

Fernbank Studio
away past
elsewhere



A Christchurch Art Gallery Outer Spaces Project



Brendan O'Brien: printer and book maker

The hand-printed books produced by Brendan O'Brien at Fernbank Studio in Wellington are among the most exquisitely printed and designed books produced in New Zealand. **Fernbank Studio: away past elsewhere** brings together a selection of books and ephemera printed by O'Brien over the past two decades.

O'Brien has always had a passion for books, an interest fostered by his bookseller father. In 1993 he bought his first printing press and quickly mastered the complexities of hand-setting and printing metal type. In 2000, O'Brien took up residence at the Rita Angus Cottage in Thorndon, Wellington, where he established a private press named after the small cottage Angus lived and worked in between 1955 and 1970, Fernbank. Over the next year his output was immense, producing numerous booklets of poetry by both leading and emerging poets and including Bill Manhire, Joanna Margaret Paul, Jenny Bornholdt, Gregory O'Brien, Kate Camp and Mary Macpherson. This was a period of intense production for O'Brien, where he committed himself fulltime to his craft and honed his skills as a letterpress printer.

Alongside his Fernbank Studio publications O'Brien has also produced works in collaboration with several other presses. In 2001 he printed *Rita: Seven Poems by Colin McCahon* with Holloway Press. One of his most impressive books, however, was Bill Manhire and Ralph Hotere's *PINE*,

printed while he was printer in residence at Otakou Press, Dunedin in 2005. This was the first time the poem had been published in book form and O'Brien worked closely with Hotere to ensure the wooden typefaces used were printed as the artist desired.

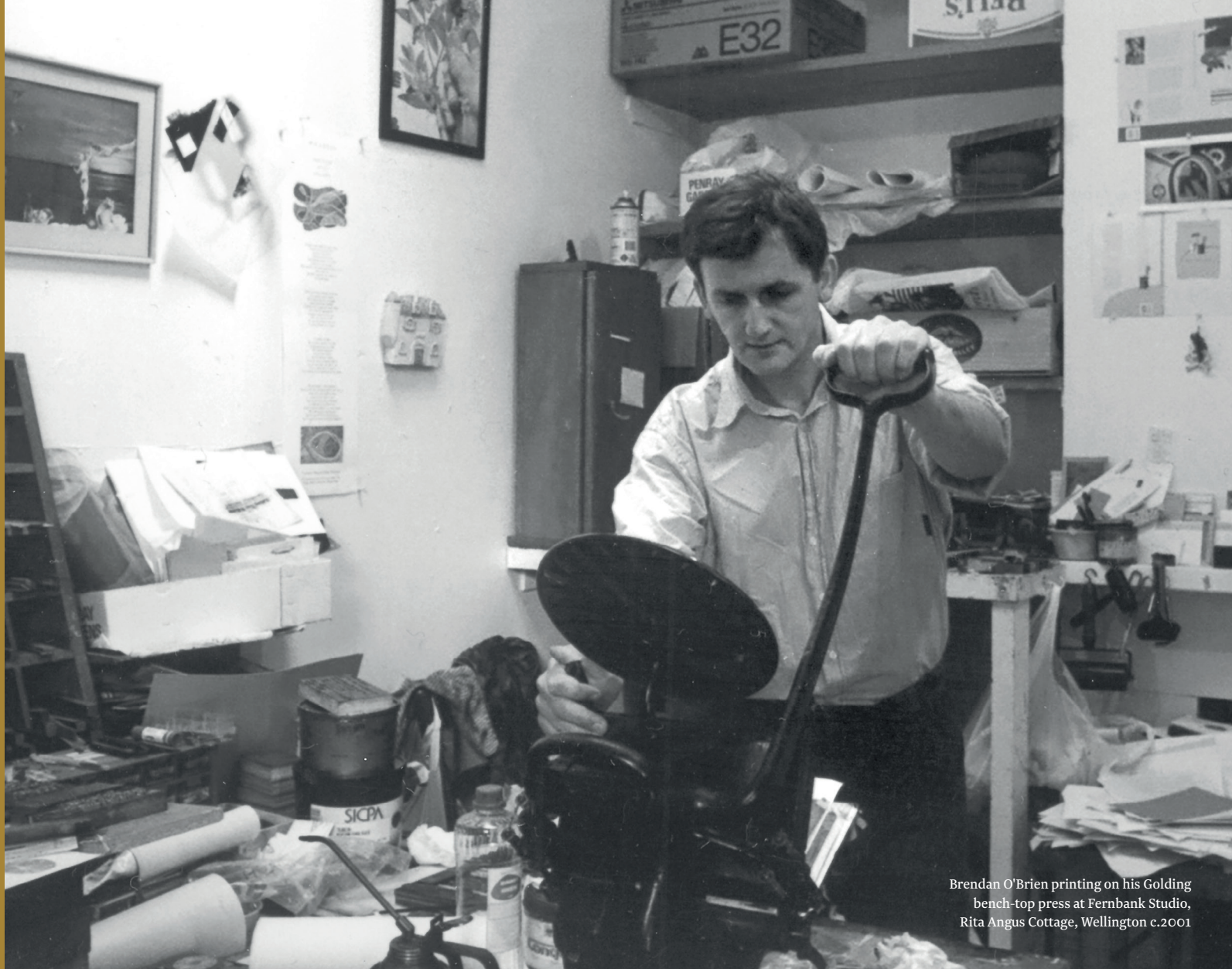
Like many in the private press movement, Fernbank Studio shuns commercial aspirations. The qualities inherent in O'Brien's hand-printed books – the slightly embossed text thoughtfully arranged on the page, extensive use of colour and use of found printer's blocks – are what make these books stand out. O'Brien's more adventurous designs often reflect his interest in surrealism, with unrelated found elements brought together in a manner that highlights the influence of Max Ernst and Rene Magritte; fish float freely alongside dollar signs, sheep, umbrellas and the pointing hand. All these elements are drawn from the printer's extensive collection of illustrated blocks and reflect his own on-going work as an artist incorporating collage techniques.

