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introduction

Canterbury is, and always has been, a fertile breeding ground for painters, with many of New Zealand's current contemporary stars beginning their careers here. A closeknit artistic community exists on these plains, fostering an association amongst its artists that can continue for years. 'The Group', which first exhibited in 1927 and was still exhibiting fifty years later, is just one example of a collection of artists who knew each other well and whose artistic relationships were sustained over many decades. The 1980s brought the start of another kind of group and its loose network saw the artists in it attend the same art school, the same gatherings and explore and debate their artistic practice together. The dialogue that still takes place between these artists informs the development and commentary in their work. *Skywriters and Earthmovers* features the work of seven Christchurch trained artists - Shane Cotton, Bill Hammond, Chris Heaphy, Tony de Lautour, Séraphine Pick, Peter Robinson and Grant Takle - whose paintings share a strong stylistic thread of connection.

While individual ideas are explored and signature styles established, there are obvious similarities to be observed within the practice of these artists. When they started out together in Christchurch their work was stylistically quite disparate, but as they have moved further apart their styles appear to have drawn closer together. Their cerebral links have remained intact, as they continue to share, swap and test ideas on each other. One artist tries an idea, the next does it differently, running with the concept, pushing it to its limits. This artistic repartee occasionally appears as a visual conversation between the artists, with pictorial ripostes discernible in their paintings. In addition to the very evident camaraderie amongst this group, there is also rivalry, competition and occasional conflict which is every bit as important for the fuelling and energising of their ongoing stylistic development. The distance now separating them geographically has done nothing, however, to diminish their artistic relationship. Instead, the discourse between them has taken on an increasingly significant role.

Stylistically, there are a number of characteristics shared by this combination of artists. A monochromatic curtain of colour forms the backdrop to many of the paintings, onto which a private lexicon of iconic emblems is floated, suspended within a veil of gravity-free space. Personal history and popular culture provide the inspiration for much of the imagery and several artists use text in their work, further emphasising the face of the painting surface and the infinite, measureless dimensions of the universe described within. Where a three dimensional world is portrayed, there is an air of theatricality and the objects in this alien environment are presented as though on a vast and indefinable stage.

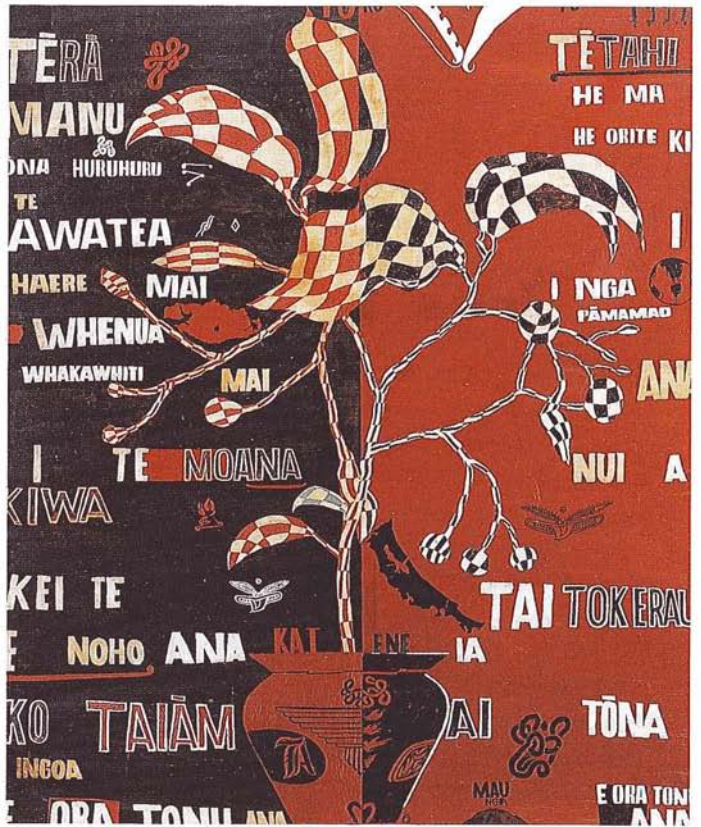
Although the artists each pursue individual themes, there are still links to be found in the content they address in their paintings. New Zealand history is mined by more than one of the artists represented in this exhibition as they examine what it means to be a New Zealander today. Cotton, Heaphy, de Lautour and Takle all make this exploration the dominant focus of their work. Attitudes relating to the importance of land in our lives, and land ownership, are an inescapable part of this debate and are also a major consideration in work by Hammond, whose influence is evident in several artists' adaptations of his gravitational and compositional license. It is an exploration that takes in current consideration of the dynamic between Maori and Pakeha cultures. Although Robinson's past work could also be classified in this way, his new paintings are personalised to a greater degree, scrutinising the individual while also considering New Zealand's place in the Pacific. He and Takle both develop their imagery through a pictorial version of word association, a process that produces a richly layered series of meanings for each symbol used.

Pick, the diarist in the group, gives particular emphasis to relationships and identity as she delves into the chaotic and complex realm of the psyche. While her work is the most overtly personal, others in the group also use their painting to explore private issues in their lives, from Heaphy exorcising feelings of loss at the death of a close friend to Robinson confronting the where-to-from-here? questions and the anxieties that face every artist at some point.

New Zealand is a small country, and it is understandable that these artists have been able to maintain their association with relative ease. But, with burgeoning international careers for some, it is interesting to speculate how long and how close these ties will remain and to consider the new and different directions that may be taken in the future with such influences brought to bear on their work. The rapid, constantly changing demands on contemporary artistic practice makes the anticipation of future groups of artists, and consideration of the shape and form they will take, an exercise of endless fascination.

shane cotton

In *Ko te rakau a Taiamai* (The Tree of Taiamai), Shane Cotton considers the importance of language in building and nurturing culture and identity. In particular, the painting relates to the early European system of education that negated and suppressed the Maori language, repudiating a centuries-old oral tradition and causing a disastrous loss and fragmentation of history, with far-reaching effects for Maori culture. By depicting a potted puriri tree (or New Zealand Oak) in front of a half-black, half-red background covered in a seemingly random way with Maori words, Cotton turns the tables on non-Maori speakers, forcing them to address the insecurity and dislocation engendered by being constantly addressed in a foreign tongue. In a bicultural environment, language has the ability to divide as well as to bind.



