

B.175

Bulletin
Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetu

Autumn
March—May
2014



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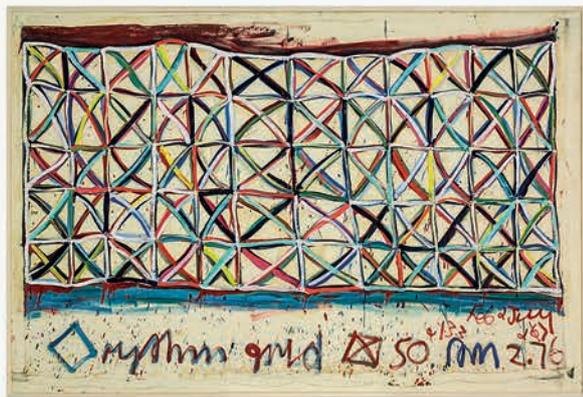


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IMPORTANT PAINTINGS AND CONTEMPORARY ART
APRIL 3RD

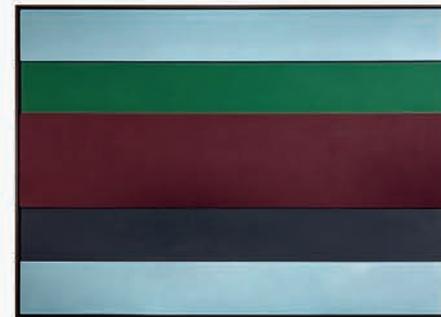
Exhibition on view from Thursday 27th March
at 3 Abbey Street, Newton.



Allen Maddox
Rhythm Grid
oil on canvas, 1976
1630 x 2435mm
\$55 000 – \$75 000



Colin McCahon
Clouds No. 7
synthetic polymer paint on
Steinbach mounted to board, 1975
1095 x 730mm
\$250 000 – \$300 000



Don Driver
Painted Relief - 1972
acrylic paint, canvas
and aluminium
1375 x 1850mm
\$20 000 – \$30 000



Michael Parekowhai
Ypres from The Consolation of
Philosophy - Piko nei te matenga
type C print, edition of 8 (2001)
1500 x 1200mm
\$13 000 – \$18 000

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Cover and inside cover:
Tony Bond **Swoop** (detail) 2013.
Ceramic. Courtesy of the artist

Director's Foreword



In the summer of 1998 my predecessor Tony Preston wrote the foreword for the inaugural issue of a redesigned *Bulletin*, the first to be produced as part of a new relationship with our then gold sponsor, and design partner, Strategy Design & Advertising. It was the start of a fifteen-year relationship, during which Strategy has designed *Bulletin* under a 100% sponsorship agreement, created and shaped, recreated and reshaped our brand, and designed memorable campaigns for exhibitions from **Giacometti** to **Ron Mueck**. During that time, we've won countless design and industry awards, and I acknowledge our deep gratitude for all the work over the years from Strategy and its staff.

So it is with mixed feelings that I write to say that Strategy are no longer designing *Bulletin*. They provided an amazing level of support and together we achieved great things. But I am excited by the new directions in which we can take the magazine, building upon the solid structure they have created for us.

This issue of *Bulletin* is the first to be created under a new partnership we are forging with the University of Canterbury's School of Fine Arts and, in particular, the Graphic Design department. Under the tutelage of designers Aaron Beehre and Luke Wood, *Bulletin* is to become a teaching tool. Over time, this arrangement will see students bringing new ideas and thinking to reinvigorate the magazine; in return, we bring real world industry connections and genuine community involvement. I see this as an example of how we want to reignite the Gallery's collaborations with artists and scholars, to be champions of thought and new ideas, and to remain engaging to a broad range of readers.

Under our feet, another important relationship is about to be changed too—our relationship with the land on which this building sits. Over several months following the quakes, the ground beneath the building settled unevenly and eventually so too did the building. The concrete of the basement became stressed and it was evident that re-leveling was necessary as well as the already proposed base isolation. So, over the past few months, while we and the collections have remained in this building, it has been efficiently and, for the most part, quietly, re-levelled with advanced technology used by Urettek.

Next, base isolation will sever our direct connections to the ground and see bearings and pads installed on the basement pillars to minimise shaking of the building. Widely used in Pacific Rim galleries and museums in other earthquake-prone cities, this is an acceptable and recognised way to assure the people of Christchurch, our insurers and potential lenders that the treasures for which we care will be as safe as they can be into the future. Ultimately, this building is required to protect its collections as well as provide safe egress for people in the event of an emergency.

With all land on our eastern boundary currently free of other buildings, we have a one-off opportunity to base isolate starting in May 2014. Only after this can we proceed to repair our wavy glass façade and the parapets which surround the building—and reinstate lighting and other services inside ready for reopening.

There is a lot of planning for reopening a whole building at once. We will be excited to integrate a range of new works and to celebrate the collection we know Christchurch is missing. We're planning an opening exhibition with the working title **Lift**—it will be guaranteed to raise the collective spirits of the city.

Exhibitions March, April, May

Christchurch Art Gallery's present building schedule shows us completing on 27 September 2015 (we jokingly add, at 4pm). What an opening it will be for this still-new gallery after four years closed; a cultural triumph in art-starved Christchurch and a clear symbol of a reinvigorated and functioning central city.

In the meantime (of course) we are still exhibiting. You've got a few more days to enjoy **Mark Adams: Cook's Sites** at 209 Tuam Street, and he'll be replaced by a hypnotic Daniel Crooks show in April. **Burster Flipper Wobbler Dripper Spinner Stacker Shaker Maker** opened at ArtBox in mid-February with an action-packed family fun day. The exhibition turns the ArtBox gallery into a playroom plus laboratory, where colour and texture change before your eyes and familiar objects are used in ways you never thought of. There is a vivid sense of the artist as maker, and the work of art as something made. This show is process-driven, seriously playful and assertively optimistic. And our educator will be offering on-site lessons, guided tours, workshops and drop-in activities based on the show. It's for kids of all ages, and we hope you enjoy it as much as we do.

Jenny Harper

Director

February 2014

Mark Adams: Cook's Sites

Until 23 March 2014

209 Tuam Street

One of New Zealand's most significant photographers, Mark Adams is renowned for his examination of issues surrounding our Māori and colonial histories. His current exhibition, **Cook's Sites**, records two places in the South Island that are intrinsically linked with Captain James Cook. Cook and his crews visited Dusky Sound in Fiordland and Queen Charlotte Sound in the Marlborough Sounds during the early 1770s. Today these places, which represent some of the first interactions between the British Empire and Māori, are loaded with bicultural significance. Adams's photographic representations of these sites are ambiguous, leaving open questions about what traces of these first encounters remain, and how we should read them.

Burster Flipper Wobbler Dripper Spinner Stacker Shaker Maker

Until 28 September 2014

ArtBox, corner Madras and St Asaph streets

Powered by the excitement of seeing ordinary things transformed in unexpected ways, this exhibition explores the shape-shifting, experimental and seriously playful work of making art. Artists from near and far test the limits of their materials with morphing pencil sculptures, stretchy paint skins, gravity-defying stacks and videos of exploding paint-balloons. Featuring works by Rebecca Baumann, Mark Braunias and Jill Kennedy, Judy Darragh, Steve Carr, Lionel Bawden, John Hurrell, Tony Bond, Helen Calder, John Nicholson and Miranda Parkes, the exhibition is supported by a lively and engaging programme for both children and adults that includes floor talks, workshops and publications.

Daniel Crooks: Seek Stillness in Movement

5 April – 1 June 2014

209 Tuam Street

Hectic city scenes are transformed into contemplative, time-bending meditations of extraordinary beauty in the hands of celebrated Australian video artist Daniel Crooks. Four remarkable works, all created using Crooks's distinctive 'time-slicing' technique, stretch and fragment everyday sights, disrupting not only our visual experience, but our perception of time itself. The centrepiece of the exhibition is the spell-binding *Static No.12 (seek stillness in movement)*, which features an elderly man practicing tai chi in Shanghai's Xujiahui Park. Celebrating the slow physical poetry of that discipline, Crooks turns an intimate moment into a powerful, complex contemplation on the movement of the body through space and time.





burster
flipper
wobbler
dripper
spinner
stacker
shaker
maker

Powered by the excitement of seeing ordinary things transformed in unexpected ways, the Gallery's latest family-focused exhibition features artists who explore the pleasures and possibilities of experimentation; testing the limits of their materials with morphing pencil sculptures, stretchy paint skins, gravity-defying stacks, videos of exploding paint-balloons and more. Curators Justin Paton and Felicity Milburn spoke with them about the seriously playful work of making art.

Rebecca Baumann **Automated Colour Field** (detail)
2011. 100 flip-clocks, laser-cut paper, batteries.
Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite Gallery.
Originally commissioned by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art for *New11*. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Plastic zip-ties... not the most likely art material, but you're in the midst of a serious romance with these objects. There must be hundreds in the works you've made for this show. How did the romance start?

I'm a walker who rambles around the city. I don't own a car so I wander into downtown Auckland from my flat in Kingsland several times a week, visiting various galleries, especially around K' Road, and the public library. And as I happen to adore Schwitters, Driver, Rauschenberg and Co. I enjoy discovering strange discarded stuff on the footpath, picking it up and, if it is small enough, putting it in my pocket. I get home and throw this 'junk' on a big table in my studio/library. And I kept finding these long ratcheted plastic things snipped off and thrown on the ground near telephone poles. Took me a while to figure out what they were for.

So where do you source the ties that appear in your sculptures?

All sorts of places, though mainly hardware stores: the Warehouse, Bunnings, Hammer Hardware, Japanese \$3 shops, Dick Smith, Mega Choice, Maurie Fussell, Surplustronics. I also have some websites I explore too, most courtesy of artist Eddie Clemens—he's been really helpful. He buys a massive quantity of cable ties for his light works.

And you're binding the ties to objects so mundane we might ordinarily ignore them—perforated plastic baskets. What were these made for and what appeals to you about them?

The peg baskets? I just had a brainwave—that these shiny gridded containers I spotted in a hardware store could be systematically added to, could have ratcheted 'hair' added on. I've always had a big interest in grids so their perforations caught my eye. It was a sudden thought out of the blue. A 'what if...' sort of thing. Art often has nothing to do with logic. Like life. One is always curious to make one's mental fantasy real, putting things together in the real world to see what would happen.

You're well known today as a critic on the EyeContact website, which suggests an analytical approach to art. Does that carry over to art-making, or is art-making where you get some reprieve from that way of thinking?

That 'reprieve' thing is sort of true. However I see writing as an extension of painting: Burroughs or Acker growing out of Picasso, Braque and Gris. Reviews obviously are a sort of visual statement, as physical objects. The website itself is a type of grid painting, with compartments, arrangements, layers etc. It's linked to my polyurethane alphabet soup art-review plaques, and masking tape, canvas grid paintings. And writing after all is making mental pictures.

I guess I like to let the hand have a will of its own. Both writing and art-making are a mix of impulse and rationality. Except with art you can be instinctive first and then analytical; put your intuition under the microscope when you have made something to look at. When things are going well for both art-making or review writing you get an adrenalin rush. It's very satisfying—and addictive.

So how do other people react physically to the works? The sheen and spring of the ties makes me want to touch. But they've also got a prickly and slightly repulsive quality—as though they might hook or snag you.

They are basically soft and bendy, not scary (cutting or piercing) like steel barbed wire.

The cable ties' hairiness relates to my big black map grid paintings held in Te Papa Tongarewa, Wallace Collection and Auckland Art Gallery. The prickly, spiky, hairy line that crosses an obliterated Christchurch landscape on mini-map grids. A chance aspect (like in my earlier 'dice score' paintings and early framed map paintings) is present when the plastic strands misbehave. I've always liked that aspect with Don Peebles's fantastic canvas fin paintings—their independent behaviour.

There is also an anthropomorphic aspect I play on and encourage. Some people project personalities onto them, especially the ones like heads or faces. They become very affectionate and talk to these sculptures. The spiky 'hair' might be me remembering the tonsorial nightmares of my school and university years. This is pre-punk. My hair was always coarse and fibrous; by running my hands through it I could make it stand up in the classroom. I'd disrupt the class by making my friends laugh. A little exhibitionism.

And zip-ties can carry some ominous associations....

