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Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetu
Bulletin Issue no.185
Spring 2016

Reading the Swell
Matt Vance looks at the art of
the sea.

The Militant Artists' Union
Marti Friedlander on Fomison,
Maddox and Clairmont.

Hair Story
Ken Hall draws attention to the
theatre of personal grooming.

Colin McCahon
Peter Simpson examines the
artist's fruitful Christchurch years.

Not Quite Human
Ronnie Van Houw talks to
Lara Strongman.

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Please see the back cover for more details.

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AUTO
REFINISH

A portrait of Julia Morison, a woman with short dark hair, wearing a black leather jacket over a black turtleneck. She is standing in a workshop or studio, with various tools and equipment visible in the background. The background is slightly out of focus, showing shelves with tools and a large circular object on the wall.

“ I like making things that I haven’t seen before. That doesn’t mean to say that they don’t start off with the familiar, they often do. But through the work it evolves and something else happens, and that’s where it becomes really exciting for me. It’s the unknown. ”

Julia Morison



Visit the Christchurch Art Gallery to watch Julia Morison working in her studio on the video wall in the NZI Foyer.



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Previous spread: Detail of the Britten V1000 installed in *GREAT BRITTEN! A Work by Billy Apple* at Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, July 2016. F002-92 collection of Kevin Grant. Photo: John Collie

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Artist Fiona Pardington with Sheelagh Thompson in July 2016

Director's Foreword

JENNY HARPER

August 2016

Since mid July we've been enjoying the first major exhibition change downstairs. While it was difficult to say goodbye to *Unseen* and *Op + Pop*—and to be rid of the colourful castor sugar (some 600kg were required) with which Tanya Schultz made Pip & Pop's *Newest New World*—it's now so rewarding to be the final venue for City Gallery Wellington's exhibition of Kāi Tahu photographer Fiona Pardington's *A Beautiful Hesitation*. Designing the display and augmenting the content of this show for our audiences feels like another big step towards being fully operational.

And artist Billy Apple's homage to Christchurch's John Britten—the inventor of an amazing motorbike, still some 25kg lighter than any other racing bike—is itself amazing. To work with such an exacting and precise artist as Apple is an extraordinary event in any Gallery's calendar; he's improved the space within which he's worked as well as presented the components of *GREAT BRITTEN!* and it's such a privilege for us finally to realise a project we've had in our notional programme since before 2011.

When they visited, both Apple and Pardington reinforced what an amazing team we have at Te Puna o Waiwhetu Christchurch Art Gallery. My grateful thanks on the city's behalf to all involved in the development and presentation of these exhibitions.

Of course, Apple and Pardington's art is very different, but there is a key link inasmuch as both artists re-present key objects for our consideration and admiration. Apple's project is a homage; he presents us with a motorbike

made by an inventor he knew and admired and he reminds us of its amazing prowess and success. On the other hand, Pardington delves into the storerooms of natural, medical and social history museums and archives to present us with less celebrated objects: birds and feathers, death masks (which fascinated French ethnographers), and soft-porn magazine images from the 1950s. She also assembles and photographs still-life arrangements of birds and beasts; of flowers, shells and globes.

When she captures what's been ordered and collected in her precise and beautiful images, they are shown for our reconsideration, but also, importantly, to allow us to reflect on where we've been and the basis of our knowledge. It's been wonderful to be able to enhance *A Beautiful Hesitation* with additional work from our own collection, and we thank Canterbury Museum for its loan of Arthur Llewelyn Barker's original letters to his uncle.

This exhibition has been the perfect moment to introduce our visitors to the great generosity of Sheelagh Thompson, who gave the Gallery the means to buy a new work by Pardington, *Still Life with Wild Wheat and Freesia, Waiheke*. It's such a treat to be able to acquire a beautiful work that is contemporary, but calls to mind some of the Dutch still lifes in our current *Treasury* exhibition upstairs.

Continuing with local generosity, I am thrilled to announce another recent gift to our collection. It's a small but important early watercolour of Christchurch by



Emily Harper *Christchurch from near Gloucester Street Bridge* 1857.
Watercolour. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, gift of the Acland family 2016

Emily Harper, one of the daughters of the first bishop, Henry John Chitty Harper and his wife, also Emily. Painted in 1857, it is no doubt one of the earliest paintings made by a woman in this part of the world—showing us the promise of the new world she and her family came to only the year before and giving us insight into how unfamiliar it would have been for them. Then, like now, Christchurch presented such a range of opportunities.

This time we thank the Acland family for their gift—we'll be very pleased to show it soon. *Christchurch from near Gloucester Street Bridge* is available on our website and by appointment, and well cared for in its new home. Rick and Nina, the immediate Acland donors and both dear relations of mine, hope that their gift will encourage others. We salute them and agree!

In this issue we hear from writer and sailor Matt Vance, who takes us on a trip into the unknown, looking at optical tricks that the ocean can play on the unwary and using our exhibition *Reading the Swell* to illustrate his thinking. Also heading into the unknown were artists Tony Fomison, Allen Maddox and Philip Clairmont during the late 1970s. To mark the acquisition of Maddox's *No Mail Today*—the first work by the artist to enter our collection—we're illustrating two photographs of the trio by Marti Friedlander, as well as an extract from her fascinating autobiography. And Peter Simpson, who has written for this magazine on a number of occasions, looks at Colin McCahon's Christchurch years—a fruitful and creative period, from which two major recent acquisitions to our collection have come. *There is only one direction* and *Canterbury landscape* show very different sides of McCahon, but Simpson places them in context, as major changes in circumstance came to bear on the artist's output at this time.

From the aggressive displays of outsider status flouted by punks to the bewigged respectability of the judge's bench, curator Ken Hall takes his exhibition *Bad Hair Day* as a starting point for a serious look at the use of hair as a cultural signifier. And senior curator Lara Strongman talks to Ronnie van Hout, the most recent artist to be installed on the exterior of our building—quite literally, as van Hout's work is a strange large-scale conflation of his hand and face that glowers out across the north-west of the city from our rooftop. He talks about growing up in the Christchurch suburb of Aranui, and of his fascination with open skies and aliens.

Assistant curator Nathan Pohio looks at Fiona Pardington's early photograph *Moko*, and finds it at the start of the artist's exploration into her Kāi Tahu heritage. We're pleased to be able to republish Tusiata Avia's 'St Paul's Trinity Pacific Island Church', a poem which mourns the loss of a piece of local heritage. And Alice Barclay, a University of Canterbury student who recently completed a project on our Barry Cleavin archive, writes on the sometimes disquieting experience of digging around in the private thoughts of an artist.

As always, our quarterly *Bulletin* is a great source of institutional pride. Through this vehicle, we celebrate our supporters and TOGETHER partners; we enhance and explore what we collect, show, do and think in and around the Gallery. Through *Bulletin* we communicate the roles of an art gallery with responsibility for a major metropolitan collection in New Zealand. It makes our work available to a wider world, reaching beyond our local visitors and enhancing our reputation as explorers and collaborators. Like Fiona Pardington and Billy Apple, we are presenters of ideas and images that matter.

Reading the Swell

Matt Vance

The art of the sea has always been the art of vastness—without edges and with potential for infinite extension. It is this immensity that has invaded the *Reading the Swell* exhibition; finding its way through the automatic doors when no one is looking and quietly expanding the walls. Like sailors, artists have laid soundings in this uncharted vastness. *Reading the Swell* is a small and pointed selection of those soundings that see fit to make sense of the sea.

The vastness they depict means these works do not sit passively in a gallery setting. Impossible to pin down, they defy containment and loom from the walls. To gallery patrons, this ‘looming’ can be disconcerting, playing tricks with their perception as haven and murderous wilderness mix together and shift before their eyes. The sea gazer, like the gallery patron, is also confronted by the sleight of hand that a looming ocean presents, and it is perhaps this phenomenon that unifies the experience of the audience.

Looming is an optical phenomenon peculiar to the sea; one of those obscure maritime topics that has been largely ignored, except by a few acutely observant sea gazers. In 1855 John Brocklesby published his *Elements of Meteorology; with questions for examination, designed for schools and academies*, which, for the first time, discussed the effect. Brocklesby published on a wide range of natural science but it was only late in his life that he found the fascination of the sea and all its optical tricks. Until then, looming was cast aside as the work of the devil but Brocklesby dispelled all that with a dose of hard physics.

His initial summation seems harmless enough: ‘Looming is caused by local changes in the temperature of the atmosphere causing irregularities in refraction and distortions in perspective,’ but it is his explanations that strike the unwary sea watcher with the power of a vivid hallucination. Like a neat margin ruled on a page, the horizon fools the observer into the idea of a limit to the sea but then uses this false margin to play tricks with our eyes. Ships and islands appear to hover in the air and distant shores are brought closer.

Top: Hely Smith *The Fog Horn* 1896. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, presented by the Canterbury Society of Arts 1932

Bottom: Julius Olsson *Moonlight* c.1910. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, presented by the Canterbury Society of Arts with assistance from the John Peacock Bequest 1912. Presented to the Gallery 1932



Brocklesby shoots himself in the scientific foot by attempting to illustrate the concept of a sailing ship being ‘hull down’. Only the rigging and superstructure are visible above the curvature of the earth and, as the ship gets more distant, it appears to topple over the horizon, confirming what all landlubbers know deep in their soul; that the earth is flat and that you can sail off the edge.

Perhaps it is the obscure element of looming that draws people to the edge of the sea or indeed the gallery, seeking what Thomas Jefferson called the water prospect without termination. Like art, the view of the sea seems to open something else in the land bound. It infuses the walls of *Reading the Swell*. Hely Smith’s *The Fog Horn* (1896) is wreathed in it. The comfort of the horizon is entirely obscured by fog and the ghostly apparition of a sailing ship bears down with nothing short of menace on the pilot ketch waiting at anchor. It is one of those moments that occurs often at sea and that even modern technology has not managed to quell. Fog over the ocean distorts sound as well as vision, and it is this hint of peril that drums away in the background of *The Fog Horn*. Smith has included the pilot ketch’s anchor line to ground his landlubber audience and to trick them into believing that land lies only a few fathoms below. But in reality, the crew of the ketch would have been hove to in deep water, drifting slowly sideways, their mizzen keeping their bows to the weather as the pilot waited for a potential client. Any hint of land or the proximity of the sea floor would be a holy terror to these sailors, full of the uncertainty that fog inflicts on navigation.

Knowing the terrestrially bound audience’s need for security in the form of land defines Julius Olsson’s *Moonlight* (c.1910). Olsson was a keen yachtsman as well as artist and was acutely observant of both his element and his audience. *Moonlight* positions the viewer on a headland, safe from the perils of the sea, but with access to all the delights of a coast seen by moonlight and the reassuring swish of surf on the rocks below. Exactly the sort of swish that would horrify the sailor. The haven of the harbour is faintly visible in the form of the lighthouse. Like Smith’s anchor cable, it is a trick he plays with the audience to make them feel safe, masking the murderous ocean with a patina of moonlight, prospect and dry-footed assurance.

It is the harbour as a haven that both John Gibb and Petrus van der Velden examine in their respective works. This is the sea as their terrestrial audience would prefer it: contained and subdued by the hand of commerce. Gibb’s *Lyttelton Harbour* (1886) has an air of prosperity about it, depicting a colony on the make. Even today, the workings of

Top: John Gibb *Lyttelton Harbour, N.Z. Inside the Breakwater* 1886. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, presented by the Lyttelton Harbour Board, 1989

Bottom: Petrus van der Velden *The Leuvehaven, Rotterdam* 1867. Oil on canvas. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased with assistance from Gabrielle Tasman in memory of Adriaan, and the Olive Stirrat bequest. Purchase supported by Christchurch City Council’s Challenge Grant to Christchurch Art Gallery Trust, 2010



this harbour give a good indication of the health of New Zealand's economic balance sheet; the coal going out roughly equals the second-hand cars coming in. The image is set facing inward with no hint of the infinite horizon to the east. Gibb's harbour ignores the open sea and all its potential to trick the viewer. His sea's only purpose is to provide a medium for import, export and prosperity to a new colony.

Petrus van der Velden's *The Leuvehaven, Rotterdam* (1867) has the same air of orderliness. The sea has been subdued into a street to serve the demands of commerce. In his later years, van der Velden moved to New Zealand and developed a passion for the unruliness of the wilderness. Perhaps he had a glimpse of the future, as the bombs of the Luftwaffe levelled most of the scene of the *The Leuvehaven, Rotterdam* in World War II. This knowledge, something only a contemporary audience could have, looms before the work—a warning shot to the gallery-goer. Like a ship that appears to topple over the horizon, it gives the viewer some unease about the certainty of what constitutes a haven from the sea.

