

CLINKPROJECT6

Andrew Last

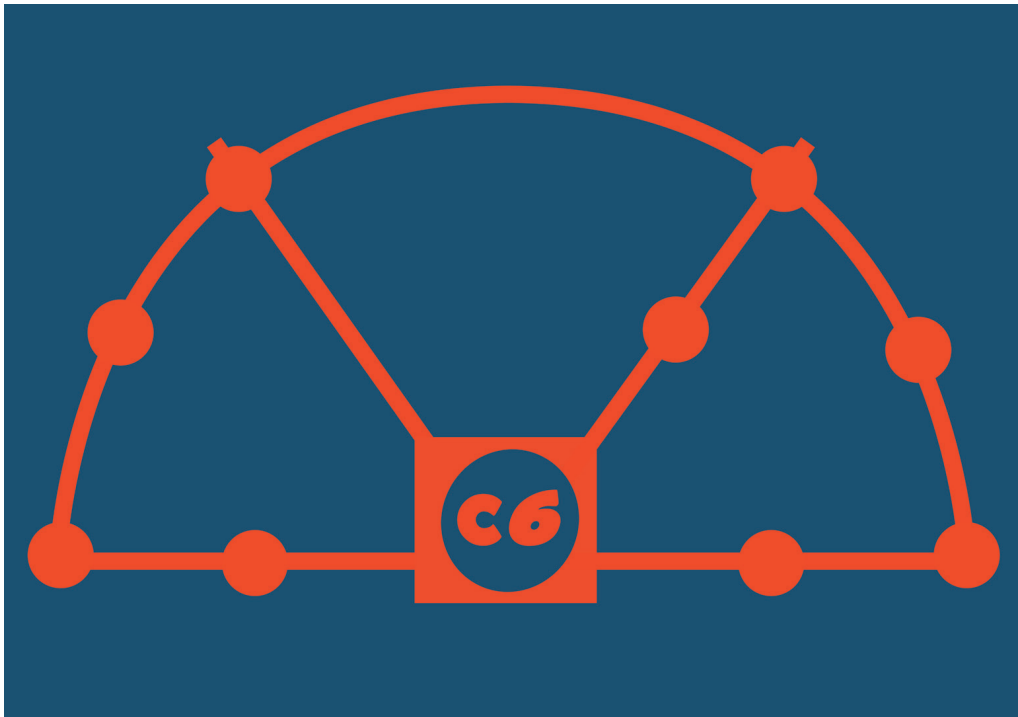


Figure 1. *CLINKProject6* logo.

For the last five years, a cohort of students and staff from Dunedin School of Art have travelled to Auckland and worked with Hungry Creek Art and Craft School on collaborative projects under the title *CLINKProject*. The output has been pop-up or intervention-flavoured jewellery exhibits in Auckland locations. This year, groups from both schools crossed the Tasman and met in Melbourne to stage *CLINKProject6* under the umbrella of Radiant Pavilion, a Melbourne jewellery biennial that has gathered momentum over recent years.¹ The two groups united and worked in conjunction with the Grainger Museum, a collection within the University of Melbourne dedicated to the life and work of Australian musician and composer Percy Grainger:

CLINKProject6 has worked within a museum context before; in 2017 we worked with the Auckland War Memorial Museum alongside curator Grace Lai.² For that event we spent a day in the museum; each participant selected a work from the collection to respond to and we worked intensively for two days in Hungry Creek's workshop making jewellery in response to the collection piece chosen. We presented our work to the public set on top of Tyvek-wrapped vitrines placed outside the museum's shop.

In contrast to CLINKProject's typical short-timespan collective-making strategy, for 2019 we resolved to pre-make work responding to the Grainger collection's online and audio-visual archive resources, rather than via a direct experience with the collection. This decision was precipitated by three factors: our relatively brief stay in Melbourne; our lack of a workshop facility in Melbourne; and the compelling opportunities to be part of the wider Radiant Pavilion jewellery biennial.

