

Content.

A MAGAZINE BY ART+OBJECT
ISSUE 02 – 2014

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Maybe I won't go to sleep at all., 2013,
La Loge, Brussels.





Content.02

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York – a favourite destination of travelling New Zealand artists Kate Newby and Francis Upritchard.

Welcome to the second issue of CONTENT by ART+OBJECT. The inspiration for this magazine is to explore and celebrate the vital contribution New Zealand's visual artists make to our cultural identity *and* increasingly the global discourse. However, our journey begins in 1881 when the magnificent whare Hinemihi was carved by the Ngāti Tarāwhai masters Wero Taroi and Tene Waitere. Her turbulent history mirrors that of

Aotearoa over the last three centuries – she has increasingly become a site of pilgrimage for New Zealanders living in and visiting England.

Content 02 is published as important exhibitions by New Zealand artists and curators open in Los Angeles, Sydney, London and Auckland. The exhibitions and museum shows detailed on the following pages reveal New Zealand visual art making its presence

felt globally with growing confidence and resonance. As Sydney based curator Justin Paton so aptly puts it, Kiwi artists are “stalking the world”. We urge New Zealanders to visit these vital signs of the New Zealand world view in the arts on their travels.

For those who remain in Godzone we trust that you will enjoy the original CONTENT on these pages.







WORLD
BEAUTYSTORE



Breakfast in America

2012 Walters Prize winner Kate Newby's practice is particularly sensitive to our response to space and place. The Content team met her in New York to discuss the life of the artist and how she interacts with the scale of the Big Apple.

Content: Kate, lovely to catch up in New York. Can you tell Content readers what you have been working on since you were awarded the Walters Prize in 2012?

Kate Newby: When I won the Walters in 2012 I was doing a residency in Canada on Fogo island in Newfoundland.¹ Straight after the prize giving dinner I returned to Fogo Island where I stayed for another four months. Since then I have been travelling about between New Zealand and other places making my work for exhibitions and projects.

Content: What have been some of the locations of those exhibitions?

KN: Well, this time a year ago I was in Brussels undertaking a solo exhibition at La Loge² which is an old Masonic Lodge that has been converted into an art space. From there I went up to Copenhagen where I had an exhibition at Henningsen Gallery³ and then back to New Zealand. Recently I was in Bristol for an exhibition at the Arnolfini⁴. At the moment I am based in New York trying to carve out time to make new work and process work I have been making. The thing about working site

responsively is that I don't get to spend that much time with my work once I have made it.

Content: You have to say goodbye to it?

KN: Exactly. A lot of my pieces no longer exist once the exhibition finishes. For my Arnolfini project I cemented a green hill around a tree which will just get broken up and thrown out when the exhibition ends, along with the three other site works I made throughout Bristol. What I am doing now is to set aside some time in my life to focus on works made and assess what I'm doing and what can happen from here.

Content: You have been living the life of the globetrotting artist. How does this travel feed into your work?

KN: I always think my work is strongest when it's approaching a new space. For example, I have just returned from Mexico City where I had a solo exhibition at a space called Lulu⁵. Mexico City is a really interesting place. I felt really self-aware making art there. When you look around there is a really exciting use of concrete, colour and plants.

There is a vitality there and when my work was installed in direct conversation with that environment I think it pushed my work to a whole new level.

Content: A lot of your work over the last few years has been environmentally based but frequently at what could be described as a portable scale. Here we are in New York, the home of big art. How does this big city environment affect your thoughts around scale?

KN: Here you have a lot of blockbuster everything as well as a lot of painting. I don't think about my work in the context of art in New York, because it's just not helpful for me. But I do think of it in the context of the city and the sidewalks, the urban spaces, the life of the city. I'm not necessarily pushing myself to interact with the fine art context here. I think it might give me an identity crisis! (laughs) You could say I'm a bit withdrawn here.

Content: That pinpoints a fundamental difference between New York and New Zealand. In New York you can see people living their lives on the street like 24/7 TV whereas in New Zealand people's lives take place behind closed doors, down a driveway in a house in the suburbs. This interacting with New Yorkers whose lives are far more available to us to observe – that is a big difference isn't it?

KN: I think it is huge. People in New York often have tiny apartments so the public spaces become incredibly

Facing page: Kate Newby on the Bowery, Lower East Side, New York, September 2014.

Below: Kate Newby, *I feel like a truck on a wet highway*, from the eponymous exhibition at Lulu, Mexico City in 2014. Cement, red pigment, silver and bronze cast objects, ceramics rocks (high fired porcelain, stoneware, glaze). Photo: Isaac Contreras.

important – the parks, the sidewalks, the cafes, the bars. I think that people have to be free and available to open interaction. Often I'll overhear quite personal conversations in public because people don't have a space to retreat to. I also find I don't get invited around to peoples' houses in the same way that you do in New Zealand. I think people really protect their homes as a way to retreat from the city and rejuvenate. In Auckland you are always going to friends' houses for dinner, to hang out, to watch a movie. Here it all happens in restaurants and bars and public spaces. I love it. I go to the parks and people will be lifting weights, singing, having picnics, hanging out.

Content: There is an intimacy to this public sharing.

KN: There is a really amazing essay by E. B. White called *Here is New York*. He wrote it in 1948 in his hotel room in Chelsea. He talks about how New York blends the gift of privacy with the excitement of participation. That really resonated with me because one of the reasons I am here is I want privacy. That may sound strange coming from New Zealand where there is a lot of space, but I'll often feel like I have more room here than I did in Auckland. I grew up in West Auckland have lived on Karangahape Road for most of my adult life. I have a strong community there which I love and deeply miss but here it is just me and I'm on my own and right now – that is the best feeling in the world.



1. Kate Newby's time at the Fogo Island Residency in Newfoundland was detailed in issue 161 of Frieze magazine in March 2014 <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/in-focus-kate-newby/>

2. Kate Newby *Maybe I won't go to Sleep at All* at La Loge, Brussels, September 2013 <http://www.la-loge.be/project/maybe-i-wont-go-to-sleep-at-all>

3. *The things we know* (curated by Tim Saltarelli), Henningsen Gallery, Copenhagen

4. Kate Newby *Mr and Mrs Hands* at the Arnolfini, Bristol, England. 19 July – 9 November 2014. For more see www.arnolfini.co.uk

5. Kate Newby, *I feel like a truck on a wet highway* at Lulu, Cuauhtémoc, Mexico. 2 August – 5 October 2014. For more see: luludf.tumblr.com/



“Her work is almost radical in its interest in the small, slight and fleeting – emotions and the throwaway – things most often ignored, whether they’re pebbles or potholes or patches in a sidewalk.”

Jennifer Kabat, 2014, referring to Kate Newby's presentation at the Arnolfini, Bristol. Kabat is a New York based art critic whose articles have appeared in the Guardian, Frieze, New York magazine, the Financial Times, The weeklings.com, Salon.com and Wallpaper.

Above left: Kate Newby, *Mr + Mrs Hands*, 2014, fired porcelain, earthenware and stoneware, hand formed glass, table, ink on paper. Installation view: *The Promise*, Arnolfini, Bristol. Photo: Stuart Whips.

Above right: Kate Newby, *Maybe I won't go to sleep at all.*, 2013. Installation view: La Loge, Brussels. Photo: Isabelle Arthuis.

Content: It is almost part of the journey of being a New Zealander. When you travel you realise that New Zealand is a village. When you come to a big city without that support network at home you are thrown onto your own devices and that can be quite liberating. What are some of the benefits you hope to gain from living in New York and how is that working for you?

KN: What I look at is how people use public space and this affects the work that I make. How people pause and interact, the debris they leave behind, what can give you privacy in an urban mass. I think when I'm in Auckland that I don't have the same lens. Here I pay full attention.

Content: In terms of these public spaces is there a favourite place that you've discovered in New York that really clicks for you – one that enables you to explore some of these concerns in your work?

KN: Recently I've given up my studio here. Part of that

was cost but I also decided I wanted to spend more time out and about. I've been going to the Met and the Museum of Natural History. It is really interesting to go into these spaces and think about your work in the context of the history of the world! I feel like I do best when I am on my own and I'm going on a mini journey or adventure.... And I take many of these on a weekly basis in this city. Subway rides are also a really productive time for me because I sit and record the things that have come up in my daily travels.

Content: Is there a part of the Met, a culture or a period or exhibition hall that you are particularly drawn to?

KN: Every time I go there and I get lost and I find somewhere new. I was there last week and I tried to find a room that I remembered but couldn't find it for the life of me. I remember a room that had a massive pyramid in it but never managed to find it again. Along the way I found a room that had



relics from Tutankhamun's tombs. While I have an ability to move around New York I have no ability to move around the Met in a way that makes sense!

Content: As a New Zealander the experience of going to an art gallery during the week can be a lovely lone experience with a certain work, but at the Met that is not possible – it is busy all the time. It is like an art train station, an art metropolis, a really communal experience. You have almost the sum total of human experience and thousands of people. You have to share with many others. Your work talks to the idea of the shared or communal experience. As an artist you tend to work alone. How do you find community here in New York?

KN: I've had to reposition my sense of community here in New York. A lot. It's very different from the support networks I have in New Zealand but I have also found the community I have here incredible. Friends can show you new

experiences every time you see them and I find myself gaining new understandings all the time. I want to be site responsive but also to make something that reflects actions that could be happening anywhere. I love this feeling that it is just me and I can make a work at any time. I could go downstairs right now and make a work on the street. I try not to be too reliant on galleries and exhibition invitations and to keep making work that connects to the things I am looking at and care about. I want the work I make to feel related to every day life and the situation I am in here in New York makes this a challenge, but a really worthwhile one.

Kate Newby *Tiny-but-Adventurous* at the Rokeby Gallery, London from October 16 – December 12, 2014. For more www.rokebygallery.com

Kate Newby is represented by Hopkinson Mossman, Auckland.

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Stalking the World

Justin Paton at the Art Gallery of New South Wales with (on the left) Ah Xian's *Evolutionaura 13: Tai-lake Stone-1* (2011–2013) and (on the right) *Grey Taihu rock*.



Justin Paton is one of New Zealand's leading curators and art writers. In October 2013 he was appointed to one of the key roles in the Australasian art world as Head Curator of International art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. He took up this new position after having been senior curator at the Christchurch Art Gallery since 2007 and previously the curator of contemporary art at the Dunedin Public Art Gallery. In 2013 Justin was the curator for New Zealand at the 55th Venice Biennale where Bill Culbert's installation *Front Door Out Back* at the La Pieta church complex was met with international acclaim. Paton is also well known as an author – his 2005 book *How to Look at a Painting* was developed into a popular television series. He speaks exclusively to Content on the challenges of his new role on the international stage.

1. The Anne Landa Award for Video and New Media arts – *Unguided Tours* (2011) at the AGNSW

2. Announced in March 2013, Sydney Modern encompasses the strategic vision and masterplan to carry the AGNSW to its goal of being a 21st century art museum catering for

a global audience. Sydney Modern entails an expansion of the gallery and modernisations to be completed in 2021, being the gallery's 150th anniversary.

3. *Forcefields*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, from February to September 2014.

Content: Tell us how you are settling into Sydney and how familiar were you with the city before you arrived to take up your new position?

Justin Paton: Not fully settled. Productively unsettled is more like it. The job keeps me busy enough that life is lived between home and work. We had a couple of long stays here when I was curating the Anne Landa exhibition¹ in the wake of the Christchurch earthquake (2011). I like now what I liked then about the city which is a kind of outward energy, the lushness and the way nature is bursting through at every opportunity.

Content: Where are you living in Sydney?

JP: In Rozelle. There is a storybook quality to the harbour where every view is crammed with nature, industry and human activity. Very different to Christchurch where I grew up, where everything is stretched out on a plain under that big sky. Sydney is more like Auckland where the topography forces things into interesting arrangements with each other.

Content: What has been the most pleasant surprise for you and your family since you have arrived in Sydney?

JP: The village dimension. People call it a car town but everything we need is close enough to pick up on foot.

Content: Your title is Head of International Art. Can

you tell us about your role and how that fits within the wider curatorial team at the AGNSW ?

JP: I've taken over what is an enlarged and rearranged department which covers everything that is not Australian. So not only is there historic and contemporary western international art, there is also Asian art which itself is a vast and various category encompassing many different periods and traditions. Asian art is the area that I know least well and consequently it is the area that is giving me the most pleasure because I'm in amongst objects and ideas that are often new to me.

Content: When you say Asian art, is that contemporary art or the base collection of the AGNSW which is very historically rich? And are you adding to the collection in that area?

JP: It's both. And yes, we're acquiring across the breadth of the department. The acquisitions activity is far greater than anything I had experienced in New Zealand and one of the real buzzes of the job is heading out into that world looking for things by some of the artists I admire most on the planet. We have just had a terrific acquisitions round which brought in *Jazz* by Henri Matisse, who was the missing modernist in the AGNSW collection. We acquired a colossal Grayson Perry tapestry – a map of contemporary truths and beliefs. Also a Kay Rosen wall painting, an Anthony

McCall light installation, a wonderful group of tiny sculptures by Ron Nagle, a powerhouse painting by Gajin Fajita and works by Spencer Finch, Doug Aitken, Akira Yamaguchi, Ah Xian, Xu Zhen and Sharon Hayes.

Content: So acquisitions and building the collection is an important part of your role. It must be great to have the budget to act on this brief.

JP: It's daunting in a good way. Michael Brand, the AGNSW's director, in his statements about the Sydney Modern² project, has said that our ambitions in collecting should be global. It is no longer one art world, it is a multitude of art worlds. So how do we meaningfully represent the life of art all over the planet while still acquiring works that are supreme examples of their kind? I don't think that is a question you can ever fully answer, but it is one you need to keep alive as you move from acquisition to acquisition. One thing I would say about living in Sydney is that you feel palpably that connection to the Asia-Pacific region. You feel Indonesia sitting up there above you. You feel the energy pumping in from Korea, Hong Kong, China...

Content: When you talk about the wider Asian scene you really mean many scenes. Is there a particular country you have encountered that feels like a new frontier?

JP: No new frontiers – that might sound a bit Christopher Columbus. But

like a lot of people presently I'm fascinated by the work coming out of Indonesia. There's this cohort of young artists making work which has a ragged, punky, high-energy quality to it, as if they're all simultaneously saluting and one-upping one another. Often it fuses pattern and the visual intensity that is associated with historical Indonesian art with barbed social commentary. And humour.

Content: You must be getting to know the AGNSW collection quite well. Have there been some interesting discoveries?

JP: One of the nicest things about the job is heading out to our storage facility and going through rack after rack of amazing works. As is well known the gallery has nowhere near as much wall space as many of the other Australian public galleries so we can show only a slice of what we own. One work which has not been seen for a very long time which I was thrilled to get out for my first show at the AGNSW was a great Bridget Riley from the 1970s called *Aurum* which is a slow-moving masterpiece. I suspect that some of the curators who preceded me were not especially excited by Bridget Riley. But something generational happens. Sometimes you are more interested in your grandparents than your own parents. So when a new generation comes through they often reach back to works that weren't high profile previously and say "hey this work is still singing." People in public

galleries talk about their 'icons' – the works people expect to see. But I think it is really important to understand that you can make new icons.

Content: Is there a key New Zealand work in the collection that you have engaged with in the flesh?

JP: A modest Gordon Walters koru painting is quivering on the racks in the storage facility and of course I like to remind colleagues that Rosalie Gascoigne and Daniel Crooks are great Kiwi artists... But more interesting perhaps are the great New Zealand artworks that we don't own. We have a good core of New Zealand photography but beyond that there is so much work to be done. I'm fascinated by the number of Australian artists in the collection who pay explicit homage to Colin McCahon.

Content: Like Imants Tillers?

JP: Imants Tillers, Peter Atkins, Gordon Bennett, John Walker, Richard Bell, Philip Wolfhagen, Gascoigne (in her Australian role). But we have no McCahon. I would like to see that change.

Content: That's incredible. Something of a startling revelation!

JP: Yes. McCahon is the most important Australasian modernist – the most doubt-racked and extreme. He should be here. I think something very interesting would happen to McCahon

in a collection like this one that doesn't necessarily happen when you plug a great McCahon into a New Zealand gallery. Here he is alongside Anselm Kiefer, Jannis Kounellis, Yves Klein, Roman Opalka...

Content: His peer group?

JP: Sure, his neighbours in the outlands of the Modern. Kindred spirits. McCahon in his international context is a show crying out to be done.

Content: In terms of engaging with its various audiences what are some of the future challenges for AGNSW and how do you in your role seek to address these?

JP: I think the main issue is size. We really need some more real estate in which to let the collection breathe out.

singular show than with a cross-hatch of experiences as you move through a large building.

Content: When you look at the future of the AGNSW, this begs the question of the relationship between the AGNSW and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA). How do you see this? Obviously everyone wants to have a clear pitch to the marketplace. What is your interaction with the MCA and how do you see the respective roles of the MCA, the contemporary gallery and the AGNSW, the canonical gallery for want of another word?