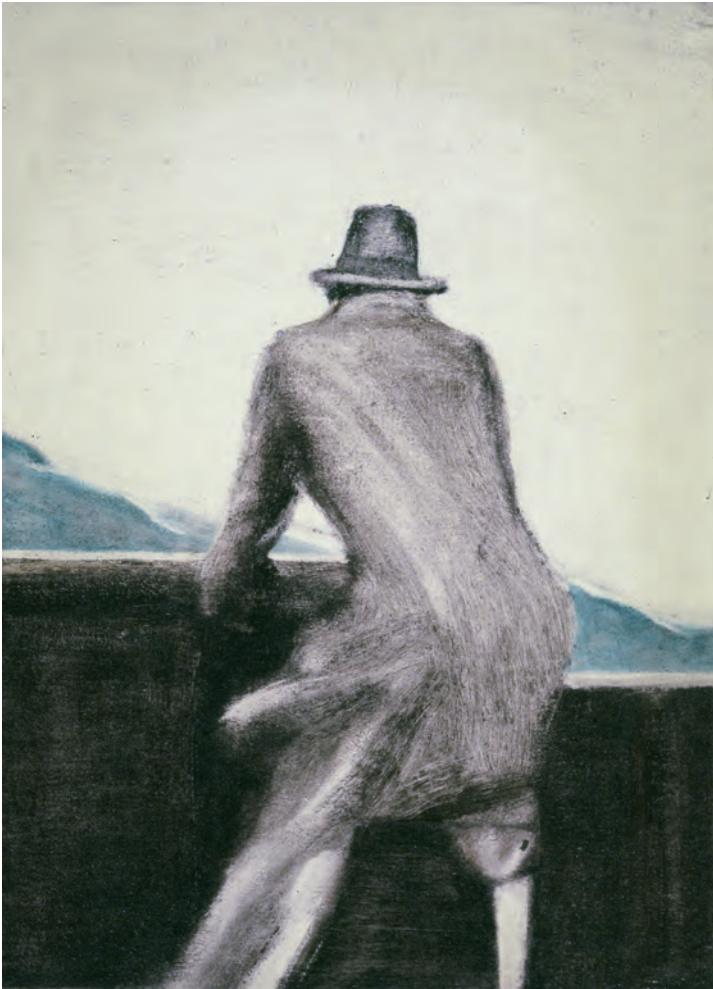
This sense of foreboding about what the sea and the human mind are really capable of is captured by Tony Fomison in his rendition of Herman Melville's Captain Ahab. Ahab is locked in an intense gaze, not at the sea, nor the great white whale that took his leg, but at the land; a land that looks remarkably like Banks Peninsula viewed from the sea. Perhaps Ahab's obsession with the great white whale is fuelled less by revenge than by a desire to escape from the distraction and futility that are a sailor's life ashore. The hunt for a murderous whale focuses the senses, whereas the prospect of land only induces the hunch-shouldered anger of a man about to spit in disgust at the vision before him.

Max Gimblett's *Lost at Sea—2* (2002) moves our focus to the sky, yet does not escape the effects of looming. Sailors look to the sky to see the future, to find their position on a seemingly featureless watery world and to glean a hint of the weather to come. The stars whirl above the ocean with the certainty of a giant cosmic clock and it is a shock to find the ominous features of a skull emerging in their midst like a sinister Magellanic cloud. The skull changes form with the lighting, almost disappearing when the gallery lights go out. The image looms as if Gimblett is hinting at something of our future and of the waves.

The uncanny similarity of fate emanates from Louis Auguste de Sainson's *La Corvette l'Astrolabe* (1833). The depiction is of Dumont d'Urville's ship the *Astrolabe* striking the reef that would later come to bear its name. The seas are vertically surreal, hovering, forever

Left: Tony Fomison *Captain Ahab Peg Legged Hunter of the White Whale* 1981. Oil on canvas board. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, presented to the Gallery by Peter Wells 1984

Right: Max Gimblett *Lost At Sea—2* 2002. Acrylic polymer / Japanese Kinkami Silver Fleck 100% Kozo Handmade Paper. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, the Max Gimblett and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett Gift 2011



on the edge of breaking, drawn for direct impact on his land-dwelling audience. The scene is viewed from above, as if from the back of a seagull, where the audience is rendered an observer, not a participant in the ungodly tableau. The ship sits immobile while all around is calamity on the move. There is something unnerving in de Sainson's depiction of the sea, something that hints at its ability to destroy even the finest of havens; something that hints at the future and a ship named *Rena* going aground on the very same reef with horrendous consequences.

If de Sainson's work hints at the almighty power of the sea, then William Wyllie's *The Sloping Deck* (1871) confirms it; a scene of utter desolation, full of Conradian shimmering terror as the haven visible in the background turns hellhole. For the survivors clinging to the stump of the mizzenmast, drowning or being dashed to death on the rocks is all that lies in prospect. In the awful scene he depicts in *The Sloping Deck*, Wyllie unites the landlubber and the sailor. The landlubber's distrust of the sea is confirmed and what all sailors have secretly known is revealed.

The mask of humility has been torn off and the diabolical violence that lurks beneath its waters has been unleashed. The looming has gone from an amusing trick of the light to an inescapable horror from which we cannot avert our gaze.

Matt Vance is a writer and sailor, and has guided many expeditions to the Antarctic, the Southern Ocean and the Southwest Pacific.

Reading the Swell is on display in the collection galleries until February 2017.

Top: Louis Auguste de Sainson *La Corvette l'Astrolabe tombant tout-à-coup sur des récifs dans la baie de l'Abondance, (Nouvelle Zélande)* [*The Corvette Astrolabe falling suddenly on reefs in the Bay of Plenty, (New Zealand)*] 1833. Hand-coloured lithograph. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased 2014

Bottom: William Wyllie *The Sloping Deck* 1871. Oil on card. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, presented by the family of James Jamieson 1932



The Militant Artists' Union

Marti Friedlander

Tony Fomison and Allen Maddox and Philip Clairmont were all in their thirties when I photographed them. There was a terrible sadness about that trio. All of them died before they were fifty, almost as though they chose to die, to protest or to create this image of what the artist is, the artist as a sacrificial lamb. They all had their own personal tragedies that they were coping with.

I was invited to spend a day with the three of them in Tony's house in Grey Lynn. I was particularly fond of Philip Clairmont. A very sensitive person. We bought one of Phil's paintings from his very first exhibition held in Auckland, which we still have and still love.

Tony Fomison I was not always comfortable with. I thought his work was very grim and dark and black and he tended to act the part of the artist. It was a time when artists perhaps needed to create a mystique about what it is to be a creative person. I never went along with that sort of disguise, although I could understand the need for it.

When I went to photograph Tony for *Contemporary New Zealand Painters*, I told him to stop acting. I said, look, I'm here to do a job. I think he was taken aback that I was frankly standing up to his nonsense. I said, you know very well that I have to take these photographs for the book and that you'll be getting recognition. I've come here and I'm taking you seriously; I want you to take me seriously too, artist to artist. And it made a difference, my saying that. By the time the session ended I think we were working on a completely different level, one of acceptance and cooperation.

It was the same with Allen Maddox, whilst Philip Clairmont was much more cooperative from the beginning. They really were the Three Musketeers, and I felt privileged to have a corner of their friendship. I've always had this thing for painters, I don't know why. I've always recognised their struggle, whether in a tiny room or a big studio. Think of Edvard Munch, for example; an artist trying to share what it is they imagine with the world. It's a lonely life, and you can't help being affected by it when you're allowed entry to that world. So I was very present, very affected that morning.

But the time I spent with the three of them was also hard. I knew that they were playing games,

Marti Friedlander *Philip Clairmont and Allen Maddox with Tony Lane* c.1977. Photograph





‘There was a very strong bond between Clairmont and Fomison and Maddox. They were like a band of warriors. But they also reinforced each other’s addictions.’

and I had a strong feeling that they wouldn’t live long lives. Too many drugs and too much alcohol. They had this great big canvas stretched along the full length of the room. And they were doing a sort of Jackson Pollock, with oils. At times I felt quite uncomfortable, and thought, what am I doing here? In a way, it was so intimate that I didn’t want to be witness to their decline, as artists and as people. And yet I got tremendous photographs of them, drinking from their flagons, with their dog—that’s the image that was bought by the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, now the Christchurch Art Gallery, and is quite well known, very evocative of the year in which it was taken.

There was a very strong bond between Clairmont and Fomison and Maddox. They were like a band of warriors. But they also reinforced each other’s addictions. As a smoker myself, I understood that one could have an addiction. We all have addictions. Most people don’t want to admit to it, but we do. But I’ve always felt that alcoholism is worse, more destructive. Cigarette smoking causes you to get ill, but alcohol changes your behaviour.

Nobody wants to watch people they love caught in a cycle of self-destruction, whether they’re destroying themselves by speaking negatively—the New Zealand thing, not skiting, don’t believe in yourself, don’t boast—or by physical destruction. I think you have to try to survive in order to show what you need to reveal, a kind of purpose that gives meaning to your life. But not all of us are capable of that survival. It requires courage.

Marti Friedlander is one of New Zealand’s most acclaimed photographers, with a career spanning over fifty years.

Marti Friedlander Tony
Fomison and Philip
Clairmont with Tony Lane
c.1977. Photograph

First published in *Self-Portrait: Marti Friedlander*, Auckland University Press, 2013. Reproduced with kind permission.



In drawing attention to the theatre of personal grooming, *Bad Hair Day* brings together portraiture and caricature with a variety of less readily classifiable works of art. The densely packed selection spans a vast historical range. And in putting bowl cuts and bushy beards alongside wayward wigs and whiskers, it highlights the sometimes comical aspects of hair, especially when styles are extreme. If wry intent is discernible throughout the exhibition, however, we shouldn't let this fool us: hair is a topic that easily turns serious.

A cautionary note also belongs to the show's gag title: although the hair on display could be rated if necessary, little of it is truly bad. Of more interest is the way in which, with works grouped roughly according to categories (wigs, facial hair, tricky cuts, long black or long blonde...), the similarities and differences start talking to each other. It is possible to read the works according to timelines, changing fashions and ways of thinking about personal grooming down the centuries. There is nothing terrible about most of it—it's just how styles change. The *Portrait of a Courtier* attributed to Robert Walker, for example, shows a long-haired and bewhiskered style that was conventional in the 1650s, but likely wouldn't be seen today.

Ideas relating to time and change also come into play in Siliga David Setoga's *Oki fa'a-kama-Samoamoni lou ulu (Cut your hair like a true Samoan boy)* (2014), a gridded series of photographs in which the artist makes a provocative formal statement about identity through his own hairstyle. It is both satirical and deeply serious—the title being a challenge to the artist from his father, who had arrived in New Zealand in 1961 and wanted for his son the neatly-trimmed style of that particular period, as seen in the bottom row of photo portraits. The Niu Sila-born Setoga, however, more comfortably pictured at the top of the chart, wryly challenges prescribed expectations relating to cultural identity, from a different generational viewpoint at least. This work, like many of those selected, can also be

read in relation to how hair defines personal space.

David Cook's photograph *Punks go on Rampage in City* (1983) connects to a similar idea, a reminder of how punks and rebels in early 1980s Christchurch and elsewhere used hair to signify difference and define an alternative cultural space. Their adopted hair statements functioned as both warning signs and buffer zones between the wearer and the prevailing, homogeneous society, creating a useful barrier. In contrast, the eighteenth-century Englishman *Leonard Mapes Esq., of Rollesby, Norfolk* used his 1735 coiffure as an expression of the society and cultural values he wished to embrace. Mapes's white-powdered wig and impressive embroidered coat signalled who he was and where he belonged. These were part of an en masse gentlemen's agreement, where well-off adult males wore wigs as a means of confirming their place in society, their fashionableness, refinement and status.¹ The taste for these started in France in 1624, mainly due to kings Louis XIII and XIV both going bald at a young age. The fashion took off in England the 1660s when Charles II began losing his hair, and endured for the next 140 years. Reflecting the spillover effect of that particular period in fashion, Steve Carr's video work *Aona* (2010), made while on an artist residency in Japan, shows its enduring influence on French poodle grooming style.

Ideas attached to approved cultural codes and hair presentation rituals also exist in *Our Country's 24 Examples of Filial Piety* (1882), a spectacular three-part woodblock print by Japanese artist Toyohara Chikanobu. The theatrics of style are heightened by the fact that it depicts a *kabuki* drama scene, further underscoring the link between hair and performance. Similar thoughts may be applied to the dramatic mutton-chop whiskers of early Christchurch lawyer Henry Wynn-Williams, a different type of performer whose facial showmanship is highlighted in two portraits. The first, an 1860s oil-painted photographic portrait, is a likeness he would have procured from an early city photographer's studio.

