- 6 Russell Kleyn, "Photographing Dunedin's Black Brigade," 27 August 2015, [https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_uk/article/vbepz9/photographing-dunedin39s-black-brigade-uk-translation](https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/vbepz9/photographing-dunedin39s-black-brigade-uk-translation).
- 7 See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen & West, 1966). For a recent evaluation of Mauss's concepts, see Volker M Heins, Christine Unrau and Kristine Avaram, "Gift-giving and Reciprocity in Global Society: Introducing Marcel Mauss in International Studies," *Journal of International Political Theory*, 14:2 (2018), 126–44.
- 8 Run by Murray Eskdale, the gallery was originally known as Mint Gallery (opening in 2011), but later took the name Eskdale Gallery (2017).
- 9 For a discussion of Daniel Stern's concepts and the creative process, see Alistair Fox, *Speaking Pictures: Neuropsychanalysis and Authorship in Film and Literature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2016), 81–9.
- 10 Thomas H Ogden, *This Art of Psychoanalysis: Dreaming Undreamt Dreams and Interrupted Cries* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 8.
- 11 I am indebted to Cecilia Novero for this comment.
- 12 Garrett, "Marie Strauss: Mud, Coats and Cheese," 25–7.
- 13 See Christopher Bollas, *In the Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).
- 14 For Strauss, all these figures (of which the owl is only one example) across different media are not actual representations of a specific bird or flower; for example, but of a concatenation of various birds. In the case of these 'owls,' Strauss sometimes refers to them as moreporks, a native New Zealand owl, and at other times as South African owls. Marie Strauss, conversation with the artist, Dunedin, New Zealand, 8 June 2018.
- 15 Dutch wax-printed fabric, popular in Africa for more than a century, has been the subject of debate and controversy within visual culture scholarship. For Strauss, the fabric recalls her early experiences in South Africa and the layers of meaning generated by the imposition of subsequent encounters with this same fabric, including, more recently, within the fashion industry and the contemporary art world, suggesting the complexity of emotional attachment. A full examination of the implications of this particular fabric in terms of Strauss's own history and the history into which she was born would require an article in itself. In the interests of space, this discussion must unfortunately be deferred.
- 16 Marie Strauss, conversation with the artist, 15 June 2018.
- 17 Hilary Radner, "Cinema," in *The End of Fashion*, eds Vicki Karaminas and Adam Gezky (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 96.

## THE BODY POLITICAL: WEARABLE OBJECTS AS SOCIAL TOOLS

Andrew Last

### LAUREN KALMAN MASTERCLASS AT THE DUNEDIN SCHOOL OF ART, 5 MARCH 2018

"Lauren Kalman is a visual artist based in Detroit, whose practice is invested in contemporary craft, video, photography and performance. Through her work she investigates beauty, adornment, body image, and the built environment."<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1. Lauren Kalman, *But if the Crime is Beautiful ... Strangers to the Garden*, 2016, inkjet print. Courtesy of the artist and Sienna Patti Contemporary Art Gallery.

Lauren was brought to New Zealand by the Dowse Art Museum and the HANDSHAKE project. The HANDSHAKE project was created by Wellington-based jewellery activist, artist, curator, writer and tutor Peter Deckers, from an idea born out of recognition of the need for ongoing support for talented New Zealand graduates after completing their jewellery art study. HANDSHAKE reverses the old apprentice model whereby a mentee works for a mentor – here the mentor, through feedback and support in the development of ideas and presentation, works more for the mentee.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to running masterclasses at Hungry Creek Art & Craft School and the Dunedin School of Art, Lauren was an invited speaker at the opening of Dowse Museum's exhibition, "The Language of Things: Meaning and Value in Contemporary Jewellery."<sup>3</sup>

In Dunedin, Lauren's workshop was attended by 13 students and staff from the Dunedin School of Art's jewellery and textile studios. The objective of the masterclass was to explore and produce a dynamic, human-scale wearable object addressing the issue of wearable objects as performed social tools. Our personal politics are rooted in values and these values can be projected through wearable objects.



Participants were asked to source found objects (around 100); these would ideally be 3D objects – plastic cups work better than old CDs, for example – but anything could work. These were used in the building process, so finds that were inexpensive or free were encouraged. Things that students had used in similar projects in the past included (hundreds of...) old cans, plastic cups, leaves, scraps of industrial material and old shampoo bottle caps. Other workshop materials included bindings such as string, thread, steel wire and, most importantly, a hot glue gun. Finally, participants were asked to bring along a camera.

Lauren introduced the workshop with a slide-show discussion that served as a brief history of wearable protest, objects of identity and craft as political tool. She gave particular attention to the work of contemporary artists working in these areas including Nick Cave, Theaster Gates, Tiff Massey, Tiffany Parbs and Jennifer Crupi. The use of humble materials by contemporary artists transforms them in a way that often exceeds expectations.



Figure 2. Andrew Last at the Lauren Kalman workshop, Dunedin School of Art, 2018.



Figure 3. Using furniture and bodies to establish a position of social dominance. Lauren Kalman workshop, Dunedin School of Art, 2018.

Following the introduction, the participants formed three sub-groups. These groups were led through a series of exercises that provoked thinking about the language that conveys or removes power; and the ways that an object might activate or negate a body's sense of power. In the concluding exercise, individual participants were asked to make a list of things they sought to champion and things they sought to change. The brief called for a selection of a single item from these lists, and participants were challenged to use the materials at hand to make a wearable object in response to their selection.

Remarkably, in the remaining four to five hours of the workshop, everyone made and photographed a work:



Figure 4. Vivian Dwyer



Figure 5. Jose Ran



Figure 6. Andrew Last



Figure 7. Rachel O'connell



Figure 8. Simon Swale



Figure 9. Hope Duncan

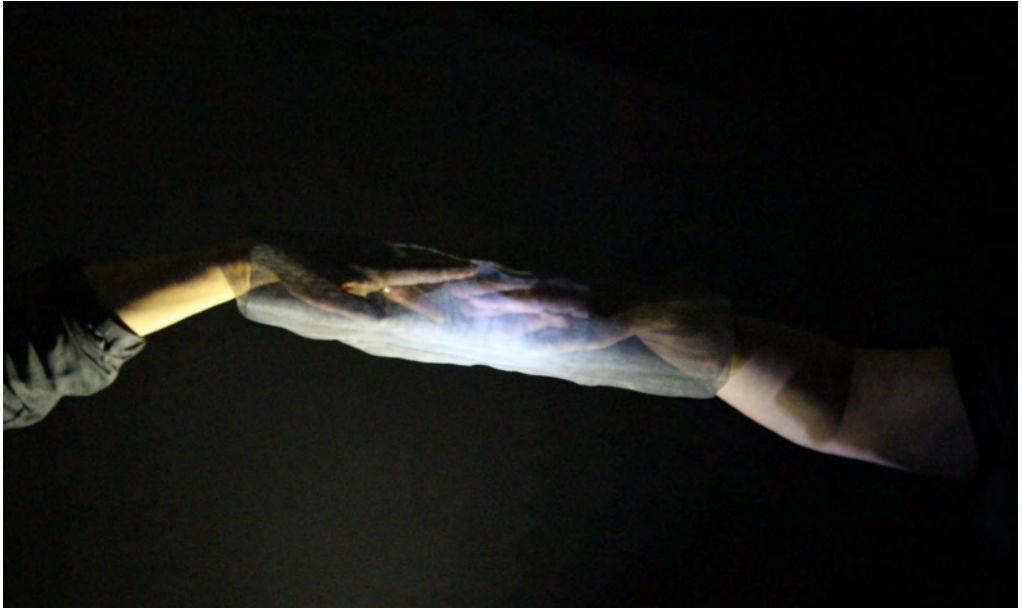


Figure 10. Cyndy Mckenzie



Figure 11. Megan Griffith



Figure 12. Victoria Bell





Figure 13. Andrea Muggeridge



Figure 14. Anataia Wong



Figure 15. Susan Videler

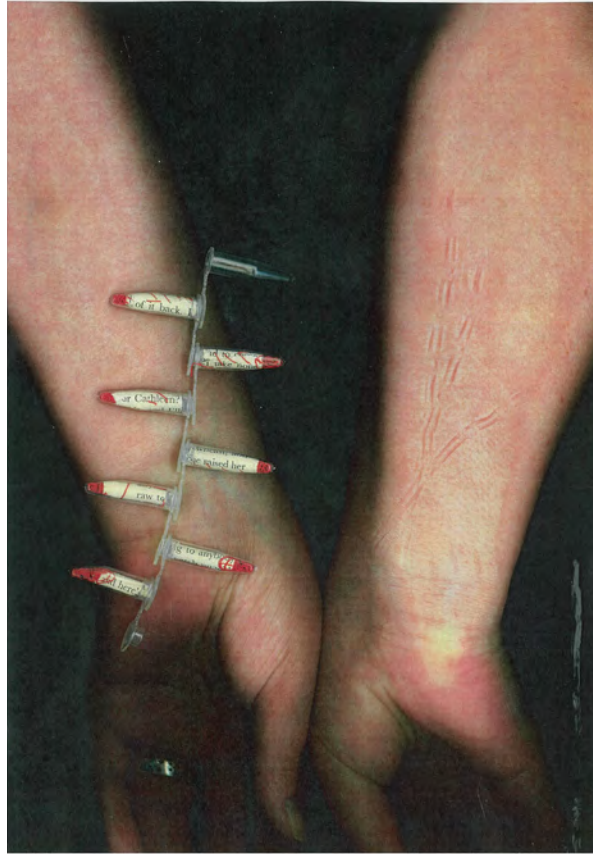


Figure 16. Tracey Kennedy

In addition to the challenges of the masterclass workshop, several participants committed to presenting their work performatively during the same week at the Dunedin Fringe Festival's Short Black Box space in Dunedin's main thoroughfare, Princes Street.

The pressure-cooker format of Lauren's schedule, combined with Johanna Zellmer's organisational zeal, allowed no opportunity for participants to waver in embracing the spirit of the workshop. Students in their second year of undergraduate studies worked alongside Masters students and staff in a non-hierarchical classroom environment. Everyone was pushed to work in ways that went well beyond established levels of familiarity or comfort. The atmosphere of cooperation and mutual support enabled the production of work that will continue to fuel individual practices and that added a richness and diversity to the jewellery and textiles studio curriculum.

All participants shout out a big mihi to Lauren for her generosity and energy, and to Johanna for engineering and supporting the kaupapa of this masterclass.



Figure 17. Cyndy and Tracy, Dunedin Fringe Festival 2018, Short Black Box space.

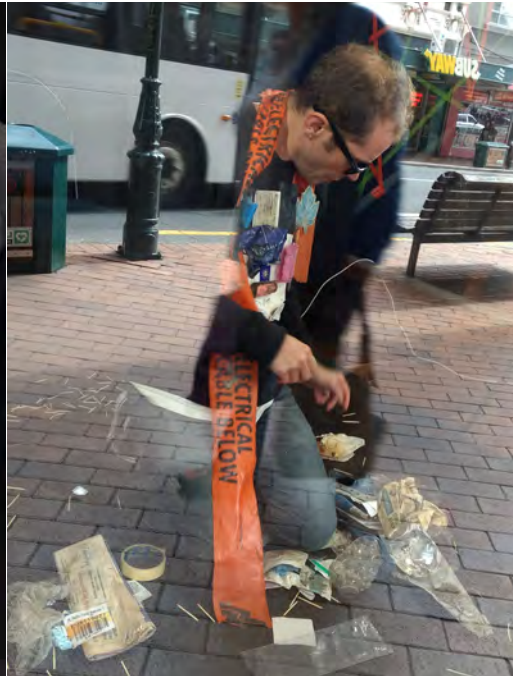


Figure 18. Simon, Dunedin Fringe Festival 2018, Short Black Box space, window reflection.



Figure 19. Andrew Last, Dunedin Fringe Festival 2018, Short Black Box performance, street view.

**Andrew Last** is a Senior Lecturer and the Studio Coordinator for Jewellery & Metalsmithing in the Dunedin School of Art. Originally from Australia, he holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in Gold and Silversmithing from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

- 1 <http://www.laurenkalman.com/about.html>.
- 2 See <https://www.handshakeproject.com/about-us/>.
- 3 See <http://dowse.org.nz/exhibitions/detail/the-language-of-things>.



## CLINK PROJECT4 - AT THE AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM TAMAKI PAENGA HIRA

### CLINKProject Jewellery Collective

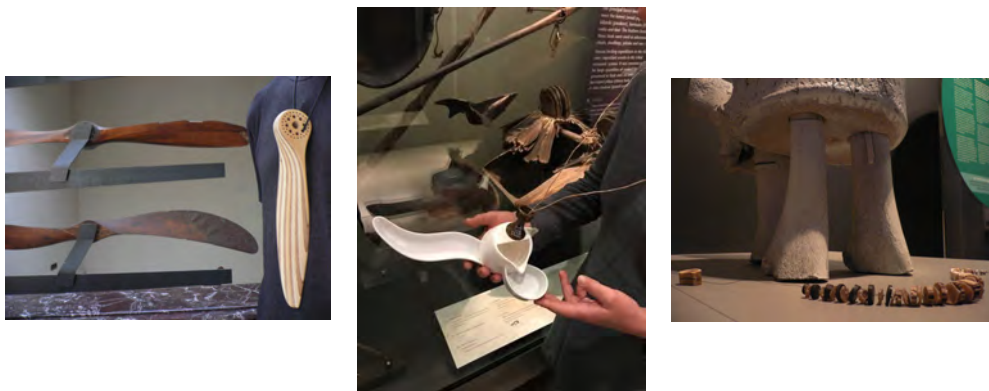


Figure 1. Andrew Last's response to wooden propeller blades from the First World War; Johanna Zellmer's response to a small, multi-spouted kumete; Susan Videler's response to a whalebone chair

This collaborative article will reflect on an initiative jointly established in 2014 by the jewellery departments of Hungry Creek Art & Craft School (HCAC) in Auckland and the Dunedin School of Art (DSA) at Te Kura Matatini ki Otago / Otago Polytechnic. Every year, both departments join forces to form a new collective of both undergraduate and postgraduate students and staff for an event known as *CLINKProject*, with everybody working collaboratively towards one outcome and a final publication.

Each collective plays with the experience of disruption or intervention, often in the form of unannounced pop-up exhibitions in central Auckland, such as jewellery-making on the street or deploying clear plastic umbrellas as moving showcases. Each year's collective gathers for a frenzied week of brainstorming, planning, collaborative making and public interaction, in an endeavour to share contemporary jewellery with a diverse audience. The first two projects unfolded at the Auckland InnerLink bus stops (2014) and in the courtyards of public institutions such as the Auckland Art Gallery and the City Library (2015). Projects #3 and #4 were working with the challenge of how to enact these driving forces within the context of the public gallery settings of Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery (2016) and the Auckland Museum in 2017, the latter being the focus for this report.



In preparing this report and unpacking their shared passion, the project's founders realised that it is essentially based on the philosophy of Community as Practice, as in the notion of 'Ubuntu,' a Nguni Bantu term meaning 'humanity.' It is often translated as "I am because we are," and is used in a more philosophical sense to mean "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity." In New Zealand this concept is mirrored in *manaakitanga*, meaning reciprocity of kindness, respect, hospitality and humanity – nurturing relationships and caring for others and the environment. So essentially, we are talking about a Social Practice.

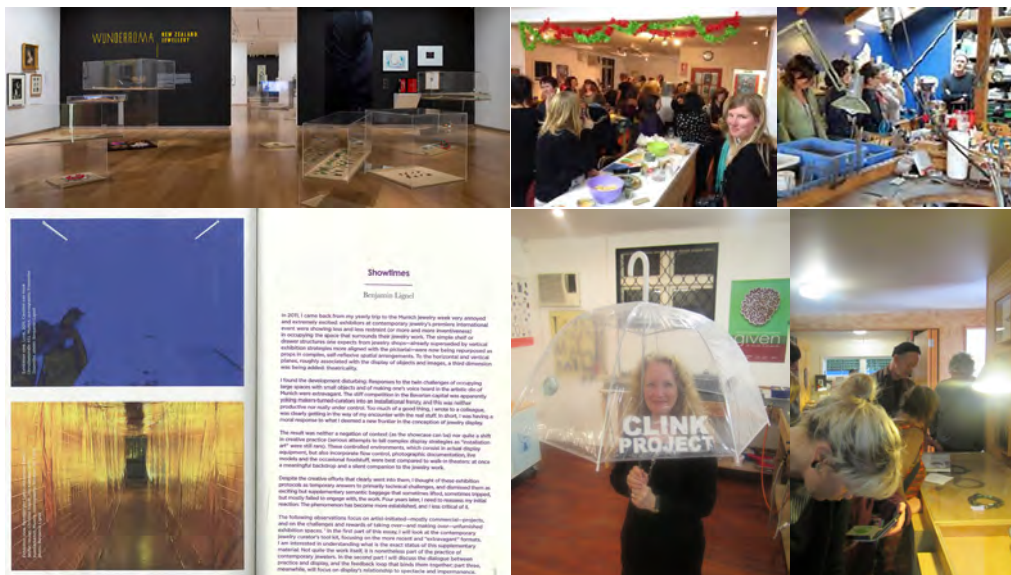


Figure 4. Things around and central to *CLINKProjects*: "Wunderruma" and critical texts; Whau Studios and pin-swaps; Warwick Freeman studio visits.

CLINKProject emerged from a rather improvisational chaos to become a more deliberate chaos over the years. It is motivated by deliberate actions of disruption and intervention. This approach is firmly embedded in art practice, and yet still sits at the fringe of contemporary jewellery despite its inherent socially engaged framework.

A number of events have become central to *CLINKProjects*. These include significant jewellery exhibitions shown in public art galleries, such as "Wunderruma"<sup>14</sup> and "Handshake";<sup>15</sup> the joint reading of current critical texts on craft exhibition practice; the Whau Studios Collective<sup>6</sup> and pin-swaps;<sup>7</sup> artist studio visits (such as to Warwick Freeman<sup>8</sup> and Lisa Walker<sup>9</sup> and Karl Fritsch<sup>10</sup>); and visiting key jewellery galleries in Auckland. All these have been reasons for *CLINKProjects* to date taking place in Auckland. We started the first project in 2014 by joining a pin-swap at Whau Studios. Dunedin students had never even encountered this tradition, but getting everybody to make a pin in three hours collectively was an ice-breaker; and making together became an essential part of future *CLINKprojects*.

## CLINKPROJECT4

The invitation to engage with the Auckland War Memorial Museum (AM) came from this initial project as a loose invitation to respond to the museum collection. In early 2017, emails between the collective and the new curator of the museum's applied arts collection, Grace Lai, began to flow. Compared to earlier interventions, it was clear that the museum was a very different beast. Curator Grace Lai was truly amazing in navigating all the obstacles that are part of such an institution. The project unfolded through a series of collective meetings via Skype and was put to the group as an idea. The collective decided to respond to the museum collection through **making**,

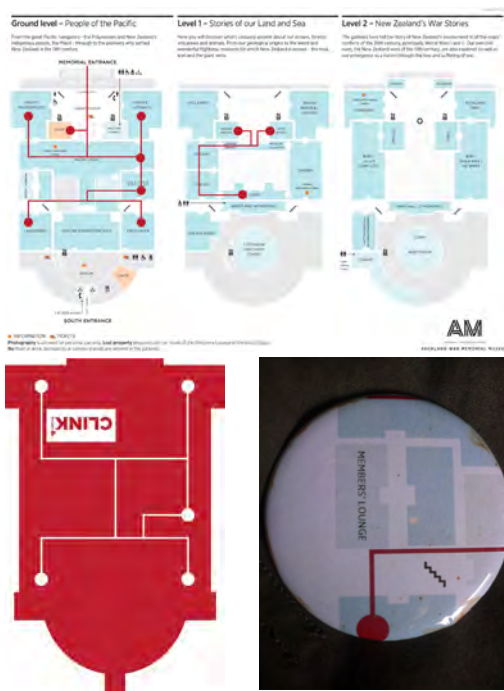


Figure 5. Auckland Museum map. Source for CLINK4 logo.

and resolved to use the existing AM maps to indicate pieces in particular collections that would receive individual jewellery responses. The map became the logo for *CLINKProject4*, while the maps of Level 1 and Ground Level were stamped out into a set of badges for visitors to collect and take away.

The trip to Auckland was broken up by a visit to the Dowse Art Museum in Wellington for the exhibition "Handshake 3: Reflect," curated by Sian van Dyk, followed by a stopover at Karl Fritsch and Lisa Walker's home studios.

At the Dowse, we were met by curator Sian van Dyk and participating jewellers Becky Bliss and Kelly McDonald. Sian spoke of the history of the HANDSHAKE project, instigated by Peter Deckers, in which emerging jewellers are paired with a mentor who challenges and extends their professional practice beyond the realms of institutional education. Sian also explained her curatorial decision-making process, focusing on the involvement of the participating artists.

The "Handshake 3" brief was "Reflect." It elicited a variety of responses including videos; blown glass; oversized enamelled rings, bracelets and neck pieces; carved wood; false stones; old memories depicted in print on handkerchiefs washed over and over and gradually fading; and a bookcase crammed with gilded books, stacked with their pages outward, so that the viewer was confronted with a golden reflective glow. None of the HANDSHAKE work was conventional jewellery in size or appearance. Its layout was complex, in this long gallery bounded by a concrete block wall on one side and a white wall on the other. Although individual exhibits all radiated an intimate presence, reflecting the persona of the maker, the space and layout did not facilitate relationships or conversations between the exhibits.

Kelly McDonald and Becky Bliss both spoke of the freedom that HANDSHAKE allowed them to pursue their own artistic directions, unfettered by commercial or curatorial constraints relating to the gallery. Becky used her installation of stylised, old-fashioned clothes pegs to critique a culture of commodification that makes us dependent on constantly updating (domestic) appliances – spending more money, using more resources and demanding more of our 'leisure' time. Kelly McDonald's *Asomic Echo* consisted of a collection of discarded metal objects, once functional and prized, but now no longer valued; they were arranged on a white board as symbols in asomic language to be interpreted by the viewer, with the aid of a quirky soundtrack by David Long. As invited guests, we enjoyed the permission we were given to engage with the interactive exhibits including Sharon Fitness's give-away orange string, for which we were asked to find a useful object and hang it around our neck, exploring qualities of "jewelleryness."<sup>11</sup> Kathryn Yeats's *Lost Ritual* invited the audience to follow instructions and knit a wreath, encouraging us to take the time to think about grief and loss.

Our next Wellington destination was a visit to the house/studio complex of Karl Fritsch and Lisa Walker. The whole group felt privileged to be received with such hospitality, openness and zero pretence. Both artists work in a studio environment where their thinking, material and process are abundantly visible. Despite these spaces being





Figure 6. Kelly McDonald, Becky Bliss, Sian van Dyk and Johanna Zellmer during the collective's visit to "Handshake 3: Reflect" at the Dowse Art Museum in Wellington.

very clearly personal, both Karl and Lisa were completely fine with our group being in their space, handling their taonga and happily answering any of our questions about their work, techniques and ideas. Although their jewellery is far from conventional, both Karl and Lisa made the point that unlike the majority of the HANDSHAKE work, all the jewellery they make is wearable. Later, in Auckland, we went on further excursions, including the memorable group show "Out of Order"<sup>12</sup> at arTHAUS Orakei, an exhibition of works by 12 contemporary jewellers curated by Sarah Walker-Holt, as well as to the Fingers<sup>13</sup> "Alumni/Update" graduate show, and to Objectspace<sup>14</sup> for the traditional pin-swap. Not only were these exhibitions at either end of the island, they were located at either end of the jewellery spectrum.

In contrast to HANDSHAKE, "Out of Order" was exhibited in the arTHAUS Gallery, a small, well-lit, oddly shaped white space. Sarah Walker Holt, the curator of "Out of Order," met our group at the gallery. Sarah was also one of the participants in the show, as well as a participant in "Handshake 3: Reflect." Although, unlike HANDSHAKE, there was no single theme, a cohesive atmosphere had been created where clever use of metal plinths, a large glass cabinet, an old dental-room cabinet, oddly stacked drawers and slightly off-register wall hangings caught the eye. Makers often repurposed materials; paper clay, folded metal, discarded plastic, paint and graphite on aluminium, cotton and faux flowers, brass, copper, silver and kauri all sat alongside – yet quietly independent of – each other. Invited by the layout to move around each small world and investigate, this was a satisfying and inspirational exhibition put together by a community of jewellers. Caroline Griffin's *Drapus* was particularly attractive – here a visual twist of gathered fabric drawn on aluminium become oversized drapery for the body.

And then Fingers Gallery is always a treat; so much contemporary jewellery, so many novel ideas and materials, all in one place. You would think it would lead to sensory overload and visual weariness and fatigue, but somehow it doesn't. Instead, it creates excitement, a sense of wonder and amazement, and pride at being part of such a lively branch of contemporary art.

The "Alumni/Update" exhibition showcased recent works by Fingers Graduate Award winners from the last nine years, emphasising their continued growth and development. The work was diverse – materials, forms and ideas all very individual to the makers. For some there has been a sea change, in terms of materials or themes, and for others

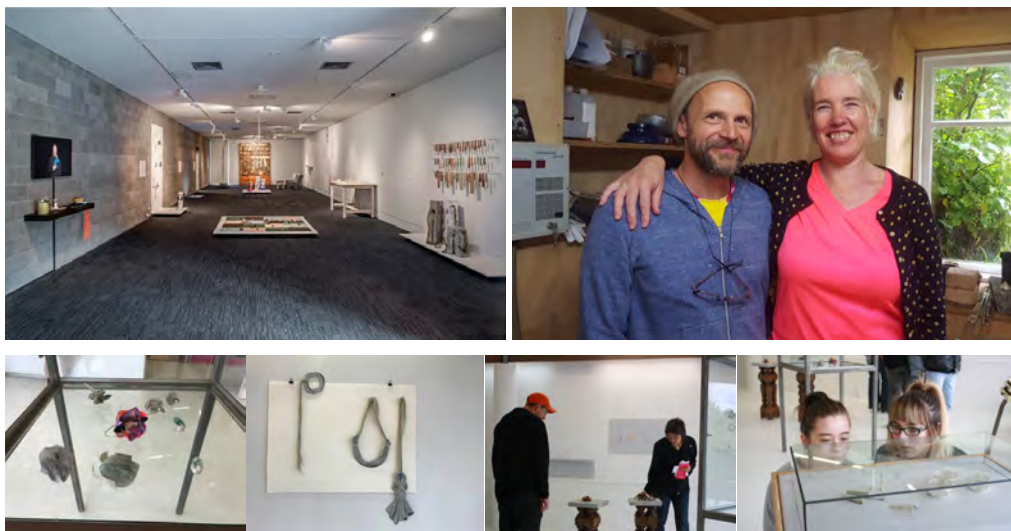


Figure 7. "Handshake 3: Reflect" at the Dowse Art Museum in Wellington; Karl Fritsch and Lisa Walker at their Wellington home; "Out of Order" at artHAUS Orakei. Photographs: "Out of Order" at artHAUS Orakei, by Sarah Walker-Holt.

there has been a continual evolution and consolidation of their processes and ideas. What was apparent, across all the alumni, is their persistent enthusiasm for extending their practice. As emerging jewellers, makers and artists, it is important for us to understand that ongoing growth and experimentation is needed to maintain a dynamic practice, and these alumni are perfect examples of this. Not standing still, always thinking, trialling and developing their skills, techniques and ideas, culminating in wearable pieces that continue to challenge and engage

And so, in good old tradition we had started out as a joint group in Auckland on Day One by discussing related texts, this time in three groups presenting three texts for discussion to each other. These were:

The excerpt "Custodians" from E Diller and R Scofidio's *FLESH: Architectural Probes* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1998). The text considers the authoritative vision of the museum as a custodian of constructed histories.