JP: I think the difference is right there in the name. They do the contemporary and we do the whole span of history from ancient Chinese to contemporary projects

of art. We are uniquely placed to do that – to place a sculpted bust by Ah Xian alongside a Chinese Taihu rock, or a history painting by Anselm Kiefer next to a history painting from the 1800s. Artists are always reaching back into history for forms and figures that they can reuse and redeploy in the present. And they're usually excited to see their works, from the now, placed beside much older objects.

Content: Can you discuss the similarities and differences between the New Zealand and Australian art scenes?

JP: Outwardly they are quite similar. But the closer you get the more striking the differences become. Without wishing to buy completely into the idea of New Zealand as the home of the dark, the Gothic and the introspective I think there is a certain sunniness – a *healthy* quality – you encounter in the work here that is not as prevalent back home. Sometimes I have to crack open the Jeffrey Harris catalogue for a dose of that old-time, hard-core 'NZ art' feeling. But the major differences are ones of scale. In New Zealand when someone makes a big noise you tend to hear it wherever you are, but here there are a number of big cities each with their own large public art museum, and around that the usual constellation of independent spaces and dealers.

Content: You really need to travel to each of these cities quite regularly to discover the nuance of each scene?

JP: Absolutely. And you've got to cherish those moments when you are confronted with interesting art but you don't have a fully worked up set of opinions about the people that made it or the politics of the scene. It is a

bit like a blind tasting, when you are thrown back on what you know about art and how this present experience measures up against those past experiences.

Content: Yes I remember last year at the Venice Biennale the Emma Kunz⁴ work fell very much into that category for me.

JP: I felt the same way about the small case of Ron Nagle sculptures which I adored. They would all have fitted on a single tabletop but they alone justified the airfare. If I come back as a sculptor, let me make those objects please.

Content: This may be a tricky question. I call it the Robbie Deans factor. Appointing a New Zealand curator to such an important role in Australia must have caused a few comments. I always think of New Zealanders as the ultimate insider outsiders in Australia. You are the leopard with 99 spots that are the same but there is one spot that is very different. There has been a bit of a Kiwi invasion in the last ten years. Can you talk to this?

JP: There may have been some grumbling but everyone has been very polite so far. There was that interesting moment when flying to Australia when New Zealand ceased to be home. It entered the realm of 'the international'. Now that I was living in Australia, I could legitimately talk about New Zealand as part of the international scene. But, and it is a big 'but', New Zealand is not Berlin, or New York or Hong Kong. So I think I am something of an outsider and perhaps a surprise candidate in that sense. But I have the sense that the gallery wanted that outside perspective.

Perhaps they were seeking someone who did not bring an expected set of attitudes to life in a public art museum – a circuit breaker of some kind. I think the key thing to say is that in a gallery the size of the Christchurch Art Gallery, which is a lot smaller than the public art galleries in Australia, you tend to move a lot faster. Also because the collections are smaller in New Zealand you have to be resourceful and opportunistic in the way you work your collections. When an earthquake closed the building down we had to be resourceful in an especially dynamic way. The other thing to say is that as a Kiwi you are often struck by the amazing provincialism of the so-called international art world. As a New Zealander you are always looking outward, always greedily sucking up information about the world beyond our shores. We are always stalking the world as Kiwis and hence perhaps better prepared to take it on than those who grow up assuming a place in the so-called centres of the art world.

Content: The last time I saw you was at the Venice Biennale for the Bill Culbert (Front Door Out Back 2013) show which you curated of course. Can you talk about what exhibiting at Venice means for New Zealand and Australia?

JP: We have to be there. For all the agonies and exasperations that go along with mounting a project in Venice, by being there you are putting yourself at the heart of the conversation. In the years that follow that big event becomes a kind of shared ground. So that when you are talking with a colleague, an artist or a fellow art enthusiast you can say, 'What was it that you liked there, what spun

There was that interesting moment when flying to Australia when New Zealand ceased to be home. It entered the realm of 'the international'.

Content: There is a big park on your doorstep

JP: That's right and that is where the Sydney Modern development will grow towards completion in 2021 which is the gallery's 150th anniversary. What you will see rolling out from the end of this year is a series of much more dynamic remixes of the gallery's collection – shows that have a thrust and an argument. They'll include so called iconic works but also wonderful lesser known things as well as major new acquisitions and works that are commissioned. I think great museum experiences have less to do with one

being executed in our entrance court as we speak. That is the essential point of difference and we want to build on this ability to bridge the old and the new – to connect different times and traditions. I dislike the idea that viewers who come to see the historical also stay away from the contemporary, or that people who come to see the contemporary tend to neglect the historical. I think a great gallery is one that brings the fans of the historical into the contemporary and vice versa. In the process you're woken up to patterns and meanings – and contradictions – that flow through the full history



you around? What sung, what barked? Did you see the Ron Nagle work or the Emma Kunz?’ In a highly fragmented, molecular art world, Venice is one of the few events you can count on most people having been to. We all work out where each other stands in relation to it.

Content: I think for all New Zealand art fans *Headlands* (MCA, 1992) looms as a really key exhibition in the story of contemporary New Zealand art and our relationship with Australia. Do you think the timing might be right for a new *Headlands* or

something similar?

JP: On the whole I think nationally focussed shows are a bad idea, because few artists make nationally focussed work any longer. I’d be more interested in a show that confidently placed New Zealand art alongside art from many other places, or a cargo cult show that was about all the weird borrowings and acts of theft that New Zealand artists engaged in through the modern and contemporary periods. I don’t want to see another show about Colin McCahon’s relationship with

fellow New Zealand artists. I want to see McCahon alongside Mondrian, Pollock and Tomioka Tessai.

Content: I think that is a show we would love to see here in New Zealand.

JP: And in New York and London and the rest!

Content: One thing we have noticed here as both collectors ourselves and in our day to day business at A+O is that there is growing interest from Australian collectors in contemporary New Zealand art. It is almost

as if the Berlin wall has come down. Do you see this as you move around in Australia?

JP: You do see it. Dealers like Roslyn Oxley, Martin Browne, Andrew Jensen and Darren Knight are key figures in that story. I think art history tends to overlook how important dealers are in seeding their own art worlds with art from other places. Look at how important someone like Darren Knight has been as a conduit between the New Zealand and Australian art worlds – all those small but crucial moments of contact.

With Gajin Fujita’s *Southland standoff* (2013), purchased 2014.

4. The 2013 Venice Biennale curated exhibition was entitled *Encyclopedic Palace*. Curated by Massimiliano Gioni the direction of the show was inclusive, particularly of visionary or outsider artists. Artists such as Emma Kunz, Ron Nagle, Roger Callois and Aleister Crowley were a feature of the main pavilion installation. For more information see Content issue 1, September 2013.



Instead of organising the material by country or chronology we're juxtaposing old and new in a series of dynamic conversations... It's about pushing back at the idea that the art of the past is remote or untouchable. It lives!

5. *Pop to Popism*, Art Gallery of New South Wales from 1 November 2014 to 1 March, 2015

6. *Conversations through the Asian collections*, AGNSW from 25 October, 2014 to 4 October, 2015

What I am much more aware of is the burgeoning interest amongst Australian collectors in international art more broadly. There are some amazingly ambitious collectors here, and we hope they'll think about the Gallery in due course, because it is harder than ever for public institutions to match the resources of private collectors.

Content: Final question.
Is there a show that you are working on that should be a must-see for New Zealand art fans in the next twelve months?

JP: The show no one should miss is *Pop to Popism*⁵ which my colleague Wayne Tunnicliffe has put together and offers an epic account from Pop's beginnings through all its ramifications. Meanwhile I've been working on something I never expected on arrival, in collaboration with the Gallery's four Asian curators, which is a complete rehang of the upper and lower Asian galleries⁶. Instead of organising the material by country or chronology

we're juxtaposing old and new in a series of dynamic conversations, showing how artists of now are informed and inspired by these amazing old objects and images. So you'll see Tatsuo Miyajima alongside a Japanese Amida Buddha, Rodney Glick beside an Indian miniature, Ai Weiwei beside ancient Chinese ceramics. The contemporary artists become guides and companions through the riches of the historical Asian collection. It's about pushing back at the idea that the art of the past is remote or untouchable. It lives!

On the right: Tim Johnson, Karma Phunstock et al., *Lotus born* (2006), Contemporary Collection Benefactors 2006. On the left: Narodakini (20th century) and other Tibetan ritual objects and thangkas.



Brick Bay sculpture trail

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*Artwork: Top, Phil Price 'Hoop'
Lower, Lonnie Hutchinson 'Comb (Red)'*



Family Affair

Francis Upritchard is a former Walters Prize winner (2006) and represented New Zealand at the Venice Biennale in 2009 with the exhibition *Save Yourself*. Content visited the artist in her Hackney Central studio in East London – a communal complex that she shares with other artists and designers who support each other technically, conceptually and with superb lunches and early morning yoga sessions – as she prepares for a solo show at the Hammer Museum¹ in Los Angeles to discuss some perennial concerns.

Content: Your next show is at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles.¹ Can you tell us about the exhibition and the type of work you are preparing?

Francis Upritchard: The exhibition opens in late October and is called *Even Small Animals Make Dirt* which comes from a German saying which means even small things count. A lot of my work is about having lack of political power or feeling like a useless being – someone who can't be useful or powerful in making this world a better place. So to me that saying also talks about even the small person can make a negative impact in the world too. Because every person is a small person.

Content: To be a force for good or for evil or wrongdoing?

FU: So we can make dirt. In German like in English the word also means shit. You can use it in a similar way.

Content: What kinds of works are you preparing for this show?

FU: They are all new works. There is a new type for me made from Balata, which is an old material I found ten years ago in Brazil on residency. It is a natural rubber. You prepare it by boiling hot water and submerging the material which softens it and then you form it into sculpture in cold water. I have made five or six dinosaurs and then two larger works in papier-mâché. I'm also interested in Balata because it was at one point the main export of Brazil. It is a natural material and it does not last too long. Have you heard of the Portuguese rubber

Barons? They killed a lot of people. They were terrible slavers and treated people very badly. So Balata in effect killed people. I'm always interested in power and how people are positioned economically against each other. So we have the extinct dinosaurs and I'm also thinking about Balata and slavery and extermination.

Content: So the material is loaded with history?

FU: It is, but I also love it as an amazing sculptural material which no one is using now. It looks very historical and lends itself to dinosaurs very well (laughs). You have to work it very fast as it is hot and molten and you are working it underwater. So you don't have long to make them so the making is quite carefree. Even though I'm thinking about them in quite political

ways they are made in a carefree way.

Content: Can we discuss the role of the dinosaurs in your work?

FU: I'm also working on these enamel disks which are metaphors for meteorites. I've been very interested in dinosaurs and meteorites for a long time now. They are long gone but we still find them fascinating. Were they eradicated by meteorites? That is a theory. I was originally looking at the Victorian dinosaurs in the Crystal Palace which were made in concrete which were really 'incorrect'. What I like about dinosaurs is that we really don't know what they looked like particularly. So anyone's interpretation is as good as the next...has it got feathers? Is it green?

Installation views of Francis Upritchard: *Do What You Will* at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, England, June to September 2014. Photograph by Angus Mill



1. Francis Upritchard, *Even Small Animals Make Dirt* at Hammer Projects, Los Angeles, October 2014 to March 2015, curated by Anne Ellegood.



Francis Upritchard in her East London studio fashioning the copper meteorites that accompany her Balata dinosaurs.



Content: It is somebody's best guess?

FU: Yes you can interpret it quite badly and still get away with it (laughs). There are almost different fashions for dinosaurs – different rules and schools. Also LA reminds me of dinosaurs. People have always said to me “you would love the Museum of Jurassic Technology”. So perhaps wrongly I have always connected LA with dinosaurs. Plus I have been trying to make dinosaurs for about ten years. So the timing is right.

Content: One thing that is notable about this body of work is the dramatic increase in scale. For those of us who have followed your work over the last fifteen years this is quite remarkable. Is this the dinosaur effect?

FU: I'm getting better at making things and this studio is well equipped. However, I like to work on my own. I like to be able to handle everything myself. But here I can get some assistance with welding. I bent the metal but got someone to weld it up for me. The largest one is about 2.2 metres. So they are getting bigger. I'm not sure they will get much bigger but you never know.

Content: London is a city with such a diversity of historic sites and museums. Is there a particular place that is useful for your research and is connected to your work?

FU: The outdoor park at Crystal Palace which I have visited a number of times. It has the huge concrete dinosaurs. But recently the meteorite section at the Met

in New York and previously I also loved the meteorite section in the Museum of Natural History in Vienna.²

Content: The work that New Zealand audiences would have most recently seen of yours was at the *Freedom Farmers*³ show at the Auckland Art Gallery earlier this year. The works were of larger scale. One of the most striking things about these works was the wonderful poses of the figures almost like Tai Chi or some form of enigmatic ritual. The gestural nature of your figures is an arresting aspect for the viewer which makes one feel that one can either relate to the gesture or that there is a mystery to it that you want to understand. How do you go about the research of finding these gestures?

FU: Actually there are not that many different

types. It is all one type. I have discovered that it is a family's type of gesture. It looks quite alien and funny to lots of people but they look very natural to me. I had always wondered where they came from and I looked at some family photos and I was like... “oh yeah, we all just stand funny (laughs)”.

Content: So some of these poses and figures are really quite personal to you as opposed to being emblematic of another culture for example?

FU: I have an idea that a figure might be reaching for something but it reaches in a really Upritchard way!

Francis Upritchard is represented by Ivan Anthony Gallery in Auckland, Kate MacGarry in London and Anton Kern Gallery in New York.

2. In 2010 Francis Upritchard staged a major exhibition *In Die Hohle* at the Secession Museum, Vienna

3. *Freedom Farmers: New Zealand artists growing ideas* curated by Natasha Conland at the Auckland Art Gallery, October 2013 to March 2014

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Brian Butler and Isha Welsh in front a work by Superflex *I Copy Therefore I Am* from 2009 – a riff on the 1980s Barbara Kruger classic *I Shop Therefore I Am*

On the Miracle Mile

Content meets Brian Butler and Isha Welsh of Los Angeles gallery 1301PE to discuss the US West Coast art scene – and the growing globalisation of the international scene that is making room for New Zealand contemporary artists. Both of course are well known to Kiwi art followers – Brian was director of ARTSPACE in Auckland from 2005 to 2008 and Isha was formerly gallery manager of Sue Crockford Gallery for over a decade.

Content: Brian you were well known to the New Zealand visual arts community as the director of Artspace in Auckland. You’ve been back in LA for six years. What have you been doing since most people in New Zealand would have last seen you?

Brian Butler: Well we did an exhibition, *Greetings from Los Angeles*, in New Zealand at Starkwhite in 2012 so we got to catch up with many friends¹. Since we moved to Los Angeles I have focussed on 1301PE, running the gallery and picking up some new artists including Fiona Connor who came up at around the time that I came back and who went to CalArts. I’ve also been busy raising our son, Thomas – we live in Brentwood near Santa Monica.

Content: Isha can you tell us about how long you have been here and your transition to living and working in LA?

Isha Welsh: I moved up in October 2008. I was travelling first and then spoke to Brian and interviewed for the role here at 1301PE. It is a really interesting gallery with a lot of forward thinking positions in relation the art world. My wife Bunny moved up a few months after me. She was working at New Zealand Trade and Enterprise and has been working with artists and artists’ studios, so she has become part of the art scene here which is great. It has been a great move – a whole new set of people and artists and curators.

BB: We are very happy that Air New Zealand flies directly from Auckland to Los Angeles so we get to see lots of Kiwis that way.

Content: Who have been some of your recent visitors?

IW: In the last wee while Dane and Tana Mitchell – also Peter Robinson and Ava

Seymour, Kelvin Soh, James Pinker and Lisa Reihana, Robert Leonard, Sue Gardiner from the Chartwell Trust and Greg Burke². Justin Paton was through and had a look at some of our artists he might work with in the future. Rhana Davenport³ was here recently. Simon Denny was here for a show a year ago. So many more artists are moving between America, Europe and New Zealand now. They are much more mobile. And the gallerists too. We have seen Sarah Hopkinson, Michael Lett, John McCormack and Dominic Feuchs and Gary Langsford. Lots of people.

Content: 1301PE predates your time at Artspace by over a decade. What is the history of the Gallery?

BB: The gallery was founded in 1991 but did not open until April 27th 1992 which was the day the LA riots started, an infamous day! I had just come back from Cologne in Germany and I opened the space in a townhouse in Santa Monica at 1301 Franklin Street. I really liked the scale of the space as it had human proportions. There were a number of other galleries in London and Edinburgh that had similar ideas at the time. In 1995, we left the space; there was a movement at the time which was like ‘the end of the gallery’ so local galleries such as Regen Projects did offsite shows with Richard Prince and we did an offsite project with Jorge Pardo and Jason Rhoades called *Ranch*. Then we found this space with a few other

galleries in 1997⁴. Since then we’ve had exhibitions with Diana Thater, Jorge Pardo, Angela Bulloch, Pae White, Rikrit Tiravanija, Martin Kippenberger and group shows which included Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy.

Content: So how did you first make contact with New Zealand?