However, both groups set aside two dedicated making days in our separate studios where participants worked toward the Grainger exhibit simultaneously. There was an option to work collaboratively if areas of overlapping interest were recognised.

We brought our work to Melbourne and used the limited time available in the Grainger Museum to collectively refine curatorial and presentation issues. We worked with Grainger's curator Dr Heather Gaunt during this phase.

CLINKProject6 was presented as a discreet but integrated exhibit among the permanent display collection in the Grainger Museum. It was open to both the general public and the Radiant Pavilion audience for three days, 12, 13 and 15 September.

As an educational strategy, CLINKProjects have sought to empower both students and staff by taking the curriculum beyond the school into the realms of public (real world?) interaction and commitment. Studio and gallery visits have been integral to establishing a current understanding of communities of professional jewellery practice.

Over the five previous incarnations of CLINKProject, the key values have been participation as community; collaboration; *manaakitanga* (reciprocity of kindness, respect, hospitality and humanity); non-hierarchical decision making; diverse strategies for audience interaction; and dynamically responding to live making and curatorial stimulus. For *CLINKProject6*, the emphasis on some of these key values shifted as a result of the event being located in Melbourne and being part of the Radiant Pavilion biennial.

This year's participants were:

(Hungry Creek/Auckland): Denise Callan, Cindy Tan, Courtenay Marshall, Jessica Dew, Emma Webster, Jack Wolf, Amelia Rothwell, Lissy Hunt.

(Dunedin): Susan Videler, Meg Van Hale, Fiona Frew, Tess Wing, Alex Huber, Nona Shackleton, Maja Nederman, Simon Swale, Johanna Zellmer, Andrew Last, Victoria Bell, Jan Dobbie.

While the majority of this year's participants were new to the CLINKProject experience, several are repeat contributors and some are serial CLINKers. The mix of participant experience over many incarnations of the CLINKProject allows comparison and contrast between *CLINKProject6* and its predecessors. As a strategy to give voice to participants in *CLINKProject6*, selected participants were asked a series of questions in order to gauge general responses from first timers and to allow historical comparisons from veterans.



Figure 2. Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne.

DENISE CALLAN

Q: Gifting #NotLostPins freely to the exhibition audience allowed everybody to feel important, just as Percy conveyed a sense of importance to the most mundane objects by his relentless archival tagging.

Your work ended up being worn by many Radiant Pavilion people. How important to you was your sense of connection to that broad community compared to the smaller CLINK collective and smaller-still Hungry Creek whanau?

A: *I was really grateful and excited for the opportunity of being part of both CLINKProject6 and Radiant Pavilion, and really wanted to make the most of that. While I didn't start out with the intention of making a giveaway-type work, I am glad that's the direction it took. In general, I think community is really important and I enjoy meeting and connecting with new people. That meant this opportunity to connect with other makers and the general public was really exciting and became an important part of the work. In giving the pins away freely, I was really interested to see how many would become 'not lost' to me again, even if they only returned for a brief moment. The name of the work itself (#NotLostPins) in part came from that idea, and gave me the additional ability to track their individual journeys beyond Radiant Pavilion through social media. It was great to be able to see who had been to CLINKProject6 by who was wearing a pin. They proved to be great conversation starters, which enabled me to connect with many people I may not have otherwise spoken to. I've also been able to see that several of them have travelled across the world to places I myself have never been, which as a maker I think is kind of cool.*



Figure 3. Denise Callan, #NotLostPins, 2019

CINDY TAN AND AMELIA ROTHWELL



Figure 4. Cindy Tan and Amelia Rothwell, *I will be handed over to immortality one day*, 2019.



Figure 5. Cindy Tan and Amelia Rothwell, *Beloved Mother's Pearls*, 2019.

Q: Your works *I will be handed over to immortality one day* and *Beloved Mother's Pearls* are both sensitive responses to the Grainger exhibit focusing on Percy's mother's suicide. What was your reaction to seeing the exhibit in real life, compared to the images that motivated your work?