With their unique, vibrant cover designs, thoughtful layout and beautifully set and printed texts, Fernbank Studio books at once capture the eye and entice the reader to explore the pages inside.

Peter Vangioni

Curator, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu

Fernbank Studio: away past elsewhere has been curated to coincide with National Poetry Day, 16 August, 2013.

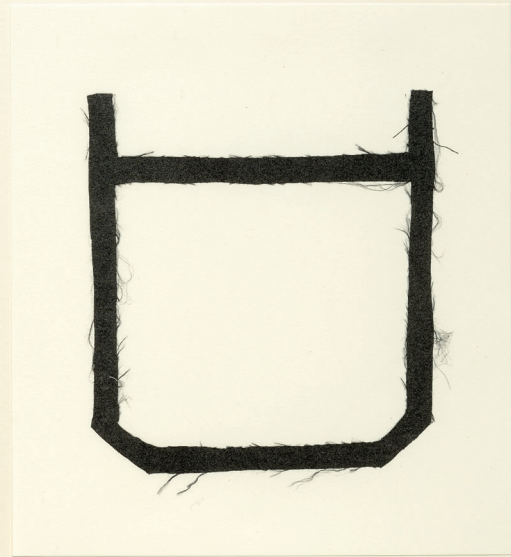


Brendan O'Brien printing on his Golding
bench-top press at Fernbank Studio,
Rita Angus Cottage, Wellington c.2001