BB: In 2003 I went to Hamilton. The original contact came via Tessa Laird. I was invited by the artist Lisa Benson to give a keynote speech at the Spark conference and curate an exhibition. Then I did a bit of a Tiki tour with Amanda Cruz. I had already met Peter Robinson in Germany and then in 2004 Peter sent me an email saying that Tobias Berger was leaving the job at ARTSPACE. I had just returned from the Frieze art fair and I thought it sounded interesting. I contacted Vicki Henderson at ARTSPACE and she suggested I send in my CV. I was like, I have been running the gallery for fifteen years I don’t have a CV! But I prepared something. Then we did an interview on the phone with Tessa Laird, Stella Brennan and Lisa Reihana. It was a rainy night in LA and I had a few glasses of wine but the interview went well. Then Katie and I came over and guess what? The first person we met at Jenny Gibbs house at Piha was Bill Culbert! That was great! I had curated a show with Bill in the late 80s.

Content: One of the interesting questions currently is the relationship of LA to the wider US

1. *Greetings from Los Angeles* at Starkwhite July 2012

2. Greg Burke is the former director of the Govett Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth and the Powerplant Contemporary Art Gallery in Toronto. He is currently director of the soon to open Remai Art Gallery in Saskatchewan, Canada

3. Rhana Davenport is the director of the Auckland Art Gallery

4. 6150 Wilshire Boulevard is a gallery cluster in the near vicinity of the The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), referred to as ‘The Miracle Mile’. Other galleries at the same address include ACME and Mark Foxx Gallery.



Pae White: *Day for Night*
installation view, United Talent
Agency. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen.

environment. Brian, can you tell us about the emergence of the Los Angeles voice?

BB: To go back a bit LA was always a centre but it was never considered *the* centre because New York was that centre. That being based on a market reality. But when you start looking at people's collections, be it people who have Kienholz or Altoon or Ruscha. All the people from the 60s. They were all here but it wasn't where the power structure was. Then CalArts⁵ merged with Chouinard and with that people like John Baldessari came who is a seminal figure here as a teacher with some others. The first generation left but the second generation stayed. That is the Mike Kelley generation and artists like Stephen Prina and Christopher Williams who has a retrospective at MoMA⁶ currently. That generation staying led to more and more

people remaining here. But it was problematic in that New York was always seen as the market place. My feeling about Los Angeles is that it is a place for experimentation. So in LA what has changed in the last five years, let's say since the recession, is that a lot of artists have moved from New York, Chicago, San Francisco into Los Angeles and set up their studios here. Dealers are setting up second or third galleries here. That has really taken off. For twenty five years downtown LA has been trying to become a centre and now it is happening. Plus – and this is important – the press loves it.

IW: It is also a city of art schools. One thing I noticed moving here is that CalArts, Art Center, UCLA brings in a whole range of international students. That is why Fiona Connor was here and Amy Howden-Chapman and

Sean Grattan all came up for school and then they stay. They become a part of the art scene here. So many young artists I know come here for school.

Content: I think for many New Zealand art fans the Ed Ruscha show at the Auckland Art Gallery in the mid 1970s was a key international contemporary art experience. One thinks of the Sunset Boulevard photographs. What is his position in the firmament of the LA art scene?

BB: I think he is one of the cornerstones. Baldessari was the artist's artist. Ed bridged everything. I think the fact that Ruscha showed at Leo Castelli in New York and he showed with Ferus Gallery in LA along with Keinholtz and Warhol was big for the LA art scene at the time. He was like the young punk kid at Ferus, the Californian

version of Pop – maybe the cool part of Pop. This was in the 1960s. Then in the 70s he became very experimental making prints with coffee and jam and beer, all kinds of stuff. He pushed towards conceptual art along with Baldessari. By the mid-80s he gets picked up again in Germany. So over a thirty year period his work spans criticality and popularity.

Content: Brian, you curated a show many years ago which has a New Zealand link in that the exhibition included both Boyd Webb and Bill Culbert, who of course represented New Zealand at the Venice Biennale last year. What was the genesis of this exhibition and publication?

BB: That was in 1988 and was entitled *British Art: the Literate Link*. The exhibition included Bill Culbert, Boyd Webb who I had become familiar with when I lived

5. The California Institute of the Arts dates to the early 1960s and was founded by Walt Disney. CalArts role as a key player in the contemporary art scene dates to the early 1970s when the school moved to a new 24 ha campus in Valencia, California.

6. Christopher Williams: *The Production Line of Happiness* at MoMA, New York until November 2014.



Serenin



Fiona Connor: *Wallworks*
Installation view, Monash University
Museum of Melbourne, 2014.
Photo: Andrew Curtis

Fiona Connor
Installation view, 1301PE, 2013.
Photo: Fredrik Nilsen



in London in the mid 1980s, Susan Hiller who turned out to be American but also lived in London, Art & Language, Alison Wilding, Simon Edmondson and Steven Campbell. I was interested in the idea of non-verbal language. After having lived in the UK and comparing this with the States where language was – bigger, brighter, bolder – where everything needed to be verbally explained. I was interested in this much more complex thing as I looked at the Brits. Now looking back on it I can see that including those New Zealand expats in the UK (not that I knew this at the time) that they somehow bought more of an understanding of the complexity of the non verbal. It was about an elegance and a quietness.

Content: Can you tell us about the type of collectors you deal with?

IW: I was surprised when I first got here about how expansive that group is. Many from Europe, all across the States of course but also Mexico and Canada – a

much wider range of people than I thought would be the collector base for an LA gallery. In the past LA has been a focus for German collectors who first picked up Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy. Some of those artists had their first major shows or commercial success in Europe and then have come back here. It is far more trans Atlantic than I thought. There are also a lot of amazing LA collectors who are really adventurous and who really curate in-depth collections of photography, video and contemporary art.

Content: LA is also about Hollywood and American movie industry. How do the art worlds and film worlds interact?

BB: If we are talking about the history of artists in Los Angeles and their relationship to Hollywood is very tightly woven from working in the industry to referencing it. If we are talking about Hollywood's relationship to collecting there have been some wonderful collectors from

the movie industry who are active and considered. From agents like Michael Ovitiz or Thao Nguyen of CAA to producers and actors there is a history of Hollywood collecting and supporting the art world.

IW: Yes Hollywood does collect. There are a group of amazing collectors who have been part of the LA art world for the past 20 years. Brian mentioned Michael Ovitiz has extensive collections and of course there is David Geffen. Ovitiz is now collecting younger artists such as Blake Rayne. Brian Grazer, Michael Lynton and Bryan Lourd are all on the board of LACMA. Agencies like CAA and UTA also have great collections throughout their buildings. We recently worked with Jeremy Zimmer at UTA on a large Pae White project for their space. Right now there's a younger group of players passionate about art, actors such as Neil Patrick Harris and Orlando Bloom are both building art collections. Entertainment players are giving back too, Steve Tisch contributes major works to LACMA

and former UPN chief Dean Valentine gifted fifty important sculptures to the Hammer Museum.

Content: Tell us about what is coming up in the near future for 1301PE?

BB: We have a great Jorge Pardo show coming up at the end of the year. He is doing these new volcanic ceramic Chimineas, you know outdoor fireplaces, made in Mexico. Also *Dad's Cuba* which was the first work Jorge made in Cuba in 2012 for the Havana Biennale.

Then in January we have Fiona Connor, her second show with us which is really exciting. She has just completed a major work in Melbourne.⁷

We are doing Art Los Angeles Contemporary in January, then the Armory in New York and in April we will be doing the Cologne Art Fair. So it's a very exciting and busy year ahead.

7. Fiona Connor *Wallworks* at MUMA Monash University July 2014



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Context is everything

1. Mark Adams and Nicholas Thomas
Raaru, Tene Waitere, Māori carving,
colonial history, University of Otago
Press, 2009

2. Roger Neich *Carved Histories,*
Rotorua Ngāti Tarāwhai Woodcarving,
Auckland University Press, 2001

The journey of the whare Hinemihi from the desolation of the Mt Tarawera eruption in 1886 to a new home in the grounds of a Palladian manor house in an English country garden is a grand arc that encompasses war, devastation and recontextualisation. It is also the story of the enduring legacy of one of New Zealand's greatest carver artists Tene Waitere. A+O's Hamish Coney visited Clandon Park in Surrey to gain an insight into Hinemihi's physical *and* cultural context. Photographs by Sarah Smuts-Kennedy.

Driving through the leafy lanes of Surrey on a balmy English summer's day is not one of life's greater chores. After an hour or so bowling along the M3 from London we take the Guildford turn off and soon find ourselves in an extremely green and pleasant land. The adjoining counties are Hampshire, Sussex, Kent and Berkshire of *Wind in the Willows* fame. We are in the heart of the fertile English Home Counties – a pastoral idyll of thatched roofs, country pubs and the occasional squirrel.

Our destination is Clandon Park, the family seat of the Onslow family, amongst whose descendants was the fourth earl, William Hillier Onslow (1853 – 1911) Governor General of New Zealand from 1889 to 1892. It was Onslow who acquired Hinemihi in the early 1890s as a memento of his time

in the colony, effectively saving the ailing whare *and* removing it from its homeland forever. That Hinemihi is still standing some 122 years later is a cause for celebration and thanks for the prescience of the Earl of Onslow at a time when the whare's survival was very much in the balance.

Hinemihi was not unknown to me, having first come onto my radar via both photographer Mark Adams peerless body of work¹ focussing on the achievement of the Ngāti Tarāwhai master Tene Waitere (1854 – 1931) and the pre-eminence accorded Tene by Professor Roger Neich in his definitive history of Māori carving in the post-colonial era *Carved Histories*.²

The dramatic sweep of

Hinemihi and Waitere begins in the early 19th century before the artist's birth in 1854. In the mid 1820s the traditional Te Arawa homelands of the Rotorua Lakes area was the subject of numerous battles and skirmishes with raiding Ngāpuhi war parties, most notably led by Hongi Hika. It was after the 1823 attack on Mokoia island that Waitere's mother Ani Pape, herself a half-sister to another Ngāti Tarāwhai master carver Anaha Te Rahui (1822 – 1913), was carried away as a prisoner by Ngāpuhi to the Bay of Islands. Forcibly married into the Ngāpuhi tribe, Ani bore two children before she was returned to Rotorua by her brother Anaha in 1857. The influence of Christian missionaries had discouraged the traditional practice of taking battle slaves and moves were made to repatriate those taken during the conflict of the 1820s. Anaha returned his sister and children into the Ngāti Tarāwhai heartland of Ruato on the shores of Lake Rotoiti. It was here a young Tene was apprenticed to be a carver under the tutelage of the master Wero Taroi (circa 1810 – 1880) with whom he collaborated on numerous projects including Hinemihi. His sister Mereana married another Ngāti Tarāwhai master Neke Kapua. Waitere's turbulent early history throws into relief two enduring threads: the effects of displacement endured by Māori as conflict and colonisation after the Treaty of Waitangi redrew tribal, economic, and political boundaries *and* the

steps Māori took to secure their cultural patrimony in the face of these, at times, life threatening forces. Tene Waitere's early history is ample demonstration of the deeply interwoven bloodlines and kinship that sit at the heart of the Ngāti Tarāwhai school. It brings to mind a similar vigorous, dynastic and creative powerhouse: that of the Bellini of 16th century Venice and bears all the same hallmarks: multi-generational, with blurred lines of authorship and collaboration, but most of all both the Ngāti Tarāwhai carvers of the 19th and early 20th century and the Bellini in their era were acknowledged as peerless exemplars of their art.

The story of Hinemihi is bound up with that of the resourceful and entrepreneurial Te Arawa people of the mid 19th century. Tarawera and Lake Rotomohana in the centre of their tribal rohe in the Bay of Plenty had become a major tourist attraction, a geothermal wonderland. The jewel in the crown, the famed Pink and White Terraces had become the biggest drawcard in Aotearoa in the 1870s. Tourism was in its infancy, but Te Arawa were becoming wealthy on the proceeds of this dazzling natural wonder.

Hinemihi was commissioned by the Tūhourangi chief Aporo Te Wharekaniwha and opened in early 1881 situated at the village of Te Wairoa near the entrance to the Pink and White Terraces. Today this is

the site of the Buried Village. Funded from revenues created by visitors to the Terraces (which at their peak topped 6000 pounds per annum or about one million dollars in present day terms) the whare was intended as a community centre for functions and performances. It was also very much intended as an assertion of Te Arawa commercial mana. Legend has it that Hinemihi o te Ao Tawhito (of the old world) was soon referred to as Hinemihi of the golden eyes in reference to the gold sovereigns that reputedly replaced the more usual paua shells used to represent eyes within carved figures – a 'new world' affectation, but tellingly an indication that Te Arawa were very much aware of the commercial power they had developed. In less than ten years Te Wairoa became one of the wealthiest villages in New Zealand.

That all changed early on the morning of 10 June, 1886 with the eruption of Mt. Tarawera, the destruction of the Pink and White Terraces and the scattering of the Te Arawa people. Hinemihi was one of the few surviving structures in a volcanic onslaught which claimed 153 lives including many of the residents of Te Wairoa. Tene Waitere and his family were amongst the handful of survivors who took refuge within Hinemihi which almost buckled under the weight of volcanic debris.

Hinemihi arrived at Clandon Park in April 1892 and has spent her last 122 years in relative seclusion on the grounds of the estate. In



this time she has acquired a few odd additions including the thick thatch roof in 1978, believed to be an error arising from the appearance of the whare covered in ash immediately after the 1886 eruption.

This dramatic history precedes the visitor to Clandon Park in 2014. Hinemihi's story and her place within the narrative of both New Zealand and the grand Ngāti Tarāwhai tradition is both incredible and assured. Still, all of that does not prepare the New Zealand visitor for the almost surreal experience

of encountering a Māori whare in the grounds of a Palladian mansion in rural England. The visitor sees the house first, surrounded by expanses of lawn and formal gardens. The house is the work of Venetian architect Giacomo Leoni (circa 1686 – 1746) and dates to the early 1730s.

At a distance of some one hundred and fifty metres from the mansion, Hinemihi sits sheltered amongst a grouping of trees and shrubs. She faces the main house and the tension created between the two very different structures

opens a visual discourse that is at once perplexing and inviting. Two very different but intertwined cultures are engaged in architectural dialogue. For the New Zealand visitor this first encounter comes freighted with two centuries of history and feels emotionally charged. Regardless of whether the viewer has any knowledge of Hinemihi's journey it is impossible not to be transfixed by the whare's presence as well as the magnificent setting.

In discussion with Claire Nodder who has recently returned from New Zealand

to take up the position of House Manager at Clandon Park it soon becomes clear that Hinemihi is doing some heavy cultural lifting for Aotearoa as a centre for the activities of the UK Māori community whose activities are co-ordinated by the Ngāti Rānana London Māori Club and as a site of pilgrimage for New Zealanders, including the New Zealand Olympic Team in 2012.

Ms Nodder has extensive experience in New Zealand via roles at Te Papa, The Whangarei Museum and Heritage Park and the Otago Settlers Museum in

Dunedin. She also worked on an important project documenting the extensive collection of the Waitangi Treaty house and environs.

Since 1956 The National Trust has managed Clandon Park. In recent years Hinemihi's condition and future conservation requirements have become a priority and an active plan has been formulated to ensure that the 122 year old whare enjoy a long future as one of New Zealand's most significant taonga outside our shores.

The establishment of the





Burton Brothers
Aporo and Ngareta at Wairoa
Circa 1881–5
albumen print

Burton Brothers
Rununga House (Hinemihi), Wairoa
Circa 1881–5
albumen print

Frederick Muir for Burton Brothers
Rununga House, Wairoa, after
eruption June 10. 86
July 1886
albumen print
image courtesy of Michael Graham-Stewart



friends of Hinemihi group Te Maru O Hinemihi³ in 2012 has helped to strengthen ties to Ngāti Rānana, the local community and Ngāti Hinemihi in New Zealand. The group has been working with the National Trust to consult with stakeholders to formulate a plan for Hinemihi's long term care. The aim is to restore the whare as close to her original form as is possible. A number of significant changes are proposed. For example the house is approximately a third smaller in form that her original footprint at Te Wairoa and the goal is to rectify this and to conserve all of the twenty three major carvings. This work will involve the dismantling of Hinemihi and conservation and strengthening of all of her structural parts and the replacement of the current thatched roof with a shingle roof as she enjoyed when first constructed in 1881. Already work has begun on the creation of new woven tukutuku panels to be installed when the complete restoration

work is undertaken. Basic security and fire alarm systems will be installed as well and measures taken to ensure weather tightness all year round. There have been a number of partial cleans and restorations in recent times but the substantive plan proposed by the National Trust will require substantial funding. As Content magazine is published the Clandon Park team, the National Trust in conjunction with Te Maru O Hinemihi are preparing a funding bid to the UK Heritage Lottery Fund to secure funds that will greenlight this major restoration project.