True... plastic handcuffs for the NYPD or the military. Very sinister symbols for suppression. Bondage and S&M too. I also use other stuff from hardware stores though: curtain rings, washers, rawl-plugs, plant-ties, label ties.

You call the objects 'things', a title I love. It suggests objects that aren't yet named, that haven't yet been categorised. As a writer you've got to choose your words carefully. Why'd you choose this one?

One art world expression that irritates me is 'untitled', because actually it really is a title. 'Things' is actually grasping at that same inchoate concept; something that can be convenient as a label without providing information that replaces the experience, the non-language gut encounter.

In the show—after I made the various assorted items for it—I found a pattern, four types of object I had produced: thingies, doodahs, thingummies and whatsits. Terms for being calculatedly vague. Four types of thingwords, for mask-things, box-things, sparsely-haired things and band-wrapped-tightly things. And I think putting them all together on the wall as a sort of 3D composition will make up a sort of 'hairy' painting.

The sculptures do nonetheless suggest or allude to lots of other things. What else have people compared them with? What do you compare them with yourself?

Bondage masks, ice hockey goalie masks, Papua New Guinean culture, balding men with patches of stringy hair, bird's nests, tumbleweed, seaweed, gorse, horsetails, punk hairstyles...

How much time and energy do you put into trying to anticipate those comparisons and echoes? Or is it a case of busying yourself with the making and letting associations bloom as they may?

The latter. They are made by improvisation. At the start I don't know where I'll end up—though I might have a hunch. I'm discovering things, trying out stuff. There was a time I worked the other way, planning before constructing. Now it is more fun surprising myself. And working quickly.

When you worked as a curator at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, you curated a show called Sharp and Shiny which presented artworks as a form of fetish object. Are these new works tribal masks for a plastic-glutted consumer society?

You are dead right. It's a knowing reference to fetishism, but made by impulse, having some fun, and not intended as a critique of anything. The process is generated by the pleasure found in handling the materials, and curiosity. As I get older I'm enjoying colour and texture more and more. It is as if sensation is something I've recently discovered.

John Reynolds has talked about his mixed feelings about the plastic that washes up on our beaches: terrible evidence of environmental damage, but also surprisingly beautiful at times. Do you have 'moral' feelings about all the plastic we're awash in?

Certainly, especially when you hear appalling stories about seabirds eating the stuff and dying of malnutrition. And yet, of course I love the design, form and shiny saturated colour of this stuff. Can't deny it, I'm drawn to these components.

The funny thing is that in *Mythologies* (1957) Roland Barthes describes plastic as 'disgraced' and 'aggressive' long before eco issues were being widely discussed. He means something very different: its unnatural lack of fibrous texture or grain, the fact it flows into a mould that determines its shape.

JP



John Hurrell **Things (a Baker's Dozen): Five whatsits, two thingummies, two doodahs and four thingies** (detail) 2013. Plastic peg baskets, nylon cable ties. Courtesy of the artist

You use paint in your work. In fact it's almost all you use. But would you call yourself a painter?

I studied painting and I use painting conventions; colour is important as is tonality and placement of forms. However I think about a space not a 'canvas' and I consider light and movement. My practice has grown out of a painting knowledge and its history and my work makes reference to that history.

A few years back, you were letting this paint ooze down boards. But then the paint lifted free of any traditional support. Tell us how that happened.

From early on I was interested in the relationship between painting and architecture. I began looking at very early architecture/construction and the interior wall coverings as surfaces that concealed and revealed, which led to a number of experimental works that related to house construction and interior coverings in the early 2000s. Plaster panels were painted/poured with white enamel paint while horizontal. When lifted the semi-dry paint slumped slowly down the surface. These were in frames, which leant against the walls suggesting easels as well as prefabricated walls.

This led to a series of works where I poured paint onto panels then tilted them, using gravity to form the shapes. The residue of paint collected on plastic sheets or in trays. Quite often I would leave a pool attached to the lower edge of a panel as an experiment. This in turn led to panels with pours 'spilling' on to the wall—paint half on/half off. I also had smallish pools or slivers of paint that sat in the studio for some time until I began to consider using them.

There's something deeply alluring about the process of pouring out sheer colour—what do you think it is?

The paint material is seductive especially when it is first poured—a glossy material that picks up light and reflections and appears to have a life of its own as it flows and spreads. I suppose there is a seeming recklessness that appeals to those who witness this.

In the work you're making for the Burster Flipper show, the colours in play seem to be referencing Mondrian and De Stijl—is that right?

The modular white cuboid forms and the black lines through the space put me in mind of de Stijl so I decided to work with the three primary colours, or rather, variations of them. The horizontal black beams 'cut' through the line of vision. Hopefully this will encourage the viewer to change position and peer upwards as well as walk around. The skins themselves are elongated and hang from black rubber cords that stretch under their weight. This emphasises the height, drawing

the eye upward to the ceiling and back to the ground, where the rubber coils in relaxed forms. The colour falls through the space. The working title is *red, blue, yellow* but there are several skins of each colour and each of those is a variation on the main colour. They have quirky names—*Havoc, Bombshell, Knock out, La rioja, Lucky, Alo-alo, Lochmara, Endeavour, Curious.*

There are also other associations in play; the works are sticky, bodily, visceral...

There are interesting comparisons made, most to do with the body. The scale of most of the individual pieces does relate to the body, and skins have a sense of being discarded from some organic form. In fact the paint skins have in a sense been discarded from the picture plane. Lifted from their flat support they fall in on themselves or whatever support is given. I use different supports for different works. Sometimes these are steel pegs, rods or racks depending on what it is I am trying to do.

The elastic you hang them from looks casual but is very carefully chosen. Why is it important for you to hang the 'skins' in this way—as opposed to pinning them up or presenting them more conventionally?

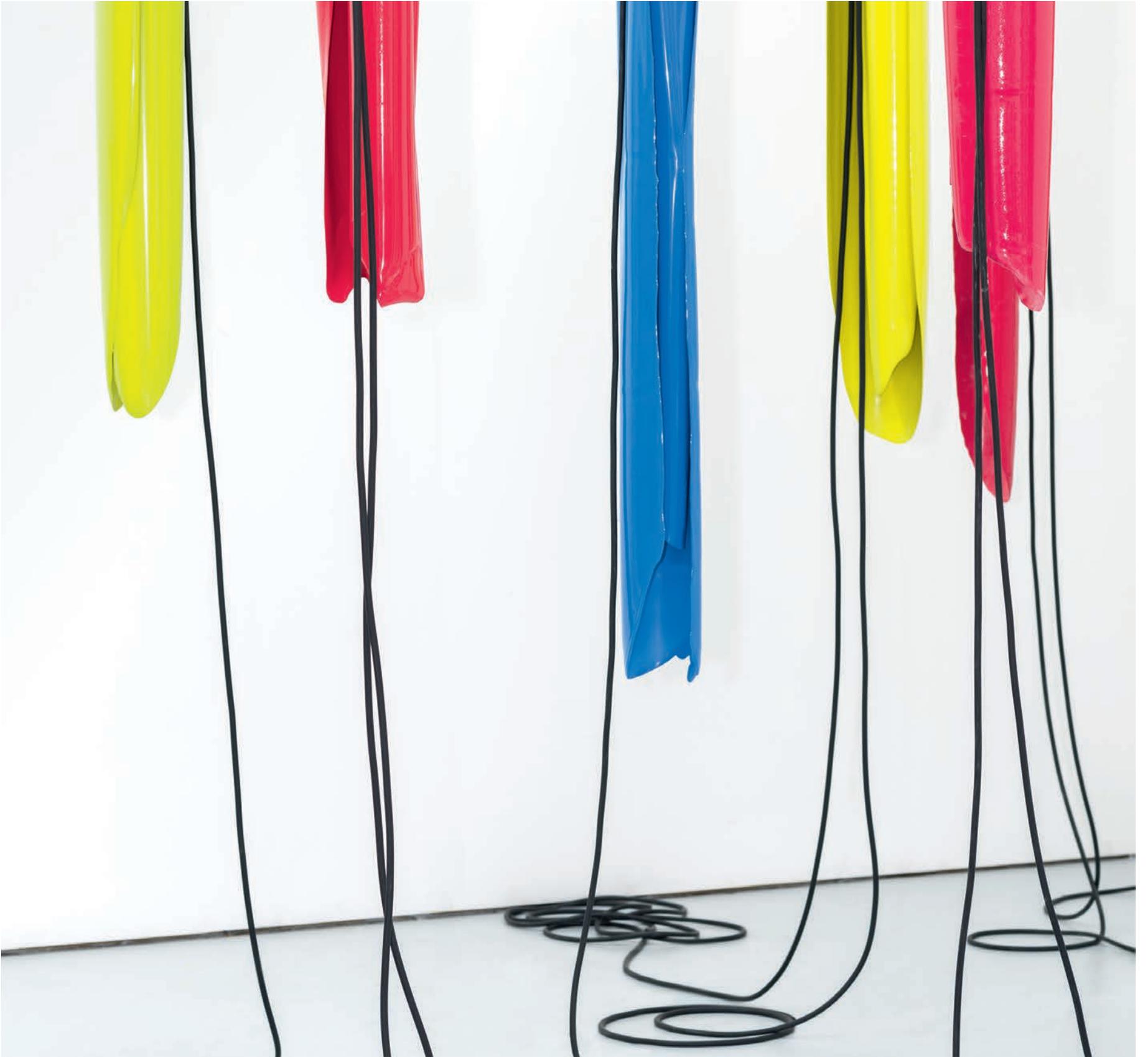
The cords are solid rubber and reasonably stretchy. In this work the cords pull the skins into tight, almost cylindrical, forms. This is particularly important as the colour needed to be presented in complete contrast to the wall planes—to fall through the space as opposed to being anchored to the wall or hanging against it on rods.

Some commentators say we're in a 'post-studio' period, when artists often outsource their production. What's your feeling about the semi-mythical space of the studio today?

I think most artists carry their ideas around in their heads and can develop these pretty much anywhere, with notebook or computer. The studio is simply the space where the ideas are physically worked on. Ideas dictate the materials or type of production of an artwork and sometimes that bypasses the need for a studio. The materiality of my work demands a reasonably large workspace.

JP

Helen Calder *Yellow, blue, red and black* (detail) 2013. Enamel paint, rubber cords. Courtesy of the artist



The work we're showing in Burster Flipper began as your pastel drawings, which were animated by filmmaker Jill Kennedy and then given a soundtrack of whirrs, clangs, pops and wishes by John Payne. Can you tell us more about how this collaboration worked? Did you each complete your part and hand it on like a game of Exquisite Corpse?

The three of us have collaborated on a number of animations over the past seven years so we have developed a unique symbiotic relationship—working independently yet feeding off the process. We all live in different parts of the country or the world so most of the feedback and decision making is done online.

Essentially I would send a series of drawings to Jill and, rather than a direct series of instructions, give her more or less carte blanche to 'mess' with them on the computer. We would identify a particular set of formal or pictorial concerns within the drawings and allow things to evolve in the process. Through trial and error we would both wait for things to organically develop; when we both agreed on a particular direction that's when things really started to take shape. From the quite large body of animations produced we selected those we thought worked best as a series. Throughout the process John thought about sounds to accompany the visuals, and he and Jill completed the works.

Most of your work has been made as an individual, but you've also done another collaboration recently, with quilt-maker Brenda Ronowicz. Are there particular benefits or challenges associated with making works with others?

When I first started drawing on public walls in 2001 the notion of collaboration seemed to fit like a hand in a glove. In that sense you are working directly and immediately with the gallery and the audience. I probably have built up enough individual drawings to last 1,000 years, so being able to extend them into different media with someone else allows for a bit of breathing space. The best collaborations are those where you trust that person and let them make the works without too much interference. Once the collaborator has a sense of ownership I stop seeing them as 'my' work, and for that reason can probably enjoy them more. It's healthy as an artist to lose some of the preciousness you develop about your own work. In that way it also feeds back into my own practice where I can see what I am trying to do slightly more objectively. Hopefully, Jill, John and Brenda also gain something from the experience for their own practice too.

Your work for Burster Flipper appears simple, but it's incredibly satisfying to watch. That's partly because the touches are so light; the objects aren't solid, just coloured in airily at the edges. Is that kind of simplicity easier or harder to get right than the more outwardly complex works you've done?