Ko te rakau a Taiamai (1997) Collection of the Dunedin Public Art Gallery

Words, and particularly the names on maps, have always been potent tools of conquest, and Cotton's inclusion of a world globe can be read as a pointed reference to the ownership claims perpetrated by empire-building cartography. The frenetic placement of words on the canvas is calculated to recreate the patterns and inflexions of human speech, emphasising the loss of political voice a people suffer when their native language is denied them. Some of the text within *Ko te rakau a Taiamai* appears accessible, with familiar expressions such as 'haere mai' and 'te moana' floating benignly over the

surface. The known words, however, only contribute to our sense of frustration as we endeavour to flesh out some decipherable narrative without success. If we feel we are being toyed with, it is with good reason – the culture that controls language wields immense power, and with their voice suppressed, a people's ability to negotiate is severely diminished. They must also face the future consequences of what has been lost in translation, as New Zealand's tangled Treaty of Waitangi attests.

The pot motif can be found throughout Cotton's oeuvre, and alludes here to the

symbol Maori painted on their property to signify legitimate ownership during the years of Governmental land confiscation in the late 1800s. It also suggests the nurturing nourishment of the land and of its culture, and the leaves and berries borne by the puriri tree growing out of it have inescapable connections to a continuous whakapapa (the Maori genealogy recorded orally until European settlers insisted that it be written down). The solid rooting of the tree into the pot suggests strength, unity and the responsibilities of custodial ownership for ensuring the health and growth of the land, language and culture.

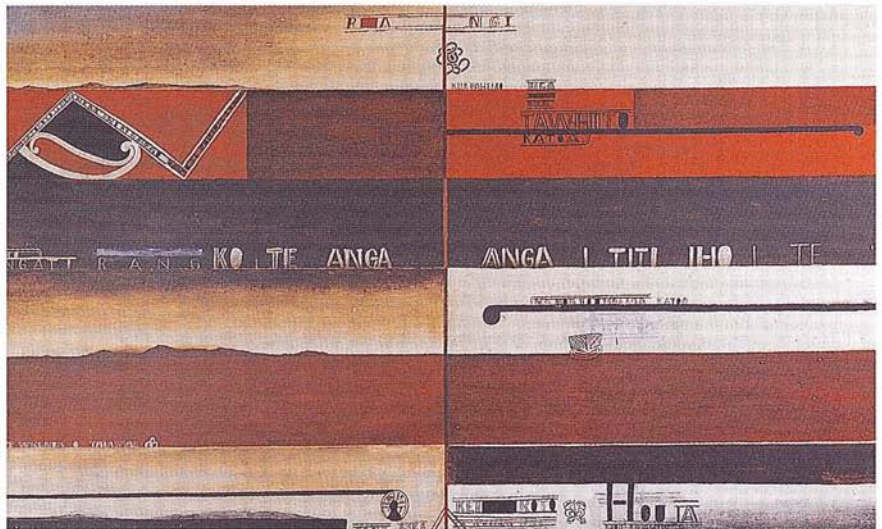
Gathering his imagery from both the past and the present, and including symbols and motifs from traditional Maori carving, Cotton often uses iconography which relates to contemporary art history. His emphatic, symbolic use of text suggests the work of Colin McCahon and, by employing traditional Maori negative and positive designs, he makes connections to Gordon Walter's controversial appropriation of Maori imagery. In addition, the dazzling checkerboard designs on the leaves of the tree recall the work of Hungarian-born 'op' artist Victor de Vasarely.

The four horizontal landscape segments of *Heke III* are annotated with text relating to the belief that the Ngati Rangi people, with whom Cotton's family is affiliated, originally descended from the sky. With the influence of subsequent teachings by European settlers, the Maori concept of 'sky' gradually became associated with the Christian idea of 'heaven'. The modification of Maori

spirituality to conform to Christianity was simplified by the obvious similarities between the European 'God' and the Maori 'sky-father', Rangi, whose name is spelled out across the top of the painting. Additional sections of text, which are stacked up to form unstable constructions within individual landscapes, are phrases from the Bible in Maori. Cotton sees this "bind and weave" of the Maori and Christian faiths as being at the heart of his current practice.

Both the sky and land in *Heke III* exist within an unearthly silence, as if waiting for the enactment of some monumental religious event, and could equally represent visions of the distant past or the near future. A white tiki emerges from the horizon in one landscape, next to a cross and biblical translation into Maori which have been partially erased by a smear of white paint. The intentional 'whiting out' acts as an echo of the systematic stripping of traditional art from meeting houses by 'civilising' Europeans, who considered the Maori forms pagan and vulgar. This practice

resulted in the evolution of a new form of Maori art, a hybrid fusion between Christianity and Maoritanga, incorporating such visual influences as Victorian scrimshaw, photography and needlework. The resulting naïve-style 'folk art' is often reproduced in Cotton's work as it connects well with his own interest in the alteration of Maori culture to fit European assumptions. The enigmatic landscapes in *Heke III* reflect this dichotomy, juxtaposing traditional Maori shapes and colour combinations with what are obviously European forms. A palely glowing horizon line, reminiscent of McCahon's looming landscapes, symbolises the rising or setting sun, and, concurrently, the waxing and waning of a culture. The reddish-brown glow of the work provides it with an historical feel, while the compartmentalised landscapes (a comment on the European division and demarcation of the land) ensure the viewer has to work to try to put the narrative together. The insecure spaces Cotton manufactures depict the uneasy habitat of the present, in which the past must be examined in order to chart a course for the future.



Heke III (1998)
 Courtesy of the Gow Langsford Gallery



Detail: *Flight Recorder* (1998)
 Courtesy of the Brooke Gifford Gallery

bill hammond

Bill Hammond's peculiarly haunting paintings operate within a strange, yet familiar time and place. Although many of his works reveal a twentieth century consciousness, they also contain an often Gothic sensibility and references to an ancient, primeval past. Repellent and delightful in equal measure, Hammond's complex compositions combine a dry, sardonic humour with an epic theatricality and take place in a landscape that is obviously alien, but has distinct connections with both pre-European New Zealand and the modern world.

In *Heading for the Last Roundup*, a vast, mountainous composition is infused with an unnatural golden light, giving it the appearance of a sprawling Hollywood western. Within the top and bottom sections stiff yellow curtains, frozen mid-ripple like corrugated iron, loom over dwarfish mountain ranges, acting not only as physical barriers but also as backdrops and points of entry. In the central section, coifed and mohawked spectres with soft, pupae-like bodies maraud across the landscape while delicately patterned cones and ropes float over the ranges and into their mouths. One of the figures appears to be metamorphosing directly out of the land, his legs braced wildly on the ground and mouth hanging open in apparent anguish. In a scene peopled by grotesques of this nature, the air of

almost hysterical confusion is only heightened by the increasingly neurotic colour scheme.