B Lignel's "The Shop" – published in *Contemporary Jewelry in Perspective*, edited by D Skinner (Lark Books, 2013) – which discusses our encounters with objects as commodities, and how their perceived value is changed by the type of store that holds them: the shop, the pop-up and the concept store.

And, from the research publication *Schmuck Als Urbaner Prozess*,<sup>15</sup> an excerpt from G Schillig's essay "Mediating Realities and 'Magnetizing Space,'" which considers the substantial role of physicality and materiality in public space and their effect on our bodily perception.

Group A looked at the museum and discussed the concept of museum/ mausoleum; a place for things to die. The spaces that are museums and their functions. A collection of things collected by whom? "A 'rarefied' domain for communion with icons ... and the 'lowly' site for cruising and shopping."<sup>16</sup>

The second group discussed humans as sensual and living beings. How do we interact with body and space, where does the body end and the work begin? Where does the body end and the city begin? Ultimately, this involves our relationship with our environments and the sensory spaces in between.





Figure 8. Two of the three key texts informing the emerging projects

The third group discussed the idea of the shop and how different retail spaces are perceived: gift shop, pop-up shop, concept store. Each space encourages a different relationship with the object, and creates different perceived monetary value and status. These spaces encourage us to relate to the object in a certain way and colour our perception of what we are looking at.

These discussions were valuable because they got everybody talking and thinking about their making and also about the Auckland museum as a venue. It was an encouraging start to the project.

The collective had received permission to access the area outside the Museum Shop for the display, within strict limits. There were four showcases available for the work (after all, this is jewellery, right?). With a museum, the structure – understood both architecturally and politically – can often dictate what the public will view: “as a social construct there are fluctuations between the ‘rarefied’ domain for communion with icons of devotion and the ‘lowly’ site for cruising and shopping.”<sup>16</sup> While this quote, from one of the critical texts chosen for the project, referred to MoMA (the Museum of Modern Art in New York), the collaborators couldn’t help but discuss similarities with their own experience – after all, they had been assigned to a spot outside the shop, with a few showcases.

Grace Lai had scheduled a full day at the museum, which included viewing a selection of works from the archives and a guided tour of the various collections. Based on the tours and discussions arising from these fleeting encounters, participants selected a particular piece or idea or system to respond to.

The following couple of days were spent making individual work at the bench, as well as deciding how to best use the showcases and making logo sandwich boards and badges. After carefully selecting an object from the Auckland Museum to respond to, it was time to set out and make! The school at Hungry Creek impressed with its tidy and very well-organised workshop, filled with great equipment including a dedicated stone room. Ideas flowed quickly, but were soon brought back to the reality of only having two days to make. It seemed to be a common feeling among the group, but it made for a very exciting workshop. Energy was high and, for Dunedinites, the excitement of a big city and warm weather was combined with fabulous hospitality from the students and staff at Hungry Creek.

Running on this adrenaline, everybody was go, go, go for the duration of *CLINKProject*. There was a buzz in the air, everyone working individually on their pieces, yet cohesively as a group. The collective came up with a plan to break into smaller groups and divide up the available time to devote to different aspects of the project – one group on flyers and logos, one on the exhibition set-up, another on badges, and so on. Everybody agreed not to use the showcases as vitrines, but instead to turn them into collection objects by wrapping them in Tyvek building paper in

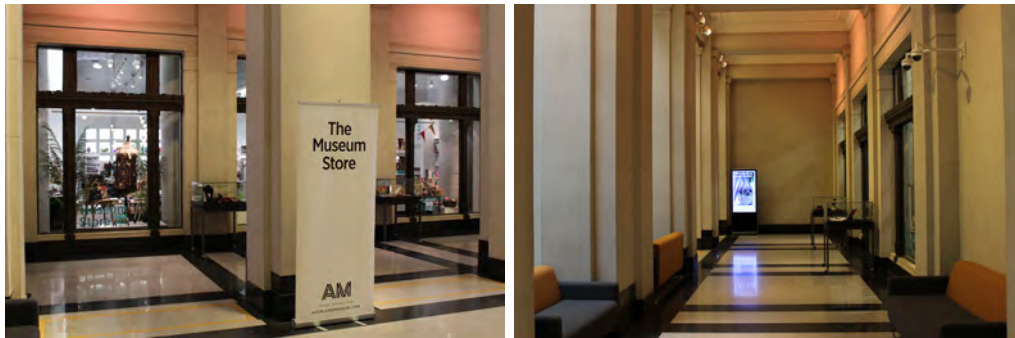


Figure 9. The area outside the Auckland Museum Shop. Photography: Grace Lai.

response to the archives, using our catalogues as collection labels. Work was then to be displayed on top of these boxes as museum pieces, with the heart and soul of the timeless treasures lying in the archives for decades.

The small groups allowed people to effectively manage their time, so that everybody was soon able to get back to their making. When the two days were up and it was time to take a look at what everyone had produced, collaborators were absolutely blown away by what they had managed to achieve. It felt a bit like a collective sigh of relief that everybody was able to produce a finished piece of work. The experience of being in a fast-paced workshop, with a great group of people all striving towards a common goal, is something unforgettable. It was an arduous task, but with the synergy of the group the collective was able to pull off something truly special, which they felt proud to have been a part of – intense yet fulfilling.

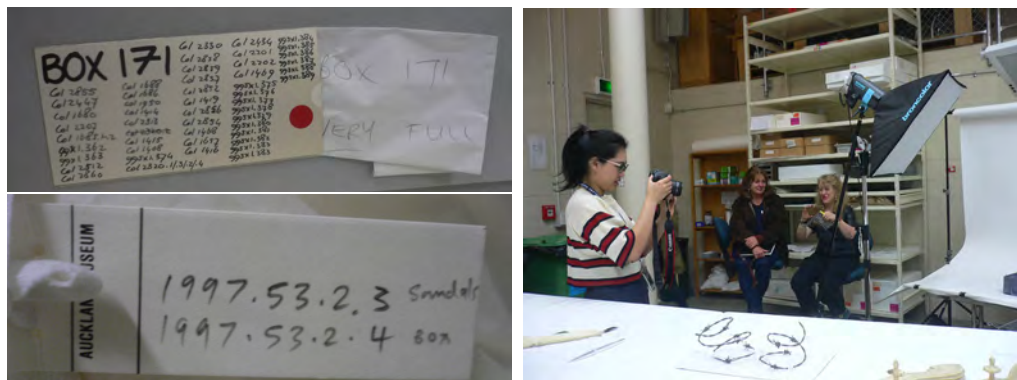


Figure 10. In the Auckland Museum archives with Grace Lai, curator of applied arts and design.

While the creative energy put into the works may have looked rough on the surface, everyone put every second, every minute and every hour they could muster into making their pieces for the exhibition. With only two days in hand, along with the planning and executing of the project (i.e. logo design, display, flyers, schedules), everyone divided their time to the best of their ability so that completed works and plans could form.

The dynamics of making work as an individual in a group setting poses many questions for the maker. The two most common questions were: Is my work good enough? and Why does everyone else's work look so much better?



Figure 11. The final display and audience interaction.

The making was staged over two days and participants' work was viewed by the group in the beginning stages. However, commentary was limited and all of the participants were thoughtful and respectful of each other's ideas, process and materials. The group energy gave participants a sense of being 'OK,' allowing them to shed the initial insecurities associated with the insular. The beauty of the work presented for *CLINKProject4* is that the individual works seemed to lose their status as 'single/individual' pieces and gained a collective strength. The individual contributions worked as a group show or collection, exhibited in the Auckland Museum as 'outsider' work on the 'inside' of a structure that can be viewed as monolithic, both architecturally and philosophically.

In order to engage the viewer in the work, a number of strategies were talked through: putting a small reference on the cabinet housing the parent piece, making an identifier on the floor ... However, all these 'interferences' were flatly refused by management.

The group arrived at three strategies for engagement, utilising a roster system to organise division of labour; changing every two hours during the day of the event. Participants could:

wear the logo around their necks as a piece, while handing out flyers promoting the event

take a drawing book and a drawing chair and sit at the relevant cabinet and draw

and lastly, wear the piece they made and stand at the cabinet for a given time

The first day of the exhibition dawned bright and very windy. The collective arrived at the museum an hour before opening time to set up. A creative group effort got underway, whereby we worked together to find the best way to wrap the display tables in the Tyvek material from the archives.

Then the museum opened. While there was limited interest at the start, throughout the morning the group noticed more and more visitors coming up with flyers in their hands – the people assigned to hand out the flyers were

making a big impact! The sandwich boards worn by the group proclaiming “CLINK:ASK ME” were also very useful, because as well as inviting visitors to question us, they identified us as part of the *CLINKProject* collective. Day Two on Sunday was a lot slower – everyone was calmer and had by now gotten a feeling for the event, and were getting used to interacting with passers-by. There was a great feeling of fulfilment on the day, as what the collective had set out to do had gained a good amount of success.

And then it was time to pack up and go home. But there was an unexpected surprise. While we were packing down, curator Grace Lai asked if one of the pieces, *Made to be Used*, could be left in the museum collection permanently, as she said the piece encapsulated the feeling of *CLINKProject4*. This was an exciting end to the journey, especially when she mentioned that there might be opportunities to continue *CLINKProject* at other museums in the future.

The exhibition was very successful and meaningful for everyone – the collective’s jewellery works had been exhibited to people from all over the world visiting the Auckland Museum. The group’s exhibition schedules helped everything run smoothly. Everybody had a great time working on the project, and exhibiting work in such a spectacular location was very exciting and memorable for all involved. On the final day, the collective was asked to fill a spare showcase with all our items for the museum shop to display as they saw fit.



Figure 12. A single showcase loaded with all the items from the exhibition, left to the museum shop for sale.

## CONCLUSION

Outcomes that bring *CLINKProject* collaborators together year after year include a heightened confidence in the ability to make, in collaborative work practice, in producing a pop-up exhibition, and in the ability to write up one’s contribution as an academic research output.

Other outcomes include the adaptability and resourcefulness that result from the pressures of real-world commitment, deadlines and the necessity to problem-solve. Not to mention the non-hierarchical nature of the





Figure 13. The CLINKProject collective throughout the years.

projects, enabling participants at all levels of professional experience to make equally valued contributions to a collaborative project. Then there is the power to fail, which is not intrinsic to craft and its history. And last but not least, the fact that through effective collaboration a project may be realised that is greater than the sum of its constituent parts.

As mentioned at the start of this essay, this project was born out of a sense of shared isolation, as well as a passion for education and examining the role of intervention and disruption. The founders' shared passion to teach and develop a conversation around exhibition practice in two New Zealand cultural institutions challenged the students to enter unknown territories. This in turn created a collective conscience around community, craft and making.

Some participants have now been part of the collective on four separate occasions, each time bringing with them prior knowledge which adds value to the group – 'Ubuntu' – 'I am because we are.' To quote a comment by Monica Gaspar on Caroline Slotte's exhibition "Knick Knacks": "Dust settles on things that do not move."<sup>17</sup> Our intention is to provide more questions than answers. For something to stay current, it must meet the needs of the community that handles it.

The four projects undertaken to date have included many different aspects of current contemporary jewellery practice – for instance: Using cheap costume and pre-loved items to make work (our first pin-swap in 2014 related to projects like "JUNK: Rubbish to Gold"<sup>18</sup> (by Laura Bradshaw Heap, Jivan Astfalk and Rachel Darbourne) and the Ethical Metalsmiths' "Radical Jewelry Makeover"<sup>19</sup>

And, of course, passing on a single work to multiple makers has been previously explored in numerous contemporary jewellery exhibition projects around the world, as well as gifting back to the community; Kevin Murray's "South Project"<sup>20</sup> is a key example here.

Are we in danger of losing the 'community' or undervaluing the power that such projects have? It is unfortunate that in this age of highly competitive consumerist educational policies, we are experiencing the 'silo effect' of protecting one's own patch at the expense of creating a larger picture. As Rafael Cardoso states in his essay "Craft versus Design: Moving beyond a Tired Dichotomy,"<sup>21</sup> "for craft to survive in the face of overt consumerism, it must embrace the legacy of its own origin – community and shared interaction."

We indeed need to take care of our local currency through bartering, experiences, stories and performances, as well as through providing opportunities to explore 'craft' activism through shared ownership, shared curation and shared authorship.

**CLINKProject4** crossed craft discipline boundaries and once again included a textile artist. The 2017 collaborators and authors were Sarah Atkins, Lucinda Barrett, Dominique Botha, Yeon Joo (Jo) Chung, Clio Hartdegen, Shane Hartdegen, Elicia Hunt, Eilish Jowett, Andrew Last, Yulia Makogonchik, Nikki Perry, Haonan (Jose) Ran, Janette Raven, Kelly Read, Madison Rogers, Susan Videler, Michelle Wilkinson, Anataia Wong and Johanna Zellmer. To find out more about this collaborative initiative between the Dunedin School of Art and Hungry Creek Art & Craft School, see <http://www.thescope.org/> (art & design issues 9, 11 and 13) or <https://www.facebook.com/clinkproject/>.



Figure 14. Renee Bevan, "Stream of Thoughts."



Figure 15(above). Jewelry as a metaphor for creating community Roseanna Bartley. Human necklace: Pendant, (Barcelona Residency, 2005-06), 2007 Edition of six digital photos, each 54x38cm Photograph: Christian Shallert.

Figure 16 (left). Johanna Zellmer's drawing from Kevin Murray's South Ways Wellington Roundtable: Giving Art Away.



- 1 A roving environmental jewellery project devised to activate a creative response to the burgeoning issue of waste plastic within the environment. See <http://seedingthecloud.blogspot.co.nz>.
- 2 "Meanings and Attachments" is an ongoing public-participation project held in different countries with the aim of creating a written, oral and photographic record of people's personal connections to the jewellery that they wear. So far, events have been held in 11 countries and over 2000 people have taken part. "Meanings and Attachments" has worked with many organisations including Tate Britain, The Design Museum in London, The Design Museum in Lisbon, The Design Museum in Gothenburg, The Art Applied Museum in Tallinn, FAD in Barcelona, Kilkenny Arts Festival and The Pratt Manhattan Gallery. See <http://www.meaningsandattachments.com>.
- 3 Occupation: Artist is a Wellington-based group which since 2013 has exhibited widely and hosted local and international artists. See <https://occupationartist.com>.
- 4 Two of New Zealand's leading jewellers, Warwick Freeman and Karl Fritsch, toured the country in search of works that illustrated the nature of adornment and what it has meant to New Zealanders. The result was an exhibition that travelled to Munich, Germany, in 2014, showing later at the Dowse Art Museum in Lower Hutt, Wellington. It was revised for its final appearance at the Auckland Art Gallery, where paintings, photographs, sculptures and drawings were incorporated. See <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/whats-on/exhibition/wunderruma-new-zealand-jewellery>.
- 5 HANDSHAKE is a contemporary jewellery exchange that links early-career New Zealand makers with established, internationally based mentors. Over two years, participants learn from and collaborate with their mentors as they navigate through a series of exhibitions. See <https://www.handshakeproject.com>.
- 6 Whau Studios is a group of contemporary jewellers, ranging from recent graduates to teachers, academics and established practitioners. Since early 2014, they have been working towards establishing a central location for an Auckland-based contemporary jewellery collective. See <https://www.whaustudios.co.nz/about>.
- 7 An integral aspect of the jewellery community is the coming together to share knowledge between established and up-and-coming artists. This practice breaks down the elitism that often accompanies the arts. Jewellery objects make this process possible through their intimacy, mobility and variability, a collection of traits that is unique to jewellery and its making culture. By making a pin with a brief, and a time limit, a pin-swap puts everyone on an equal footing.
- 8 Warwick Freeman revolutionised contemporary jewellery practice in Aotearoa in the 1980s. His work is characterised by the use of natural materials such as bone, stone and shell. His work has been acquired for major public and private collections both in New Zealand and overseas. His international standing was recognised by the Françoise van den Bosch Foundation, based at the Stedelijk Museum, who named him their 2002 Laureate. In the same year, he received an Arts Foundation Laureate Award in New Zealand. See <http://www.thearts.co.nz/artists/warwick-freeman>.
- 9 Lisa Walker is widely regarded as one of the world's most influential contemporary jewellers. Her work directly challenges accepted notions of what is beautiful or precious, and she is continually pushing towards extremes, breaking down conceptual barriers about what constitutes jewellery. She uses a vast range of materials and construction methods. Her work has been acquired by major public and private collections, both in New Zealand and overseas. Walker has received numerous New Zealand and international awards, including the Dutch Françoise van den Bosch Award in 2009, regarded as the leading jewellery award in the world, and New Zealand's Arts Foundation Laureate Award in 2015. See <http://www.thearts.co.nz/artists/lisa-walker>.
- 10 Karl Fritsch focuses primarily on making rings. His work is characterised by rough finishes, visible fingerprints, the use of oxidised silver and mixing materials such as precious stones, plastic pearls and glass gemstones. Fritsch's influence, along with that of fellow jeweller and spouse Lisa Walker, has been important in the positioning of contemporary jewellery in New Zealand. Fritsch frequently works collaboratively with other artists, including sculptor Francis Upritchard, furniture designer Martino Gamper and photographer Gavin Hipkins. Fritsch's work is held in many international museum collections. See <https://www.karl-fritsch.com>.
- 11 A phrase coined by art historian Liesbeth den Besten, conveying the properties and power of jewellery.
- 12 A group show by contemporary jewellers Lucy Pierpoint, Mandy Flood, Lisa Higgins, Macerana Burnell, Michele Wilkinson, Laura Jer, Caroline Griffin, Tracy Watson, Ingrid Van Hussen, Dorothy de Loutour and Sarah Walker-Holt (curator), held 7-15 October 2017. See <http://arthauso.org/event/out-of-order-contemporary-jewellery>.
- 13 Established in 1974, Fingers is the oldest contemporary jewellery gallery in New Zealand. It has become an institution recognised locally and internationally, providing a platform for many artists' careers.
- 14 Objectspace is a public gallery in Auckland, dedicated to positioning craft, design and architecture within cultural, economic and social frameworks to provoke new assessments of works and practices. See <http://www.objectspace.org.nz>.
- 15 See *Schmuck als urbaner Prozess: Artistic Interventions in Urban Space. Documentation of a Research Project*, eds Elisabeth Holder and Gabi Schillig (Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, 2015), 38-9. This publication presents a research and exhibition project initiated in 2012 by the Design Department of the Düsseldorf University of Applied Sciences and the Stadtmuseum of the City of Düsseldorf. Under the guidance of Professors Elisabeth Holder and Gabi Schillig, students explored the different

manifestations of jewellery or adornment in urban space. The creative and artistic experiments documented here led to new objects, performative systems, actions, temporary or permanent installations and interventions that are based on urban space and transcend the definition of jewellery.

- 16 See E Diller and R Scofidio, *FLESH: Architectural Probes* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 163.
- 17 See Monica Gaspar, "The Currency of Craft," in *Currency* (Gmünden: Think Tank Edition 07, 2010).
- 18 "JUNK: Rubbish to Gold" is a playful exploration of community economies (exchange, giving, bartering, gathering, earning, harvesting), putting on display the process of creating the 'work of art.' During a public performance, 31 jewellers 'gifted' their skills, (re)constructing pieces selected from a mountain of "JUNK," creating re-imagined artworks for an exhibition and auction. See <http://rubbishtogold.com>.
- 19 Developed by Ethical Metalsmiths, "Radical Jewelry Makeover" deconstructs the supply chain and creates an alternative system in the form of a 'public performance' of creative jewellery-making. It brings together volunteer miners – people who dig out and donate their old jewellery – with volunteer jewellers and students, working together as refiners and designers. The project concludes with a public event, an exhibition and sale of innovative, 99%-recycled designer jewellery. People who have donated jewellery receive discounts on purchases, and the profits benefit Ethical Metalsmiths' continuing efforts to promote responsible mining. See <http://www.ethicalmetalsmiths.org/projects>.
- 20 Dr Kevin Murray is an independent writer and curator, adjunct professor at RMIT University and research fellow at the University of Melbourne. He is the managing editor for *Garland Magazine*. From 2000-2007 he was director of Craft Victoria, where he developed the South Project, a four-year program of exchange involving Melbourne, Wellington, Santiago and Johannesburg. Four South Ways roundtables invited artists, writers, craftspersons and designers to actively participate in a constructive forum about alternative practices and spaces for ethical art. See <http://kevinmurray.com.au>.
- 21 R Cardoso, "Craft versus Design: Moving beyond a Tired Dichotomy," in *The Craft Reader*, ed. G Adamson (Oxford: Berg, 2010), 321-32.

### REPORT ON A VISIT BY OTTO KÜNZLI

Andrea Daly

Otto Künzli is a Swiss-born contemporary jeweller residing in Germany. He held the chair of goldsmithing and taught the class for jewellery at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich from 1991 until 2014. From 2008 to 2012 he was a visiting professor at the Royal College of Art in London. He has an internationally acclaimed and widely respected contemporary jewellery practice. He has made a significant global contribution to contemporary jewellery and has an impressive international exhibition record.

During his presentation at the Dowse Art Museum, Otto Künzli described himself first and foremost as a goldsmith. However, in stark contrast to the world of fine jewellery, he has been a pioneer of contemporary jewellery. For his exhibition at the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, he was described as someone who "has revolutionized modern jewelry art. In the 45-odd years in which he has been addressing the topic of jewelry, Otto Künzli has carved out for himself a quite unique position of far-reaching international influence not only as an artist and a pioneer, but also as an author and mentor."<sup>1</sup>

In New Zealand, his influence as educator has inspired the practices of renowned contemporary jewellers Lisa Walker and Karl Fritsch, both of whom studied under his tutelage in Munich. Other prominent international contemporary jewellers who studied under Otto Künzli include David Bielander, Yutaka Minegishi and Hellen Britton.

Otto Künzli came to New Zealand as a guest of the Dowse, and was keynote speaker at "Unpacking the Language of Things," a conference that was linked to the corresponding exhibition "The Language of Things: Meaning and Value in Contemporary Jewellery."

During his time in New Zealand, he also held workshops at Hungry Creek Art & Craft School in Auckland and the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic.

At Hungry Creek, the workshop consisted of one-on-one critiques by Prof Künzli of individual jewellers' work. It began with silence and a few minutes contemplation by Künzli, who then spoke to the maker about the work. At this point the maker could respond, explaining or adding context to the work. Through this critique, each of our students and guest jewellers experienced a personalised, focussed interaction with a practitioner who has a vast depth of knowledge and experience and was able to offer a fresh response to their work and ask new questions of them. In addition, just as much learning was done by listening to critiques of others' work.

These critiques were often more rigorous when Prof. Künzli was looking at practicing jewellers' work, and lively debates ensued around a number of interesting questions such as when is a work jewellery and when has it become something else? This prompted a recognition that one's making practice can be larger than jewellery per se, and the various ways in which jewellery talks to its audience.

The respect that Prof. Künzli gave to each person's work was a corollary of the respect with which he engages this area of practice – a recognition of the role of culture in human development and the role of jewellery as an ancient tradition of crafting objects that mediate between our internal and external worlds. The rigour and intensity of the workshop made visible and real to the students the potential richness of the cultural landscape they could choose

to engage with. It also introduced them to the level of expertise and rigour they would need to develop in their own practices.

From day one, the students and makers quickly realised the truth of the following assessment: "Otto Künzli is one of the greats in contemporary art jewellery today. His remarkable career has spanned 5 decades wherein he has created iconic and signature works that define and shape the art jewellery field. Otto's work is hard hitting social and political commentary, emboldened with humour; wit and sophistication."<sup>2</sup> This was true of his teaching and of every interaction at the workshop: inspiring, thought-provoking and memorable.

**Andrea Daly** is a practicing jeweller and tutor who works from her own studio and has been involved in teaching at various institutions since 1990. She is HOD Jewellery at Hungry Creek and was a partner in Fingers Jewellery Gallery from 1991 to 2017.



Figure 1 and 2. A captive audience - Otto Künzli, makers and students at Hungry Creek Art & Craft School, Auckland



- 1 "Otto Künzli. The Exhibition, 09 Mar – 07 Apr 2013;" *Pinakothek der Moderne*, <https://artmap.com/pinakothek/exhibition/otto-kuenzli-the-exhibition-2013>.
- 2 "Lecture: Otto Künzli;" *Craft & Design*, 5 February 2017, <http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/craft/lecture-otto-kunzli>.

## SURFACE. SPACE. COLOUR.

Jessica Ritchie



Figure 1. Jessica Ritchie, *Who's Afraid of Hot Pink?*, 2017, acrylic, oil, spray paint, glitter on aluminium, 122 x 122 cm.

This article represents an overview of my MFA project. My dissertation was titled *Beyond the Surface*; my final exhibition, *Surface.Space.Colour*, was exhibited at the Dunedin School of Art Gallery in September 2017.

In my studio research, I have developed a painting practice reflecting on the art of painting itself: abstract, drawing from colour, light and music. My work is concerned with process, with the exploration of the formal qualities of painting, and of the infinite possibilities of touch with paint. Located within the context of the field of abstract painting, the term 'abstraction' is used in a questioning and provisional sense, rather than as a categorising or labelling term; considering complexity rather than reduction. The paintings aim to show the potential of abstract painting to communicate light and space. Important influences include abstract expressionism, colour field painting and the

relationship between colour and music. The expressive force of painting resides in the materiality of colour; light, surface, space and luminosity.

I began this project by re-examining my previous practice, questioning why it was painting that I was drawn to. The earliest known paintings exist on cave walls. From the prehistoric era people have known the relationship between mark-making, colour, light and time. Painting is an example of a primitive contact with the world that embodied experience promotes. It is an exploration of visibility that does not depend on language. In fact, the creation and experiencing of paintings is a type of making sense of the world that linguistic description and analysis do not capture fully.

I am engaged with painting not only for its self-referential properties – it operates as itself, with its own materials. The elements don't have to refer to or rely on external motifs or objects. Abstract painting has the ability to fully engage the act of seeing and being. In my painting, the marks and gestures are signs of *an* image, rather than *the* image. The fragments create a dialogue with each other in movement; large shapes float, drips descend, some skim across the surface, others are static or frozen. Movement is that of the hand, arm, brush and paint. If shapes are unidentifiable, they do not fix and define the space around them. Shifts in scale indicate complex spatial relations, areas fracture, melt or separate. Painting attests to a process of change and improvisation, where some things are concealed, reinstated and then covered over again.

The fundamental life of any material I use is concretized in that material's gesture: gesticulation, gestation – source of compression (measure of tension and expansion), resistance – developing force of visual action. Manifest in space, any particular gesture acts on the eye as a unit of time. Performers or glass, fabric, wood ... all are potent as variable gesture units: color; light and sound will contrast or enforce the quality of a particular gesture's area of action and its emotional texture.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 2. Jessica Ritchie, *Unashamedly Improvised*, 2017, acrylic, spray paint and flashe paint on aluminium, 40 x 40 cm.