The second, painted a century and a half later, is a blown-up version by Auckland-based Gavin Hurley that puts men's facial grooming from the colonial era under a double spotlight. This particular style would have been especially startling in court, where Wynn-Williams wore a hairpiece similar to the one sharing space with his portraits: an elaborate horsehair wig, London-made, worn by an early Christchurch town clerk.²

The wearing of wigs by legal professionals in court was clearly intended to bulk out their formidable aspect and, for William Hogarth, invited a satirical response. Hogarth's *The Bench* (1758–64) depicts an engraved array of outrageously bewigged or bearded characters in various states of caricature. This is accompanied by a summary treatise on *caracatura*, or distorted drawing for satirical effect. Laying out his thoughts beneath the picture, Hogarth expresses admiration for a 'famous Caracatura of a certain Italian Singer, that Struck at first sight, which consisted only of a Straight perpendicular Stroke with a Dot over it.'³

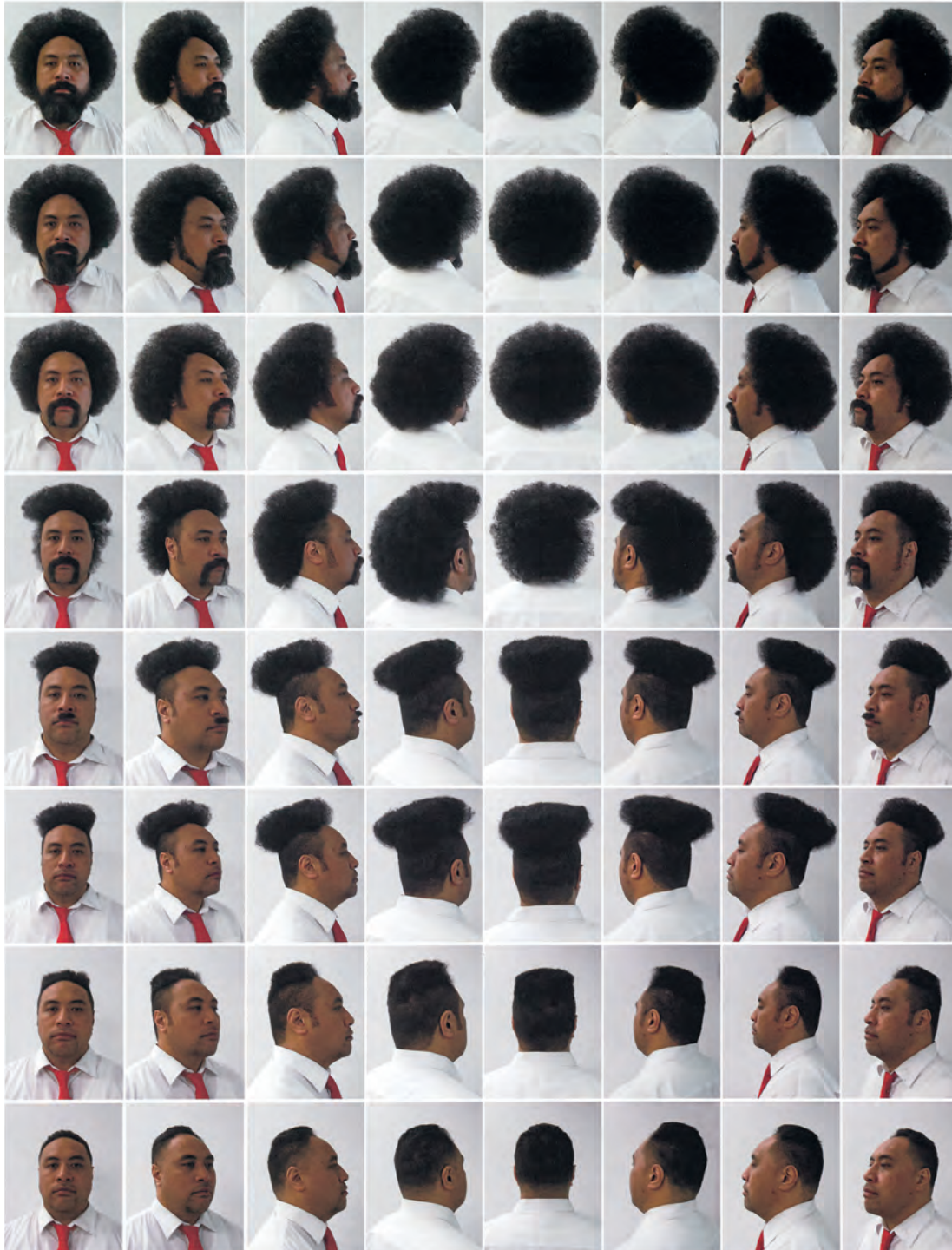
As if picking up cues from Hogarth three centuries later, Christchurch-based Leo Bensemann seized on the possibilities of reductive caricature through a series of stylish, 1930s art deco inflected sketches—line drawings depicting visiting entertainers and local identities. One visitor with carefully exaggerated stage hair was the Russian opera singer Feodor Chaliapin, performing as a pointy-bearded Don Quixote.⁴ The mass of tight auburn hair belonging to Mary Glover, the English-born cosmetician and model married to poet Dennis Glover, was described by Bensemann with ultra-economy. A similarly audacious, streamlined treatment was given to Esther Levy's sleek black hair, reduced to a trailing question mark.⁵

Style and stylisation also establish the tone for two paradoxical photographic works, Yvonne Todd's *Ethlyn* (2005) and Heather Straka's *Cindy* (2009). Aligned to the seventeenth-century Dutch painting tradition of character studies known as *tronies*, rather than straight

portraiture, these disquieting images each present a carefully-groomed young woman looking directly at the viewer. Ethlyn's cascading blonde tresses appear transported from the 1970s (Todd discloses having spent a short time in her early career working in a wig shop—the influence seems evident). Cindy's hair looks more this century: long, black and anime-inspired with flicked out ends. And yet, the meticulous styling of both contrasts with elements in the pictures that appear incongruous or wrong: Ethlyn's mildewed white dress; the black gloves holding her guitar; Cindy's cloud of brazen smoke testing the viewer.

Other links between hair, perfection and decay are manifest in Liyen Chong's *I am Here and There* (2007), a heart and skeleton embroidered with her own hair in an exquisite meditation on mortality. Hair, we know, is imbued with corporeal associations. Alongside this embroidery are Chong's *Flying Oblique* (2012), a photographic self-portrait-based work and William Blake's equally lyrical '*Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind*' (*Book of Job*) (1825), illustrating a biblical reflection on suffering. Both are filled with swirling locks and dreamlike spirit, with Chong's airborne hair a formal match to that of Blake's universe maker, and almost equal in the big hair competition. A more literal face-off, however, exists in Patrick Pound's *Head* (2005), a photograph picturing an ancient stone classical figure clutching her tresses. It's also the ultimate metaphorical bad hair day: the hair remains, but her head and face are completely gone.

Pound's image of hair, its owner long departed, is a reminder of a beard preserved at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, the longest ever recorded, grown by the Norwegian-American Hans Langseth and stretching to an incredible 5.33 metres.⁶ Langseth made the occasional sideshow appearance; his beard held the same kind of freak-show appeal as expressed in Christchurch illustrator Kennaway Henderson's *Man with Long White Beard* (1920s). This stretches below



Siliga David Setoga *Oki fa'a-kama-Samoa-moni lou ulu (Cut your hair like a true Samoan boy)* 2014. Photograph, inkjet print on Hahnemühle Matt Fine Art paper. Photographed by: Setoga Setoga II, Barber/hair stylist: Maligi Evile Jnr. Courtesy of the artist

his knees, and makes him a worthwhile candidate for pogonology, the serious study of beard wearing.

Enmeshed in this territory, historian Christopher Oldstone-Moore proposes that changing facial hairstyles, rather than revealing ‘fashion cycles’, present ‘instead slower, seismic shifts dictated by deeper social forces that shape and reshape ideals of manliness. Whenever masculinity is redefined, facial hairstyles change to suit.’⁷ Social forces highlighted in his study include political, religious and economic influences. Young beard growers in 1830s Paris, for example, were recognised as revolutionary romantics, who displayed greater risk through their hair expression than any 1980s punk.⁸ Within a few decades, however, the full beard was no longer associated with youthful idealism or a ‘calling card of social rebellion’. And by 1907, in James Balfour’s *Portrait of Samuel Charles Farr*, we find the full beard expressing a relaxed and stately confidence. Farr was a Christchurch architect whose achievements—apart from his flowing white whiskers—included designing many notable early public buildings and churches.⁹ (He is also credited with helping introduce the bumblebee to New Zealand.) An interesting contrast exists in Peter Stichbury’s *Mr Phil McEwan* (2010) whose equally snowy beard is studiously clipped. A long way from Gothic spires and bumblebees, he wears an eager intensity of expression and belongs more clearly to our own, more manic, times.¹⁰

While changes in hair fashion can be studied and explained, some choices appear less explicable, and made for no good reason apart from the purposes of artful good humour. This quality resides in spades in Ronnie van Hout’s *End Doll* (2007) video and sculpture. Screen Ronnie, in massive curly black wig and puppet-like beard, explains himself carefully, blaming these ‘innocent looking’ production-line toys for his failed planet’s ills. The mini-Ronnie doll has hair like Trump’s—a crackpot style that now seems part of a global, dual art-and-life problem. But as is clear from looking at hair in history,

the famous man’s hair only does what hair has always done. It communicates identity and provokes a response, while at the same time unwittingly revealing anxieties about ageing and death, and the desire to retain the impression of youth. Hair is linked to expression but also to basic human vulnerabilities. (Please remember the early warning about this being serious.)

Ken Hall Curator

Bad Hair Day is on display in the Burdon Family gallery until 28 May 2017.

Notes

- 1 The collaborative satirists Thomas Rowlandson and George Moutard Woodward expressed the funny side of men wearing horsehair wigs in their *Horse Accomplishments* aquatint engravings (1799).
- 2 Canterbury Museum collection. The combined wig and whiskers in court would have been a nightmare for anyone suffering from chaetophobia, a fear of excess hair associated with human and/or animal hair.
- 3 We can enjoy the elasticity of Hogarth’s thinking, until at the bottom of the print, we read—in a different hand—the news that he had been reworking this etching on the day before he died on 26 October 1764. The cold fact somewhat dampens the comedy.
- 4 Chaliapin toured New Zealand and Australia in 1926, and was well-known for this role. He also starred in the movie *Adventures of Don Quixote* in 1933.
- 5 In 1933, the year before her marriage to Philip Braham Levy, Esther Rose was a celebrated South Island beauty contest winner, who just missed the national prize of a trip to Hollywood.
- 6 This treasure is brought out twice a year by his descendants. Those wishing to emulate must start young: a man’s beard grows an average of 14cm per year.
- 7 Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards and Men*, University of Chicago Press, 2015, pp.1-2.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p.156.
- 9 Most were destroyed following the 22 February 2011 earthquake. They include the old Normal School (Cranmer Courts) and St Paul’s Presbyterian Church, corner of Cashel and Madras streets.
- 10 Stichbury’s subject is based on an old high school science teacher, from a series paying tribute to former schoolmates and teachers who were sometimes bullied.



Gavin Hurley *Big Henry (Wynn-Williams)* 2016. Oil on linen. Courtesy of the artist and Melanie Roger Gallery, Auckland



Peter Stichbury *Mr Phil McEwan* 2010. Acrylic on linen. Collection of Joanna and Pawel Grochowicz. Courtesy of Tracy Williams, New York; Michael Lett, Auckland; Gallery Baton, Seoul



Liyen Chong *Flying Oblique* 2012. Archival inkjet print on Hahnemühle photo rag. Courtesy of the artist and Melanie Roger Gallery, Auckland



Ronnie van Hout *End Doll* (detail) 2007. Mixed media. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu, purchased 2007

*St Paul's
Trinity Pacific
Island Church*

Tusiata Avia



Tim J. Veling *Corner of Cashel Street and Madras Street* 2011. From the series *Adaptation*. *St Paul's Trinity Pacific Island Church. Foundation Stone. (Hugs and kisses.)*
Chromira digital C-type print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper

No evidence
of the backs of women's heads piled high with loops of hair,
white hats pierced like the side of Christ.

No evidence
of the train of ministers lining up all the way around the block
to their multi-storied home in the sky.

No evidence
of the baptisms, weddings and funerals of everyone we know,
of the gauzy clouds of White Sunday,
children hurtling out of the sky
shouting the words of the saints over and over.

No evidence
of the tiny pockets of air inside the chewing-gum in the mouths of women,
the clicking and the echoing of it up into the vaulted ceilings
up into the ears of God.

No evidence
of the soprano, alto, basso,
of the men in their suit jackets and skirts,
bent and shuffling over raspberry blood in sweet little glasses
passing us, down through the seventies
where they flapped to Englebert and Tom in the church hall.

No evidence
of *Yellow Ree-vah, Yellow Ree-vah*
You're in my mind and in my soul.