Case 1

1.
Colin McCahon, *Rita: Seven Poems by Colin McCahon*, Holloway Press, Auckland and Fernbank Studio, 2001. Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu
2.
Bill Manhire and Ralph Hotere, *PINE*, Otakou Press, Dunedin, 2005. Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. Reproduced courtesy of the Hotere Foundation Trust
3.
Pip Culbert, Jenny Bornholdt and Gregory O'Brien, *Air Pocket*, 2004. Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. Reproduced courtesy of Pip Culbert
4.
The Wolf of Horeke: Drawings by Noel McKenna, Poem by Gregory O'Brien, 2008
5.
Jenny Bornholdt and Gregory O'Brien, *Ode to a Little Hotel*, 2002. Private collection, Wellington
6.
Joanna Margaret Paul, *The Cherry Now*, 2001
7.
Jenny Bornholdt and Mari Mahr, *Two Walk in Paris*, 2007. Reproduced courtesy of Mari Mahr
8.
Gregory O'Brien and Mari Mahr, *Two Walk in Edinburgh*, Holloway Press, Auckland, 2011. Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu
9.
Gregory O'Brien, *Four Taranaki Poems*, 2000

scam
stress stress
slip slip slip
stream stream stream stream



3. Air Pocket

2.

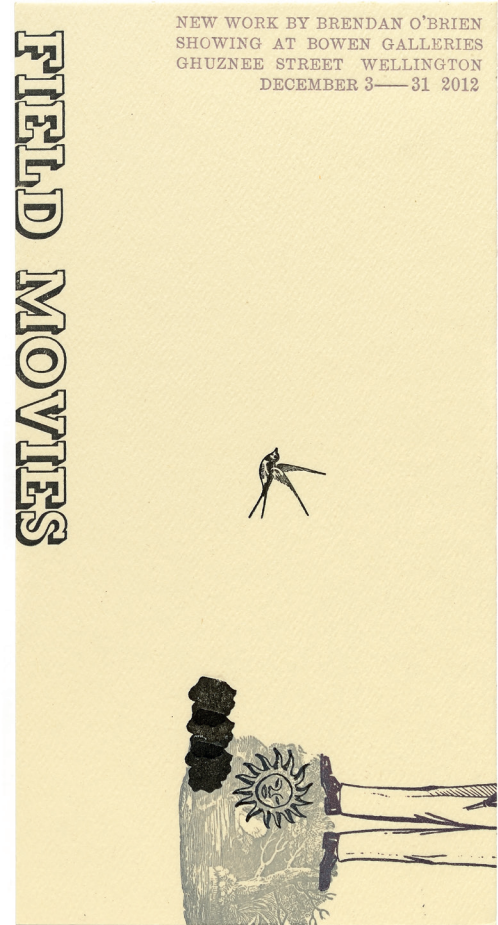
In the unexpected places
we find what is dear
to us.