Large brush strokes are a way in and out of the work; they articulate space in a particular way. Physical involvement is evident as a felt response to the world. Each action is representative of a specific moment, a specific action and a specific intention in time. Throughout the painting process, the artist must critically reflect, assess and evaluate the emerging piece, attending to the developing relationships between the drawn line and colour. It is these two elements that are largely responsible for negotiating the space and conjuring sensations, textures, images and memories for both artist and viewer. There is a dialogue between myself and the painting; each painting offers a provisional answer and as the work evolves it suggests other things.



By using a variety of action painting methods, from fast brush strokes to dropping, or slowly pouring paint, energy can be captured in different ways. For example, a calm and 'flowing' visual image is the result of pouring paint, the combination of opacity and transparency, and textured and smooth, the contrast between glossy and matt. There is a relationship between forms that suggests a particular reading of fluidity on the one hand and solidity on the other; the drips and washes that so vividly recall the liquid state of the paint as it leaves the brush.



Figure 3. Jessica Ritchie, *A State of Concentration*, 2017, acrylic, oil, spray paint, glitter on aluminium, 122 x 122 cm.

## COLOUR

For me, the unpredictability of colour; its queerness, its silence, its decoration, its shameless excesses, its resistance to language, its elusiveness, its plasticity, the impossibility of its containment and its inherent abstraction – are the exciting potentialities and promises of colour.<sup>2</sup>

There may be a relationship between colour and emotion, but colours in themselves are not good or bad. They can have a psychological effect on the viewer which is related to perception rather than vision. Colour is compelling, seductive and emotional. Colour is one of the most important elements in my work. Responses to colour are personal and intuitive. Colour is also laden with symbolism and cultural connotation. Colour can represent and evoke emotion; it can have calming or stimulating properties. Bright or strong colours can lead the work to be associated with positive emotions – joy and happiness – or danger and warning. "Colour exists as an unbroken continuum, but the language that directs our perception breaks this continuum down into distinct areas that are red, yellow, green and so on."<sup>3</sup>

Colour can have unstable qualities, as does light; both can be ephemeral and intangible. Different lighting can alter the appearance of colour; so understanding colour can be problematic. Colours influence each other and are

influenced by each other; and colour is a vital tool for creating and evoking an emotional and meaningful experience. Light and colour play a primary role in perception that can activate thoughts and emotions. It is not only about the colour; it is the qualities of colour values that are important – saturation, hue and luminance.

For each individual, colour can mean a different thing. In her essay "Colour for the Painter," Bridget Riley (b. 1931) makes the connection between seeing the colour of things and how a painter sees colour: The painter sees "the pigments spread out on a palette and there, quite uniquely, they are simply and solely colour."<sup>4</sup> The painter has two systems for processing colour – perceptual colour; as in our everyday individual experience of colour; and pictorial colour; the colour necessary to make a painting. Colour as it is perceived in the world is our primary experience of colour.<sup>5</sup> Both ways of seeing colour are present in the work of a painter.

In his book *Chromophobia*, David Batchelor talks about how colour has been perceived by artists, architects and philosophers. He points out that colour has been both a source of fascination and of fear and loathing in Western culture.<sup>6</sup> He explores the concept of chromophobia as colour has often been treated as corrupting, foreign or superficial.<sup>7</sup> He argues that as an object of prejudice in Western culture, colour has been marginalised, reviled, diminished and degraded.<sup>8</sup> Chromophobia is described as the fear of corruption through colour. There are two ways of purging colour. One is to consider colour as the property of some foreign body. Besides defining colour as dangerous, the second is the idea of colour as being in the realm of the superficial, the excessive, the cosmetic and the inessential.

In his 1908 essay "Ornament and Crime," Adolf Loos (1870-1933) declared that ornamentation is amoral and degenerate and an unnecessary hindrance to the advancement of society. Excessive waste and the triviality of ornamentation should be suppressed. For Loos, ornamentation and colour was a superficial burden borne by the oppressed sectors of society; it should be purged and eliminated in order to make way for a social purity, one without "cultural and class baggage."<sup>9</sup> Favouring the intrinsic beauty of function, during a time when Art Nouveau was at the forefront of design, his opposition to ornament extended to anything that could not be justified in terms of what he considered its rational function. Loos insisted that

the urge to ornament one's face and everything within reach is the start of a plastic art. It is the baby talk of painting. All art is erotic. ... The first ornament that was born, the cross, was erotic in origin. The first work of art, the first artistic act which the first artist, in order to rid himself of his surplus energy, smeared on the wall. ... But the man of our day who, in response to an inner urge, smears the walls with erotic symbols is a criminal or a degenerate.<sup>10</sup>

Loos described the act of ornamenting and decorating as superfluous, excessive. Suspicion of colour is reinforced by the *other* or *unknown* being associated with the feminine, vulgar, oriental and primitive.<sup>11</sup> In this case, colour is treated as something foreign or 'alien,' so that it is considered dangerous. "Chromophobia manifests itself in the many and varied attempts to purge colour from culture, to devalue colour; to diminish its significance, to deny its complexity."<sup>12</sup>

French art critic Charles Blanc (1813-82) identified colour with the 'feminine' in art and as something that cannot be detached from life. More than that, he considered colour as a permanent internal threat. As a result, he came up with the idea of either completely ignoring colour or controlling it in order to prevent it from ruining everything by contaminating it. For Blanc, colour is secondary and dangerous and can fall into degeneracy and excess.

According to Batchelor, in contemporary culture the fall from grace is not unlike the fall into drugs. The relationship between drugs and colour goes as far back as Aristotle, who called colour a drug and, before that, to Plato, for whom a painter was merely "a grinder and mixer of multi-colour drugs."<sup>13</sup> In the 1960s, drugs were associated with a distortion of form and intensification of colour: "Think of psychedelia; think of the album covers, the posters."<sup>14</sup> Roland Barthes described colour as a kind of bliss, "*jouissance* ... ecstasy." Overtly eroticising colour; as Blanc did, also gives it the power to overwhelm and annihilate. "For colour is like a closing eyelid, a tiny fainting spell."<sup>15</sup>

Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret 1887-1965), a Swiss-born architect, wrote the purist manifesto *Towards a New Architecture*, which contained his plan for the 'whitewashing' of architecture. He called it the *Law of Ripolin*.<sup>16</sup> "Every citizen is required to replace his hangings, his damasks, his wall-papers, his stencils, with a plain coat of white Ripolin. His home is made clean. There are no more dirty, dark corners. ... Then comes *inner* cleanliness ... no action before thought."<sup>17</sup> Le Corbusier insisted that after eradicating all forms of decoration and reminders of the past, people would achieve "inner cleanliness."<sup>18</sup> It was a quest to enlighten and inspire. The quest for "purity" leaves no room for the individual.<sup>19</sup> This perception also results in colour being used only for decorative purposes in architecture, and therefore as a secondary quality of experience. "It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that, in the West, since Antiquity, colour has been systematically marginalized, reviled, diminished and degraded. ... As with all prejudices, its manifest form, its loathing, masks a fear: a fear of contamination and corruption by something that is unknown or appears unknowable."<sup>20</sup>



Figure 4. Jessica Ritchie, *Necessary Distraction/Abstraction*, 2017, oil and acrylic on aluminium, 122 x 122 cm.

Most of my works centre on colour, texture and how they interact; for example, how colour follows form. When it comes to some of the colours I use, they are often polarising. Whether people love or hate it, either way a saturated 'hit' has immediate impact and emotional charge, and expresses it through the movement of marks – either from pouring or brush strokes. The colour palette also influences the level of emotions captured in an artwork. Colours laid down in certain places can be used to lead the viewer's eye around the picture by creating a path for the eye to follow, and can keep a viewer engaged in an artwork, emphasising the relationships between different aspects of the painting. Colours can be a path moving in space. Colour can equally carry weight as well as lightness, describing a form or an edge, and create new pictorial spaces. The movement may be fast or slow and lyrical, expressing a sense of energy and give movement to a work. The use of metallic paints, as well as glass and glitter, creates a place for light to bounce off so as to bring a quality to a work that could not be painted, because it is using real light, not implied light. These materials also reassert the nature of a painting's flat surface.

## MUSIC

Music is not painting, but it can learn from this more perceptive temperament that waits and observes the inherent mystery of its materials, as opposed to the composer's vested interest in his craft. Since music has never had a Rembrandt, we have remained nothing more than musicians.<sup>21</sup>

Colour has often been compared with music. Music and painting occupy space, albeit not literal space. Colour shares with music a sense of harmony and concord or dissonance. As a sequence of notes is not heard independently of the instrument, no fixed viewpoint of the image can be seen at one time. Images can echo music in the way that the fragments are pieced together; overlapped and appear to be floating in and around each other. Like sound, a painting can have rhythm the regular alternation between silent gaps and beats. The spaces – the voids are anything but empty. The colours and marks in paint can be imaginings of how sounds relate, vibrate, disappear, modulate and

rest on return to the tonic. Colours blur out of focus. The varied forms of tone mark and reveal sounds. Music also has concrete elements and pictorial conventions: pitch, rhythm, tempo, texture, timbre (tone colour), dynamics. All of these share the elements of visual art: symmetry, colour, tone, pattern, repetition, proportion.

Painting and music are not similar forms of expression, nor do musical tones mechanically correspond to certain colours or shapes or illustrate a painting. A reference to music in relation to painting is not to any direct correspondence, but implies more of an inward connection. As a musician who has also composed music, the ideas that drive me to be expressive in music can be the same ideas that inspire my painting; whether it is a physical movement, a particular sound of an instrument, a mood or a layering of particular colours. A musician manipulating the notes of the octave starts with a few forms, coloured according to the key of the impression she wishes to create, and combines and reproduces these in a variety of relations until what is produced is a harmonic composition. One could say that the same process is at play in abstract painting.

Morton Feldman (1926-87) was a musician and composer who found motivation for his compositions in painting, aligning himself with the abstract expressionist painters of the New York School. Feldman often looked to painting as an influence for many of his musical ideas. He was particularly interested in the visual arts of America in the 1940s and 1950s, particularly painters such as Philip Guston and Mark Rothko. Morton Feldman's music encourages listening strategies that extend beyond those traditionally associated with Western classical music. In instrumental music, the way we make sense of what we are hearing is to engage in listening metaphorically. Throughout the history of music, we have become enculturated to interpret various musical configurations as metaphors for emotions or states of being. The perceptual system of the listener is always busy hunting within his or her known cultural and physical environment to assign meaning to the sounds presented within a piece of music. In Feldman's piece *Piano* (for piano, 1977), some keys are depressed while others are played simultaneously; the harmonics ring out softly as the other notes have caused the depressed strings to vibrate. They are not the actual notes heard, but are buried beneath the others, like a background wash of sound. As in painting, the layers are buried.

## CONCLUSION

Although my project began with visual references to the world outside the paintings, these references have slowly disappeared. The process has become more intuitive. Elements previously used, along with experiments, have slowly crept in to form a whole, little by little bringing more and more elements into the paintings. As in networks and systems, fragments came together: the paintings began referring to themselves and to one another. I am interested in an aesthetic which is not categorised by softness or delicacy, but by subversive qualities. My work has become less about image-making and more about physical process. I use exaggerated tones, with a range of different treatment of mediums. At times, painterly gestures refer to various past styles or motifs, testing the limits of the physicality of paint.

In the final exhibition, I curated the completed works to form a cohesive whole, whether in their format, colour, brushstrokes or brightness. I also came to the conclusion that these works needed a lot of space around them – I needed to edit the exhibition dramatically in order to give them that space. The paintings were selected and arranged with useful amounts of space between works, and yet retaining a relational purpose and dialogue between the works; they needed to talk to one another across the space. The exhibition comprised a series of seven paintings which between them explored the formal possibilities of the medium of painting.



Figure 5. Jessica Ritchie, *Constantly Intermittent*, 2017, acrylic and mixed media on aluminium, 40 x 40 cm.

**Jessica Ritchie** is a painter from Dunedin, she graduated with an MFA with distinction from the Dunedin School of Art in 2017.

- 1 Carolee Schneeman, "From More than Meat Joy: Complete Performance Works and Selected Writings" (1976), in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, eds Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (London: University of California Press, 1996), 716.
- 2 Linda Besemer, statement for *Colour*, ed. David Batchelor (London: Whitechapel Gallery and Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008), 224.
- 3 Barry Schwabsky, "A Benjamin View of Colour," in his *Words for Art: Criticism, History, Theory, Practice* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 32.
- 4 Bridget Riley, "Colour for the Painter," in *Colour: Art & Science*, eds T Lamb and J Bourriau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 31-64, at 31.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 6 David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 22.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 23.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 22.
- 9 Charles Jencks, *What is Post-Modernism?* (New York: Saint Martin Press, 1986), 25.
- 10 Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays*, ed. Adolf Opel, trans. Michael Mitchell (Riverside, Calif: Ariadne Press, 1998), 19, [https://www.academia.edu/22800087/Ornament\\_and\\_Crime\\_Adolf\\_Loos](https://www.academia.edu/22800087/Ornament_and_Crime_Adolf_Loos) (accessed 2 March 2017).
- 11 *Ibid.*, 23.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 22.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 Roland Barthes, "Cy Twombly: Works on Paper" (1979), in *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 166.
- 16 Named after an opaque white coat of paint favoured by Le Corbusier.

- 17 Le Corbusier, *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui (The Decorative Art of Today)*, trans. James I Dunnnett (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1987), 188.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Morton Feldman, quoted in *The Music of Morton Feldman*, by Thomas De Lio (New York: Excelsior Music Pub., 1995), 208.



## THE ALCHEMY OF EXILE

Justine Turnbull

The Greeks had two meanings for it: 'eu-topos,' meaning the good place, and 'u-topos' meaning the place that cannot be ... Rachel Menken, *Mad Men*, episode 6: Babylon (2007)

My work is centred around this good place, and the unlikelihood of remaining there, even if we find it. It is a place of loss and nostalgia, love and guilt, innocence and corruption. The title of my Master's exhibition, *The Alchemy of Exile*, conflates the turbulence preceding breakdown and transformation with the universal theme of exile from paradise. I consider chaotic energy to be a necessary aspect of the creative process, one which is exemplified in physical laws and in the capacity for self-destruction in human nature, and which ultimately leaves us to wander East of Eden.<sup>1</sup> In my painting practice, I wanted to capture this unpredictable energy of motion-between-states – an intense, chaotic turbulence that directly precedes new order – as my work at the time had become lifeless due to over-control. My goal for the Master's project was to destroy old habits in order to facilitate the emergence of a new order. I learned to literally destroy my paintings to achieve this new life.

I have noticed the process of transformation in many spheres of life (such as a caterpillar becoming a butterfly), in the physical and cognitive sciences, alchemy, art-making and in the vicissitudes of life – any area where there is creative growth.<sup>2</sup> Some years ago, I realised that the concept of entropy provided a way to explain this constant destruction and rebuilding. Ilya Prigogine has shown that natural processes are irreversible. This not only increases the entropy of the universe and destroys order; but also the opposite; complex structures created by irreversible processes can come about spontaneously and respond to changes in their physical environment, indicating a perfect balance between creation and destruction that originate from the same source. Prigogine comments: "Near bifurcation, systems present large fluctuations. Such systems seem to hesitate among various possible directions of evolution. A small fluctuation may start an entirely new evolution that will drastically change the whole behaviour of the system. The analogy with social phenomena and history is inescapable."<sup>3</sup>

I now believe that this analogy pertains to all levels of creative growth – that chaos is a pre-requisite for all creative transformation. In my own work, the raw energy of the initial marks I had made expressed this upheaval. However, my need to resolve the forms would obscure those marks and my finished paintings felt stifled. I had literally choked the life out of them! I wanted to discover what gave a work of art a life of its own, and whether this intensity of sensation was the reason some art continues to engage for years, even centuries, after making.

Philosophers Gilles Deleuze<sup>4</sup> and Elizabeth Grosz<sup>5</sup> posit a transformative space where this sensation and its affect – and a dialogue between artist and material – can interact, often unpredictably, to create a force which exists independent of subject and maker. Grosz argues that art is an arrangement of chaos, and that artists organise and transform materiality which then resonates with a force of its own – a vibration peculiar to itself. She makes use of Deleuze's concept of "becoming/flux" to identify movement between relational elements – the motion between states – which leads to transformation. Grosz theorises that we are dependent on our animal history, our memory, for the point we are at now, and are ready to transform because of previous "animal-becomings," or a new order that has been reached before. But, she says, art is not simply a building upon our animal past – it is an emergence of new form, where sensations have reached the right conditions to express themselves.

Painter turned academic James Elkins uses the analogy of painting and the alchemical processes of gestation and distillation to illustrate a similar point. He presents these analogies primarily through a discussion of substances and how they occupy the mind of both painter and alchemist, and notes that alchemists and painters both use rational control combined with intuitive freedom to reach their goals. Discussing gestation, Elkins believes that where the experience and understanding of the artist increases – and given the right intensity of sensation found in the motion of states in-between – the substance may transcend its materiality and become more than the sum of its parts. He describes the process of distillation as that moment when paint forms itself into something more than itself, as the "unpredictable, dangerous agitation that immediately precedes transcendence."<sup>6</sup>

In an attempt to define creativity, cognitive scientist Margaret Boden<sup>7</sup> argues that a combination of unpredictability and constraint is essential, and together these result in original thinking. She refutes the idea that art is just a novel combination of previous ideas, arguing that an element of unpredictability in a truly creative idea is crucial. Boden recognises that there must be an established style of thinking, or conceptual space, whose structural features can be mapped. She gives the example of jazz melodies as a conceptual space, in the domain of music, whose limits, contours and pathways can be mapped, explored and transformed in various ways. Boden suggests that knowledge of the structural features and some notion of how a new idea can fit into it, combined with an unpredictable element, can elicit transformation. Thus, there is a balance of chaos and control in the art-making process – unbridled and intuitive mark-making is balanced with an understanding of the limits and capabilities of domain-specific processes, even if these rules are then broken.

This idea of a structure that forms the building blocks for a new order is echoed in the birth of a butterfly. Beatrice Bene quotes evolutionary biologist Elisabeth Sahtouris:

Inside a cocoon, deep in the caterpillar's body, tiny things biologists call 'imaginal discs' begin to form. Not recognising the newcomers, the caterpillar's immune system snuffs them. But they keep coming faster and faster, then begin to link up with each other. Eventually the caterpillar's immune system fails from the stress and the discs become imaginal cells that build the butterfly from the meltdown of the caterpillar's body.<sup>8</sup>

This is a neat example of the process of transformation, and the caterpillar represents the scaffold upon which a new life is built. These ideas influenced, perhaps unconsciously, the way I began to work in the studio. I was in the experimental phase of the course and had started using cheap materials as my success rate wasn't great! I made a painting out of acrylic on paper which had some good ideas, but wasn't working visually. I was so fed up I attacked it, obliterating it by blurring and scraping back the paint, dripping and flicking, and using a condensed tonal range to obscure large areas of the forms. The result was a painting with mystery and mood.



Figure 1. Justine Turnbull, *Beauty as Burden*, 2016, acrylic and oil on paper, 150 x 100 cm.



Figure 2. Justine Turnbull, *Template*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 120 cm.



Figure 3. Justine Turnbull, *Template*, 2018, oil on canvas, 120 x 120 cm.

Having a structure underneath that could be fused with a new idea, and an element of chaos, fitted with my theoretical concerns and played out in this work. The structure is hidden, yet integral to the outcome and therefore never truly lost.<sup>9</sup> It represents that which is unknown and unseen, yet which precipitates sudden changes of fortune and overturns the established pattern of life. This template represents an intelligent and orderly plan behind the apparently random changes in life.

Myth acts for me as another template in terms of narrative. Just as referring to art-historical work gives a starting point for pose, colour or composition, myth can be used as a key to navigate the structural features of say, losing one's innocence, job or loved one – examining these maps in depth and detail may help us ride the wave of change. Myths express the profound, permanent tendencies in the nature of man; thus the idea of God expelling Adam and Eve from paradise for their sins, and loss of innocence in general, is universally appealing. The process of transformation – or death, if we do not have the required learning capacity to creatively self-organise and transform – and being constantly expelled from all we build, causes anxiety and alienation. I have learnt techniques from the neo-romantics and other contemporaries to express these feelings without succumbing to sentimentality. For example, Figure 4 is an exploration of anxiety based on Manet's *Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe*, which shows a group of figures crowded into an intimate space, yet isolated.



Figure 4. Justine Turnbull, *Exposure*, 2017, acrylic and oil on canvas, 120 x 120 cm.

The work in my exhibition referenced art history, often from the Baroque period. I am naturally drawn to the drama and extravagance of the Baroque with its dynamic compositions, rich colours and the use of chiaroscuro. This latter technique has connotations of emergence – an acknowledgement that transformation is a painful process which is often undertaken unseen, such as with birth of a butterfly or the journey through grief.





Figure 5. Justine Turnbull, *Limen*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 100 cm.



Figure 6. Justine Turnbull, *Limen*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 150 x 100 cm.

Some work I've made over the last couple of years shows great change from under- to overpainting, and in some the differences are subtle. Nevertheless, the practical outcome is that the underlayer provides me with the confidence to play *with* the material,<sup>10</sup> rather than flogging it to death. I enjoy both processes – the tighter more accurate portrayal (as with the resolution achieved in the hand of the Madonna in the underpainting of *Limen*), and the looser, more expressive qualities that celebrate the sensual nature of oil paint in the top layer.

In conclusion then, change is an evolutionary process that occurs throughout life and creativity. When sensations have reached the right conditions to express themselves, an agitated energy builds, preceding death or transformation. In the studio, a combination of structure, an idea whose time has come and this element of unpredictability work together to create a new order. In my own practice, I have adapted my process to create a stronger dialogue with the material. The underlayer represents structure, while the unpredictability is in the material itself, and it is this which I explore through the top layer of oil. The idea of Utopia – equilibrium – is one we strive toward. But once a level of completion is attained, we must sum up,<sup>11</sup> and our growth as artists and people insists on our expulsion.

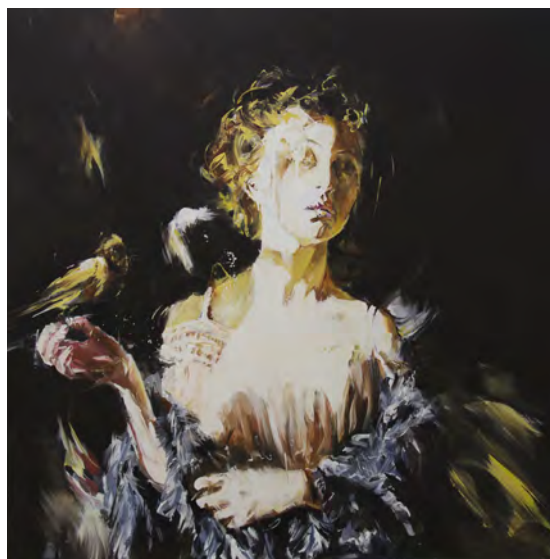


Figure 7. Justine Turnbull, *Reckoning*, 2017, acrylic and oil on canvas, 120 x 120 cm.



**Justine Turnbull** gained an MFA in painting from Dunedin School of Art in 2018. She had a highly successful Master's exhibition in Wellington and won the People's Choice Award at the NZPG Adam Art Award this year. Justine tutors part time, and works from her studio. Follow her on instagram - <http://www.instagram.com/justineturnbullart/?hl=en>

- 1 Genesis 4:16: "So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden."
- 2 Beatrice Bene has been working on a similar concept, and cites systems as diverse as natural ecosystems, social systems, the Hero's Journey and the three-act story structure as evidence of this "archetype of change" at work. Beatrice Bene, "Demystifying the Pattern(s) of Change: A Common Archetype," April 2007, <https://beatricebene.com> (accessed February 2016).
- 3 Prigogine is a Belgian scientist who received a Nobel Prize in 1977 for his work on the thermodynamics of systems operating dynamically under nonequilibrium conditions. He argued that systems that were far from equilibrium, with a high flow-through of energy, could produce a higher degree of order: Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature* (New York: Bantam, 1984).
- 4 Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W Smith (London: Continuum), 1981.
- 5 Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press), 2008.
- 6 James Elkins, *What Painting is: How to Think about Oil Painting, Using the Language of Alchemy* (New York: Routledge, 1999).
- 7 Boden, Margaret, "Creativity and Unpredictability," *SEHR*, 4:2: Constructions of the Mind (updated 4 June 1995), <https://web.stanford.edu/group/SHR/4-2/text/boden.html> (accessed February 2016).
- 8 Bene, "Demystifying the Pattern(s) of Change."
- 9 "Omnia mutantur, nihil interit" is a phrase used by Ovid in *Metamorphoses* meaning "Everything changes, nothing perishes."
- 10 According to Jane Bennett, because artists are interested in the force or tendency found in matter; they develop a deeper understanding of a specific material and can have a productive collaboration with it. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). My own experience of learning to let the paint speak was profound.
- 11 *Reckoning* is inspired by the times of summation in our lives, when we reap the harvest of our choices and a new beginning emerges from the past.

## SURROUNDINGS

Yong Wei Lim

### INTRODUCTION

The stories that inspire me have long contributed to my artwork. I have used this method since undertaking my diploma studies. I particularly enjoy stories that contain elements of the mysterious, alienation and unforeseeable circumstances. They reveal a twisted world that I enjoy 'digging into.'

As an international student, adjusting to a completely new environment is not as simple as making new arrangements for eating and sleeping. Things may seem fresh and new at first glance, but when I looked around again, I found there was nothing I could totally depend on except myself – or perhaps my bed. Although I am not basically an outgoing person, I do feel the need to make contact with new people. One may say that you can't try too hard to connect with other people, but when I do make the effort, I have no idea how much I will receive in return – this can be very tiring. While I enjoy being alone, having too much time for myself led me to think that I might be wasting my opportunity to study in New Zealand. As a result, I have started to reach out to the people around me.

The process of establishing an identity has led me to think of my friends who have moved with their families from Malaysia to New Zealand and have had to adapt to a very different culture. Their progress can be compared to laying transparency film over an object as they adopt new interests, while aspects of their original cultural identity are retained.

These tensions are one reason that the works of the Japanese writer Haruki Murakami are so appealing to me. Furthermore, the feeling of connectedness I experience when reading his stories has certainly given me the urge to create something based on them. As a result, I am hoping to represent them in ways that reveal my own identity in my relationship with my surroundings.

In my project, I explore a range of possible approaches to presenting my work. Painting is a practice that engages with material and surface in various ways, and I am excited to see how my subject matter elicits different ways of looking at things. As I proceeded, I researched the practices of three artists whose approaches are related to my own studio practice: Belgian artist Luc Tuymans, who works on representation and historical subjects; American artist Elizabeth Peyton, who paints portraits of friends and celebrities; and Edouard Manet, a nineteenth-century Impressionist who painted scenes of people and everyday life.

The major connection between these artists and my work is their use of photographs in the creation of artworks. Furthermore, the factor linking my choice of these artists and the novels of Murakami is the focus on mundaneness, the texture of everyday life. In addition, I draw on studio theorists like Carole Gray and Julian Malins, whose book *Visualizing Research* focuses on studio methodologies; Richard Wollheim's essay "What the Spectator Sees," that explores how the mind works when viewing an artwork; and Graeme Sullivan's writings on the role of theory in studio work.