No evidence
of their straight backs, their sharp suits
their Brylcreemed profiles, like movie extras
returning us to Paradise.

From *Fale Aitu / Spirit House*, Victoria University Press, 2016.
Reproduced with kind permission.

Colin McCahon

The Christchurch Years

Peter Simpson

Colin McCahon lived in Christchurch from March 1948 to June 1953. It was a fertile period—in just over four years he completed around fifty oil paintings and approximately forty watercolours and drawings. But what prompted McCahon's move to Christchurch from Nelson? He was 28 years old, had just had his first major solo exhibition (at Wellington Public Library in February 1948) and was painting prolifically.

The sad truth is that he was forced by circumstance; his Nelson landlord wanted the McCahons out of their house in Muritai Street, Tahunanui, and there was nothing else affordable in the area. The family investigated possibilities in the Hutt Valley, Otago Peninsula and Banks Peninsula without success. Eventually, it was decided that Anne and the children would live in Dunedin with her parents while Colin looked for somewhere in Christchurch. It would be fifteen months before he found a suitable place. Until then he boarded with Doris Lusk and her husband Dermot Holland at 52 Hewitts Road, Merivale, using a converted wash-house as his bedroom-studio.

A reason for choosing Christchurch may well have been McCahon's involvement in The Group, with whom he had exhibited regularly from 1940. He had many friends among Group artists such as Doris Lusk, Rita Angus, Olivia Spencer Bower, Beth Zanders and Toss Woollaston—most of them resident in the city.

A glimpse of McCahon at Hewitts Road comes from writer John Caselberg: 'In Christchurch, James K. Baxter took me one morning to meet him. In his studio workshop at Doris and Dermot Holland's, he paused—looked up from his work... and after a handshake greeting, asked, perhaps unconsciously describing himself: "Who are you? A poet or prophet or what?"'

There was no immediate change of direction in McCahon's work in Christchurch; he produced both landscapes and figurative paintings as before. Only two landscapes from his first year in Christchurch, *The*

Green Plain and *Taylor's Mistake*, depict the Canterbury environment.² Most paintings of 1948–9 show Nelson landscapes, notably *Takaka: night and day* and *Triple Takaka*, which are both 'memory' paintings.

In his 1972 *Survey Exhibition* catalogue McCahon writes, '[*Takaka: night and day* and *The Green Plain*] were painted in my bedroom-studio at the Holland's place. The *Takaka* painting was painted round a corner of the room, no one wall being itself long enough. ... It is not so much a portrait of a place as such but is a memory of a time and an experience of a particular place.'

The biblical paintings done at Hewitts Road newly address subjects from the familiar repertoire of Christian art which he had already explored in 1946–7. Thus *Hail Mary* is a new version of *The Angel of the Annunciation* (1947); *The Virgin compared* shares its subject with *Mother and Child* (1947); *I Paul* refers back to *I Paul to you at Ngatimote* (1946); while four new *Crucifixions* (two lost or destroyed) followed the four done in 1947. The newer works are painted with more sophistication and less emphasis on speech bubbles and landscape backgrounds.

Eventually in June 1949 McCahon found a suitable house in Waltham, and the family was reunited. He wrote a vivid account of their new place: 'It was in Barbour Street, by the Linwood railway station. A place almost without night and day as the super floodlights of the railway goods-yards kept us always in perpetual light... To the right a pickle factory; behind, a grinding icing-sugar plant. Twenty-two rail-tracks to the left. A lovely view of the Port Hills and industry from the front room...'

Soon after moving McCahon put together new exhibitions in the North Island—in Wellington at Helen Hitchings's new gallery, a joint show with Toss Woollaston from 30 July until 5 August 1949; and in Auckland, in a hall lent by Modern Productions between 13 and 30 August. Of the twenty-four works in the Hitchings show, nineteen had been made since moving to Christchurch,



Colin McCahon *There is only one direction* 1952. Oil on hardboard. N. Barrett Bequest Collection, purchased with the support of Christchurch City Council's Challenge Grant to the Christchurch Art Gallery Trust, 2011

and several were exhibited for the first time, including *The Virgin compared, Canterbury plain with snow-covered hills, Ecce Homo, St Veronica, I Paul*, several *Crucifixions* and three large biblical drawings.⁵ Biblical subjects predominated; few of the new works were landscapes. The Auckland exhibition had twenty works, of which fifteen had been shown in Wellington, while others were older.

Between 1947 and 1949—as well as exhibiting at annual Group Shows in Christchurch—McCahon held one or two shows each year: in 1947 at Modern Books, Dunedin; in 1948 at Wellington and Dunedin public libraries; in 1949 in Wellington and Auckland. After 1949 he did not hold another solo show until 1957.⁶ From 1950, his annual Group Show appearances necessarily acquire additional importance for tracing his development.⁷

A new phase in his work was instigated by *The Maries at the Tomb* (January – March 1950), a strongly dramatic piece about which McCahon wrote to Ron O'Reilly: 'My three women at the tomb with flying angel is really something to look at.' He believed that it manifested 'something of redemption & not only the fall. If so it is an advance.'⁸ For some reason it was not shown at the 1950 Group Show at which McCahon exhibited several substantial new works, including *Annunciation* (July – November 1949), *Easter morning* (February – April 1950), *Crucifixion: the apple branch* (April 1950), *Otago landscape* (1950), *Virgin and Child* (May 1950), and *A Southern landscape* (May 1950).

Annunciation and *Virgin and Child* continued McCahon's recent tendency of expanding the figures to fill most of the picture and treating the background abstractly, all landscape elements removed. Nevertheless, landscape made a strong return in *Otago landscape* and *A Southern landscape* and figures are smaller and landscape reintroduced in *Easter morning* and *Crucifixion: the apple branch*. In the latter, the left-hand landscape closely resembles *Otago landscape* both

in colour and the pattern of horizontal and diagonal lines; the landscape on the right resembles those in his Nelson pictures of 1947–8, and the laden apple branch also connects it to the region.

In September 1950 McCahon first strongly expressed his need for a 'new direction'. He told Caselberg: 'I seem to have arrived at a place to stop painting. Something has been worked out at last—I can now make a start on a new direction... I feel the need of a deep space & order... after recent work I feel the need for something more conscious.'⁹

The new direction seemingly involved movement towards pure landscape. He told his loyal friend, poet and editor Charles Brasch, '[I have] started a landscape (Heathcote) & am finding it most difficult having developed a feeling for landscape & people—landscape without, seems without a heart. But good discipline for the head.'¹⁰ *Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury* (October 1950) is a memorable product of this new thinking. The biblical content is implied through allusion to Genesis and the six days of creation, as well as the use of a sliver of blood to link all six landscape panels.

Biblical paintings became increasingly rare; only three belong to McCahon's remaining years in Christchurch: *Christ supported by angels* (1951), *Crucifixion* (1950–2) and *There is only one direction* (1952). He struggled with the first of these for months: 'The new work ex Pieta is still on the way—so slow & hard—I can't remember any other painting being so hard'.¹¹ In Brasch's journal we read that he considered it unsuccessful: 'An evening with the McCahons—Colin painting Canterbury Plain landscapes, flat & bare with dark lines, scarcely more than abstract maps... His first Resurrection (which grew out of an after-Bellini pieta!) a failure: he said so himself.'¹²

One of the landscapes Brasch refers to here was probably *North Canterbury landscape* (1951), in which the stark linear geometry of the paddocks contrasts in colour and form with the curvilinear informality of the clouds.



Colin McCahon *Six days in Nelson and Canterbury* 1950. Oil on canvas on board. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, gift of Colin McCahon through the Friends of the Auckland Art Gallery, 1978

In July 1951 McCahon wrote: ‘Last night painted a successful picture, at least began it. A follow on to that large grey green landscape you saw when last here, but more human, much less cold. I feel much better for it.’¹³ This is possibly *North Otago landscape* (1951), a tawny, ochreish work, strongly reminiscent of *Otago landscape* (1950)—one of three called *Landscape* in Group 1951, along with *Christ supported by angels* and *Six Days in Nelson and Canterbury*.

In August and September 1951 McCahon spent several weeks in Australia. Brasch, who paid for the trip, believed him to be under-educated as a painter and in need of exposure to the European masterpieces in Melbourne’s National Gallery of Victoria. Just as important as the Old Masters (Rembrandt, El Greco, Cézanne, Turner) he admired, however, were the fortuitous lessons in cubism he received from an elderly painter, Mary Cockburn Mercer, who had studied in Paris before World War I. He told Brasch he had ‘learned more in 3 days from her than ever before’.¹⁴

Back home again McCahon worked on landscapes, a few biblical paintings and his first abstracts, but found life in Christchurch increasingly frustrating, as Brasch reported: ‘Colin is now working as a gardener; everything seems shut against him, the art school for teaching, WEA lecturing; but he goes on painting—at present, large landscapes of the plains but subtler & more varied than his first rather bare & empty ones.’¹⁵

In the new landscapes McCahon applied the cubist lessons received in Melbourne. In several instances he reworked paintings started before his Australian trip, such as *North Canterbury landscape*, begun May 1951 and finished in February 1952.¹⁶ Then came *Canterbury landscape* (May – August 1952), now in Christchurch Art Gallery. Richly combining greens and ochres, the painting utilises a loose geometrical grid forming repeated triangular shapes—the horizon so close to the top of the picture that it resembles an aerial photograph.

It was followed by the most ambitious and majestic of all McCahon’s Canterbury paintings, *On building bridges* (July – September 1952), a triptych made over from a pre-Australian work, *Paddocks for sheep*. He said: ‘We lost the sheep and gained a bridge... [T]he “Bridges”, after Australia and Mary, taught me the need for precision and the freedom that only exists in relation to a strictly formal structure.’¹⁷ O’Reilly wrote: ‘What has interested the artist is the contrast between the cold, rectangular shapes of the steel, and the warm, triangularly faceted hill country.’¹⁸

There were just two significant biblical paintings in 1952, the last of around forty such works—a magisterial *Crucifixion*, begun in 1950, and his sixth Madonna and child, *There is only one direction* (May 1952). Both were shown in Group 1952, together with abstracts and landscapes.¹⁹ The latter work, recently acquired by Christchurch Art Gallery, is moving and almost monochromatic. Enclosed by a Braque-like oval, a teenage Jesus stands in front of a sombre-faced Mary, transfixed by the ‘one direction’ of his life towards crucifixion (his eyebrows and nose create a T-cross, subtly suggesting his future fate).

In December 1952, criticising Brasch’s latest *Landfall*, McCahon wrote: ‘This last [L]andfall—a trip to hell ... without a new direction. You probably look for it too as I do, sunlight rather than the light of the moon—or not even sunlight but at least open daylight.’²⁰ Again he insists on pursuing a ‘new direction’, such as he had achieved in the triptych.

Early in 1953 McCahon was commissioned to commemorate the London to Christchurch air race. A large painting showing two jet aircraft, viewed from above and flying over clouds and plains, occupied him through his last months in Christchurch. Exhibited as *International Air Race* with six preliminary sketches at the Group Show in 1953, it was later thoughtlessly (and tragically) destroyed.



Top: Colin McCahon *Canterbury Landscape* 1952. Oil on canvas. Purchased with the support of Christchurch City Council's Challenge Grant to the Christchurch Art Gallery Trust, 2014

Bottom: Colin McCahon *On building bridges (triptych)* 1952. Oil on hardboard panels. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased 1958

This commission—McCahon's final evocation of Canterbury—came through Eric Westbrook, the dynamic new director of Auckland City Art Gallery, who, when he saw *On building bridges* hanging in Canterbury Public Library, asked to meet the artist and immediately offered him a job. McCahon, somewhat disillusioned about his prospects in Christchurch, jumped at the chance and left for Auckland in June 1953. After his departure, Brasch, wrote: 'The McCahons left Chch this evening. ... Chch has been a disappointment to him; he's sold only one picture here since he came, about four years ago... & he's had no public recognition...'²¹

McCahon's future belonged to Auckland. Nevertheless, later he looked back with affection on this richly creative period, saying in 1972: 'The Christchurch years had been alive with friends and conversations... work and fun.'²²

Peter Simpson is an Auckland writer, curator and editor. *Bloomsbury South: The Arts in Christchurch 1933–53* was published this year by Auckland University Press and the first of his two-volume edition of Charles Brasch's post-war journals will appear next year from University of Otago Press.

All works by Colin McCahon are reproduced with the kind permission of the Colin McCahon Research and Publication Trust.