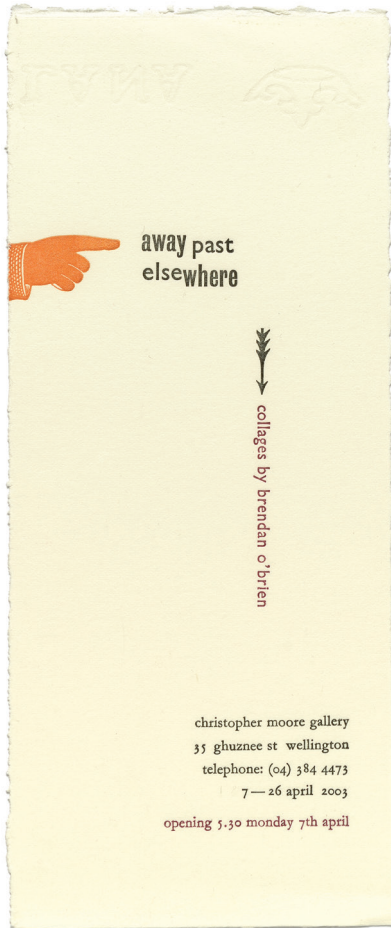
Case 2

10. Exhibition invitation for *FIELD MOVIES: New work by Brendan O'Brien*, Bowen Galleries, Wellington, 2012 (beige card)
11. Exhibition invitation for *FIELD MOVIES: New work by Brendan O'Brien*, Bowen Galleries, Wellington, 2012 (white card with chine-collé)
12. Exhibition invitation for *Hallelujah Anyway: Collages by Brendan O'Brien*, BAM, Wellington City Libraries, 2000
13. Exhibition invitation for *a working kitchen: Gregory O'Brien, Noel McKenna, Brendan O'Brien*, Bowen Galleries, Wellington, 2010
14. Exhibition invitation for *away past elsewhere: collages by brendan o'brien*, Christopher Moore Gallery, Wellington, 2003
15. Gregory O'Brien, *TARANAKI* 1998. Broadside over-painted by the poet
16. *small music: collages by Brendan O'Brien*, Christopher Moore Gallery, Wellington, 2004
17. *brendan o'brien – Palais Waipapa*, 2002. Business card
18. *Brendan O'Brien: Printer / Bookmaker* 2000. Business card
19. *Brendan O'Brien: Printer*, 2004. Business card
20. *books from the rita angus cottage*, 2001. Bookmark
21. Jenny Bornholdt, *Ho there little cupcake we've got gingerbread to celebrate*, 2000. Broadside
22. Prospectus for *Eleven books from the Rita Angus Cottage*, 2001
23. Bill Manhire and Ralph Hotere, *PINE* (proof page), Otakou Press, Dunedin, 2005

24.
Nuptials. Cover printed for the poem of the same title by Bill Manhire, hand-printed by students enrolled in the course 'Printing on the Handpress' with Richard-Gabriel Rummonds, Wai-te-ata Press, Wellington, February 2007
25.
 Mr Explorer Douglas, 'The Mountain Kiwi', from *Birds of South Westland*, 2001. Broadside
26.
 Gregory O'Brien, *historic places trust nobody*, 1995. Broadside
27.
 Brendan O'Brien, *Carlo*, 2007
28.
 Josephina O'Brien, *here comes me: a book of the year*, 2008
29.
Cookie Brooklyn, Portel Records, Wellington, c.2001. 7" record cover
30.
a checklist of books hand-printed at the fernbank studio, 2002. Private collection, Wellington
31.
 Christmas Cards, 2007-12



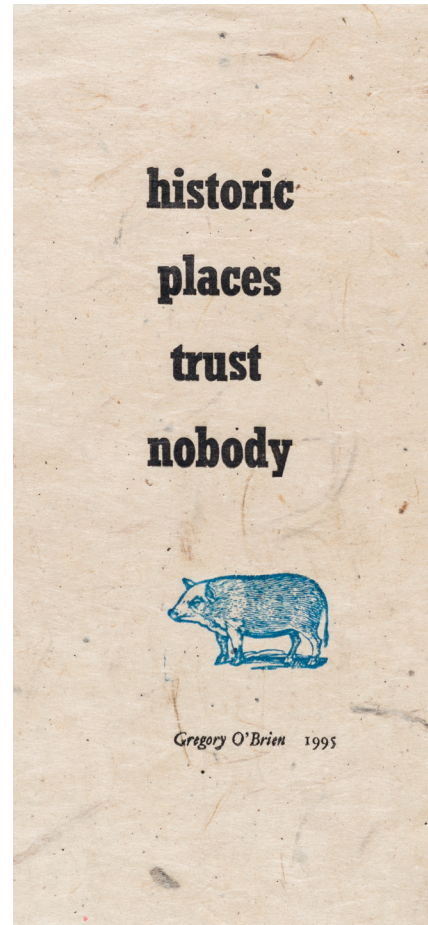
10. Exhibition invitation



14. Exhibition invitation



18. Business card. 31. Christmas Card

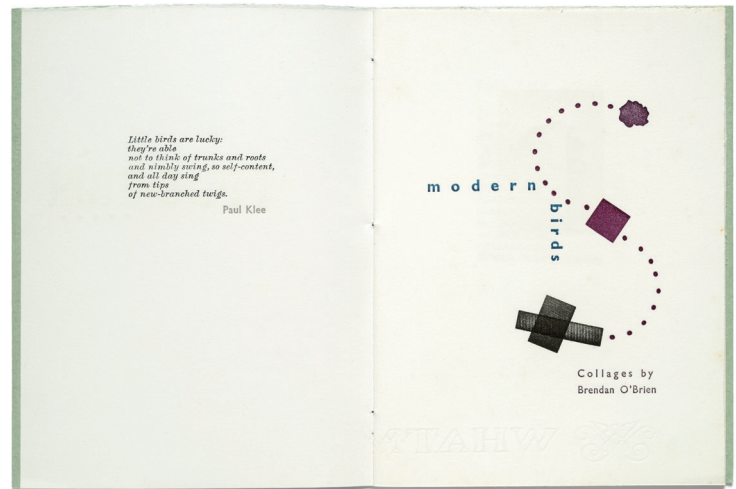


26. historic places trust nobody (detail)