I wouldn't say either way actually. Both picture-making formats require an equal focus on every aspect of their construction. However as Jill has an inherent minimalist aesthetic in her own work I knew the more recent 'pared back' drawings I offered up would suit her approach. The type of 'echo' experimental soundscape I associated with John was also a factor in achieving the result we arrived at.

Some of the images seem to allude to food, others have a more mechanical feel; did you have any subject matter in particular in mind when you began?

Yes. I wanted my organic abstractions to abstract. To unpack themselves and put abstraction to work. It always seems to just sit there looking content and self-satisfied in its well-made refined modernist way. So I wanted to make it do something. That something was to suggest or reference biological functions. In this way minimal abstraction, through very slight movement, might also express an internal psychological world. Jill mentioned that she watched a lot of David Attenborough's *Life in the Undergrowth* during the development of the animations, which I believe crept into some of her thinking.

When I first watched these works, I realised I was thinking about those great old sequences you used to sometimes see of repetitive mechanical processes in factories that had been set to music. Is there any nostalgia at work in there for you?

Both Jill and I have a fascination with 1950s and 1960s children's illustrated encyclopaedias. The mass of information and imagery appeals to me and the 'ordinariness' of the diagrams seem to be 'asking for it'. One of my favourite books is by Bertha Morris Parker titled *What things are made of*. It is a sincere attempt to explain the nature of all known matter in the universe to a twelve-year-old in 1950. It's a big ask, but the nobility of even trying to do so deserves respect. Something of that influence has a trace in some obscure way in this body of work.

Even in other works that are not animated, like Mang (1997), which is in the Gallery's collection, there is often a sense of multiple frames and sequences. Why does this approach appeal?

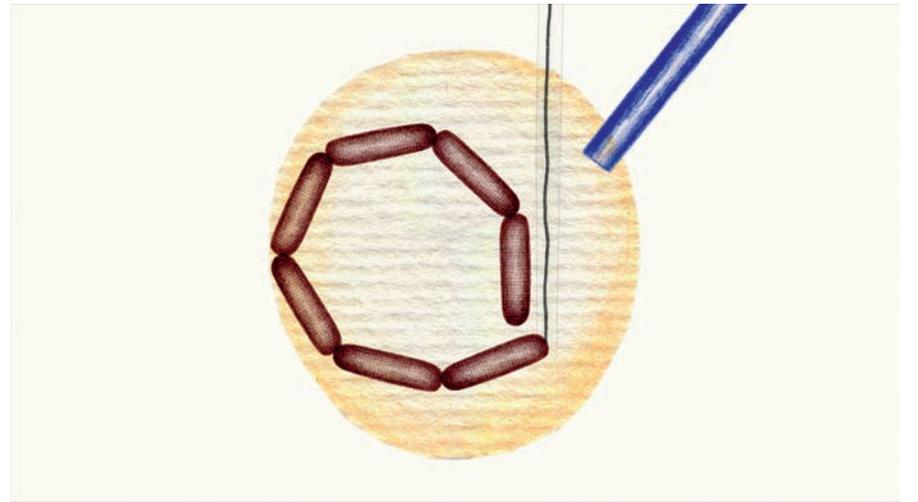
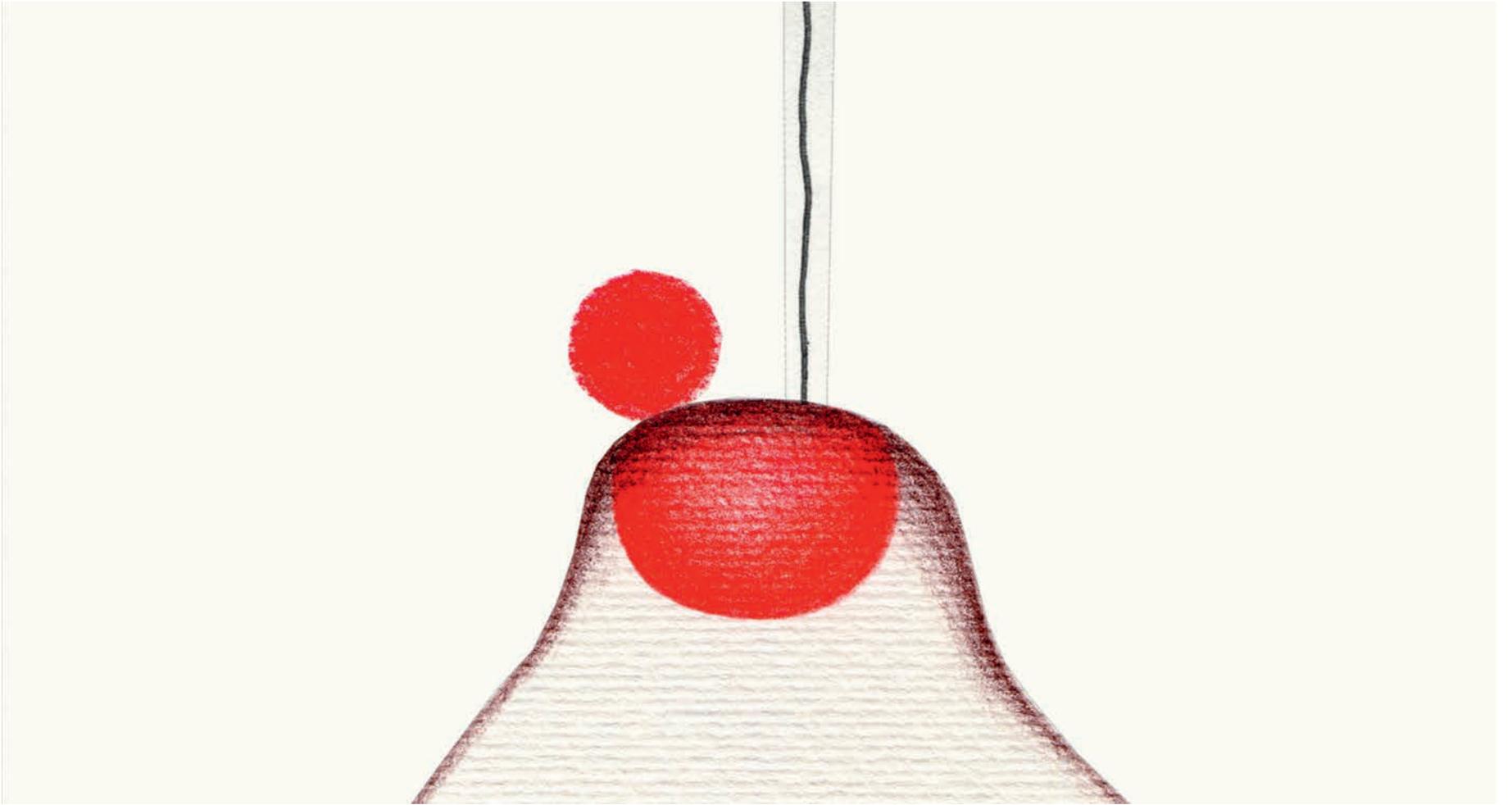
It's not so much a decision on my part other than the fact that I am a restless image maker. From early childhood I just drew constantly. It feels effortless so I produce one after the other. At a certain stage I exhaust the themes or forms I am dealing with and look critically back at them. Quite often an entire series seems like one work so I will present them in that format. They need to have an automatic sensibility about them that breeds from one page to the next. I have no interest in repetition for its own sake, the drawings have to evolve or de-evolve each time, even if the pictorial concerns are quite similar. Other times a single work screams back, 'leave me alone!' However most of the work never leaves the studio, and periodically I'll destroy lots.

How do you think of these animated drawings; as elements that have been separated out from a larger framework, or as individual works?

For every image in the larger more complex works (and all the wall drawings) there exists a single quite complete drawing. The intricate and layered compositions were a natural flow on from my previous practice of putting single works together as multiples. Working on large walls allowed me the freedom to unload all the individual images within one frame—more or less a cross-section of visual images inside the brain given an exterior space to inhabit. So the animations as made by Jill allow these individual images to come off the page, canvas or wall and start moving through time. Like a migratory species born in the imagination or a parallel universe of what things are made of.

FM

Mark Braunias and Jill Kennedy
Blue guts, Face lift and Suck
(details) 2013. Animation.
Courtesy of the artists



The painting you have in the show, *Spinner*, is a very carefully-made object, with all those lines of colour rippling out towards its edges. Yet looking more closely at the work it seems to have started with an accident. Is that so?

Spinner began with three large paint spills on the canvas. If you look closely you can see two putty-coloured spills beneath the stripes and partially underneath the main green spill. Throwing the paint was not an accident per se, but a way of engaging the space of the canvas, establishing a working field and starting a painting. The shape of the spills could not be controlled, so gives a sense of accident.

And how did the painting grow from there?

I was working with a painter's version of a 'call and response', like in music where the second figure answers the first, completing the phrase. The spills were my call and I left them to dry before coming back to see how I might develop and resolve the work from there.

I noticed that the outside edge of the green spill had an interesting shape, and so edged this with a dark colour, creating a cartoony effect. Enjoying the shape of this line, I decided to continue taking lines around the central spill, right up to and off the edge of the square canvas. I had an idea that the geometry of the repeating lines would balance out the organic nature of the spill. I also felt excited about how the semi-transparent lines would be affected by the putty colour underneath, giving the painting a little depth.

People know you best for making canvases that seem too big for their stretchers—canvases with spectacularly ruffled surfaces that 'boof' out into the viewer's space. *Spinner*, however, shows you working flat. Is that a shift, or do you see clear connections?

Those boofy canvases came out of the same experimental studio practice that applies to everything I make. Going flat is a way of expanding to include more potential outcomes and I have no problem working with both the boofs and the flats. I suspect more alternative solutions to do with canvas will arise over time. Prior to the boofs I was painting on semi-transparent PVC rather canvas and part-twisting, part-stretching this. I would like to use this material again too.

Spinner was part of a body of work for a show called *Smasher*, which was my first exhibition to include both scrunched canvases and flat paintings. I was interested to see how diverse I could let the shapes become, while still offering a tight and coherent show. The colours, ideas and themes in the paintings held them together as a show, rather than their formats.

The particular challenge I gave myself with *Spinner* and the other new flat works was to make a painting that could be as dynamic and exciting as the scrunches, depending only on paint. I had a feeling that I was making a 'radical' move by painting on a flat, stretched canvas, which I find funny.

With the flat surface, I'm tempted more to read the painting as a representation. That shrill green blob has me thinking of landscape. And the blueness around it could be coded 'water'? Or am I being too 'New Zealandy' here, reading landscape into everything?

I agree that *Spinner*, and some of the other flat works, looks topographical or like a bird's eye view of nature. However, this is not through an attempt to represent anything (there is at least no conscious representation of the visual world) but possibly because the works are made on the horizontal plane, as I generally work on the floor. I'm interested in the way that a simple shift to the vertical plane can make something into a painting. And I'm more interested in what a painting is and what it does than in what it looks like.

In saying that, I think it's a sign of an abstract painting doing its thing when it sparks off ideas and relationships to things in the environment and in our experiences. To me, *Spinner* is a blob-island in a sea of stripes, seen and made from above.

Though it's tempting to connect your work with other things, you're very much an abstract painter—plugging into the long tradition that reaches from Mondrian right up to now—focusing closely on things like how paint builds up, how colour carries, how canvas behaves when unstretched?

I love the way that focusing on these things allows a sort of unlimited imagination—if the work is not forced to line up with words, and not tied to representation, then what it can mean is limitless and up for further shaping even when it's laid out in front of a viewer. Painting is a whole language of its own and I will never learn all of it, but using it helps me to remember that there are so many languages—perhaps some we aren't even aware of.

I also love the physicality of painting. A lot of our life is not lived out through the physical and often now the things we create and offer exist in the digital world.

I think there are valuable limitations and therefore possibilities that come through when ideas are tied to, and mediated through, a physical medium like paint. Furthermore, painting seems to me to be a celebration of the sensual aspects of life. I like to challenge the old ideas around spirituality and intelligence transcending

or being beyond the physical as I think the physical has a lot to teach us. (There are some gender role ideas here that I'm interested in too.)

And as a painter in the studio without a 'subject' to paint, how do you proceed? If you're looking for chance events how do you find them or put yourself in their way without it feeling forced or set up?