Many of the characteristics often found within Hammond's work are prominent in this painting; the frantic, hallucinogenic feel, the witty appropriations from popular culture (seen in the directional arrows and the Disney-esque cartoons which cover the fabric screens) and the atmosphere of fantastic transformation in which one mountain range becomes a teeming mob to be rounded up, while another grasps the rippling plains like a coffee table with vertigo. A grisly fusion between man and furniture gazes, unblinking and transfixed, at the images which rain down the sheet in front of him, while a vomiting television set bursts into flames in the background. The work's title

contributes to an air of finality, as if these over-zealous cowboys, having mustered their herds, are intent on bringing in the landscape as well. While one mountain is encircled by a lazily floating noose, another's gold-ringed peak bears a suspicious resemblance to the Paramount Pictures logo.

Flight Recorder overtly alludes to the 'black box' used as evidence in the aftermath of an aeroplane crash, but also considers the wider narrative of flying itself. Within six chaotic canvas strips Hammond portrays the broad spectrum of winged flight, from classical legend to modern day avionics. In his hands, flight becomes a harbinger of danger - a sinister method of transportation synonymous with invasion, destruction and death - hinted

at by the work's title and by the predominance of 'delayed' (and 'delanded') signs visible on the "Arrivals" board in the top panel.

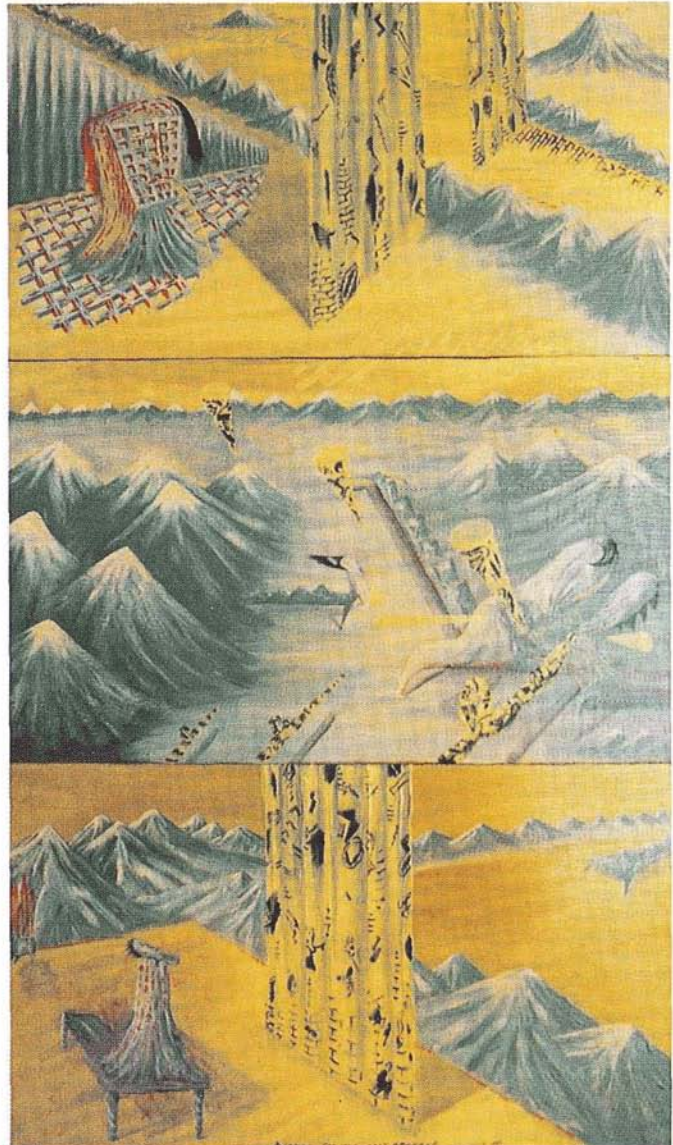
Pegasus, the winged horse of Greek mythology, is a familiar symbol of flight, but his close proximity to the ocean in this work recalls the fated journey of Bellerophon, who attempted to ride Pegasus to Heaven, but fell to the earth when Zeus sent a gadfly to sting the horse. An additional layer of meaning is provided by the contemporary use of Pegasus as a logo for the petrol company Europa, an allusion which, in the context of Hammond's previous works, can be read as a symbol for the European 'invasion' of New Zealand.

War planes in the painting's central panels illustrate humanity's gradual and violent usurpation of the skies. One of Hammond's sleek birds gazes with immeasurable irony on a world in which humans have stolen the secret of flight and then hunted the original flyers to extinction - a stuffed bird in a bell-jar and a display-case drawer full of eggs 'preserved' for posterity provide compelling evidence.

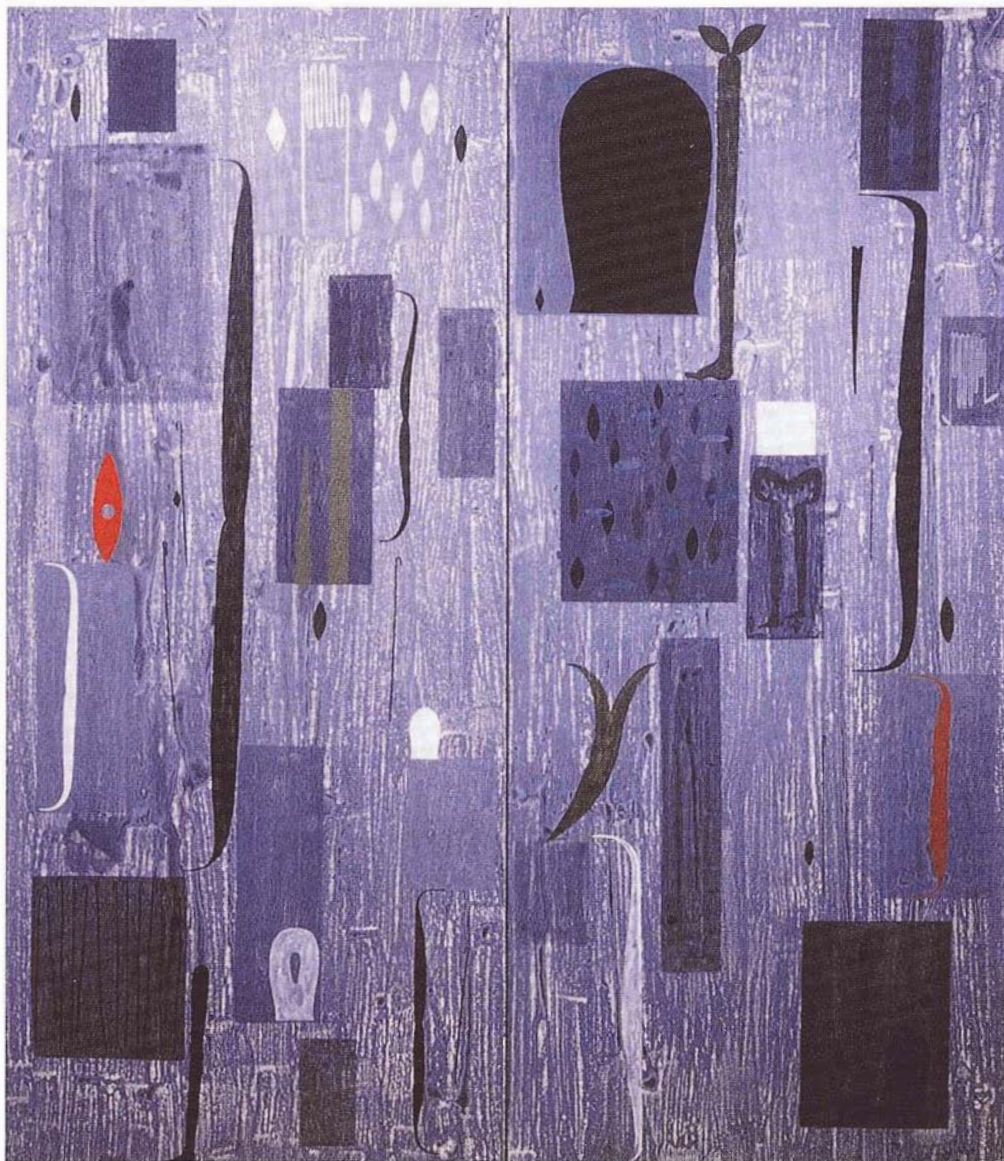
As in many of Hammond's works, the narrative drifts between the ancient and the modern. In one panel, a biblical angel heralds imminent destruction for a screaming crowd in the shadow of a black sun, in another, overlooked by Arcadia-dwelling Pan, aeroplanes pull along inane commercial messages above spectators