Case 3

32. Brendan O'Brien, *Figure with Cloud on Box*, 2013
33. Brendan O'Brien, *Paintings on Love*, 2010
34. Catalogue for *small music: collages by Brendan O'Brien*, Christopher Moore Gallery, Wellington, 2004
35. Catalogue for *Modern Birds: Collages by Brendan O'Brien*, 2001
36. Catalogue for *FIELD MOVIES: new work by Brendan O'Brien*, Bowen Galleries, Wellington, 2012
37. Catalogue for *away past elsewhere: collages by Brendan O'Brien*, Christopher Moore Gallery, Wellington, 2003
38. Brendan O'Brien, *Private City*, 2000. Collage. Private collection, Wellington
39. Brendan O'Brien, *Untitled*, 1998. Collage on printed card. Private collection, Wellington

40. Gregory O'Brien, *Star of Bengal*, Raoul Island Publications / Fernbank Studio, 2011
41. Various contributors, in honour of Jenny Bornholdt, *for Jen*, 2010
42. *Magnolia Tree: Rita Angus to Doris Lusk*, illustrated by Brendan O'Brien, 2001



35. *Modern Birds: Collages by Brendan O'Brien*

Case 4

43.

Eleven books from the Rita Angus Cottage, box set published 2001:

- Kate Camp, *Then*, 2000
- Faith: *A Poem by John Mulgan*, 2000
- Joanna Margaret Paul, *Rose*, 2000
- *The Way: A Poem by Jenny Bornholdt*, 2000
- Bill Manhire, *Black sheep and other poems*, 2001
- Mary Macpherson, *Three Poems*, 2000
- Andrew Johnston, *History*, 2000
- Stephanie de Montalk, *Five Poems*, 2000
- James Brown, *Two Poems*, 2000
- Ken Bolton, *Tiepolo*, 2001
- *Small Book of Paintings by Milton Avery: a poem by Gregory O'Brien*, 2000

Including additional book:

- Gregory O'Brien, *View from the House of Many Chimneys*, 2000

44.

Gregory O'Brien, *Winter I Was*, 2000

45.

Stephanie de Montalk, *The Intransigent Traveller*, 2000

46.

August Kleinzahler, *Reno*, collaboratively printed by John O'Brien at Toad Hall Press, Auckland and Brendan O'Brien at Fernbank Studio, 2005

47.

Gregory O'Brien, *View from the House of Many Chimneys*, 2000

48.

Trois Poemes par Charles Juliet, 2000

49.

Geoff Cochrane and Brendan O'Brien, *Nine Poems*, 2002

50.