I start with materials, given factors (like a show date), aesthetic desires (really hankering after blue and green together at the moment), and often a premise (currently, to compress some ideas embodied in my recent public sculpture down into rich little paper works).

I don't worry about things feeling forced once I have a good environment and mindset to start with—I can let go and become involved in the work and, when it is really working, a sort of rhythm takes over. This 'letting go' is backed, however, by lots of reading and research. I take photos, read and write and then leave it all outside of the studio and enjoy the material processes.

A traditionalist might say they want a 'good' painting: balanced, harmonious, eloquent. A Canterbury School formalist in the 1980s might have said they wanted a painting that 'works': where all the parts are in productive conversation. As an artist in the muddled-up twenty-first century, what do you want your works to be? Alive!

An unsettled quality is present in the very active titles you give your works, which have inspired the title of this show. In slang language, a 'spinner' is someone who's a bit loose or loopy. Were you thinking of that sense of the word?

Yes. I like dynamic titles that suggest the work is active and has its own personality. It's also helpful if the title relates to more than one aspect of the work, perhaps reinforcing the idea that there is more than one layer to a painting. *Spinner* refers to the visual trajectory of the stripes as well as that loopy person with trippy ideas, or perhaps a spinner of yarns. I also think about art world or art historical references and I was thinking of Damien Hirst's *Spin* paintings. My *Spinner* is perhaps more of a unique individual though.

JP



Your work for Burster Flipper involves a wall covered with paint-splattered corks and was featured in an exhibition at The New Art Gallery Walsall in England. How did the idea originally come about?

This work was originally shown in *what* (2008) at Jonathan Smart Gallery in Christchurch, then again in *Studio of Exhaustion* (2009) at Two Rooms in Auckland. Each time, more corks were added and the work grew. I enjoy the idea of an enlarging work, visible labour; I see each cork as a painting in its own right. The Walsall gallery borrowed *Swarm* for a show called *Party!* to celebrate their ten-year anniversary. Artworks were selected with ideas around the birthday event... so hundreds of popped corks set the tone! The work becomes more sprawled depending on the size of the wall, the form is determined by the space. Artists have historically used the wine bottle as a still-life trope so the use of the cork is a nod to that tradition.

In Walsall the work was installed on a wall that had a window at its centre. You've reworked it for the ArtBox space. What did you change or add?

The Walsall gallery chose that particular wall and it worked really well; in the photographic documentation the window looks like a painting, an illusion. For ArtBox I added 300 more corks and *Swarm II* will likely cover the ceiling and walls—it will grow through the space as permitted. These recent corks are more fluoro and the paint has covered the surface, there is less cork showing. The thing is, with screw tops on wine bottles the cork is vanishing. Cork is a natural material, which appealed to me, but maybe screw tops are kinder to the planet?

What is your studio like? Is it full of materials and works in various states? Playpen or Zen garden?

My studio has a cycle of busy and full then empty and tidied. I love an empty studio as it promises new work and ideas. I'm always happy to see work leave; not so much returned as I have to store or reuse or throw it away. There are lots of stashed materials, arrangements, storage boxes. I find having old work around can hold back the new ideas. I don't really invite people in, it is a space of thinking and working.

Your works always seem full of the tactile enjoyment of materials, and often convey a sense of playfulness and exuberance. Are they fun to make, as well as look at, or are you too busy concentrating on what you want to achieve?

I respect how a material can behave and don't want to intervene too heavily. There is a politic here... let the form come from the material. I enjoy the accidents and failures and what these offer. I respond to what I am using. When I was using found objects I never set out to find an object, it would find me.

Your installation *Cats and Dogs* is a much-loved part of Christchurch Art Gallery's collection. With that work, the arrangement is variable and determined by the curator each time it is exhibited; but you'll be here to install *Swarm II*. Do you prefer to maintain some control or do you enjoy the works being reshaped by other hands and minds?

I am 'hands on' and enjoy the installation process as I can respond to the space and find fresh ways to present the work. But I am happy to hand over the process, of course—the Walsall hang was done by the gallery and it was great.

You have used an incredible array of materials in your works, from dolls, plastic flowers and stickers to expanding foam and vintage glassware. How do you come to select them and which comes first, the materials or the idea?

Lots of hunting for materials, looking out for and being aware of possibilities. I make weekly visits to op-shops, second-hand shops and markets, although the \$2 shop culture is replacing the second-hand culture so I don't rely on this process so much now. I work from instinct, I guess; lots of playing with materials and ways to alter or make new forms that interest me and trying to make something I haven't seen before.

Finally, inevitably, where did you get all those corks from?

Hah, wine bottles of course! Collected from everywhere and everyone; a box was given to me by a friend who still buys wine with corks. That's a lot of wine that got drunk.

FM



Judy Darragh *Swarm II* 2014.
Corks, paint, wire. Courtesy of
the artist and Two Rooms Gallery



Coloured pencils are at the heart of your work for Burster Flipper, but you're not using them in the usual way. What are you doing with them and what processes do you subject them to?

I am asking them all to play along and hang out together for a while, to disguise themselves as a group and press very tightly together so that you cannot really see when one finishes and the next begins. Then I am asking them to play dress-ups and disguise themselves. 'Let's pretend we are not pencils for a while. Let's stand very close together and pretend to be a vast field of energy. Let's all undulate and pretend to be a landscape.' The wonderful thing is they remain pencils. Having worked with them for a while I have had moments where I had wished people would stop seeing the pencils, like I do so often—it all just becomes a field of matter, with very specific, sensational properties. But that is the wonderful thing, they are always made of pencils; the pencils sometimes hide in the works, disguised as a surface of a form and other times they yell, 'look, we are pencils. Look at us.'

There's something wonderfully simple and unexpected about this method—taking a tool usually used for making art and treating it as a raw material for art instead.

Like many wonderful joys in life, it happened by accident. I was holding a bunch of hexagonal pencils in my hand and I realised they linked into a solid honeycomb block. Like all accidents and mistakes, there is often a way to look at it and to discover something—to learn and take away some new information. For me it was thinking, 'Oh so this is what they do, naturally all by themselves. What if I roll with that and then carve them and play with them and make them dance?'

You once related to me some advice you received from the New Zealand-born Australian sculptor Rosalie Gascoigne. How did that come about and what was the advice?

She told me: when collecting a material to work with, do not collect two or three of that thing, or ten (stones, feathers, pencils...) but collect a hundred or a thousand or ten thousand, and see what the material does then. What do things look like when there are so many that they stop being individual things and become part of something else/bigger? The object becomes its own universe when repeated en masse. I often quote a line from Stanislaw Lem's 1961 science fiction novel *Solaris* which uses the phrase 'the secret of matter'. I think sometimes when you liberate something from its individuality as a single thing with

a specific purpose, and you start to build hundreds or thousands of these things into a kind of new flesh, then the secrets of matter start to reveal themselves. It is both fundamentally simple and kind of magical.

So when a new show or sculpture is on the horizon, how do you proceed towards it? The finished sculptures often seem so natural, as if they'd just formed themselves. But they must involve a great deal of forethought. What's the balance or tension in the making process between 'forward planning' and intuition?

I work from feeling I suppose. I cannot say exactly how that feeling is transposed and even if what I am feeling is essential to the finished work. Most often I will start a work with some clear idea, perhaps inspired by a book or a song title or an object I found on the ground somewhere (the forest, the beach or on the street). My initial thoughts are often quite simple and then naturally enough, many little observations of my current life, my heart, my friendships and conversations will leak in. The influences are not always direct but most works become saturated by the density of daily experience. I think that everyone, and everything, is complex. I do not need to overcomplicate an idea for it to be a rich journey for me, and as I grow older (and I love growing older), I deeply believe simplicity is one of the most wonderful things in the entire luscious, deliciousness of the cosmos. I get an idea, I scrawl a drawing, I start to stick stuff together, I drink coffee and listen to music, I get distracted, I come and go and the thing grows; despite the labour these works do often feel like they grew themselves while I was out of the room. Artworks are wholly surprising to me even when they feel known from the beginning. There is a wonderful linear quality to the process—a beginning, a duration and an endpoint. It is always satisfying upon completion as it is *done*, even if that involves some kind of disappointment. But it is the thing growing in your hands that is really exciting.

The sculptures carry echoes of many intricate and beautiful things, ranging from natural forms like coral and honeycomb to highly cultured ones like mosaic and filigree. Are there touchstone or reference objects in the world—things which inspire you and fire you up imaginatively—that you think of when making your sculptures?

Being human means we have a mental condition (whatever wonderful version of a mind you have). We are all burdened with powers of perception and observation. Some of us see more than others and

most of us see and feel more at specific moments—we become hyper aware. It is in these moments of hyper awareness when I really feel like I am actually seeing the real world, in all its incredible beauty, chaos and power. So basically anything can inspire me, like a pile of garbage (which looks like a visual poem), to a seed pod (both literally and metaphorically fertile), or another artist's work (in which one can see something profound looking back at you). This work is inspired by seashells, caves, speakers, the hearing trumpet, sonic devices, folds of surfaces, the human body, geographic fault lines, two humans embracing and so on. I take gentle whispers from the world around me and try and whisper them into the work as I make it and see what they say when embedded into the object.

In traditions of spiritual art, intensely detailed patterning is often used to induce a heightening of perception, a quality of concentration or intense focus in the observer. Do you feel any sympathy with this idea of sculpture as a kind of focuser of perceptions, an object for heightened contemplation?

Increasingly I think one of the whole challenges of being a human is the question of where you place your awareness—awareness of the world and awareness of self, so the suggestion of pattern as a portal for heightened perception is very resonant for me. I think losing yourself in process and in pattern can be very powerful. I have been doing meditations recently based on activating endorphins and certainly I think pattern has a kind of trance-like, amplifying quality through which one can refocus one's attention to different places and begin to ask more essential questions of who or what we are.

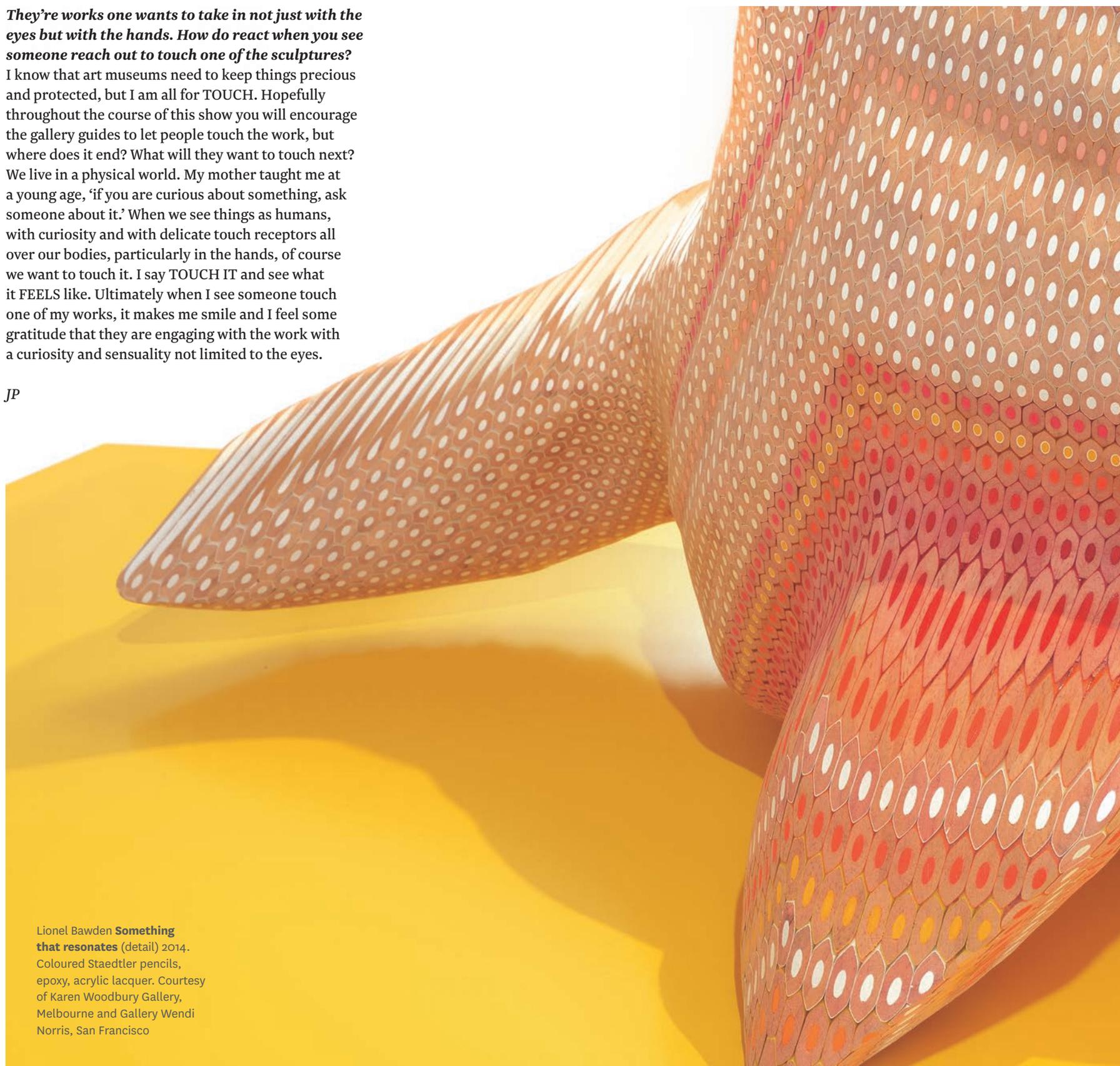
Your works are also very physical though, even suggestive. Can you talk about some of the other associations you mentioned that seem to move about within the surfaces of your works for Christchurch?