Perhaps the final word needs to come from Jim Schuster, Tene Waitere's great, great grandson. Schuster is a Māori heritage adviser at Heritage New Zealand *Pouhere Taonga* and has enormous experience in engaging with marae and historic whare as both important artistic taonga and living buildings performing vital social functions within the daily

lives of iwi. Schuster is also a key member of Te Maru O Hinemihi and uniquely placed to share his vision for the future of the displaced whare, "she needs people and to be able to cater for her visitors. When she is ready to come home she will. Probably that will not be in my lifetime. Today she is doing an important job for UK based Māori, their children and visitors." He goes on to explain that in the course of time most marae houses are constantly upgraded to meet the needs of a marae and iwi, "You know she has survived two world wars when there were bombs dropping all around but today she needs a few basic upgrades like electricity, proper windows and floors and even sanitation so guests can stay in the whare overnight. With funding we can attend to these practicalities".

3. to find out about the activities of Te Maru O Hinemihi see www.hinemihi.co.uk/

Tene Waitere as Artist

by Damian Skinner

In 1892 Tene Waitere moved to Whakarewarewa in Rotorua. Employed by C.E. Nelson, the Pākehā manager of the Geyser Hotel, Waitere had a workshop and accommodation in the hotel stables, and worked for a variety of Pākehā patrons, including Nelson, the Tourist Department and the Auckland Museum.

Nelson, who liked to be regarded as a ‘white tohunga’, commissioned Waitere and the Ngāti Tarāwhai carvers Anaha Te Rahui and Neke Kapua to carve a whare whakairo (meetinghouse) called Rauru, which would be used as a tourist attraction. This house, now in Hamburg, is filled with innovations. The ancestors featured in the artworks are not specific to any particular Māori group, but come from pan-Māori stories and whakapapa. This connects with the Pākehā desire, at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, to create a national culture based on Māori subjects. These myths and histories and art practices had the value of being unique to this country and could be neatly repackaged as local folklore by Pākehā writers, scholars and artists.

Waitere’s naturalistic carvings bring European artistic conventions into play to create representations of Māori ancestors who are no longer evoked in a kind of timeless space but depicted at particular moments in specific stories. This is a huge departure from the way Māori carving operated previously, where ancestors



were presented or incarnated, depicted in a continuous duration, but not located in time and space like this.

Sometimes, as Nicholas Thomas puts it, colonialism brought ‘oddly productive opportunities to do new things as well as, in some cases, pressures to commodify culture that were ultimately destructive.’ In his work, Tene Waitere shows just how capably and dynamically Māori artists were able to grab hold of these opportunities and make extraordinary work that challenges the tired conventions of art history like ‘tradition’ or ‘primitive art’.

Within the ‘opportunities of empire’, individuals like Waitere were free to occupy any position they like, to assert either the positive or negative implications of colonialism and to shift between them. But the important thing is that the space in which Waitere worked – Rotorua at the turn of the twentieth century,



and the practice of Ngāti Tarāwhai art with its close relationship to tourism – is animated by the dynamic of innovation and destruction existing alongside each other.

Roger Neich, who has done the most to present Tene Waitere as an artist – that is, as an active agent working dynamically with his inheritance as a Māori carver, and responding to contemporary opportunities – says that he stands pre-eminent because he made the transition between traditional contexts and the modern commercial arena with integrity. The sheer diversity of Waitere’s carving stands out, as does his formal experimentation with naturalism and oblique viewpoints.

Most famous in this regard is the panel, now in Te Papa, that Waitere carved for Augustus Hamilton, director of the Colonial Museum, in 1896. Three naturalistic heads represent tattoo patterns, but the lower

head is an oblique profile, something never before attempted by a Māori artist in the Rotorua region. As Neich points out, not only was Waitere the only Māori artist to attempt such a direct representation of the natural world at this time, but he was the only one to sign his work.

This is the individualism of the artist in a way that makes sense from a western perspective, and yet Waitere remains deeply connected to Māori art in other ways, both in terms of the patterns and artistic strategies he used in his work. Neich writes that this didn’t last long, with a return to a more orthodox model of Māori art when Waitere stopped carving for Pākehā patrons after 1912. The experiments he left behind continue to challenge art history to find more sophisticated ways of explaining Māori art, and to describe the space between orthodoxy and innovation that Waitere occupied with such aplomb.



From Left:
Door, Raaru, Kurangaituku, the bird-woman. Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg. Te Tohunga: Tene Waitere. 9.5.2002

Window, Raaru, depicting Hatupatu. Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg. Te Tohunga: Tene Waitere. 9.5.2002

Ta Moko Panel, Pounamu sore, Te Papa Tongarewa/Museum of New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand. Te Tohunga: Tene Waitere. 19.3.2008.

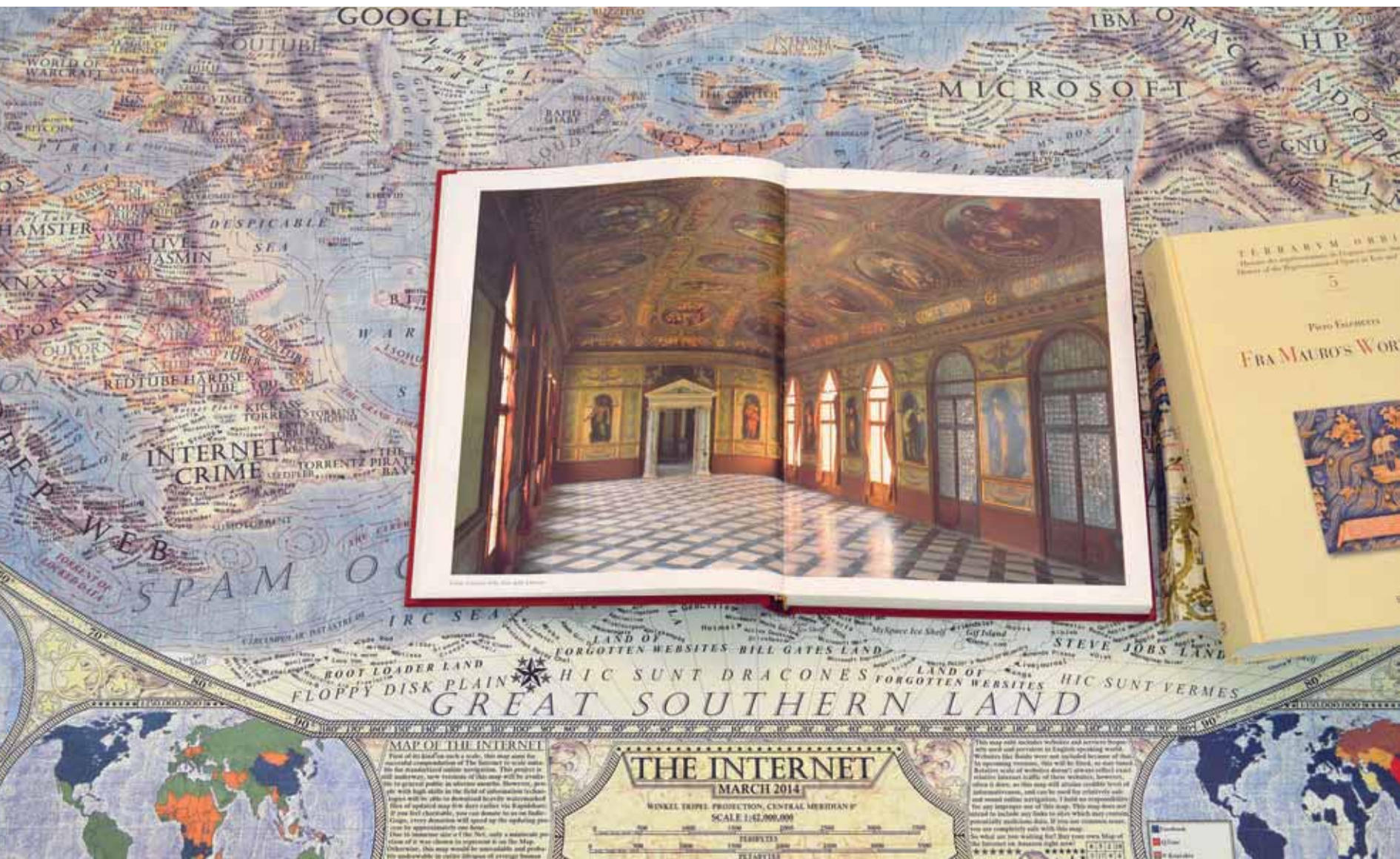
All images Mark Adams, courtesy the artist and Two Rooms

Further Reading:

Roger Neich, ‘The Māori carving art of Tene Waitere: Traditionalist and innovator’, *Art New Zealand* 57, Summer 1990-91, pp.73-9.

Nicholas Thomas (ed.), *Rauru: Tene Waitere, Māori Carving, Colonial History*. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2009.

Altered States



We live in the “post-Snowdon” era. Who controls and accesses your personal data is now contested terrain. Governments and the individual are on the front line as we wrestle with the tentacles of corporate and political power. Simon Denny brings both a sense of urgency as well as a cogent argument for artistic freedom of expression to the most compelling debate of the early 21st Century. *Secret Power* is the title of his upcoming exhibition at the 2015 Venice Biennale. Content magazine met the Berlin based artist on a recent trip to Auckland to discuss his research based practice.

Content: The 56th Venice Biennale¹ is now almost six months away. Can you tell us how preparations are coming along for your exhibition *Secret Power*?

Simon Denny: As with every project New Zealand does for Venice the selection of venue has been a really big part of what we are doing. We are working with an amazing space which is an historical library in the middle of Venice on San Marco.

Content: So that is right in Piazza San Marco?

SD: It is literally across the square from the Doges Palace. It is called the Biblioteca Marciana² designed by Jacopo Sansovino. The interior of the library is designed as an allegory for the acquisition of knowledge. There are a number of allegorical paintings by Titian and other artists on the ceiling that depict wisdom and philosophy. It also holds a number of important historical maps and early cartography. One of the most important is the Fra Mauro map which recently travelled to Australia³ for the first time as a key part of an exhibition at the National Library in Canberra. This is one of the first European maps that was drawn to include Japan. It was made in the fifteenth century and included a lot of knowledge that was collected on Marco Polo's travels. It was also one of the first times that maps of that period were moving from depicting things from a religious perspective to a more scientific or

topographical view. That map stands for questioning the conventions of depicting the world. Obviously Venice at that time was a key centre of commerce. It was a kind of commercial empire. My presentation's themes will work with those ideas of how do we understand and map the globe. What does geo-political space look like today from the perspective of New Zealand? An important thing I've folded into that project, which I think is the most important element that affects how people see this in the last couple of years, has been the post-Snowden releases of all this material about intelligence and the way that US centred intelligence spreads across the world – and how much New Zealand plays a part in it. There are many documents that have been released over the last year and half through various news outlets; all of them very interesting visually, from a design perspective. Particularly as an idea that they are parts of what could be called a modern depiction of geo-politics. That is my perspective on that material. That is where I am at the moment. Everything else is yet to be defined. I have a range of ideas and I have started producing the exhibition experience but there are still a few decisions to be made. Also I want to leave some content to surprise.

Content: We are in an interesting moment politically in New Zealand. The title of your show is *Secret Power*. It seems right now that the citizen and



Photo: Calla Henkel and Max Pitegoff

the state is in a process of renegotiation of the relative power of the one to the other. As an artist you are going into a place that not many artists have gone into recently. There is a sense of a lineage that is being created to more politically active periods of artistic production. I think of course of the Italian Futurists, the Russian Constructivists... what is it now that makes it feel urgent for you to address these issues?

SD: I have looked at technology now for a long time in my practice. That has been a big part of what I have focussed on in the last five years or so. The idea of hardware standing in for changes in the way that we are able to communicate globally. The Snowden

material and finding out about Kim Dotcom⁴ was part of a politicisation of that material in the world. I started to become more interested in those things as the world became more interested in them. A few years back I did a piece for Art Basel with Michael Lett when we won the Statements section of Art Basel⁵. I did a piece about the redesign of the New Zealand passport and the end of TVNZ channel 7. That was a documentary piece. Not a lot of research has been done, as I found out at that time, into official national design. I couldn't find anything. I collaborated with Simon Pound who at that time was journalist for TVNZ 7. We worked together on a piece that looked at the decision making for that design process. I think

1. The 56th Venice Biennale – 9 May to 22 November 2015. New Zealand will be represented by Simon Denny and the installation *Secret Power* curated by Robert Leonard, Senior Curator at the City Gallery, Wellington. 2015 NZ at Venice commissioner is Heather Galbraith, Associate Professor at Massey University.

2. The Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana is one of the earliest libraries in Italy and dates to the mid 16th century. Designed by the Italian renaissance architect Jacopo Sansovino (1486 – 1570) the Marciana is acknowledged as one of his greatest works in Venice. Sansovino's tomb is in the sepulchre of St Mark's Basilica on Piazza San Marco.

3. *Mapping our World* at the National Library of Australia, Canberra, (November 2013 to March 2014). The Fra Mauro Map is dated to circa 1450.

4. Simon Denny *The Personal Effects of Kim Dotcom* is currently on exhibition at the Adam Art Gallery, Wellington from 4 October to December 19, 2014. *The exhibition* was first presented at Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (MUMOK) in Vienna, Austria in July 2013. It was then recreated at Firstsite in Colchester, England, in March 2014.

5. The 14th Balloise art prize at Art 43 Basel was awarded to Simon Denny in 2012 for the exhibition *Channel Document*.



Above: video stills from
Channel Document, 2012

that was the first time when I entered into looking very closely how national documents are depicted from the perspective of the government. Who decides how these documents look? It was interesting to see that it was an advertising firm that was doing that work in collaboration with a number of artistic voices. An interesting thing about that document is that it tells a story of travel and discovery by using hardware and technology as a key metaphor. Every different page of the passport is a new navigational tool. It has a progressive history which goes right from Māori exploration to early European navigational charts right up to Google. It really set the stage for me to look more closely at how states and nations use this material. When the Venice commission came along I thought that is something you can't ignore. The way that Venice is set

up is national in that you appear on behalf of your nation. To not address those issues would be a missed opportunity.

Content: A recent work of yours is the *New Management* exhibition in Germany where you are addressing a major international corporate organization in the form of Samsung⁶. Your research covers a key moment in the corporate life of the Korean consumer multinational giant that changed the direction of consumer electronics via national values asserted within the customer dialogue, obviously for a profit. It is a relatively logical step to then look at this space between the private and the public whereby you are examining how governments operate at a national and geopolitical level. What are some of the sensitivities around gaining access to the very information you need to do your research when it is indeed secret?

SD: That is an irony that is not quite true. I work with material that is already in the public domain. I'm not looking for material that is not out there already, but there is a lot of material that has been released. I am following it very closely. There may be a few things in the news every now and again but I have collected every single document that has been released. This research material will not be the presentation of course, but I am looking very closely at this material from both a cultural perspective but

also a visual one and I am seeking to unpack this. There is a lot of information in the decision making in the design of those slides – for example the logos that get produced for each of the programs. These are interesting in themselves. I think people, quite rightfully of course, have become quite caught up in the sensation of the story of this material coming out and the vast changes that we have to have and think about in terms of how secure our communications are. That is the immediate political content of this material. However I think that the cultural implications of this has not been looked into deeply. A bit like the passport. What does it mean to have a system that depicts some things but not others? What does it mean for those designers who are making those slides and internal documents and posters and various other things have been released – what does it show about the priorities that is within those systems? That is very much where my research lies.

Content: In terms of the livery, we the viewer understand that this sits within contentious ground but the look and feel are symbolic of certain meanings which are not necessarily communicated but which we as the consumer respond to either empirically or intuitively.