Notes

- 1 John Caselberg, 'Towards a Promised Land', *Art New Zealand* 8, November – January 1977–8, p.36.
- 2 *The Green Plain* is clearly dated on the painting January 1948, i.e. before McCahon left Nelson; it too was a memory painting based on recollections of Canterbury as he travelled back-and-forth between Dunedin and Nelson; he continued working on it in Christchurch, which explains the July 1948 dating in the 1972 *Survey* catalogue.
- 3 Colin McCahon, *A Survey Exhibition*, Auckland City Art Gallery, 1972, p.19.
- 4 McCahon, *A Survey*, p.20.
- 5 These are the modern titles; some were first exhibited under different titles.
- 6 According to Bloem and Brown (*A Question of Faith*, 2002, Craig Potton Publishing and Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, p.253) there was an exhibition at the Canterbury University College staffroom in 1952, but no catalogue or exhibition list has been traced.
- 7 Between 1948 and 1953 McCahon showed forty-two works at Group Shows.
- 8 Colin McCahon to Ron O'Reilly, 15 February 1950, quoted with the kind permission of Matthew O'Reilly.
- 9 McCahon to John Caselberg, 12 September 1950, Hocken Collections (HC), MS-97-185-1 1950-56; published with permission of Hocken Collections and the Caselberg estate.
- 10 McCahon to Charles Brasch, 19 September 1950, HC, MS-0996-002/225; McCahon's letters published with permission of Hocken Collections and the McCahon Family Trust.
- 11 McCahon to Brasch, 18 April 1951, HC, MS-0996-002/225.
- 12 Brasch journal, 28 May 1951, HC, MS-0996-9/18; Brasch's journals published with permission of Hocken Collections and the Brasch estate.
- 13 McCahon to Brasch, 25 July 1951, HC, MS-0996-002/225.
- 14 McCahon to Brasch, 14 September 1951, HC, MS-0996-002/225.
- 15 Brasch journal, 1 March 1952, HC, MS-0996-9/18.
- 16 This is a different work from *North Canterbury landscape* (1951), mentioned above.
- 17 McCahon, *A Survey*, pp.21–2.
- 18 R.N. O'Reilly, 'Controversy theme for Group Show', *Christchurch Star-Sun*, 29 October 1952, p.2.
- 19 *Landscape* in Group 1952 was probably *Canterbury landscape* (Christchurch Art Gallery).
- 20 McCahon to Brasch, 30 December 1952, HC, MS-0996, 002-225.
- 21 Brasch journal, 3 June 1953 HC, MS-0996-009-022.
- 22 McCahon, *A Survey*, p.22.



Colin McCahon *Crucifixion: The apple branch* 1950. Oil on unstretched canvas. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased with funds from the Sir Otto and Lady Margaret Frankel Bequest 2004

The Camera as a Place of Potential

Nathan Pohio



Fiona Pardington *Moko* 1997. Photograph. Gold-toned gelatin silver hand-print on fibre-based archival paper.
Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, Auckland

To Māori, the colour black represents Te Korekore—the realm of potential being, energy, the void, and nothingness. The notion of potential and the presence of women are what I see when I peek at Fiona Pardington’s 1997 work *Moko*. And I say peek deliberately, because I am quite mindful of this work—it is downright spooky. *Moko* is a photographic rendering of a seeping water stain upon the blackboard in Pardington’s studio, taken while she was the recipient of the Frances Hodgkins Fellowship in Dunedin in 1997.

‘It was just a random thing in a near empty Frances Hodgkins studio. What I saw immediately was a woman’s moko kawai, and I thought this is a tohu for me from women in the family.’

But consider Pardington’s earlier work—family was her starting point, and then came a warp of lovers, mysticism, and a feminist form of eroticism that provided a responding critique of the male gaze. As she began to pack her work with the potential and opulence of dreams, her sense of responsibility to the politics of representation also unfolded. And then, in one particular case, came the indefinable. I mean, when is a water stain upon a blackboard not a water stain on a blackboard? When that stain is conceived by the artist as something else. For Pardington, the stain was understood as a sign, a point from which to pursue a particular pathway. From here, all bets for carrying the previous concerns forward were off, and *Moko* can be seen to be a transitional point, a pivot for the artist’s focus. It is from here Pardington initiates her desire to understand a Kāi Tahu world view and represent it within her work.

From this perspective, it is important to note that the work comes from a water stain, because water is a sacred element to Māori—a taonga left by the ancestors to provide and sustain life.

‘It’s like tears. I was thinking about the loss of land and the inter-tribal fighting, all the heavy stuff that went on. I was aware of what women went through and so for me too with the kind of issues I’d had trying to find my family it kind of all made sense.’

Now hold for a moment the idea that for Māori nothingness is relevant to every aspect of life; parallel to this is also the fact that nothingness as an idea holds considerable significance within twentieth-century Western art history. Conceptualism and minimalism expand and contract the notion of nothingness, from Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* (1915), where the small canvas is hung across a corner of a given room, to the immense but intimate land-art works of James Turrell, which place the viewer in a roofless space where light and sky change colour and where they can contemplate everything and nothing without distraction. Nothingness is not empty but full of potential. Nothing, or the void, also holds important ground in photography: the chamber of the camera is where the light-sensitive material of film is protected. Light enters this chamber through the aperture and burns its unfixed image upon the exposed film. This poetic moment provides another relationship for Māori to explore in the world of art-making.

For Māori nothingness is *everything*. Nothingness within the Māori world view is within the many fields of Te Po—the void, the night, the place without light, but also the place where once light did enter and creation, or life, began. With this in mind the potency Pardington invested in the photographic moment saw two universes merge, and something of the European art world that so many urban Māori artists grew up in was met by something that led her towards her Kāi Tahu heritage, which had until then been quietly kept in the background.

‘For me it’s very much about what are the beautiful things you can construct out of the things that are shattered and broken. For me that wasn’t putting me off or too much of a downer, I just saw it as part of the journey and an acknowledgment that I was heading in the right direction.’

Nathan Pohio

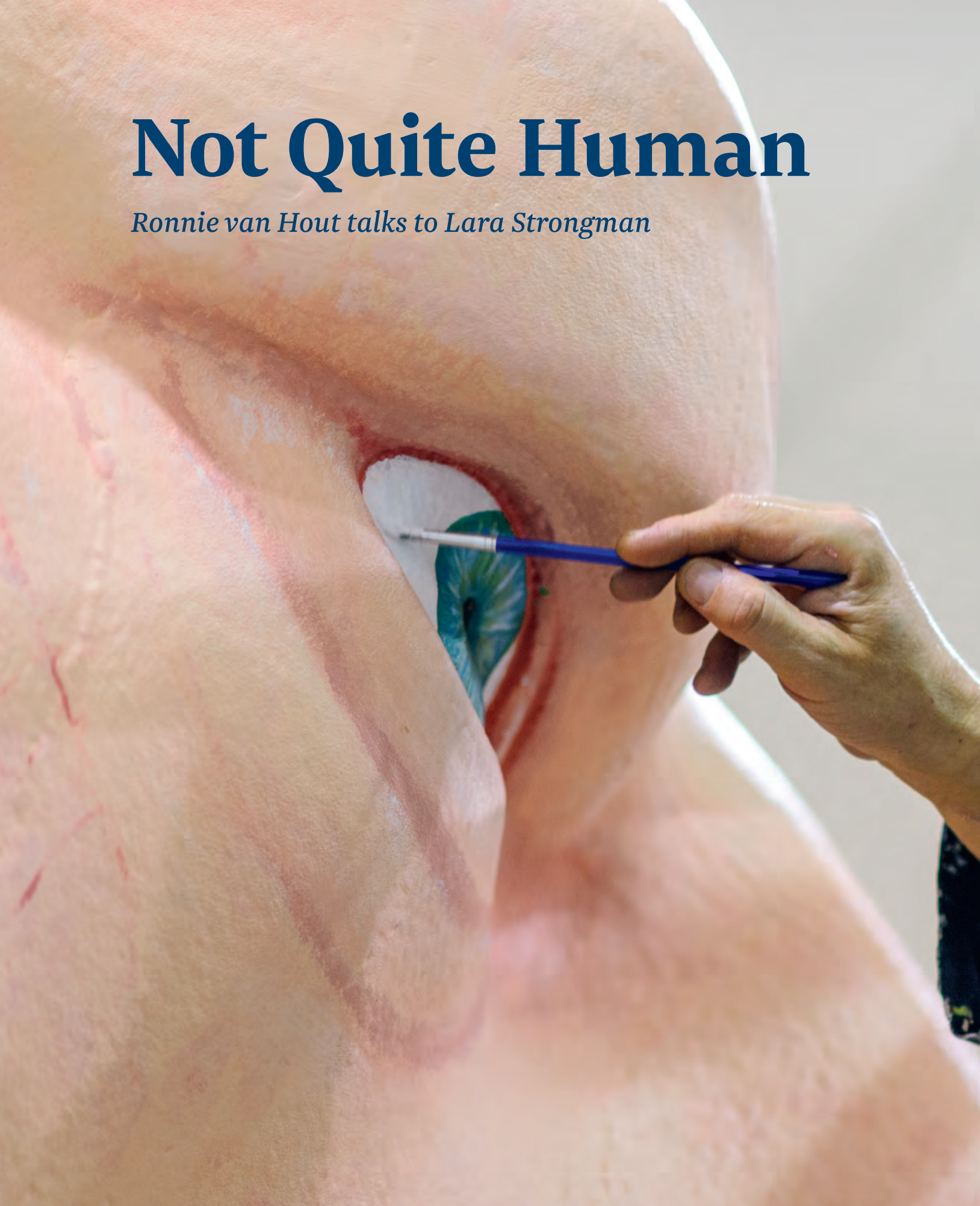
Assistant curator

Fiona Pardington: *A Beautiful Hesitation is on display in the touring galleries until 6 November 2016.*

All quotations from a conversation with the artist, July 2015.

Not Quite Human

Ronnie van Hout talks to Lara Strongman





Lara Strongman: The title of your new work for the Gallery is *Quasi*. Why did you call it that?

Ronnie van Hout: Initially it was a working title. Because the work would be outside the Gallery, on the roof, I was thinking of Quasimodo, from Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. I was coming out of a show and research around the idea of the freak, the outsider and things that are rejected—thinking about how even things that are rejected have a relationship to whatever they've been rejected by. And I called it *Quasi*, because it's a human form that's not quite human as well. The idea of something that resembles a human but is not quite human.

LS: You live in Melbourne now, but you grew up in Christchurch. You're from Aranui, along with a lot of other extraordinarily creative people; Roger Shepherd, Nathan Pohio, Karoline Tamati, Malo Luafutu, Mark Adams. It's a special part of town. You've made many works that refer to your childhood in Christchurch. I'm thinking of your dad's shed at Te Papa; *House and School*, in the Gallery's collection; *Ersatz (Sick Child)*; and lots more. Can you talk a little bit about your experience of growing up here, and how it informs your work?

RvH: It's hard to talk about your own personal experience. You have nothing to relate it to. The childhood you have is a closed space. It's the eternal; childhood doesn't change. You can go back and revisit it for that reason. I think it was only when I went to art school that I realised that other people had different childhoods to myself. Because that's your first experience of being outside your own sphere. It's also related to the type of child I was—my experience of the world and how I perceived it. I do think that Christchurch as a city probably had a big part to play in forming my feeling of my place in the world. Because it's a such a flat city, you have a very horizontal, flat

view of the world. The sky's very dominant. You certainly have a feeling that you're on the earth, and that contributes to the feeling of being small. And I think that must have had an influence on me in terms of my interest in UFOs and things coming from the sky. A strong sense that there are odd things in the world that you couldn't see, but which are affecting you—*forces beyond*. That's the kind of child I was.

LS: Does Christchurch have a distinctive kind of culture?

RvH: Christchurch is an introspective place. There's a darkness to it, and a coldness. That's kind of historical; the type of people that settled here, a sort of Protestant thing. People wear black, look a bit dour, unemotional—I *will not be affected by happiness or sadness*. But that's an act, a way of performing. I always felt that pressure as I got older. The restrictions that were imposed, not by yourself, but from outside. It relates to the New Zealand past. There's a coolness, but also, *don't show off*. *Why would you want to do that. Don't put your head above the wall...* because if you do you're a show-off or a poser. I grew up thinking about how this held people back. At the same time, Christchurch historically has a very strong tradition in the arts—music, visual arts, writing. And that's especially true with popular rock music; it's had a huge history, the strongest in the country I would say.

LS: It's very much about not making a spectacle of yourself. But actually, your work continually makes a spectacle of your self. You've taken that restriction, that cultural limitation that you see in the city, and inverted it.

RvH: Though I don't really see it as myself. Tony Oursler talks about David Bowie and the performed personality... It is you, but it's not you. You create this other person that you perform with, and under. So I never really have a lot of personal relationship



Ronnie van Hout *Comin' Down* 2013. Painted polyurethane over VH grade machined polystyrene, glue, welded steel armature. Courtesy of the artist

Previous page: Construction of Ronnie van Hout's *Quasi* (2016). Steel, polystyrene and resin. Commissioned by Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. Courtesy of the artist



Construction of Ronnie van Hout's *Quasi* (2016). Steel, polystyrene and resin. Commissioned by Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. Courtesy of the artist

with it. It's a sort of performance. And a kind of disembodied personality.