at a rugby match. A large quilted bed in the lowest panel represents the final flight of life, as a spirit rises from a dead body, witnessed by a solemn group of hybrid bird-people. Symbols of the soul in ancient Egypt, birds (often a Hammond shorthand

for Nature itself) seem to represent the power and beauty of true flight, whereas our necessarily artificial attempts reveal us to have more in common with the briefly soaring creature in the bottom panel - a flying fish out of water.



Heading For the Last Roundup (1985) Collection of the Artist



Ture Wairua (1997) Collection of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery

chris heaphy

Chris Heaphy's paintings hover deliberately in the space between cultures, observing and relating the experiences of each to the other. He uses a rich vocabulary of symbols and motifs drawn from throughout New Zealand history, choosing his emblems diversely to range from Maori to Pakeha, iconic to banal and ancient to present-day. Rock drawings, kowhaiwhai, religious images, contemporary art and road markings - Heaphy employs them all, enjoying the ambivalence of these signs, their huge significance to some, their complete irrelevance to others.

The title for *Ture Wairua* comes from a name the Maori political and religious leader, T.W. Ratana, was once known by. Combining 'ture' (law), and 'wairua' (spirit), Heaphy's painting refers to the religious side of Ratana's movement - his spiritual counsel and faith-healing abilities. The stylised, upraised hand which appears in several places within *Ture Wairua* and forms the primary image for one of the *Dreaming Aids* panels, is recognised as Ratana's personal motif. Similarly, the variously coloured leaves, some with the addition of 'sprouting' arrows, which occur passim throughout both of Heaphy's works, symbolise physical and spiritual growth and regeneration. Although earlier paintings have often shown the playing card motifs of the Maori prophet Rua Kenana, in this composition it is only the diamonds that are present, scattered throughout the painting in a seemingly random way. Heaphy's interest in Ratana and Rua Kenana

stems from an empathy with their willingness to shake off what they saw as the superstitions of the past to get on with the future, finding new ways to look at the world and new symbols to express them with. The subtle blue/grey background of *Ture Wairua* suggests something which is worn, familiar, and faded with use. When coupled with Heaphy's diverse, invigorating imagery, it represents an old language used in a new way.

In addition to these general themes *Ture Wairua* and *Dreaming Aids* articulate a more personal narrative exploring the cycle of loss and mourning. Part of a series which was created after the death of one of Heaphy's close friends, both feature severed legs and walking stick motifs which, in addition to recalling the canes and prosthetic limbs left behind after Ratana's faith healing, also symbolise bereavement, incompleteness and the

faltering steps we gradually travel in the path away from grief. The abandoned crutch is the support we lean on, then eventually relinquish, in the wake of a loved one's passing. In this context, the ashen backgrounds navigated by Heaphy's imagery have obvious connections to cremation and the final return of the body to the earth.

Heaphy does not confine his iconography within fixed interpretations, and the tears in his paintings can be read both as symbols of sorrow and of release. The rotated moustaches evoke a distinctly colonial and masculine impression, but are also an allusion to the art of Magritte and the international Surrealist movement. Regarding his paintings as receptacles for groups of signs which admit many meanings, Heaphy provides fragmentary, shifting backgrounds over which densely stacked shapes offer a framework for discovery.



Cameos (1998) Courtesy of the Ivan Anthony Gallery

tony de lautour

cobwebs, teardrops, heraldic lions and weapons. The menacing appearance of these symbols contributes to an atmosphere of violence and decay, foreshadowing an impending societal collapse. De Lautour's increasing interest in the early Maori and European contact period has resulted in the inclusion of specifically New Zealand imagery, such as kiwi, taniwha and the ubiquitous abbreviation "NZ". These symbols are enigmatic, seemingly noble and nationalistic yet often represented as debased or weakened. The de Lautour lion is resigned rather than rampant, more likely to be found having a quiet drag in the corner than staunchly guarding the realm.

Tony de Lautour's abjectly seedy paintings tread an insolent line between the gallery and the gutter. In his early works, this frisson was created by the luxuriant application of the 'high art' material, oil paint, to depict his distinctly low-life subjects. In more recent paintings, where the defiant coalescence has rarefied into a slicker fluidity, this discordant air of elegance is provided by his deliberate use of a particular shade of blue, found not only in d-i-y tattoos but also in colonial chinaware.

The flat, generally single-colour backgrounds of these loose canvasses act not only as grim shadow-worlds inhabited by strange and depraved creatures but also as shirts, arms, or walls upon which urban outcasts self-consciously display their identity and affiliations. In some works, highlighted objects are "pinned" onto a blue/black background like badges or tattoos, in others, gloomy veils draw back to expose a stage on which de Lautour's crazed and theatrical scenarios unfold.

