Between late August and October 2019 I completed a visiting artist residency programme at the Dunedin School of Art. This culminated in an exhibition held at the School’s gallery between 14 October and 1 November of the same year.

The exhibition, “Working on a Guru (A Pictorial Procession),” was a deliberately skewed non-linear and ironic interpretation of leaders and followers or cults throughout Western history. An emphasis was placed on the notion of spiritual belief systems, and the work referenced Giotto’s Arena Chapel frescoes as a site from which to de-contextualise.

Within this re-invented chapel an entire end wall arrangement, We are the Grateful Dead, operated as a stand-in for The Last Judgment. Typed obituaries of significant or famous people (both positive and negative in terms of their reputation) were presented in encyclopedic book form and arranged in alphabetical order. The altered photographs of each individual were given hand-drawn frames alluding to the process of biological and molecular deconstruction. These frames included abstracted biological parts and cell structures such as mitochondrion, ribosomes, microtubules, vacuoles, nucleus and nucleoli – essentially molecules and atoms actively disassembling and reassembling. The written commentary alluded to the subjects’ life achievements (or otherwise), with a final sentence which was often little more than an ironic and pithy ‘summing up.’

Following the exhibition, I decided to bring many of the deceased in these works back to life – perhaps to offer them another chance at even greater immortality. Establishing an Instagram account for my famous dead, I regenerated the same altered photographs from the exhibition and uploaded them to a contemporary online platform – the assumption being that they would still feel the need to communicate via impassioned posts from beyond the grave. The Internet’s global coverage offered the grateful dead vast opportunities to convert the masses, possibly plead for forgiveness or, more than likely, maintain a similar pose to that revealed in their own era.

Satire is obviously the key driver for the entire concept and yet, despite a mocking tone, the message delivered by the famous dead attempts to convey a ‘darkened’ universal empathy and need. This need is at the heart of the works spread across the following pages. It’s a need to be noticed, to be understood, to be respected, to be popular and potentially to be adored. Finally, like all Instagram or Facebook users, a need to know you actually exist. Or not.

Mark Braunias graduated from Canterbury University with a BFA in 1988. He has exhibited widely in New Zealand and overseas since that time. In 2019 Braunias completed an Artist Residency at the Dunedin School of Art.

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**Marilyn Monroe**

An Icon of American Popular Culture and Tragedy.

**Blondie**

An American Actress and Model Famous for Playing Iconic Blondes and Symbolic of Sexuality.

Marilyn Monroe (June 1, 1926 - August 4, 1962).

**Andy Warhol**

American artist, director, and producer - leading figure in the visual arts movement termed Pop Art.

Andy Warhol (1928-1987)
Lyndon B. Johnson (1908–1973)
American politician who served as the 36th President of the U.S.A. Replaced J.F.K as L.B.J. Expanding civil rights medical care.

B52's
Lived to the age of 4.P


BABY, FACE
Lived to the age of 85.

Shirley Temple (1928–2014)
An American actress, singer, businesswoman, and diplomat. Box office draw as a child star from 1935–1938.

Babothy and the Von Trapp children follow you over the rainbow.

Jean - Paul Sartre  
(June 21, 1905 - April 15, 1980)

Simone de Beauvoir (January 9, 1908 - April 14, 1986)

French Philosopher, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, political activist, autobiographer, and literary critic.

Jean Paul Sartre was one of the key figures of French philosophy and existentialism. He became a cultural hero and his ideas spread throughout the liberal world. As fascism and political change continued to be a source of concern throughout the world, Sartre became a significant political figure. His work on the existential themes of freedom and the individual in society and its effects on our lives is widely recognized. His books and articles continue to be widely read and studied today.

Simone de Beauvoir is known for her treatises 'The Second Sex' a detailed analysis of women's oppression and a 'Philosophy of Love' where she wrote about the duties and pleasures of love. She was active in the French Resistance during World War II and also a tireless fighter for women's rights. She is remembered for her contributions to the feminist movement.

Scope: (Art and Design), 20, 2020