LS: A stand in, or a surrogate for you?

RvH: Yes. Or for someone else. Someone who is me but not me at the same time. It's a form of acting. A kind of masking. It always comes from somewhere else. Your personality is formed through your relationship to other things, or other people, usually. That's why I was interested in childhood and revisiting sites of the past. But in the visual arts, things just stand for things, they're not the actual things, they're just in-place-of. It's very complicated today. There's another layer added... You're pointing to something that points to something else.

LS: One of the things I enjoy about *Quasi* is its quality of comedy-slash-horror. It's like a giant prop from a B-movie, something Roger Corman thought better of.

It's less scary than it is funny, but the funniness tips sideways into pathos. This comedy/horror thing is something you've often been drawn to. I'm thinking of those photographs from the mid 90s with the low lighting and the block letters rising from the blasted landscape. There was one called *The Living Dead*, referencing the Romero film as well as, I think, the situation of New Zealand art at that moment. What is it that interests you about the comedy/horror thing in particular?

RvH: I'm interested in film, I guess. Comedy and horror—they deal with the same things... the outsider, the concept of outside. The horror and the monsters are the projected fear of our bodies being destroyed. Classic horror films are to do with home invasion—the classic set up is that life's normal and happy and something comes along to disrupt that,



Construction of Ronnie van Hout's *Quasi* (2016). Steel, polystyrene and resin. Commissioned by Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. Courtesy of the artist



Installation of Ronnie van Hout's *Quasi* (2016). Steel, polystyrene and resin. Commissioned by Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. Courtesy of the artist

then it returns back to normal, but there are clues to say it could happen again at any moment. *There's something in the house... We've traced the call! It's coming from inside the house. Chaos ensues.* It's not the stranger but the thing inside that we're trying to stop. It's unresolved stuff from childhood; and I think art is an outcome of dealing with those things. We make art because there's a gap we can't solve, that language can't deal with, that we can't communicate in other ways. It's like poetry: it exists because it heals language, heals the damage of existence. It's also why we have to sleep. We externalise an interior state. So *Quasi*—it's the idea that monsters aren't always bad things.

LS: But the idea of the disembodied hand in films... It never means anything good when the disembodied hand turns up.

RvH: That's what we fear the most. But it's become quite standard. I remember any time I mentioned zombies in my work, I'd get *heh heh heh* [mimics pompous laugh]. But now it's standard. That *Living Dead* thing, imagining McCahon and Lusk—they are the living dead, they wander our landscape. It was hard to even look at the landscape without imagining them there. They don't have that effect any more, but at that time they were so huge, kind of monsters.

LS: Do you feel those ghosts are laid to rest now?

RvH: They're part of some other world. Their discussions are about something else. They've become historical.

LS: Today's view of history seems flatter than the old. Michelangelo is the same as McCahon or van der Velden, they're all historical and therefore equivalent.



Installation of Ronnie van Hout's *Quasi* (2016). Steel, polystyrene and resin. Commissioned by Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. Courtesy of the artist

RvH: Time is not a line but a circle. It's around us.

LS: The individual stands in the middle of each of those circles. Whereas we inherited the canon, that sense of history as a line with us at the end.

RvH: Yeah, but that canon had only recently been put in place when we were at the studying age. It was only people within the art world who were trying to canonise McCahon. And even in the art community, not everyone liked him. He was still being ridiculed.

LS: I was re-reading an interview you did in the 90s with Robin Neate—the *Hangover* interview. You talked about feeling unable to fulfil the concept of yourself as a genius artist, and instead taking small steps, doing small acts. That would be the course of your work. *Quasi* is a pretty big act, but in a way it's a small gesture.

RvH: It's something small made big. It's a simple

idea, and I've built towards it. It seemed logical, it seemed like the right thing. But that comment—which I still sort of believe in—came out of thinking about the generation of people I went through university with, grew up with. Not being able to find a place within the art system, which at that time seemed not to include you. And not just because you were young and unknown, but... there wasn't really an obvious road. There was a lot of mistrust of what we would have considered the old world, the idea of the genius and the masterpiece, which was the way they still talked about art—that just seemed to be impossible. How could I, simple me, ever become that? So there was a sense of not even trying. Certainly the music scene was a bit like that as well. Everyone was making these terribly complicated expensive studio albums, and there was no point in

attempting to do that—you've just got to make art for the community that you're in. When I reflect on it now, people shared similar goals. One of them was not being big time; it was always about the local. Taking apart the hierarchy and levelling it out.

LS: How does *Quasi* relate to the previous rooftop work you did in Christchurch, on the old Post Office building?

RvH: Maybe it's the hand of the pointing figure that has detached, flown across the city, and landed, superhero-like, on the roof of the Gallery. Gestures of the hand are being read as a form of language; and the hand has become the centre of speaking and taken on the language of the head. Merging the two together. I see hands everywhere now in art. Also it's how we read the body and understand it simply. It's those things we understand without thinking that are interesting. That relates to the idea of the alien and how *centric* we are. We always interpret things from our own position—it's impossible not to. We see the hand, and the fingers become legs—it's easy to read them like that. I made a video of some hands walking around to test it. It plays with empathy as well. You can project into it.

LS: Empathy is an emotion that runs through your work. It's funny; but with a vein of sadness and pathos. Something to do with the sense of not being quite adequate, or being subordinate, or wanting to do something but not quite being able to say it or reach it or do it.

RvH: Which I guess is a sense of failure. Or aspiration that falls short. Failure is a big part of art; a big part of life, or existence. I don't go along with the idea of the artist as a producer of perfectly finished forms and high production values. My process is still studio-based; it's still me, working on things, and all my inadequacies at doing that. I'm not particularly interested in outcomes. I'm more interested in the things that I learn as I'm making.

LS: What have you learned from this one?

RvH: The ideas of the gesture—and that you can empathise *with your hand*. That other people can connect to it. It puts you in a weird space. I like to do that in terms of art; it puts you in between adulthood and childhood, between being in control and not. The hand is the device of control that we normally associate with *handling* things. Dealing with stuff. Then you subvert it by creaturising it and it suddenly becomes a bit more chaotic and less controllable. Something like a monster.

LS: But because it's *your* hand, it's also the hand of the artist. So the alien hand that's flown across the city and landed on top of the Gallery and is silhouetted against the sky, that's also an artist's hand. It points to the idea of creation—and the hand as the source of the artist's genius. The point from which the mark is made.

RvH: And anyone who's ever had to make anything knows that that's where failure occurs, between here [points to head] and there [gestures with hand]. The brain visualises something and you try to make it happen. But then there's a bit of a gap. Between thought and expression, as the Velvet Underground would say, lies a lifetime.

Lara Strongman talked to Ronnie van Hout in Christchurch in June 2016. *Quasi* will be on display on the Gallery roof until mid 2017.

Injecting colour back into the city

Leading law firm Chapman Tripp recognises the importance of the arts in a city and is a proud strategic partner of the Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetu. The Gallery colours the inner cityscape with art accessible by everyone.

www.chapmantripp.com



Beyond The Fields We Know

In the canons of received taste, the unicorn figurine doesn't rank terribly highly beyond kitsch. Sitting in your hand, it's cutesy, twee, trivial and quaint (though a piece of master-worked Venetian glass from Murano is a pricey and collectable item).

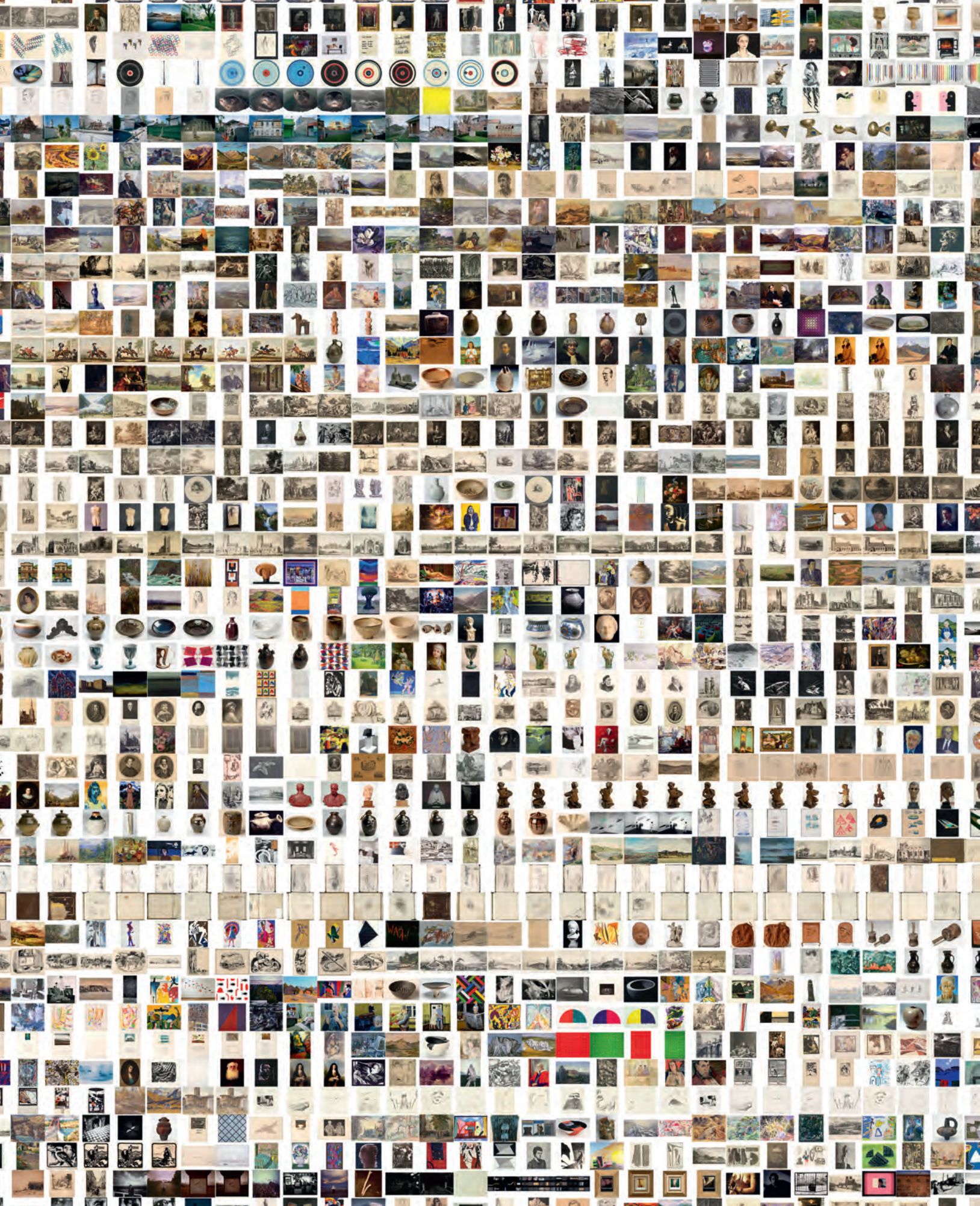
On the other hand, kitsch is powered by sentimentality, and sentimentality is a valid human emotional response to the existential condition, a degree to love, hope and compassion. The snobbery and elitism of taste is an artificial construct designed to separate the sheep from the goats, a panjandrum to demarcate people into social boxes of U and Not-U.

Photographer Fiona Pardington has a knack for finding and returning the mana and spirit of the forgotten and unconsidered, and under her lens the unicorn figurine transforms back into the majestic magical guardian of medieval legends, a symbol of the wonder lurking just beyond our mundane, illuminated from within and transformed by light.

We are in the presence of immanence and transcendence. It hides in the heart of the humble and everyday. Beyond the fields we know, lies Avalon.

Andrew Paul Wood is a Christchurch-based art writer and cultural historian.