De Lautour plays the role of urban bricoleur in recycling a finely honed arsenal of motifs, many derived from tattoos and gang insignia, such as

De Lautour combines the rough and street soiled with the epitome of decorative impracticality in *Cameos* - the Empire's best jewellery roughing it in the colonies. The cameo is a traditional symbol of elegance and decoration, but here, topping vicious knives and daggers which seem on the verge of transforming into primitive, hybrid creatures, they represent the heights (or depths) of bestiality. A chimerical beast constructed from cobwebs reveals the ambiguity of de Lautour's imagery - the hypodermic needles which form its bared teeth could carry either medical or recreational drugs.

In *NZ Co.*, de Lautour makes reference to the 19th century English company of that name which bought up land from Maori cheaply, paying for it with muskets and shot, and then selling it to European settlers, providing the already Gordian

treaty agreements with an additional layer of confusion. The island-clasping lion, stitched together like the lines of old Empire cartography, acknowledges the double edged nature of New Zealand's history. De Lautour's forays into the past skirt the usual channels, evoking instead the experiences of the lost, the losers, the cheated and the cheats. Scale is distorted (and of a type more common in caricatures and cartoons than painting), heightening an atmosphere of taut surrealism as the lion dwarfs New Zealand and grasps the North and South Islands in his hand-like paws until they bleed black tears.

NZ Co. (1998) Courtesy of the Ivan Anthony Gallery



— séraphine pick

The paintings of Séraphine Pick are filled with many interlacing layers, both physical and figurative. Not only do they incorporate several different surfaces and techniques, but the subject matter she employs encompasses images from popular culture, childhood memories and personal experience. Fully realised figures, elusive, rapidly sketched scenes and objects gleaned from a personal repertoire of images exist within (and rise to the surface of) a largely monochromatic background.

Naked Graffiti features a theme often present in Pick's work, that of make-believe and role-play. In this case, the fantasy is a sexual one, with the primary focus of the painting being two women (possibly separate incarnations of the same person) dressed in revealing and seductive clothing. One, complete with high-heeled boots, see-through skirt, suspenders and mickey-mouse ears, perches playfully on a hastily sketched structure, proffering a suspiciously suggestive pitcher. Its connotations are confirmed when the other female figure, also cuddling a jug on her lap, is seen snuggling up to a man who boasts a recognisably phallic wine bottle. The couple sit next to each other on a huge portable record player, an image Pick characteristically uses to denote recollected memories. Scattered

throughout the composition are overturned chairs and objects balancing close to the edge of stacked-up books and boxes, relating to the chaos of everyday experience, but also to the shambolic and often random cycle of remembering and forgetting. The title of this work alludes to the mercurial 'sgraffito' effect Pick achieves by scratching into the slowly drying multi-coated background as well as the way in which the deluge of images builds up on the canvas, with many objects erasing or partially obscuring the layers beneath.

Pick's most recent blue and white works, in which she has drawn into wet blue paint with the end of a brush dipped in white, resemble the writing and doodles half-erased from a blackboard, but they can also

be read as a diary or streams of consciousness. Images and phrases float out and back into the painting's surface like the memories held within the mind until they are recalled by a particular sound or sensation. As quick as thought, the images move constantly between memory, experience and imagination with little respect for chronology, recalling the words of author Janet Frame, who described the practice of using tenses to divide time as "...like making chalk marks on water". The objects and figures which occupy Pick's canvasses pay scant regard to the conventional rules of gravity and scale, as figures are dwarfed by huge domestic objects and images skate freely over the entire painting.



Naked Graffiti (1998) Private Collection



peter robinson

Detail: *Big Bang: White Light* (1998)
Courtesy of the Anna Bibby Gallery

The tonal screen which formed the background for sardonic slogans in Peter Robinson's "strategic plan" series has assumed control of the entire canvas in his most recent paintings. In cavernous black or blinding white, these new works are sparingly studded with symbols and images, many from popular culture, and particularly the cinema and television. From a distance, *Big Bang: White Heat* and *Big Bang: White Light* exude a standoffish reserve normally associated with minimalist works, but closer inspection reveals that they contain an extremely accessible vernacular.

The *Big Bang* series was prompted by Robinson's indecision about the next direction his art should take. His response was to produce large, almost blank canvases, relieved only by the diverse imagery which pushed its way into his consciousness from the outside world. The resultant works are therefore reflections of the post-modern abyss - a crisis of confidence only heightened by the overwhelming volume of information (as opposed to knowledge) with which we are constantly barraged by television, advertising and the internet. With the sale of information now one of the world's most quickly expanding markets, we are provided with so much knowledge that we start to feel as if we, like Sergeant Schultz in "Hogan's Heroes", "know nothing". Robinson explores this phenomena in his new works, in which unrelated objects drift within a cosmic blankness, with no obvious narrative connecting them, or providing them with any relevance.

Important or inflammatory symbols and phrases are placed on the same level as the inane and the banal, while writing is often printed upside down. The sense of isolation and dislocation engendered by such a topsy-turvy environment is expressed with the use of images such as 'Robbie the Robot' from the 1960s television series "Lost in Space". Robinson uses space as a double-barrelled metaphor - we may be lost within it, but at least there is room to move.

Robinson's sense of disorientation has been elevated by his frequent travels between Europe and New Zealand. Much of his current iconography relates to a sense of displacement and exile, and includes sailboats, black holes and desert islands. Robinson's willingness to play with associations and follow language links wherever they lead becomes evident in his use of Robinson Crusoe imagery. Most obviously tied-

in with his own surname, it also relates to the inverted Maori face images in alluding to the noble savage stereotype illustrated by Daniel Defoe's "man Friday". In addition, the island symbol also suggests the "desert island mentality" Robinson developed while in Europe, trying to construct around him the things that would comfort him in the midst of an otherwise alien environment.

Much of the success of Robinson's images hinges on the mind's desire to trace or fabricate connections between seemingly unrelated symbols. We crave a sense of order and, in our attempts to make it all 'mean something', play out a surreal guessing game in which the final answer may or may not exist. Often the proximity of objects to each other forms tantalising links - when a fat blow fly crawls beneath a waving black flag the mind makes the instantaneous leap

to an advertisement for a particular brand of insect-spray. Robinson likens his works to surfing the internet, where the person viewing, or participating in, the painting is the common denominator between a vast array of otherwise isolated points. A lively humour underlies this game, and just when we are on a roll of unravelling images, Robinson is quick to snag our complacency, inserting the abrupt phrase "no pictures available".