## HARUKI MURAKAMI AND HIS WORKS

Haruki Murakami is a well-known Japanese writer, born in Kyoto in 1949, shortly after World War II. Although growing up with parents who were immersed in Japanese literature, he developed a strong interest in Western writers that began when, as a boy, he purchased a cheap English paperback from some sailors. This happened after the family had moved to Kobe; as a port city and trading hub, it was one of the few Japanese cities open to the West. This development brought a huge international influence to bear on Murakami's work; in an interview, he recalls how he used to idolise Scott Fitzgerald, Truman Capote and Fyodor Dostoyevsky.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of these influences, critics like Kenzaburo Oe accuse Murakami of not being an authentically "Japanese" writer.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, his novels are full of references to Western music of his own era – one of the hallmarks of his work. He frequently uses songs either as titles or to describe an emotion or location.<sup>3</sup> For instance, in the novel *Dance Dance Dance* (1988), he writes: "The next thing you know, they'll be playing Gregorian Chants in bathhouses, Ryuichi Sakamoto in tax office waiting rooms."<sup>4</sup> In an interview, Murakami disclosed that he has to listen to music while he writes. He says that he has learned so much from music – harmony, rhythm and improvisation – and by bringing these elements into his writing, they aid him in creating what he calls a "rhythmic novel."<sup>5</sup> Although Murakami's musical era was before my time, I am familiar with 1970s musicians such as The Carpenters, due to my father's influence. At the same time, the songs mentioned in Murakami's stories make me want to listen to them in the hope that they will bring me closer to the stories themselves.

Before Murakami became a professional writer, he owned a jazz club. He was also a "huge bookworm" and would put aside money to buy books no matter how hard life was. He was first inspired to write a novel by the impact that a single sound made on him. One day, while attending a baseball game, the unique sound of the bat striking the ball bumped his brain circuitry onto new pathways. Following this experience, he gradually began writing in his spare time and sent some of his efforts off to literary competitions.<sup>6</sup> He debuted as an author in 1979 with his first novel *Hear the Wind Song*, winning the Gunzo Award, which he took as motivation to continue writing. It was after *Pinball* was released in 1980 that he decided to become a full-time writer.

As Murakami is a postmodernist writer, one would not expect the traditional lifestyle of Japan to be a focus of his work. The author Yoshinobu Hakutani says that "His characters eat pasta, McDonald's hamburgers, sometimes vichyssoise."<sup>7</sup> His work gives the feeling that "one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McD for lunch and local cuisine for dinner; wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and 'retro' clothes in Hong Kong"<sup>8</sup>. This is relevant to my life in Malaysia where Western culture is often favoured as a 'high-class' experience. For instance, steaks, pasta and drinking wine or soda in fancy glasses are now the choices made for special occasions. Seeking and establishing a sense of place in a new country has made me curious about how some of my friends have also adapted to life in New Zealand.

Murakami's work emerged during the post-war period in Japan, when changes in society brought hard times for many and led to people questioning the status quo. At the individual level, many people shied away from creating human relationships as this takes effort, and the gain is not always equal to the energy invested. In his works, Murakami foregrounds the communication of individuals with a world involved in the complexities of rebuilding a shattered society, often to the extent that a person's emotional and psychological capacities reach their limit. He is convinced that changes to one's surrounding do not automatically turn a person into a whole new being. In the novel *Norwegian Wood* (1987),<sup>9</sup> Toru, the male protagonist and first-person narrator and his high-school friend Naoko move to another city in an attempt to escape their past. However, the earlier suicide of their best friend continues to affect their new life. After years of struggling, Naoko also decided to commit suicide, leaving Toru alone in search of a new identity.<sup>10</sup>

The key novels that I focused on for my project were *Norwegian Wood*, *Dance Dance Dance*<sup>11</sup> (1988) and *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (1985). Murakami's novels often come equipped with a distinctive

narrative voice, along with a puzzling plot. Many of his stories leave the final fate of his characters vague, leaving his readers to imagine the outcome. This has left me thinking, how important actually is a conclusion? Are they really so indispensable? The subject matter that I chose for my project came mainly from my surroundings – for example, my friends. The fleeting relationships that float about between me and them is a sort of uncertainty. We cannot see the future. There is nothing to predict what will happen as time passes by.

The complexity of Murakami's work is augmented by the fact that some of his novels are set in surreal worlds. For example, *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*<sup>12</sup> is set in two separate worlds in the mind of the protagonist. The treatment of conscious and subconscious, reality and dream, is handled in a very unusual way in this story. This can be very confusing at first, but once you connect the dots you find yourself in a totally new world. Murakami's work is characterised by the motifs of exit and entrance, inside and outside, themes that mark the characters as they seek to remedy their sense of loss.

One of the recurring backdrops in his writing is the forest, which acts as an important metaphor in many of his novels. For example, in *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, the whirlpool on the "other side" of the town is located in a forest; the town guard discourages the protagonist from going there as the woods are full of darkness. In *Norwegian Wood*, the woods are where Toru and Naoko took refreshing walks together; and also the place where Naoko hung herself, while in *Kafka by the Shore* (2002)<sup>13</sup>, Kafka lives alone in a small hut in the woods for a few days, trying to settle his uncomfortable thoughts about predictions made about events to come.

The exploration of human emotion plays a major part in Murakami's works, whether one considers the stories told, the characters or the many other things that are talked about in his novels. The stories frequently carry a sense of melancholy and nostalgia, as well as a wealth of mixed feelings that are hard to put into words. It is these elusive feelings and ideas that I have sought to use my paintings to express.

In addition, Murakami's stories are full of mundane details that have mysteriously captured my attention. Strange as they seem, these things make sense of a kind, even though they might not sound 'useful' in any obvious way. His writing is also marked by a sense of humour that helps make his books page-turners. One of my goals while working on this project was to read as many of his works and other people's writing about him as possible, so that I could have a better idea of how I might translate his work into my own visual vocabulary.

Reflecting on this process, I thought about how I approach his work as a reader; the process of digesting his words. In *Visualizing Research*, Gray and Malins point to the value of the knowledge accrued by explorers who have visited similar terrain.<sup>14</sup> In other words, in order to gain a full picture of Murakami's work, it is important to read how he is perceived in the world of literature. For instance, the 2012 thesis by Midori Tanaka Atkins deals with the literary landscape of Murakami's work, which she divides into two sections: The World of Murakami and Murakami in the World.<sup>15</sup>

Although I am inspired by Haruki Murakami's work, this does not imply that I am working directly from insights gleaned from his novels. Rather, I am using his work as a guide for my project concept: having transferred to new environments, his characters are experiencing similar events to myself.

## ART INFLUENCES

In my work I am influenced by artists who have connections to my own work and to Murakami's writing. The key element that links Murakami and these artists is their ability to capture both the mundane and mysterious elements of everyday life. For example, Elizabeth Peyton's notion of "capturing humanness" is also a strength of Murakami's writing. An interest in politics and historical questions is common to Murakami and artist Luc Tuymans. In addition, human figures are portrayed with delicacy and clarity in both Manet's paintings and Murakami's texts – where words turn into images and portraits into stories. The art practice of these artists is related to postmodernism, where

their role as artists and the act of creating artworks is constantly being questioned. For Manet's generation, artists could legitimately present their subjects using images and objects drawn from everyday life. In their turn, Peyton and Tuymans have inherited the approach pioneered by Manet.

Elizabeth Peyton made her mark in the art world with her arresting portraits. She takes for her subjects both the people around her and iconic figures. She uses both photographs and live models for her paintings. She seeks to express the humanness of her subjects by uncovering it in the process of painting. As she said in an interview with the *New Yorker*, "I really love the people I paint. I believe in them, I'm happy they are in the world."<sup>16</sup> According to the artist, when doing celebrity portraits, she does not see her subjects in the way that the media presents them; rather, she seeks to portray them in a state of serenity and living an everyday life in the same way as other people do.<sup>17</sup>

In my own work, I am also exploring ways to configure my paintings through gaining an understanding of my models, who are friends that I spend time with. Peyton comments that she is drawn to her subjects through a focus on particular moments – this fleeting feeling becomes a motive for preserving them. The concept of 'presenting a moment' is something that I want to develop in my own work.<sup>18</sup>

In Peyton's painting, *Ken and Nick*, two young men are shown resting on a couch. Staring into the distance, their expressions are tired. The man in the dark green shirt has a book on his lap, suggesting that he has been captured by the artist during a moment of leisure. The postures of both subjects are very relaxed. The simplicity of their clothing and the detailed patterns on the couch show that the artist has put some thought into the patterns and textures used in the painting.



Figure 1. YongWei Lim, *Adrian and Ian*, 2017, oil on canvas, 23 x 27 cm. Photograph: The artist.

My painting *Adrian and Ian* (Figure 1) shares some similarities with *Ken and Nick*. It shows an intimate space where two young men are sitting next to each other; composition is built up with simple blocks of colour covering a large area of the canvas. In both works, details float like whispers around the figures – the decoration on the wall, a random leaflet on the sofa; and, in *Ken and Nick*, the book that rests under one figure's hand and the polka dot pillow underneath the other's resting head. Also, in both paintings the composition is cropped, with the edges of objects cut off. Nevertheless, it is obvious that a shared space is being presented in both works.



Despite these two paintings being quite similar in mood, my work is enclosed in a darker setting. Its surface is duller and less glossy than Peyton's as a result of the materials used, reflecting the difference between using canvas or board as the base medium.

Although Peyton's colours are crisp and bold, the works have a sense of fragility. With the intention of showing how people really are, Peyton focuses on facial expressions and their connections with her subjects' environment. Thoughts and decisions are constantly passing through our minds; these changing variables show the extent to which people project themselves out into the world. As time passes, holding a single facial expression can be nerve-racking. Furthermore, techniques such as the use of broad-brush strokes in thin glazes and keeping details loose and simple make her figures visually attractive. And her use of vibrant colours and watery effects allow her subjects' emotions to unfold. Peyton's minimal use of structural elements in her paintings further enables her to impress viewers with her soulful portraiture.

In her *Flower Liam*, swift brushstrokes are evident in the background and parts of the figure's clothing. Highly saturated colours in different tones wash over the surface. Personally, I appreciate the way in which the subject's gaze makes him look as though he is telling a story. An unconscious melancholy merges with the various formal elements of the painting, especially the blues which are present in over half of the composition.



Figure 2. Yong Wei Lim, *Watercolour Portrait of Jia Hui*, 2017, watercolour on paper, 18 x 14 cm. Photograph: The artist.

In producing my *Watercolour Portrait of Jia Hui* (Figure 2), I discovered how learning about Peyton's work has given me new insights into working with watercolour. In particular, I learned how to apply sheer washes of colour over the figure. Subsequently, dark brown was used to create a contrast with the opacity of the other colours and to contour the subject's facial features. I followed this with swift lines and loose curves to represent the folds in his clothing. Jia Hui is a stranger I met in 2017. Although I did not develop a deep understanding of him, conversation and the use of photographs have helped me to realise his emotions in the painting. His unphotogenic expression reveals his 'true self'.

Edouard Manet is one of the most widely discussed artists in Western art history. His failures and attempts to participate in the Salon while determining his own path have been well documented. The message of 'living in the moment' is evident throughout his work. Manet declared, "You must be of your time and paint what you see."<sup>19</sup> As I explored Manet's paintings, I found that a handful of subjects, such as Berthe Morisot, were portrayed again and again.

Manet's painting style developed throughout his career; from realism to the abstraction of lines, colours and tones. In *Interior at Arcachon* (Figure 3), a sense of depth is created by a rather intuitive method. The application of a cool, deep, thick grey gives depth to the background; paint is applied and then scraped off; thin washes and strokes are used to render details in an abstract manner and create a sense of flatness within the scene. The intimate size of the painting helps capture the atmosphere created by the two figures resting by an open door; with the sea beyond.

In the same manner, in my oil painting *N.G. Chilling* (Figure 4), objects are painted in a simplified way, with a sort of flatness – a technique I regard as a development of my handling of the painting surface in my previous project. To enable viewers to gain a better appreciation of the living space depicted here, simple lines and tones are used. Dark, thick navy browns and greys cover sections of the painting opaquely, in contrast to the pastel-like purples and pinks; the two techniques complement each other; making the setting ideally lit. Our gaze ranges across a cluttered corner; comfortable furniture and items neatly arranged in the cupboard. Some objects have been deliberately cropped in order to enhance the harmony of the interior as a whole.

While both Manet's work and mine takes people with whom we have close relationships as subject matter, our work is set in very different surroundings. While Manet uses formal settings, mine are on the casual side. In contrast with Manet's work, I apply dabs of bright colour amid the darker hues (of the sofa and carpet, in the case of *N.G. Chilling*), a feature I hold in common with Peyton's paintings. The mix of different colour saturations constitutes an invasion of the painting surface. In place of Manet's imprecisely rendered but well-arranged elitist aesthetic objects, the objects in my paintings retain much more detail and are used to bring out the identity of the figures portrayed.



Figure 3. Edouard Manet, *Interior at Arcachon*, 1871, oil on canvas, 39.2 x 54 cm. Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA. Source: Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA, <http://www.clarkart.edu/Collection/3953>.



Figure 4. Yong Wei Lim, *N.G. Chilling*, 2017, oil on canvas, 41 x 35 cm. Photograph: The artist.

At the same time, our painting styles share some similarities. The intimate size of my painting focuses on a moment in life, as does Manet's. In addition, the way that the brushstrokes are loosely applied contributes to the calming ambience displayed by each of these works. Correspondingly, the use of low-saturation colours creates a sense of depth that allows the audience to feel the calmness in the work. At the same time, the figures in both paintings are grouped near the centre of each work.

My observations on these artworks resemble the way in which a story gives the reader information about a person's characteristics, actions and emotions; while these elements may be explained in a literal-minded way, focusing on the ways in which these minor features take on important roles brings us back to Murakami's writing.

Another artist whose work I've been exploring is Luc Tuymans, a painter who is concerned with preserving and representing the sense of presence and memory. These memories are derived from objects in his surroundings, whether images from magazines or natural scenery that has been imprinted on his mind. Generally, they are drawn from the banalities of daily life, which are approached by Tuymans directly, albeit with an uneven tone.<sup>20</sup> From the Holocaust ("the banality of evil") to still life, his subjects of interest are beyond predicting.

Apparently, Tuymans has acquired the habit of completing a painting within a single day.<sup>21</sup> Hence, his paintings do not appear to be visually complex insofar as they lack detailing and are marked by the placement of random objects in the scene. *Gas Chamber* is a good example of this approach. The painting shows a large empty space in a rather simplified structure, resulting in a visually quirky quality. The combination of blurred forms with desaturated tones creates a suggestion of suffocating violence. The painting's visual language slowly takes shape as one observes the relationship between the lines, colours and space. In a review in the *Guardian*, Adrian Searle praises Tuymans for his ability to find the best techniques to embody his concepts – for example, turning the whiteness of the wall into a somnolent, dramatic silence.<sup>22</sup>

Like Tuymans, the objects around me serve as an inspiration for my paintings. The mundaneness of my subjects' lives tells its own story. By making these paintings, I aim to capture everyday moments as if stopping time. Through the act of painting I aim to present moments and feelings, rather than a precise narrative.

On the other hand, our representational techniques differ significantly: his stripped-down visual repertoire is less complicated than mine. In my paintings, spaces are filled with objects. These details are the elements I use to tell a story, while Tuymans' focus is on space and colour.<sup>23</sup> While *Gas Chamber* is a small painting of a large space, my works show intimate domestic spaces. Above all, whereas his paintings are imbued with a sense of horror – they can be very disturbing if one explores the stories behind them – my works chronicle cosy moments of daily life. In order to invite the viewer to construct their own narrative, the repeated appearance of certain objects can be crucial. For instance, in my paintings lounge rooms, food, knick-knacks and people are found again and again. Finally, giving a painting a suitable title is the key to unlocking the meaning of both Tuymans's and my paintings.



Figure 5. Yong Wei Lim, *Jia Hui*, 2017, oil on canvas, 18 x 22 cm. Photograph: The artist.

While Manet, Peyton and Tuymans all embrace the concepts of preservation and representation in their portrayal of everyday life, their objectives differ. And although they obtain their subject matter from their surroundings, the inspiration they derive from their surroundings is unique to each artist. For example, while Tuymans focuses on controversial issues of politics and history, Manet and Peyton are concerned to record a moment in time.

Each of these artists can be identified through their distinctive mark-making, from colours to brushstrokes to the details they choose to reveal. In terms of detail, there is no doubt that both Manet and Peyton surpass Tuymans. While the latter's paintings are minimalist in this respect because of his ways of working, the emotions expressed in his work are the most powerful of the three. Even though his and Manet's paintings are characterised by the use of low-saturated colours, the tones they use illustrate different visual languages. The deep, opaque colours used by Manet create a sense of security and calm, while Tuymans portrays his subject through hazy colour composition. On the other hand, the bright, lively colours used by Peyton convey her feelings toward her subject matter – a feature of her work that makes her stand out for me.

Finally, these three artists share a fundamental technical similarity insofar as they all work from photographs, albeit each bringing a different perspective to photography. Whereas Manet sought inspiration from the blurry photographic images of his day,<sup>24</sup> Peyton approaches photography as a form of representation while incorporating her feelings for her subject into her art, and Tuymans translates his photographic references into abstract forms that lack an obvious narrative context.

## THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The tools I used to perform my practice are sketching, painting and photography. When I make a painting, a brief outline is sketched after an image has formed in my mind. I then follow up with photographs, which are used as references for my paintings. These photos are initially taken in formal modelling sessions. However, following a session with the painting critique group at art school, I found that among all my preliminary paintings, the one that was worked up from a photo taken randomly received the most positive feedback. As a result, I begin taking more candid photographs. When my subjects forget about the camera, they behave naturally as they go about their daily activities. As consent was not given for particular photos, I planned to conduct an ethical review before making a final decision about their use in my project.

In his essay "What the Spectator Sees,"<sup>25</sup> Richard Wollheim discusses how paintings are perceived by different kinds of viewers with different perspectives on the same work.<sup>26</sup> I have drawn on his work in this area to explore how my own paintings are received.

Wollheim divides his discussion of this topic into two parts, which he calls "seeing-in" and "representation." He describes seeing-in as a distinctive perception triggered by looking at the surface of the artwork; this experience could be complex or simple, according to the individual viewer. Importantly, seeing-in precedes representation.<sup>27</sup> Thus, in seeking to perceive the intention behind an artist's work, aspects that involve personal experience are combined with what we are 'told' to see. The relation of seeing-in to representation produces a phenomenology<sup>28</sup> of twofoldness. The two activities resonate with each other; allowing viewers to perceive the painting by discovering it through reading the surface.

The viewer's role in the interpretation of an artwork and the validity of personal judgement has elicited considerable debate. Commenting on Wollheim's essay, Flint Schier has expressed some scepticism about Wollheim's idea that "the artist is a spectator of her own work."<sup>29</sup> Schier interprets this as meaning that the artist wants to know if her works evokes the experience that she desires in her audience. He argues that when viewing an artwork, one does not fully take in what the artist is wanting to propose. As the viewer's imagination is a subtle agent, it is inevitable that one's own subjectivity will have a part to play in the appreciation of art. As John Berger puts it in his book *Ways of Seeing* (1972), "The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe."<sup>30</sup>

While I appreciate that my works are personal, and that spectators might not see them in the way that I view them, I hope there is one key element that viewers *can* see in my work: a passing moment in the lives of the people in my paintings, whether or not such moments are considered meaningful.

A number of visual theories have been proposed to interpret finished artworks. In *Art as Research* (2010), Graeme Sullivan argues that such theories can be based on knowledge or on experience.<sup>31</sup> After discussing knowledge, he remarks: "In other situations, theories are based on experience, which helps us understand more complex things. This kind of theorizing involves understanding, which is an adaptive process of human thinking and acting that is informed by our experiences and encounters. It is also a cognitive process whereby what we know shapes our interactions and transforms our awareness."<sup>32</sup>

I consider that my project is based on experience. As I read Murakami's novels and observe my surroundings with a view to creating artworks in the studio, the process itself generates work that can be evaluated in this way. According to Sullivan, art practice can be considered as a form of "transformative research"<sup>33</sup> – a type of research that can change existing concepts and practices, and create new paradigms.<sup>34</sup> As the making of art is subject to a variety of approaches, creative insights are revealed. The process results in visual forms that produce meanings for interpretation. As Sullivan puts it, "In studio settings, visual forms are used as data to investigate meanings, and as sources of data."<sup>35</sup>

Sullivan proposes that art research is a field in its own right, and does not require the support of theories imported from other fields. This concept relates to my studio methodology, as the encounters and experiences that happen during the making of my work are the sources that create the ideas for my project. Thus, while theory informs practice, practice also informs theory; they have a trans-cognitive relationship.<sup>36</sup> The methodologies used to create artworks can be supported by visual theories.

However, there are arguments for theorising art practice based on human subjectivity – for instance, that imagination is a transparent image that appears in one's head, that life experiences differ from person to person, and are also interpreted differently. Nevertheless, today the art-going public is quite sophisticated when it comes to the interpretation of art, as long as the questions involved can be answered using knowledge gained from studio research. As we are seeking to use our art to communicate with the viewer, the context of the work produced in the studio benefits from practices such as documentation. In the process of visualising the work, theoretical issues are brought up for discussion and critique, enabling them to be analysed and rendered into words that may help inform potential viewers.<sup>37</sup>

The experience that I have focused on is the rendering of my paintings through my feelings for Murakami and his work, and the way that these elements are captured in my own life in the moment. Painting is a physical activity that I use to explore my materials and subjects. Embodied experience as it relates to my works is the feeling of my hand grasping my paintbrush and the feeling that my eyes are seeing real things. The feelings presented are ephemeral, unlocatable, indistinct, floating and unknown. The real and tangible environments presented in my work are domestic; the objects in the paintings are rendered and remain in place as they initially were in reality, and people's actions are reproduced as they were perceived. In John Berger's documentary video *Ways of Seeing*, he says of an object: "Its uniqueness is part of the uniqueness of the single place where it is. Everything around it confirms and consolidates its meaning."<sup>38</sup> A painting can capture a momentary experience with greater subtlety than a photograph – because the surface of a painting is built up with feelings that take time to form.

Seeing plays the pre-eminent role in the appreciation and understanding of art. With painting as the focus in his discussion of phenomenology in art, Merleau-Ponty confesses that painting is the art form which he has considered most deeply.<sup>39</sup> In painting, the artist attempts "to render the process by which perception constructs meanings from objects or other people from experience."<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, the act of seeing is different from looking. In seeing, we analyse the information we perceive with



our eyes and link it to our experiences. This can be applied to the idea that painting portraits is also a form of self-examination – hence the idea of the self-portrait. In my painting process, I project my own thoughts onto the people I am close to. In the few cases where I was not very close to my model – for example, *Arthur* (Figure 6) – the result felt like something I could only observe, but not inhabit. Metaphorically speaking, these subjects are like a beautiful vase with a narrow neck – having grasped the neck, my hands cannot reach the base, no matter how hard I try.

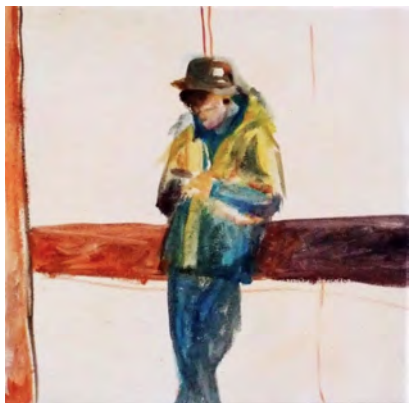


Figure 6. Yong Wei Lim, *Arthur* (unfinished), 2017, oil on canvas, 25.5 x 25.2 cm. Photograph: The artist.



Figure 7. Yong Wei Lim, *Lik De in Kitchen*, 2017, oil on canvas, 38 x 53 cm. Photograph: The artist.

## CONCLUSION

Returning to my interest in Murakami's novels, together with the research I have completed in the course of my project, the personal growth I have experienced is exciting for me. The relatable stories and characters I found in Murakami's work have brought me this far by making me more open to conversations and sharpening my observation of the people around me.

The evolution of my paintings can be expressed as an unconscious vision of people's circumstances. Although I take photographs as a starting point, I can never predict how the final painting will evolve. As the Existentialist philosopher Heidegger proposed, "We are both subjects apart from the observed world, and objects to observe ourselves."<sup>41</sup> By observing, I came up with the idea of painting the people around me and, as for being observed, the painting process is a reflection of myself.

Since completing *Adrian and Ian*, I have enjoyed the intricate, intimate momentary feelings that such paintings elicit, inspiring me to create more smaller paintings. However, I still create larger works that portray the lives lived however by my subjects in greater detail.

In human experience, the elements that construct a person's lifeworld are carried through the time-space continuum. In a study of learning strategies in higher education,<sup>42</sup> Vic Caruana argues that the hardships a person experiences when immersed in a new environment give them a resilience and mental toughness that enables them to study effectively in their new surroundings. As time passes, newcomers begin to change their consciousness, helping them integrate into the host society. Murakami's characters may not be the toughest beings, but they are real. The struggles and process involved in forming relationships between oneself and one's social environment are worth the effort of artistic endeavour, whether in paintings or novels.

As John Berger expressed it: "We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves."<sup>43</sup>

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Figure 9. Yong Wei Lim, *Adrian, Ian and Anson* (from left to right), 2017, oil on canvas, 36 x 55 in. Photograph: The artist.



Figure 10. Yong Wei Lim, *Dining in Fiona's Room*, 2018, oil on canvas, 35 x 55 in. Photograph: The artist.

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## SPIRIT IN RUIN: TOUCHED BY TIME

Ross T Smith

### THE WORLD RETREATS

Auguste Perret once said, “True architecture makes beautiful ruins.”<sup>1</sup> And in the same breath, one could say that ruins make for beautiful architectural memories: those which are an internalised structure of experience, spaces of the imagination, reverie, silence and the ephemeral. Wonderment and a spiritual force reside within us, yet require close attention to our sensory perceptions of Self and the physical world in which we exist.

The spirit of place, or *genius loci*, refers to a location's distinctive atmosphere that exists in all places including those of dilapidation, ruination and decay. Sites such as the sacred locations of churches cut into cliff faces, recently deserted private houses, incomplete projects left idle in the landscape, and decommissioned public buildings and factories in industrialised cities all exude specific qualities of time and silence. In ruination the entropy, lack of predictability and gradual decline into disorder of the material world retreats from us, returning to states of being existing before Man's intrusion or exertion.



Figure 1. Antebellum house, Greensboro, Alabama, US.  
Photograph: Ross T Smith, 2012.

Symbols of past experience and loss are revealed by the sense of a life lived and work done by others through the passage of time, be it near or remote history. Our physical intimacy with space leaves remnants of experiential traces. Touching surfaces, presenting our body to material conditions and entwining Self with nature is how we leave traces that exist beyond our presence. The hand, in particular, signifies our embodiment, our labour, creativity and love. Places of ruin present us with symbols as “ongoing processes of elemental transformation,” according to Jane Rendell.<sup>2</sup> We experience the touch of the hand on places of work, religious interiors, the long lived-in family home, door handles, timber balustrades and scratchings of children's play on soft plaster walls. Those marks remain beyond us and reveal themselves in places of loss and dis-appearance. Juhani Pallasmaa adds: “Architecture's task to provide us with our domicile in space is recognised by most architects, but its second task – to mediate our relation with the frighteningly ephemeral dimensions of time – is usually disregarded.”<sup>3</sup>

Architecture, if engaged with phenomenologically, is an assemblage of multi-dimensional sensory perceptions that



create the totality of place and experience. These are constructed through our body, the psychological nuance of intuition and personal experience, the objective realities of adumbrations, abstract revelations of the visible and the invisible, as well as those affective sensations such as pressure, temperature, and atmosphere.