Having gained a more thorough understanding of the exhibit and its context in the museum, would you have made any changes to your work with the benefit of hindsight?

A: Cindy: Experiencing Rose's exhibit in real life was quite affecting, because up till then we had only seen individual photos of objects that were on display. Seeing all the items together in context, and amongst other pieces we hadn't seen, such as Rose's suicide note and images of her with Percy or after her death, gave the whole exhibit a sense that she truly was loved and that it was first and foremost a memorial to Rose's life.

My work responded to Rose's gloves that she wore on the day of her death, and the approach I took spoke very directly to the original item in the museum. The nature of the processes involved in my two works, ceramics and lost-wax casting, meant that the outcomes were unexpected and uncontrollable. In terms of the context of the Grainger, Heather was very accommodating to our ideas and gave us freedom to alter and rearrange the existing displays. It was an interesting experience to place our works into the original exhibits, and in hindsight there isn't anything I would have done differently.

A: Amelia: Before going to the museum, I hadn't anticipated the intimacy of the display of Rose's hair. I had imagined it as just being one thing in a long list of catalogued, lined-up objects.

The display sat in a low-lit, quiet little pocket tucked away in a corner of the museum. Laid out in the cabinet where the hair sat were Rose's personal effects that she had been carrying in her handbag on the day of her death. Above were the reconstructed fragments of the torn-up, anguished letter that Rose had written to Percy the day before. Surrounding were close-up portrait photos of Rose and Percy together during her lifetime, photos of Rose laid out in her coffin (her face surrounded by a sea of flowers), the preserved posy of flowers that had lain on her chest at the funeral – all of these objects combining to create a tragically intimate portrait of Rose and Percy's relationship. All of the care with which these objects – the tale of a beloved life lost – were so thoughtfully arranged in the display added so much more to my piece than I could have imagined, and because of this I wouldn't have changed anything.

The positioning of my work within this space worked well because the sentiments contained in my necklace echoed those of the whole display – those of remembrance and the human instinct to attempt to preserve connection with a loved one long after death has separated them. Like the tension within the work, the display was both serene and comforting whilst simultaneously unsettling; familiar and yet unfamiliar; uncanny. The intense joy and pain of life and love juxtaposed alongside the grief and release of loss and death – both sharing the same moment.

SUSAN VIDELER AND MEG VAN HALE

Q: Having both participated in several CLINKProjects, it'd be fair to say you are big fans of the opportunities that arise through this way of working. Most of the CLINKProjects have involved collectively making the work for exhibition in the Hungry Creek workshops during the programme. This has typically been high-energy, planned and developed on-the-fly and excitingly tense.

Susan: your *Ball-Bell* musical balls are a witty take on Percy's twin passions of music and BDSM sexual practice.

Meg: your *Duet with Mother* similarly relates Percy and his mother's passion for music (and your own).

In what ways did you value the extended making time for this work and what did you miss from the intensity of previous CLINK making events?

A: Meg: CLINKProject has always been a whirlwind of activity. Intense workshops, making sessions, discussions (arguments), exhibition installs, too much wine (or not enough?). For the Dunedin crew there was always the extra excitement of travelling, feeling like we were venturing out into the world and making new connections, connections with fellow jewellers but also new audiences. I think CLINK Melbourne really vamped up the sense of adventure. Our two groups easily became one as we banded together as kiwis eager to share a cohesive exhibition on a new stage. For many of us it was our first time exhibiting internationally, but not only that – exhibiting with almost free rein within a museum; but not only that – during the reputable Radiant Pavilion, a



Figure 6. Meg Van Hale,
Ball-Bell, 2019.