Fiona Pardington *Flora_Unicorn* 2016. C-type photograph. Courtesy of the artist and Starkwhite, Auckland



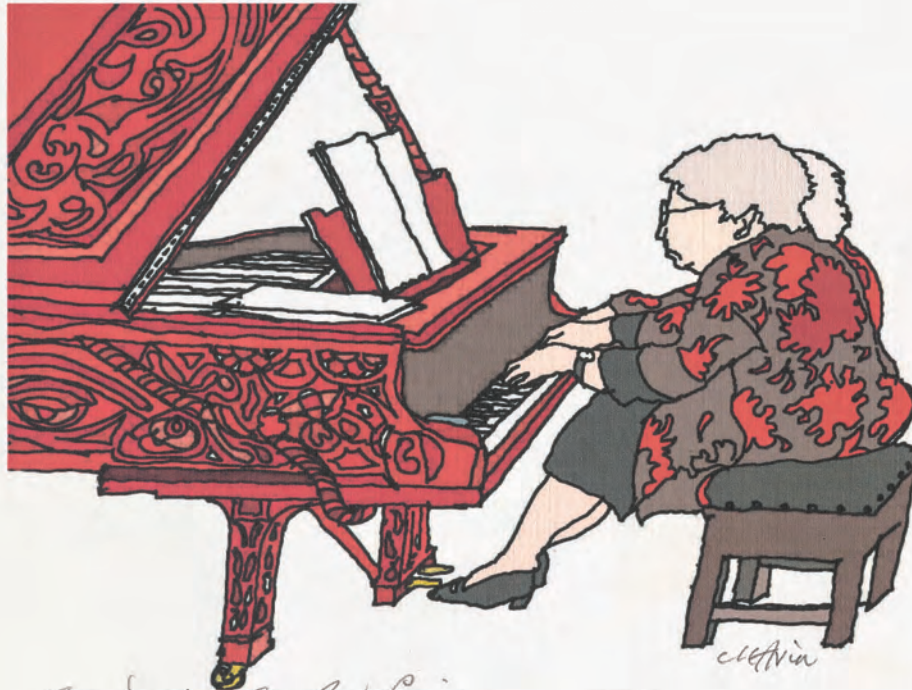
My Favourite

Delaney Davidson, Woolston's best-kept secret, spends half his time in New Zealand and the other half touring his music in Europe and the USA.

I hit browse and there it was. The collection. I had slowly built up both a resistance and a feeling of attachment to this collection. Stuffy musty rooms from 1986. Quiet and fresh white walls when it was raining outside. Sunshine on a book through the window on a late-winter afternoon. Christchurch. This collection I recognised instantly, and I felt the repulsion as well as the comfortable feeling. A family relationship. Looking at these pieces one by one it was hard for me to find any specific reaction apart from the obvious. A familiar style of landscape, a typical set of colours, the view of adulthood through my distant childhood eyes. A feeling of deeper meaning waiting to join my experience. And then the world of extended family, weirdo uncles, cousins and peripherals. Were these part of the collection? The smell of the halls in the Arts Centre? The cool feeling of shade in the trees of the Botanic Gardens? The sausage rolls in the museum, smelt from the fake street downstairs? The huge see-through box of money in the foyer? Donations.

I went to other towns and saw the same donation boxes. I saw similar collections in Edinburgh, Germany, Cleveland and Melbourne and wondered if people in these towns had the same family relationship to these other collections. Proudly recommending the Gallery to me, I sometimes asked what was there and they laughed before admitting they didn't know. Slowly it dawned on me that the collection was like a family. I looked through

the updated online catalogue from Christchurch, and expected it to be fresh and new, something that would jump out at me. I saw the same pictures and stalwarts from the old collection I had never realised *was* a collection till I saw them all lined up on one page. I scrolled through and felt my experiences of this Gallery and its connections breathe into my body and reopen a side of Christchurch I had forgotten existed. A side of Christchurch I carried around inside me. I knew it was there but had never realised how much of it was created by standing and staring at pictures.



The Sweet on the Red Piano ———

Jenny — and for you with my very best wishes ———

Finding Barry Cleavin

Exploring and documenting the contents of Barry Cleavin's archive in the Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives was both a novel and an invaluable experience for me.

There was the mystery of uncovering the contents, there was the opportunity to gain a special insight into Cleavin's career, and there was the chance to broaden my understanding of both printmaking and New Zealand artists—in particular, Cleavin's contemporaries during the late 1960s to 1980s. It is interesting how absorbing oneself in an individual's archive can give you the feeling that you know them (or at least, a little part of them). Were you to meet them, would you feel like you had a secret? Or perhaps feel uncomfortable about having spent so much time looking at what was, originally, private property? I am hoping that those feelings will fade. However, what I won't forget, is my belief that Cleavin is a seriously talented individual, a master of the printmaking medium and supremely witty. I would constantly find myself smiling at titles such as *Designed to Drive You up the Wall*, *Just One of a Number of Allegations Flying Around a Room* and *M. Duchamp Gives Cubism a Passing Thought (The Necker Cube)*. On the basis of the archive contents, it was clear that others thought so too. I would also find myself smirking at Cleavin's letters to the editor, as I quickly discovered that he is the master of a well-reasoned, thoughtful and articulate opinion. Indeed, whilst writing this, I must admit to fleeting moments of panic, afraid that I will write something factually incorrect and find myself the subject of a letter to the editor, courtesy of Barry V. Cleavin himself. So just in case:

Dear Mr Cleavin,

I am forever in your debt.

Yours faithfully,
Alice M. Barclay

Alice Barclay is currently studying towards a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Art History at the University of Canterbury. As part of her course requirements, Alice completed an internship at the Gallery in May 2016



Retired piano teachers Lynley Clarke and Beryl Cowan played Michael Parekowhai's *He Kōrero Pūrākau mo Te Awanui o Te Motu: story of a New Zealand river* (2011. Te Papa, purchased 2011, with the assistance of the Friends of Te Papa. 2011-0046-1/A-N to N-N) when it was installed at 212 Madras Street, Christchurch in 2012. The event was captured by Gallery photographer John Collie, and unknown to us at the time, by Barry Cleavin too.

1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016

The Year in Review...

*A summary of the year in business at the Gallery**

1,477

NUMBER OF HOURS OPEN
TO THE PUBLIC

2,793

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEER HOURS
OF VALUED SERVICE

Given to the Gallery by our volunteer guides, who helped and informed approximately 6,459 visitors.

11,700

NUMBER OF CHILDREN
WHO TOOK PART IN 354
GALLERY-LED LESSONS

12,132

NUMBER OF PEOPLE
WHO ATTENDED
EDUCATION EVENTS

16,763

NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO
ATTENDED 127 PUBLIC
PROGRAMME EVENTS

200,313

NUMBER OF VISITORS

Gallery Publications

Everything is Going to Be Alright, Christchurch, 2015, 448 pages

101 Works of Art from the Collection, Christchurch, 2015, 352 pages

Four editions of *Bulletin* (*B.181*, spring 2015; *B.182*, summer 2015; *B.183*, autumn 2016; *B.184*, winter 2016)

Staff Writing and Media Products

Ken Hall

'Trove', *B.183*, pp.22–9

19 entries in *101 Works of Art from the Collection*

3 collection columns for *The Press* (25 August 2015; 21 January 2016; 20 April 2016)

Jenny Harper

'My Favourite Building', *Home NZ*, February/March 2016, p.146

'Moon Enso, for Max', *From Grafton to the Guggenheim: Max Gimblett*, Auckland, 2016, p.74

'Doing Things Differently', *Australasian Registrars Committee Journal*, 70, winter 2016, pp.14–23

5 entries in *101 Works of Art from the Collection*

Gina Irish

'A Bull in a China Hardware Shop', *Australasian Registrars Committee Journal*, 70, winter 2016, pp.24–31.

Tim Jones

'Reflections on Riches', *B.181*, pp.26–9

4 collection columns for *The Press* (30 June 2015; 8 September 2015; 9 March 2016; 24 May 2016)

Felicity Milburn

'Sparks That Fly Upwards', *B.182*, pp.8–17

'Hidden in Plain Sight', *B.183*, pp.8–13

'The Right Kind of Wrongness: Lisa Walker's Revolutionary Jewellery', *Takahē* 86, April 2016, pp.34–40

'Doris Lusk: An Inventive Eye', *B.184*, pp.32–8

20 entries in *101 Works of Art from the Collection*

4 collection columns for *The Press* (14 July 2015; 17 November 2015; 9 December 2015; 2 March 2016)

Simon Palenski

'The Lines That Are Left', *B.184*, pp.8–17

Nathan Pohio

11 entries in *101 Works of Art from the Collection*

Lara Strongman

'The Last Five Years', *B.182*, pp.30–43

'Twenty Days in China and Japan', *B.182*, pp.44–53

Contribution to 'Half full of hope: 18 Christchurch voices on the fifth anniversary', *The Spinoff*, 22 February 2016

'Silent Patterns', *B.183*, pp.48–50

24 entries in *101 Works of Art from the Collection*

5 collection columns for *The Press* (28 July 2015; 7 October 2015; 15 December 2015; 22 March 2016; 30 June 2016)

Peter Vangioni

'Labour Intensive: The Holloway Press, 1994–2013: A Checklist of Publications', *Landfall Review Online*, July 2015, landfallreview.com/labour-intensive-2

'Brendan O'Brien: Hallelujah anyway', *Verso: A magazine for the Book as a Work of Art*, no.1, October 2015, pp.12–14

Review of *Thinking Feeling: Ziggy Lever and Joanna Margaret Paul*, May 2016, physicsroom.org.nz/exhibitions/thinking-feeling

'Life is Probably Round', *From Grafton to the Guggenheim: Max Gimblett*, Auckland 2016, p.75

22 entries in *101 Works of Art from the Collection*

5 collection columns for *The Press* (11 August 2015; 23 October 2015; 14 January 2016; 4 April 2016; 22 June 2016)

Invited Public Lectures and Industry Workshops

Guntra Auzins

'The Christchurch Experience—A Guide's Perspective', Australian Art Gallery Guides Organisation conference, Art Gallery of South Australia, 9 October 2015

Ken Hall

'Reclaimed history through the photography of D.L. Mundy and A.C. Barker', History—Making a Difference, biennial New Zealand Historical Association conference, University of Canterbury, 3 December 2015

Jenny Harper

Speaker and panellist, Educate Plus NZ Conference, 14 August 2015

Moderator, 'Biennials in times of disaster', University of Canterbury, 6 November 2015

Gina Irish

'How About Sharing?', Australasian Registrars Committee Think Lateral conference, 18 March, Sydney, Australia and 21 March, Auckland, 2016

'Beyond Response: Christchurch Art Gallery's Recovery from the Canterbury Earthquakes', American Institute for Conservation conference, Montreal, Canada, 11–18 May 2016

Tim Jones

'Digital Initiatives in a post-quake art museum', Inclusive Museum conference, New Delhi, August 2015

Felicity Milburn

'Unseen', Talk to University of Canterbury Post-graduate Art History students, 19 May 2016

Lara Strongman

'Pressure to be useful: Public art practices in post-disaster Christchurch', Curating Under Pressure symposium, ifa/Goethe-Institut/Creative New Zealand/University of Canterbury, University of Canterbury, 5–8 November 2015

Chair, 'Imaginary Cities', writers' panel discussion, Christchurch Arts Festival, 30 August 2015

'A gallery without walls in a city without buildings', Cities in a climate of change: Public art and environmental and social ecologies, IAPA conference 2015, University of Auckland, 1–4 July 2015

Exhibitions

Thirty new exhibitions, including eight *Outer Spaces* projects, were created during the year.

Professional Advice

Jenny Harper

Editorial committee, *Art Monthly Australia*

Editorial committee, *Journal of Australian and New Zealand Art History*

Trustee, Ohinetahi Trust

Trustee, Christchurch Art Gallery Foundation

Public Art Advisory Group, CCC

Gina Irish

CPIT Artworks Committee

Chair, Australasian Registrars Committee

Blair Jackson

Trustee, W.A. Sutton Trust

Tim Jones

Library and archives advice to Ferrymead Printing Society

Felicity Milburn

Creative Industries Support Fund, CCC

Selection panel, Sculpture on the Peninsula 2015

Arts editor, Takahē Collective

Rebekkah Pickrill

Canterbury Disaster Salvage Team

Lara Strongman

Chair, International Visual Arts Residencies Panel, CNZ Arts Council of New Zealand

Judge, Sculpture on the Peninsula 2015

Jurist, Walters Prize, Auckland Art Gallery

Public Art Advisory Group, CCC

Top Five Pop Up Shop Products

Everything is Going to be Alright (publication)

The Golden Age (boxed card set)

101 Works of Art (publication)

Cass, Rita Angus (card)

Beasts (boxed card Set)

Collection

Outward loans: 13

Inward loans: 56

Acquisitions: 50 (including 22 gifts)

Library

The collection of the Robert and Barbara Stewart Library and Archives now comprises 12,024 items. The entire library was moved back from Canterbury Museum during the year.

Awards and Residencies

Bulletin (B.181, B.182, B.183, B.184),

Highly Commended, Museums Australia Publication and Design Awards, May 2016

Website redesign, Best in Show—Multimedia, Museums Australia Publication and Design Awards, May 2016

Gina Irish, Samuel H. Kress Foundation international travel grant

Lara Strongman, Asia New Zealand Foundation Curators' Tour to Asia 2015

Venue Hire

7,885 people attended 48 events in the NZI foyer and Philip Carter Family Auditorium.

*All figures reported are since reopening on 19 December 2015

Postcard From...