## TO SENSE IS TO TOUCH

In physical reality a building, as a living entity, tells us the story of its sensuous parts, its unexpected revelations and discoverable mysteries. "Buildings, over time, sustain multiple readings," observe Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow, due to the contingency of future actions, events and inhabitation.<sup>4</sup> Phenomena are ageless but not timeless. Their revelation will forever contain the new and unadulterated, but will always be anterior to our present being. They are a truth, but as with all 'truths' the way in which they are interpreted depends upon the receiver or the observer as adumbrational perceptions – that is, the film-like sequencing of the parts of individual apprehensions into one whole experience of perception. Pallasmaa says: "A work of architecture is not experienced as a collection of isolated visual pictures, but in its fully embodied material and spiritual presence."<sup>5</sup> As each truth is personal, phenomenologically speaking, we make of it our own story of a certain reality and *un certain regard*.

Inter-objectivity – the relationship between objects as a philosophical concept applied to architecture – brings us to realise that we are at all times in either vague or quite specific sensorial relationships with other things: fleshy creatures, physical objects and the subtleties of the ephemeral and atmospheric. Subsequent to this contact, we have influence over the substantial world and, in return, it does over us. Man is merely a witness to a world of gesture that affects him in varying degrees of positivity or negativity, depending on his perception of the occurrence.

Man, according to the Heideggerian phrase of "being-in-the-world," suggests that he is also an 'object' of the material world, yet one that exists in his own sphere of intentionality; that is, we as subjects extend ourselves towards the nature of objects. Whereas, as I suggest, if we change this phrase to "being-of-the world," then Man would exist as an interconnected cellular and energetic force in communication with the material world; and not as an egocentric being who makes stuff happen for him. We may be sentient beings, unlike rocks and chairs, yet the natural world has an energy that emanates from it in all directions, including our own.

We are 'touched' by all things: the physical touch of an object on our skin, the perpetual touch of our own body by itself, or the life force of that thing which transfers to us as something beyond the activation of a pressure point: the sun, for example. As Merleau-Ponty says, we are flesh of the world, and that flesh is the chiasm between the toucher and the touched: "a crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible."<sup>6</sup> This act sets up inter-receptiveness as a circle of touching as transitivity from one to another, and its reversibility, which is touch returned.

Whereas objects existing in their own spatial realm, in the sun, wind and rain, they are also exposed to inter-objective association. Exposure, feasibly, is the best way to describe inter-objectivity: if one object is exposed to another, then there is a touching relationship, and with touching comes molecular interaction as a transfer of energetic potency. Man is not the centre of inanimate conditions. The blooming and decay, and the inter-objective interaction of material objects continues with or without Man's presence.

Philosopher Graham Harman speaks of vicarious cause, which is the contentious issue of inter-objectivity, the relationship between objects when there is non-intentional human interaction or when there is no human presence at all: "The most general problem is that if objects cannot touch each other, we need to know how they interact at all!"<sup>7</sup> I would propose that the energetic emanation within space, which contributes to this aura, is due to the decayed reconfiguration of its material components. Contributing to this is a person's transference of personal memory or desire onto a place that has taken on its own sense of purpose through ruination. Decay towards death forces us to recognise a dynamic greater than ourselves, which could be considered 'spiritual' in some circumstances relating to nature, psychic states or public collectives.



Figure 2. Russian textile factory abandoned in 1960s. Kayseri, Turkey. Photograph: Ross T Smith, 2014.

## SPACE IN BODIES

Philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy describes carnal phenomenology in terms of “carnation” that refers “to the vibration, color, frequency, and nuance of a place, of an event, of existence.”<sup>8</sup> He continues: “The world is spacing, a tension of place, where bodies are not *in* space, but space *in* bodies.”<sup>9</sup> We are captives of our own body. This pulpy thing, held together by mysterious threads, is the carnal being of our mortality. French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, famous for his investigations of phenomenology and the body, asks of himself, and us, what is flesh? What is this “shadow packed with organs” in which we find our self? This is not only a question of the physical object—thing our mind drags around; not only the pulp held together by its tactile integument of smooth, rough, hairy, thick, thin, wrinkly, red, pallid, exposed, hidden skin; but the fragile layer of cellular separation that is the contact we have with the world. Yet, the existential question: how is it that we be? “We never get away from our life,”<sup>10</sup> says Merleau-Ponty — and I would add, we never get away from our Self. We live in a carnal world, a world of pressing materiality.

Sensory perception is not noetic — that is, a construct of the intellect — but a physical, extremely subtle, sensible response that relates directly to our bodily apprehension of phenomena. Yet, in the extents of the metaphysical exists the perception of time, memory and loss. Loss is a dimension of absence and reveals the condition of longing. It makes us feel intuitively that something that ‘should’ be there is missing — a gnawing incompleteness. Memory, likewise, is a lingering sensation of “remembrance of things past.”<sup>11</sup>

Discovery of the unexpected can reveal a new space experienced and utilised by others. Their presence exists not in themselves, but in the remnants of their activity and a sometimes temporary engagement with that interior. Our discovery can be exposed by pushing through tangled undergrowth or breaking in closed doors and looking through smashed windows to discover the hidden mystery of what lingers. We may discover rooms which have been inhabited by homeless people, used as drug dens, or as an outlet for disenchanting teenagers to ‘let loose’ with a spray can. Less dramatic can be the invasion of trees, vines and new growth, or the occasional dead bird. We are seduced by the revelation of lost interior spaces, which once existed with a life force of their own, but not in their original state, with a mixture of fear and expectation as we explore phenomena as material and ephemeral remnants.

We exist in a time of urgency and fragments. In architecture, space is definable, yet it exists as the presence of absence, as an extension of Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of the visible and invisible.<sup>12</sup> Absence can be regarded as the inverse of presence. Absence then is not nothingness or emptiness, but a place of portent, a space available for action, and a space which exists of and for itself. It is in these forgotten and abandoned spaces that we may allow our creative imagination to roam to construct possibilities for future uses of the space: fine apartments, artists’ studios or even a new school of architecture. Picard says: “In silence, therefore, man stands confronted once again by the original beginning of all things: everything can begin again, everything can be re-created.”<sup>13</sup>



Figure 3. Living spaces cut into soft rock. Cappadocia, Turkey, 4th-7th centuries AD. Photograph: Ross T Smith, 2015.

## SILENCE RESTORES SECRETS

Silence is not termination, or the end result of all activity. Silence is liberation. "Silence is equated with arresting time," says Susan Sontag.<sup>14</sup> It brings us to a point of stillness in which we may start again. Spaces of silence support our ability to fill that void with whatever we wish or desire; sensual memories can be summoned forth to explode, unfettered into this space – our space. In so doing, silence presents a neutral beginning, a point of departure, the edge of a precipice from which to plunge into imagination and memory. Silence restores the preservation of secrets beyond reality.

Forgotten interiors exude the shadowy mystery of decay, placing materiality in a faded light of obfuscation.<sup>15</sup> The reduction in clarity dims the present mind to instigate a journey of reverie into shadows of the occult and otherness. We are 'plugged in' to such an extent these days that the presence of visual, aural and spiritual silence is almost impossible to inhabit. Silence reveals its presence, not as a passive nothingness, but as an active perception (physical or spiritual interaction) within a space of stillness; that which is tranquil but not void.

Architecture has the capacity to affect time and silence in this way. Profound architecture halts time; it puts us in a place of timelessness in which we are confronted with the silence of eternity. It is in these rare moments that we understand our connection to all things, that we no longer exist in isolation and separate from others, but we are likewise part of the atomic flow of eternal time. These architectural spaces, because of the intensity of silence, can also invoke fear and anxiety as we are confronted with our own mortality. There is spiritual beauty in death, not as a romantic notion, but death as the levelling condition of all natural things – which lingers in space and objects.<sup>16</sup> Time has stopped and only silence and foreverness remains. There is architecture that can halt us so abruptly that we lose our breath, and our very being is confronted with the thorny, existential question: Who am I?

There is no formal conclusion to this article. Time and decay, space and silence, revelations of the visible and the invisible, the mystery of inter-objective communication, the spiritual dimension, creativity and imagination, and the turning of the world are unceasing processes – seemingly without end. Conclusions close down potential, expectation and mystery. We can never know all that exists or understand all that is presented, yet we engage our



Figure 4. Abandoned construction. Cappadocia, Turkey. Photograph: Ross T Smith, 2015.

body, mind and spirit with the phenomenal world as best we can in order to make sense of our own little part of it and time in it.

To express the prescience of spirit as a force existing in things and time, the last word must go to Merleau-Ponty: "The world is not what I think, but what I live. I am open to the world, I communicate indubitably with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible."<sup>17</sup> We must remain open to the potential of revelation; it sustains the ecstasy and magic of life.

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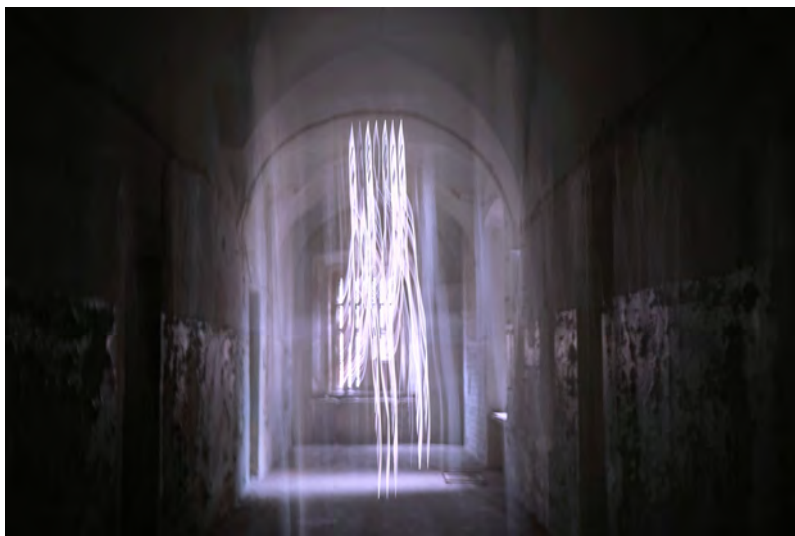


Figure 5. Abandoned hospital, c1960s. Daugavpils, Latvia. Photograph: Ross T Smith, 2016..

- 1 Auguste Perret (French architect, 1874-1954.), cited in David Leatherbarrow, *Architecture Oriented Otherwise* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 111.
- 2 Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (London: IB Tauris, 2006), 96.
- 3 Juhani Pallasmaa, "Hapticity and Time: Notes on Fragile Architecture," in *Encounters*, ed. Peter MacKeith (Helsinki: Rakennustieto Oy, 2005 [2000]), 323.
- 4 Mohsen Mostafavi and David Leatherbarrow, *On Weathering: The Life of Buildings in Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 16.
- 5 Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Academy, 2005 [1996]), 44.
- 6 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining – The Chiasm," in his *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 133.
- 7 Graham Harman, *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2005), 90.
- 8 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, trans. Richard A Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 17.
- 9 Ibid., 27.
- 10 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," in *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, eds Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 84.
- 11 See Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way: Remembrance of Things Past*, vol. I (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966 [1913]).
- 12 Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*.
- 13 Max Picard, *World of Silence* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1988 [1948]), 22.
- 14 Susan Sontag, "Aesthetics of Silence," in her *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1969), 17.
- 15 Junichiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows* (New Haven, Conn.: Leete's Island Books, 1977 [1933]).
- 16 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie: Childhood, Language, and the Cosmos*, trans. Daniel Russell (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1971 [1960]).
- 17 Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, 64.



## MEMORY OF PLACE TAKES FLIGHT

Fiona Van Oyen

Barely able to stand, I reel as the ground underfoot shakes, twists and jolts. Heaving up and down, panting breaths of distress, the land beneath me transforms into a gigantic anthropomorphic being. I glance over to see the river rise at a phenomenal rate. I see dust rise, then disperse to reveal collapsing buildings that make new dust. All occurring within seconds; momentarily everything optically turns white. Not dust that blinds me – this is white shock at the thought I am about to die.

Conceptually, white becomes a colour of significance as I process my embodied responses experienced during the Christchurch earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. My master's project, *Landskin*, and its subsequent supporting exhibition, *Memory of Place takes Flight*, are my response when memory and the certainty of place no longer exists.

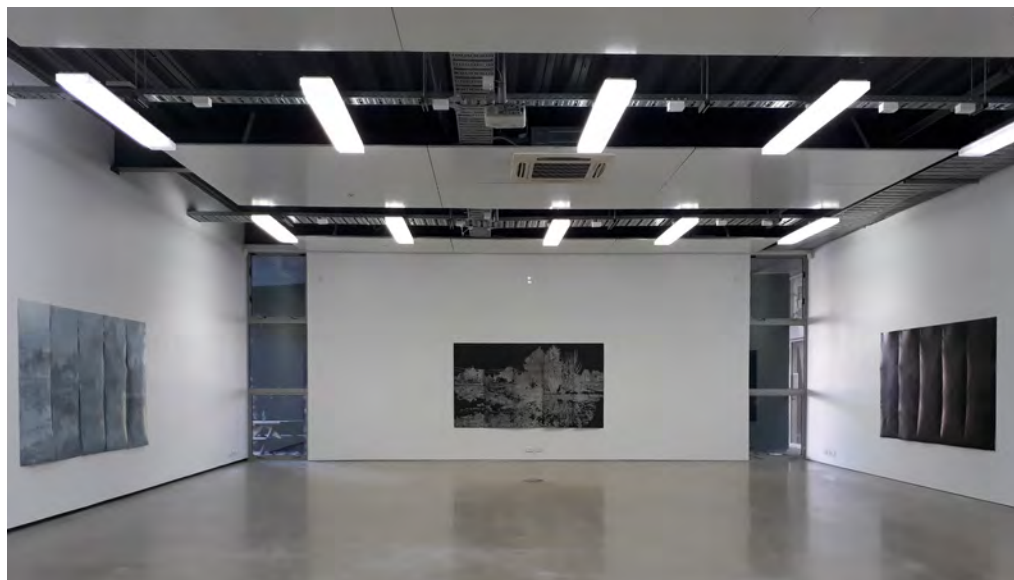


Figure 1. Fiona Van Oyen, *Landskin*, Dunedin School of Art gallery, November 2017. Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

Between 1892 and 1894 Claude Monet painted 31 canvases of Rouen Cathedral, each portraying a different time of day, different lighting and weather effects, resulting in very different spatial effects. For example, what appears as concave in one work reads as convex in another; making them "a triumph of the optical over the physical."<sup>1</sup> In my master's show, *Landskin*, I too presented one image replicated, but in variations of whites and monotonal hues as I explored the optical *and* the physical. White and the marks I make become a means to compress pictorial space. The marks that I make in my printmaking process also require a level of physicality that, together with pictorial compression, helps to activate the haptic within me.

Discussing the concept of "society's body," Thomas J Csordas writes: "The haptic system, from the Greek term meaning 'able to lay hold of,' is according to [James] Gibson (1966:97), 'the sensibility of the individual to the world adjacent to his body by the use of his body.' It is the apparatus through which information about both the body and the environment are gained."<sup>2</sup> In the hanging of *Landskin*, the relationship between each work, the placement one between the other in the gallery space, became crucial to avoid a reading predicated on a time, lighting or weather sequence, as Monet had done in his Rouen Cathedral series.



Figure 2. Fiona Van Oyen, *I think this is part of our garden (black)*, 2017, 5-piece linocut print on cotton paper, 2.5 x 1.2 m.  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

Referencing the anthropomorphic association I had felt with the land, the miniature marks in *I think this is part of our garden (black)*<sup>3</sup> that describe form, read as cellular anatomical structure. The human body is not only present in the drawn line, it is also there in the scale of the work. Each panel is the approximate width of the body that stands before it and, while the work is taller than the average person, hanging low on the wall helps to activate the sense of falling into the scene. The viewer becomes aware of his or her own physical scale before the work.

A second image, *Landskin*, from which my project took its name, presented variations of tonal white values emerging from nothingness as the image has been cut out and removed. The softer, raised emboss seen in the prints is literally cut right through the paper to reveal the supporting wall which now becomes part of the conversation.

The work achieves an interplay with the shadows it creates on the wall that supports it. In both instances, the paper-cut works *Landskin* and *When Memory of Place Takes Flight*, made a year later, move from the monumental print to the installation in terms of scale. Here the conversation becomes more about the relationship to the interior architectural space and the gallery wall, not just the haptic of the interior body, the external skin and the printed skin, as is the case with the printed works.

Where the walls of Rachel Whiteread's sculpture *House* are inverted and turned outward to expose the remnants of a typical private dwelling in a residential area long since gone, *Landskin* presents the remnants of a lost place where the scale of the work demands that the wall does not become a barrier between the viewer and what is outside. In this instance, the wall becomes a metaphor for inverted inversion. That is, the wall is put right. It is folded back as it should be, bringing the memory of outside place along with it.

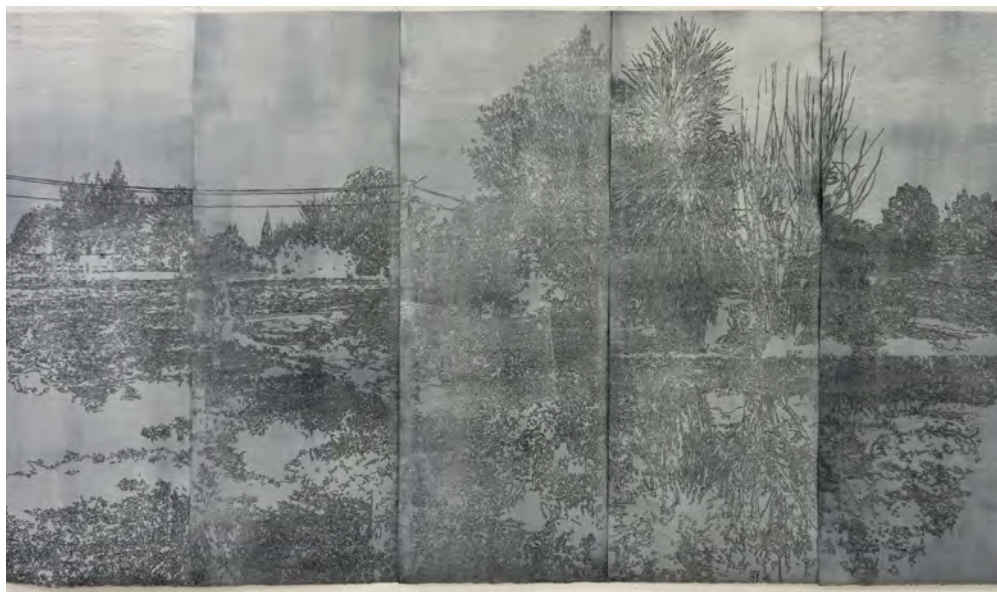


Figure 3. Fiona Van Oyen, *I think this is part of our garden (blue)*, 2017, 5-piece linocut print on cotton paper; 2.5 x 1.2 m  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

*Landskin* – When the land is neither secure ground on which to stand, or a familiar feast for the eyes, one's sense of scale in place is felt as an internal conflict that comes to rest on the skin as something other.

In the printed works I employ matt against sheen; raw against heavily painted and inked paper; large sweeping cut lines juxtaposed against minute intricate cut lines; these are just some of the opposites used to activate the physical haptic. Looking at these elemental opposites in the surface 'skin' of the work, I begin to feel a physical response throughout my body. This is the physical haptic. Consciously creating a second skin on paper, the skin of the horizontal land on which I have stood is lifted from under my feet, vertically up onto the wall. Here, the two skins – my haptic bodily skin engages with the haptic paper skin of the prints, and anchor me.

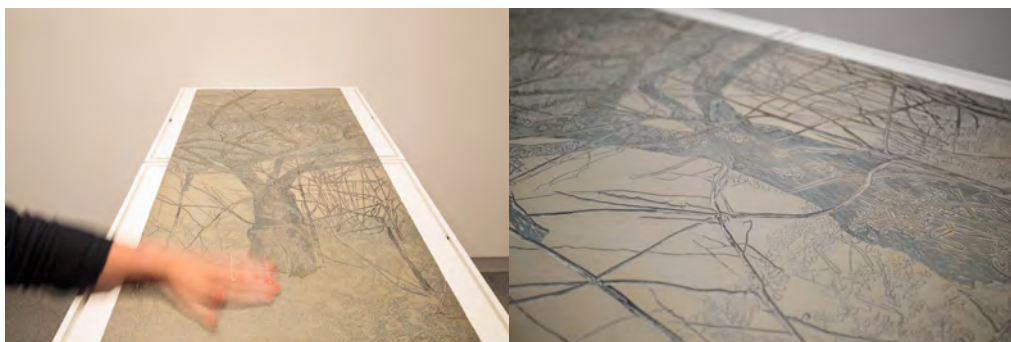
Tracing photocopied enlargements or drawing selectively from projected overhead transparencies of the photographed scenes from which my phone protected and distanced me, the drawings that I make are larger than I am. I use old technologies to push my body as I draw, redraw to invert and transfer the image onto lino, to draw once again with a blade as I cut into the lino to make the linocut block from which I will print. In her book *On Longing*,

when considering the relationship of language to experience or, more specifically, the relationship of narrative to its objects, Susan Stewart asks, "what does exaggeration, as a mode of signification, exaggerate?"<sup>4</sup> Printmaking may be an old technology, but the exaggerated repetition and long, slow working required in the process becomes meditative. The lino becomes an extension of my body, warming to my own bodily temperature as I work with it.

The notion of the haptic system, including the concept of haptic touch, implies its active nature:

The haptic system, unlike the other perceptual systems, includes the whole body, most of its parts, and its entire surface. The extremities are exploratory sense systems but they are also performatory motor organs; that is to say, the equipment for feeling is anatomically the same as the equipment for doing. (James Gibson 1966).

Gibson's "feeling," of course, refers here to touch, rather than emotion.<sup>5</sup>



Figures 4 & 5. The centre linocut block for *The anthropomorphic garden* on display in the Ashburton Art Gallery as part of my exhibition *When Memory of Place Takes Flight*, March 2018. Photographs: Johannes Van Kan.

From the original drawings to the finished prints, my process is full of opposing extremes, considered both materially and physically. Materially, paper swollen with water, squeezed through the press, is moulded and embossed. Once dried it is sooted, burnt, painted and printed further. Physically and mentally, I push myself through long periods of work that is often repetitive and includes minute drawing that at times is tortuous. The viewer can imagine these aspects when looking at the work and in this way, by empathetically imagining, respond to the works' haptic potential.

The haptic system must be seen as part of a dynamic and social process, for 'in social touch, the haptic system with all of its subsystems comes into full perceptual use.' The work on haptic touch is useful in developing a sense of the agency of the body in both individual and social existence, and may thus contribute to the elaboration of the model of embodied feeling central to the argument ...<sup>6</sup>

As the title suggests, *When Memory of Place Takes Flight*, my show at the Ashburton Art Gallery during 3-31 March 2018, was the 'final act' of my master's examination show, *Landskin*. Both shows presented various interpretations of a single image. In *When Memory of Place Takes Flight*, the anthropomorphic aspect is magnified and made more explicit. The limbs of the tree appear skeletal, reminiscent of bone joints and muscular structure. The ground beneath the tree is 'alive' with cellular matter. Works from the Chinese Song dynasty that incorporate multiple views within flattened pictorial space are also heavy with anthropomorphic symbolism.<sup>7</sup>





Figure 6. Fiona Van Oyen, *The anthropomorphic garden (silver)*, 2018, linocut print on cotton paper; enamel paint and oil-based ink, 1.5 x 1.4 m (triptych). Photograph: Johannes Van Kan.



Figure 7. Fiona Van Oyen, *The anthropomorphic garden (red)*, 2018, linocut print on cotton paper; enamel paint, watercolour paint and oil-based ink, 1.5 x 1.4 m (triptych). Photograph: Johannes Van Kan.



Figure 8. Fiona Van Oyen, *The anthropomorphic garden (drawing) (detail)*, 2018, emboss of linocut block on cotton paper; candle flame soot and burnt elements, 1.5 x 1.4 m (triptych). Photograph: Johannes Van Kan.





Figures 9-10. Fiona Van Oyen, *When Memory of Place Takes Flight*, 2018, hand-cut cotton paper; 8-piece installation, 3 x 1.5 m. Part of the exhibition *When Memory of Place Takes Flight*, The Ashburton Art Gallery, March 2018. Photographs: Johannes Van Kan.

The lack of 'skin' on the raw, exposed vulnerability of the paper in the sooted drawn work becomes an aesthetic bridge between the heavy materiality of the printed works and the white reduction of the paper-cut works.

Susan Stewart writes: "Whereas the miniature represents closure, interiority, the domestic, and the overly cultural, the gigantic represents infinity, exteriority, the public, and the overly natural."<sup>8</sup> The scale of *When Memory of Place Takes Flight* equals the height of the wall in the gallery, identifying it as architectural, exterior or outside of the body. However, while the work cannot be touched or held in the hand as Stewart describes the world of the miniature, on close inspection, as the viewer is drawn into the miniature-cut details in the gigantic work, evidence of the artist's hand in the hand-cut lines still references the internal bodily haptic. In this respect the hand-cut, rather than the machine laser-cut, is an important element in the reading of the work. Thus in both *Landskin* and *When Memory of Place takes Flight*, the haptic of touch and the physical meet and interpret memories of landscape, transforming these paper and printed works, bringing the unseen to the surface.

**Fiona Van Oyen** completed a Master of Fine Arts with distinction at the Dunedin School of Art in 2017. Fiona works as a visual arts teacher at Cashmere High School in Christchurch. Jonathan Smart at The Central Gallery in Christchurch represents her work.

- 1 Khan Academy, *Monet, Rouen Cathedral Series*, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/avant-garde-france/impressionism/v/monet-rouen-cathedral-series-1892-4>. Beth Harris and Steven Zucker discuss Monet's Rouen Cathedral paintings.
- 2 *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*, ed. Thomas J Csordas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 61.
- 3 *I think this is part of our garden (black)* won ZAFAA17 (Zonta Ashburton Female emerging and mid-career Art Award, 2017). As well as a monetary reward, the award included a solo show, to take place the following year at the Ashburton Art Gallery as part of ZAFAA18. *When Memory of Place Takes Flight* was that subsequent show.
- 4 Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1993), ix.
- 5 Csordas, *Embodiment and Experience*, 61.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 "There was an ancient belief, founded on a cosmogonic myth, that rivers are the blood that irrigates the body of the earth, while mountains are the bones. The Chinese word for landscape is 'shansui,' which means 'mountains and waters.'" Francois Berthier, *Reading Zen in the Rocks: The Japanese Dry Landscape Garden*, trans. Graham Parkes (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 42-3.
- 8 Stewart, *On Longing*, 70.

## 1954, URBAN DREAM BROKERAGE, 7-17 DECEMBER 2017

David Green



Figure 1. 1954 Entrance to Dreavers. Photograph: David Green.

Urban Dream Brokerage projects, managed by Tamsin Cooper, are designed to engage people in Dunedin City by providing unique and innovative experiences which demonstrate an awareness of Dunedin's current usages, issues and history and connect them to location and existing uses.