Figure 7 Susan Videler;
Duet with Mother, 2019.

week-long event dedicated to the art of jewellery. Because of this opportunity to display our work during this event amongst a large group of international peers, I felt the extended making time to be very valuable. We each had a chance to respond to the Grainger collection and work within our methods. As individual artists, we had the chance to develop and build upon our practices. Building up to the trip, not having seen each other's work and not actually having lain eyes on anything inside the Grainger museum, I'll admit I was dubious about how it would all come together. What if we all responded to the same thing? What if we had all built upon opposing ideas of display and installation? But it simply wasn't the case when we came together. Each response was so varied. There was room for every voice. And it all came together as an exhibition that flowed through the space, intertwining with the existing collections while still drawing the audience in with a new story to tell.

So I guess what I missed at first was the planning as a group. However, the diversity in our practices within the CLINK family was truly allowed to blossom for this project, and I believe it was a chance to develop professionally and personally.

A: Susan: The last four CLINK projects have all had a different flavour while maintaining a similar format with regards to co-operative responses, planning and making. Responding only to photographs sent of the collections and layout of the Grainger Museum, I had several weeks to consider Percy Grainger the man and musician. It felt once removed, however, and this feeling became pronounced when I entered the space. It suits my practice to have had time to reflect on the varying aspects of Grainger and trial ideas. I felt the resultant two pieces reflected both his playful musical nature, his collecting, archiving and complex sexual needs. Although we had two days set aside to make as a group in Dunedin, this seemed difficult to achieve and I found myself missing the frenetic, loud and often absurd tempo at the Hungry Creek workshop. One year, disconcertingly, we had to work on a piece for an allotted time then pass it on so that the final work was a Chinese whisper of the original. This became an exercise in letting go and the antithesis of the latest project. I was very satisfied with my pieces, and they certainly benefitted from working at my own pace. However, the experience lacked the camaraderie and unpredictable nature of a group of time-poor, energy-rich makers. We often work alone; the stimulation of a group is a breeding ground for diversity, little anarchies, critique and connection.

SIMON SWALE

Q: This image captures renowned jewellery historian Liesbeth den Besten interacting with your work *Concerto for Untuned Necklaces* with Melbourne-based jeweller Manon van Kouswijk, yourself and Maja watching closely.

CLINKProject6 brought in a broad jewellery audience through its inclusion in the Radiant Pavilion programme.

How valuable was the audience response to your CLINK experience?

A: I was really thrilled that people engaged with the work as was intended. Participation has become an increasingly important consideration for what I make and how it is presented to an audience. I thought this was a really great opportunity – responding to an archive dedicated to a musician – to try and make this happen in an interesting and unusual way. The fact the museum already had exhibits in place that encouraged participation – I felt really fortunate to be able to place work alongside that, and that was probably the ultimate contributing aspect that gave people the freedom to play with my own work. Jewellery is a really tactile and haptic art form, yet it can be really difficult to get an audience to physically engage with it in an exhibition setting. So to have people walk up to my work and just start hitting it with drum sticks basically told me the work was a success.

Q: Having seen many exhibits from the RadPav list, did you perceive any stand-out characteristics of CLINKProject6?

A: Within all the work I saw during RadPav, CLINK was unique – and in so many ways. That we responded, as a very diverse group, to an established archive was unique in itself. But to then be able to insert our work into that archive, in a museum context, was really special. Many people I spoke to over the week commented on that incredible privilege, so I think that was an absolute standout. But just to be with a really great group of creative people – and share that experience together – I think that was unique in itself in the context of RadPav.



Figure 8. Simon Swale,
Concerto for Untuned Necklaces, 2019.

JAN DOBBIE AND MAJA NEDERMAN

Q: Jan: *Shedding Black Dog with Ticks* is your homage to Percy's use of repurposed and found materials in his experimental musical instruments featured in the museum's permanent display. Percy would have immediately seen other applications for the savagely spiky Lumberloks you used to punctuate your composition.

Maja, your work *Stayin' Alive* similarly responds to Percy's fascination with human hair and his belief in the benefits of a good whip.

You were both part of an undergraduate group from Dunedin School of Art that recently worked in response to the "Garden of Earthly Delights" exhibition in Otago University's Hocken Collections.³



Figure 9. Jan Dobbie,
Stayin' Alive,
2019.