At the moment I am interested in the idea of resonance chambers and objects which resonate. I love the play of language, so the expression 'Something that resonates' for me is both a physical and metaphorical image. I like the idea that a form can be sonic, like a seashell, with the wind moving through the perfect spiral creating a sound, which we commonly equate to the ocean. And I am interested in forms where the inside and outside start to transmute, like our own bodies, where our mouths are both the outside and inside of our bodies, down into our intestines. When your mouth is wide open, where does the outside end and the inside begin?

They're works one wants to take in not just with the eyes but with the hands. How do react when you see someone reach out to touch one of the sculptures?

I know that art museums need to keep things precious and protected, but I am all for TOUCH. Hopefully throughout the course of this show you will encourage the gallery guides to let people touch the work, but where does it end? What will they want to touch next? We live in a physical world. My mother taught me at a young age, 'if you are curious about something, ask someone about it.' When we see things as humans, with curiosity and with delicate touch receptors all over our bodies, particularly in the hands, of course we want to touch it. I say TOUCH IT and see what it FEELS like. Ultimately when I see someone touch one of my works, it makes me smile and I feel some gratitude that they are engaging with the work with a curiosity and sensuality not limited to the eyes.

JP



Lionel Bawden **Something that resonates** (detail) 2014. Coloured Staedtler pencils, epoxy, acrylic lacquer. Courtesy of Karen Woodbury Gallery, Melbourne and Gallery Wendi Norris, San Francisco

Let me ask an obvious question. I doubt there's a person who sees your Screen Shots work who wouldn't like a chance to poke a pin into a balloon filled with paint. Were the films as much fun to make as they are to watch?

The films were totally fun to make. The thing about shooting slow motion is that it is full of surprises when you play it back. It is amazing how something so fleeting and impossible to witness live actually takes place when it's drawn out like that. It was intriguing that the form of the paint splatter seemed to act differently depending on the pin position and the colour of the paint.

I'm picturing a serious controlled environment for the filming: lots of clean-up equipment and plenty of fresh white shirts... What was the set-up actually like?

It was a pretty tightly controlled shoot. There was a lot of time spent on lighting and ensuring the painted backdrops were lit evenly. When shooting at high speed you need a huge amount of extra lighting so the environment got pretty hot. The crew had bets on how many white shirts we would get through, and we got through a lot. There were plastic covers everywhere and we had a great clean-up crew who would jump in between every shot. We also had a team dedicated to filling the balloons, something that is surprisingly difficult to do and involved a purpose-built paint-filling tool (patent pending). There was a crew of ten working on this shoot.

The framing of the scene suggests a trick being performed in an old-fashioned television magician's show. Yet there is no trick, no magic. The marvel of the videos is that we simply get to see a messy physical event in more detail than normal vision would allow. How have you made that possible? And are they your arms in the videos?

Yes, they're my arms. I like the idea that it can be read as a trick, as the capturing is pretty magical. The framing was primarily about referencing the history of the camera that we used in the shot. The Phantom HD's first use for a scientific purpose was filming a balloon filled with water. I like that history could offer a suggestion for what I should shoot with that particular camera. Here the art gesture was to simply replace the water with paint. This also dictated the framing as it needed to be from the point of view of the popper and not from the view of the audience watching the event.

Seeing matter move in this slowed-down, hyper-resolved way is riveting. Why does something so simple have such a hold?

It's as though the videos compress the narrative arc of on-screen drama into a single charged moment: a period of stillness and anticipation, then the moment of action and crisis, and the ensuing release and relief... On a technical level it was important to get the pace of the film right. Too fast left you wanting and too slow became tedious and too much of a celebration of the technology. The Phantom can film up to 7,200 frames per second in full HD, but *Screen Shots* is filmed at only 1,200 frames per second.

It's not painting because it's video art. But something in your approach to video suggests an affection for painting: the slowness, the flat, coloured backdrops, and of course the paint itself. Could you comment?

The film is about paint, and it certainly plays into a painterly history. It is a work that can be read with a pop sensibility, connections to action painting, abstract expressionism and minimalism.

Here I think too of the title of the works. Bumblebee, Airlock, Candyfloss. Are these the names of paint colours? And do they refer to the paint in the background or inside the balloons?

Yes, all the subtitles of the works are from the paint colours that are contained in the balloons. The colours within the balloons interchange and become the background colours. I didn't want to be connected to certain decisions such as colour choice, so I enlisted the help of Katie Lockhart, a designer who was responsible for developing the Karen Walker Resene colour range.

I've always thought it would be a great job, naming paint colours. And wonderfully futile job, too, because, as Dave Hickey has said, the plenitude of possible colour in the world always exceeds our ability to name it.

Paint names are pretty wonderful. For a while it was an art school joke that if you were having trouble naming your show then go out and grab the Resene colour palette. Some of the titles are really beautiful, some completely offensive. This work was about letting go, and the titles of the works offer a strange poetics to the work, but like much of the process with *Screen Shots* it was about letting the external things develop the work. Outsourcing the colour, using the history of the camera to determine what was shot or the works getting their titles from the selected paint were all aspects that I was happy to embrace.

JP





Steve Carr **Screen Shots** (details)
2011. HD file transferred to Blu-ray,
nine channel video work. Chartwell
Collection, Auckland Art Gallery
Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 2011

You're well known for using vividly coloured plastic in your sculptures and wall pieces. What kind of materials had you been using before turning to this common material, and what drew you towards plastic?

When studying I was more interested in the act of making things in three dimensions. I never had any meaningful tuition in sculptural technique so when I did come to make things there was no rule book—if two objects needed to be stuck together I would use whatever there might be in my studio on that day. Books were rarely consulted back then and there was no internet. Over time my skill set has grown, but if a trade expert says it can't be done, I will sometimes attempt to prove them wrong.

During the nineties Reverse Garbage was a good place to source material, due mostly to limited funds. You could often find great stuff and it was there that I first started buying and using plastics. In the studio I found that plastic could be worked in much the same way as more traditional materials like wood. Common perceptions of plastic were often negative and that in part formed my resolve to find a positive; it did not hurt that it was available in fantastic colours too.

I am also a surfer and an admirer of the finish fetish artists of the US West Coast. Getting a new surfboard was a big deal. I would look at it for hours and feel the perfection of the contour shifts and its craftsmanship. I felt in some way that the objects I made had to compete with professionally designed and made products. There needed to be an element of seduction.

The resulting artworks have an amazing sense of crispness and compression: all those slices of colour laminated together so perfectly. Is it you in the studio measuring and clamping? Or do you, like Donald Judd when he was making his 'specific objects', enlist help from other experts?

Forming relationships with experts in industry is important but so is keeping your distance. I ask advice and get my laser-cutting done but outside of that I do everything in my studio by myself. Some processes are very labour-intensive and others can be as quick as drawing. There are times when it is not appropriate to use plastic in an experiment and as I often work without sketches, things are made up on the spot. If a steel or concrete component is needed, I might employ industry experts; working on public sculpture that often goes without saying.

With a process that requires quite a lot of forethought and careful planning, do you still find enough room for play and experiment?

My studio is literally full of experiments, failed and successful. It can be hard to get rid of them because without them I may not remember how they got made. Sometimes there will be answers in failed experiments. There are days when you are scrambling to resolve a problem and the answer has been sitting in front of you for months. Experimentation can be very frustrating but can also give the greatest rewards.

A sense of play comes through strongly in the small pieces that appear in the Burster Flipper exhibition. The little plastic circles you've glued together look like counters from a board game.

The modular system of working is very attractive to me because it allows for rearrangement. I have made works that can be displayed in endless combinations and I also have work that can have components displayed in separate rooms or even countries.

And the titles are intriguing; they seem to evoke the world of data—of dematerialised information. Can you talk further about this aspect?

Earlier work was an attempt to make the magnetic spectrum of light an object, or at the very least, 'visible'. The transmission of digital information in many instances would be impossible without light so now I am looking at that data—all those zeros and ones—and thinking about how it might look when its flying through our atmosphere and buildings, under our feet and through our bodies. I want to give it volume and mass. I want it to be made of particles. I want to know what it might look like when it hits a moving car or the moment before it forms an image on a hand-held device.

Commentators often get worked up about the possibilities for art that farewells the physical and takes a virtual or digital form. But your approach seems to go the other way. It's as though you're bringing digital forms back into the physical realm.

Digital media is very appealing and accessible, and I often think about how I might use it. Sure, you can make digital art without really knowing how to use the technology (just as I started making objects) but an understanding of materials and or media is essential for resolved work. It is also a good thing to be working outside trends or fashions because it is easy for the work to look and feel homogenous. The 'virtual gallery' has been floating around for a while but in itself it seems like a cost-cutting exercise. The next leap will come from the world of science and I hope there are artists taken along for the ride so it can be given a more human interface and the possibilities that are not product driven can be kept open. Until Scotty can truly BEAM ME UP I will be in my studio.

JP

John Nicholson **Firewall** (detail)
2012. Plastic. Collection of
Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna
o Waiwhetu, purchased 2013.
Reproduced courtesy of the artist



When I think of your art I think of colour—colour of a synthetic, highly artificial kind. But the colour you use never seems to sit still. It's always swirling or fluttering or turning over. Where does this passion for moving colour come from?

I use a commercially available colour palette found in the materials I use—consumer products such as confetti, balloons, streamers, acrylic, tennis balls, felt, tinsel, paper and so forth. I'm interested in the ways in which I can manipulate these materials in order to subvert their inherent language.

The element of activation and constant fluctuation of colour within my work references the innate change of our emotional selves and the greater world. This state of flux also reinforces our subjective experience of colour by providing each viewer with a physically unique experience of the work. I've used both industrial and domestic fans, a supermarket conveyor belt, flip-clocks, automatic ball throwers for dogs, a paper feeder from a printer and pyrotechnic detonators.

The resulting artworks look like they were quite hectic and wild to experience—more like performances than sculptures or paintings. What category would you place them in?

I would generally describe my works as kinetic sculptures, although they definitely intersect with both painting and performance. Where these mediums overlap is an interesting space for artistic exploration.

I consider the materials themselves as performers, with me facilitating the 'stage' on which they will perform. I take the materials I'm using, separate them from their context, and then recast them within a new formal experiment. I control the beginning of the experiment but ultimately it is the properties, and potential, of the materials themselves that realise the work.

And how about the devices you'll be using in Christchurch—what are they and where did you first come across them?

They are flip-clocks. A flip-clock is an analog clock that was popular in the 1970s, and it tells the time with numbered cards that flip over as the minutes change.

I first started using flip-clocks in 2011, for a work called *Automated Colour Field*. I was researching this piece during a residency in Berlin, and I was initially interested in the arrival/departure boards that were once common in train stations in Europe, as a potential activation device. Although I pursued this, it wasn't financially viable so through a process of research, reduction and refinement I came to use flip-clocks.