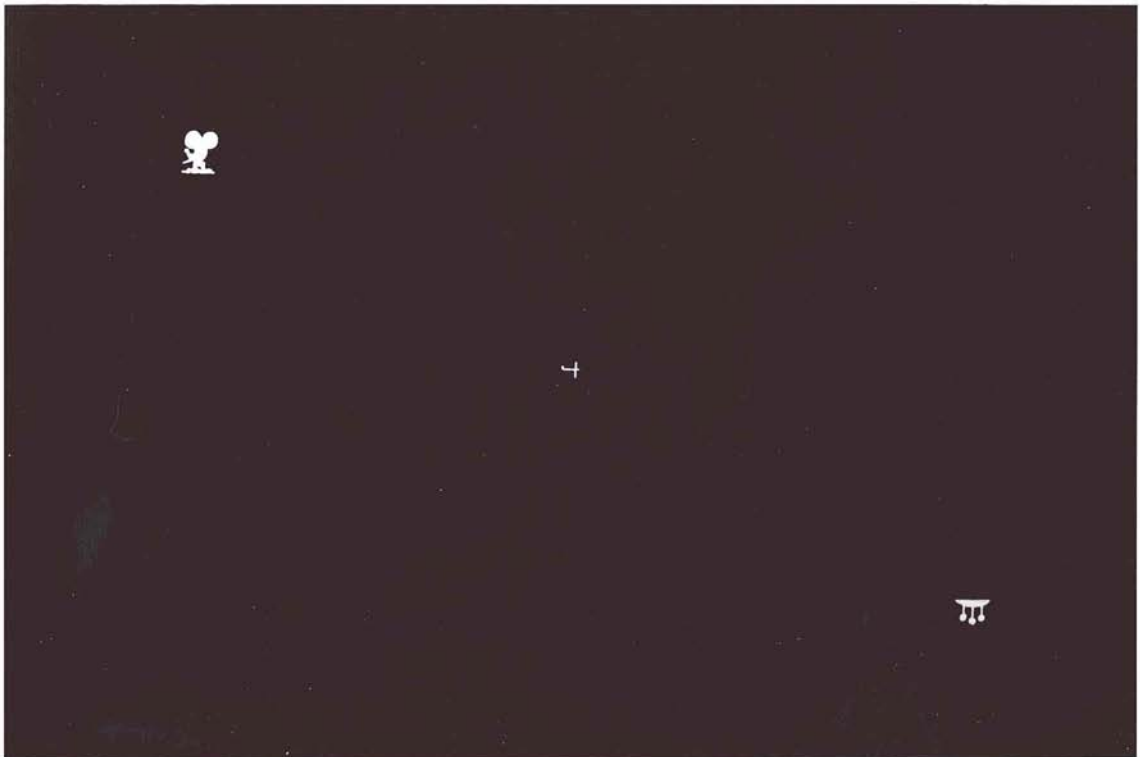
Many of the slogans in Robinson's work are written in 'dumbspeak' - a naïve tongue which recalls the staccato language of graffiti and billboards, representing the

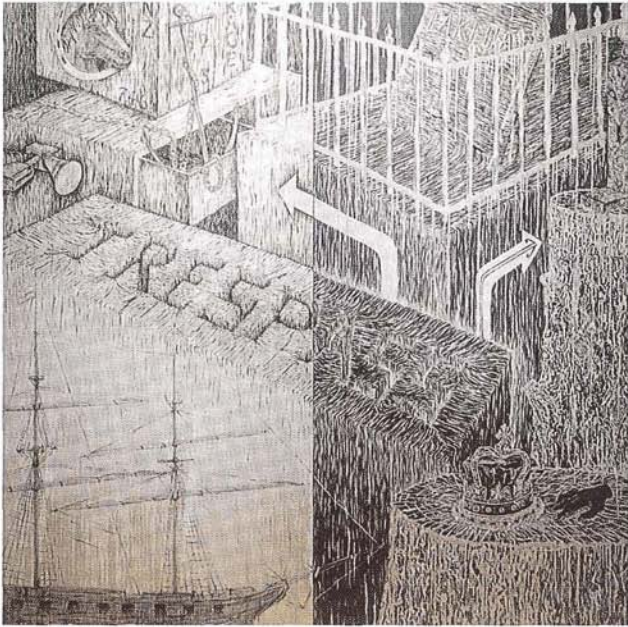
substitution of off-the-cuff, often provocative, generalisations for intelligent and considered discussion. Coupled with the paintings' black and white two dimensionalism, this invented speech reflects the state of relations between Maori and Pakeha New Zealanders – a dialogue of regional parochialism, material obsession and superficiality.

Both *White Heat* and *White Light* feature the phonetic language Robinson has derived from French, German and Maori, which relies on his cynical observation that even the most ordinary phrase sounds more significant if relayed in a foreign tongue. In this way he seeks to

expose our own assumptions about the intrinsic qualities of various cultures. Robinson's interest in the links between language and culture extends to his use of idioms. In *Big Bang: White Heat*, Mickey Mouse, whose silhouette is recognised throughout the world, is given a new reading courtesy of Robinson's experiences in Germany. In a particularly upmarket part of Dusseldorf, a street called Koenigs Alle has become the epitome of "schickey" - a German word for over-the-top snobbery. In Robinson's reworking of the Disney classic, the famous mouse is outfitted with a bowtie and a long cigarette holder - et voila! - "Schickey Mickey" is born.

Detail: *Big Bang: White Heat* (1998) Courtesy of the Anna Bibby Gallery





Trespass (1998) Courtesy of the Brooke Gifford Gallery

— grant takle

Grant Takle's intricate silver and black paintings, seething with symbols, puns and allusions, act as vehicles for his intense examination of New Zealand's current cultural identity. Employing a pictorial version of word association, Takle plays with a large and extremely diverse repertoire of iconography. None of his multi-faceted images correspond directly with a single meaning, and are as open to change and interpretation as language and culture. Both *Trespass* and *Taken* feature massive, land-block motifs, echoing the archaeological digging Takle undertakes in mining the past for a consideration of the future. The shifting sections of earth which rear up against each other like seismic plates

forming signposts, packing crates, even coffins, allude to the division and assumed ownership of what was previously Maori land by the settling Europeans. They also warn of the perils involved in attempting to traverse such unstable and treacherous ground.

Two arrows in *Trespass* refer to the polarities of the political right and left, as well as to ideas of right and wrong, and 'taking a turn for the worse'. The diverging lines are also a wry illustration of a possible future path for New Zealand's uneasy bicultural marriage - will it survive for better or worse? The koru form enclosed within the right-veering arrow alludes to the appropriation of Maori culture for both artistic (Gordon Walter's *Koru* series) and commercial (Air New Zealand's corporate logo) purposes. Takle has himself appropriated images from New Zealand art historical sources, including McCahon-like gates, fences and text in several paintings. *Trespass* relates to ideas first explored in an earlier painting, *All Things Being Equal*, which addressed the issue of intellectual copyright and the influence of funding bodies such as Creative New Zealand in deciding which types of art and expression are rewarded with financial support.