Figure 10. Maja Nederman,
Shedding Black Dog with Ticks,
2019.

In what ways did that project prepare you for CLINKProject6 and what were the key differences, particularly taking the project out of the School environment?

A: The work we did in response to the “Garden of Earthly Delights” exhibition in Otago University’s Hocken Library certainly helped to prepare us for CLINKProject6, in which we worked with Heather Gaunt and the Grainger Museum collection. The projects were similar in the way that our briefs were to respond to an item or theme within an established exhibition. These collections varied greatly. We started by finding a piece that spoke to us, a muse, and using that as the foundation of our work. The methodology of working to a brief, within a group and curating an exhibition together, was an invaluable experience that led to a productive collaboration for CLINKProject6.

Where the projects diverged was the making process. The Hocken project was quite research-focused, following a curriculum set by the course. The Hocken Library is just down the street from the art school, so we had plenty of opportunity to study the exhibition – whereas we did not have access to the Grainger Museum ahead of time. Because of this, our work was very much an initial instinctive response to digital images and we worked more intuitively. We didn’t have much of an understanding of the complexity of the Grainger collection and the context of our work until after our pieces were already completed and we got a chance to actually tour the museum in person. Another key difference was that we were responding, as individuals, to particular items but working as a collective – whereas responding to the Hocken we presented our work individually, even though it was shown with other students’ work. As a group showing in the Grainger Museum, we worked well in making consistent choices, so there was fluency of theme and it came together as an excellent, thought-provoking exhibition.

The fundamental difference with working outside of the school environment was that we were in a public space. The Grainger Museum had an already established exhibition on display, which we had to work with and around. With this in mind, we were respectful of the privilege of being invited into the space and [for] their generosity in accommodating us and allowing us to move things around.

CLINKProject6 was a great opportunity for the students involved to work together with a diverse group, including prominent artists. It was a memorable precursor of what we hope our futures hold.

TESS WING AND ANDREW LAST

Q: Both of these works, *Untitled Quad* and *Prince Planet Power Pendant*, respond to Percy’s childhood drawings featured in the Grainger Museum’s “Early Years” display.

In what ways has CLINKProject6 informed your practice, particularly reflecting on the proximity or distance from your own childhood?

A: Both works owe an aesthetic nod to the cartoon imagery of our childhood days. Line and colour characteristics of Tess’s *Untitled Quad* are stylistically reminiscent of *Invader Zim*, *Catdo*, and *Wild Thornberries* – cartoons from the early years of this millennium. Andrew’s work is a direct reference to jewellery worn by *Prince Planet*, the central character from one of the earliest Japanese TV anime series (1965). Andrew’s all-time favourite was *Gigantor*.⁴ The space-age aesthetics of rockets and jets is obvious in these anime cartoons, and that imagery can be traced through much of Andrew’s artwork.



Figure 11 Tess Wing,
Untitled Quad,
2019.



Figure 12. Andrew Last,
Prince Planet Power Pendant,
2019.

The Radiant Pavilion programme offered a concentration of jewellers and their work in Melbourne during CLINKProject6. Tess has followed up with a connection made to local jeweller Victoria McIntosh via an encounter at her excellent Radiant Pavilion exhibit, "The Mother Lode." The energy of sharing an airbnb with 16 people (miraculously!) drew our crew together including Tess and Meg, who have also followed up their connection post CLINK. Andrew studied and established his art practice in Melbourne 30 years ago. CLINK offered the opportunity to re-establish jewellery connections from back in those days. Mentor Susan Cohn has begun enquiries toward a Dunedin residency, partly provoked by meetings during CLINK. Colleague Rohan Nichol, current coordinator of ANU's gold and silversmithing course in Canberra, was dead impressed with CLINKProject6 and invited us to present at next year's JMGA conference in Canberra. Both of us valued presenting work side-by-side on an equal basis.