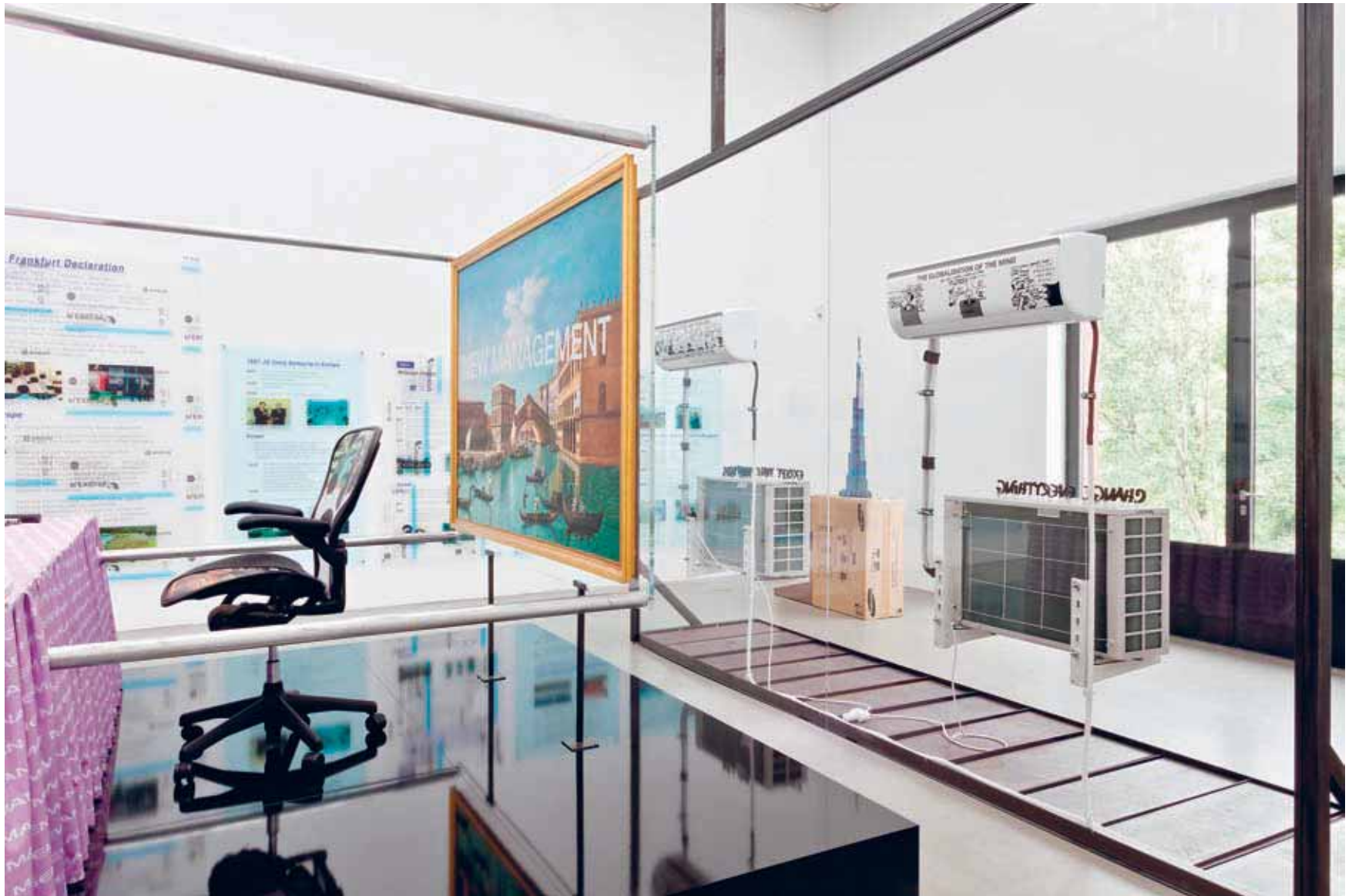
SD: Exactly. One of the reasons we chose the venue for the Biennale, this very ornate library is that there is a lot of very heavily loaded

material in that space from a different era but looking at the same thing. That is how I am casting it of course. It is great to look at power point slides and clip art that has classical quotations in it next to a textbook example of a classical portico that divides a certain room. The language of power has changed.

Content: This is a space of shifting terrain. Meta data – what it is and what it means. You as an artist have relative freedom to operate in this space. There are a number of artists who do not have this freedom – who have to deal with the reality of secret power and actual power. We think of Ai Weiwei who has to tap dance his way around the reality of being arrested, seized and interfered with in his pursuit of these conversations.

SD: Yes, I think that tension between the global and the national is really important. When you start making shows in lots of different places you begin to see that. I've never worked in China but I am aware that there are different rules in different places. That is a very interesting subject to engage with. There are of course lots of codes and rules in New Zealand that I became aware of by living somewhere else. This is a common experience for New Zealanders I think. I think these issues from the perspective of the New Zealand psyche are important to express. Also it's a truly great thing that an officially appointed artist is given space to explore these kinds of issues in a

6. Simon Denny *New Management* at Portikus, Frankfurt, Germany – July to September 2014



New Zealand pavilion. It is testimony to the attitudes and policy around the arts in this country.

Content: Nobody is neutral. I guess that when you are doing your research into your subject matter – which is the real world in real time – which is why, in my opinion many people react so strongly to your work – that you must come up against moments when you become on your guard about where the display of this information needs you to frame the lens through which the viewer approaches the material?

SD: Of course there are a lot of decisions that need to be made about how things are displayed. That is something that we as artists and people who deal in visual culture know and one of the great tools I have to work with. But in terms of my relationship to my material I am often unsure of exactly how I feel about some of it. I think that is a very natural response and how I think the vast majority of people feel encountering difficult material. They think “Ok, well I know all this material has come out. I know this stuff is going on, but how do I really feel about it? I don’t know if I’ve got something

to hide. I don’t know if people should be able to look at what I do. I don’t know how I feel”. It is important for me to keep that sense in the work. I would not say I am guarded. I think I am honestly ambivalent about making conclusions about what some of the material really means. But I know it elicits pretty strong responses from people. I know also myself that whilst I don’t know exactly how I feel, I know it is important.

Content: People in the art world like to feel we have open minds towards what is happening in the ‘real’ world and the art world as

well. What you are doing is concertina-ing these two things together and asking us as the viewer is what does having an open mind mean? And is that an appropriate position to take – or do you really need to have a position in the face of this information? That really came home to me in your Walters Prize work in which you present the environment of a trade fair or conference that discusses the cyberspace. You impose an almost old school analogue chronological walk through to locate or find logic in a fast moving space. Are there moments, where in the process of seeking to

Installation view of Simon Denny *New Management* at Portikus, Frankfurt, Germany – July to September 2014.
Photo: Helena Schlichting.



Simon Denny, *All You Need is Data* – *The DLD 2012 Conference Redux* (installation view), 2014. From the Walters Prize 2014 exhibition at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki. Photo: Jennifer French.

understand these complex concepts, logic is abandoned and sense is hard to find?

SD: I think there is always a certain degree of chance in what I do and artists embrace chance as a generative force. I think one always feels that there will be a way forward from the research into presentation. In any artistic process you know sometimes there is a presentation outcome and sometimes there isn't. There are a few projects that I get halfway through and need to shelve for a while. Of course you have seen a number of outcomes where I have reached that point of completion. But certainly there are some others that require further investigation.

Content: Venice is coming down the wire and we have discussed the nature of

national representation. One of the factors I have experienced is the sense of pride that New Zealand is participating at this great event often described as the "Olympics of the Art World". The viewer really does gain a sense of the tradition of Biennale as being a beacon for free speech. What does this tradition mean for you as you prepare to represent your country?

SD: These ideas provide content for me. There are a lot of different aspects in play at Venice. For any artist who is representing their country this is complex because there are so many different goals. Often when you are making an exhibition for a museum or gallery it is clear who your audience is going to be. With Venice there are a lot of different agendas all happening at once. What I have tried to



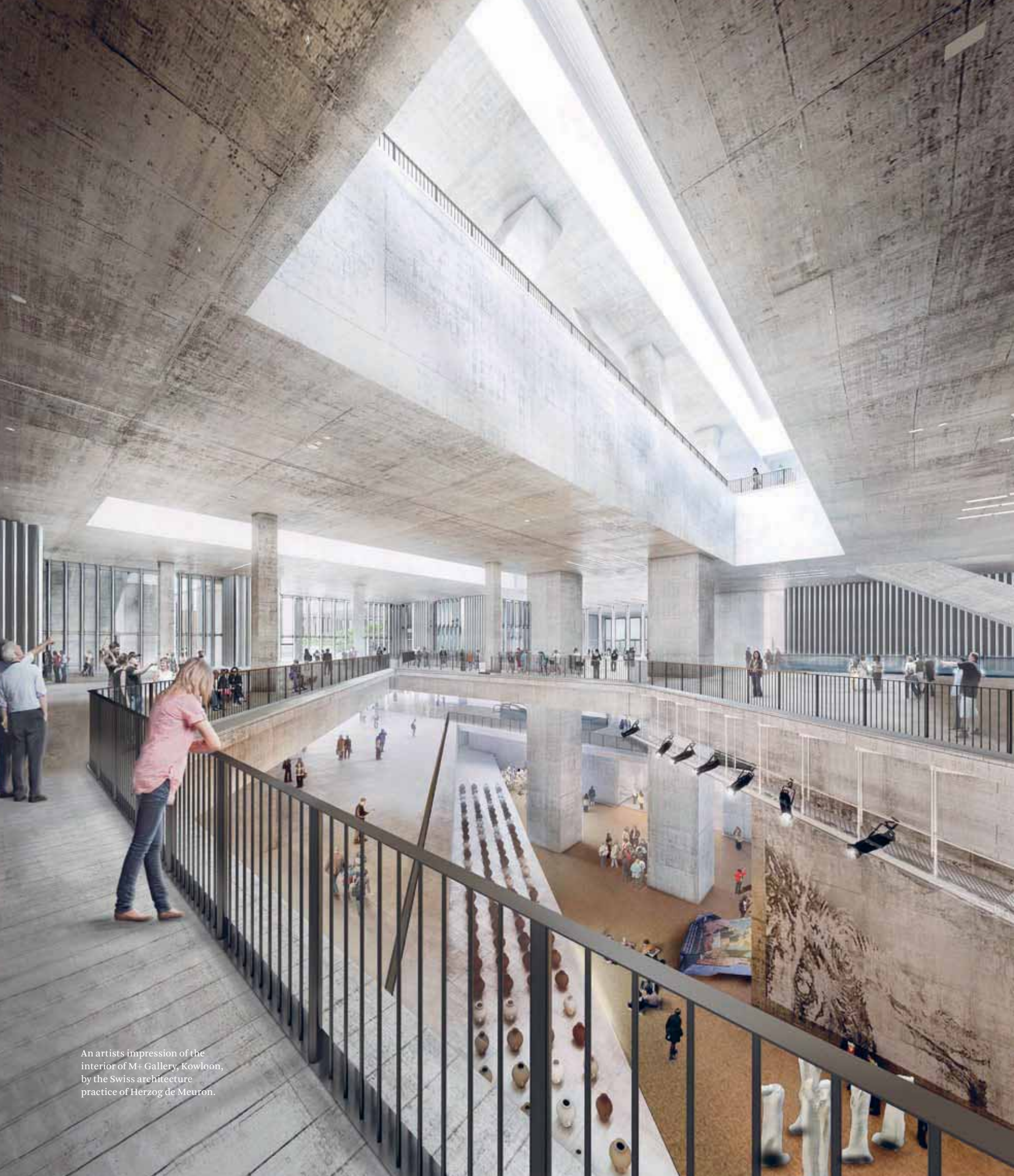
do is to understand this by talking to other artists who have done pavilions for their countries in the past and of course with artists who have represented New Zealand previously. Last year I was part of the curated show⁷ at Venice and that gave me an understanding of how the Biennale functions. All of these things have contributed to give me a map of what the landscape is. I can take all of these forces into account into the way that I pitch the show. In terms of the specifics the viewers will see this on the day, but I think I have been lucky I've had a good amount of exposure to the nature of Venice.

Simon Denny is represented by Michael Lett, Auckland, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin & Cologne, Petzel Gallery, New York and T293, Rome & Naples.

7. Simon Denny *Analogue Broadcasting Hardware Compression* (2012) was curated as part of the *Encyclopedic Palace* at the Arsenal, Venice.



architecture to lift the spirit



An artists impression of the interior of M+ Gallery, Kowloon, by the Swiss architecture practice of Herzog de Meuron.

Distance (finally) Looks Our Way!*

* *Distance Looks Our Way* was the title of the exhibition at EXPO'92 in Seville, Spain which featured the work of ten contemporary New Zealand artists: Gretchen Albrecht,

Gavin Chilcott, Jacqueline Fraser, Bill Hammond, Tony Lane, Richard Reddaway, John Reynolds, James Ross, Michael Stevenson, and Elizabeth Thomson.

Content visited Hong Kong recently to catch up with former ARTSPACE director (2002–2005) Tobias Berger who now holds a senior curatorial position at the future Kowloon based mega gallery M+ – the first international gallery to have New Zealand modern and contemporary art squarely in its collecting ambit.

Content: Exciting times ahead for you Tobias. Can you tell Content readers about your role at M+ and how things are proceeding for the opening of the gallery?

Tobias Berger: M+ will be the most important museum for visual art in Asia. It is a 60 000m² facility with about 20 000m² exhibition space for visual art, design, moving image and architecture. It is a place that will not reinvent the idea of the museum because the idea of the museum is actually quite good, but it will change or shift perspective a little bit away from a western European idea of art and museums to an Asian Pacific story which has not been told yet, which is necessary to tell. There are so many things coming out of Japan, Korea and now China, New Zealand and Australia in the last fifty years. So we are building a big, professional museum for this new story.

Content: Tell us about your role in this major venture?

TB: My role changes all the time! I was the first one hired for this project. I was hired by the director¹ but he actually started after me. We were basically two people in the beginning

thinking about what should a museum be like in this new century. How should it work? How should it be physically because we had to write a brief for the architects, for the collection and for the team. So slowly we had to build up a team. Currently we are about 30 people now. There is the director and there is a now a chief curator Doryun Chong from MoMA.² So my current role is more to do with the architectural design process.

Content: So you are in the middle of the design process?

TB: We are basically at 70% detailed design. We start building in a few weeks. We will open in 2018. At the moment my job is really working with the architects on the one side and on the other side we have to put a collection together. Now we have about ten senior curators. I'm mostly responsible for visual art from Korea, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. However one very big principle in the museum is that we don't have departments. So if I find something interesting and important in the way of design or moving image – for example a work by Len Lye then I can move forward and acquire a work like this.

So we have the responsibility and the right to look much more broadly than our own individual specialty.

Content: So this is a really unique event on a global level but also for you personally. You are building a collection and building a museum at the same time?

TB: Going back after I left New Zealand in 2005. Yes it is that long ago! (laughs). Yuk King Tan and I came to Hong Kong and I was director of Para-Site which was an artist run space and I made it a more international curated space. Then in 2008 I went to Korea to become chief curator at the Nam June Paik Art Center. Again this was a new facility and we had to build up the team and the collection. Also before I came to New Zealand I had to build up that big Biennale in Lithuania. That is what I did all the time. I took something and grew it and build it up. So now it is on a much, much bigger scale. Before you made an exhibition for ten or twenty thousand US dollars and now you do this for one hundred thousand or even more. Or before you bought something for Nam June Paik for one hundred thousand dollars now you buy something for five



hundred thousand or more. But you still go to the same galleries and have the same friends but things are on a bigger scale.

Content: So this means that in the last ten years Hong Kong has gone from a standing start...

TB: From almost nothing.

Content: As you say from almost nothing to becoming to a major player in the world of contemporary art. When you think about the vision for M+ on its completion that means that Hong Kong will become a must visit destination for fans of Contemporary art. What are the sorts of shows you anticipate seeing when the gallery opens?

TB: When I came here in 2005 there was not even one commercial gallery

1. Lars Nittve has been Executive Director of M+ since 2011. He was the lead curator of the Hong Kong Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale. Previously he was the founding director of Tate Modern in London and Director of the Moderna Museet, the national museum of modern art in Stockholm.

2. Doryun Chong joined M+ in mid 2013. Previously he was Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York.

3. Shiro Kuramata (1934 – 1991) is regarded as one of the most important designers of the 20th century. In 1990 the French government awarded him the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in recognition of his contribution to art and design.

4. Simon Denny *New Management* at Portikus Frankfurt. The title refers to a pivotal 1993 meeting of Samsung executives in Frankfurt that paved the way of the creation of the global electronics giant that is Samsung today.

5. Justin Paton Head Curator of International Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. See complete interview on page 10.

that showed international contemporary art. So now with the art fair and with M+ Hong Kong will be one of the two or three hubs for contemporary art in Asia. I don't think there will be just one but a number. It will be like Europe with Paris, London and Berlin. M+ will tell the history from an Asian or Hong Kong point of view. But it is a history of visual culture so it will be a bit more mixed. It could be a Bruce Lee exhibition or a Wong Kar Wai exhibition – where you talk about design and moving image as well as visual art. You can make these exhibitions in Asia today where things interrelate much more than they have in Europe. You can tell the most fascinating stories combining things. You

know Te Papa has tried this a few times. But you cannot think about dedicated categories anymore, like moving image, design and visual art separately. We really have to see it as a whole. I think that will be a great thing that M+ will do. Areas I am investigating at the moment are post-war Japanese photography or Korean painting from the 70s. Then of course we are in Hong Kong so we have an amazing story to tell about urbanism. That is a design story. Then if you look at Japanese design we have just acquired a complete Sushi Bar from Tokyo which will be dismantled and bought over to our museum.

Content: What is the vintage of the Sushi Bar?

TB: An 80s interior from a designer called Kuramata³. He designed all the Issey Miyake interiors. He was a major influence on Japanese design. He did a lot of shop interiors but nobody keeps these. This sushi bar closed in the 80s but a Tokyo gallerist kept on paying the rent all this time until he sold it to us. He knew how important that piece of architecture is. Kuramata was the only Asian member of Memphis. So there are all these amazing and fascinating stories and a museum in Hong Kong is a natural place to tell them.

Content: Can you tell us about the genesis of M+?

TB: M+ is part of the West Kowloon Cultural District. It is a government project

which is funded to about 2.3 billion Euros. We have to build about ten theatres, the big museum and a lot of retail, dining and entertainment to pay for the operational costs. It is a government project and of course they control what we do with the money. It is the Hong Kong government, not the Chinese government so there is complete freedom of speech and expression. Our founding donation to the museum came from Uli Sigg who is the Swiss collector who has the biggest collection of contemporary Chinese art in the world. He gave us that incredible collection which is the foundation of our Contemporary Chinese Art collection. But this is, for example, also the biggest collection of Ai Weiwei which

you could not do in China.