This installation *1954*<sup>1</sup> was held in the historic vacant shop space that was formerly the Dreaver family's milliners shop. The family maintained their business at the George Street location between the 1870s and 1950s. A mosaic laid on the shop threshold still announces their name.

Six months after her coronation (which followed Edmund Hillary's conquest of Everest by one week), Queen Elizabeth spent three days in and around Dunedin. The numerous fragments distributed throughout the *1954* installation at 165 George Street are drawn from the documentation made by members of the Dunedin Cine Club between 25 and 28 January 1954.

While the shop still stands, for most of us, it is hard to recognise the day-to-day interactions in the Dunedin that existed nearly 64 years ago.

*1954* was designed as a public video art installation primarily featuring the footage of a dozen or so members of the Dunedin Cine Club during the 1954 visit of the newly crowned 25-year-old Queen Elizabeth II. Given to the extraordinary popularity of the young, charismatic monarch, virtually every owner of an 8mm or 16mm movie camera went out to film it. As a result, in the manner of an insect caught in amber; a trove of visual fragments of this moment in the life and culture of Dunedin are trapped and held. The amateur films employed in the installation offer a rare historicity that is the result of a particularly unsullied indexical quality often afforded by their very lack of crafting.



Figure 1. D. Green, *1954*, 2017, seven channel video installation. Photograph: David Green.

Urban dwellers are like successions of hermit crabs who readily take up empty shells provided by makers, now long gone. These shells retain the traces of lives and worldviews quite different from ours today. Only amateur documentation reveals the virtual ghosts in the dust and discolouration of the spaces we ourselves memorialise with signs of wear. More often than not, traditional cinema assembles loose evidence into a very particular story. Any collection of images can be maneuvered to serve any number of intentionalities, but once presented with a

particular construction it becomes difficult to change the way we have seized upon it as a viewer. But what happens when those fragments of evidence are encountered in a distributed manner that is similar to the way we experience the world? Perhaps then the viewer has room to connect events in a manner more resonant, even more truthful, by using them as the building blocks of meaning while calling upon their own experience, imagination, and memory to enlarge the narrative form.

The installation furthered my experiments with an expanded cinematic form I call “disarticulated cinema.” This approach, in part, distributes different film segments and film fragments throughout an interior or exterior space – in this instance, a century-old commercial retail space on George Street (Dunedin’s “High Street”), open for three hours a day during the pre-Christmas rush. The royal motorcade passed this storefront during the visit in the eponymous year.

Because I was invigilating the installation over its run, I fell into many conversations with visitors and was able to understand a variety of viewers’ perspectives relating to form and content which I found valuable.

**David Green’s** research and practice might best be described as cinema in the expanded field. His artworks sometimes appropriate and re-contextualise motion pictures, produced by both professionals and amateurs, in order to reveal their iconological meanings (or embedded social and cultural themes). David is interested in applying the phenomenology and the neurology of perception to the collaborative engagement between artwork and viewer. The ideas examined in his writing and practice arise from a variety of schools of thought ranging from Pre-Socratic philosophy to Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO).

I     Link for online content <https://vimeo.com/263103458>.

## IN TERMS OF PRINT

Marion Wassenaar



Figure 1. Abbotsford Convent, Melbourne.

### EXHIBITION STATEMENT

The News Network Project is a trans-Tasman network of visual artists who have set themselves the task of examining 'the news,' as disseminated by the popular media, and the relationship of this dispersal of information to the fine art print. The group responds to current events and explores how the news media and contemporary art intersect, with a special focus on the print. Printed materials have a particular, historical relationship with current events that are made public in newspapers, magazines, websites and other media outlets. Responding to and recontextualising these materials, The News Network Project pairs the print's capacity for sharing and spreading topical information with the special significance of the print as fine art object, utilising strategies of repetition, authenticity and repositioning.

Exhibition Report: The News Network Project at c3 Contemporary Art Space, Abbotsford Convent, Melbourne, 11 April – 6 May 2018

Exhibiting artists: Alison Alder, Marian Crawford, B&T & Emboss, Neil Emmerson, Richard Harding, Trent Walter and Marion Wassenaar.



This report focuses on two artworks in the exhibition and seeks to demonstrate their relationship to current events in the context of the fine art print, as outlined in the above statement. Familiar from the history of print production, the term 'halftone' is discussed in relation to Marian Crawford's work *Fake Pearls*, followed by the terms 'limited edition' and 'relief' in relation to own work, *111 200 Let's Do This*. I explore these terms in the context of these works in order to demonstrate the connection between the news media and the print in contemporary art.

## HALFTONE<sup>1</sup>

/ˈhɑːfˌtəʊn/

noun

1. a process used to reproduce an illustration by photographing it through a fine screen to break it up into dots

2. the etched plate thus obtained

3. the print obtained from such a plate



Figure 2. Marian Crawford, *Fake Pearls*, 2018, intaglio and laser prints on cut paper; thread, laser print and fake pearls, letterpress and zines. Photograph: Screaming Pixel.

There are a number of print processes employed in Crawford's work including intaglio, laser printing and letterpress, all of which refer to what appears to be a magnified version of a newspaper image, but is in fact an image of pearls. Some prints incorporate fine thread as a method of attaching the work together in the way that the key image of this body of work has, I imagine, been stitched together using 'fake' pearls attached to black velvet. Pearls are a symbol of status and nobility; however, the title of the work, *Fake Pearls*, suggests a kitsch commodity or souvenir. The image honours Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, king of Saudi Arabia from 1964 to 1975. His death at the age of 69 was by assassination and the embellished pearl, a museum piece, could be seen as a devotional icon of some kind.

Crawford has produced a facsimile of the image of the king in a number of variations. One shows a small letterpress edition, titled *In a Private Museum*. The image is adorned with two pearls and alongside it is a text that describes her encounter with the framed image in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia:

In a private museum we wandered past dust-covered Bedouin necklaces, rings and coins, Arabian coffee pots and copper vessels, the pelt of an Arabian wildcat, weaponry; until we saw the portrait. The glittering picture was an image of the King. His face, sitting on a ground of black velvet, had been dotted into existence in pearls. Pearls are valuable, iridescent, but those jewels, surely, weren't for real? In this image's tribute to power, the pearls had been transformed into sad copies of the beautiful and rare.

Crawford's reference to the transformation of "sad copies" seems to mean that the effect created in the reproduction is similar to the halftone screen that produces multiple copies through the print process, associated with the photomechanical printing of newspaper images. The halftone process translates the various tones of a photograph into dots of various sizes.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the pearls create the illusion of the halftone dot, a technology which is associated with consumerism and mass production and which has simultaneously become an analogy for fake news or deliberate misinformation. In the corresponding works in the series, Crawford exaggerates this misconception by reproducing enlarged versions of the image that accentuate and duplicate the scale of the pearls, making the halftone dot appear more evident.

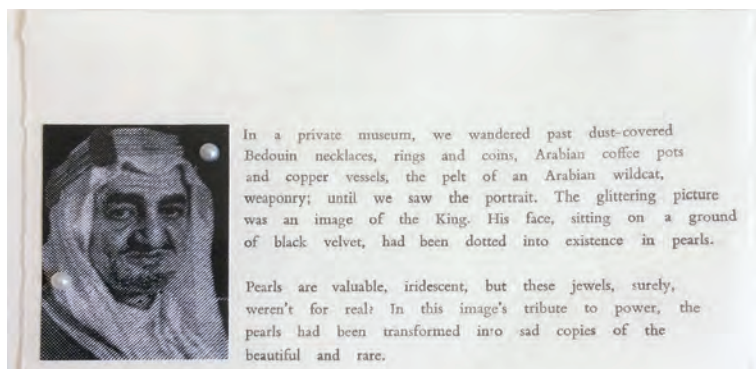


Figure 3. Marion Crawford, *Fake Pearls, In a Private Museum*, 2018 (detail).

In her artist statement, Crawford states that the work is about the proposition that there could be “fake” and “not-fake” news; the dearth of news from the Middle East due to her remoteness in the southern hemisphere; her experience of living and working in Saudi Arabia (and the fear she felt there), and her gratitude for the privileges and freedom offered to her as a female artist in Melbourne, Australia. More importantly, in relation to this review, Crawford also describes the work in terms of the power of the image, referring to its artistic lineage that includes Andy Warhol’s celebrity portraits denoting fame and power. Finally, she asserts that the work is about the pixel that converts an image into the language of the print.

Viewing this work, my mind drifts to Johannes Vermeer’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, 1665.<sup>3</sup> The young girl who is wearing a turban that exposes the sumptuous pearl earring has an air of fictitious, exotic grace about her, allowing the viewer to reflect on her expressive character and emotions. Vermeer’s work has been celebrated through both an historical novel and a well-known film, complete with reproductions and merchandise, which in turn has made the image legendary. In contrast, the image of King Saud is an iconic likeness that has been faithfully rendered using pearls that mimic the halftone dot, and thus more closely resembles the dot-screened and celebrity portraits produced by Warhol. A striking example can be seen in Warhol’s *Most Wanted Men* series.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike Vermeer’s historical painting from the Dutch Golden Age, the halftone represents an artistic language, medium and technical process that was developed between the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries and that underwent major changes from the Industrial Revolution through the Pop Art Movement that began in the 1950s. Crawford utilises this technique to navigate and to comment on the sheer amount of information available through print, and now widely accessible through our screens. I find myself pondering the contemporary relevance of Marshall McLuhan’s assertion in *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects*: “Societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication.”<sup>5</sup>



Figure 4. Marion Crawford, *Fake Pearls, Fake Pearls\_2*, 2018 (detail).

## LIMITED EDITION<sup>6</sup>

noun

1. an edition of something such as a book, plate, etc., that is limited to a specified number

## RELIEF<sup>7</sup>

/riˈli:f/

noun

1. a printing process, such as engraving, letterpress, etc., that employs raised surfaces from which ink is transferred to the paper



Figure 5. Marion Wassenaar; *Ohai Coal*, 2016.

*111200 Let's Do This* is the fourth iteration of a body of work that commenced in 2016 with a public lightbox exhibition in Melbourne for The News Network Project. The original work, titled *111200 Rising Tides*, showed an image of a coal sack stationed at the water's edge, functioning as a sentinel for the impending rising tides of climate change. This was followed by *111200 Limited Edition (after Duchamp) Take 1*, an installation for the "Art & Future" exhibition at the Dunedin School of Art gallery in October 2016.

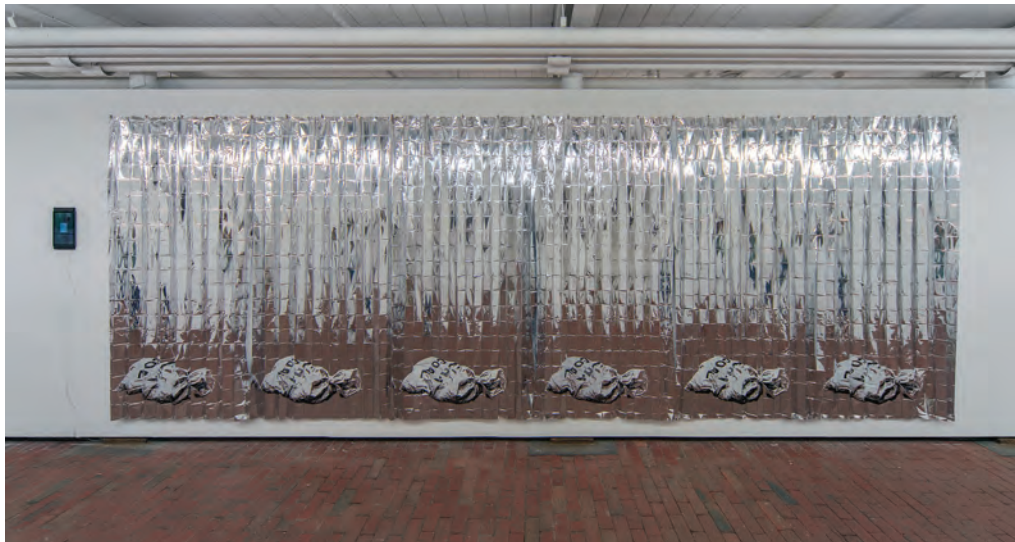


Figure 6. Marion Wassenaar *111200 Let's Do This*, 2018, video and relief print on emergency blankets. Photograph: Screaming Pixel.

Included in this work was a stack of printed posters as giveaways showing a suspended coal sack commercially printed from an original relief print. Twenty-five prints were available sitting atop a stack of plain paper, giving the impression of a large stack of posters. A GoPro camera mounted above the posters recorded the audience as they took away the posters, leaving 900 blank sheets of paper. As the pile decreased, the print ran out, revealing a stack of plain paper ghosted by the projection of the inverse image, giving the effect of a negative afterimage retained in one's vision. The inverted coal sack image hovers on the page as if strangled by the rope that holds it and deprived of air – a commentary on our finite fossil fuel reserves and growing carbon emissions.

It is in this context that I attribute a dual meaning to the term "limited edition." The notion of the limited edition, as well as referring to the very few prints made available to the public, became a commentary on our planet's limited resources due to human impact on the environment.

The work refers in part to Marcel Duchamp's *Twelve Hundred Coal Bags Suspended from the Ceiling over a Stove*, exhibited at the 1938 Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme at the Galerie Beaux-Arts in Paris – although the total number of 1200 hanging coal sacks was never confirmed. The sacks, suspended above the audience releasing coal dust, were lit by a workman's brazier in the middle of the gallery, along with flashlights issued to the audience.<sup>8</sup> The dim, shadowy atmosphere would have created an unwelcoming environment and would perhaps have evoked the feeling of being in the depths of a coalmine, highlighting the reality of manual labour rather than the surrealist subconscious. This work was exhibited at a time of continuing economic downturn and industrial unrest, including coalminers' strikes – perhaps staging a twin critique of fascism and capitalism.<sup>9</sup>

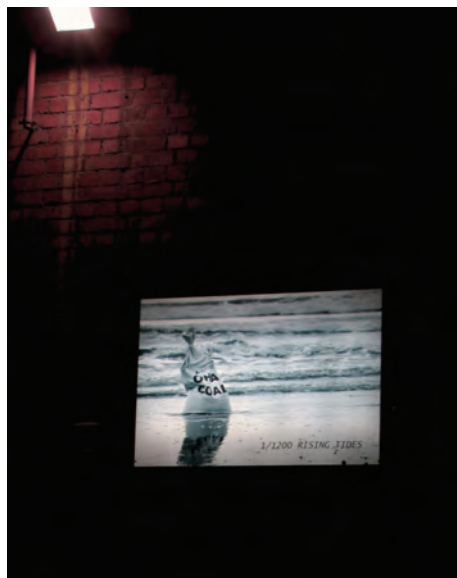
For this most recent work in the series, *111200 Let's Do This* at c3 Contemporary Artspace, the edited video recording from the "Art & Future" exhibition was displayed on a tablet mounted on the wall alongside relief-printed coal sacks lying on emergency blankets. The artist statement asserts: "Coal bags take on a new lease of life as protection against rising tides."

Coal is a finite and polluting resource. New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, signalled climate change as "this generation's nuclear free moment."<sup>10</sup> Her catchphrase during the election was "Let's do this!" The motif of the coal sack can be seen as a symbolic barrier to rising tides. The term "relief" now takes on an alternative meaning to describe the aid and support needed for the casualties of climate change:

## RELIEF<sup>11</sup>

1. a feeling of cheerfulness or optimism that follows the removal of anxiety, pain, or distress: *I breathed a sigh of relief*
2. deliverance from or alleviation of anxiety, pain, distress, etc.
3. a. help or assistance, as to the poor, needy, or distressed
  - b. (as modifier): *relief work*

Figure 7. Marion Wassenaar; *111200 Rising Tides*, 2016, digital lightbox project, Rodda Lane, Melbourne.



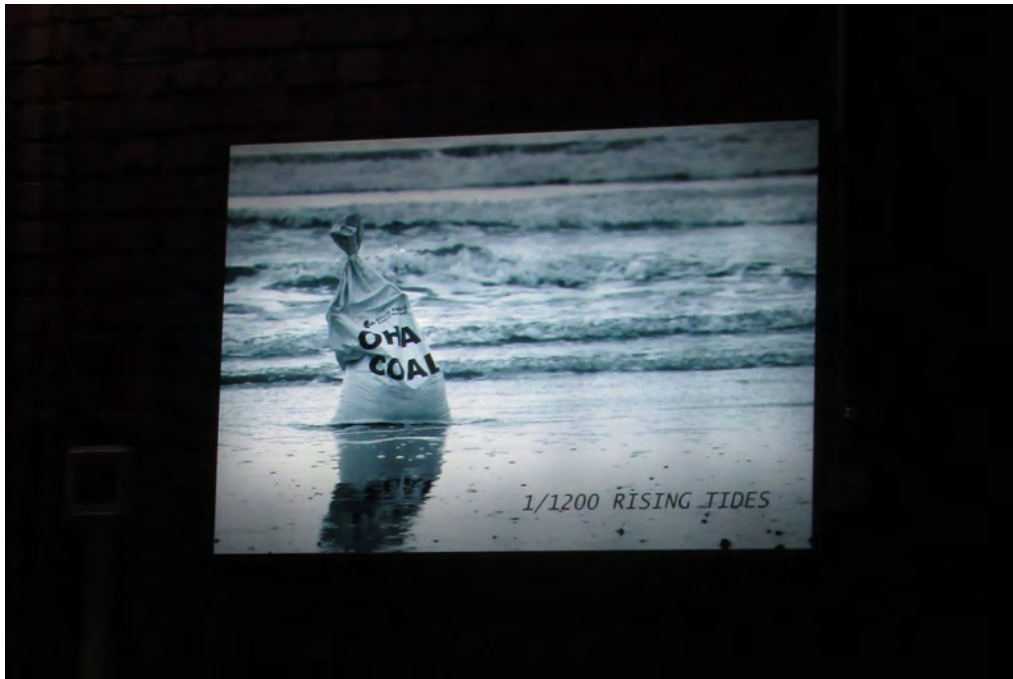


Figure 8. Marion Wassenaar; *1/1200 Rising Tides*, 2016, digital lightbox project, Rodda Lane, Melbourne.

A little over 30 years ago, New Zealand's then Prime Minister, David Lange, declared that nuclear weapons were morally indefensible and that we would no longer play any part in the arms race that threatened to extinguish all life on Earth. In 1984, the country became legally nuclear-free and this position remains a part of New Zealand's foreign policy. Today, as Prime Minister Ardern states, climate change is a major priority for the government, and is as relevant to the country now as the nuclear issue was in the 1980s.

This project addresses coal mining's impact on climate change and the pressing opposition to expansion of the industry on both sides of the Tasman. Recent news reports, for example, have featured the controversial Adani coal mine project in Queensland and the proposed mine site at Mt Te Kuha, near Westport, New Zealand, that threatens the ecological integrity of the area. Also, US President Donald Trump is attempting to revive the coal industry, denying climate change by declaring that: "The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive."<sup>12</sup>

In a gesture of despair, the relief-printed image of the prostrate coal sack is exhausted and laid to rest. Acting as its support, the emergency blanket offers a sense of security and possible renewal for what the future may hold.

All images by the author unless otherwise stated.

**Marion Wassenaar** holds an MFA from the Dunedin School of Art and specialises in print practices. Her research focuses on the collision between humans and their environment. She lectures in the Print Studio at the Dunedin School of Art and is a member of The News Network Project (<http://www.thenewsnetworkproject.org>).



- 1 *Collins English Dictionary* (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 2014), <https://www.collinsdictionary.com>.
- 2 Dusan C Stulik and Art Kaplan, *Halftone*, The Getty Conservation Institute, 2013, [https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications\\_resources/pdf\\_publications/pdf/atlas\\_half\\_tone.pdf](https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/pdf_publications/pdf/atlas_half_tone.pdf).
- 3 Johannes Vermeer, <https://www.mauritshuis.nl/en/explore/the-collection/artworks/girl-with-a-pearl-earring-670/#>.
- 4 Blake Gopnik, "What the Dots Mean in Andy Warhol's Pop Art," *The Daily Pic*, 17 March 2017, <https://news.artnet.com/opinion/andy-warhol-broad-894944>.
- 5 Marshall McLuhan and Q Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*, new ed. (Corte Madera, Calif., Gingko Press, 2005), 104.
- 6 *Collins English Dictionary*.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 68-88, quoted in David Hopkins, "Duchamp, Childhood, Work and Play: The Vernissage for *First Papers of Surrealism*, New York, 1942," *Tate Papers*, 22 (Autumn 2014), <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/22/duchamp-childhood-work-and-play-the-vernissage-for-first-papers-of-surrealism-new-york-1942>.
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- 12 Donald J Trump, <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/265895292191248385?lang=en>.

## BON A TIRER AND EMBOSS: "PANAMA PAPERS," 2016-18

Neil Emmerson

All human beings have three lives: public, private and secret. (Gabriel García Márquez)

This project was initiated in 2016 when the media exposed what became named the Panama Papers.

The Panama Papers are 11.5 million leaked documents that detail financial and attorney–client information for more than 214,488 offshore entities. The documents, some dating back to the 1970s, were created by, and taken from, Panamanian law firm and corporate service provider Mossack Fonseca, and were leaked in 2015 by an anonymous source. The documents contained private, personal financial information about wealthy individuals and public officials. While offshore business entities themselves are not illegal, reporters found evidence of money-laundering, fraud, tax evasion and the evading of international sanctions. New Zealand also became implicated in the resulting scandal, that continues to resonate today.

In the spirit of hiding secrets, this public exposure of dodgy financial dealings became both a title and a vehicle for expressions of other hidden, illegal practices. The clues to other secrets appear in graphic references to the works of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. The appropriation of Johns' *0 through 9* work is laid over a contemporary imitation of Rauschenberg's 1950s newspaper cut-and-paste print, including clippings of Panama Papers newspaper reports. Johns and Rauschenberg were young men in love during a period of rampant, institutionalised homophobia in mainstream American culture. Their relationship remained a public secret for many years due to the criminalisation of homosexuality at the time. Their historically illicit, homosexual relationship meant a close proximity to that secret place called the closet. This repressive 1950s culture is not entirely dissimilar to the current situation in Russia. It must be remembered that for many LGBTQI people globally, this is still a pressing and, in many instances, life-threatening issue.

Concurrently with the Panama Papers exposure in newspapers and other daily news media, the cannabis issue had surfaced and was being debated, yet again. Should its medicinal and/or recreational use be legalised or remain a criminal offence? The connection between the cannabis issue and the laundering of illegal drug money through illicit Panama accounts might also be one worth thinking about. Cannabis or hemp, along with all its many and varied applications and uses, has been demonised in the modern world of national politics and multinationals. This demonisation is what it has in common with homosexuality. Actually, similar discussions have been a part of homosexual law reform debates, arguments against legalisation being issued by a similar mixture of conservative religious and political individuals, groups and institutions. This does not, however, mean that these two issues are necessarily similar beyond this point. However, if a practice is illegal then there is an equivalence and, it could be argued, an associative relationship. For example, Jean Genet artfully fused the idea of the homosexual and the thief in his writing.

Johns and Rauschenberg were involved in an illegal relationship during a relatively recent period in American history when homosexual activities were a criminal offence. In some more liberal environments, cannabis is now a legal means of recreation and medicinal treatment – but mostly it is still globally illegal, regardless of how widely it is used by a cross-section of society for both purposes. The titles of the three mock Rauschenberg/Johns screen prints, *tinny*, *fiddy* and *hundy*, are a tongue-in-cheek play on colloquial terms for the various, common quantities of cannabis generally sold illegally (\$25, \$50 and \$100). Money to be laundered.



Figure 1. *Panama Papers, Tinny Bag*, Installation View. c3 Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne. Photograph: Screaming Pixel.

Accompanying the three prints are two other sets of three objects in relative, escalating scale to the prints. Three transparent plastic bags filled with various quantities of shredded, green- and pink-coloured paper and fake New Zealand banknotes imitate, or are a spoof of, the clear plastic bags commonly used for the packaging of smaller quantities of cannabis. These oversized bags stuffed with shredded coloured paper become expressive, abstract compositions in shiny, clear pillows, resonating with ideas about the relationship of abstract expressionism to Pop and enabling associations with Rauschenberg and Johns once again.

Three reconstructions of cigarette rolling-paper packets, using the altered label of Panama Vice (instead of Zig Zag), reinforce both the Panama Papers and the cannabis puns and are furnished with pink papers for 'rolling up a number.' Once more, both repetition and the exaggerated and escalating scale of these objects nod in the direction of Pop. Art history can construct various narratives that, as noted in the case of Rauschenberg and Johns, can be used to cover up and conceal secrets. If we talk about this work in regard to its relationship to abstract expressionism and pop art, can we create an art-legitimate diversion and sweep the cannabis debate under the rug? Metaphors collide in this *Panama Papers* project. All three sets of signs refer to the other in a triangular system of shifting associations. Antithesis, hyperbole, metonymy and simile are all swirled together in an arty joke, a cryptic smokescreen.

This project was exhibited recently (April-May 2018) in concurrent group exhibition projects at c3 Contemporary Art Space in Melbourne and the Forrester Gallery in Oamaru. The News Network is a trans-Tasman group of print practitioners whose work references the news media and develops projects based on issues and images lifted from a wide variety of media sources and developed into productions for fine art contexts. These two recent events were the third and fourth group exhibition projects organised by the News Network.

**Bon a Tirer (BAT) and Emboss** use pseudonyms when working together on their collaborative P lab projects. In this case, the playful use of these nom de plumes also reinforces the idea of secrets and concealment at work in *Panama Papers*.

## 2018

The News Network: Marian Crawford, Melbourne. Richard Harding, Melbourne. Trent Walter, Melbourne. Alison Alder, Canberra. Steve Lovett, Auckland. Neil Emmerson, Dunedin. Marion Wassenaar, Dunedin. BAT & Emboss, Dunedin

**Neil Emmerson** is a Senior Lecturer and coordinates the Print Studio at the Dunedin School of Art, in New Zealand. Neil has a Master in Visual Arts from the Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney. His research expertise spans a broad range of Print-related technologies, Identity Politics, Queer Theory, and Gay and Lesbian History. His work is held in the collections of major public institutions in New Zealand and Australia.



Figure 2. BAT & Emboss, Installation View. c3 Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne. Photograph: Screaming Pixel.



Figure 3. Neil Emmerson, BAT & Emboss, Installation View. c3 Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne. Photograph: Screaming Pixel.





Figure 4. BAT & Emboss, Installation View – Forrester Gallery, Oamaru. Photograph: Neil Emmerson.



Figure 5. BAT & Emboss, Installation View – Forrester Gallery, Oamaru. Photograph: Neil Emmerson.

## I08: NEW/OLD MODES OF PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Rye Senjen

Every order is therefore political and based on some form of exclusion. There are always other possibilities that have been repressed and that can be reactivated. Chantal Mouffe<sup>1</sup>

### THE THEORETICAL BASIS: SUBTLE COUNTER-HEGEMONY

Chantal Mouffe<sup>2</sup> questions whether artistic practices can and do play a critical role in society when artists themselves have become a necessary part of capitalist production and consumption. She suggests that what is needed are interventions in different social spaces in order to oppose, challenge and undermine the "imaginary environment necessary for its reproduction."<sup>3</sup>

The Gramscian concept of counter-hegemony is the theoretical ground of these interventions. Hegemony – normative views about political and social reality – is and can be challenged by counter-hegemonic interventions.<sup>4</sup> Importantly, counter-hegemonic moves are *affective*, because praxis and understanding are rooted in "feeling" and aim to arouse "passion." Gramsci writes that any revolution "presupposes the formation of a new set of standards, a new psychology, new ways of feeling, thinking and living."<sup>5</sup>

According to Gramsci, it is not enough to change the mode of production; the supporting ideology must also be challenged, changed and ultimately overthrown. Counter-hegemonic resistance hence involves struggling over and changing dominant attitudes, beliefs and emotions about the world.<sup>6</sup>

It is within this theoretical context that I wish to situate the I08 project, in particular in the form of the *I08 cups* project. Through a series of 'performances,' the I08 project is attempting to challenge the prevailing industrial system at the ideological (and hence emotional) level.