With a title based on old Ministry of Education signs, *Trespass* refers to the perceived trespass by Europeans, and now Pakeha New Zealanders, on Maori land. The sailing ship flying St. Andrew's Cross and the ornate jewelled crown are obvious symbols of European colonisation, while the horse's head on the side of a crate highlights 'race'

issues in New Zealand, where the quality of your 'bloodstock' can determine whether or not you are treated as a first, second or third class citizen. Takle believes that the definitions being forced upon European New Zealanders are providing them with increasingly diminished options, and has placed a headstone engraved with the legend "Pakeha" within a fenced colonial grave. Ironically, Pakeha culture and identity is now endangered, just as the Maori culture was threatened by the arrival of the Europeans. Yet "pakeha" is, in essence, a New Zealand construction - if, in being Pakeha, they don't belong here, where else can they exist? How long do you have to live or die in a country before it becomes part of you and you part of it?

Taken brings with it the immediate connotations of possession, theft and unlawful seizure, but also presents less overt associations, such as to be enamoured with, fooled or betrayed. In Takle's painting, the last letter of the word is almost lost within the transition between silver and black backgrounds. This leaves the word 'take', which in Maori can mean a base, root or cause as well as reason, concern or a topic for discussion. In the darkened panel of *Taken* a series of oversized hourglasses form a teetering stack, each enclosing a different plant. The rose, the thistle and the shamrock are easily recognised as symbols of the nations within the British Empire, and the realisation that it is our own silver fern at the bottom of the pile forces us to consider our position on New Zealand sovereignty and national identity. Each

plant drips into the bottom half of the glass, a symbol of the lines of descent for both Maori and Pakeha, as well as the gradual dilution and integration of bloodlines. The mountain formed by this attrition is an enigmatic symbol, as it could refer to both the building up of resentment or the creation of a new place to stand. In the foreground a rampant lion, the traditional emblem of

the power and strength of the Crown, holds down the lid of a trunk which is being pushed open by the creatures hidden within. The trunk, pierced on all sides with swords like part of a death-defying magician's act, contains what Takle describes as a 'spiritual treasury', and represents the opposing attempts to 'lift the lid on' and 'box in' New Zealand culture.

Taken (1998) Courtesy of the Brooke Gifford Gallery



artists

Shane Cotton

Shane Cotton was born in Upper Hutt in 1964. He studied at the School of Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury, receiving his BFA in 1988. He holds a Diploma in Teaching from the Christchurch College of Education, and has taught at both Christ's College and Lincoln High School. In 1987, Cotton won the Seager Prize in Fine Arts, and in the following year he received both the Ethel Rose Overton Scholarship and the Sawtell–Turner Prize in Painting. In 1989 he was awarded the Judge's Prize in the Wilkins and Davies Art Award, and he received a Te Waka Toi Projects Grant in 1991. Cotton is currently the Frances Hodgkins Fellow at the University of Canterbury. Since 1993 he has been a lecturer in the Department of Maori Studies at Massey University, Palmerston North. Cotton has participated in group exhibitions throughout New Zealand, including: *Korurangi: New Maori Art*, New Gallery, Auckland City Art Gallery, 1995; *Localities of Desire*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1994 and *Five New Zealand Artists*, DKW Gallery, Melbourne, Australia, 1994. His solo shows include: *Tableau – New Painting*, Lesley Kreisler Gallery, New Plymouth, 1997; *Shane Cotton: Paintings*, Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, 1997; *Shane Cotton: Recent Paintings*, Govett Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth, 1995; *Te tā Pahara*, Brooke Gifford Gallery, 1995 and *New Works*, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, 1994.

Bill Hammond

Bill Hammond was born in Christchurch in 1947. He studied at the University of Canterbury's School of Fine Arts in the late 1960s. From 1971 until 1981, Hammond designed and manufactured wooden toys. He held his first solo exhibition in 1979 in Christchurch, and has since exhibited regularly throughout New Zealand. In 1989, Hammond travelled with a group of other artists to the sub-Antarctic Auckland Islands, and later exhibited work resulting from this expedition. He was awarded grants by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council in 1984 and 1987, and received a travel grant to visit Japan in 1990. In 1991, the Arts Council awarded Hammond a major fellowship grant. Hammond was the joint winner of the 1994 Visa Gold Art Award. He is represented in many public and private collections throughout New Zealand and currently lives in Lyttelton. Selected solo exhibitions include: *Bill Hammond*, Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, 1998; *Headscapes*, Gregory Flint Gallery, Auckland, 1997; *Plain and Fancy*, Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, 1997; *Gangland*, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington, 1996 and *We are Birds*, Gregory Flint Gallery, Auckland, 1996. Hammond's selected group exhibitions include: *Distance Looks our Way*, Expo 1992, Seville, Spain, 1992; *Headlands*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1994 and *Hangover*, (toured New Zealand) 1996.

Chris Heaphy

Chris Heaphy was born in Palmerston North in 1965 and is of both Kai Tahu and European descent. He received Te Waka Toi Grants in 1993 and 1994, and was awarded the Olivia Spencer Bower Fellowship in 1995. In 1998 he received a Waikato Polytechnic Research Grant, allowing him to undertake a residency in Melbourne. Heaphy's selected solo exhibitions include: *Drawings*, Jonathan Smart Gallery, Christchurch, 1998; *Visions*, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland, 1998; *Hope*, Jonathan Smart Gallery, 1997; *Finding the Gap*, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington, 1997; *Into the Black*, Jonathan Smart Gallery, 1996; *New Paintings*, Peter McLeavey Gallery, 1996; *New Dirt*, Gregory Flint Gallery, Auckland, 1995; *Dirt*, Jonathan Smart Gallery, 1995; and *Inbetween*, Gregory Flint Gallery, 1993. Heaphy has also contributed to major group shows throughout New Zealand and internationally, including: *Propositions Australiennes*, Arts d'Australie, Paris, 1998; *Transaction*, Hong Kong, 1998; *Pins and Needles*, Bishop Suter Art Gallery, Nelson, 1996; *Korurangi: New Maori Art*, Auckland City Art Gallery, 1995; *A Very Peculiar Practice*, Wellington City Art Gallery, 1995; and *Stop Making Sense* (collaboration with Gordon Walters), Wellington City Art Gallery, 1995. Heaphy currently works as a Tutor in Visual Arts at the Waikato Polytechnic in Hamilton.