KAH BEE CHOW

Malmö, Sweden

Malmö is a good place to disappear. I came here in 2010 to attend the Art Academy. I remember watching the Academy's director on YouTube describe how professors were not allowed to enter a student's studio unless invited to do so. I would say that this is intimately tied to the ideological legacy Sweden is known for. I bring it up because it is something that still resonates with my life in Malmö, along with why I live here.

A good friend once described Malmö as an 'absolute dearth of visual stimulation.' The flat terrain filled with four-storey buildings lends a particularly uniform character to how and what you see in this city. Groups of toddlers in hi-vis vests being shepherded on sidewalks by gentle daycare messiahs.

After a few months away, I asked Filip what had been happening in Malmö. He shrugged and said, 'Oh y'know, five more people decided to become vegan.'

Boredom is a good place to work from. Malmö allows for a measure of withdrawal and space to work.

Others might say this is a path to guaranteed obscurity. Do you dance better if no one's watching? Or does it just make you isolated and out of touch? I think every ideal also risks becoming a form of entrapment. Time will tell.

***Kah Bee Chow** is an artist from Penang, Malaysia and Auckland who lives and works in Malmö, Sweden.*



Kah Bee Chow *Wake* 2016. Chipboard, MDF, silicone. Installed as part of *Escaping Space*, curated by Susanne Ewerlöf, Fullersta Gärd, Huddinge

Exhibition Programme

Current

Doris Lusk:

Practical Visionary

Until 30 October 2016

Intricate landscapes and imaginative explorations by renowned New Zealand painter Doris Lusk.

1969 Comeback Special

Until 6 November 2016

A fascinating focus show centred on a decade in which the Gallery's first professional director, Brian Muir, began to acquire contemporary New Zealand art for the city's collection.

Fiona Pardington:

A Beautiful Hesitation

Until 6 November 2016

A survey exhibition by a leading New Zealand photographer explores sex, death and the female gaze.

Great Britten! A Work by Billy Apple

Until 6 November 2016

Billy Apple celebrates the record-shattering 1995 campaign of the Christchurch-designed Britten V1000 motorbike.

Joyce Campbell: Flightdream

Until 20 November 2016

A journey into the ocean's fathomless depths, exploring processes of creation and annihilation.

Treasury:

A Generous Legacy

Until 4 December 2016

Stunning proof of the impact of generosity on the Christchurch collection.

Bad Hair Day

Until 28 May 2017

The wild and wonderful ways of hair, investigated through painting, printmaking, sculpture, photography and video. Shaped with younger audiences in mind.

Beasts

Ongoing

A generous, multimedia selection of animal-themed works, both lively and thoughtful.

No! That's Wrong XXXXXX

Ongoing

Three paintings by Tony Fomison, Philip Clairmont and Allen Maddox, to mark the Gallery's acquisition of Maddox's *No Mail Today*.

Ronnie Van Hout: Quasi

Ongoing

A giant new sculpture on the Gallery roof by Ronnie van Hout.

Simon Morris:

Yellow Ochre Room

Ongoing

A painted room which offers space and time for contemplation.

Above Ground

Ongoing

An exhibition exploring the impact of architecture, imagination and memory.

Tony de Lautour: Silent Patterns

Ongoing

An outdoor painting inspired by wartime Dazzle camouflage.

Reuben Paterson: The End

Ongoing

A sparkling elevator installation offering an unexpected space for contemplation and connection.

Laurence Aberhart: Kamala, Astral and Charlotte, Lyttelton, March 1983

Ongoing

Aberhart's photograph of Lyttelton children is displayed on our Gloucester Street billboard.

Martin Creed: Everything is going to be alright

Ongoing

Martin Creed's completely unequivocal, but also pretty darn ambiguous, work for Christchurch.

Coming Soon

Kōwhaiwhai

3 September 2016 –

6 February 2017

Significant works of modernist and contemporary Māori art informed by traditional Māori architecture.

Ship Songs

3 September 2016 –

6 February 2017

A small but poetic exhibition looking at early European and Māori representations of seafaring vessels.

Reading the Swell

3 September 2016 –

6 February 2017

The Gallery's collection of maritime paintings, from the safety of the harbour to disaster on the high seas.

He Rau Maharataka Whenua:

A Memory of Land

From 17 September 2016

Canterbury modernist landscape painting poignantly revised from within a Kāi Tahu perspective.

From the Sun Deck:

McCahon's Titirangi

17 September 2016 –

6 February 2017

An exhibition of Colin McCahon's Titirangi-period paintings.

Olivia Spencer Bower:

Views from the Mainland

5 November 2016 – 2 April 2017

A selection of paintings by modernist painter Olivia Spencer Bower.

Haines & Hinterding: Energies

26 November 2016 –

5 March 2017

A major survey show by Australian multimedia artists David Haines and Joyce Hinterding.

Closing Soon

In Modern Times

Until 11 September 2016

McCahon / Van der Velden

Until 11 September 2016

Events

Special Events

Immerse

27 September, 4, 11, 18 and 25 October, 2 November / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / \$100 for 6 lectures or \$20 per lecture (Friends and Together partners \$80 or \$15 per session)

What do Rembrandt, selfies and kauri cupboards have in common? Join the Gallery's six-week New Zealand art appreciation programme and all will be revealed. Enjoy stimulating presentations and lively discussions over a glass of wine in this dynamic series fundraising for the Friends of Christchurch Art Gallery. Please see the Gallery website for full programme and bookings.

The Mix 5: Fashion Forward

12 October / 6pm / NZI Foyer / free

Rediscover the Gallery after dark as it comes alive with a vibrant calendar of special events combining people and art with exciting music, great food and drink, pop-up talks and demonstrations, films and live performances. Have a different kind of night out and embark on a new cultural exploration over each of the six editions of The Mix in 2016.

Dress to impress for a night out at the Gallery, with *The Mix 5: Fashion Forward*, featuring local designs and designers, a mega clothes swap, discussions on ethical clothing and the art of personal style.

Muka Prints

11–13 November / 10am – 5pm / Education Centre / free

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of Muka Youth Prints, Muka Studio once again tours its collection of original lithographs by international artists. The prints are offered exclusively to young people aged 5 to 18, who will have an opportunity to buy up to three works.

Unframed works \$70, framed \$155

Good Vibrations: Haines & Hinterding

25 November / 7.30pm / NZI Foyer / free

Inspired by the work of Australian artists David Haines and Joyce Hinterding, *Good Vibrations* takes over the Gallery for an evening of captivating experimental and energetic fun. This will be an exciting night of collaboration between New Zealand and Australian artists and musicians. Enjoy an interactive and immersive art experience, accompanied by fantastic local food trucks and a smashing Yealands cash bar loaded with Three Boys Beer and Peter Yealands Wine. Not to be missed.

Workshop

In Stitches Workshop

18 September / 2.30pm / Education Centre / free

We're crafting the perfect afternoon. Join us for a relaxed cross-stitch and embroidery workshop with expert embroiderer Barbara Johns, followed by high tea. This workshop is ideal for beginners who want to give cross-stitch a go, but it's also excellent for those more experienced with embroidery. Bring along your own embroidery supplies and we'll supply afternoon tea.

Talks

Doris Lusk: A Sense of Place

7 September / 6pm / meet at the front desk / free

Join curator Felicity Milburn as she explores the remarkable career of New Zealand painter Doris Lusk (1916–1990) through the works on display in *Doris Lusk: Practical Visionary*.

Hana O'Regan responds to Fiona Pardington

14 September / 6pm / meet at the front desk / free

Building on her beautiful essay 'Taku Hokika ki te Kāika / My Journey Home', in *Fiona Pardington: A Beautiful Hesitation* Hana O'Regan (Kāi Tahu) explores the Kāi Tahu narratives, landscapes and traditions woven through Pardington's work, while also discussing her own personal connection to these stories, places and traditions.

He Rau Maharataka Whenua: A Memory of Land

21 September / 6pm / meet at the front desk / free

Curator Nathan Pohio discusses the Kāi Tahu histories and narratives behind the works displayed in the exhibition *He Rau Maharataka Whenua: A Memory of Land*.

She's A Mod: New Zealand Fashion in the 1950s and 1960s

19 October / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

Bronwyn Labrum (head of New Zealand and Pacific Cultures at Te Papa) speaks about her new book *Real Modern: Everyday New Zealand in the 1950s and 1960s*, which uses the ordinary objects of the post war years to tell the story of everyday New Zealanders during this fascinating time.

1969 Comeback Special Floortalk

30 October / 2.30pm / meet at the front desk / free

Curator Peter Vangioni discusses this exhibition and the history of the acquisitions made by Brian Muir, director of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery during a watershed year for New Zealand contemporary art.

New Directions 1969–78

9 November / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

Dr Anna Crighton remembers Brian Muir, director of the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, his idiosyncratic collecting policy and his crusade for art education.

Haines & Hinterding Floortalk

26 November / 2.30pm / meet at the front desk / free

Australian artists Haines & Hinterding introduce their new exhibition at the Gallery and discuss their work, which incorporates sound, installation, video, performance, sculpture, photography and drawing.

Colin McCahon: The Titirangi Years

30 November / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

Academic, writer and curator Peter Simpson discusses Colin McCahon's move with his family from the South Island to a house in the bush at Titirangi in Auckland and the ground-breaking work he accomplished there.



Small text label on the wall, possibly a title or artist name.

Family and Kids

Oh Baby It's Art

1 September / 9.30am / meet at front desk / free

A free, guided tour especially for parents with babies.

Buggies welcome.

Art Safari

11 October / 9.30am / Education Centre / free

Come on an art adventure with us. Make and look at art with your pre-schooler in this specially designed programme for under 5s.

Halloween: Macabre Mummies and Spider Headbands

30 October / 11am / Education Centre / free

Get ready for creepies and crawlies and things that go bump in the night. Create your own moveable mummy or a creepy headband to go trick or treating in. Suitable for all ages.

'Tis the Season to be Jolly Crafty

20 November / 1-4pm / Education Centre / \$10 children, \$20 adults

Deck your halls with a variety of beautiful decorations. Have fun making beautiful Finnish paper stars, Russian wooden poker-work decorations, New Zealand-inspired shell angels and American ribbon icicles. You can also try your hand at creating beaded star ornaments and cinnamon-stick stars. Activities for children include 3D paper-bag stars, pasta bells and clay glitter ornaments. All materials provided.

School Holidays

Shiny, Shimmery Fish

27 September – 7 October / 11am-12pm / weekdays / Education Centre / \$8

Let's go under the sea and create some colourful tropical fish with discs, markers, paper and paint. Hang them in your window and see them shimmer in the light. All materials provided. Ages 5+

Ponyo

5 October / 6pm / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

This film, written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki and produced by Studio Ghibli, is a fun adventure about a five-year-old boy and his relationship with Ponyo, a goldfish princess who longs to become a human.

103 mins

Films

German Film Festival

28 September and 1 October / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

This mini-festival, courtesy of the Goethe-Institut, showcases a fine selection of internationally acclaimed films in German with English subtitles. Please check the Gallery website for full programme and films.

Latino Film Festival

26, 29 and 30 October / Philip Carter Family Auditorium / free

Celebrate the opening and closing of the Latino Film Festival with us. The films come from a wide range of Latin countries and in a wide range of genres, topics and styles. Please check the Gallery website for full programme and films.

... Francis Upritchard, Vincent Ward, Dan Arps, Shane Cotton, Tony de Lautour, Julia Morison, Bill Culbert, Peter Robinson, Neil Dawson, Rita Angus, Saskia Leek, Eddie Clemens, David Hatcher, Tony Fomison, Séraphine Pick, Jason Greig, Joanna Langford, Miranda Parkes, Zina Swanson, Robert Hood, Ruth Watson, Heather Straka, John Coley, Olivia Spencer Bower, Marie Le Lievre, Raymond McIntyre, Emily Hartley-Skudder, Quentin MacFarlane, Hamish Keith, Anton Parsons, Chris Heaphy, Barry Cleavin, Pat Hanly, Jim Speers, Toss Woollaston, Bill Sutton, Ronnie van Hout, Margaret Stoddart, Juliet Peter, John Hurrell, Trevor Moffitt, Ngaio Marsh, Sydney L Thompson, David Low, André Hemer, Philip Trusttum, Joyce Campbell, Allen Maddox, Nathan Pohio, Mark Adams, Simon Morris, Darryn George, Mark Braunias, Dick Frizzell, Tjalling de Vries, Gordon H Brown, Tom Kreisler, David Cook, Terry Urbahn, Maddie Leach, Grant Lingard, David Rittey, Alan Pearson, Jane Zusters, Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, Carl Sydow, Ella Sutherland, Paul Johns, Philippa Blair, Paul Cullen, Hannah Beehre, Bing Dawe, Austen Deans, Euan Macleod, Jason Ware, Joanna Braithwaite, Cornelius (Kees) Bruin, Peter Trevelyan ...

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