And what was it about the mechanisms that appealed to you as a colourist?

The flip-clock became a perfect way to combine colour with the passing of time. At the beginning of the development of *Automated Colour Field* I knew that I wanted to create a kinetic colour field that explored my interest in colour in a more explicit way than I had with previous works. Colour was to be both the subject and object of the work, whereas in the past it had been more of a by-product of the materials that I was using.

I was interested in using flip-clocks as they inherently talk about the passing of time, yet through my manipulation—changing the numbers to colour—the ability to read them is lost. The flipping action of the device creates an interesting tension and anticipation of the colour change. Hints of the previous, and future colours are also visible behind the front cards.

And how does the arrangement and sequencing work? You seem ready to embrace random colour combinations—to let the flip-clocks do the composing for you.

I sequence the coloured cards intuitively, making the decision of which colour goes next based on the colour I used before, either in contrast or in harmony. The clocks do not have a specific order within the grid, which means the work will be different each time it is exhibited.

I am interested in the relationships between the clocks, the colours, the unexpected permutations, and the multitude of readings which can occur within that. I embrace randomness, relinquishing absolute control over the final outcome of the work.

With all this interesting technology powering up your art, what's your studio environment like? I picture something like a cross between a children's birthday party and an electronics shop...

It's a glorious mess most of the time—scattered with confetti, piles of coloured paper, and cluttered with boxes. I'm a bit of a bowerbird and have an ever-growing collection of materials and devices that have caught my eye. I find it hard to get rid of anything, just in case I may find good use for it in the future.

JP

Rebecca Baumann **Automated Colour Field (Variation 4)**
2014. 44 flip-clocks, laser-cut paper, batteries. Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite Gallery



The works in Swoop look as though they have been designed with some particular purpose in mind, yet we're left to imagine what possible function objects like this might serve. What interests you about combining specificity with a sense of enigma?

They're not 'designed' per se, but this work in some ways is a comment on that human ability to see ourselves as other, as separate in order to objectify; it reflects on our innate need to design or modify existing organisms to suit our own needs and desires. Obviously they don't have a utilitarian function, although the possibility of this has been mooted on more than one occasion, both by those viewing and reviewing the work. It's becoming more obvious that our perception of what might be regarded as normal is changing at a rate where ideas of what constitutes natural or artificial will eventually blur into ambiguity. In saying this, I'm not offering a judgment on whether this need to tinker or meddle is either good or bad. The result of this urge to know or control, as unpredictable as it might be, could put us on a very slippery slope, or it might lead to playful, even humorous, outcomes.

Previously, you've made sculptures using a variety of materials and surfaces but, with the exception of the tilted shelves they sit on, these and other recent works have been made entirely from clay. What's behind that choice?

I've worked with ceramics throughout my practice. The plasticity of the medium allows me to work in a similar way to drawing, which is something I also do a lot. There are various reasons to choose a particular material for a work. Clay simply works best for these particular pieces. The nature of the medium, the scale of the work, the processes involved, whether the material itself in some way reinforces the concept, all play a part in what to use. The shelf isn't just something for the work to sit on, it's an intrinsic part of the work. In this work all three elements, walls included (the space itself) are important in the realisation of the idea.

The first time I visited you, your studio was a large space above High Street, filled to the brim with all kinds of salvaged materials ripe for repurposing. You've been without a studio since the earthquakes and have created works from your home. Has that changed your process or affected the kind of work you've made?

Losing the studio in the centre of town was a blow. Beyond a place to work, most of the salvaged materials/objects and larger sculptures were kept there. Access to large inner-city studio spaces was something that set Christchurch apart. At home I'm limited to making the smaller-scale ceramic works, but this has generally tended to be the case anyway. If I need to go bigger or use other materials or processes, I have access to a workshop on the far side of town.

There's a clear sense of connection between these works and the earlier Formunculata works, which include the nine-piece ceramic sculpture owned by the Gallery. Yet whereas many of those works were neutrally toned, your more recent pieces pop with colour. What prompted that change?

Formally the works have some similarities but the ideas behind them have moved on. The silky white fired surface, terra sigillata, on the earlier pieces, was more than just an aesthetic consideration. Somatic concerns meant I wanted a skin-like surface that was essentially the same material as the body of the piece. Although I have used bold colour in the past, it's tended to be on larger works or in 2D pieces. I wanted colours that would in some way work with and simultaneously belie the ideas behind the work, suggesting perhaps something playful, an innocence. I chose auto lacquers because of the colour range, the finish and the connection to high tech and objects of desire.

With their piercings, slits and tumescent protuberances, the works in Swoop have the potential to operate as an in-gallery Rorschach test: what kinds of reactions have you had from viewers?

The first-hand responses I've had tend to be bemusement, and a need to identify, to know what it is they're looking at. When asked, for example, what 'Quimbilicum' means, I just point to the work. You mentioned the enigmatic and I think people do look at the work searching for the familiar, thinking they've found it, then realising there's probably something strange going on. Some people appear to see only cute little animals, sea creatures or whatever, even when they've just been sex-slapped.

Are there shapes that you consciously repeat in your works, or ones that seem to reappear regardless? Was a lot of trial and error involved to get to the shapes you wanted?

I've listened to authors being interviewed claiming their characters determine where the book goes and in some ways that's true of these pieces. With these particular pieces, the involvement with the medium opens up a conversation. In terms of the individual ceramic elements, it's not a matter of designing one then making it, which may be the case with a larger-scale work involving various different and more complex processes. In a formal sense with these ceramic works the intimate involvement with the media and the initial open approach means judgment calls are continually made throughout the making process. Some forms intrigue so I take them further. The work builds on an idea, the outcome isn't predetermined.

Given the human inclination to morph shapes into faces or other recognisable forms, did you deliberately steer clear of shapes that looked too familiar?

Yes, well, you use the wrong word or put a word in the wrong place and the poem stinks. So try again.

FM



Education in the ArtBox

Finally! After almost three years carrying the classroom around in the back of a Toyota Yaris and giving art lessons in schools throughout Canterbury, the education programme is back in a gallery and running alongside an exhibition again. I'm not too shy to fist pump in the air about this; I am ready to find a home back within the gallery, even if it is only temporary. I also believe that this is an important step in providing Christchurch children with the experience of seeing real art in the flesh, because nothing beats the real thing. Looking at art teaches children to think, to examine and to interpret. Talking about art teaches them to negotiate and be accepting of other people's opinions. In an over-full curriculum, time spent on art in the classroom is becoming rare. High impact, memorable experiences—like visiting a gallery—are vital. That's probably the reason our schools' programmes have always been so popular.

The **Burster Flipper Wobbler Dripper Spinner Stacker Shaker Maker** exhibition is a rich learning resource, featuring artists who have experimented and played with colour, texture and materials to create unexpected results. The exhibition shows a world of possibility, imagination and creative problem solving. During class visits, students are given a guided tour of the exhibition by one of our experienced volunteers, who encourages them to question and discuss what they are seeing. Students also spend time making their own creation to take back to school in our ArtBox classroom next-door to the gallery.

We are able to run two 90-minute lessons a day, but bookings are essential. Cost: \$1 per child.

To make a booking contact Susie Cox
T: (03) 941 7373
E: susie.cox@ccc.govt.nz





**Burster Flipper Wobbler Dripper
Spinner Stacker Shaker Maker**
is at ArtBox until 28 September 2014.

QUIET INVASION

Faces from the Collection

The idea of peppering the vestigial city centre with portraits from the collection became part of the Gallery's tenth birthday POPULATE! programme, intended to remind all of us that the collection is, indeed, still here and in good shape.

Rita Angus **Portrait of O'Donnell Moffett** 1930s.
Oil on board. Private collection,
reproduced courtesy of the
Rita Angus estate



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EXPRESSION TATTOO & GALLERY



The city's art collection has become something increasingly elusive and rare in this last while: a part of our visual culture and heritage that hasn't completely disappeared—this despite the fact that it remains hidden away. Seen against this background, the **Faces from the Collection** project was to be about rediscovery and surprise. Not a difficult brief perhaps in a city that now holds such a strong sense of entering the unknown. Large, high-quality reproductions of faces and portraits—mostly oil portraits as it happened—were to be strategically placed on empty walls around the city centre in order to reinstate a sense of human presence and to offer connections between the present and past. With invaluable support from Life in Vacant Spaces and Christchurch City Council's Transitional City project, we spied out vacant lots, surviving buildings and newly exposed walls, looking for sites that offered a communicative match. Landowners were traced and contacted, and permissions politely sought. Some seemed to have vaporised—they simply couldn't be found. The project also became slightly competitive, with ideal spaces being eyed up by similarly motivated groups working to activate the central city. And we met the challenge of walls and spaces that we'd been ready to work with vanishing, turned into rubble and carried away. The job became easier once we accepted that not every attempt would work: overall, our strike rate wasn't terrible.

In seeking to reinforce the idea that the paintings are objects and more than purely images, we decided

that, where possible, they would be reproduced in their frames, offering a possible *trompe l'œil* effect when positioned on a wall. The first of these, in an elaborate gilt frame, was Elizabeth Kelly's oil portrait *Margaret* (c.1936), applied to a blank wall in Cashel Street's Re:START Mall not far from the Bridge of Remembrance. With her accessorised tent, rucksack and fishing rod, the model was well suited to this moment—a Christchurch woman able to add presentability and assurance to practical survival skills. Kelly had spotted the young Margaret Hatherley working in the art department of Beath's department store, not very far from here. Her likeness has been enjoyed in its new location, not least by the artist's grand-niece, who became inspired to add another portrait to the city's art collection with the gift of a striking plaster bust of Kelly's sister Laura, modelled in the late 1890s when the artist was still at the Canterbury College School of Art. It's a work we'll look forward to unveiling.

Michael Smither's *Portrait of my mother* (1972), the helmeted archetype of an earlier generation, offers a surprise encounter on an abandoned pharmacy on the corner of Cashel and Colombo streets. In this site, she appears the well turned-out older customer, denied her pills and lotions and forever awaiting opening time. Not far away, on a wall between High, Tuam and Manchester streets, Tony Fomison's *No!* (1971) is shouted large. An image originally sourced by the artist from a grainy press cutting, in the midst of this





Opposite page:
Elizabeth Kelly **Margaret** c.1936
1936. Oil on canvas. Collection of
Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna
o Waiwhetu, purchased 1951

Michael Smither **Portrait of
my mother** 1972. Oil on board.
Collection of Christchurch Art
Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu,
purchased 1981. Reproduced
courtesy of M.D. Smither

Following spread:
Tony Fomison **No!** 1971. Oil
on canvas. Collection of
Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna
o Waiwhetu, purchased 1973.
Reproduced with permission





brokenness and carnage it could be open to any kind of interpretation, but seems to belong very neatly to now. A bit further down Manchester Street, Harry Linley Richardson's *Cynthia's Birthday* (1926–7) sings a sombre tune. The artist's children have never appeared excessively excited, rather stunned into silence, but now their state is closer to psychic shock. The cake has three candles; this work was put in place on 3 September 2013, three years minus one day after the first big shake. It's her party and we'll cry if we want to.

Slightly more chipper and with a crisper, more modern edge, Rita Angus's *Portrait of O'Donnell Moffett* (1930s) presents to us a bright-eyed boy with a great name and a cowlick. He looks at home under the old Peterson's Jewellers' sign in the miraculously intact, recently reopened New Regent Street. George Henry, a Scottish artist, offers an unexpected and lesser-known work, *The Black Hat* (c.1910), on Cashel Street, east of Manchester. With its sumptuous gold frame, this confident society beauty provides a rare moment of decorative elegance—a mode and standard that no longer exists. For some reason, it's at this point that I start to ache for those quiet gallery spaces with their well-arranged, carefully lit walls.

It's nearly time to return home, but perhaps not before taking a flutter with William Nicholson's *H.M. The Queen* (1899). Possibly teetering slightly, she has been more than welcomed to the playing-card walls of Christchurch Casino, planted firmly at the edge of the reviving Victoria Street precinct. Together, the

portraits seem to chart the city's recovery progress. Raymond McIntyre's *Suzette* was reproduced at exactly life size, with her frame, positioned on the Gallery's south east corner on Worcester Boulevard (shown here on the day the 'red zone' officially ended and the army exited stage left out of town). The wall is now hidden behind the white-painted hoardings that surround the Gallery, and that later this year will receive a generous new assortment of faces from the collection. We're claiming the people focus back for this space, and want to clearly stake out that this is where the locus of activity will be.