Overall, *I08* emphasises imperfection, a variety of production technologies, the use of safe, toxic-free materials and different interactions with 'participants,' depending on the object. I am making a subtle counter-hegemonic intervention, aiming to "disrupt the smooth image that corporate capitalism is trying to spread, bringing to the fore its repressive character."<sup>7</sup> I propose substituting alternative realities: hand-made everyday objects – imperfect, each one different, yet similar.

As Chantal Mouffe has pointed out, "today artists cannot pretend any more to constitute an avant-garde offering a radical critique, but this is not a reason to proclaim that their political role has ended. They still can play an important role in the hegemonic struggle by subverting the dominant hegemony and by contributing to the construction of new subjectivities."<sup>8</sup> My objects do not appear avant-garde, yet offer a radical critique of production/consumption in twenty-first-century neoliberal capitalism.



Figure 1. Range of glazes in 108 cups. Photograph: Pam McKinlay

### 108 CUPS: AN ESCAPE FROM THE DAILY CAPITALIST GRIND (PUN INTENDED)

In 2016, Otago Polytechnic's Eden Café banned the service of coffee in disposable takeaway cups to stop 1000 paper cups heading to landfill each week. This inspired a reconsideration of the vessels used to serve coffee and how they could be more 'sustainable'. (I will not address here the thoroughly problematic concept of sustainability, but see Rose and Cachelin 2018<sup>9</sup>). In an initial response, Otago Polytechnic ceramics students created the first 40 ceramic cups for the café.

In 2017, I decided to continue this effort by creating a further 108 hand-thrown cups for Eden Café. However, rather than providing a 'random' selection of cups made by a variety of makers, I decided that these cups should provide a consistent and counter-hegemonic message. Arousing 'feeling,' pointing towards a new way of thinking must be accompanied by some tangible, experiential signposts. These signposts included the way the cups were made, their materiality, their colour and their number. The number 108 is imbued with significance in a number of spiritual traditions – from Vedic India to old Germanic sagas, from ancient Peru to ancient Rome – as well as having astronomical significance. Curiously, the distance of the Earth from the sun is around 108 times the diameter of the sun.

The cups were not only made from Dunedin-sourced clay bodies or clay bodies prepared by ceramicists at the Otago Polytechnic ceramics studio, but I also chose six different coloured glazes to represent the six senses – sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and extrasensory perception. To emphasise different throwing technologies, I threw half the cups on a kick wheel (representing the past as well as the future) and the other half on an electric wheel (representing present production methods).

To symbolise and ensure a human future, I only use safe, non-toxic materials. All glazes are free from toxic metal oxides such as cadmium, manganese, cobalt, barium and lithium. All cups are stoneware and are gas-reduction fired to 1280° C.

My aim was to go well beyond mere sustainability. I felt inspired to introduce others to a more human experience, one that is unique and handcrafted: each cup feeling different from the next; challenging expectations on the vessels that are used in a café; finding joy in a humble, but unique cup; and creating a special experience that is also available to everyone.

To paraphrase Melser;<sup>10</sup> I aim for a counter-ideology that values the imprint of the hand or process of the maker. My cups emphasise appreciation by touch and by being sensuous. Their 'virtue' lies in their rejection of industrial perfection, instead resolutely aiming for the imperfect. Instead of imitating industrial and computerised values, these cups aim to provide relief from the mass-produced.

An encounter with one of the *108 cups* provides a daily escape from the capitalist machine. It is a small but perhaps significant jolt away from mass production and consumption.

My aim is to create a porthole into a different reality. By travelling through the porthole, I am instilling a desire for the hand-crafted, against the mass-produced. Encountering one of the *108 cups* becomes a signal, a signpost. We can escape the mass-produced, using handcrafted, locally made cups instead. Imperfections and differences become signposts of the possibility of a different reality. Handcrafted but not expensive, not reserved for 'posh' people, not found in a designer shop.

But today, craft objects in all their guises have very much become the domain of the middle and elite classes: handcrafted shoes, handcrafted bicycles, hand-knitted scarfs, handcrafted beer – the list goes on. Like other consumer objects, handcrafted objects become a signifier of the educated/elite/wealthy class one belongs or aspires to. These objects are fetishised in the sense that the 'owner' projects onto them his or her desires for a different kind of world, a world in which they probably would not exist. A world in which the 'owner' does not need to feel guilty about the way the object was crafted.



Figure 2. Detail- *108 cups*. Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

The current expectation is that a cup used at a café has no value, no story, and is mass produced, with little care. Yet each cup also captures the moment of making, the energy of the maker or the industrial machine, depending on its creation. My cups are designed to create the opposite of the expectation normally attached to café experiences: they are not paper cups to be thrown away and they are not mass produced. These objects invite a pause, a different experience, a rupture of the daily grind.

Each cup embodies duration in the Bergsonian sense. "Duration is the 'field' in which difference lives and plays itself out. Duration is that which undoes as well as what makes: to the extent that duration entails an open future, it involves the fracturing and opening up of the past and the present to what is virtual in them, to what in them differs from the actual, to what in them can bring forth the new."<sup>11</sup> The handmade cup – encountered unexpectedly, and then hoped for in a daily ritualistic encounter:

A handmade cup can provide a new sense of duration through its making and maker. Sustainability, now largely an empty and tired slogan, can be renewed: it becomes about getting back to reusing and repairing, about caring for the objects that participate in our lives.

**Rye Senjen** is an artist, activist and scholar, currently training as a ceramicist at the Dunedin School of Art. She has a background in artificial intelligence and Sanskrit, and has taught sustainability to MBA students. She often works with her wife on ceramic projects (see [www.fluxedearth.nz](http://www.fluxedearth.nz)).

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2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 A Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks* (New York: International, 1987).

5 A Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 41.

6 J-P Reed, "Theorist of Subaltern Subjectivity: Antonio Gramsci, Popular Beliefs, Political Passion, and Reciprocal Learning," *Critical Sociology*, 39:4 (2012), 1-31.

7 Mouffe, *Artistic Activism and Agonistic Space*.

8 Ibid.

9 Rose, J and A Cachelin, "Critical Sustainability: incorporating critical theories into contested sustainabilities," *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*. (2018) DOI:10.1007/s13412-018-0502-9.

10 P Melser, *The Unknown Craftsman*, 2016, <https://paulmelser.co.nz/unknown-craftsman> (accessed 2 April 2018).

11 Elizabeth Grosz, "Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming," *Parallax*, 11:2 (2005), 4-13.



## #PEAKPLASTIQUE

Fiona Clements



Figure 1. Fiona stands in zero-waste offcut red dress in front of the humans who responded to the call to be clothes-bearers. Fiona is introducing herself and calling forth her ancestor Motoitōi: "Nau mai Motoitōi, e tōku tipuna, ki tōku taha i au e tū ana hei māngai māu. Welcome Motoitōi my ancestor to stand at my side as I stand as your mouthpiece." The humans are sans plastique, having released themselves from their plastique constraints.

Senorita AweSUMO is a platform for activism, a space that is ever changing and adapting to current needs. The name came from extenuating circumstances when Fiona Clements needed an outlet for creative expression while working through the effects of workplace-related harm; having to stand up for self in a threatened place – physically, emotionally and socially. Senorita AweSUMO is Fiona Clements' protective moniker; a bullet-proof vest to enable space between the active front and the person of vision. A constant engagement with participatory aspects, making a difference through activities and challenging people to activate and create; to bring that action into their daily life through the use of imagination. The zero-waste philosophy that drives the platform is a pathway to the circular and regenerative economy. It is a bite-sized, chewable concept that consumers can try on for size in order to adapt their lifestyle. To break our take, make, waste cycle and shift it to a circular one, we need more awareness from consumers about purchasing and product stewardship from producers. Designers serve their community by providing solutions to problems. Having seen the amount of waste created by commercial fashion production, Senorita AweSUMO is about creating solutions by finding opportunities to create unique garments and providing a local solution to a problem facing the fashion system globally.

## TOITU TE AWA TOITU TE WHENUA TOITU NGA WAHINE

As part of Dunedin iD Fashion Week 2018, and alongside two other Ngai Tahu designers, Amber Bridgeman of Kahuwai and Darlene Gore, Senorita AweSUMO took part in a fashion event titled "Toitu te awa, Toitu te whenua, Toitu nga wahine" which was held at Toitu Otago Settlers Museum, Dunedin. The collection designed under the Senorita AweSUMO label was named #PEAKPLASTIQUE.

The zero-waste collaborators in this avant garde collection were staff at the Otago Museum, which donated material from the "Who Cared? Otago Nurses in WWI" exhibition which was developed and delivered in collaboration with the Otago Polytechnic Bachelor of Design (Communication) students and, complicitly, the citizens of Dunedin. Senorita AweSUMO collected the 'plastique' aspects of this collection from the streets. It was this daily action that drove Senorita AweSUMO to integrate a performance element into the fashion collection #PEAKPLASTIQUE.



Figure 2. Tent canvas goddess tunic stuffed with the leftover handles from 800 plastic shopping bags that were used to create the plastic-bag monster inflatable sculpture by Zoe Fox.

The disposable nature of plastic is inherent to our throw-away, single-use society. Senorita AweSUMO created a conversation with the audience about product stewardship, both visually and as a spoken word performance. We have hit peak plastique on a global scale. Plastic wrapping litters the earth and suffocates our oceans. Our animals are trapped in nets and eat plastic, which cannot be differentiated as not-food. New Zealanders use 1.6 billion plastic bags per year –, 40,000 an hour go into our landfills. Recycling is no longer a satisfactory solution to the problem as the #PEAKPLASTIQUE collection and performance demonstrate. Senorita AweSUMO issued a clarion call to halt the use of single-use plastic and follow the example of countries which are banning its use.



Figure 3. (left) The broken plastique umbrella. Everyone knows the story of the broken broolly, used once, blown inside out, broken and thrown away – where is away? Figure 4(right). Discarding the plastique T-shirt. Plastique clothing suffocates the skin, causes endocrine disruption, does not break down in landfill and creates microfibre pollution. This is not a healthy space for humans. The long-term effects on the environment and our bodies as we evolve will be detrimental.



Figure 5.(left) Asymmetrical goddess tunic in plastique filled with single-use cups, which were discarded in the plastique midden that grew at the end of the runway throughout the performance. The 'away' space. Figure 6.(right) Fresh off the shelf, yet consumed in a single-use minute, everything on our consumptive shelves comes in plastique.

about what we throw away and how we value our resources. The #PEAKPLASTIQUE inflatable plastic bag monster made by Zoe Fox was a surprising physical disruption of the event space. This challenge to the 'normal' in the midst of a runway laid down the wero for commitment by all humankind that kaitiakitanga is the most important mahi and one that we must undertake immediately.

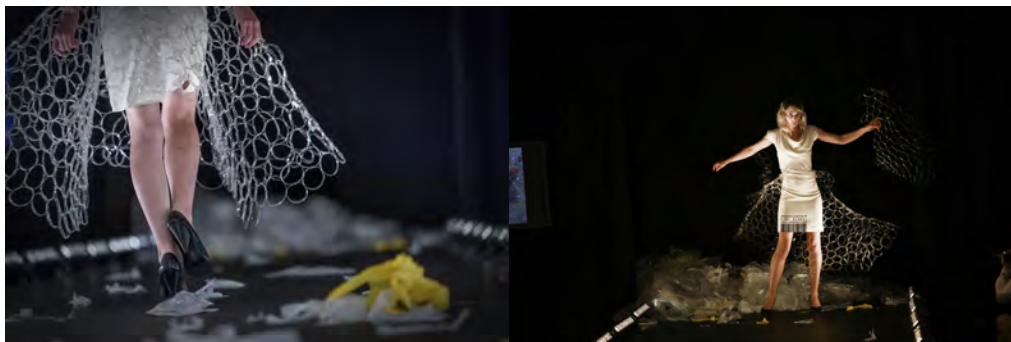


Figure 7. Sexy AF silk dress with a plastic bottle skirt made from all the juice bottles I drank while creating the collection. This was the only plastique I was allowed to buy while making the collection in order to get uniform circles. I gave them another single use.

He hononga mahi iti – a global collaboration made up of tiny actions.

Kei a tatou te mana – we have all the power.

**Fiona Clements** Pakeha, Kai Tahu, clan Gordon, craftivist, zero-waste textile practitioner and fashion activist. She grew up in Waitati, Dunedin. Connected closely with nature and environmentally minded, her beliefs are reflected in her zero-waste textile designs.

Photographs by Andy Thompson Photography NZ.

## WHAT GROWS WHERE YOU LIVE (#WGWYL)

Ruth Evans



Figure 1. Harakeke, Poroporo, Raupō.

What Grows Where You Live (#WGWYL) was an environmental art project led by Ruth Evans and Log. The project was selected as one of two “Environment Envoy” commissions as part of Dunedin City Council’s Te Ao Tūroa – Dunedin’s Environment Strategy, and delivered through Dunedin’s Urban Dream Brokerage service. According to Environment Envoy broker Katrina Thomson:

Artists have a vital role in making new connections and enabling people to see their world in completely new ways. Our programme uses and creates strong partnerships between different sectors to encourage Dunedin’s community to see their local environment from new perspectives. We are working with Urban Dream Brokerage as a model for innovative and participatory use of vacant space – indoor as well as outdoor. We are all working together to achieve the goals of Te Ao Tūroa, Dunedin’s Environment Strategy.<sup>1</sup>

The #WGWYL project embraced the biodiversity of Ōtepoti/Dunedin, focusing on the plant species raupō (*Typha orientalis*), harakeke (*Phormium tenax*), kōwhai (*Sophora microphylla*) and poroporo (*Solanum laciniatum*). #WGWYL was manifested through native plant revegetation initiatives, artwork creation and community outreach. The project began by working with private and public landowners to reintroduce native flora across the greater Dunedin region through planting initiatives. This part of the project was documented and compiled within the pages of an art zine, the #WGWYL zine, which provided an understanding of where these plants grow, how to source them, and their traditional applications in Māori society.<sup>2</sup>



Ruth Evans also created sculptural representations of the focus species in three-dimensional needlework pieces. These educational artworks were displayed in an exhibition space in the central city between 27 April and 19 May, at 23 Princes Street. Open six days a week, on Saturdays the space became a community hub for knowledge- and skill-sharing workshops led by practitioners in biodiversity and the native flora and fauna of Dunedin, with the artworks as a continuous focal point for connection and reflection. This multi-disciplinary work brought people together in active and new ways to explore the environment and also the impacts that the environment has on us.

## ENVIRONMENT ENVOY

In August 2017, Urban Dream Brokerage and Dunedin City Council announced the launch of Environment Envoy, a pilot program which aimed to support projects that related to Te Ao Tūroa – Dunedin's Environment Strategy. Two commissions of \$6,500 were available for projects with a "strong public impact."<sup>3</sup> The judging panel were looking for proposals which "encourage the community to think about the environment and productive landscapes in different ways; strengthen collaboration between artists and the public, iwi, scientists, councils, business and community groups; engage the community to contribute to creative projects that provide educational opportunities for communities and support enhancing our environment."<sup>4</sup> Applicants were asked to address the way in which their project responded to at least one of the following goals of Te Ao Tūroa – Dunedin's Environment Strategy: "working with landowners to integrate biodiversity into productive environments (farming and agricultural lands); boosting backyard biodiversity and urban biodiversity; increasing food resilience; enhancing urban ecosystem functions (e.g. storm water runoff regulation, providing food for pollinators); ensuring Dunedinites are able to enjoy, connect to and celebrate the natural world."<sup>5</sup> #WGWYL responded to not just one of these goals, but to all of them.

## REVEGETATION INITIATIVE

The major goal of the #WGWYL project is to honour the native flora and fauna of Ōtepoti, raising their numbers through revegetation initiatives. The decision to plant out raupū, harakeke and kōwhai was made during the proposal phase of the project, once we knew what sort of ecosystems we would be revegetating. There is no need for humans to plant out poroporo in the region, as this plant spreads readily by itself. Because of this, poroporo has gained a reputation as an invasive weed, rather than being acknowledged for the beautiful native that it is. By honouring this plant alongside recognised native species – such as kōwhai for example, which has been labelled New Zealand's unofficial native flower – it is our intention to challenge the common perception of poroporo.

From the beginning, it was decided that the revegetation initiatives would take place on private land. We reached out to a number of property owners who we felt would be interested in participating in the project. From these inquiries, we were introduced to a number of other people who wished to participate, and received plants to plant out on their own properties. The majority of the plants purchased for the project were distributed in the Waitati area, while other recipients were based in Port Chalmers, North East Valley and Karitane. Three of these properties were larger blocks of land, over 2 acres, while the rest could be described as 'backyards.' One participant took our plants to Quarantine Island in Otago Harbour with the Otago Girls' High School Enviroschool group.

A total of 130 plants were purchased from Dunedin's Ribbonwood Nurseries, and another 40 harakeke were raised for the project by Dylan King. King also donated a number of other native plants, including makomako (*Aristotelia serrata*), akeake (*Dodonea viscosa purpurea*), mountain akeake (*Olearia traversiorum*), kōhūhū (*Pittosporum tenuifolium*) and kōtukutuku (*Fuchsia extorticata*).



Figure 2. #WGWYL planting event in Waitati

The summer of 2017-18 was the hottest on record. According to Niwa's National Climate Centre, Dunedin received 618 hours of sunlight between December 2017 and February 2018,<sup>6</sup> with the mean air temperature in the city 3°C higher than the historical average.<sup>7</sup> Under these conditions, we were concerned that the heat would negatively impact the plants if they were to be put in the ground during the summer months. We decided to wait a few weeks after collecting the plants, knowing that as March arrived, the days would shorten and the heat subside.

On 3 March, a small group gathered at a property in Waitati for the #WGWYL Planting Event. Landowner Mark Spencer took the group on a walk through the property, and a discussion was held on his long-term plans for native revegetation. We asked Mark where he would like us to work, pointing out the areas which were ideal for our plants. Mark stated that he had no preference for the location, and encouraged us to use our judgement. We headed to a site near the house: a paddock with a sloping bank running down into a freshwater swamp containing a number of native grasses and rushes growing among introduced grass species. With its sloping bank and waterlogged terrain, the site was perfect for our day of planting.

After a quick coffee, the group set to work. While I photo-documented the process, Dylan, Log, Sam and Orlagh planted out 100 natives. The day was hot and as the crew got stuck into their task, low cloud came up from the bay, bringing with it a slight drop in temperature and, later that evening, a drizzling of rain.

Having completed our activities on Mark's property, we divided up the plants requested by the other #WGWYL recipients. These individuals had volunteered to revegetate their own sites, providing us with documentation of the process. The plants, the "#WGWYL cross-stitch swab" and a letter providing more information on the project and their role within it were delivered to these locations. In the weeks following, these participants each engaged with the project in their own way, sharing their experiences with us, and the broader public, through photographs which have been archived in the #WGWYL zine.

Between November 2017 and April 2018 four #WGWYL sculptures – *Poroporo*, *Raupū*, *Harakeke* and *Kōwhai* – were constructed. The original intention was to create work from materials found at the revegetated sites. However, due to record summer temperatures, the decision was made to begin working on the sculptures before the opportunity to host the #WGWYL Planting Event arose. Just weeks after being informed by Urban Dream Brokerage and Dunedin City Council that #WGWYL had been selected as an Environment Envoy commission, materials were donated for constructing these sculptural works. Following a process of experimentation, three-dimensional textile sculptures were chosen. Where possible, these sculptures were based on actual plant specimens. The only time when it was necessary to work from photographs and botanical illustrations was during the making of the flowers for the *Kōwhai* piece. While the sculptures are not intended to be botanically correct, we sought to create representational forms of the plants on which they were based.

Steel wire of various gauges was used in all the pieces, acting as a skeletal framework for the works. In addition to the use of wire, *Raupū* was formed around a steel rod; the sculpture was then set in a concrete base, which was hidden with a layer of sand and polymer resin, a material which mimics water. The wire allowed the sculptures to be reshaped by visitors. In the case of *Poroporo*, the skeletal wire framework constructed for the textile forms allows the piece to change shape in a realistic manner, at the whim of those handling it.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

During the course of the commission, Ruth and Log met with a number of individuals, groups and organisations, seeking out information on the chosen plants and their various applications. We met with members of hapū botanists, scientists, raranga (flax weaving) practitioners, horticulturalists, and others. Through these networking activities, Log and Ruth were able to gather a wide variety of information relating to the project which was used in the construction of the #WGWYL zine.



Figure 3. "Plant a Native" workshop with Dylan King

## WORKSHOP EVENTS

During the exhibition, which ran from 27 April to 18 May, a number of workshops were hosted in the Princes Street gallery space which expanded on the concepts behind the project. On the morning of 28 April, a small group of artists and makers gathered at an 'artist discussion' event, where Ruth Evans answered questions from the public about the project and her future intentions.

That afternoon, Tahu Mackenzie, the education officer at Orokonui Ecosanctuary, hosted a workshop, "Learn to Plant Trees like Birds do!" Using nutrient-rich clay and eco-sourced native seeds, the public were invited to participate in the creation of 'magic poo bombs' (also known as 'seed bombs'), which they took away to plant in a suitable location of their choice. After a brief introduction and a beautiful waiata, Mackenzie explained how this approach to propagation mimics the way that birds, such as the kererū, spread seed far and wide. Working spaces were established within the gallery, with tables hosting native plants, their seeds, some clay and potting-mix soil.

While a number of seeds were pre-harvested for the activity, Mackenzie also provided some seed-laden plant cuttings, allowing participants to mimic the gathering of seed directly from the source. A small ball of clay was rolled in the palms of our hands and a 'well' was pressed into its centre. Seeds were then added and the ball was rolled again. Once we had combined the seed with the clay, the balls were coated in the potting mix and were ready to be thrown. Mackenzie encouraged us to produce 'magic poo bombs' which contained a variety of seed, rather than a mono-crop, and discussed the importance of diversity for revegetation. Koromiko (*Hebe parviflora*), tauhinu (*Ozothamnus leptophyllus*), kōhūhū (*Pittosporum tenuifolium*), and kānuka (*Kunzea ericoides*) seeds were used for the workshop, as they do not require passing through the digestive tract of an animal in order to propagate.

On 5 May, the #WGWYL HQ hosted two further workshops. In the morning, between 10am and 12.30pm, the gallery became a zine-making working space, with members of the public joining Ruth and Log to create zines of their own. Ruth demonstrated how to turn a sheet of A4 paper into a small zine and, using the resources provided, participants began making zines of their own.



Figure 4. #WGWYL Envoy space. View from Princess st.



Figure 5. Workshop participants with Tahu McKenzie

That afternoon Lucy Smith hosted a workshop titled "Introduction to the Art of Raranga." During the workshop, the gallery was closed in order to allow participants to engage with the material without interruption. Lucy has been teaching raranga in Dunedin for a number of years, having been taught by her whanau elders from an early age. Lucy began the workshop with a karakia before demonstrating how to harvest harakeke following the correct tikanga. Lucy would usually avoid hosting workshops in such a setting, as she prefers to work from the plant itself, so we felt very honoured that she was willing to step outside of her comfort zone and commit her time to the project. Because there are no harakeke plants within walking distance of the gallery, Lucy used a juvenile harakeke plant for the harvesting demonstration, and brought in leaves which she had harvested before the workshop. Participants

were taught how to weave harakeke flowers, and after the event Lucy offered to host future workshops at a site where harakeke was available, so that more time could be spent expanding the group's skills.

On 12 May 2018, the #WGWYL gallery was home to another workshop, "Plant a Native, with Dylan King." King is an experienced arborist, landscaper and gardener who specialises in the native plants of Aotearoa. From the proposal stage right through to the conclusion of the project, King was thoroughly involved in the #WGWYL project, sharing his skills and knowledge through interviews and revegetation events. For his workshop, King educated participants about various propagation techniques including how to correctly sow kōwhai seeds; transplanting of seedlings; and how to take divisions of harakeke to ensure reliable transplanting of cultivars. Twenty people attended this workshop, and all participants walked away with native plants for their own properties, whether as seeds sown, transplanted seedlings or juvenile trees.

The final workshop for this round of #WGWYL, "Habitat Restoration and Guided Hikoi," took place on 19 May. Hosted at Te Nohoaka o Tukiauau/ Sinclair Wetlands and facilitated by the wetland's coordinator, Glen Riley, this hikoi and planting event took place the day after the exhibition had closed, providing the public with one more opportunity to engage with the project through habitat restoration initiatives. Te Nohoaka o Tukiauau is a 315ha wetland on the Taieri Plains, owned by Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and managed by Te Nohoaka o Tukiauau/Sinclair Wetlands Trust. The site is valued as a wāhi taonga (culturally significant site), and also for the purposes of mahinga kai (traditional food and resources), conservation, recreation and education.

Sixteen participants arrived at the site on a cold but sunny Saturday morning. After a brief introduction in the education center, Glen took the group on a guided hikoi through the wetlands. Armed with photographs taken over the years, Glen discussed the changes that have occurred through the process of wetlands restoration, explaining the history of the site and future ambitions. Along the way, we stopped at various locations where native plants were waiting for us. Glen demonstrated how to transplant these juvenile specimens and how to protect them from introduced weed species while the natives establish their roots and slowly reclaim the land. We felt extremely honoured to work with Te Nohoaka o Tukiauau.

This final event captured everything that #WGWYL is all about – community engagement, skill sharing, native habitat appreciation and restoration – bringing the project full circle. In the wise words of wetlands founder Horrie Sinclair, "Without habitat we have nothing."<sup>18</sup>

## OUTCOMES AND PROSPECTS

#WGWYL achieved a number of goals in the time that it was made available to the people of Ōtepoti. Through community participation in the project's revegetation initiatives, native flora has been reintroduced to a number of locations across the region. One hundred plants were put in the ground at Mark Spencer's farm in Waitati, creating an onsite nursery for future propagation of raupū and harakeke on other sites, taken from divisions. The sculpted forms of raupū, harakeke, kōwhai and poroporo captured the interest of visitors, sparking conversations about the importance of these plant species and their social, cultural and environmental significance.

Through the information compiled in the attractively produced zine, readers can gain a deeper understanding of the theoretical layers informing the project. The workshops and other events provided opportunities for experts from a number of areas to share their knowledge with the public. Skills were shared and plants were distributed in the form of seeds, seedlings, divisions and juvenile trees, to be planted out through community participation, further advancing the main objective of the project: to increase the biomass of native flora across Ōtepoti.



With this first round of #WGWYL now behind us, the groundwork for future iterations of the project is already being laid. The second phase of #WGWYL will focus on concerns over the spread of myrtle rust (*Uredo rangellii*), a fungal disease which seriously damages plants of the *Myrtaceae* family, such as pāhutukawa, mānuka, rātā and ramarama, among many others. This project will raise awareness of myrtle rust, examining how it spreads, the damage it can cause, and the measures being taken to reduce its impact on the environment.