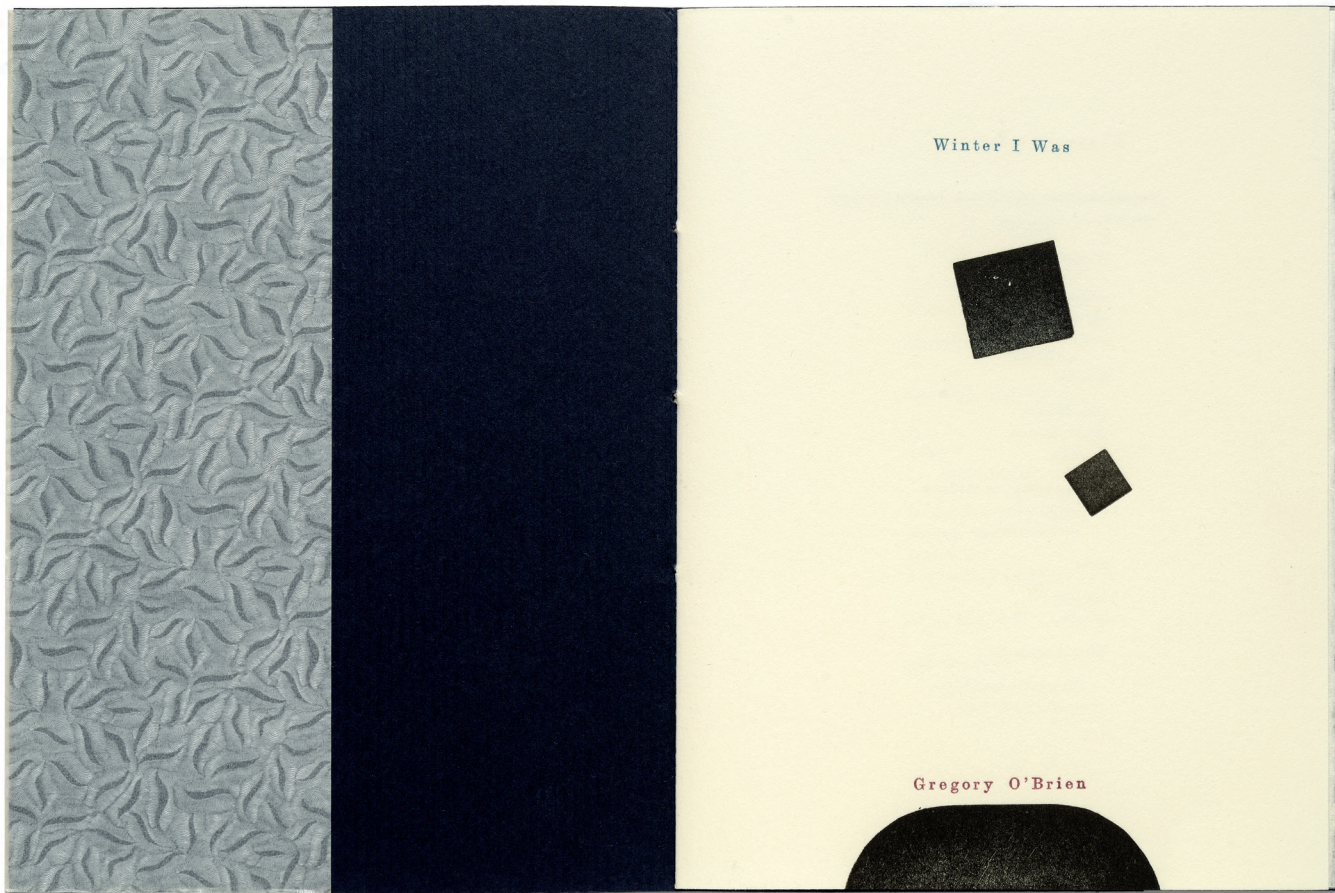
Bill Manhire and Gregory O'Brien, *Delicious*, 2005

51.

Kate Camp, *Mirage*, 2001



43. *Faith*



44. *Winter I Was*



INKLING

Flax gleams and rattles
There's threat in the taupata's gloss,
ambush in the fennel

The link glints darkly
of my connection in time
to another place

QUALM

To be potted by Death
(*that* posh clinician),
not having read
all the best stories
of John Cheever —
D'oh!

MIRAGES

Here near the railway-yards,
tall hoardings tout
beds and lagers and BMWs

Cartons sleepers tyres about to combust
hold aloft their tempting Christmas dinner,
a hot repast of smells

**CHRISTCHURCH
ART GALLERY
TE PUNA O
WAIWHETU
OUTER SPACES**
christchurchartgallery.org.nz



A Christchurch Art Gallery Outer Spaces Project

12 August – 23 September 2013
Central Library Peterborough

Unless otherwise stated, all books and ephemera
are from private collections, Christchurch.

Christchurch City
Libraries
Ngā Kete Wānanga-o-Ōtautahi

Christchurch
City Council 