Ken Hall
Curator

Faces from the Collection was installed as part of the **POPULATE!** programme throughout the city from 10 May 2013.





Opposite page top:
 William Nicholson **H.M. The Queen** 1899. Lithograph.
 Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, gifted to the Gallery by Gordon H. Brown 2008



Opposite page bottom:
 Raymond McIntyre **Suzette**.
 Oil on panel. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, presented by Mrs M. Good, London 1975.
 Photo: Neil Semple

This page left:
 George Henry **The Black Hat**
 c.1910. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, presented by the Canterbury Society of Arts 1932

This page right:
 Harry Linley Richardson
Cynthia's Birthday 1926-7.
 Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, presented by the Canterbury Society of Arts 1932

SEEKING STILLNESS IN MOVEMENT

Justin Paton responds to Daniel Crooks's *Static No.12*



Daniel Crooks **Static No.12 (seek stillness in movement)** 2009–10.
High Definition digital video transferred to Blu-ray. 5 minutes 23
seconds, 16:9, colour, sound. Edition of 3, AP1 and AP2. Courtesy of
the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery

Time didn't feel like it was on my side on the day I first saw Daniel Crooks's film *Static No.12* (*seek stillness in movement*) (2009–10). In Sydney for just a couple of days to see the Biennale, I'd committed the cardinal mistake of the international art tourist and bitten off more culture than I had time to chew. By the time I reached Cockatoo Island and its dozens of exhibits, I was suffering from what might be called the Grumpiness of the Long-Distance Art Watcher—a state in which one doesn't absorb the artworks so much as check them off, feeling simultaneously fretful about my dwindling time and resentful about the sheer quantity of art. Though I hardly knew it then, this was the perfect state in which to test Crooks's video—a work that attempts, like no other I know, to induce an altered sense of time.

Static No.12 is itself the product of a moment of good timing. In Shanghai in 2009 to gather footage for a commission, Crooks had risen early and walked with his camera to nearby Xujiahui Park. Crowds of locals gathered there each morning to exercise and meditate, and Crooks hoped to find something complex and rhythmic to film in their activities.

Nothing felt quite right, but on his way out Crooks came across an arresting scene: an elderly man immersed in tai chi in a secluded corner of the park. Intuiting a possibility without knowing exactly what would emerge, Crooks set down his tripod and, with a nod of assent from the man, began filming. It was, Crooks notes in retrospect, a moment of pure serendipity—one of those occasions that seem to have been prepared in advance for an artist.

The video opens with bird-chatter, a morning sound, heard while the screen is still dark. Then up fades slow-motion footage of the man in his quiet spot, turning and dipping with the dreamy deliberation of someone moving underwater. The human figures in Crooks's past videos often move at a meditative pace; in the *Pan* films especially they glide through molten streets with a stunned, moonwalking slowness. Tai chi, however, is a form of movement renowned for being slow in the first place, so to slow it down is to make a special point about the value of taking time. The point is sharpened immeasurably in *Static No.12* by Crooks's use of a high-speed camera, which reveals all the strange

motion that exists below the threshold of normal perception: the way the man's clothes ripple, the way his musculature shifts, the way he gathers and releases the air around himself.

If this was all *Static No.12* had to offer, it would still be an absorbing work: a portrait of a man who is uncannily 'in the moment'. For me, that day at the Biennale, it was the perfect antidote to impatience. But this opening passage turns out to be mere preparation for the change—the gorgeous glitch—that soon interrupts the footage. First you notice the man's forehead ripple, and his torso begins to waver and widen. It's soon apparent that not just he but his entire world is fissuring, the two halves of the scene pulling away from each other and leaving a strange stretched space between—a kind of opening in the weave of time where everything turns liquid and semi-abstract.

At first glance this shift suggests the shape-changing world of cinematic special effects, where squads of CGI experts regularly make bodies do impossible things. But part of the pleasure of Crooks's art lies in its hands-on, one-man-band







ingenuity, the fact that he realises these marvels, not with a budget of millions, but with the digital equivalent of a scalpel and glue stick. It begins with Crooks locating a single frame in the flow of the film, one one-hundredth of a second, and then locating, within that frame, a vertical section just one pixel wide—an ultra-thin sliver of time. In normal video footage, that sliver would be rapidly replaced as new frames come into view. Crooks's simple but pivotal move, however, is to keep all the slivers on view, like strips sliced from photos and glued down in an ever-widening array. As the slivers accumulate, they slowly push the bracketing 'real footage' off screen. What we see growing in the space between is a graph of the man's movements through time.

Descriptions like these make Crooks sound like a cool-headed analyst, reaching into the flow of footage and stretching his human subjects out through time. Certainly there's an analytical quality to his earlier video *Static No.11 (running man)* (2008), which suggests high-resolution footage extruded by some biomechanics lab of the future. But one of the joys and surprises of the Shanghai film is the way the mechanical comes up against

the meditative, the sense that the elderly man is not succumbing to this time-warping process but actually generating it. This is apparent especially on the edges of the 'fissure', where the real footage turns strange and elastic. As he pivots and gestures on this threshold, the man becomes a gestural painter, generating a gliding frieze, a scroll painting, from memories of his own physical movements. There are calligraphic thumb-strokes, Cyclops-eyed smears, leg-sweeps of billowing grey fabric. Frozen like brushstrokes on a canvas, these gestures then travel right across the screen until they're seamlessly 'collected' and absorbed by the other half of his divided image. If this is a portrait, then the self it evokes is not a noun but a verb: endlessly released and reconstituted, unmade and remade.

The unmaking idea comes beautifully to the fore in the video's last and most surprising moments. By this stage the 'graph' fills the entire screen and has assumed a strange life of its own, massing, flexing and breathing like a bizarre human weather system. Then at last it simply evaporates, slowly fading into its leaf-green background like water soaking into a page. What this means in technical terms is that the

man has finished; completing his meditative morning routine, he has walked off to carry on with his day. But a purely technical reading is impossible. The man's advanced age and astonishing grace ensure we can't take it that way. We seem to witness, not just the end of a morning's exercise, but the quiet ending of an entire life—the melting of one body and mind into the landscape that surrounds and sustains it.

There's an amazing sense of amplitude here, of emotional as well as visual expansion, as a few minutes of real-time footage dilate into a meditation on transience. Though it's as thrilling to watch as any of his earlier videos, I think *Static No.12* marks a shift in Crooks's art, from ingenuity and exhilaration into a larger eloquence. For Crooks, despite the apparent coolness of his method, has always been driven by an obsession: a desire to grasp time as if it were a substance and thus show how our lives in it feel. He has stretched time, compressed it, reversed it, sliced it, examined it from multiple directions. But in *Static No.12*, with the help of his elderly collaborator, he simply lets time go.

Justin Paton



Justin Paton was senior curator at the Gallery until December 2013. He is now head curator of international art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Daniel Crooks: *Seek Stillness in Movement* is on display at 209 Tuam Street from 5 April until 1 June 2014. This text first appeared in the exhibition publication *Marking Time* (2012, Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia). Reprinted with kind permission.

MAKE A DONATION, MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Following the Canterbury earthquakes, Christchurch Art Gallery needs your support more than ever. By becoming a supporter of Christchurch Art Gallery Trust you can help this Gallery continue to grow as a cultural centre of national and international note, providing stimulating and accessible experiences to all who visit.

WAYS YOU CAN MAKE A DONATION

The Christchurch Art Gallery Trust welcomes all contributions and offers a number of ways you can make a donation.

Annual Giving

Our three-tiered programme for making annual donations allows you to choose the level that best suits your circumstances.

Even before we reopen, benefits will flow.

Patrons (\$10,000 and above)

Ambassadors (\$5,000 – \$10,000)

Benefactors (\$1,000 – \$5,000)

Collection Development

The Challenge Grant and Challenge Grant Response Fund

The Challenge Grant is a ten-year commitment by Christchurch City Council to supplement the core collection development budget by matching dollar-for-dollar donations raised by the Trust up to a set amount per annum.

Donate to any level if you would like an association with the Gallery's growing collection. Ask us if you would like your name associated with a particular purchase and we'll look out for a work and discuss it with you.

Special Donations

Making a special donation means you can stipulate what you would like your contribution to be used for.

Bequests

This is your opportunity to leave an inspirational legacy for the future by including the Gallery in your will.

Talk with your legal advisor and, if you would like, the Gallery's director, Jenny Harper (+64 3 941 7375).

Christchurch Art Gallery formally acknowledges the major donors who contributed to the building of the Gallery.

Hon. Margaret Austin, Kiri Borg and Brian Henry, Hon. Philip and Mrs Ros Burdon, Philip Carter, Ben Danis, Sir Neil and Lady Isaac, Neil and Diane McKegg, Monica Richards, Robert and Barbara Stewart, Sir Robertson and Lady Stewart, Stout Trust, W.A. Sutton Trust, Sir Angus and Lady Tait, Adriaan and Gabrielle Tasman, Jim and Susan Wakefield. Many continue to support the Gallery and we thank them.

RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS AND GIFTS

Gabrielle Tasman

Chartwell Trust

Andrew and Jenny Smith

NZ Federation of Graduate Women (Inc),

Canterbury Branch

Pat Unger

Worcester Trust

W.A. Sutton Trust

Dame Jenny Gibbs

Anonymous (various)

Major Bequests

N. Barrett

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Chris Brocket, Garth Gallaway, Jenny Harper,

Bruce Irvine, Stephen Montgomery, Guy Pask,

Monica Ryan, Alexandra Stewart, Gabrielle Tasman



Fundraising for Michael Parekowhai's
Chapman's Homer was spearheaded
by the Gallery Trust in 2013.
Reproduced courtesy of the artist
and Michael Lett, Auckland

LASTING LEGACIES

While we await the eventual reopening of Christchurch Art Gallery next year, behind the scenes the Gallery's collection has continued to grow and develop. A number of generous bequests have been made over the past year or so, received into the collection from owners who obviously enjoyed them immensely during their own lifetimes. Here, Peter Vangioni focuses on four notable New Zealand landscape paintings, which together form a lasting legacy for others to enjoy for years to come.

Doris Lusk **Okains Bay, Banks Peninsula** (detail) 1949. Oil on board. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, bequest of John Cleaver 2013



If you park your car across the road from Jack's Hut (the distinct green road-workers' cottage just before you cross over Arthur's Pass and descend into the Otira Gorge) there is a great walk that takes you across the upper reaches of the Bealey River. This pristine wilderness is not dissimilar to the view in Grace Butler's oil painting *In the Otira Gorge* (1925), which was recently bequeathed to the Gallery by the artist's daughter, Grace Adams. *In the Otira Gorge* is a mighty addition to the Gallery's collection of artworks relating to the Otira region by historic and contemporary artists including Petrus van der Velden, John Gibb, Margaret Stoddart, Alfred Walsh and Ann Shelton. In particular, Butler's view, which takes in the view upwards towards a mountain pass, bears comparison to van der Velden's iconic 'Mountain Stream, Otira Gorge' series in its focus on the almost abstract qualities of the flowing stream and rock faces. If there is one artist with an affinity to this landscape to rival van der Velden's it would have to be Butler; she and her husband Guy bought Jack's Hut in 1923 and it served as a base from which she could encounter the mountainous landscape that so captivated her.



Grace Butler *In the Otira Gorge* 1925. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, Grace Adams bequest 2013

Archibald Nicoll's *A Canterbury Landscape* was bequeathed to the Gallery by Alf Taylor in 2012. The title of this work is frustratingly vague and throws up numerous challenges for the researcher; with no date, catalogue number or inscription of any sort on the work apart from the artist's signature, where to begin? We know that after purchasing a car in 1928, Nicoll suddenly found he had the freedom to travel to a wide variety of painting locations throughout Canterbury. The rolling hills in the background suggest foothills of some sort—could they possibly be the Ashley Downs or the cultivated paddocks of the Waitohi Downs with the Opihi River running its course beneath them? *A Canterbury Landscape* appears to date from Nicoll's mature period from the late 1920s on, and the use of a road as a device for drawing the viewer into the painted landscape is one he favoured. The gorse hedges in bloom on the roadside and lush green pasture suggest the work was completed in spring. What I love about this painting though is Nicoll's broad handling and his spontaneous brushwork in the left foreground; although Nicoll's palette is lighter in colour it suggests to me (as with Butler) the influence of van der Velden, an artist he deeply admired throughout his life.