The responsibility to the CLINK group as a whole meant that our work was driven by a high group expectation, as well as our own standards.

JACK WOLF AND VICTORIA BELL

Q: Your works, *MOTHER (be gentle)* and *Percy Played Percussion on His Bum, Bum, Bum*, use graphic qualities to draw attention to Grainger's notorious pioneering of deviant sexual practice and tactile material properties to convey a sense of intimacy that is easy overlooked by sensationalism.

We would probably claim that societal norms have changed profoundly since Grainger bravely insisted that documentation of his BDSM practice be included in his museum's public charter. In what ways do you think this is still a socially relevant discussion and how do your works contribute?



Figure 13. Jack Wolf, *MOTHER (be gentle)*, 2019.



Figure 14. Victoria Bell, *Percy Played Percussion on His Bum, Bum, Bum*, 2019.

A: Jack: I like to play with perception and bringing light to different perspectives while I work. BDSM is a psychologically and physically intense, complex exploration into the body and mind. Although this is still considered taboo to many, BDSM is a thriving community, full of light and dark characters navigating life's complexity as best as they can. Grainger bravely chose to reveal his explorations in self-flagellation and visual journaling, illuminating his abusive childhood and continual turmoil. My response to his self-harm is to offer gentleness. By transforming an object of torture into a soft, playful creature, I meet him in his childhood.

A: Victoria: In what ways do you think this still a socially relevant discussion? Surprisingly, I think Percy Grainger's BDSM makes his life and work more accessible to contemporary audiences, albeit in a possibly titillating (or disturbing) way. While once, such was the brilliance of his fame that he married Ella Ström at the Hollywood Bowl, in front of a cast of (paying) thousands, his legacy as a composer is somewhat dimmer outside of certain music scenes, nowadays. Yet due to Grainger's gesture of vanity or philanthropic generosity, we are able to encounter this museum in his name; to encounter him. As a layperson in regards to Grainger's sound works (and many inventions including the striking Kangaroo Pouch oscillator on which my work was lightly draped), I found [that] his fetish, the outing of his sexual desires and sadomasochistic practices, [and] his motivation to intertwine these urges with his composing, surprisingly, made him an accessible figure in 2019.

One may site Grainger's deviancy within a loose zigzag, arbitrarily picked up from the Weimar Republic, to the (censored) photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe, zag to the "everyone read it, no one admitted it" obsession for *Fifty Shades of Grey*, and arrive in our complex present where the who, what, where of sex narratives, as well as the worry or boredom of porn and concerns regarding permission, violation ... is a vernacular of our

contemporary Western life. Grainger chose to expose his sexual proclivities and the ways these stimulated his composing and creative lives. By encountering this frankness in the museum, we are invited to (re)consider Grainger anew, in light of current critiques of power, gender, identity that are contemporaneously being fought in our courts of law, on social media, in the streets and our beds

How do your works contribute? Percy Played Percussion on His Bum, Bum, Bum depicts a repeated image of a nude Grainger, sourced from the museum's collection, printed in blue (blue movies), on linen. The textile repeat pattern echoes the geometry of the Kangaroo Pouch, and is disturbed by a slash of black ink across Percy's buttock. The placement of the work, not in the Lust Branch of the museum, but rather with his sound inventions and musical instruments, embraces a moment of reconciliation of Grainger's private and public worlds. One might listen for the slap of the composer's baton, hear the moan of the oscillator (designed to sound like a malfunctioning air-raid siren) ... A lament, or a strangled cry for (sexual) freedom?

JOHANNA ZELLMER

Q: Seeing Percy's US army dog tags allowed your work, *Collar*, to deepen your exploration of the ways that individuals are identified in national systems. Imagining the discomfort of wearing *Collar* also sets up a parallel to Percy's fondness for self-flagellation.

Having worked with Auckland Museum through curator Grace Lai in CLINKProject4, how would you describe the similarities and differences of CLINKProject6 to Grainger Museum and curator Heather Gaunt?