Content: M+ has just acquired, under your direction, a very important Gordon Walters work on paper dating to the 1950s. Tell us why you acquired this work and how you see it sitting in the context of the collection?

TB: I think Gordon is fascinating for many reasons. If you think that every country has its own history of modernity and there is no better example in Australia or New Zealand than Gordon Walters for this story of a developing sense of modernity in art that is always very unique but still exemplary in an international context. He went to Europe, he came back via Australia

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New Zealand is exceptional in every way. There are dozens of museums showing contemporary art. Four or five good schools. There are great collectors. You cannot really compare to New Zealand because it is not only paradise but for art it has it all. It is a perfect example of a well working infrastructure. Hong Kong did not have this luxury for years.

and he changed his style dramatically and he also changed his country's way to look at art in a very radical; and at his time, controversial way. Walters tells like very few other artists that story of being in a certain part of the world but still being connected and changing things. There is also the story of using Māori symbols. You know when he did this in the 70s and 80s there was of course discussion about appropriating these

symbols. Huge discussions. It is also about these conceptual issues. That is also an important story. The work we bought is a very early smaller work on paper but an important one in his career. It is a great start and hopefully the beginning of a bigger collection of his work.

Content: So M+ has a pretty broad brief to focus on this region of the world. There are not very many international galleries which

touch us. We are an island nation. Who are some of the artists you might be looking at in the future?

TB: I think people like Colin McCahon and Gordon Walters are a given. Len Lye is also someone pretty obvious. We are not trying to reinvent the wheel here or rewrite New Zealand art history. Of the younger artists Simon Denny just made a huge piece about Samsung⁴ in Frankfurt

which was a great show. We cannot acquire this show as it is just too big. But certainly if there is a New Zealand artist that creates works about Asia's biggest corporate conglomerates we will check it out.

Content: From a New Zealand perspective we have seen an explosion of the contemporary Asian art scene in the last five years. I was speaking to Justin Paton⁵ recently and he mentioned Indonesia as a scene he is finding really interesting. Tell us about the Hong Kong contemporary art scene today.

TB: The Hong Kong art scene is really special. It is very small still. A few years ago there were no dealer galleries. Only a few years

ago, with the emerging art fair and the auctions, contemporary art received some attention. Good contemporary art in Hong Kong is rather conceptual, introverted – maybe there is a connection to New Zealand. You know New Zealand is exceptional in every way. There are dozens of museums showing contemporary art. Four or five good schools. There are great collectors. You cannot really compare to New Zealand because it is not only paradise but for art it has it all. It is a perfect example of a well working infrastructure. Hong Kong did not have this luxury for years.

Content: Small but perfectly formed?

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The exterior of the M+ Gallery by architects Herzog de Meuron. On completion in 2018 M+ will transform it's Kowloon waterfront location into one of the premier contemporary art destinations in the Asia-Pacific region.

Opposite: A recent addition to the M+ collection. Gordon Walters, *No. 4*, ink on paper, 1956. Courtesy of The Walters Estate and Starkwhite.

TB: Maybe too perfectly formed because people do not go out enough from New Zealand. There are a lot of artists who would have the potential to do well internationally if they were not so comfortable in New Zealand. In Hong Kong it is different as everything changed when the art fair started. It is very commercial. We have to see that the art fair came to Hong Kong not because it is so wonderful but because of tax reasons. Also easy access and complete freedom of speech, you don't get that in China. Then the big galleries came to town. They had the same problem. They had to be in Asia and by default that is Hong Kong, as everything you bring into China you have to pay 30% tax just to bring it in.

Content: Even if is just for exhibition?

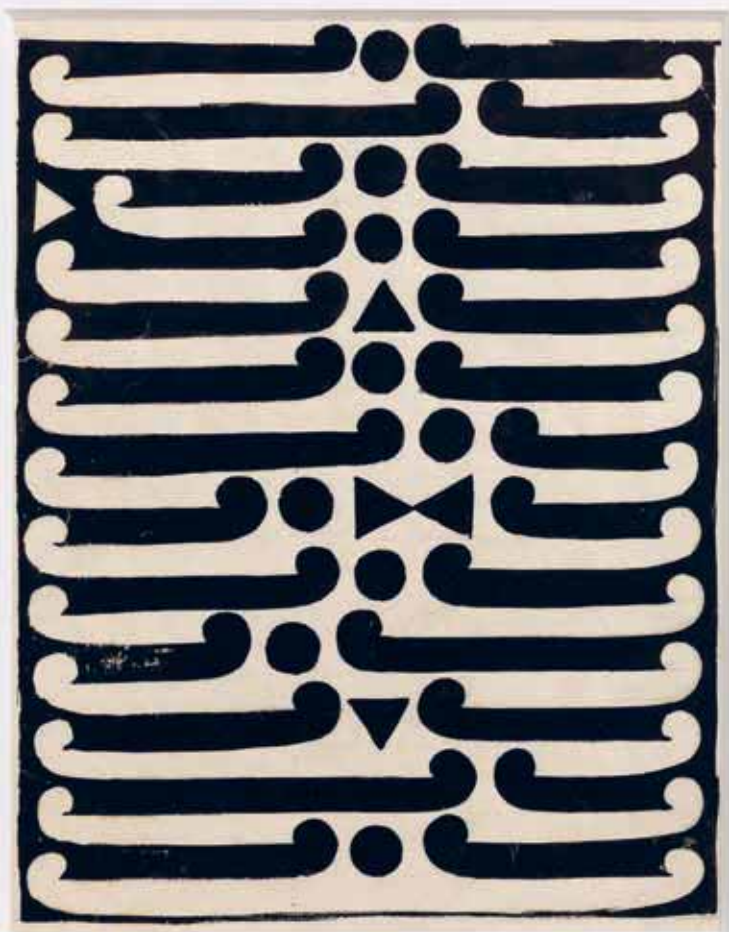
TB: That's right, you have to pay up 30% cash, you get it back if you export the works again but still it's a lot of cash for a bond. So Hong Kong is the natural place to do business. So in the last five years Whitecube, Gagosian, Perrotin, Simon Lees, Lehman Maupin have all opened shop here. Pearl Lam is local of course. So there is a lot of good art to be seen here that was not here before.

Content: M+ is going to be a new type of gallery and you have touched on this and an Asian focussed gallery. Tell us about the architects and the design process? It sounds quite exciting.

TB: I think the radical thing was to go back to basics. When we put out the requests for proposals for the building the only thing we knew is what we didn't

know. We didn't know what kind of exhibitions we were going to do. We did not know what type of collection we were going to have. At that time we only had six staff. So we wanted a museum that was very adaptable and that is different from flexible. Flexible is like thin walls which you can change every day. We did not want that, we wanted a space that was good to display all kinds of things. We wanted a space that we could change rather easily but not *too* easily and that gives artists classic white cube space. We still believe in white cube. Then we have what we call industrial or factory space because in China most people don't have studios they have factory spaces. Then we needed a large scale performance space which can be more flexible. But we do not want what I call an 'exploding

pancake' à la Frank Gehry or Zaha Hadid. We wanted a straightforward, even basic building. So we had six shortlisted candidates, three from Japan and three from Europe. In the end the Swiss firm of Herzog de Meuron which also designed Tate Modern, the de Young and the Perez museum in Miami, they won the competition. We think right now that they are the best museum designers for what we need. So right now we are working with them pretty much every day and looking forward to the opening of the Museum at the end of 2018. That is a date that feels like it is coming pretty fast.





Mervyn Williams in his Grey Lynn studio with recent works, October 2014.

A Free Radical

Content meets Mervyn Williams, sometimes referred to as ‘optic Merv’ to discuss six decades of continuous practice as one of a handful of dedicated abstract artists in New Zealand. In 2014 Williams has been the subject of a career survey exhibition and monograph but such recognition has not always been so forthcoming. Content met the artist in his Grey Lynn, Auckland studio, a space he shares with a vast collection of classical records and a stunning 1962 3.4 litre Jaguar Mk2.

Content: Your career survey exhibition at the Gus Fisher Gallery' which covers fifty five years of continuous practice has just come to a close. This has been an opportunity for many viewers to see aspects of your career that are perhaps less well known. This is also an opportunity for the artist to take stock. How did you approach the exhibition with Ed Hanfling the curator?

Mervyn Williams: Ed is a very insightful curator. In fact I was happy to leave much of the decision making to his discerning eye. I have my own hierarchy of favourite works of course. But Ed made the final choice, so it is his story if you like.

Content: One of the key themes that is revealed is your work in the area of Op art from the 1960s and 70s. At that time you must have been a relatively lone traveller as an abstract

artist in New Zealand, but Optical art is out there on the boundary of abstract practice. How did you find your way to this form of modernist abstraction in the mid 1960s?

MW: There was another pioneer which was Ray Thorburn who is an enormously accomplished artist whose work was recognised internationally long before it was here. It was an unrelentingly unsympathetic environment critically here at the time.

Content: The optical works for those who come to them for the first time are so dazzling and successful as a body of work. How did you go into that space in the mid 1960s?

MW: There was a real democratization in the arts at that time. People like Peter Blake, Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein were

making Pop art a real force. What I liked about it was that suddenly this very precious world of elitist art was blown sky high by smart young people in New York, London and Paris – and they embraced popular culture. So one became aware of people like Bridget Riley and Richard Anuszkiewicz, who produced images that were absolutely different. The formal abstraction of a Josef Albers was being made over by a new generation of artists just as the Beatles were making a new kind of music. Mary Quant in fashion! Carnaby Street! Out of nowhere, suddenly the whole damn thing belonged to our generation. One became very aware of all this new information coming in.

Content: Today you can find out about anything in half an hour on the internet. I'm guessing that in New Zealand in the mid 1960s Op art was not something you could easily encounter. How did you as a young artist find out about these other young artists forging these exciting new directions?

MW: I have a copy here of the actual *Life*² magazine from December 1964 which was the first international exposure of Optical art. Bridget Riley from the get go was the star of the Op art movement. *Life* was not an art magazine but a very popular pictorial magazine of the time. *Life* acted as a kind of bridge between the rarefied world of high art and an expanding American middle class. There would have been about half a

1. *Lost for Words: Mervyn Williams from Modernism to the Digital Age* at the Gus Fisher Gallery, University of Auckland, September to November 2014. Curated by Ed Hanfling.

2. *Op Art, the Deft Newcomers* in *Life Magazine*, December 11, 1964.

dozen significant Op artists featured in that article.

Content: Your formative career as an artist was shaped by some key figures in the New Zealand art story, Robert Nettleton Field and Ted Dutch. Can we discuss your relationship with these two figures?

MW: Robert Nettleton Field was my art teacher at Avondale College. By the time I was in the fourth form, in 1954, it was clear that my father was very ill and would soon die. He was only forty seven but completely bedridden with complications relating to rheumatic fever. You have to remember that there was little or no support for people in dire straits as we were. My parents said you will have to leave school. No matter how little you could earn it will be better than not earning anything. So they sent a letter to the school saying that Mervyn will be turning fifteen soon and will be leaving school. Robert Nettleton Field sent a letter to my parents asking for a meeting saying this is a terrible thing. His words were 'Mervyn has a precocious talent and he can't leave school'. He tried to organise a scholarship that would contribute to the family situation. When Robert Nettleton Field met my parents and explained what might happen they were really charmed by him. But unfortunately this did not work out and I had to leave school at fifteen. But quite wonderfully Nettleton Field encouraged me to keep working and

painting and visited me at our house in Avondale on a number of occasions. My first job, would you believe, was working in the display department at Milne and Choyce. The pay there was appalling. I think I got three pounds a week. Then a mate of mine who was working at Crown Lynn pottery mentioned that there might be a job which paid six pounds a week! I took my little portfolio of work which Robert Nettleton Field had helped me with and I got the job on the proviso that if I proved myself by working in the factory for six months I could work with Frank Carpay in the design department. So they took me to meet Carpay and he looked at my portfolio and said that he could use some help with basic graphic design stuff like inking in designs, decals and transfers. So I started showing my work to Frank Carpay and he was very encouraging. But the six months went by and I asked about the trainee position and it became clear that I would not get out of the factory. So in a fit of anger I chucked in the job, but only after destroying quite a lot of crockery. My parents were horrified. At this point I was intent on leaving New Zealand and signing on as a merchant seaman!

I had the signed papers in my pocket and I was walking down Queen Street and I ran into a little Cockney guy I had met out at Crown Lynn. He asked me what I was up to and I explained I was going to London as a deck boy. He said, "you'll



Mervyn in his Grey Lynn studio, at left a recent work *Diva* from 2012.

love it in London, but before you go I want you to meet my boss. We are looking for a trainee boy just like you.” He told me about Ted Dutch and explained my prospects would be so much better with a few skills to my name. So I took my work to show to Ted Dutch and he said this is just what he was looking for. So I started there immediately and he trained me.

Content: So where was this?

MW: His studio was in England Street in Freemans Bay, overlooking the massive gas installation that used to be next to Victoria Park. Ted’s abilities were phenomenal. He was a typographer, film animator, he designed books and magazines, department store displays and hoardings, things for big shows like the Easter show. In his spare time he

couldn’t stop drawing those ‘Signaller’ figures. I would compare him to Juan Miro who had a similar whimsical quality.

Content: So how did you move from this environment to thinking about being an exhibiting artist?

MW: Well at this time there was really no place to exhibit. But I had met other artists such as Dennis Knight-Turner. Then I made a sale of a work, I think I was about seventeen. At that point I said to myself, come hell or high water, I was going to be an artist.

Content: The works that you refer to as the ‘crusties’ are quite dazzlingly 3D. This is part of your long engagement with optical phenomena. Can you tell us how these are created – or is this a trade secret?

MW: I thought that this would be an approach to art in which the experience is equivalent to the very abstract experience that music provides. I am talking more about classical music. One of the things that I wanted to communicate was the problem of painting or drawing and sculpture only existing in one moment. In the main they do not unfold over time. So I wanted to exploit the capacity to see as being equivalent to our capacity to hear. I believe that if you have an art which is free of narrative then you were at the beginning of making a visual experience equivalent to the audio experience of music. So after the early gouaches that feature at the beginning of the book³ I became immensely influenced by the School of Paris and Vieira da Silva⁴ who was an international abstract

star at the time. Milan Mrkusich and Ted Dutch and many other painters were influenced by her. Then I discovered Mark Rothko, Ben Nicholson, Victor Passmore – both formal and lyrical abstraction. But I was actively looking for something that would enable me to work more like a musician. Like music would be if you could see it. I wanted an art that was international, particularly after seeing that *Life* article in 1964. I didn’t want dying kauri trees. I wanted something that was not New Zealand. People would say to me “Merv that’s interesting, but it’s not very New Zealand”, well that was the whole point!

I was also studying the pointillists and colour theory and experimenting with this and joining the dots quite literally to the Op art.

3. Mervyn Williams, *From Modernism to the Digital Age* by Ed Hanfling, Ron Sang Publications, Auckland, 2014.

4. Maria Helena Vieira da Silva (1908 – 1992) was a Portuguese/French abstract artist whose complex maze like works married cubist influences with a dense perspectival schema. Her work is held in the collections of the Tate and Guggenheim museums. She was the honoured artist at the São Paulo Biennial (1989).

5. Bridget Riley at Coventry Gallery, Sydney, Australia, 1976



I worked in this area for about fifteen years. But much of this work was ignored. Ray Thorburn was having the same problem. One of the reasons I persevered with this work was the support I received from Gordon Walters. We visited Sydney in mid 70s to see the Bridget Riley exhibition⁵ together.

But the crusties came about through my experimentation with Renaissance chiaroscuro and my discovery of American colour field painting on a visit to New York, also in the mid 70s. The basis of the crusties developed through the manipulation of light and shadow. First I had to get a workable substance to paint with so I could get a real impasto. I used marble dust mixed with acrylic resins. I developed various methods of defining highlights and

shadows. I began to get these strangely vital surfaces -greater than the sum of their parts. I have to build up millions of little surfaces and introduce incidents. One of my skills I think is working with tonalities.

I'm asking the viewer to simply engage in the act of seeing. It is a bit like looking into the heavens or through a microscope.

Content: Today digital technology has caught up with your practice and in your current work and has enabled you to create these finely modulated, pulsing, very musical canvases. Your musical and painterly concerns seem united in these recent works. Is that a fair comment?

MW: Absolutely. They have frequencies that I consider musical. They have a

resonating beat to them. The things that inform this new work are an intersection of original paintings and collages and digital techniques to work these images into scale. This new technology brings a whole new level of finesse and infinite subtlety.

Content: You have been a practicing abstract artist for over fifty five years. What is the lure of the abstract that has sustained you?

MW: I have always felt that it is essential for an artist to have credibility that he has to create something that is specifically his or her own. This is where Gordon Walters is so important. He did not invent the koru but he invented using it in such a unique way. Take Colin McCahon. There had been a few people who had written on canvases before him but

no one ever had created such an enormous body of work around this extraordinary calligraphy which he created and which remains unique. He was the originator. Gretchen Albrecht with her hemispheres. Ian Scott with the lattices. For me I was drawn to this fascination with being able to see. I have always had this sense of the magic of what I look at. I have wanted to create art that celebrated the visual. To answer the question why I chose to remain forever totally abstract it was because any time you add any recognisable imagery it simply muddies the waters.