**Ruth Evans** believes that art has the capacity to act as a tool of resistance. Evans explores this approach within her multi-disciplinary practice, through the creation of contemporary jewellery, sculptural works and art-based games. Evans completed the Master of Fine Arts programme at the Dunedin School of Art.

- 1 "Art Makes Environmental Connection", *Ara Toi Ōtepoti*, 4 May 2018, <https://hail.to/toi-oho/publication/87YlulO/article/7JlS8F8> (accessed 8 August 2018).
- 2 "What Grows Where You Live", *Urban Dream Brokerage*, <http://urbandreambrokerage.org.nz/what-grows-where-you-live> (accessed 8 August 2018).
- 3 From the Environment Envoy project criteria brief, <http://urbandreambrokerage.org.nz/environment-envoy>.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 See <https://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/dunedin-sweltered-hottest-summer-record>.
- 7 See <https://www.pressreader.com/new-zealand/the-press/20180203/281517931564149>.
- 8 Horrie Sinclair began creating what was to become Sinclair Wetlands in 1960 when he purchased the land, ceased farming and began blocking drainage channels.

### AWA HQ

Aroha Novak, Angela Lyon, Charlotte Parallel

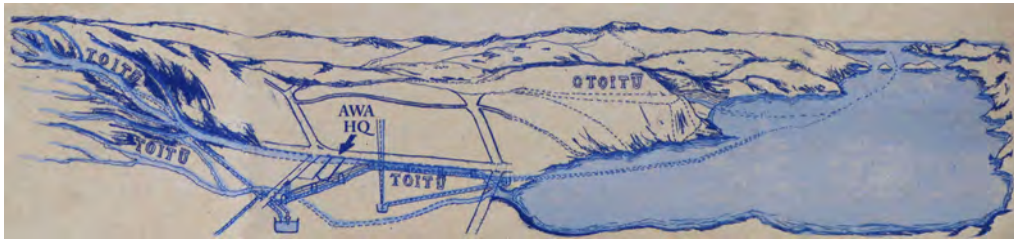


Figure 1. The course of the Toitū awa and AWA HQ. Image credit: Angela Lyon 2017, Rizo print by POINT.

AWA HQ is a collaborative project about the Toitū awa (stream) involving three Ōtepoti multidisciplinary artists, Angela Lyon, Aroha Novak and Charlotte Parallel, that ran from October 2017 to March 2018. AWA HQ is an Envoy project commissioned as part of Te Ao Tūroa – Dunedin's environment strategy delivered through the Urban Dream Brokerage initiative. AWA HQ invited people to find, respond and connect with the Toitū awa in three public events, each concluding with a picnic.

The year 2017 was an important one for water in New Zealand. Not only did the media present the nation's water resources in terms of crisis, but there were public protests seeking to protect water at every level: against water bottling and trade, agricultural use and pollution. This year also saw the Whanganui River attain legal status as a living entity through Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement Act 2017). We were inspired by this legal recognition and the protection of the awa that the change of legal status ensured. This motivated us to acknowledge and reconnect with water's status as a living entity, beyond the abstract turning of the tap. With that, AWA HQ found its purpose – to see and acknowledge our urban waterways and the drains that flow beneath us as living things.

Turning to Ōtepoti Dunedin, our subject became the Toitū, the little stream that once ran through the centre of Ōtepoti Dunedin into the harbour and, in more recent years, rushed the gutter outside the Crown Hotel every 20 minutes. The Toitū awa is now mostly invisible, piped through a series of Victorian tunnels and rerouted through reclaimed land that today makes up much of the city's industrial area.

Dedicated to understanding, recognising and acknowledging its condition, history and relationships, our research on the Toitū became a personal exchange of information, stories and mysteries. These pivotal and generous conversations guided our search to get to know the Toitū awa, both as a community and through a series of public events – a quest that shared the search to meet the Toitū, one that would consider the state of water now and, finally, one that acknowledged the Toitū as a living entity.

## AWA HQ OPENING: SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2017

This event began with a water-divining hikoi in the Town Belt with Stephen Kilroy and Taonga Pūoro artists Jennifer Cattermole and Jessica Latton. Dowsing rods were provided to help participants learn the art of water dowsing and together trace the uncovered Toitū awa down to AWA HQ on the former Toitū riverbank, at 175 Rattray Street, for a picnic. AWA HQ OPENING: SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2017



Figures 2-3. Water-divining hikoi in the Dunedin Town Belt with Stephen Kilroy and Taonga Pūoro artists Jennifer Cattermole and Jessica Latton.

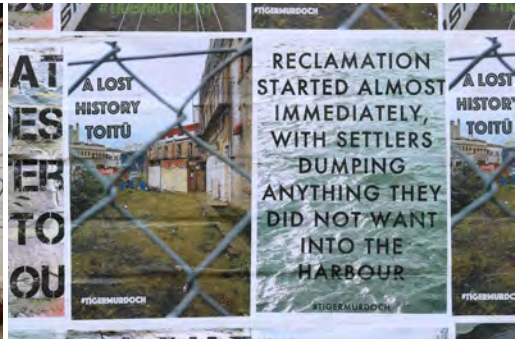
## MURKY WATERS: SATURDAY 9 DECEMBER 2017

Murky Waters was held in the empty lot at 175 Rattray Street where the Toitū riverbank would once have been and where the Toitū now gurgles below ground through manmade culverts and stormwater drains. Artists known for their blurring of the line between activism and art were invited to continue the conversation about the lost history of the Toitū awa and to address current environmental, political and historical concerns about New Zealand's water in 2017. Artists involved included Ruth Evans, Fresh & Fruity, Tiger Murdoch, Chris Schmelz, Rubbish Film Unit, Metiria Turei and Tao Wells.



Figures 4-13. Top: Murky Waters, featuring artists Ruth Evans, Fresh & Fruity, Tiger Murdoch, Chris Schmelz, Rubbish Film Unit, Metiria Turei and Tao Wells. Image credits, from top to bottom: Rubbish Film Unit/Chris Schmelz & Kerian Varian; Tigermurdoch; The Activists Handbag/MetTure.





## FINAL PICNIC



AWA HQ's final project started off on the lawn between Serpentine Avenue and Māori Road where, with the help of Moana Wesley and Te Rōpū Waiata O te Kaunihere-a-rohe o Ōtepoti, we learnt the Toitū waiata together. We then walked up the road, and scrambled down the bank where we could see, smell and touch the water. Here we sang to the past, present and future of the Toitū awa.



Figures 14-16. The final picnic. Photography: Ted Whitaker, 2018



The AWA HQ project invited the community to connect with the Toitū, including many who never knew that it flowed beneath our streets. This new connection involved a sense of timelessness, permanence and security – because, of course, the Toitū still flows, as it always has, from the mountains to the sea.

#### HEARTFELT THANKS FOR YOUR TIME AND GENEROSITY TO:

Moana Wesley, Te Rōpū Waiata O te Kaunihere-a-rohe o Ōtepoti, Mark Cain, SCANZ – He Punawai Hohourongo – Peace, Water, Power 2018 Hui, Parihaka, Ian Clothier, Claudia Babirat, Alishea Dench and the Dunedin Town Belt Education Initiative, Otago Community Trust, Keep Dunedin Beautiful, Tahu McKenzie, Rosemary Clucas, Fresh & Fruity, Rubbish Film Unit, Chris Schmelz, Tao Wells, Metiria Turei, Ruth Evans, Log, Sam & Jones Chin, Taste Nature, Veggie Boys, Morning Magpie, Mandy Mayhem, Al Halstead, Blue Oyster Project Space, DCC Small Projects Grant, Port Chalmers Pioneer Hall, Rachel Wesley, Natalie Karaitiana, Seán Brosnahan, Bill Dacker, Jen Cattermole, Jessica Paipeta Latton, Stephen Kilroy, Rua McCallum, Paul Pope, Huia Pacey, O, Carmela & Tigerlily, Waitati Hall, Katrina Thomson, Urban Dream Brokerage, Dunedin City Council Environment Strategy, Gilbert May and everyone who has been open to having conversations about the Toitū. Most importantly, we would like to thank the Toitū awa itself. xxx

**Aroha Novak** is an Otepoti based artist working in multiple mediums. She completed a Master of Fine Arts in 2013 from the Dunedin School of Art.

**Angela Lyon** is a visual artist from Dunedin. She graduated with a Master of Fine Art from Dunedin School of Art in 2007. Currently she works as a Lecturer of Photography at Otago Polytechnic's School of Design.

**Charlotte Parallel** is based in Koputai Port Chalmers. As a practicing artist she works in the fields of sound installation, collaboration, and performance.

DÉPÊCHES D'UN CORRESPONDANT DE GUERRE: REVIEW  
OF EXHIBITION, ROB CLOUGHLEY & PRUDENCE EDGE,  
*TUBE*, ANTEROOM, PORT CHALMERS, 2017.

Scott Flanagan



Figure 1: *Tube* Prudence Edge and Rob Cloughley. Installation at the Ante Room September 2017. Photograph: Alan Dove.

And down with all Kings but King Ludd.(Byron to Thomas Moore, 24 December 1816)

There is a history of Dunedin that is quite literally underground – it is the history of 274 kilometres of reticulated pipes.<sup>1</sup> The Dunedin Gas Light and Coke Company (Ltd), founded in 1862 by Stephen Hutchison, was given the remit to provide 50 street lights for Princes, George and Stuart Streets. Gold soon flowed into the city, and the number quickly increased to 150. The Dunedin City Council purchased the company in 1876. Hutchison built a new gasworks in Caversham in 1881, in direct competition with the council; during a heated debate in the council chambers, two councillors and one ratepayer were sent to court for assaulting the mayor!

The first commercial use of gas lamps was at the Salford Cotton Mills in 1804: providing 50 gas lamps allowing the mill to operate at night. Just eight years later – coincidentally the same year that a public gas supply was installed in London by the Gas, Light and Coke Company(!) – reports started to filter out of a violent insurrection in Nottinghamshire. These reports mentioned the destruction of technology by groups aligned to a certain Ned Ludd – soon to be known as Luddites.<sup>2</sup> This violence against technology quickly spread to Manchester and even made brief appearances in London.



Researching this period, I am surprised by the startling similarities to our own day – how the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution resemble the end, as post-industrialisation prepares to replace labour with automation. What if the Luddites were correct? What if Ned and his cohort of wreckers actually did sound a prophetic voice, one more real than the romantic flights that marked Byron's maiden speech in the House of Lords?

In September 2017, Rob Cloughley and Prudence Edge presented an engaging, subtle and incisive exhibition comprising both collaborative and individual works which came together to form a unified installation.<sup>3</sup> The philosophical, social and humanistic themes evident in their collaboration responded to Paul Virilio's dromoscopic<sup>4</sup> concerns of an imminent technological collapse, lending the completed installation an apocalyptic structure. Wonderfully human and a pleasure to see, on first viewing *Tube* I was surprised how quickly the name Ned Ludd came to mind.

In the exhibition, ceramics and textiles combine to generate an active field in support of a passive field. Cloughley has set up ceramic simulacra of pieces of machinery, turbines and pipes. Also arrayed are organic structures that resembles corals, or creatures feeding off thermophilic ocean vents – soft tubular organisms surviving and propagating inside rust-like ceramic matrices.

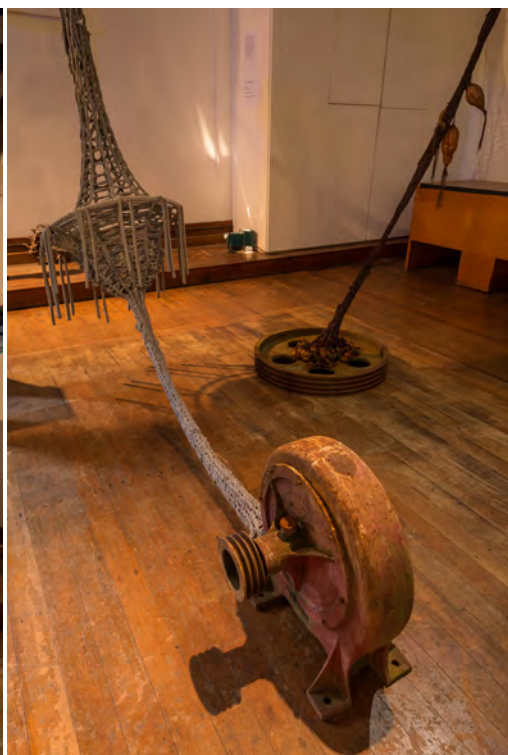
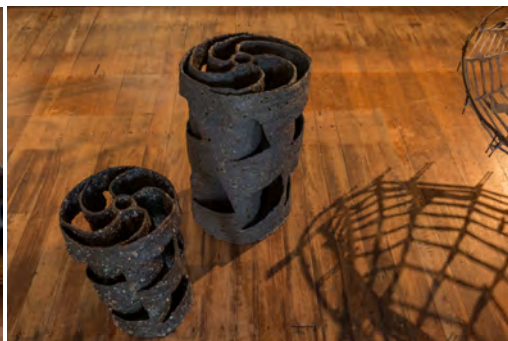
The interpenetration of the organic and the industrial with the history of ceramics is highly synergistic; it made complete sense that these simulacra of industry would be made from some of its basic components, the same materials that feed or house the organic.



Figure 2: *Tube* emerging from a rusted steel hull, actively knitted on gnarled ceramic teeth by Edge during the exhibition.



Figure 3: *Day Three*, the growth of the tube, lit by a small blue portal. Photograph: Alan Dove.





Previous page: Figure 4: "The combination of actively knitting primary mathematics, gravity and the elasticity of the fabric results in a remarkable fingerpost pointed in the direction of an Einstein – Rosen Bridge." from text. Figure 5: Cloughley' rustic ceramic cogs, stand aside as remnants of a post industrial age. Figure 6: Shadow play doubles the impact of the an Einstein – Rosen Bridge. Figure 7: Cloughley/Edge knitting and found objects suggesting "The equitable relationship with the machine." Figure 8: Cloughley' ceramic machine remnant. Figure 9: The special clamor of Cloughley/Edge math, science, light and industry. Photography: Alan Dove.

In a cluster on the floor of Port Chalmers's Anteroom – a rectangular Masonic lodge with a small raised perron at one end, one small window high up on the same gable end and a single door (side entrance) – Cloughley has placed a fulcrum (on which to prise my thoughts), a group of handmade units and a square with a T on the top side, about the size of a standing palm. It is open, it bespeaks fertility, it has a relationship to every ceramic piece arrayed around the gallery, as well as compelling intellectual connections – as if all Cloughley's work is informed by a single unit.

Deformation is also present, a natural outcome of gravity that appears to be pushed just past its limit. A cast turbine, solid and heavily impasto with engobe, weighs ponderously over a vigorously thumbled coil tube. Bent at the connecting point, it has a stupefying gravity. If you can imagine the news: A group of men around Sherwood forest are breaking machines, burning looms.

Today, the news is not quite as startling, though still utterly relevant – for what will be done with all the human units when industry conforms to automation?

Life on the edge of extremes, it adapts and grows and flourishes. In the same manner, Cloughley has dispersed among the simulacra the organic components carrying the fertility of the unit; they have become mounds branching anew from the evolutionary rhizome, growing confidently into the spatial field that Edge occupies. Industry is a force that makes life adapt its vitality.

On a hulking, rusted section of pipe, one of a number of actual mechanical parts in the gallery, Cloughley has attached to the circular flange (where the pipe would be bolted to another section of pipe) a series of his handmade units, and from this conjunction of metal and clay he has fashioned an over-large French knitting spool. Situated on the raised platform, it is elevated above the rest of Cloughley's works: rightly so. This work has an eminence, for it moves from the passive field into the active field as Edge knits from the very large spool.

It is a very smooth transition, confirming how the two fields rely on each other in order to function collaboratively. This just happens to assert what the so-called Luddites wished for – an equitable relationship with the machine.

Post-modernism was a curiously irascible hair shirt; it was wilfully difficult and obscurantist, but it has been useful to grab some of its tricks as we move towards something described more openly as soft modernism.<sup>5</sup>

Edge has affirmed that knitting, a form of weaving, is related to a group of primary mathematics disciplines dating back millennia, a history entirely consistent with clay. This explained why I understood her work as acknowledging something quite different from the shock I first experienced when I caught an intake of breath and thought, "Oh no, dreamcatchers," quickly followed by "Oh yes, Ada Lovelace!" Banded metal hoops bound with fibre, or remaining raw, rusted metal, have been given tassels and hang, or are suspended, at varying intervals from the roof of the gallery – thus compelling my initial shock.

Edge's work moves through the space of the gallery, tunnelling through it actively as it is confidently knitted each day. Using a plain, utilitarian grey fabric, she employs a loose knit to connect the banded hoops. The combination of actively knitting primary mathematics, gravity and the elasticity of the fabric results in a remarkable fingerpost pointed in the direction of an Einstein-Rosen Bridge<sup>6</sup> – a concept necessary to both popular culture and theoretical physics, as an insightful mathematical application has confirmed a cherished literary trope. Hone Tuwhare wrote of it, with pointed finger connected directly to incisive intellect, as drilling *Small Holes in the Silence*.

Edge knits together these small holes, opening tunnels to the past and the option to project a future. And, knitted directly from Cloughley's clay units on the French knitting spool, that hulking, rusted unit of industrial strength supports the idea that the relationship of craft and art is also fluid. Was that perhaps Duchamp's porcelain point before he escaped back to chess and installations?

Multiple Einstein-Rosen Bridges cross the space of the gallery, nearly always connecting to some piece of distressed, obsolete industry – but only one is actively knitted, and that is somehow very correct.

With only a single small window high on the gable end, the gallery is lit with incandescent slide projectors, lo-fi dystopian campfires that bevel and sharpen the apocalyptic edge of the work.

There is a subtext knitted within Edge's work and its relationships, both active and passive, with Cloughley's – it is a complex textuality, weaving together Lovelace, Byron, Mellor, gasworks, and the folding together of the early and late Industrial periods.

Ada Lovelace<sup>7</sup> – prodigious mathematician, Byron's daughter – gilded with Manchester millinery money, proposed a way to code machines and enable them to advance from primary mathematics by adding a complexity that was so astonishingly simple that it could be replicated anywhere, completely and utterly utilitarian. The way all these threads join together, cohering complexity across a disciplined craft, tunnelling through ideas to create a symmetry we call Art, makes this an installation so vital, so necessarily modern to our day.

As we spiral towards another threshold similar to the one faced by Mellor and his cohort of Luddites, it is especially apposite to be thinking how the arts – humanity's one saving grace – remain a priority in the face of obsolescence. Edge and Cloughley have tempted out a refreshing guild within a sharp dystopia.

**Scott Flanagan** is an artist and writer from Port Chalmers, Dunedin.

**Rob Cloughley** is the Diploma in Ceramic Art programme coordinator / Ceramic Lecturer within the Dunedin School of Art. He has worked for Otago Polytechnic since 2002 and holds a Master of Fine Art. Rob's practice is in ceramic sculpture and he teaches a wide variety of ceramic-related topics.

**Prudence Edge** is an artist and businesswoman from Port Chalmers. She holds an Masters of Fine Art RMIT University.



Figure 10a and b: Cloughley's large ceramic and found steel sculpture at the entrance to the Anteroom in Wickliffe Terrace, Port Chalmers. Photograph: Alan Dove.

- 1 Dunedin Gasworks Museum Trust, *The Engine House, Dunedin Gasworks Museum: A Guide to the Museum's History and Displays* (Dunedin: The Museum, [200-?]).
- 2 Robert Reid, *Land of Lost Content: The Luddite Revolt, 1812* (London: William Heinemann, 1986); Nicols Fox, *Against the Machine: The Hidden Luddite Tradition in Literature, Art, and Individual Lives* (Washington: Island Press/Shearwater Books, 2002).
- 3 "Tube," a multi-work installation by Prudence Edge and Rob Cloughley, was shown at the Anteroom, Port Chalmers, Dunedin, 16-22 September 2017.
- 4 Paul Virilio, *Negative Horizon: An Essay in Dromoscopy* (London: Continuum, 2005), 163-80.
- 5 Mike Grimshaw, "'Soft Modernism: The World of the Post-theoretical Designer,'" *Ctheory*, 8 April 2004, [http://ctheory.net/ctheory\\_wp/soft-modernism-the-world-of-the-post-theoretical-designer/](http://ctheory.net/ctheory_wp/soft-modernism-the-world-of-the-post-theoretical-designer/); Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1982).
- 6 There is as much hard science and communicative science on the subject of Einstein-Rosen Bridges as there is popular representation in cinema and literature.
- 7 On Ada Lovelace, see Sadie Plant, *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women + the New Technoculture* (London: Fourth Estate, 1997).

### MY FIRST KILN

Richard Stratton

#### THE HOW AND THE WHERE

In 2018, I received an invitation from the Otago Potters Group to hold a workshop in Dunedin about my current ceramic practise of reusing surface techniques deployed in the decoration of British slipware dating from the late seventeenth century. At the time, I was being hosted by the Dunedin School of Art. I had recently arrived back in my home town of Dunedin and the School of Art's ceramics department, where I had not set foot for 25 years.



Figure 1. Raku Kiln, Dunedin School of Art, 2018. My first kiln, which got me hooked into ceramics, the raku kiln has been rebuilt several times and is still standing in the same position in the ceramics department.

#### THE WHY

My research is based on industrialised ceramic practises during the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, including the development of British slipware from the early artisanal work of the late seventeenth century (Figure 2) to the mass-produced mochware of the eighteenth century (Figure 3). The mainstay of my research in this area is *The Manual of Practical Potting* by Charles F Binns (1897)<sup>1</sup>, which I originally picked up in a second-hand book store. Essentially, it is a recipe book of glazes and ephemera relating to the industrialised ceramics of the late nineteenth century.

This work was to prove its importance on my return from an artist's residency at Guldagergaard in Denmark in mid-2015, following a five-month period of leave. This residency, and the work and research that evolved from it, was the starting point of my shift to a more sculptural-based approach to making works. My leave entailed a two-month ceramic research tour of England, Belgium, France and Germany, followed by a three-month residency at Guldagergaard International Ceramic Research Centre in Denmark. After I started creating new works based on my research and work overseas, it soon became apparent that slipware was going to be the main surface decoration technique employed.



Figure 2. Cup, probably Staffordshire, 1690-1700, slipware, combed or feathered, 4 in (h). The potter has added an unusual "S" pattern to the decoration. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 3. Early mochware bowl, ca 1780. It is decorated with mottled and combed slip on a rust-coloured band. The rim has been engine-turned in a checker pattern. Source: [www.hanauerandseidmanantiques.com/Mocha.html](http://www.hanauerandseidmanantiques.com/Mocha.html)



Figure 4. Sixteenth-century slipware sherds found on the banks of the River Thames, London, 2015. Image courtesy of the artist.

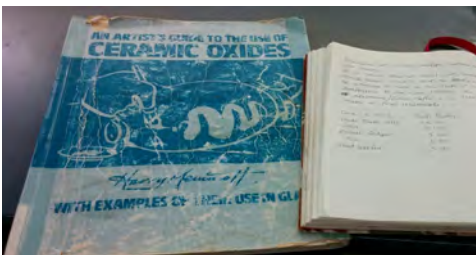


Figure 5. Harry Memmott's book on ceramic oxides, now out of print but still on the shelf at the Robertson Library, Otago Polytechnic. Image courtesy of the artist

My use of slipware decoration started with the chance finding of ceramic slipware sherds (Figure 4) on the banks of the Thames while 'mudlarking' there in early 2015. This activity was a planned part of my research tour of England in 2015. I was surprised by the sheer variety of ceramics I found there. While I set out looking for Westerwald sherds (German salt-glaze wares from ca 1560), I came upon some slip-trailed sherds; initially, I didn't think much of these toffee-coloured, haphazardly decorated fragments, but they grew on me. It wasn't until my return home that I came to fully understand the relevance of these slip-trailed sherds and how I could incorporate them into my work. The idea of reversing the process of building and decoration emerged – a new and challenging approach for me, because usually I would first make the pottery form, then decorate it, fire, glaze and refire.

Binns's 1897 book *The manual of Practical Pottery* was the starting point for much of the testing of clay bodies, glaze and slip recipes that were used for this new work from this point the process developed rapidly (Figure 6)





Figure 6. Slip-decorated slabware vases from Richard Stratton's "Old Zealand New" exhibition, Te Uru Gallery, Auckland, 2016.

## THE PROCESS

The results of the past three years of research and making were offered at a double weekend workshop on historical slipware and the techniques involved during my three-week residency in the ceramics department in May 2018. It was hard to believe that after 25 years so little had changed in the ceramics department. With the help of Kylie the studio technician and Rob, we soon had everything sorted for the upcoming workshops.

To kickstart the workshops, I took some of the department's staff and students to the library to help them with their research. There I located some titles that were central to my own research when I was a student (Figure 7), and the students were happy to find that they were as relevant today as they were 25 years ago.

The course I was to deliver was entirely based on historical techniques dating from the late seventeenth century, piecing together the jigsaw made up of the processes, tools and technical applications used.

The first weekend of the workshop was all about preparing and decorating the platforms – in this case, clay slabs – after a demonstration of the process of slip-trailing, feathering and joggling. Chaos reigned for the rest of the weekend, as the slabs were decorated, discarded and redecorated, patterns trailed, ideas figured out, eureka moments. Then came the homework – designing a form to fit the prepared decorated slabs.

After a week of drying the slabs before the building process began, during which I noticed that freshly decorated slabs were turning up in the studio, I worked with the students on their various projects as well as continuing to work on my own slab-built vessel. This was a very slow process – I would usually build only around four square inches a day.

The second workshop weekend soon rolled around. After demonstrating how to join the pieces to build forms, I worked alongside the students. It was so quiet in the studios that you could hear a pin drop – the students' concentration levels were intense.

The works that the students produced were well thought out and covered all the techniques that I had demonstrated. I said to them: "I am here only to teach the techniques and provide inspiration – it's up to you to run with it now." And they did.



Figure 7. Richard demonstrating feathering technique.  
Photograph: Erin Jones



Figure 8. Joggled tri-colour slip decoration. Photograph: Lindsay Doeblner



Figure 10. One of the students hard at work at the 2018 workshop. Photograph: Erin Jones.

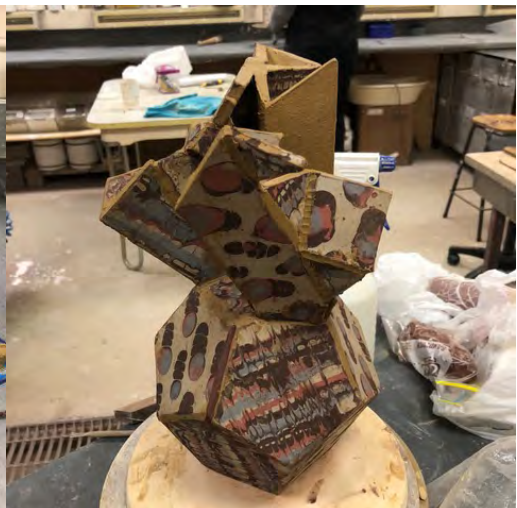


Figure 11. Richard's unfinished decorated slab vase. Photograph: courtesy of the artist.

**Richard Stratton** was an artist-in-residence in the Ceramics Studio, Dunedin School of Art, May 2018.

1 Charles F Binns, *The Manual of Practical Potting*, 2nd ed. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1897)..