Figure 15 Johanna Zellmer,
Collar, 2019.

A: In comparing Project4 and Project6, one would expect to find many similarities, given that both unfolded via institutional invitations. Not only does this circumstance set up specific expectations – both for the makers and for the institution – but it also results in some preempting of the projects' unfolding. Let me explain; as outlined in the introduction, the collaborative nature of CLINKProjects was initially founded on the principle that the entire collective, only when united, decides on both a venue and an event. Often the venue would be jointly determined in the beginning, with the projects in turn becoming site-specific responses. The collective force created by time-poor, energy-rich makers in these instances is astonishing and often full of surprises. In working with institutions, the venue and general strategy becomes a given well ahead of the collective joining forces. The predetermined task at hand is quite clear: make work in response to an item in the collection, which in turn will be exhibited within the institution. Naturally, in that respect both were very similar. Personally, both projects enabled a deepening and revisiting of my own specific research interests through new work. In both instances, curators Grace Lai and Heather Gaunt met the projects with overwhelming enthusiasm, energy and outstanding support. And yet, the two projects could not have been more different.

The restrictions embedded in operating a massive national institution such as the Auckland Museum saw the final exhibit hovering at the very fringes of its collections, in the entrance hall outside the gift shop. However, access to the Hungry Creek School of Art and Craft's workshop facilities offered the joint collective intense and focused making days alongside each other. Curator Grace Lai was able to visit the workshop, observe the process and document work in progress. This hands-on, concentrated sharing in a workshop environment forged lasting professional relationships beyond the event. The idiosyncratic experience of making together leads to companionship; formerly paired with 'pin-swap' events (a long-established characteristic of social jewellery gatherings internationally) and collaborative writing, this had become a key to the success of previous CLINKProjects.

Due to the lack of workshop access and the immense benefit of participating in the wider Radiant Pavilion programme, neither of these aspects formed part of CLINKProject6 activities. The additional hours available for making exhibition work individually made for time-rich pieces, but a vastly different experience. The two parts of the collective (the 'Hungry Creekans' and the 'Dunedinites') formed more tentative relationships. The collaboration was reduced to focusing on 'making the exhibition' through joint brainstorming, constructive critique, catalogue design and active involvement in installing the work. All were indeed energy-rich and extremely valuable, but without the same lasting sense of forging a collective. Regardless, the exhibition at Percy Grainger Museum was an outstanding success. Fully integrated into the collection, it received Radiant Pavilion's People's Choice Award. This smaller museum, attached to the University of Melbourne, enables curator Heather Gaunt to work to her full capacity with the same infectious enthusiasm and passion as Grace Lai, yet with much greater autonomy. CLINKProject6 clearly benefitted from this context, with Heather being able to involve all members of the collective in placing their work within the collection's showcases and displays. Due to everyone's staunch commitment; the intimate nature of this wondrous and eccentric autobiographical museum; and the public's recognition of the uniqueness of this exhibition; in comparison, CLINKProject6 was yet another remarkable success.

Andrew Last ( ORCID No 0000-0001-5394-8418) is a senior lecturer in jewellery at Dunedin School of Art. Alongside colleague and CLINK architect **Johanna Zellmer**, Andrew has ridden shotgun on four of the CLINK projects.

- 1 Melbourne Contemporary Jewellery and Object Biennial, *Radiant Pavilion*, <http://www.radiantpavilion.com.au/about.html>.
- 2 CLINKProject Jewellery Collective, "CLINK PROJECT4 – At the Auckland War Memorial Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira," *Scope: Art and Design*, 16 (2018), 69-82, <https://www.thescope.org/assets/Uploads/b0c3634896/69-Scope-Art-Design-16-Johanna-Zellmer.pdf>.
- 3 Hocken Collections, "A Garden of Earthly Delights," *University of Otago Library*, <https://www.otago.ac.nz/library/hocken/otago716573.html>.
- 4 "Gigantor," *Wikipedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gigantor>.