One of my personal favourites in the recent raft of bequests is Doris Lusk's *Okains Bay, Banks Peninsula*, which was left to the Gallery by well-known Lyttelton identity John Cleaver. I was fortunate enough to view this work at John's home when I borrowed it for the exhibition **Picturing the Peninsula: Artists and Banks Peninsula Te Pataka o Rakaihautu** in 2007. Anyone who has skirted round the top of the Akaroa Harbour basin, the (at times) precarious summit road, will at once recognise the distinctive features of the outlying bays. There's the seemingly endless view out to the distant horizon (on a good day at certain spots you can see both the Kaikoura Ranges to the north and Aoraki Mt Cook to the south) and the stripped bare, grass-strewn hills. Lusk has seized upon the gnarled, withered and sun-bleached tōtara stumps that litter the Peninsula to good effect. These are the reminders of the dense forests of native tōtara, matai and kahikatea that once stood on this landscape. Just beyond these remnants, further down the bay, can be seen a stand of introduced pine trees, macrocarpas maybe, that now take their place. *Okains Bay, Banks Peninsula* is a major work by Lusk and one of her larger paintings in oils.



Archibald Nicoll **A Canterbury Landscape** c.1928. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, Osborne Alfred (Alf) Taylor bequest 2012



Doris Lusk **Okains Bay, Banks Peninsula** 1949. Oil on board. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, bequest of John Cleaver 2013

The most recent bequest to the gallery is Colin McCahon's *Kauri Tree Landscape*, which was left to the Gallery by Jean Norrie. Unlike the other three works discussed in this article, McCahon's painted landscape is not from Canterbury but the North Island. I haven't spent a lot of time north of the Bombay Hills, but on one trip to Little Huia on the Manukau Harbour I spent a late summer's day walking through dense bush in the Waitakere Ranges to view a huge kauri known as Tom Thumb. I was gobsmacked by the sheer scale of this monster of a tree, and all the kauris encountered on the walk. The way the forest canopy stretches up so very high and the sunlight is diffused as it filters down through the branches is something McCahon conveys beautifully in this work, and shafts of light become fractured and abstracted as they fall through the foliage. It must have been quite a transition for McCahon when, in 1953, he shifted from Christchurch to Auckland—from the heavily industrialised, urban landscape of Barbour Street, which sat right next to the Linwood rail shunting yards and factories, to the peaceful sylvan landscape of Titirangi, surrounded by dense forests of kauri trees. The Gallery does not hold a strong collection of paintings by McCahon so Jean Norrie's gesture makes an important addition.

These four paintings represent just a few of the works that have been bequeathed to the Gallery's collection since the February 2011 earthquakes. The quality of these paintings is superb, and each represents a substantial addition to our holdings of not only the individual artists, but also the wider collection of twentieth-century New Zealand landscape painting. I for one am thankful that the benefactors saw fit to leave these works to the Gallery—their generosity is of great significance to the ongoing development of the collection. Now it's just a matter of waiting patiently until we reopen our doors and once again have the opportunity to view historical works of art, including these recent bequests, on the walls and in their best light.

Peter Vangioni
Curator

Colin McCahon *Kauri Tree Landscape* 1955. Oil on paper on board. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, bequest of Jean Norrie (partial gift) 2014. Reproduced courtesy of the Colin McCahon Research and Publication Trust



PAGework

#21

The following double-page spread is given over to the twenty-first instalment in our 'Pagework' series. Each quarter the Gallery commissions an artist to create a new work of art especially for Bulletin. It's about actively supporting the generation of new work.

HELEN CALDER

Helen Calder's intriguing 'paint pour' investigations have seen her allowing paint to drip laconically down boards, droop as 'skins' from pins on walls, drape over metal racks and, as in her work for **Burster Flipper Wobbler Dripper Spinner Stacker Shaker Maker** (detailed on p.10), hang vertically from the ceiling in intensely coloured cocoons from sinuous rubber cords. In **Double Up**, her 'Pagework' for this issue, those same paint pours take on a form that suggests new uses; folded in tight tidy stacks, they are alluringly glossy 'coats' of paint, waiting to be put on, or put up.

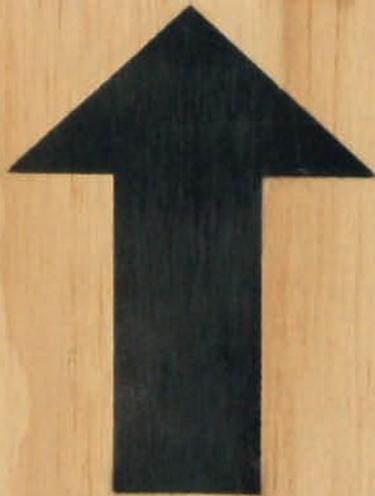
Felicity Milburn

Curator

'Pagework' has been generously supported by an anonymous donor.

Helen Calder **Double Up** 2014. Paint skins and packing crate







Russell Clark **Cabbage Tree in Flower** c.1954. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased 1964. Reproduced courtesy of Rosalie Archer

I wasn't familiar with Russell Clark's work until I looked through the Gallery's online collection, but I found myself immediately attracted to this painting because of its subject. My hobby is photography and one of my favourite subjects is the cabbage tree—I often imagine drawing one, but my artistic flair is limited to an eye for composition behind the camera lens.

Of course, in this painting I am looking not at a photograph, but an artist's impression of what is an immediately recognisable feature of the New Zealand landscape. What I love about the cabbage tree is picked up in the angles and shapes that make it so defining. I love the way Clark has used the colours to convey texture; he has captured the essence of a tree that reminds me of my favourite holiday journeys, from Christchurch to Kaikoura, Auckland to the Coromandel. Digging deeper, I found a fascinating article about Clark associated with the 1975 retrospective at the Robert McDougall. Clark chose to paint cabbage trees because he found their shape satisfying; 'They are good paintable objects' he said in 1961, adding, 'There must be some emotional content in painting. To me the important thing is to get to the essence of a subject.'

Reading about his history, and especially learning that he was born in Christchurch, reinforced my sense of connection to this painting. I believe he has got to the essence of the subject, which explains my emotional response. In the viewing, I feel I have experienced what Clark intended to express when he painted *Cabbage Tree in Flower*.

Lianne Dalziel



Lianne Dalziel was born and raised in Christchurch, New Zealand. She was elected as Mayor in October 2013 and is committed to working with and listening to our community to create a resilient, sustainable city based on the strengths of our people.

MY

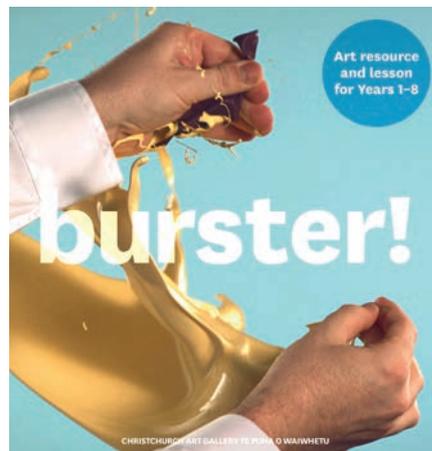
FAVOURITE

BACK MATTER



Shane Cotton Makes the Top 100

We were very pleased to see *Shane Cotton: the Hanging Sky* featuring in the *Listener's* '100 best books of 2013', where it was described as a magnificently produced book. We couldn't agree more. You may need to build a new bookshelf to store it, but no art-loving house should be without at least one copy. You can pick yours up in the Gallery Shop: christchurchartgallery.org.nz/shop.



New Art Resource for Teachers Out Now

For a limited time only, teachers can get a free copy of our **Burster!** art resource and lesson. Featuring a large, colour poster for the classroom and a series of associated activities, it contains all you need to create an entertaining and informative art lesson with your class.

Email: Susie.Cox@ccc.govt.nz

Tel: (03) 941 7383

Into the Void

A new documentary is currently being filmed on legendary local Christchurch noise rock band *Into The Void*, who came together at Ilam art school twenty-six years ago. Directed by Margaret Gordon, the film includes contemporary interviews and footage of the band performing over the years. The film is expected to premiere here in Christchurch in August.



Into the Void performing in Christchurch in January 2014

New Blue Oyster Director

Congratulations to Chloe Geoghegan, who was appointed director of the Blue Oyster Art Project Space in Dunedin in January. Previously Chloe was co-director of Dog Park, a hugely successful artist-run space founded here in Christchurch in 2012.



Chris Pole **Still There** 2013. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of Warwick Henderson Gallery. Reproduced with permission

Chris Pole Exhibition at ArtBox

When you're down at **Burster Flipper**, make sure you check out *Contradistinction: New works by Chris Pole* in the ArtBox next door. Chris recently enjoyed a break from his day job as exhibition designer here at the Gallery when he undertook the Asia NZ Foundation's Vision Culture Residency at Shalini Ganendra Fine Art in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He is represented in Auckland by Warwick Henderson Gallery, and the exhibition runs until 9 March.

Sharing Experience

Director Jenny Harper has been invited to appear as the keynote speaker for the 2014 Australasian Registrars Committee conference in Brisbane, 27–8 March. With the theme of 'Changing Spaces', the conference traverses the new territory that registrars and collection managers are facing as they manage exhibitions, collection storage and digital information. Jenny will also join a panel of directors discussing *Future Directions in Museums* on Wednesday 26 March prior to the opening reception for the conference.

Lettre International

Eliot Weinberger's beautiful 'The Ghosts of Birds' text from the Shane Cotton publication has been republished in the winter 2013 issue of *Lettre International*, the leading intellectual magazine in Germany. Accompanied by reproductions of three of Shane's paintings, it's the opening feature in the magazine, which is great for Eliot, for Shane and for the Gallery. If your German, Italian, Spanish, Hungarian, Rumanian or Danish is up to scratch, you can pick up a copy at www.lettre.de.

Public Programme

Artist Floor Talk: Mark Adams

A unique opportunity to join photographer Mark Adams in conversation with curator Peter Vangioni and hear the fascinating stories behind **Cook's Sites**.
6pm / Tuesday 4 March / 209 Tuam Street / free

Film: The Jeff Koons Show

A very close look at the life and work of artist Jeff Koons, told through the perspective of Koons himself, curators, gallerists and fellow artists.
65 mins / Wednesday 12 March

Film: Art and Copy

Meet the real Mad Men (and women!) in this powerful new film about advertising and inspiration. It reveals the work and wisdom of some of the most influential advertising creators of our time—people who've profoundly impacted our culture, yet are virtually unknown outside their industry.
88 mins / Wednesday 26 March

Film: Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer

Three young women faced seven years in a Russian prison for a satirical performance in a Moscow cathedral. But who was really on trial in a case that gripped the nation and the world beyond—the three young artists or the society they live in?
88 mins / Wednesday 9 April

Film: Good Ol' Freda

As the Beatles' devoted secretary and friend, Freda was witness to the evolution of the greatest band in history and tells her stories for the first time in fifty years. This is one of only a few films made with the support of the living Beatles and featuring original Beatles music.
86 mins / Wednesday 14 May

Film: Wagner and Me

Animated by Stephen Fry's trademark wit and featuring a soundtrack of Wagner's extraordinary music, this film is a provocative yet enjoyable exploration of the life and legacy of one of history's great musicians.
89 mins / Wednesday 28 May

All films are shown at Alice Cinematheque / 6pm / free

School Holiday Programme

Paper Menagerie

Create a colourful cast of animals from card, pom-poms and a whole load of imagination.

Suitable for children 4+

1.30pm / Monday–Friday / 28 April–2 May / ArtBox / \$5

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Judy Darragh SWARM II 2014. Corks, paint, wire.
Courtesy of the artist and Two Rooms Gallery.



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The Gallery is currently closed to the public.
Our off-site exhibition spaces are upstairs at
209 Tuam Street and at ArtBox CPIT, corner of
Madras and St Asaph streets.

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