I am really a musician painting beautiful songs for your eyes.

Mervyn Williams is represented by Artis Gallery, Parnell and Milford Galleries, Dunedin

Above left: Mervyn Williams, *Untitled - Prismatic Study*, screenprint, 1969.

Above right: *Vagabond*, a classic 'crusty' canvas dating to 1984.



On the eve of the opening of West Auckland's new contemporary art space, Te Uru, gallery director Andrew Clifford spoke to Content about the aspirations of the gallery and the community for this dazzling rethinking of the former Lopdell House.

Content: What was Lopdell House is about to re-open as Te Uru. It must be quite exciting. How has the last month been for you and your team?

Andrew Clifford: On the one hand it is super exciting but on the other it is incredibly nerve wracking. As you have just seen a week out from opening, there is not a lot of work up and there are still a lot of workmen in the building. We are working around them, measuring up the works and getting ready to install them. That's a very tight deadline. It's a massive building and a lot to finish. But I think it is going to come together really quickly. It is just finishing touches now. It is suddenly going to materialise. That is the really exciting part.

Content: So now the Lopdell House Gallery becomes Te Uru. In terms of the gallery environment what does this mean?

AC: In terms of sheer physical space we are going from one and half rooms in a converted ballroom of about 150m² to five big galleries totalling 450m². It is exponentially bigger. The whole point of the entire

exercise when planning began in the late 1990s was the need to raise the standard of the facilities to meet contemporary museum grade specifications. We weren't able to borrow works or take touring shows. These things were really holding the organisation back. All those things are now possible.

Content: I think when people first see this space they are going to be astounded. There are wonderful gallery spaces but also an incredible vertical experience. It feels taller than it is wide. Can you tell us about the architectural brief and process?

AC: Mitchell and Stout are the architects. Prior to Te Uru, in terms of relevant projects, they designed the Tauranga Art Gallery – a refit of a heritage building into a gallery space. Before that they did the refit of what was the telephone exchange that became the Auckland Art Gallery's New Gallery. They would be one of the few firms in the country that has that amount of experience working on museum projects. Because this project involves both the refurbishment and

earthquake strengthening of Lopdell House as well as the design and construction of Te Uru that experience with heritage buildings and museum design makes them perfect for the job. It's pretty clear that they have made a point of not designing a white cube. You don't move around generic stairs from one cube to another. There is definitely a journey and you can explore this building. All the different spaces have different dynamics. Every space has a certain kind of energy. I think it will make it much more interesting to install art into. It might be hard to make sure we are not fighting with the architecture but I think done well it is going to be a really interesting place to work.

I think the building also works really well with natural light filtering into the galleries and sightlines both within and between adjacent galleries and of course out into the surrounding environment. Here in Titirangi it is such an extraordinary environment with the view out to the Manukau Harbour. The building does not bunker itself away from that context. It really exploits it and acknowledges it.

Content: A gallery of national significance has sprouted here in the west. Obviously it is many years in the planning. When you look at developing your vision you must be excited by the types of exhibitions you can curate and accommodate in this space and what a drawcard they will become. Tell us about the curatorial

programme you are considering?

AC: I'm not sure I will go into specifics but in a general sense the building is no longer a limitation. In terms of space we can do almost anything it is just a question of resource. It will take a while to develop this resource. It will take a while, having grown exponentially, to get up to speed in this new space. But within a few years I would like to think any touring international show could just as easily come here as any gallery in the country. That is the next challenge, developing that professional capability.

You mentioned that you have been looking at M+ in Hong Kong. I've been watching M+ too. It is fascinating, one of the biggest developments in this part of the world. In the same way that people don't realise what is happening up here in little old Titirangi, a lot of people in this part of the world still think the big deal is in places like New York, but there is this thing happening in Hong Kong that is going to blow a lot of people out of the water. One of the things that particularly interests me about M+ is that it arrives at the beginning of what we call the Asian century. It is at that crucial gallery crossroads on that major trade route in Hong Kong, the gateway into China. They are launching an international gallery and purchasing works from all over the world, but it is very much of that place. In a similar way, Te Uru can be potentially an international

gallery but we are very much of West Auckland. That will be the challenge in how we create our programme: what can we do that speaks of the world from a West Auckland vantage point?

Content: When you think of the artistic legacy quite literally within a stone's throw of Te Uru – McCahon House is just down the road – you and your curatorial team must be salivating at the thought that one day you could have a Don Binney at Te Henga show or explore Colin McCahon at Muriwai. This gallery space is asking to be filled with exhibitions of local and national significance.

AC: Yes, even if we were to be entirely provincial and focus specifically on stories that are just of this place and only show local artists, which is an assumption that is often made about regional galleries, we are still spoilt for choice. There are lot of artists right here on our doorstep that have probably never exhibited with us but who are on the international stage. Now we can look forward to working with them. The likes of Judy Millar and Michael Parekowhai, whose studio is in Henderson. We have a major work of his coming in December. We are working with Judy on a project for March 2015.

Content: Looking at this space it is clear that Te Uru will become a must visit for out of town art fans. It could become to Auckland what Heide' is to Melbourne. An international space that



sits on the periphery with a unique identity. To this end you have recently appointed a new curator. Can you tell us about her?

AC: Ioana Gordon-Smith. She comes to us from ARTSPACE and most recently at Objectspace. She recently realised a project for the Auckland Festival of Photography². She is very involved with the Tautai Pacific Arts Trust³. All those things make her uniquely appealing to us. It is a really nice match of interests that I think will carry us forward. As a younger curator she has a very fresh view – in terms of relaunching our organisation as a fresh institution with a much more contemporary perspective, that view is going to be very useful.

Content: When any institution closes and re-opens, and I think of the Auckland Gallery here of course, there is a period of re-engagement that happens with the community as institution opens again and says “hey come and look at us, we are brand new!” Can you tell us about some of the programmes you have coming up to embrace the local community?

AC: This is the kick start process I guess. It certainly happened for the Auckland Art Gallery and we are expecting the same thing to happen here, which is that the building itself creates a massive blip in visitations. It is a huge thing that has been happening in the middle of quite a distinctive local community. It has been quite an imposition on them. They will be thinking, “thank God it is finished,”

but I hope they will also be quite excited in seeing what the completed result is. There will be a flood of people coming through. That, I think it is a given. The trick is how you sustain this interest. So to touch on what we discussed earlier we are not opening an exhibition, we are opening a building initially. But the follow up to that very quickly will be our programmes. One of our first shows is Te Hau a Uru which acknowledges and explains our new identity as Te Uru. It acknowledges local iwi who have given us this name and through this we now have a responsibility to have a much closer relationship with Te Kawerau a Maki, the local iwi. This is the beginning of an important and long conversation which sits at the heart of our initial five year plan.

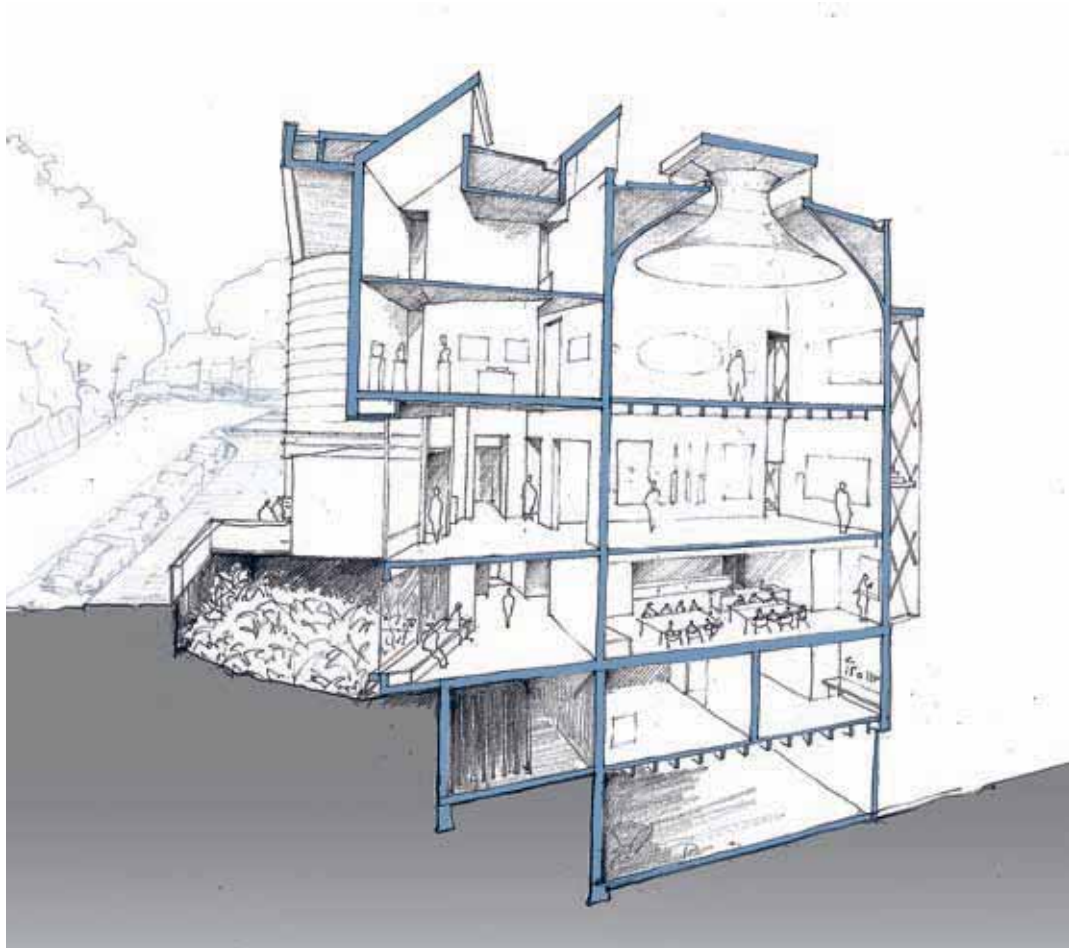
Content: When contemporary artists see this incredible new space I’m guessing that they will be falling over themselves to exhibit here. You must be looking forward to how the artists will respond to this space. What type of responses are you hoping for from the contemporary art community?

AC: That is something we are starting to get a sense of – the particularities of the spaces as they are unveiled. In time I look forward to seeing how artists respond to the gallery spaces. The point for me when the building started to become real, even when we were working off plans, was the first time I had a meeting with an artist. I sat down with Judy Millar and showed her the plans – she started asking questions that I hadn’t thought of. This is how an artist views

2. *A Sense of Place* curated by Ioana Gordon-Smith and Talia Smith at the Papakura Art Gallery, 12 May to 21 June, 2014.

3. The Tautai Pacific Arts Trust is an organisation dedicated to mentoring and ongoing support of Pacific artists. A 2014 project supported by the Trust is the exhibition *Tungaru: The Kiribati Project* by Chris Charteris and Jeff Smith at the Mangere Arts Centre and the Auckland Museum. For more information see the website www.tautai.org.

4. *Paper-jams: artists between the covers* at Gus Fisher Gallery, The University of Auckland from 9 March to 28 April 2012.



That will be the challenge in how we create our programme: what can we do that speaks of the world from a West Auckland vantage point?

the space. I had to go to the architects to ask them a few questions about some of the detailing. I was looking at the floorplans, but she was interested in the ceiling.

Content: This is a major new role for you as a director of a fabulous new gallery. Tell us about your career up to this point?

AC: I have been at the Gus Fisher Gallery in Auckland for the last seven years as curator. A small organisation really, just me and the director Linda Tyler. So there was the opportunity to gain a lot of experience very quickly. What I really liked at the Gus

Fisher is a real eclecticism which comes from Linda's approach. I think we are kindred spirits in that sense. The diverse range of what we did there was something I really appreciated. I was able to bring other interests into that programme but also by osmosis picked up a lot from Linda from her particular interests in architecture for example. My interests in music and performance also fed into the mix. I began as a music critic and writer when I was at art school and this naturally led to art writing.

Content: What was a highlight of your seven years at Gus Fisher?

AC: One that was a bit of a surprise was a show about books⁴. It wasn't yet another show about the significance of text in New Zealand art but about the materiality of books. It was an eclectic idea that transcended what would normally be in an art gallery and included literature, concrete poetry and music scores: concepts that dealt with the page in a whole range of ways. Those ideas that tap into other narratives outside the art world are what I keep coming back to. That is partly because for quite a long time I had one foot in the music world and one foot in the art world. I have always thought in a multi-disciplinary way. This was an approach that wasn't beaten out of me at the Gus Fisher – quite the opposite. There was even more eclecticism that evolved there. I think this is really useful in this role- the

ability to communicate with a community who are not specifically fine art people but who are interested in culture in various other ways. There are numerous in points you can engage with. We will be working with the local music and book festivals. Craft is also a very important part of the programme here. That is one of the legacy attributes of the pervious gallery we will be continuing here.

Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, 420 Titirangi Road, Titirangi opens to the public on November 1, 2014. See www.teuru.org.nz for the complete schedule of opening exhibitions.

Facing page: exterior views of the Mitchell & Stout design demonstrating the relationship of the refurbished Lopdell House building (1930) and the new Te Uru structure.

This page: architects section drawing reveals the magnificent upper gallery with pagoda-style internal canopy.



Peter Peryer
Self Portrait with Rooster
gelatin silver print, 1978
image courtesy of the artist

Image Conscious

Richard Maloy
Green and Red
Type-C prints

Richard Maloy was born in 1977 and is based in Auckland. Since first exhibiting in the early 2000s, his practice has included both photography and site specific installations.

His large scale sculpture entitled *Big Yellow* was a feature of the seventh Asia Pacific Triennial at the Queensland Art Gallery in 2012/2013. Richard is represented by Starkwhite.

Content asks two photographers to discuss a New Zealand image that has exercised a lingering influence on their thinking and creative practice.

Content: Richard, what is your decisive image in terms of New Zealand photography?

Richard Maloy: I go right back to high school. I was interested in Peter Peryer's work and I have always been interested in his self-portraiture, particularly *Self Portrait with Rooster* 1978, which always seemed slightly staged and oddly absurd. Also, his images of everyday objects, particularly the food series of cakes and donuts, I was drawn to how he makes them look quite formal through repetition and pattern. A re-consideration of every day objects through photography.

When you encountered Self Portrait with Rooster at high school you must have been quite young. What did this image open up for you?

RM: I think I was fifteen. I had set up a darkroom when I was at intermediate school with a group of other students so I had a background in traditional black and white photography. At high school, I was interested in looking at artists and working through their ideas mostly through emulation and *Self Portrait with Rooster* presented a shift of the artist from behind the camera 'into' the camera and that image represented these ideas for me at that stage.

Although the work looks quite natural, it is not a pure documented photograph. It is a set up, there is staging at play. The artist did not just sit hidden behind the camera, but started to manifest within the image itself becoming part of the content of the work.

The artist is collaborating with himself?

RM: Yes. The artist is artist and muse all in one. What I like about self portraits is that when you place yourself in front of the camera there is a sense of honesty about where the artist is positioned. Quite often when you look at an artwork it feels like the artist is detached. I see self-portraiture as a way an artist can enable the viewer to connect directly with them, maybe this is a more humanist approach to art making which I appreciate.

So when we talk about your work, one of the elements is staging. I think of the 'portraits' with the different coloured bags on the figures' heads. Can you talk about the relationships between Peryer's work and your own? Do you feel a kinship?

RM: Yes. I think of these works as self-portraiture meets a type of painting formalism or even abstraction. I can see a connection to Peryer's work,



the self-portraiture and also in looking at the cake series with the formal qualities of the rolls and the donuts all lined up. The bag works are actually self portraits, but you cannot see me. That absurd nature and play in the bag works is there as a kind of flirtation. It 'should' be a self portrait but the art mechanism is a block of colour which prevents that happening.

What are you currently working on in the studio?

RM: I am finishing my art school archive (*Richard Maloy Student Archive: 1996-2001*, Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 2014) It's a pretty monotonous process archiving ephemeral negatives, drawings, paintings, sculptures, video, photos, slides, sound recordings, art history theory essays and notes. All from my six years of art school education. It has over 900 parts and over

2000 items so far and still counting.

Your Starkwhite exhibition *All the things I did*, a presentation from the 'Richard Maloy Student Archive: 1996-2001' was fascinating because the public get to see an art student's workings laid bare from the first day of art school to the last.

RM: Yes that's what I was after, taking the fundamental building blocks of being an artist and revealing it in a way that allows for a new consideration of that process. The exhibition was developed as a way of presenting the archive and simultaneously turning it into a work of art within its own right. I wanted to create a show which reveals my art student workings, their processes and pedagogies. Utilising my time from art school and material I had kept seemed like a logical place to start.

The exhibition *All the things I did* is one of a blizzard of images and ephemeral material that let us see what an art student does within art education. We can see that all things are important to the creation of the other. The archive illustrates the job of being an artist.