Tony de Lautour

Tony de Lautour was born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1965. He graduated from the University of Canterbury in 1988 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Sculpture) degree. De Lautour has featured in solo exhibitions throughout New Zealand, including: *New Paintings*, Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland, 1998; *New Paintings*, Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, 1998; *100 Paintings and a Large Saw*, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, 1997; *New Paintings*, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland, 1997; *Southern Monograms*, Lesley Kreisler Gallery, New Plymouth, 1996; *New White Collection*, Brooke Gifford Gallery, 1995 and *Bad White Art*, Brooke Gifford Gallery and Teststrip, Auckland, 1994. Selected group shows in which de Lautour has participated include: *Close Quarters*, Melbourne, Australia, 1998; *Seen and Heard*, Hawkes Bay Cultural Trust, Hastings, 1998; *Peep*, Ivan Anthony Gallery, Auckland, 1998; *Now Showing: Artists Go to the Movies*, Film Centre, Wellington (Toured New Zealand), 1997; *Failure?*, Next Wave Festival, Linden Gallery, Melbourne, 1996 and *A Very Peculiar Practice: Aspects of Recent New Zealand Painting*, City Gallery, Wellington, 1995. De Lautour received the Premier Award in the 1995 Visa Gold Art Award.

S raphine Pick

S raphine Pick was born in Kawakawa, in the Bay of Islands in 1964. She graduated from the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts in 1988 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts. The following year she studied Drama and in 1991 she gained a Diploma of Teaching from the Christchurch College of Education. In 1994 Pick was the recipient of the Olivia Spencer Bower Award and was awarded a Merit prize in the Visa Gold Art Award. In the following year, she was named as the Rita Angus Artist in Residence. She has exhibited regularly throughout New Zealand since 1987, and her work is held in public, corporate and private collections. Pick is currently teaching at the Elam School of Fine Arts at Auckland University. Pick's solo exhibitions include: *Scratching Skin*, McDougall Contemporary Art Annex, Christchurch, 1998; *I Wish*, Hamish McKay Gallery, Wellington, 1998; *Recent Paintings*, Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, 1998; *Possibly*, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland, 1997; *Looking Like Someone Else*, Manawatu Art Gallery, 1997; *Unveiled*, City Gallery, Wellington, 1995; and *Headspace*, Brooke Gifford Gallery, 1994. She has also participated in a number of major group exhibitions, including: *Now Showing*, City Gallery (toured), 1997; *A Very Peculiar Practice*, City Gallery, Wellington, 1995; *Paintings and Drawings*, Hamish McKay Gallery, 1994; *From Liquid Darkness*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 1993 and *Recent Paintings*, Hamish McKay Gallery, 1993.

Peter Robinson

Peter Robinson was born in Ashburton in 1966. He attended the Canterbury University School of Fine Arts, graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1989. The following year, he received his Diploma of Teaching from the Christchurch College of Education. In 1988 Robinson received a Maori Education Foundation Award and the Irwin Ellen Tertiary Scholarship. Te Atinga, the Contemporary Maori Visual Arts Board, gave him a Projects Grant in 1991, and he received a grant from the Arts Council of New Zealand in 1995. Robinson has worked as an Art teacher at Christ's College, Christchurch since 1991, taking a leave of absence in 1995 when he took up a position as Artist in Residence at the Ludwig Forum in Aachen, Germany. Robinson also undertook residencies in 1996 and 1998, at the Goethe Institut in Dusseldorf and at the Artspace Gallery in Sydney. His selected solo exhibitions include: *Peter Robinson*, Anna Bibby Gallery, Auckland, 1998; *Canon Fodder*, Peter McLeavey Gallery, Wellington, 1997; *Nice Paintings*, Anna Bibby Gallery, 1997; *NZPR*, Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, 1997; *Home and Away*, Peter McLeavey Gallery, 1996; *Bad Aachen Ideas*, Ludwig Forum, Aachen, Germany, 1995; *New Lines/ Old Stock*, Brooke Gifford Gallery, 1994 and *100%*, Peter McLeavey Gallery, 1994. Robinson has participated in group shows throughout New Zealand and internationally, including: *Sydney Biennale*, Sydney, 1998; *Entropy Zu Hause*, Suermondt-Ludwig Museum, Aachen, Germany, 1998; *Seppelt Art Awards*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1997; *Johannesburg Biennale*, Powerhouse, Johannesburg, 1997; *Asia/Pacific Triennale*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 1996; *San Paulo Biennale*, Biennale Pavilion, San Paulo, Brazil, 1996; *Korurangi*, Auckland City Art Gallery, 1995; *Cultural Safety*, Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, Germany, 1995; *Localities of Desire*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 1994 and *Art Now*, Museum of New Zealand, Wellington, 1994. Robinson is represented in public and private collections in New Zealand and overseas.

Grant Takle

Grant Takle was born in Christchurch in 1962. Between 1981 and 1984 he completed a Diploma in Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury. Takle is represented in several major public collections, including those of Trust Bank Canterbury, the Manawatu Art Gallery and the Robert McDougall Art Gallery. He received QEII Arts Council Grants in 1988 and 1989 and was awarded a Guthrey Travel Grant from the C.S.A. Gallery in 1992. In 1993 Takle received the Manawatu – Pacific College Purchase Award and won the Young Contemporaries Merit Art Award from the Suter Gallery in Nelson. In 1997, he was a finalist in both the Visa Gold Art Award and the Wallace Art Awards. In the same year, Takle received a Community Trust Arts Excellence Award. Takle's solo exhibitions include: *In the New Zealand Style*, Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, 1997; *Scoring Points*, McKee Gallery, Nelson, 1994; *Deforming Attitudes*, McDougall Contemporary Art Annex, Christchurch, 1994; and *Walls and Decoration*, Jonathan Jensen Gallery, Christchurch, 1990. Takle has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, including: *Drawings and Paintings*, Brooke Gifford Gallery, Christchurch, 1998; *Recent Acquisitions*, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, Christchurch, 1998; *Wallace Art Awards*, The Wallace Trust Gallery, Auckland, 1997; *Visa Gold Finalists Exhibition*, Auckland Art Gallery and City Gallery, Wellington, 1997; *Drawing Out of Context*, C.S.A. Gallery, Christchurch, 1996; *Prototypes*, McDougall Contemporary Art Annex, 1994; *Prospect Canterbury*, Robert McDougall Art Gallery, 1992; *Vanitas*, McDougall Contemporary Art Annex, 1992 and *Here and Now*, McDougall Contemporary Art Annex, 1988.

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