RM: With both the archive and the exhibition, we can see all of the processes and all the thought processes of an art student laid-out without much hierarchy or editing – unlike how we experience end of year art school shows. The viewer gets to make their own connections with the processes and discover the logic at play just as I had done back then. My practice as an artist post art school operates in this way, but you don't get to see it laid out in one setting like this. You need to see it over multiple shows and over an extended time frame.



Roberta Thornley
Fence
from the series *I Will Meet You There*
(2012)
archival pigment ink photograph
mounted on aluminium,
edition of five
Image courtesy the artist
and Tim Melville Gallery

“I try to evoke atmospheres that oscillate between melancholy and desire”.¹

Content: Roberta can you tell us about your chosen decisive image?

RT: In 2009 I first encountered Bill Culbert’s *Winework* from 1992. I had just started to work with inanimate objects. I seem to remember seeing it first in the book on Culbert’s work called *Making Light Work* by Ian Wedde. The thing that struck me most initially was that it was a photograph of a sculpture. It seems a rather simple thought now, but it was an “ah ha” moment. I had just completed Elam having focussed on sculpture and painting before moving into photography. I liked what I saw immediately. The case for the work being a photograph was what intrigued me. In this image the physical glass lifts off the surface and the ever wavering and unpredictable shadow directed by the great bulb in the sky ties it down. There is a balance that is struck between this inanimate object and its shadow. They swap expected roles in the most delightful way. This picture has stayed with me since then. I think it taught me and continues to teach me some important lessons about photography, that making pictures is an act of memory catching.

Content: When did you complete at Elam?

RT: In 2007. I had my first show with Tim Melville in 2008.

Content: You mentioned that most of your work at art school was either painting or sculpture. So when did you move to photography?

RT: I approached photography in my last semester. Most of the previous four years had been taken up with sculpture and some painting. Once I connected with the camera I felt that my ideas really started to make sense, but it was a learning curve for me. Having said that I took into making photographs so many aspects of those previous engagements.

Content: Your first exhibitions featured the moody backyard scenes, almost like cinéma vérité but placed into an everyman domestic environment. Can you tell us how you constructed these images?

RT: I create a boundary for my narratives to arrive in. I locate a space that I like the feel of and then let the subject play out within it. I see it as a play between theatre and reality. So there is an element of unravelling to my process. This is how I work with any subject.

Content: On the technical side your work frequently has a wonderful dusky end of day feeling. Is this something that is achieved with natural light or do you take the image and then build this digitally?

Roberta Thornley was born in 1985 and is based in the Waikato. After graduating from Elam School of Fine Arts in 2007 her work has been curated into numerous public gallery exhibitions including *Everyday*

RT: I’m not very good with computers (laughs). I do as much as I can in the moment with the camera. But if you are talking about light then I shoot at all times of day. The use of digital technology is all about context. I will and would use it if I thought the feeling it gave me was tied up in the making and meaning of the work.

Content: Are there other photographers that you feel an affinity with?

RT: Julia Margaret Cameron’s work, especially her portraits of female subjects seems to be spilling from my notebooks right now. Also Bill Viola’s work. I am looking forward to seeing his installation at St. Paul’s in London later this year. Right now I am enjoying Sam Harrison’s sculptures and etchings.

Content: Tell us about what you are working on currently.

RT: I am working on a new body of work that will travel with me to Rwanda when I visit family later this year. Then I will be back home and commence the Sarjeant Gallery Residency at Tylee Cottage.

Content: How did you find or ‘stalk’ Fence?

RT: I was working between a public river landscape and this massive fence, which must be twelve feet high, in a semi-rural setting. The landowners had erected this fence because they had some concerns about access to the river. But the interesting thing about the fence is that where it ended and started

Irregular at The Sarjeant Gallery – Whanganui (2011) and *Uncanny Valley* at the Christchurch Art Gallery (2010). Thornley is represented by Tim Melville Gallery.

Bill Culbert
Winework (1992)
black and white photographic print, edition of three
Image courtesy the artist and Hopkinson Mossman



there were actually plenty of ways to get around it. I felt like I was standing on a stage. At this time I was photographing a group of teenagers that lived on properties backing onto the river. We worked between the private domain of their homes and the public land where they often spent time with friends. It felt like the river was everpresent in their lives. There were waterfalls everywhere in this town. I had been searching for an image of a waterfall, literally trudging along this river looking for and almost desperate for a shot of a waterfall.

But what I soon realised was that the waterfalls I was shooting, even when caught forever in stillness and silence by my camera still shouted at me as mighty torrents or cackled at me as tiny eddies. I wanted a waterfall I couldn’t hear.

Weeks had gone by and though I had made other work I was still looking for a picture of a waterfall. Then one day between the giant fence and the river it began to rain and I dashed under the shelter of a native evergreen. I held my camera against me and turned in towards the trunk of a tree until the shower passed. When I turned back around I saw before me the fence caught in a moment of tethered and collared sunlight. The remains of the brief shower had become the most beautiful transient waterfall. I took my camera and held it in memory forever.

1. The artist quoted in a recent interview during the 2014 Auckland Festival of Photography

Content 2 Top Ten NZ Photographs

Fiona Pardington

Ake Ake Huia

Mural scale gelatin silver print
Edition of 3, 2004
1210 x 930mm

Realised \$30 385

Important Photographs
May 2010



2010 represented a remarkable year for Fiona Pardington. Her breath-taking exhibition *Ahua*, a sustained photographic investigation into the complex history of nineteenth century life casts was one of the highlights of the 17th Biennale of Sydney. 2010 also saw two major Pardington works offered in ART+OBJECT's May Important Photographs catalogue, *Ake Ake Huia* (2004, edition of 3) and the *Quai Branly Suite of Nine Hei Tiki* (2002, edition of 2 with the other edition having been gifted to the Musée du Quai Branly by the New Zealand Government). One of Pardington's great attributes is her unique ability to conflate the animate and the inanimate, longing and loss, and the past and present. Fiona Pardington's photographs made market history twice on the evening of the auction. Firstly, when *Ake Ake Huia* realised \$30 385 to become the highest selling photograph at auction, and then, when the *Quai Branly Suite* achieved \$64 728. This was the first time in this country that a contemporary photographer realised prices comparable to their peers working in more traditional media.

Gavin Hipkins

The Next Cabin

20 C-type prints, each in an edition of 8, 2002
600 x 400mm each

Realised \$46 900

The David and Angela Wright
Collection of Modern and
Contemporary New Zealand Art
June 2011



Gavin Hipkins is another photographer to have garnered a significant international following. Amongst the most diverse and innovative of photographers working in this country, Hipkins works have engaged and utilised everything from 1920s avant-garde techniques of photograms, contemporary advertising aesthetics, installation and video. These qualities of formal and practical diversity led his contemporary Giovanni Intra to describe him as a 'tourist of photography', and it is the twisted pictorialism and inherent narrativity of the twenty panel photographic novella, *The Next Cabin* which set a new benchmark for his market at auction. From The Angela and David Wright Collection of Major Contemporary New Zealand Art auction in June 2011, the collection may well have showcased the work of saleroom favourites Bill Hammond, Ralph Hotere, Tony Fomison, Shane Cotton and John Pule, but for many the Hipkins photographic suite was the star of the show. Offered with an estimate of \$25 000 – \$35 000, it sailed past this to realise \$46 900 and become the second highest selling photographic work on the New Zealand auction market.

Michael Parekowhai

Boulogne from the Consolations of Philosophy – Piko nei te matenga
C – type print, edition of 8, 2001
1500 x 1200mm

Realised \$24 035

Important Paintings and
Contemporary Art
November 2013



Arguably amongst Parekowhai's most successful and admired bodies of work is his twelve-part 2001 series, *The Consolation of Philosophy – Piko nei te matenga*. Parekowhai is a multi-media artist and sculptor who uses photography as one tool in his artistic arsenal and who can in no way be described as a photographer in the traditional sense. Nonetheless his large-scale colour photographs present a dynamism, impact and presence which mark them as among the most successful still-images of recent time. Parekowhai's great skill is in making great images which are as conceptually nuanced as they are beautiful. The images in this series take their names from the battlefields which the Māori Battalion fought in WWI and collectively present themselves as a sumptuous visual tribute to those Māori soldiers who gave their lives for the cause. Parekowhai brings his skills as a sculptor to the inherently two-dimensional medium of photography, making for photographs that are convincingly sculptural with the full bouquet of *Boulogne* leaping off its perfect white background to occupy a given space in a remarkably generous manner.

Anne Noble

In the Presence of Angels
portfolio of twelve selenium toned gelatin silver prints in an edition of ten
each print signed and dated 1989
187 x 352mm: each print

Realised \$18 760

Important Photographs, Paintings
and Contemporary Art
August 2013



Anne Noble is one of New Zealand's most widely respected photographers and was awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit for her services to photography in 2003. In 2001 she was honoured with a retrospective exhibition and a major book about her work spanning 20 years. Initiated by the Dunedin Public Art Gallery, the exhibition toured from 2001–2003. *In the presence of angels – photographs of the contemplative life* (1988 – '90), a beautiful boxed portfolio of 12 exquisitely printed selenium-toned photographs together with the original cover sheet, came from an extended study of a silent order of Benedictine nuns in a London convent. Many of the defining indexes of Noble's oeuvre – her interest in darkness and light, tactility, dignity and quietude – play out strongly in this series. One particular photograph in the series *A Place Setting in the Refectory*, shows the photographer's name at a setting at the dining table and thus provides the viewer with valuable insight into the privileged position she obtained in having access to the community and capturing their daily rituals and lives.

Laurence Aberhart

Taranaki (The Heavens Declare the Glory of God)

gold and selenium toned gelatin silver print
title inscribed, signed and dated 14 May, 1986
195 x 245mm

Realised \$12 895

Important Photographs
and Contemporary Art
August 2012



Aberhart has always been, for me, one of our most important artists. Perhaps there is little less fashionable way to work in the twenty first century than with a nineteenth century plate camera. Easy to overlook perhaps, yet those who have taken the time to consider his photographs will be acutely aware that his prints are among the most beautiful and rewarding images in New Zealand art history. It seems to be the nature of the nascent market for serious photographs that the iconic image is valued disproportionately higher than other images deemed less important by collectors. This is something that this list definitely bears out. *Taranaki (The Heavens Declare the Glory of God)* is one of the most well-known New Zealand photographs, an image that adds to the legacy of the cone-shaped mountain that defines the region's identity. Here, the spherical roof of the observatory recalls Colin McCahon's *Waterfall* series, whilst the auratic glow of light and the miniaturised mountain in the rear combine to create an immensely powerful, art-historically informed and beautiful tableau.

Ben Plumbly reviews A+O's ten highest photography sales in the period 2007–2014

Brian Brake
Offerings to the Unknown Dead – Kyoto, 1964
colour photograph printed from Kodak transparency on Ektacolour paper
original Brian Brake: Dowse Art Gallery exhibition label affixed verso
460 x 665mm

Realised \$12 600

Selected Photographs from the Estate of Brian Brake
December 2010



Brian Brake is our most renowned photographer due principally to his vocation as a photo-journalist and his membership of the prestigious Magnum agency alongside such luminaries as Henri Carier-Bresson and Ernst Haas. His photo-essays such as *Monsoon* and *Pablo Picasso and Jean Cocteau at a Bullfight* were seen by millions through magazines like *Life* and were even exhibited in New York's Museum of Modern Art. In 2010 A+O presented over 60 photographs from the artist's estate for a book, exhibition and auction timed to coincide with renewed interest in the photographer's work brought about by the large-scale retrospective and monograph put together by Athol McCredie at Te Papa. The highest selling lot of the evening went to the complete set of twenty prints from the Bullfight essay which made \$43 968. Yet it was the beautiful image *Offering to the Unknown Dead, Kyoto, 1964*, heavily utilised by Te Papa in their promotion of the Brian Brake retrospective exhibition, which captured the hearts and minds of collectors on the auction night realizing \$12 600.

Yvonne Todd
January
Lightjet print 2/3
title inscribed, signed and dated 2006 verso
1360 x 1065mm

Realised \$11 725

The Russell and Shirley Hodgson Collection
March 2012



A fairly common theme to this list thus far is that almost all of the photographers have been the subject of recent museum shows or biennale appearances. In December this year Yvonne Todd will have a retrospective exhibition at the City Gallery. *Creamy Pyschology*, curated by Robert Leonard which will be the first time the entire gallery is given over to a single artist, a remarkable feat for a female photo-media artist in this country. Todd's best known for her eerie, unsettling studio portraits which manipulate the conventional to often leave the viewer feeling uncomfortable. *January* (2006), like all of Todd's photographs, is from a small edition of 3 and with one of these editions in the Queensland Art Gallery collection. It afforded collectors a rare opportunity when it appeared as part of The Russell and Shirley Hodgson Collection in early 2012. Taking its inspiration from the tragic heiress in Jacqueline Susann's novel *Once is Not Enough*, Todd's portrait made a healthy \$11 725.

Jae Hoon Lee
Hajodae
type C print, edition of 10
1900 x 1485mm

Realised \$11 725

Important Paintings and Contemporary Art
November 2011



Jae Hoon Lee is one of the key proponents in this country of a new generation of photo-media artists who is 'making' rather than 'taking' photographs, in the traditional sense. That is to say the emphasis of the creative process has shifted from his taking a photograph in the field to constructing the image on computer programmes such as photoshop. Large in scale and complex in its detail, *Hajodae* gained its visual and conceptual drama from its obvious engagement with traditional Chinese scroll painting and the disruption of traditional Western perspective. In *Haojodae* the top end of the rocky island appears closer than the bottom, an optical effect in equal parts dizzying and successful. Hoon-Lee's iconic *Farm* image was the previous benchmark for the artist's auction prices at \$7763, but the two metre tall *Hajodae* easily sailed past this to break through the five figure mark, realizing \$11 725.

Peter Peryer
Trout
gelatin silver print
title inscribed, signed and dated 1987 verso
460 x 302mm

Realised \$10 405

Contemporary ART+OBJECTS
June 2009



Peter Peryer is one of our most respected and distinguished photographers. The thought processes behind the photographs are the defining trope of his practice. Peryer has remarked that he actually spends very little time taking photographs but sometimes months leading up to the actual taking of the image thinking about the particular photograph he wants to take. Self-taught and a relatively late starter, Peryer's work often plays with scale, patternation, texture and nature creating beautiful images which are also simultaneously strange. *Peter Peryer: A Careful Eye* is currently on exhibit at the Dowse, where he first exhibited in 1977. Peryer's boxed portfolios have made as much as \$20 000 when they've appeared at auction and *Trout*, one of the artist's key images from the late 1980s, achieved \$10 405 when it appeared at auction in June 2009. Like Anne Noble, Peryer has seamlessly entered the digital age and embraced technological change, he now almost exclusively produces digital images often shot on his iphone.

Ans Westra
Untitled
gelatin silver print
signed
260 x 265mm

Realised \$9025

Important Paintings and Contemporary Art
August 2014



The audience for Westra's black and white photographs from the late 1950s through to the 1980s has been steadily increasing in recent times. This *Untitled* image realised \$9025 in April of this year and in doing so set a new benchmark for the photographer's prices at auction. Born in the Netherlands, Westra came to New Zealand in 1957. Working as a freelance photo-journalist in her twenties, Westra was attracted to Māori as she felt they were the most open and interesting subject available to her. Without question one of our finest social commentators and documentary photographers her great skill for me is the obvious trust she engenders from her subjects, her photographs always appear 'unposed', as if she and her camera are invisible to the people and scenes she portrays. Thus, the distance between the subject and viewer is perhaps closer and less mediated than in any other photographs you will encounter in New Zealand.



The Art+Object team in the gallery at 3 Abbey Street, Newton, Auckland. From left: Pam Plumbly (Rare Books Specialist), Giulia Rodighiero (Front of House Manager & Asian Art Specialist), James Parkinson (Director, Valuation & Collections Management), Hamish Coney (Managing Director), Ben Plumbly (Director, Art), Georgi du Toit (Front of House), Leigh Melville (Manager, Art).

Content.02

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Damian Skinner is an art historian and curator of applied art and design at the Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira. He is currently working on an introduction to the *whare whakairo*, which will be published by Te Papa Press in 2015. His most recent book was *A History of Contemporary Jewellery in Australia and New Zealand: Place & Adornment*, co-authored with Kevin Murray.



Hamish Coney is Managing Director of ART+OBJECT and has devised and managed the CONTENT project. He was a winner of the Qantas media awards Arts columnist of the year in 2009 and has contributed to numerous magazines and journals.



Ben Plumbly is a widely-respected art valuer, auctioneer and market commentator. He holds a first class honours degree in Art History and has managed the sale of many of the country's most important artworks and collections including the record-breaking Les and Milly Paris Collection. In 2012 he was called upon to value the entire fine art collection of The Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa.



Sarah Smuts-Kennedy is an Auckland based artist who holds an MFA with First Class Honours from Elam. Her work is held in numerous Australian public and corporate collections. Her most recent solo show was *Fieldwork 2015* at Sophie Gannon Gallery, Melbourne.



Jane Sutherland and Kate Newby enjoy breakfast in America at the Bowery Hotel, NYC September 2014.

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